

Nordlit 46

Conceptualizing the North

Edited by Kate Maxwell, Lilli Mittner, and Hanne Hammer Stien



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CONCEPTUALIZING THE NORTH

Kate Maxwell, Lilli Mittner, and Hanne Hammer Stien
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'It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.' (Haraway 2016, 35)

Enquiring into and simultaneously challenging our perceptions of and relations with the north is at the heart of this special issue of *Nordlit*. It seeks to unite, rather than divide, scholarly and artistic approaches that simultaneously conceptualize and analyse the north. Thus, beyond any notion of either/or, this volume seeks to unfold a spectrum of possible understandings of the north by looking at, reading through, hearing, experiencing, and sensing the north. Even if it were possible to define the north geographically, to delineate the north has never been our intention. While the contributions gathered here relate to specific geographies or discursive definitions of the north, our objective as editors has been to keep the north open-ended, since we understand the north as something that is always becoming through the ongoing and overlapping performative relationships of humans and non-humans, physical matter, and the imaginary. As Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum have put it, 'Rather than one thing, North is a space imagined by people, part of an identity, or state of mind, held not just by individuals but also by institutions, organizations and society' (2018, 4).

What all the contributions have in common is not just the analytical and creative lenses through which the north is represented, experienced, sensed, and hence conceptualized, but also a sense of the increasing recognition that the north is now something different from what it used to be. Whereas the north both in Western European premodern writing and contemporary scholarly work tends to be conceptualized as a mythical as well as geographical frontier, Jørgensen and Langum remind us that the north has never been a singular direction or conception (2018, 2). According to them, the north as a concept 'evokes both frisson and friction, particularly as deployed to draw borders around ideologies, traditions, and peoples, in some part due to its complex history' (2018, 9), and it must be positioned in reference to particular texts and contexts. With climate change, the melting ice, the fight for natural resources, the expansion of tourism, and the interest in indigenous methodologies (or knowledges), the north has become a new geopolitical centre (Hedin and Gremaud 2018, 3). It is not just mining companies, the fishing industry, politicians, military organizations, bureaucrats, tourists, and scientists that are fighting to define and get hold of the north. In addition, artists and art workers are paying attention to and reacting to the changing geopolitical situation (Stien 2020, 120; Hedin and Gremaud 2018, 7–8).

While the north was earlier defined primarily by visiting outsiders who othered the north in relation to the south (Jørgensen and Langum 2018, 4–5; Jørgensen and Sörlin 2013, 1) – what Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp refer to as 'Arctism' with reference to Said's concept of Orientalism (2010, x) – many views of the north still come from the

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so-called West in late Capitalism, from the hunt for resources, conquest, and escape, to the enduring geopolitics in the aftermath of the Cold War that still profoundly affect the region (Bruun and Medby 2014). Nevertheless, ethno-political movements from the 1970s onwards (Körber and Volquardsen 2020; Bjørklund 2000; Eidheim 1997) have made the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar north more seen and heard than in earlier times. Even though this does not mean that images of the natural or indigenous other are no longer reproduced and naturalized through representation (Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp 2010, x), contesting images of the north are appearing more than ever (Stien 2020). The north is now part of a globalized world that embraces, and responds to, industry, tourism, infrastructure, neoliberalism, border- and geo-politics, and all the signature and backstage moments of Western civilization that historically were missing from it. The world is changing and hence the north is changing: it is once again being re-imagined, re-created, and re-worlded: 'It matters what worlds world worlds.' (Haraway 2016, 35)

In all its complexity the north presents itself as a place of being and of belonging (Jørgensen and Sörlin, 2013, 10); it does not simply represent a border zone between the exotic and the familiar (Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp 2010, xii). The art project *Pile o'Sápmi* by the Sámi artist Máret Anne Sara (b. 1984) is an example of this. The project was displayed for the first time outside the Indre Finnmark District Court in the municipality of Tana in northern Norway in 2016, in connection with Sara's brother's public proceedings against the Norwegian state to challenge the obligatory reduction of his reindeer herd following the 2007 Norwegian Reindeer Herding Act. In Tana the installation consisted of a cone-shaped pile of 200 raw reindeer heads with a Norwegian flag at the top. Hanna Horsberg Hansen (2019) has shown how the several shifting displays of the project – first in Sápmi, following the legal case, and later at an international art exhibition in Germany in 2018, before it was acquired by the Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo – express different relations between art and politics:

Through several translations in different contexts and in the flow of time, *Pile o'Sápmi* has connected to politics in different ways: as art activism connected to Jovsset Ánde Sara's legal case defending the Sámi culture and way of life, as a medium fulfilling the curator's aims and political agenda at Documenta and finally as part of the Norwegian canon. (Hansen 2019, 93)

The shifting contexts of *Pile o'Sápmi* and the resulting changes in the relationship between its artistic and political impact remind us that art is never entirely politically neutral, and thus 'it matters what relations relate relations.' (Haraway 2016, 35)

Understanding the north performatively and relationally, as a moment that comes into being when human and non-human actors become entangled, may help to destabilize take-for-granted definitions of the north. In those very moments of becoming the north unfolds, but as fast as it appears it may disappear again. Hence, it is not only those inhabiting the north, but the relations between those within, outside, and in between that create and transform meaning in an ongoing process of encounters. Such encounters –

described as occurring at the connection between people, animals, things, nature, technologies, arts and more – result in vibrant matters (Bennett 2010), and in these we hear voices that say, ‘the north is cold’, ‘the north is endangered’, ‘the north is full of daylight’, ‘the north is music’, ‘the north is inspiration’, ‘the north is here’, ‘the north is at stake’. Even though it might seem in such resonating moments that the north essentially exists, the north is continually ‘becoming-with’ all of its partners (be they dwellers, visitors, or kin). As Donna Haraway puts it, ‘Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist in their intertwined worldings’ (Haraway 2016, 13). The concept of the north is mutable, and so are we who live it, read it, sing it, hear it, paint it, touch it, see it, build it. If we as researchers and/or artists are entangled in this moment of becoming-with, the question arises as to whether there is something that we want the north to become-with (or not to become-with). Can we, to a certain extent, influence what (when, how) the north becomes-with? ‘It matters what thoughts think thoughts.’ (Haraway 2016, 35)

A central premise for our issue of *Nordlit* is to acknowledge and unite scholarly as well as artistic approaches to the notion of conceptualizing the north.¹ Instead of delimiting the different perspectives, we decided to emphasize the kinship between academic research and artistic research that, according to Henk Borgdorff (2009, 7), becomes evident through the motives that underlie the research and the issues that inspire it. He continues:

Cutting-edge scientific and artistic research moves the frontier onto previously unexplored territory, by discovering new paths and outlooks, by enabling new observations and experiences. We may therefore understand artistic research as a careful investigation, exploration and testing of unbroken ground in [the] function of developing the discipline and broadening perspectives as well as nurturing talent. Both scientific research and artistic research are capable of constituting worlds and disclosing worlds; therein lies their performative strength – in generating and revealing new ideas, understandings, perceptions and experiences. (Borgdorff 2009, 8)

What Borgdorff sees at the root of all research is the desire for fundamental understanding and to develop new work(s), hence ‘to broaden our horizons and to enrich our world’. With his subtitle of ‘Kinship?’ (7), Borgdorff in a sense foreshadows

¹ We write from a Norwegian academic context, in which ‘art’ and ‘science’ have long been segregated. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that the Research Council of Norway does not fund research that is primarily ‘artistic’ – artistic research has its own funding body, the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. It was also only in 2018 that it became possible to be awarded a PhD in artistic research in Norway (until then, PhD-level artistic research was not entitled to the title of PhD or doctorate). Similarly, publications or outputs that are deemed primarily ‘artistic’ are rated as level 0 on the Norwegian research scale (which has three levels: 0 – non academic; 1 – ordinary; and 2 – international prestige). They are therefore not eligible to be counted for ‘research points’, the national reward scheme for publications and, often, merit (e.g. promotion). This has the additional impact that, when institutions or policymakers gather statistics on academic publication or international collaborations, artistic research, with its blanket labelling at level 0, is simply disregarded.

Haraway's notion of staying with the trouble. When she proposes to 'Make Kin Not Babies!' (2016, 102), she talks about recognizing kin as the most urgent part of making kin. For her that means 'to unravel ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species' (102). Transferred to the field of research, this calls for relations that are not built on disciplines and canons, but rather relations that seek the unfamiliar, that care, and that in the end contribute to broadening the imagination and changing the story. Haraway's expanded notion of kin is therefore one of the central premises for this special issue.

'It matters what knowledges know knowledges.' (Haraway 2016, 35) Since all generated knowledge is situated, we must take into account the considerable literature on and artistic responses to the north that have influenced us when writing and editing this volume. At the same time as the north has gained geopolitical interest, there has been a growing attention from humanities scholars with an interest in colonialism, imperialism, environmental change, and indigenous methodologies (Jørgensen and Langum 2018, 3). We, the editors of this volume and the authors of this introduction, all work at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. With its very name, particularly the elision of the 'Tromsø' to 'T' to reflect the multi-campus fusions that have taken place in recent years, our institution raises its flag across the whole of the Norwegian Arctic.² UiT's strategic motto, 'drivkraft i nord' (a driving force in the north), likewise stakes a claim to both location and purpose, and is central to its mission to 'help promote economic, cultural and social development in the north through building knowledge and human capital' (UiT 2018). *Nordlit*, the journal housing this volume, is also based at UiT, and as a recognized open access academic journal it conforms to the requirements and rigours of peer review, publishing, copyright, editing, and referencing. As authors and editors our sphere of knowledge is both limited and shaped by our own experiences and backgrounds. All three of us are interdisciplinary researchers and (co-)creative practitioners, we are non-indigenous, white, and Western European (only one is Norwegian), and we all live within the Arctic circle, in Tromsø.

Tromsø is the largest urban centre of the county currently known as Troms og Finnmark. This county, which is the northernmost county in Norway, was created through an unpopular and forced fusion of the former counties of Troms and its northern neighbour Finnmark that took place on 1st January 2020 at the behest of the Norwegian government, and is still under debate at both the local and national levels. We are thus dwelling in and living through a pertinent example of the fluidity of names, places, and boundaries in the north (a fluidity also explored in some of the articles in this volume), and of the reactions such territory staking can provoke. A pertinent example of artistic activism in the current Norwegian Arctic discourse is Nordting, which could literally translate as 'Parliament of the North'. Through performative art projects, using irony as a tool and method, Nordting takes a stand to promote northern and indigenous issues. A recent stunt in response to the forced union of Troms and Finnmark was to update the road signs on the borders of the region. By the summer solstice, which since its

² Readers outside of Norway might be surprised to learn that there is also a university called, in English, 'Nord University', whose main campus is located in Bodø in Nordland, which is over 500 km south of Tromsø (yet still within the Arctic circle).

inception Nordting has proclaimed as ‘Nordting dag’, the new county ensign had still not been decided and the signs had still not been updated. As well as a symbolic date for artistic activism in the north, the summer solstice has meaning for other countries in the circumpolar north: it is National Indigenous Day in Canada, and the national day of Greenland. Thus, on 21st June 2020 Nordting updated the Troms og Finnmark border signs with its own ensign: a red shield sporting a gold fist with a raised middle finger shaped into an arrow pointing up (images and reports can be found at Nordting 2020). As late capitalism is in play, it is of course also possible to purchase merchandise with the Nordting ensign through the Nordting website.

In addition to these contemporary discourses which have surrounded our work on this special issue, we as authors and editors seek to acknowledge our debts and gratitude to our kin, to colleagues whose influence cannot be measured in metrics, as well as to acknowledge the limits of our knowledge(s) and perspectives. For us, two of the primary intellectual influences during the long journey that led to this volume were the books *Visions of North in Premodern Europe* (Jørgensen and Langum 2018), a book that examines how the north was envisioned by those living both inside and outside of northern spaces in the premodern era, and *Northscapes* (Jørgensen and Sörlin 2013), a book that is both an environmental and imaginary history of the north and its inhabitants (human and non-human) and technologies. Indeed, we are much indebted to the multifaceted work of Dolly Jørgensen that continues to be pertinent and relevant, and her current project on extinction as well as her consideration of animals and science fiction (e.g. Jørgensen 2019) is part of the foundation for our own engagement with posthumanism and ecofeminism from a northern perspective. Anka Ryall’s work, particularly the project *Arctic Modernities* with a conference at UiT in 2014 and a number of publications (notably Ryall and Kjeldaas 2015, and Hansson and Ryall 2017), was instrumental for our purposes by including the role of the arts in scholarship on the north. Prior to *Arctic Modernities*, Ryall’s research project together with Johan Schimanski and Henning Howlid Wærp, summed up in the anthology *Arctic Discourses* (2010), prepared the way for a broader field of increasingly multimodal and interdisciplinary research on the north from an Arctic literary studies perspective.

Even though literary studies still dominate humanities research on the north, anthologies such as *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic* (Mackenzie and Stenport, 2015), *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art* (Hedin and Gremaud 2018), and *Arctic Archives: Ice, Memory and Entropy* (Frank and Jakobsen 2019) show that climate change and the Anthropocene, both as a geological epoch and as a framework to think with, are expanding the field of research. The interest in ice, as a specific matter, place of being, and metaphor, stimulates academic discussions and makes us aware not only of the north, but of the polar regions’ importance in the contemporary situation. Susi K. Frank and Kjetil A. Jakobsen (2019, 9) formulate it explicitly: ‘The polar regions are the knowledge archives of the planet, partly for climatic reasons, partly because human intervention has until recently had less impact than elsewhere.’ An older but still influential work is Lisa Bloom’s *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (1993). Through the analysis of mass media, and especially the use of photography, Bloom deals with ideologies of gender,

race, and class that were central to polar discovery and exploration narratives in the United States and elsewhere.

One central implication for future research on the north is the need for artistic and indigenous voices. These voices are out there, but they do not necessarily conceive of the academic field of northern studies as a fruitful discursive space in which to take part. How can we include indigenous voices in this field? Who can change this? One example could be the *Routledge Handbook of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic* (Koivurova, Broderstad, Cambou, Dorough, and Stammler, forthcoming 2021). It promises to bring together the expertise of indigenous and non-indigenous scholars to offer a comprehensive overview of issues surrounding the well-being, self-determination, and sustainability of indigenous peoples in the Arctic. We would also argue that bolder interdisciplinary and community-based research on, in, and with the north can work to change the picture: ‘we must change the story; the story must change.’ (Haraway 2016, 40)

In addition to the growth in visual art projects dealing with or coming from the north that has occurred the last decades, scholars and curators have been increasingly researching and promoting not only visual art, but also visual culture. A new awareness of indigenous art has similarly taken place over the last five decades. At UiT, the Sámi Art Research Project (SARP) resulted in the book *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives* (Aamold, Haugdal, and Jørgensen, 2017). This discusses and highlights an increase in activity among artists identifying as Sámi, and the organization and institutionalization of art and duodji (traditional Sámi art and craft), not least by Sámi artists themselves. At stake are complex, changing concepts regarding both creative and political agencies. The question is not how indigeneity, identity, people, art, duodji, and aesthetics correspond to conventional Western ideas; rather it is how they interact with the Sámi people and their neighbouring cultures and societies.

Two of us writing here (Maxwell and Mittner) have travelled into the Arctic north from outside (though one grew up as a ‘northerner’, albeit not from the same north – for a fuller discussion of multiple perspectives of north in this volume see in particular the articles by Stanović and McCay). In so doing, we are part of a history of wanderers, of imaginers, who find our way here either by accident or design. We bring with us texts and knowledge from our personal before, or outside, such as *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory beyond Green* (Cohen 2013): an exploration of ecologies through the spectrum of colour, whose vivid multicoloured display is a stark contrast to the dominant blues and whites of the high north. Travel writing is a discipline, and it is no surprise that these same two authors and editors both chose to write about the same memoir of the Arctic in this volume. In so doing, we are not only part of the history of narrative travel writing, but also part of the multidisciplinary approach that analysis of this writing has taken in recent years (see Gaupseth, Federhofer, and Aspaas 2013.) ‘It matters what stories tell stories.’ (Haraway 2016, 35)

From new material feminist approach to co-creative peer review

Our methodology for this volume can be described as a new material feminist approach in several ways. From the very beginning, we knew that there would not, could not, be

either a singular or a binary concept (subject/object; past/present; body/mind; culture/nature, science/art etc.) but that our conceptualization of the north would instead be multifaceted and oscillating *in between*. Telling stories around humans without becoming human-centred, reflecting on the arts without privileging the individual artist, interweaving the embeddedness of bodies, processes, materialities, and immaterialities without falling into the trap of distinguishing one above the other but uncovering their entanglements was our Arctic ‘drivkraft’. This driving force mattered at all creative levels during the production of the volume, from the call for papers to finalizing this introductory article.

For the peer-review process, which we applied to both the artistic and academic contributions, this meant that we constructed an ongoing dialogue between authors, submissions, and reviewers that became entangled in the final work. This tridirectional relationship affects *habits of mind* in the sense of the ‘imagination as reasonable connective agent toward fresh concepts’ (Bresler 2006, 58). Liora Bresler has described the emphatic relationship between artwork, oneself, and audience as a ‘*rhythm* of academic life. Connection and empathy have a pace of their own, which arises from the rhythm of building relationships, responsive to others’ (ibid., 60). We have elsewhere described this method of meaning production as a co-creative process (Maxwell, Mittner, and Stien 2020), drawing on research with people living with dementia that elaborates on the following definition of co-creativity:

[Co-creativity involves] a focus on shared process, shared ownership, inclusivity, reciprocity and relationality. [...] Co-creativity necessitates and creates openness, equality and imaginative space. Above all, it contrasts with restrictive notions of the lone creative ‘genius’ that have tended to dominate views of creativity. (Zeilig, West, and van der Byl Williams 2018, 138)

Without obscuring our authors and their works, and staying in line with international standards of peer review (COPE Council 2017), this approach allowed us to bring the peer-review process out of the dark and turn it into ‘a shared process in which the author is part of a dialogue, not a passive subject’ (Maxwell, Mittner, and Stien 2020). In effect, we asked our authors, as well as our peer reviewers, to stay with the trouble a little longer than is usual in research (particularly academic research). We do not pretend that this was an easy or quick task, and we owe a great debt of gratitude not only to the authors featured in the issue, but also to our fellow reviewers Silje Gaupseth, Anne Jänsch, Martin Siefkes, and Morten Wintervold. By consciously stepping away from the hero-narrative of scholarly review and instead being open to co-creative ‘thinking practices’ (Haraway 2016, 12) and becoming-with, we asked, with Haraway;

how do these concave hollowed-out things, these holes in Being, from the get-go generate richer, quirkier, fuller, unfitting, ongoing stories, stories with room for the hunter but which weren’t and aren’t about him, the self-making human, the human-making machine of history? (Haraway 2016, 40)

Our answer is that a co-creative peer review process, in the sense of ‘working with each other in our thinking practices’ (Haraway 2017), fosters kinship and enabled us to build a sympoietic and multifaceted concept of the north that continuously oscillated in between and becoming-with.

Collective meaning-making in and of the north

The seventeen contributions to this special issue together offer a multidisciplinary and creative anthology that conceptualizes the north from three complimentary and connected avenues of approach: travelling, dwelling, and expressing. These three categories are designed to suggest the movement towards the north, its inhabitation, and its (re-)construction.

The special issue starts with an invitation to a journey, with Brent Wetters’s *Saturn and Jupiter* that traces the Winnipeg–Churchill line featured in Glenn Gould’s radio documentary ‘The Idea of North’. Wetters’s composition, accessible from the article, allows the listener (and reader) to travel the line, to hear the noises at the work’s stations, and to make their own way into the north. His composition and reflections on his methods thus form a fitting opening for our volume. The next article keeps to the theme of sound, this time having arrived in the north with the Austrian painter Christiane Ritter. Kate Maxwell offers a close reading of *Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht (A Woman in the Polar Night)*, Ritter’s memoir (first published 1938) of her year on the north coast of Spitsbergen, that focuses on the noises and natural music of the Arctic. The northern lights are a well-known feature of the north, and in their reflection on their artwork *Aurora – Connecting Senses* Signe Kjær Jensen and Cristina Pop-Tiron explore the possibilities created by their interactive and multimodal sound and light installation. We return to Svalbard and Christiane Ritter’s book in Lilli Mittner and Gabi Wagner’s contribution, in which the authors in their respective roles as cultural studies researcher and biologist enter into a dialogue with Ritter and her contemporary Ågot Gjems Selmer about their fascination, meaning, and transformation of, with, and in the north. Our next port of call is Finland, where Ralf Kauranen and Olli Löytti use three comics on migration to Finland and the symbols of coffee, milk, snow, and a bear to analyse the relationships between place and movement. Finally in this section, Tobias Hämmerle investigates the changes in the visual and textual representation of ‘northerners’ and ‘Sweden’ in early mass media, from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

The section entitled ‘Dwelling’ opens with Lena Gudd and Antonin Pons Braley’s narrative, poetic, and pictorial depiction of the Canadian mining town Fermont. Their contribution offers a multimodal experience both of inhabiting, and being inhabited by, the north. We stay in the Canadian north with David Beard and John Moffat’s analysis of the comics of Jeff Lemire that explore the problematics of colonialization and representation of indigenous places, people, and powers. With Adam Stanović’s contribution we change norths, moving to post-industrial northern England and the role of sound and composition in constructing identities in Sheffield. Jennifer McCay takes us to Northern Ireland and Eire with her analysis of Kevin O’Connell’s composition *North* in the light of the influence of Jean Sibelius and Seamus Heaney. The section

concludes in Sápmi, with Hanna Horsberg Hansen's history of Sámi art and practices, and how these fit somewhat uncomfortably into the Western ideals imposed on them by the Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum in Tromsø through the 2017 museum performance and exhibition project *There is no*.

Our final section, 'Expressing', opens with Torbjörn Ömalm's rhythmical poem that repeatedly points toward the sound of everyday experiences, creating his personal account of the complexity of being in and of the north. We step back in time with Solveig Wang's article on the portrayal of the Sámi people and in particular their relations with Norse peoples as presented in places, landscape, and phenomena in medieval sagas. In Alexander Gagatsis' article, we hear and are invited to question our impressions of the 'Nordic tone' in jazz in the light of notions of northerness, nationalism, and folklore. Morten Bartnæs analyses the relations between Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Snow Queen' and the film *Frozen* in the light of genealogical discourses and tales of origin in northern settings. With Jon Mikkel Broch Ålvik we listen to the use of language to shape identity and gender discourses in Norwegian popular music. Our volume ends in Iceland and Japan, with Daryl Jamieson's reflections on his work *utamakura 2: Arnadalar* and the *Fóstbræðra saga*, in which he explores the potential of art to mould perceptions of space, time, and physical locations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this special issue is to explore understandings and conceptualizations of the north both artistically and theoretically. We explicitly invited a broad range of disciplines and approaches, and encouraged underrepresented voices to contribute to the conceptualization of the north. Within a non-representational theoretical framework we encouraged artistic, arts-based, and arts-related research to become co-creative and multimodal across any kind of borders in order to broaden and transform common understandings, meaning, and matter of the north. This, we believe, is co-creative research 'in the urgent times called the Anthropocene, when the arts for living on a damaged planet demand sympoietic thinking and action' (Haraway 2016, 67). In this sense, the special issue became our laboratory to produce new perspectives on the north and simultaneously reflect on being able to produce this kind of knowledge.

The sum of all contributions indicates that an additive assemblage encourages a change in our thinking practices from either/or towards as well as. The issue diffracts common conceptualizations of the north based on an artistic apparatus. Sound- and music-based enquiries of the north hold a special place and open a new territory in the field of northern studies that should be explored further. Our theoretical approach allows us to present a variety of empiric materials that seldom meet across academic disciplines, and it is in this diffractive space that we hope new avenues of approaches can open up to the reader. 'Think we must; we must think. That means, simply, we must change the story; the story must change.' (Haraway 2016, 40)

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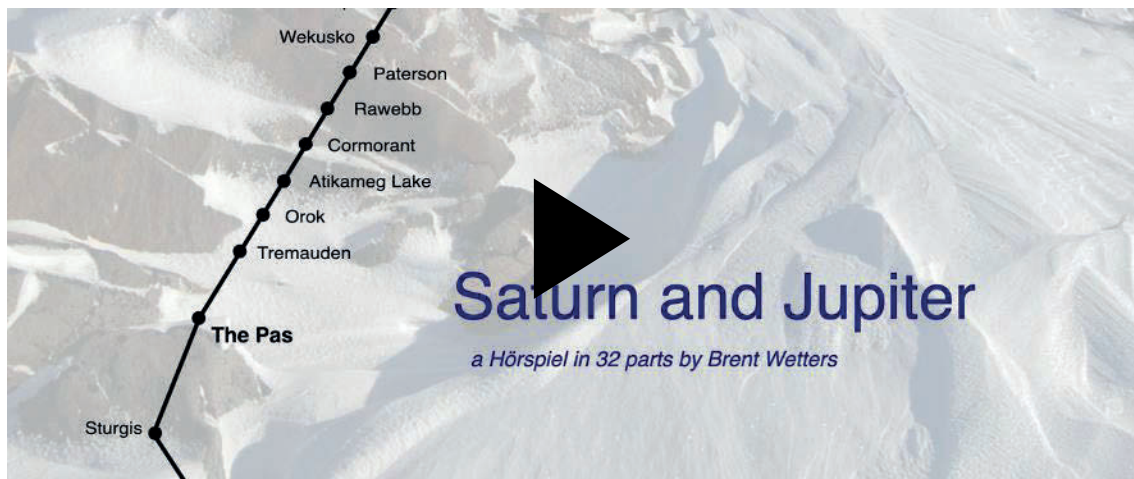
SATURN AND JUPITER REVISITED

Brent Wetters (Worcester Polytechnic Institute)

Abstract


I composed *Saturn and Jupiter* as part of my Master's degree thesis at Wesleyan University in 2003. It is an electro-acoustic and soundscape composition that responds to Glenn Gould's 1967 radio documentary, *The Idea of North*. I made the source recordings while on a week-long trip to Churchill, Manitoba, where I took the same train that Gould had taken some thirty years earlier. *Saturn and Jupiter* responds both to the ideas in Gould's documentary in the form of interviews, and compositionally by imposing considerably more atmospheric space into the work. Where Gould's documentary is noisy with talking – Gould famously pioneered a technique he called 'contrapuntal radio' where he layers multiple speaking voices simultaneously – the spoken components of my documentary are quite sparse. This new presentation commemorates the re-opening of the Winnipeg – Churchill train line after suffering massive flooding damage in 2017. In this version, listeners are invited to hear and view to the 32 movements in a customizable configuration. The interactive map allows users to select the movements, which are each named for a stop on the train line, and have them compiled into a playlist.

Keywords: *Hörspiel; Soundscape; North; Glenn Gould; Radio; Documentary*



On May 23, 2017, flooding suspended the train service on the line running north from Winnipeg to Churchill on Hudson's Bay. The flooding was caused by a series of immense blizzards in March of that year, which, once melted, overwhelmed the train's infrastructure. The train, in addition to being a lifeline for the community of Churchill and the native communities further north in Nunavut (there are no roads connecting Churchill with the rest of Canada) played a pivotal role in Glenn Gould's northern

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explorations some fifty years earlier when he produced his radio documentary, *The Idea of North*. My own experiences of the north are intimately tied to both the train and to Gould; in January of 2003, I took the train as part of a graduate school project at Wesleyan University, culminating in my own radio documentary that was conceived as a response to Gould.

Glenn Gould left the concert stage in 1964 to commit himself to a full-time exploration of the possibilities of the recording studio, and to reportedly try his hand at composition. He made good on the first half of the promise with a series of inspired studio recordings, but the compositions never arrived. That is, unless one considers (as does Robert Hurwitz (1983)) that the radio documentaries that began in 1967 with *The Idea of North* were musical compositions. Of all of the documentaries, *The Idea of North* has had the most lasting impact and has been of most subject to academic inquiry – Hurwitz calls it Gould’s ‘symphony’. Gould composed it, with assistance from audio engineer Lorne Tulk, as part of the Canadian centennial celebrations, and its status as a patriotic work is palpable – as it seeks to situate ‘the north’ as something with a peculiarly Canadian character. The documentary is composed of interviews with five subjects who could each offer unique perspective on the north, and whose voices were sonically distinct enough to accommodate ‘contrapuntal radio’.

‘Contrapuntal radio’ was the term Gould gave to a procedure of layering the speaking voices polyphonically, allowing him to experiment with various musical techniques as means of structuring his documentary. Sometimes Gould constructs virtual conversations by alternating two or more speakers, at times certain voices recede to the background, and at other times multiple voices are presented at equivalent volumes, making it incumbent on the listener to decide which to privilege. While the interviewees each provide their own perspectives, Gould’s mostly unheard voice (apart from a short introduction at the beginning) is discernable in the scripting and presentation of the other voices. The resulting documentary is a meditation on the north and its perpetual importance to the Canadian psyche (a recording of Gould’s documentary can be played at <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1121723971930>).

A documentary in 32 movements, *Saturn and Jupiter* is composed from field recordings and interviews conducted on my trip, where I spent a week at the Churchill Northern Studies Centre. I named each movement for a stop along the train line – some of the names like Pikwitonei, Ilford, Gillam, and The Pas being evocatively mentioned in Gould’s documentary. There are not, however, direct connections between the sounds heard and the places named by the titles. The only exception to that rule is the first movement, ‘Winnipeg’, a six-minute recording of ambient sounds in the Winnipeg train station. After waking up in a hotel in Winnipeg and my train not departing until the evening, I spent the day exploring a frozen city devoid of people – or at least it was devoid of people until I happened upon a sign alerting me to the existence of a food court below one of the town squares. At that point, I realized that the inhabitants were all comfortably inside, navigating the city via a series of tunnels and walkways. I nevertheless found myself at the train station with many hours and nothing but my books and recording equipment to keep me company; as a result, the recording of that first movement is made up entirely of a recording of someone vacuuming the space for what seemed like an eternity.

On the 36-hour train trip I listened to every one of Gould's documentaries I could find, starting with *The Idea of North*, then the other two in the 'Solitude Trilogy', and finally the documentaries on Pablo Casals and Leopold Stokowski. For my recording project, I mostly used my homemade contact microphone, affixing it alternately to the sink in my sleeping compartment, the bed, and finally the window. The window made the nicest recording, as it picked up sounds from outside in addition to the train sounds. The sink recordings picked up an unexplained rhythmic clicking sound that are clearly heard in the movement 'Leven'.

If the goal of my trip was to find the kind of isolation sought by Gould, then I found it on the train. Without GPS or any kind of internet connection, I never had more than a fleeting sense of my location, and then only based on the passing station signs. The easiest metric was to gauge my location was via time: it's been twelve hours, therefore I still have twenty-four to go. I did not, as Gould suggested I might, find myself striking up conversations with my fellow passengers. Both nights I thought I saw the northern lights from the train, but couldn't decide if I was just seeing lights from the train reflecting off cloud cover.

I arrived in Churchill in the early morning, a day and a half after leaving Winnipeg. The temperatures never went above minus 30 degrees Celsius for the entire week I was there. I was greeted by two staff members from the Churchill Northern Studies Centre, who drove me and two participants in a 'learning vacation' to the centre, located some twenty miles outside of Churchill proper. There I met the other staff members who are heard in my documentary. Michael Goodyear the director of the centre, Jen McCulloch a research technician, Gerry Mobey a volunteer, Mark Cleaver the cook, and Roger Woloshyn, an astronomer who was teaching classes on the northern lights for the aforementioned 'learning vacation'. More than once I found myself reflecting on what seemed like a utopian community. In the documentary, Roger explained it best: 'the only people who are there are people who want to be there'. One does not end up in Churchill by accident (although Gerry Mobey's interview might challenge that assertion).

The most notable intervention vis-a-vis Gould is the imposition of space onto Gould's north; it has been frequently noted how noisy Gould's north is, and that, for a documentary ostensibly about solitude, it is packed with speech. I wanted a north filled with expanses of time and space. The interviews in my documentary form only a small percentage of the whole, the rest being ambient sounds from the northern environment and a small amount of music.

My documentary was an aestheticized response that coincided with written theoretical reflections on Gould's *Idea of North*. While my thinking on Gould has matured over the intervening years culminating in a forthcoming chapter ('Monstrous North' in *Matter of North*), *Saturn and Jupiter* remains a time-capsule of my reactions to Gould in 2003. In addition to the issues of silence and solitude, I was most interested in addressing what I saw as rhetorical tensions within Gould's documentary. On the one hand, it follows the conventional structure of a Beethoven symphony by presenting a series of thematic ideas that are ultimately overcome in a triumphant ending. But while Gould's documentary is undeniably triumphant – with a soliloquy paired with the finale of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony – that triumph is squarely at odds with the pessimistic content of that soliloquy. As a kind of corrective, *Saturn and Jupiter* ends with a sense of resigned dissolution and profound regret at the natural habitats that have been lost

and are still to be lost in the Arctic. Videographer Mark Laurie did something similar in his 2009 documentary, *Pilgrimage to Solitude*, where he ends his documentary with a diffusion of voices rather than a soliloquy, and a Brahms *Intermezzo*, rather than the triumphant Sibelius. The thirty-first movement of *Saturn and Jupiter*, 'Tidal', does end with a soliloquy from Roger Woloshyn, but the music is the ethereal 'Material Test Unit' by Belgian composer Thomas Smetryns.

Saturn and Jupiter features very little in the way of studio processing. Most of the sounds are presented with only minimal alteration of the recorded source material, but that does not mean that the sounds are necessarily realistic representations of their sonic objects. The sounds were often the result of a complex interaction between the sounds themselves, the environment, and the practical limitations of recording in temperatures that hovered around forty degrees below zero. For example, in those temperatures it was physically impossible to monitor the incoming sound, and I had to prepare my equipment prior to going outside and only listen to the recordings much later. Sounds were often subjected to secondary mechanical effects caused by the climatic conditions. In one instance, I accompanied Jen and another researcher to a frozen lake where they were collecting data from a monitoring device. I brought my contact microphone for that trip, and recorded sounds of the snow by placing the microphone directly into the hardened snow drifts. I collected quite a bit of material which can be heard in 'Wekusko' and other movements, but eventually the temperatures were too much for the fragile wires, and they became brittle and snapped. When using a traditional microphone set-up, the challenges were different. To keep the battery warm, I had to keep the recording device inside my jacket, and the multiple layers of clothing meant that I had to snake the microphone cable through my clothes. My gloves and mittens were necessarily too thick to allow me to operate the device, so I started the recordings inside the centre before going out into the cold.

The limited performance practice for *Saturn and Jupiter* dictates that only a selection of those 32 movements would be chosen for any particular performance. In this way, it is a little like deciding whether to disembark the train at a particular spot. For the first performance (a screening at Wesleyan University, April 17, 2003) I selected 26 movements and paired the audio with pictures taken on my trip. For a more recent screening (Logos Foundation, Ghent, March 3, 2014) I selected 18 movements and used pictures from the initial trip and from a second trip I made to Churchill in 2005. In both of these performances, as well as the versions presented here, the audio is paired with a video track. I do not, however, consider the video to be an integral part of the work, and I do not consider *Saturn and Jupiter* to be a video work. It is, first and foremost, a Hörspiel and soundscape work, with the video merely being an accompaniment.

For 'Contextualizing the North' in *Nordlit*, I revisit *Saturn and Jupiter*, taking advantage of the participatory possibilities afforded by the online environment. As presented here, each user can select those movements at which they want to stop from an interactive map, and their listening experience can then be compiled 'on the fly'. The drawback to this approach, however, is that the compilation of movements was never intended to be random. Certain configurations will work better than others, and there are certain movements (like 'Thicket Portage', 'Leven', 'Weir River', and 'Tidal') that I view as more or less essential. However, selecting only the essential movements would result in a composite work where the interviews would once again dominate. To alleviate that issue, the interface also includes options for several pre-selected

configurations, but listeners who wish to enter more deeply into the structure of the work will have the option to fully customize the presentation.

This new presentation alters the relationship between the listener and the work. Previous versions were all ‘directed’, and I was the one directing the listener’s experience; now, the listener has the final say on the ultimate configuration of the work. My hope, however, is that a coherent meaning of *Saturn and Jupiter* will emerge in spite of (or perhaps because of) the divergent presentations. Realistically, this understanding will only happen for those who devote the time to immerse themselves in the possibilities here afforded. I cannot hope that this will happen for everyone, but like the north itself, and to paraphrase Roger Woloshyn once again, the only people who are there are people who want to be there.

The Winnipeg–Churchill train line resumed service on December 2, 2018 to considerable fanfare and relief for the communities that rely on it. When Glenn Gould’s interviewee (or perhaps narrator) Wally McClean said in 1967, ‘this [taking a 36-hour train to Churchill] is going to be impossible’, he may have been right, but not yet (Gould, 1992 [1967]). The charm and allure of places like Churchill and the north more generally are precisely in their precariousness.

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MUSIC IN THE DARK: SOUNDSCAPES IN CHRISTIANE RITTER'S *A WOMAN IN THE POLAR NIGHT*

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Abstract

In *A Woman in the Polar Night* (*Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht*, 1938), Christiane Ritter, a well-to-do Austrian housewife, describes her experience as the first central European woman to overwinter on Svalbard (1934–35). Ritter's prose is extraordinary in its lyrical simplicity, and in German editions the text is interspersed with her paintings of the scenes that at first were so alien and changing, yet became so familiar and loved.

Although stationed on the north coast of Svalbard with minimal human contact and without any recourse to the music with which Ritter had been surrounded in Austria, *A Woman in the Polar Night* is a text that is full of references to sound, natural sounds that are heightened by the absence of human music. This article offers a multimodal reading of Ritter's depictions of the soundscapes of Svalbard in her memoir and shows how, 30 years before John Cage made the art world do it for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, Christiane Ritter spent 12 months listening to silence, and responding to it in words and paintings. In addition, the paper will also consider the silence of the text: what is not presented, but left to the reader's imagination.

Keywords: *Christiane Ritter; Sound; Music; Silence; Svalbard.*

Introduction

Christiane Ritter's only published work, *A Woman in the Polar Night* (German title: *Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht*), describes the year she spent on the northern coast of Svalbard with her husband Hermann and his hunting companion Karl Nicolaisen in 1934–35. The book was written in German and first published in that language by Deutscher Verlag (Berlin) in 1938. The English translation, by Jane Degras, was first published in 1954 in London by George & Allen Unwin. A second edition came out in 2010 (Greystone Books, out of print), and a third, by Pushkin Press, came out in 2019 (and is still in print). It has been translated into several European languages, including Norwegian and French, and the German version has never been out of print. The 2019 English edition describes itself on the front cover as 'the classic memoir of a year in the Arctic wilderness'.

Ritter (1897-2000) was a painter, and the German editions of her book contain illustrations based on the watercolours she produced during her year on Svalbard and afterwards.¹ These and more of Ritter's watercolours inspired by her year in the Arctic

¹ The English editions do not have these, however, the introduction to the 2010 edition does contain some photos of the Ritters and the hut. These do not appear in the 2019 edition, which has small line illustrations of various animals and objects in the margins and at the beginning of each chapter. For an overview of the printing history of the book, see Ryall forthcoming. My thanks are due to Anka Ryall for sharing her work and thoughts with me prior to publication, as well as to Lilli Mittner, Hanne Hammer

are now housed in the Svalbard Museum in Longyearbyen, following their donation by her daughter Karen Ritter in 2018.² They can also be viewed on the archive digitaltmuseum.no.

One of the reasons for the enduring popularity of Ritter's book is the visuality of her prose descriptions: with a painter's eye she brings the Svalbard world to her readers. This, together with the images in the book, means that her work can be called multimodal: it combines the semiotic resources (modes) of text and image to create meaning. In addition, Ritter's vivid descriptions of her year on Svalbard bring in a further mode, that of sound. Like the language, which, as with most adult books today, is read privately rather than through aural performance, the sound and music in the book is silent, brought to life in the reader's imagination along with the landscapes and wildlife of Svalbard. Because of this silence, and of the predominance of the modes of text and image, it is easy for the reader – visiting Svalbard in their imagination – to fail to realize that 'the isle is full of noises' (as Caliban describes a very different island to his visitors in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Act III, scene ii). My focus here will therefore be principally on the sounds described and evoked in Ritter's prose, together with reference to three of her watercolours that depict the scenes evoked in the text. This article is part multimodal analysis, and part personal reflection on a book that had a profound effect on me, not only as one who lives in the Arctic, but also as a musician.

Ritter's humility in her prose is evident. For her, Svalbard is not a land to be conquered, tamed, or overcome; it is to be lived in (the German 'erlebt' of the title could be more literally translated as 'experiences'), admired, and, especially as the year goes on, enjoyed. Hers is not the narrative of a typical middle-class 'deckchair explorer', as early cruise tourists to Svalbard have been called (Koltveit 2006; for a more nuanced parsing of the term see Spring 2020). Rather, Ritter fully immerses herself in the hunters' environment and shares with her readers her wonder at her surroundings and her astute awareness of her place in them. It is this wonder and humility that she captures in words and in image, and sound – including the sound of silence – plays an important role in the narrative, as an Austrian artist and housewife brought the stillness of Svalbard to her readers while Europe lurched into war.

The silence of the text

Silence, both of humans and of the landscape, is unsurprisingly one of the two most frequently mentioned soundscapes in *A Woman in the Polar Night*. Table 1 shows the different categories of sounds used in the text, sounds that here I instead term soundscapes due to the visual nature of Ritter's prose and the landscape setting of

Stien, and members of the FemArc network at UiT The Arctic University of Norway for their comments on the text.

² Evidence suggests that several of the watercolours could have been painted on Svalbard; the pigments are more limited, and the paper shows evidence of frugality and re-use. This, of course, could also have been the due to a limited availability of artistic supplies in Austria during the Second World War, or after the Ritters' house was destroyed by fire, so it is important not to place too much weight on the possibility that some of the watercolours were painted in situ. My thanks are due to Katja Eklund, curator at Svalbard Museum, for allowing me to view the watercolours, for uploading them to digitaltmuseum.no, and for generously sharing her expertise and knowledge.

Svalbard. These are listed together with the chapters in which they appear, and the total number of mentions of each soundscape in the book. Mentions of silence occur in all chapters that take place on Svalbard except that devoted to the house fox, ‘Mikkl’ (chapter 4), and the desperate hunt for meat as the Ritters’ food supplies run out in May (chapter 16). In these chapters the focus is on the animals of Svalbard, whose deaths are both the hunters’ purpose (fox and bear fur) and means of survival (meat to eat). In all of the other chapters, however, including chapter 17 that is dedicated to the noisy return of the birds and spring, silence and/or quiet plays its part.

Category	Total	Subcategory	Total	Chapters	Observations
Silence	53	Landscape / fauna	46	All except 1, 2, 4, 16, 18	Includes ‘quiet’, ‘calm’, ‘peace’, ‘mute’. Ch. 17 (birds) quiet in one passage
		Human silence	7	10, 13	
Humans and their noises	57	Humans	25	2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18	includes laughter, conversation, singing, hunters’ noises
		Gunshots	9		
		Inside the hut	14		
		Outside the hut	4		
		Skis/sleigh	5		
Boats	13	Ships/boats	10	2, 5, 18	Orchestra ch. 2 only
		Ship’s orchestra	3		
Fauna	27	Animals	10	3, 5, 8, 16, 17	seals, foxes, bears, insect, dogs. Ch. 17 devoted to birds
		Birds	17		
Sea	18	-	-	3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17	
Ice	7	-	-	5, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16	
Weather	31	Storm	13	2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Ch. 9: different sounds of winds
		Wind	16		
		Rain/hail	2		

Table 1: Sound and silence in *A Woman in the Polar Night*

The silence of the island first hits Ritter in contrast to the noise of the boat, a symbol of the middle-class European life she has left behind:

How quiet it is here on the island; the beat of the ship’s engines is still in my ears. The waves break monotonously on the rocky strand, cold and indifferent.

Involuntarily, the thought comes into my mind: Here we can live; we can also die, just as it pleases us; nobody will stop us.' (30, chapter 3)³

This is the first reference to silence in the book, and it encapsulates the two themes that characterize Ritter's sonic experience: first, the juxtaposition of sound and silence, and second, the combination of silence, death, and freedom.

The juxtaposition of sound and silence is particularly intense in the aftermath of storms. Here, it is not only the weather that stills and is quiet, but the humans in it too, as they become aware of their role in the natural world, and the contrasts it throws at them:

Why have I been so shaken by the peacefulness of nature? Because it was preceded by the titanic storm? Do we really need the force of contrast to live intensively? It must be that. For a gentle song would not shake us if we had never heard a loud one. We human beings are only instruments over which the song of the world plays. We do not create ideas; we only carry them. (92, chapter 8)

These existential reflections are a far cry from the image of polar explorers in the popular imagination, which often focuses on the conquering of natural forces. Of course, as texts such as Captain Scott's diary have told before, explorers themselves are certainly capable of reflection and are not necessarily the generators of conquest myths (see for example Aarekol 2018). The hunters and trappers who overwintered on Svalbard at this time were quiet working-class survivors rather than conquering heroes; they subscribed to an entirely different kind of masculinity (Hauan 2007).⁴ Whereas Ritter speaks to her readers (and paints), the men she overwinters with are silent in the face of their challenges, both their joy and their terror:

The lives of these hunters are a series of performances that are almost inhuman. But they speak only seldom of their experiences. They are not out for fame, these men. They live far from the tumult of the world. [...] They are intoxicated by the vital breath of untamed nature, through which the deity speaks to them. (154, chapter 13).

Ritter's respect for the silence of the hunters is clear in this quotation; by inference, it highlights her distaste for, or perhaps disappointment with, the shallow experience of the Arctic that the majority of the German boat's passengers settle for in chapter 2,

³ Page references are to the 2010 English edition (Ritter 2010 [1954]), which I have as an e-book. As there might be discrepancies between these and the newer edition, I also provide chapter numbers for quotations.

⁴ Chapter 14, 'A Hunter Brings the Mail', gives a glimpse into the community of hunters and trappers with the visit from Hilmar Nøis (who built the cabin at Gråhøken) and his companion, an unnamed doctor. It should be noted that not all of the hunters and trappers were men: the hunter Wanny Woldstad first overwintered on Svalbard in 1932, and, despite Nøis's joke that 'whatever happens he too will keep a kitchen maid next year' (232, chapter 14), he had previously been joined by his first wife Elen Dorthea (see below), and would later overwinter with his second wife Helfrid.

when the boat puts Ritter down at King's Bay: 'they are not quite sure what to do here. It is raining, and they feel the cold. In flocks they troop back to ship; the lights in its warm lounge have a friendly look.' (23, chapter 2) Ritter does not troop back to the ship, and she does not follow the middle-class flock.

On the 16th October, the day that the sun sets for the 132-day polar night, Ritter gazes into a hellmouth that is remarkable for its silence:

It looks as though the jaws of hell had opened behind the shadowed mountain wall, outlining its massive bulk with a diabolic glare. These are scenes not made for human eyes. The drama of the polar world sinking slowly into shadow is played out in utter silence and remoteness. The scenes are changed by sorcery. (75, chapter 6)

The combination of silence and death is evident here. During the last rays of the sun described on these pages, Ritter combs the shoreline for ship's debris that could be useful in the coming months, and as she gathers the broken remains of shipwrecks she notes that 'every kind of souvenir of tragic happenings lies there on the foreshore' (73, chapter 6). Even the friendly fox, Mikkl, who accompanies her on her mission, brings overtones of his own doom: 'Mikkl is collecting for the winter; he has not yet grasped that here everything is designed for his death' (74, chapter 6). The fox, often noisy, is still as the quiet of the night descends: 'The sleeping, shining-white fox fits in wonderfully with the stillness of the night, which still remains magically bright. Mikkl is like a fragment of the mysterious Ice Age, lying hidden in the frozen, quiet brightness.' (74, chapter 6) It is at this time that he begins to be timid of the humans, prompting Ritter to ponder, 'perhaps they become clairvoyant, the animals, as the darkness grows, and then see the true face of men?' (ibid.)

In contrast to Else Christie Kielland's paintings of Svalbard from the 1930s, Ritter's watercolours have calmer compositions that substantiate silence. This image of the lone human and the fox in front of the moon and mountains (Figure 1) invites the viewer to contrast the white of the fox in one corner with that of the moon in the opposite. The limited palette, dominated, like the whole scene, by the grey of the land, is in contrast to the busy, colourful and industrial landscapes of Kielland's dynamic compositions (for a discussion of Svalbard's motivic place in art history, including a reproduction of one of Kielland's works, see Berg 2020). Ritter's expressive watercolour concentrates on the natural landscape, with human and animal figures, painted small in the Romantic tradition, as equals within it. Kielland's more abstract work, in contrast, focuses on the human industry and technology of the mine in Longyearbyen. While in Kielland's work the viewer could easily imagine the noise of the mining equipment, a familiar sound to many at that time, Ritter's viewers – like her readers – are presented with the silence of the landscape.



Figure 1: Christiane Ritter, untitled watercolour housed at Svalbard Museum. © Christiane Ritter. Photo: [DigitaltMuseum/Svalbard Museum](https://digitalmuseum.org/Svalbard-Museum). Please contact Stiftelsen Svalbard Museum to obtain permission to use the artwork.

Returning to Ritter's text, silence is present in more than just descriptions of it. What is as revealing as what she writes is what she does not write. While she is frank, both in words and in her painting (as we shall shortly see in Figure 2), about her own mental health problems during the polar night, it does not take up much space in the text. Nevertheless, mental health is a recurrent theme in the book. When Ritter's husband first introduces her to Karl, all three of them are in high spirits, and 'Karl (he admitted it to me much later) for a very special reason. He is quite sure that in the storms and the loneliness of the long night "the lady from central Europe" will go off her head' (33, chapter 2). This might strike the modern reader as cruel, ablist, and even sexist: the term 'lady' (in German, 'Dame', rather than the 'Frau' of the title) implies not only a female,

but a female of a certain class who, as we have observed from the tourists on the boat, might not be comfortable spending a year in a hunter's cabin. Yet it is clear from the context and Karl's 'merry blue eyes' (ibid.) that his comment is not made out of malice. Indeed, as Ritter nears Gråhuken, she encounters travellers who are, like her husband and Karl, fascinated by Spitsbergen, yet she is determined to remain immune:

'Spring is the most beautiful time there,' says a young Norwegian with a remote smile. 'An unforgettable time...'

'Yes, but I'm not going to let myself be caught by the island, like you've all been caught,' I say defiantly.

'Oh, you'll be caught, too,' the Norwegian says, softly but with conviction. (35, chapter 2)

And when the Englishman Mr Glen, who has lost everything he owns on Svalbard, accompanies them in the rowing boat to their hut, the contrast between Ritter and the men could not be starker, although Ritter holds her tongue and speaks silently only to her readers:

'Oh, how I'd like to stay with you,' he says. 'Spitsbergen is a wonderful country,' and with glowing eyes he stares into the mist.

It's a ghastly country, I think to myself. Nothing but water, fog, and rain. It bemuses people until they go out of their minds. (37, chapter 2)

Yet, as we shall see in the next section, the solitude of Ritter's first time alone in the hut affects her profoundly, such that her personal boundary between human and non-human is, temporarily, erased. This happens again and for a longer period during the full moon in December, in the depths of the polar night, and this time the men are on hand. At this time of danger, the text is silent about what would become of Ritter – of all of them – without each other:

I take it [the moonlight] particularly badly, and the hunters maintain that I am moonstruck. What I would like best of all is to stand all day on the shore, where in the water the rocking ice floes catch and break the light and throw it back at the moon. But the men are very strict with me. They do not let me out of their sight and often keep me under house arrest. And then I lie down in my little room, where the moonlight filters green through the small snowed-up window. Neither the walls of the hut nor the roof of snow can dispel my fancy that I am myself moonlight, gliding along the glittering spines and ridges of the mountains, through the white valleys...

'Now Chrissie has got *rar*,' says Karl, shaking his head. '*Ishavet kaller*. You must be reasonable.' *Rar* is a strangeness that overcomes many who spend the winter in polar regions. *Ishavet kaller*, or 'the Arctic calls,' is what the Spitsbergen hunters say when one of their comrades, for mysterious reasons, throws himself into the sea. (171–172, chapter 10)

Of course, the reader knows that this is a memoir, and knows that Ritter, at least, returns to tell her tale and paint her pictures. We can only imagine – in the strangeness of our own minds and memories – what it might be like to feel so at one with the moon and the sea that we can simply merge ourselves with them. Perhaps this is what Captain Scott and his companions recognized when they let Oates walk to his death with his now famous words that every British child learns by heart: ‘I am going out now. I may be some time.’⁵ Whereas Oates’s gesture is considered a heroic, selfless act to save his companions the trouble of dealing with his remains, in Ritter’s text, as in the watercolour shown in Figure 2, she portrays her *rar* as the housewife betraying her duties. In a role reversal it is the men who are painted as busily writing while Ritter lies on a bunk; in the text she tells us that they make her food rich in seal fat and cod liver oil, and cake with dried fruits, for it is after all nearly Christmas.



Figure 2: Christiane Ritter, untitled watercolour housed at Svalbard Museum. © Christiane Ritter. Photo: [DigitalMuseum/Svalbard Museum](https://www.digitalmuseum.org/svalbard-museum/). Please contact Stiftelsen Svalbard Museum to obtain permission to use the artwork. A black and white copy of this painting is also featured in the German editions of the book, in chapter 10.

⁵ At least when I was at school in the UK, in the 1990s, Captain Scott’s diary was an obligatory text on the national curriculum for English. Certainly, Oates’s last recorded words are a common phrase often used jokingly as a metaphor; they have found their way into the language almost like a proverb.

Soundscapes of the polar night

There is no room in the hunter's cabin in Gråhuken for a gramophone or musical instruments; apart from Karl singing the occasional raunchy ditty or old folksong, music, which was abundant both in Vienna and on the German boat, has been left behind: 'around me a thousand people are waving and blowing their noses as the ship's orchestra plays a sentimental farewell song.' (23, chapter 2) Occasionally, however, direct mention of art music does appear in the text. Perhaps the most striking instance is when, in the face of her bewilderment at the light of the polar night, and the noise of the weather, Ritter appeals directly to her and her readers' (presumed) shared cultural backgrounds, including that of a concert hall performance of a symphony:

Bewildering beyond anything is the wild howling of the wind against the unmoving gleaming face of the frozen earth, and the musically gentle dance of the northern lights in the sky. I try to find similes to convey the bewildering strangeness of this experience. I think the contrasts in perception make the same impact on our feelings as would, for example, the playing of a noisy Berlioz symphony in a theatre where the stage is set in a scene of classic calm. Or if we saw a serenely smiling man commit murder, murder everything that comes within range of his smile. The polar night displays the world in a clash of rhythms that make us central Europeans dizzy. (164–165, chapter 10)

While the juxtaposition of Berlioz on the wrong stage with smiling murder is perhaps extreme, it nevertheless captures the striking contrasts that Ritter is attempting to capture in her words and in her painting. That she chooses European classical music to illustrate her perceived inability as a writer to find suitable similes for her readers is symptomatic not only of her humility and honesty, but also of her status, even here past the halfway point of the book, as a middle-class outsider to the hunters' environment writing for those even further outside. Musical sounds are Ritter's principle reference points for the noises she encounters on Svalbard, even when they are distorted by distance, weather, and, perhaps, by her own perception of them. To demonstrate this, I will offer a close reading of the soundscapes Ritter describes during her first period alone in the cabin (chapters 7 and 8), which coincides with the first of the winter's storms and its aftermath.

Chapter 7, as the title 'Alone in the hut' suggests, is devoted to the thirteen days when the hunters are away laying traps, and a storm hits that lasts for nine of those days. The chapter opens in the midst of the storm, and at once we are in a world of thunderous natural music: 'I am alone in the furious drumfire of a hurricane.' (113, chapter 7) Yet after the brief opening description of the storm and her worry for the men, Ritter takes us back to the relaxed sleepy morning when the hunters set off, their cheery insouciance at the weather, and Hermann's parting instructions on how to shoot a visiting polar bear. The silence following their departure does not last long, however, and by the afternoon the storm is near:

The wind rose rapidly. Beneath its shrill whistle I caught the deep, hollow undertones characteristic of the storm. [...] The entire country was in uproar. The snow was driving like a broad stream of water over the land and over the hut and in the clouds over the black sea. The swell was going out seaward. High above, the storm was booming like a deep, long-drawn organ note. (114, chapter 7)

Alone in the tumult, Ritter sets about the basic tasks of the day: lighting the stove, breakfast, coffee. But in the storm, with the uncooperative stove, the simplest tasks are difficult. Ritter does not directly mention at this point her worry for the men, or the fear and frustration she must have felt. Rather, she focuses on the practical that is nevertheless tinged with just enough of the grim reality ('it was cheerless in the hut', 'the hideous foxes swing gently', 'the diabolic scene' (114, chapter 7)) that she brings the reader into the hut, and into the danger, with her. Together, we focus on the familiar musical similes, the simple achievements that are feats in these conditions (lighting the stove, finding paraffin and lighting the lamp, sewing a simple curtain), and these stop us worrying about the future, or the men. It is precisely this simplicity and familiarity present in the text that makes Ritter's Arctic experience both tangible and audible to her readers.

It is therefore all the more powerful when, on the next page, we read what is probably the single most disturbing passage in the book: the tale of the unnamed Norwegian woman on Svalbard whose hunter-husband became separated from her for the whole winter by an ice floe. By the time he could return to her, months later, he found that a healthy baby had been born, but 'the long night and the fears she had endured had left the mother deranged in mind' (117, chapter 7).⁶ With this and other fears, we listen with Ritter to the storm: 'Outside the storm and surf are pounding, and the sharp wind blows through the walls. And so it goes on for days, immutable, without a break, the fury of this insane music.' (122, chapter 7)

After the brutality of the storm's noises, the next chapter plays in a very different key. Instead of the hellfire of the storm, Ritter awakes to 'a vast, solemn stillness, to a never seen and unimaginable world of splendour and beauty' (127, chapter 8). Still alone, for the men have not yet returned, she faces the magnitude of nature. One of Ritter's watercolours has 'Kptl.8' written beneath it (see Figure 3), and its monochrome depiction of an eerily beautiful landscape devoid of colour and life is recognizably the same landscape we met in Figure 1, this time devoid of colour and life. In the text, Ritter reflects her solitude in the sounds and sight of the young eider ducks abandoned by their mother and left to the storm:

Where were the little birds during the frenzied storm that turned the coast into a solid block of ice? Did they find shelter from the elements, or did the elements halt their fury before their young lives? How do the wheels of the vast natural

⁶ This is probably a tale based on the experience of Hilmar Nøis's first wife, Elen Dorthea (sometimes spelt Ellen), who gave birth alone in 1922. My thanks again to Anka Ryall for pointing this out to me (private communication).

order engage, leaving to each his own? Infinitely peaceful is the sound of the birds' gentle 'go, go, go'; how calmly they come swimming in the radiant evening, approaching the unknown fearfulness of the winter night.

I myself stand forlornly by the water's edge. The power of this worldwide peace takes hold of me, although my senses are unable to grasp it. And as though I were unsubstantial, no longer there, the infinite space penetrates through me and swells out, the surging of the sea passes through my being, and what was once a personal will dissolves like a small cloud against the inflexible cliffs. (128, chapter 8)

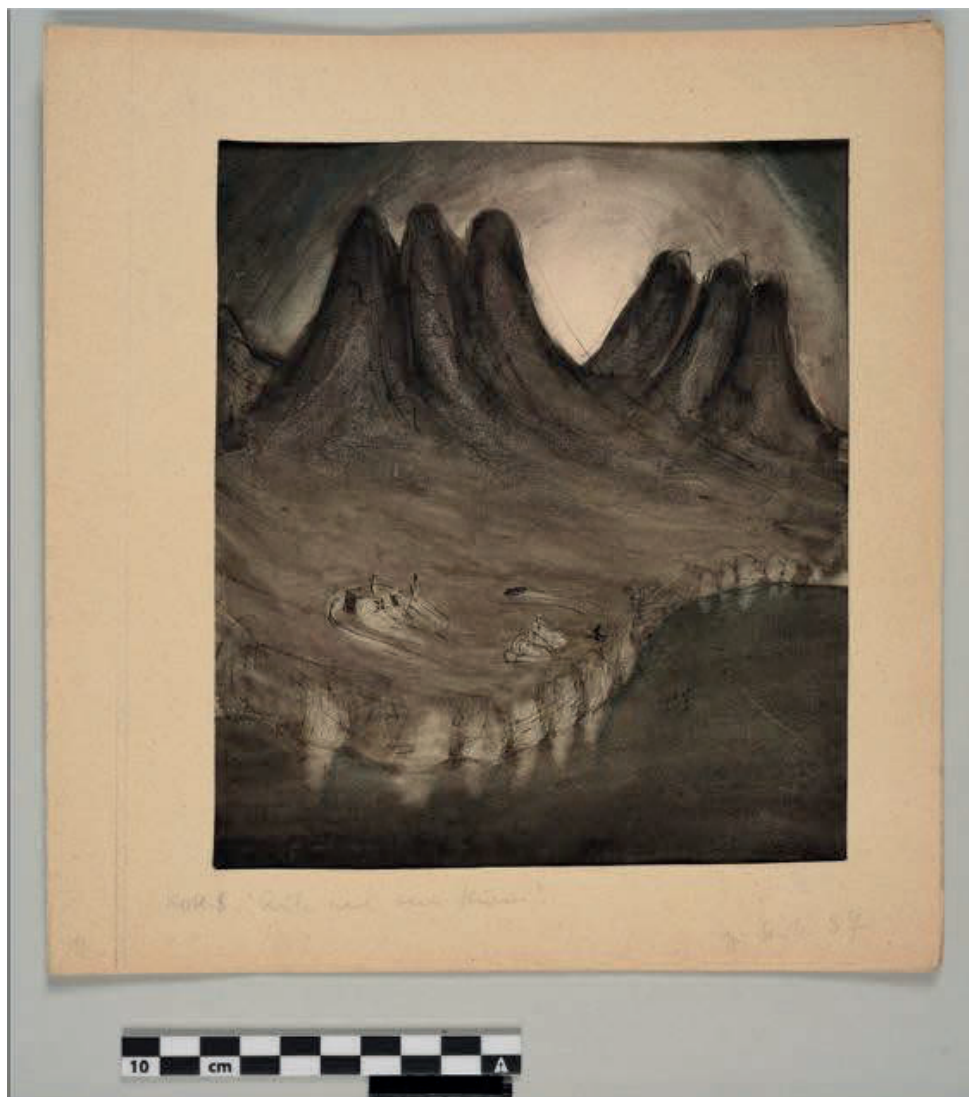


Figure 3: Christiane Ritter, 'Kptl.8 "Ruhe nach dem Sturm"' (Ch.8, 'Calm after the storm'). Watercolour housed at Svalbard Museum. © Christiane Ritter. Photo: [DigitalMuseum/Svalbard Museum](https://digitalmuseum.org/Svalbard-Museum). Please contact Stiftelsen Svalbard Museum to obtain permission to use the artwork.

Like the young ducks, Ritter survived the storm, and faces an unknown future without her more experienced companions. It is only in this ‘immense solitude’, and by her survival, that ‘for the first time I have a sense of the divine gift of companionship’ (128, chapter 8). And although Ritter does not mention them here, this reader cannot help but think of the young mother and newborn baby from the previous chapter, and the danger of mental illness that is all too palpable – a theme that will return again in the book, as we have seen.

Yet Ritter forces herself into action, and before long she, and her readers with her, see the funny side of the situation, for, viewed from a distance, it seems as if the snow has turned the cabin into ‘a large, artistically folded table napkin’ (130, chapter 8). She returns, and despite some serious setbacks in terms of food supplies, her mind is easy (‘perhaps I have acquired the fatalism of the men’, she muses (132, chapter 8)).

The next day, she experiences for the first time that sounds on Svalbard can carry over vast distances, and here the human music of the hunters setting out contrasts with the silence of the land:

The next day I am aroused suddenly from sleep. I can hear the scraping of rapid, long-drawn ski strokes out in the snow. Have the hunters already come home? I listen, but everything is quiet again. Nothing is stirring. [...] Suddenly I hear a strange loud ringing sound in the air. It is like the single peal of a bell, deep, full, and vibrating. As though spellbound, I stand then and strain my ears. Will the strange sound be repeated? But everything is quiet; only the wind and water roar. [...] This single strange note, metallically pure and clear as it was, had something frightening in it here, in this dead land. (132–133, 136–137, chapter 8)

It is indeed the sound of the men departing, but Ritter does not know it yet; she does not know (and why should she?) that on Svalbard it is possible to hear something that takes place a day’s ski ride away. She sets about baking and preparing a meal, and after a long day’s wait, with a shout of “‘Chrissie ahoy!’” (137, chapter 8) the men noisily return. Ritter’s world is once again full of human sounds, laughter, and companionship. ‘Ah, how sweet it sounds’ she exclaims silently to the reader as the men order her around (138, chapter 8).

It is clear from these two chapters that Ritter struggles to put into words and image her experience of the Svalbard soundscapes, and draws on similes that stem from her own European life experience which is also familiar to her readers. Her multimodal juxtapositions of the natural world and musical sounds only serve to accentuate the gulf of difference between them: Svalbard is unfamiliar and unattainable to anyone who has not lived there. Yet these references to the sounds of her old life – the middle-class central European life to which she intends to return – accentuate both the dangers of Ritter’s situation and the temporary nature of her stay on Svalbard, whether it is to end in death, mental illness, or a return to mainland Europe.

Conclusion: Listening to silence

Ritter's prose and paintings present the reader and viewer with a small group of people who seek to be at one with the Arctic, to live within it, to survive with it. The essential humility of (wo)man facing nature – whether the small figures depicted in her watercolour landscapes or the powerlessness of humankind in the storm – is what makes her work so enduring, particularly in the light of war, global warming, big business, and all the threats that continue to face the Arctic today.

Long before John Cage and Simon and Garfunkel extorted the musical world to listen to silence for a short time (one in the concert hall for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, the others in the pop charts), a Viennese painter and housewife had put into image and a richly sonorous prose what it was like to listen to silence for a year. Her experiences of sound and silence on Svalbard, weather human, animal, or of the weather, sea, or landscape, are for her as fulfilling as the art music that filled her life in Vienna:

[W]e talk about the aesthetic pleasures of Europe, which when we were there seemed so priceless to us – music, for example, that elevates the mind and lightens the heart and without which we could hardly live. Remarkably enough, the hunger for music is quite absent here. Our hearts are light, are minds are in a permanent state of elevation. Nature seems to contain everything that man needs for his equilibrium. (233, chapter 14)

Ultimately, however, for Ritter, to stand before and within the Arctic is to find oneself reflected there:

How varied are the experiences one lives through in the Arctic. One can murder and devour, calculate and measure, one can go out of one's mind from loneliness and terror, and one can certainly also go mad with enthusiasm for the all-too-overwhelming beauty. But it is also true that one will never experience in the Arctic anything that one has not oneself brought there. (139, chapter 8)

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE AURORA: AN EXPLORATION OF PERFORMATIVE UNDERSTANDING THROUGH INTERACTIVE ART

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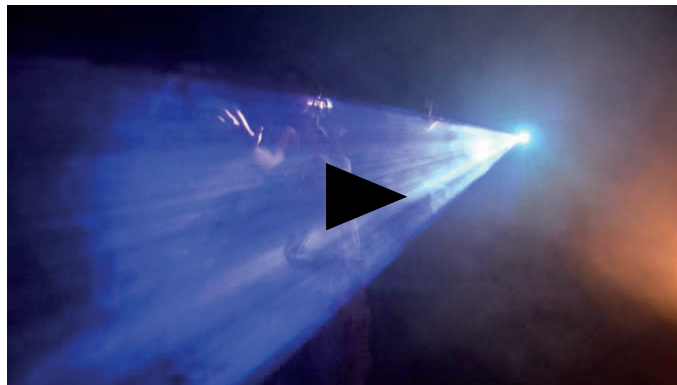
Abstract

Aurora – Connecting Senses is a multimodal, interactive art installation which explores the ideas of the Northern Lights through sound, light, colour, and interaction. The installation creates a space where the colours, magic, and mystique of the aurora are brought down to earth and into people's everyday lives. It is inspired by popular and scientific representations of the real aurora and invites audiences to create yet another interpretation of the natural wonder. In doing so, audiences are also invited to reflect upon the nature of the aurora and on the act of interpretation and exploration. In this article, we provide a thorough description of the ideas and development of the installation, along with photo and video documentation, and offer a critical discussion of the installation as a performative art piece with certain affordances for interaction, performativity, and active reflection. Our discussion is grounded in our observations of audiences engaging with the installation, aspiring to relate the theoretically available affordances for interaction with the differences in observed audience behaviour. The theme and reflective potential of the installation is further compared to other contemporary art pieces dealing with conceptualizations of nature or natural phenomena. By doing this, we aim to use the aurora installation as a stepping stone for addressing the potential of interactive art to highlight or even construct certain understandings of a natural 'reality' and for engaging audiences in a further negotiation of these understandings.

Keywords

Aurora; Performativity; Performance; Interactivity; Interpretation; Transmediation

Video illustrations of Aurora - Connecting Senses



Introduction

The aurora borealis, also known as the Northern Lights, is often described as an almost fantastical phenomenon. The aurora is a magical dancing of lights which for most people around the globe is only known through different means of representation, such as paintings, verbal descriptions, and photographs. Thus, for most people, the aurora exists as a ‘network’ of interpretative representations which are detached from the original natural phenomenon, and knowledge about the original, sensorial phenomenon is only obtained through these representations. As the historian Ulrike Spring says, referring to the aurora itself and paraphrasing Derrida, ‘there is no presence behind representations, only the trace of one’ (Spring 2016, 157).¹

In this article, we explore the act of mediation and interpretation by taking a reflexive and critical look at our own interactive art installation *Aurora - Connecting Senses*. The installation is inspired by our observations of ‘mainstream’ mediated knowledge of the aurora, which we consider to be ‘representations without presence’. As the primary author of this article is herself a Scandinavian, who has never seen the aurora, she found it fascinating, and somewhat paradoxical, how other people and media would talk about the phenomenon, assuming that they could get to see it more or less everywhere in Scandinavia, while also conceptualizing it as something almost mystical. Thus, the idea of making an art installation as an interpretation of the aurora solely based on ‘mediated’ knowledge rather than first-hand experience sprang from a fascination with this paradox, but also from the intriguing associations of mystique and beauty found in these representations.

The aurora installation originated as an art piece meant to provide an alternative, aesthetic, and sensorial experience at a popular-scientific event organised by the Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies (IMS). Since then, it has been set up and commissioned both for other events around Linnaeus University, and also for the international *Hämelinna Street Art Festival* in Finland.² With a foot in both the artistic and the academic world,³ we, as artists and authors, originally intended the installation only to be an aesthetic and interactive exploration of the aurora. When offered the opportunity, however, we chose to take the installation a step further and use it as a stepping stone to discuss the potential of interactive art in highlighting an interpretative and constructivist form of understanding, hence this article.

Whether *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is an art piece or not is a matter of definitions. Given the context of its origin, it might be argued that the installation is not sufficiently anchored in an ‘artworld’ (cf. Dickie 2001) to pass within an institutional theory of art. *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is, however, created with an intention for it to be an aesthetic object for contemplation and reflection with no other function (the theoretical reflection being a later development), and the primary artist, Cristina Pop-Tiron, is trained as an artist. Both artists/authors are further trained in aesthetic theory. Another point to make is that in some strands of aesthetic theory, *aesthetic quality* is considered

¹ Spring is referring to the aurora as a representation of a scientific principle, but the quote holds true for representations in general.

² As this exhibition of the installation came late in the writing of this article, the installation is not further discussed here.

³ Cristina Pop-Tiron is currently undertaking a PhD project which involves an artistic approach and is trained as both an academic and an artist. Signe Kjaer Jensen is mainly trained as an academic, but also has practical training in soundscape composition.

independently of art institutions, in terms of whether or not an object works to prompt a 'dialogue' with its recipient and which

creates a dialectical exchange between processes of immediate experience and processes of reflection in the recipients, and expands their sensuous, emotional and intellectual capacity to competently deal with modern life in all its complexity (Nielsen 2005, 65).

As we will argue in this article, we believe *Aurora – Connecting Senses* has this potential, but we cannot control whether or not individual audience members actually reach this level of reflection, just as one cannot force anybody to see Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) as anything but a pissoir. Thus, whether or not *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is considered an actual 'artwork', we argue that it is at the very least an aesthetic object which should be evaluated in accordance with this broad definition of aesthetic quality.

As *Aurora – Connecting Senses* provides the foundations of our discussion, we provide a thorough description of the ideas and development of the installation, before offering a critical reflection on the installation as a performative art piece with certain affordances for interaction and interpretation. Our discussion is grounded in our observations of audiences, aspiring to relate the theoretically available affordances for interaction to the differences in observed audience behaviour. The installation is further compared to other contemporary art pieces dealing with conceptualizations⁴ of nature or natural phenomena.

The aurora as a transmedial network of popular and scientific conceptualizations

The aurora is a phenomenon which has fascinated humankind throughout history. In the following, we wish to highlight a few illuminating examples of how the aurora has inspired similar interpretations in different contexts and through different types of media, but we do not aim to construct a thorough review of historical or modern mediations of the aurora, which would be beyond the scope of this article. Our aim here is to provide a rough sketch of how the aurora has been conceptualized as an aesthetic experience in Western culture, a conceptualization which in one way or another has influenced us in our own ideas of the aurora and accordingly in our artistic work.⁵

In folklore traditions, the aurora has often been understood in mythological terms as something related to fire, divine beings, or omens, such as the Nordic Valkyries,⁶ Inuit ancestral spirits, heavenly reflections from bountiful sources of prey, or even as representations of celestial battles (Brekke and Egeland 1983, 1–6). These beings that have been associated with the aurora could either possess prophetic capabilities, or they were seen to somehow bridge the heavenly life of gods and departed ancestors with the

⁴ Conceptualization is here understood as forming ideas and knowledge about an object or phenomenon through mediation in general and not just through verbal and written language.

⁵ For a more elaborated historical account of mythological, artistic, and scientific depictions and descriptions of the aurora in Scandinavia up until the twentieth century see Brekke and Egeland (1983).

⁶ It is a common popular belief that Nordic mythology explained the Northern Lights as being light reflected on the shields of the Valkyries. This interpretation has been challenged by modern Edda scholars, but as a popular belief it still persists (Brekke and Egeland 1983, 113–16).

earthly mundane life, highlighting the aurora as something connected with fate, the supernatural, or the spiritual.

Scientific attempts to describe the aurora, on the other hand, can be dated back at least to Aristoteles (384-322 BCE), possibly with several ancient philosophical descriptions predating him (Brekke and Egeland 1983, 34–35), but still the ideas of a mystical aurora are seen to live on even through 19th century aurora research. Ulrike Spring thus locates a common trend in historical aurora representations of trying to balance the science of the phenomenon with the feelings of wonder, exemplifying her claims with discussions of descriptions and drawings made by members of Carl Weyprecht's 1872–1874 aurora expedition (Spring 2016, 141–43). She argues that scientific attempts to represent the aurora, before the invention of cinematographic tools, often relied on a 'subjective', artistic discourse through drawings, paintings, and even poetic descriptions. This in order to attempt to capture the *experience* of a phenomenon which for a long time seemed to defy rational explanations, and which was 'constantly counterbalancing attempts at scientific objectification and disenchantment' (Spring 2016, 142). By combining a scientific discourse of classification and objective description with visual and literary imagery, heavy on metaphors and similes, explorers and scientists tried to capture the aurora both as a fleeting *memory* of an *aesthetic* experience and as a representation of some hidden scientific principle, showcasing the aurora's double identity as both natural phenomenon and wonder (Spring 2016, 156).

Today we know what the aurora is. Science has taught us that the aurora is created by electrical particles from solar wind, which enter the earth's atmosphere and collide with gases. Particles from the gasses are energized and discharged from their molecules, and when they return to their stable state, they emit a photon of energy perceivable as a flash of light. The type of molecule making up the gas determines which colour is emitted from the meeting. Having this scientific explanation, which in itself constitutes a type of mediation of the aurora, one that focuses on the physical and chemical properties of the phenomenon, does not, however, make the aurora any less beautiful or awe-inspiring. Add to this that the aurora can normally only be observed close to the magnetic poles, at night in clear weather during winter, and the aurora becomes something 'exclusive', a natural wonder which people are willing to travel far to see.⁷

Even today, media representations still tend to conceptualize the aurora as something mythical associated with the far north – a land of fantasy and aesthetic beauty rather than a harsh Arctic. This can for example be seen when Disney lets waves of purple and green colours flow over the sky in the opening of *Frozen* (Buck and Lee 2014). Together with the Sámi-inspired opening song, the aurora is here used for setting the scene for a film about magic and beauty in the north. Björk's song 'Aurora' (Björk 2001) is a further example of mediating the phenomenon of the aurora by pointing to associations with the heavenly, magical north. In the song, Björk's voice is accompanied by a music box, a harp, and the sound of footsteps in the snow, while Björk sings about the 'Aurora / Goddess sparkle', thus linking the bell-like sound of the music box and harp (which is also a cultural symbol of the heavenly), the sound of snow, and the heavenly with the aurora through the musical piece.

⁷ Several recent articles and statistics document that 'aurora tourism', both in Europe and Canada, is a growing industry, and that the elusive lights are one of the main reasons for tourists from around the world to travel to the far north. See: Government of Northwest Territories: The Department of Industry (2018); Heimtun, Jóhannesson, and Tuulentie (2015); Heimtun and Lovelock (2017); Óladóttir (2018).

All of these different types of scientific and artistic descriptions and depictions of the aurora, which have only been briefly exemplified above, can be considered to form a *transmedial*⁸ network. According to intermedial scholar Lars Elleström, the concept of *transmediation* should be used to signify the transfer of media characteristics (such as story content) from one type of medium (e.g. a book) to another (e.g. a film) (Elleström 2014, 25–26). Strictly speaking, the aurora phenomenon is not a mediation (at least not in the traditional sense where mediation is commonly understood to be man-made with an artistic or communicative purpose) and cannot therefore be the source medium of a transmediation. But what all the actual mediations of the aurora (drawings, verbal descriptions, video recordings, photographs) have in common is that they all attempt to transfer a selection of characteristics, either from the original aurora phenomenon or from already existing mediations, similarly to Lars Elleström’s definition of transmediation. Furthermore, because none of these mediations exist in a vacuum but rather side by side, any one of them may be the source material for new mediations, and any one of them can in turn be experienced by a given reader/spectator and thereby influence his or her understanding of what the aurora is. Thus, aurora mediations constitute a transfer of characteristics relating to the aurora, and these mediations are all connected and relate to each other via a thematic connection.⁹ This is what we understand by the term *transmedial network*.

In this transmedial network of aurora mediations, the human understanding of the aurora is negotiated, interpreted, and even constructed as a mediation necessarily always involves a form of human intervention and interpretation. Even modern scientific descriptions or photographs leave something out. They will always be selective and aim



Figure 1: Image of the fog filling the interactive space for creating a multi-sensorial experience of *Aurora – Connecting Senses*.

to translate and stabilize a dynamic phenomenon that breaks the scales of what human representations can reproduce. Even when advanced digital and scientific equipment is brought in to create representations of the aurora (such as radar equipment providing detailed insights into physical parameters of the phenomenon), the

⁸ We understand the term *transmedial* in a broad sense as something that involves two or more different media types (such as a book or a film). In our understanding of media, we draw on Lars Elleström’s work on media transformation, where media is understood as a communicative entity that can be split into *mediation*, the material mediating basis (the ‘physical realisation of entities’), and a semiotic content (understood as the interpretation or representation conjured up in the mind of the beholder) (Elleström 2014, 12).

⁹ This definition also has affinities with Lars Elleström’s concept of simple transmediation (Elleström 2014, 21–22).

representations still remain partial and to some degree dependant on human knowledge, interest, and presuppositions due to the process of designing and programming the equipment.

Aurora – Connecting Senses joins this existing transmedial network of conceptualizations. It is a multimodal interactive art installation which explores the *ideas* of the Northern Lights through sound, light, colour, and interaction. The installation creates a space where the characteristics of the colours, magic, and mystique of the aurora representations are brought down to earth and into people's everyday lives. It invites audiences to co-create yet another interpretation of the natural wonder in interaction with the installation; to reflect upon the nature of the aurora and on the act of interpretation itself by giving audiences the opportunity to stimulate a projection of different colours and sounds, inspired by the transmedial aurora network, when moving around in the installation.

Description of the installation



Figure 2: Illustration of a set-up of *Aurora - Connecting Senses* with light beams and projections.

Aurora – Connecting Senses is an audio-visual, interactive performance installation, which has active audience participation as a constitutive part. We choose *audience* as a broad concept for people experiencing the installation. As has been argued in some strands of audience and

reception studies (particularly in reception aesthetics (herein the work of Eco) and qualitative audience reception studies), we consider meaning in media, communication, and art to be the result of an interplay between a media product and its audience(s). In this line of thinking, audiences are always active in the sense that meaning is never communicated in a straightforward way but requires an active engagement and interpretation from the individual audience member whose socio-cultural knowledge and interests shape the perceived meaning of a text or media product.¹⁰ This line of thinking is also compatible with the social semiotic approach to multimodal communication (pioneered by Gunther Kress), which considers communication to be a social interaction between the communicator and the communicatee, where meaning making is the result of an active interpretative process both dependent on the communicative *prompt* (the features of the media product) and on the interest and resources of the interpreter (Kress 2010, 36–37). We do, however, find it necessary to distinguish between *audience* as a general term for the people who are present to hear and see what goes on in the art installation, and the individual audience member who

¹⁰ For a brief review of the active-passive discussion in audience studies see Carpentier 2011, 191–92.

chooses to *participate* in the installation by entering the interactive space and move around. *Aurora – Connecting Senses* has in all instances been set up in a room larger than the defined interactive space, allowing for people to both observe the installation *from the outside* and as *participants in* the installation. Thus, when we in the following refer to audiences it includes both the audience members that choose to participate and those who do not, and when we refer to *audience participant* or simply participant, it only includes those members of the audiences who are moving around in the interactive space.

Although certain elements of the installation exist independently of the audiences (an atmospheric sound design, artificial fog, and the general set up), the installation also has a number of interactive features (colours, lights, and certain sounds), which are only unlocked once an audience member chooses to enter the interactive space and move around. These interactive features only respond to movement, so if an audience member enters the interactive space but keeps still, the interactive potential of the installation will also be still.

Because of the flexible affordances of the components of the installation, one could set it up in a smaller or larger space, extending from one to more than ten participants at the same time. The designs discussed in this article were spacious enough for one to four people to interact together. *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is consequently a medium-sized artwork, which offers a personal, even intimate, relation for the participants through light projections on artificial fog, where one can experience an embodied feeling of touching the lights, in a similar vein to the *solid-light* art experiments of Anthony McCall.¹¹



Figure 3: Illustration of a set-up of *Aurora - Connecting Senses* with light beams.

The idea of the installation is that the audience members who choose to interact with the installation become part of creating a unique interpretation of the aurora through exploring its interactive and aesthetic potential. Movement within the interactive space activates predefined colours of the aurora and associated musical notes. Thus, the experience is both characterized by certain constraints and by a measure of freedom, and the individual audience members are given the chance to play around to make melodies, rhythms, and activate different colours, essentially co-constructing an artistic version of the aurora with their own presence and movement.

A looped atmospheric sound is played throughout, and the interactive coloured light beams are projected onto a stream of fog. Music has territorial properties due to the spatial restrictions of sound waves on the one hand, and to its framing of a specific

¹¹ See for example McCall's webpage: <http://www.anthonymccall.com> (McCall 2019).

social space on the other. Because music has affective capabilities, and because musical genres are strongly tied to different social groups and types of consumption, music works as a device to frame audience behaviour and experience.¹² Accordingly, the placement of the fog machine and of the speakers playing the atmospheric sounds *construct* the interactive space for the individual, and the immersive and territorial potentials of both fog and sound create an almost invisible border, allowing the audience participant to be ‘submerged’ into the artistic space, even when not moving. Thus, *Aurora – Connecting senses* can be set in an empty space focusing the experience on the unique and direct meeting of the human and artistically mediated natural worlds, or it can be set up in a regular living room, emphasizing the meeting of the mystical and the everyday.

The magical, mystical associations – or media characteristics – of the aurora that can be derived from the transmedial network discussed above, are sought in transmediated form mostly in the atmospheric sound design, while the main function of the coloured lights is to create an iconic relation to the real phenomenon of the aurora. Both popular associations and empirical observations of the aurora are thus referenced in different ways. While the real aurora has often been observed to emit a crackling or rustling sound,¹³ we do not consider this sound to be a major characteristic of artistic and popular cultural representations, and it was not something that we were aware of at the time of designing the installation. Accordingly, the sound design of *Aurora – Connecting Senses* aims to represent the scientific and popular *ideas* about the aurora as produced by electrical charges on the one hand, and as something transcendental and magical on the other, but has not sought to include the observed ‘rustling’ sound.

In film music, connotations to magic are often made by the use of bells. This can for example be heard in many Disney films such as *Frozen* (Buck and Lee 2014) where bells are frequently used as sound effects to Elsa’s magic, or in Hedwig’s theme (the main theme of the Harry Potter films) (Williams 2001) which starts out with a melodious celeste with a characteristic bell-like sound. Besides being associated with magic by convention, bell-like instruments can be considered to be musical icons of sparkling ice. There is a

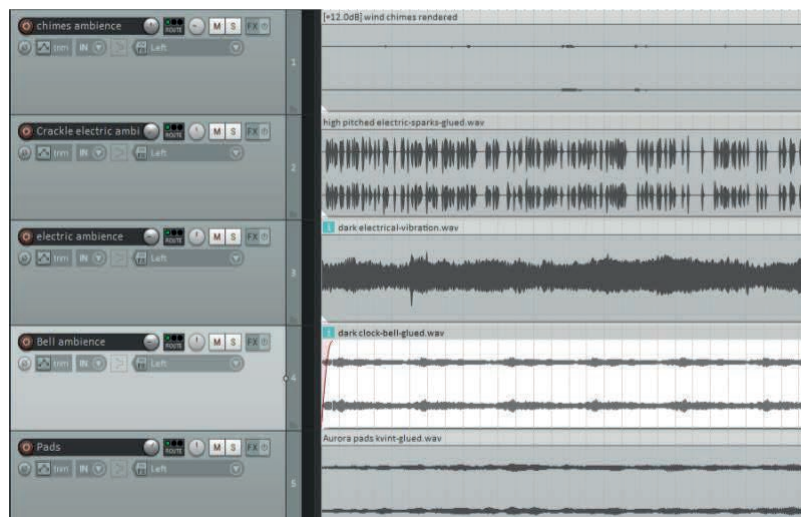


Figure 4: Screenshot of components in the atmospheric sound design of *Aurora - Connecting Senses*.

¹² For a similar discussion on the use of music in shopping centers see Sterne 1997.

¹³ For a historical critique of the ideas of the aurora sound see Brekke and Egeland 1983. For an updated, popular-scientific discussion on research concerning the aurora sound see Fazekas 2016.

structural congruence between the reflection of ice crystals or water and the reverberating sound of a metallic bell – the reverberation and timbre are determined by the metallic material which, similarly to water or ice, reflects light. Reverberation can thus be considered the musical analogue to light reflection – both of which act as waves thrown back at the spectator or listener by way of a reflecting material. Hence, the seemingly fragile character of the high frequencies and the slender timbre of bell-like instruments are easily associated with something sparkling, cold, beautiful, and, by convention, magical. These kinds of associations also seem to be at work in the Björk song ‘Aurora’ mentioned above, which makes extensive use of a music box and a harp alongside what sounds like recordings of a person walking in snow.

These cultural associations aside, the aurora is a physical natural phenomenon created by electrical charges in the atmosphere. Thus, aiming to reference both cultural associations and scientific principle, the sound design in *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is based on a mix of recordings of dark and bright bells and very subtle recordings of electrical currents and crackles – which can be considered icons of the actual electrical processes of the aurora – as well as synthesizer pads that create a broad texture to implement all of these elements into a coherent whole. In order to not break the enchantment of the sound design, however, the recordings of electricity are mixed very low, and only an attentive listener would notice them consciously. The sounds are there to help build up the mix, however, and add both to the darkness of the atmospheric sound and also give a sense of activity in the higher frequencies.

Each colour in the installation is randomly linked to one section of the interactive space and is triggered when the audience participant moves in that section. When a certain colour is activated, it colours all the generated beams of light. The shape and direction of the light beams are also determined by the movements in the space, with the light beams projecting in the area of activity, independent of the designated sections. Unlike the colours, however, the light beams stay active for a while, enabling the possibility to have any number of light beams at the same time. In contrast to the real aurora phenomenon, the participant in our installation can thus determine the colour of the aurora by switching from one place to another. Only one colour is active at a time, but most of the time, the switch of the colours is so quick that one has the impression that there are several colours in the visual composition.

Besides the ever-present atmospheric sound, the installation also has pre-recorded interactive bell-like sounds. These sounds are singular musical notes which come from a sampled music box, and they are edited to enhance the bell-like character – once again emphasizing the magical element. In addition, a childlike playfulness is encouraged through the auditive reference to a music box, which is something that is often used in children’s toys or children’s jewellery boxes, aligning with our intentions for the participants to ‘play around’ and explore the possibilities of the installation.

Unlike with the colours, the participant(s) can trigger more than one bell-sound at a time by moving through the designated spaces, and when doing so, the people present hear each sound at the time of its activation, lasting from one to two seconds. The same bell sound cannot be produced again until the first instance of it has come to a natural fade. This makes it possible to play around to create musical rhythms and melodies.

The specificity of interactive performance

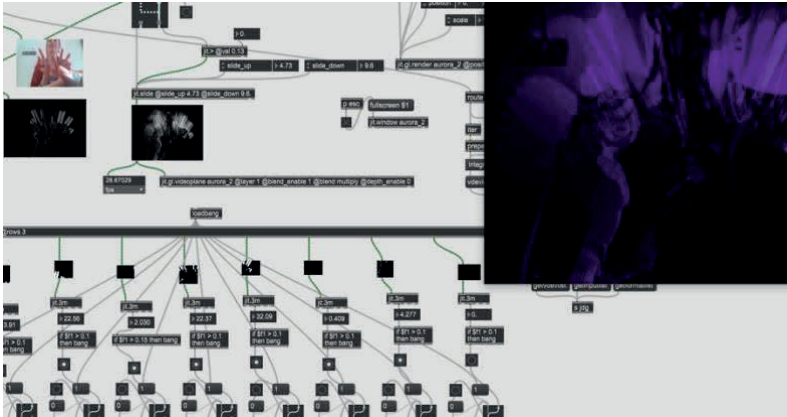


Figure 5: Screenshot of components in the interaction software, combining the movement, colour and sound of *Aurora - Connecting Senses*.

Aurora – Connecting Senses is an interactive performance installation.

Performance, in the context of *performance art*, generally refers to art that focuses on the live presence of a performing body and/or on processes over product (Dennis 2014). This body is usually that of the artist, but in interactive installations, characterized by taking

up larger spaces and requiring the audience to enter into this space (Bishop 2005, 6), the performer actualizing the artwork can also be an audience participant, as in *Aurora – Connecting Senses*. In addition, technological devices and interaction have generally become increasingly important to performances in more recent decades (1980s to present), and as in *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, artists can choose to use technical devices as extensions or replacements of their body, or as tools for interaction.¹⁴

Furthermore, as a performance is a ‘live’ event, it always involves a specific spatial-temporal anchor, i.e., the specific performance event will always be anchored in a precise moment of the here and now. Performances can be ‘re-staged’, however. They are not necessarily unique events in terms of their design, but each of the performed events affords and offers a unique *experience* dependent on the specific space, time, and performer(s). Consequently, the concrete output created by a (repeated) artistic performance will to some degree be fluid and ever changing. In this sense, *Aurora – Connecting Senses* constitutes a performance-art product as the formal setup creates a framing prompt for a performance carried out in the interaction between audience member(s) and the installation – the interactive performance both *actualizes* and *constitutes* the work. Subsequently, the interactive performance is *performative* – the sister concept to performance. *Performativity*, a concept derived from linguistic theory associated with the philosopher J. L. Austin, refers to an utterance that is *generative*, *productive* (von Hantelmann and Rinner 2014), or even *transformative* (Bal 2013, 11), and following work in reception aesthetics it can be understood in the same way as *reading* or *actualizing* – in the sense of reading as *producing* a work through experiencing and interpreting it (von Hantelmann and Rinner 2014) – a performative act is an act that produces what it articulates. This concept once again points to the fluidity and processive character of interactive art installations with their lack of a stable signified and their tendency to dissolve the boundaries between (art) object and (audience) subject in the performance, as Mieke Bal has shown for the artist Ann

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion of different categories and approaches to digital interactive performance art see Mocan 2017.

Veronica Janssens' abstract mist rooms (Bal 2013, 11).¹⁵ Similar to Bal's description of the mist rooms, *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is a performative installation that both stages and generates an audience performance, but at the same time this audience performance becomes performative as it both articulates and produces the art piece through the response to the prompt of the installation.

In accordance with our definition of the active audience above, it has been suggested that all art should be considered as interactive as it always entails an active reception process for the meaning potential to take hold (Bouko 2014, 255). In this sense, all art, and all media for that matter, is also performative as it always creates an affordance or a prompt for a performative actualization by an audience member, and all art generates an effect on its audience (von Hantelmann and Rinner 2014). What is different about interactive artworks such as *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is that this effect made on the audience produces a visible rather than a simply cognitive interaction, and that the performativity in the meaning making is made explicit by foregrounding the audiences' role in constructing the art piece. In *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, this foregrounding is sought as extended to the construction of an artistic experience of the aurora due to the scripted elements of the installation described above, including the title of the work.

We can thus distinguish between an artwork where the material composition is static and predetermined by the artist and hence only interacts with the viewer/audience on a cognitive level (such as a painting or sculpture), and the kind of interactive performances we are discussing here, where the presence and actions of participating audience members play a constitutive part in the artwork by modifying the appearance or content of the work. Yet, even 'truly' interactive artworks differ in the degree of interactivity offered to audience participants. It is thus fruitful for discussions concerning interactive art performances to operate with a categorization regarding the level of interactive potential. To this end, the artist and performance scholar Steve Dixon has proposed a model with four levels of artistic interactivity: 1. Navigation, 2. Participation, 3. Conversation, and 4. Collaboration (2007, 563).¹⁶ We would argue that one could fruitfully think in terms of an additional level, a level 0, the observational level, to include the 'static' artworks discussed above, where no bodily participation is required for the work to unfold.

Dixon's model is a hierarchical one; the levels are proposed in an ascending order in relation to the art design and its openness to user interaction. The hierarchy does not imply aesthetic quality, however. The different levels address the *depths* of interaction *offered* by the artwork, with each level giving the audience participant still more possibilities to interact and change the outcome. An example of the first level, navigation, would be Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project* (2003), or the above-mentioned mist rooms by Ann Veronica Janssens, where the participant has to choose their path through the art piece. The participant literally navigates in and through the artwork. In non-immersive artworks, this navigational aspect can be reached by offering the participant choices of how the work should proceed, as in some hypertexts that offer different paths through their stories. To reach the second level of interactivity, participation, the artwork has to offer more freedom for the audience-participant to

¹⁵ For an example of Janssens' mist rooms, see Louisiana Channel 2016.

¹⁶ It should be noted that the borders between these categories are fluid, leaving grey areas of interactivity in between each. The categorization of a specific artwork is therefore always subjugated to 'judgment calls and matters of opinion' (Dixon 2007, 565).

influence the content rather than simply choosing between a number of predefined paths. An example of this is Yayoi Kusama's *Obliteration Room* (2002 – present), where the audience participant is actively engaged in the construction of the artwork by sticking colourful dots on the walls and furniture of the room. The level of interactivity is still quite constrained, however, as the kinds of stickers and actions available are limited to this one act. *Aurora – Connecting Senses* belongs to the third level of interactivity, conversation. Here both the actions of the audience participants and of the artwork influence each other in real time, giving immediate feedback to each other and creating a unique development dependent on the particular interaction unfolding. The range of choices available to the audience participants is nevertheless still constrained by the installation design, precluding the possibility of reaching the fourth level of interactivity. An example of an artwork belonging to this category, collaboration, is *Le sacre du printemps* (2006) by Klaus Obermaier, where he collaborates in real time with a dance performer on stage in order to create the projected visuals.

By delineating *Aurora – Connecting Senses* to the third level of interactivity, it is implied that although audience participation is an essential part of the installation and of the creative potential, the audience participation, or performance, is still relatively scripted, given that they can only work to co-create a certain type of outcome within the restraints set by the artists. In this case, the 'conversation' that it is possible for the audience members to have in the interaction is necessarily a peaceful one framed by the predefined range of colours and sounds. We will return to how this level of restraint is designed to be peaceful and how it affects audience interaction below.

In addition to the foregrounding of performativity, a major distinction and qualifying aspect of interactive performance art is that since the performance is delegated to the audiences, this type of art necessarily shakes the audience(s) out of their passivity and challenges the still prevalent idea of art as passive consumption. If you only look at an interactive piece nothing much happens – the real beauty comes from people interacting, and the individual audience member has to expose themselves to get to know the true potential of the artwork. This is both the strength and the weakness of an interactive performance, as we will return to below.

Stages of the installation and the inherent possibilities for interactive and reflexive reception

The installation has been designed and developed through an iterative organic process. The first instalment of the installation was designed specifically for a small-scale, public event during the 2018 European Researchers' Night, where the installation served as an artistic and aesthetic materialization of an *intermedial*¹⁷ and *multimodal*¹⁸ idea, aligning

¹⁷ Transmediation is often considered to be a subcategory of intermediality (Elleström 2014, 5), which is the study of relations between media products and artforms (also sometimes thought of as a media conscious intertextuality). Thus, by being conceptualized as a transmediation of popular and scientific ideas about the aurora, *Aurora – Connecting Senses* can be used to illustrate an intermedial idea of diachronic media relations. For a general discussion of what constitutes intermedial studies, see Clüver 2007.

¹⁸ Multimodality as a research field studies how different expressive means (such as speech, music, and image) interact to create meaning potential in communication. As *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is dependent on sound design, colour, light projections, and movement to unlock its full meaning potential, it can be considered a multimodal installation (in fact, all audiovisual media are multimodal). For an overview of multimodal studies and approaches see Jewitt, Bezemer, and O'Halloran 2016.

with the major research themes undertaken at the Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies, which was the organiser of the event. The installation was placed in a room in a bar with old furniture, lamps, and a large carpet, making the room resemble a cosy living room. This living-room setting could easily have been created in a more formal museum set-up, but given the informal context and the location in a bar, the installation here came to function as an intermediary between academic research and the public, and an intermediary between formal art and casual entertainment. As an interactive installation that encourages play and movement through its sounds and bright colours, the installation here posed an amusing alternative to the more traditional talks by the researchers at the event. Even though the installation does not explicitly aim to ‘teach’ audiences about intermedial and multimodal processes, as an academic talk would, the installation does function as an opportunity to achieve an embodied experience relevant to these research themes. By knowing that the installation is called *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, people are encouraged to think about how and why their experience with the installation relates to the real aurora (the intermedial, transmediation perspective), and the part *connecting senses* directly encourages audiences to be aware of the use of multiple senses (sight, hearing proprioception – perhaps even touch and smell) in their interaction (the multimodal perspective). At this event, the installation thus functioned as a ‘learning through play’ complement to the more ‘static’ and less inclusive academic talks concerning similar aspects of the research fields.

This first setup of the installation involved the sound design, the interactive bell-sounds, and the projection of colourful beams of light onto fog, which partly filled the interactive space. Accordingly, the focus was exclusively on the sound and the colourful beams of light and on being *in the moment* with the installation. The installation gave an immersive and tangible experience to those audience members at the bar at the European Researchers’ Night, who chose to interact in order to understand the potential of the installation. The carpet was there in the room from the beginning, but was perceived by the audience to be a designated part of the installation and as a guide to show the borders of the interactive space. This example shows how the performance experience is somehow fluid and adaptable, and that audiences use whatever is available to them in their meaning-making processes, making each instalment unique in terms of both the interactive and the meaning-making potential.

Aurora – Connecting Senses seemed to hit a nerve with people who experienced the installation or later heard about it. Due to this interest, the installation was set up again at a semi-public event at Linnaeus University with the intention of learning more about the technicalities of the installation as well as to further investigate its artistic and critical potential. The installation was this time set up in a small room with no furniture and without the use of a fog machine, but instead with a screen onto which the light was projected in shapes made by the movements of the audience, in a similar fashion to a shadow play. With this new technical setup, new affordances for interaction also came about, as audiences could now create ‘drawings’ on the screen in addition to playing with melodies



Figure 6: Projection screen from the second instalment of *Aurora - Connecting Senses*.

and colours. Having a more tangible visual structure to relate to seemed to encourage many audience members to be more interactive than when they were acting in relation to light beams and sound alone. This might be due to the dominance of visuality in culture, and the different set ups of the installation suggest that people feel more confident exploring their creative capabilities with a concrete visual 2-D experience than with sound or with the more abstract potentials of the fog.

During this instalment, the installation was further commissioned as an art piece for guests to enjoy during an interlude at the Linnaeus University Academic Ceremony 2019. At this event, the installation was set up in an empty room with both a screen and a fog machine. This version of the installation thus incorporated most of the affordances of the two previous instalments, but within a more formal context mainly created by the choice to have an empty room with no visual distractions. This instalment clearly suggested what already seemed to be implied by the comparison of the two earlier instalments: that different groups of audiences interact in different ways and respond to different affordances. Still, the main part of the audience responded primarily to the potential of making illustrations on the screen. A few, however, paid more attention to the sound or to the light beams projected onto the fog. This suggests a potential strength of creating multimodal artistic installations as they will have a wide range of appeal through providing different options for interaction while also allowing people to experiment with modes they are less comfortable with, e.g. music, against the background of something familiar, e.g. illustrations.

This difference between the potential of the light beams and the projections is also relevant because it is due to the fog that the light beams become visible. Whereas most people in modern societies are more than used to looking at light projections, the actual paths that light takes to create these projections are normally not seen. This kind of experience of the light is therefore uncommon to most people, which might also explain why they at the outset prefer to interact with the projections. The fog, however, creates a three-dimensional space where the aurora is all around and one can almost touch it. Without the fog a participant can only see the traces of their manipulations with the light beams, the traces they leave behind, but with the fog, the natural phenomenon of light is ‘materialized’, allowing the audiences to reflect on their experience of light.

Based on these three instalments of *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, we have observed four different audience positions dependent on the audience members’ approach to the artwork, which can be related to Dixon’s four levels of afforded interactivity discussed above and to the idea of performativity. It should be noted that the audience positions, and the associated responses to performativity suggested below, are

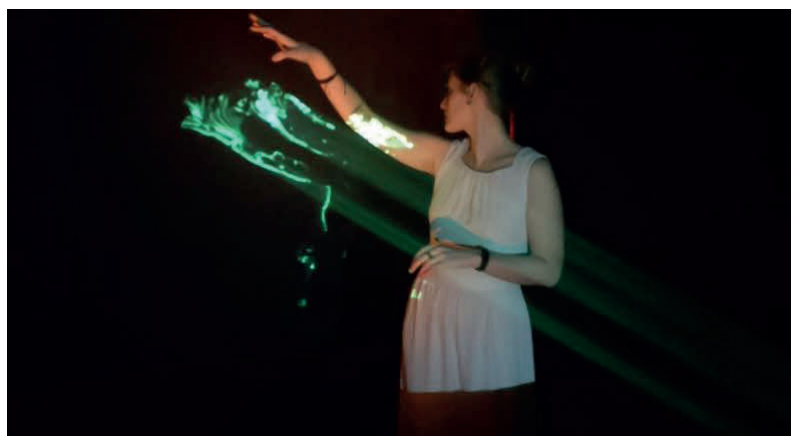


Figure 7: Light beams and projection from the third instalment.

derived from our observations of this particular artwork and cannot be generalized to all types of interactive performances. Thus, even though we relate Dixon's level one to a low degree of observed performative awareness below, it does not mean that this is the only type of audience response that a level-one interactive artwork can offer, only that a low performative awareness has most often been observed (to the extent that this *can* even be observed) in relation to audiences responding to a level-one interactive potential in our particular case. Furthermore, the suggested audience positions are not mutually exclusive in the sense that audience members can and do change between the positions during their time with the installation.

Above, we characterized *Aurora – Connecting Senses* as a level-three interactive art installation affording a 'conversation'-like interaction. Just because an artwork is theoretically *able* to afford this type of interaction, however, does not mean that audiences necessarily *use* the full possibilities of the artwork, a perspective which Dixon's more 'object'-focused model doesn't consider. Thus, we find it necessary to not just discuss what our artwork *can* do, but also how actual empirical audiences use these possibilities. With this in mind, we can delineate the four audience positions as follows:

- 0) The observer: the audience member stays outside the interactive space, possibly too shy or uncomfortable to expose themselves by interacting with the installation. Thus, the audience member does not experiment with the interactive potential, but can only observe what happens when others interact. Despite *Aurora – Connecting Senses* being a level-three interactive installation with the *potential* for conversational interaction, the audience member prefers to respond only to its level-zero potential – the potential for observation and cognitive engagement, which was not part of Dixon's model. This audience position still enables the audience member to get something out of the work, but only in the cases where other audiences are present to perform and thus actualize the work.
- 1) Technological curiosity: the audience member is curious to figure out how the installation works and asks questions or looks around to find a solution. The audience members here are mainly responding to the level-one potential of Dixon's model, navigation. They move around in the installation, but are more focused on *searching* for the technical elements of the installation than on *exploring* the aesthetic potential. The audience member is thus performing in the installation, but without paying attention to their actions as being a performance; the focus here is on finding the underlying performative principle – what makes the installation work – rather than on the performativity of creating representations in interaction.
- 2) Playful interaction: the audience member shows enjoyment in dancing around in the installation and in seeing and hearing the effects, but does not seem to want to explore possibilities or to create something coherent. The audience members here are mainly responding to Dixon's second level of interaction potential: participation. They move around and acknowledge that their movements create a change in the installation, but they do not actively seek to *create* something in tandem with the installation. Thus, the performative effect of the performance is highlighted in that the audiences show great enjoyment in creating representations through their movements,

disregarding any idea of ‘script’ in the sense of exploring possibilities and limitations.

- 3) Creative interaction: the audience member shows signs of consciously working to construct something *with* the installation by *playing* or *composing* with the tones, looking for different and specific colours, or by experimenting to create specific shapes and patterns on the screen. Only few audience members took this position and responded to the full level-three potential of the installation. Here, the performativity is fully highlighted in the audience participants showing interest in exploring the possibilities of the installation in order to know how to create their own intended output. Thus, although the playful interaction can be considered a freer interaction in that the audience participants here seem unaffected by the constraints of the installation, or seem not to care, it is only in this creative interaction that the audiences learn to take some control over the artistic output thereby gaining an *artistic* freedom.

In general, most of the people who experienced *Aurora – Connecting Senses* on these three occasions chose to actively interact, with the most common audience position being the playful interaction, and the second most common the position of technical curiosity. Few people took the time to explore the full potential. This might be due to several reasons. For one thing, even though the installation was foremost intended as an aesthetic object to reflect upon, it was not set up in a museum or other recognized art context¹⁹ where prolonged contemplation is a more natural response. Rather, the installation on these occasions was in ‘competition’ with other, non-artistic events and came to be received mostly as an ‘active break’ from presentations, work, or socializing. Second, this non-artistic context also meant that the audiences had not sought out an art experience (the second instalment is an exception), but rather that the art experience was an ‘extra’ on top of the main attraction of the specific event. And third, although digital, interactive performances have gained increased interest since the 1980s, they are still not the norm for artistic experiences. Rather, the relatively more passive consumption of ‘static’ artworks is still dominant in many museums. Thus, it is possible that people are lacking an interactive, artistic literacy which prevents them from exploring an interactive artwork’s full potential. This can be partially corroborated by our own observations during the instalments, and it is also in line with Dixon’s argument: ‘interactive users normally favor artworks that are relatively structured and constrained, where choice and navigation is focused rather than wide open: users only want a modest level of freedom’ (Dixon 2007, 564).

Accordingly, audiences at the instalments of *Aurora – Connecting Senses* generally needed some explanation and encouragement to dare to enter the interactive space. There was no curatorial text in the installation room, but most audience members had had the chance to read the title and a few key words on posters or small invitation cards, which all mentioned that the installation was interactive. Still, most people needed the encouragement of the artists present in the room to start interacting.

¹⁹ With the exception of the exhibition at the *Hämelinna Street Art Festival*, which is not being considered here as the instalment came too late in the writing process of this article.

Transmediation as interpretation and critical reflection

In conclusion, it can be said that *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is at the same time self-reflexive and ever changing, the latter due to human interventions. The sound design and interactive beams of light are intended to actively transmediate and evoke human associations, or media characteristics, of the transmedial aurora network, and thus meant to emphasize the interpretative element in our discourses about this phenomenon; the installation is not aurora, but solely a re-representation based on how we, humans, talk and think about it. It is an interpretation of an interpretation.

Furthermore, the sound, the colourful lights, and the shapes in the fog change as audiences move in the interactive space, basically taking control away from the *natural* processes supposed to produce the aurora and giving it to the audience, thereby questioning the power relations between the natural phenomenon and the human actors. The human actors are not in complete control, however. Some characteristics have been predefined by the artists – as some characteristics of the real aurora will be more or less objectively there before interpretation. In this case, the range of colours and sounds which the audiences can activate has been preselected, and the atmospheric sound design is independent of the audience members altogether. In this pre-selection, we drew on our knowledge of the aurora obtained through the transmedial network of representations, and as described earlier, we sought to both transmediate the contemporary scientific representations of the aurora as an electrical phenomenon, and the mythical and more recent popular representations of the aurora as something fantastical and magical. This constitutes a ‘doubleness’ which we in post reflection could trace back in the transmedial network to the earliest scientific descriptions. In relation to this matter of constraint, one audience member from the second set-up of the installation remarked upon the sound design that it created a very peaceful and enjoyable atmosphere, which she thought related well to the interactive potential, since the restrictions of the installation made it impossible for her to create an aggressive output, even when aiming to do so. Several audiences actually remarked upon the enjoyable calmness of the installation, although some (both adults and children) were anything but calm in their interactions. No matter the intensity of the interaction, however, the installation is designed so that it will always be in harmony. All tones of the music box will always be in harmony with each other and with the atmospheric sound, the colours are always projected by a soft light, and the shapes, which can be created on the fog and screen, always have soft edges. Constraining the *Aurora – Connecting Senses* experience to a peaceful one is part of the artistic intention described above to transmediate the enchanting conceptualizations of the aurora. The exchange with the audience member noted above also suggests something very important: that although few audience members seemed to interact directly with the sound, the sound can still frame and influence their experiences (as discussed above in relation to the framing and territorial potentials of sound), and the sound is what lead this particular audience member to reflect on the interactive and performative potential itself.

The aspects of nature, interpretation, and human interaction as intervention that we have tried to highlight here in relation to *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, moreover allows reflection on the status of reality and social construction. This is a theme which is also emphasized by other interactive installation artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Ann Veronica Janssens who, in different ways, point to art’s capacity for destabilizing the

human perception of reality. In Louisiana Channel's written summary of their interview with Eliasson concerning his installation *Riverbed*, it says:

The concept of reality intrigues Eliasson, who finds that the way we engage in the world is based on our 'model', whether it be a social, cultural or other type of model: 'The way we take in the world is not natural, it's cultural.' Thereby, it becomes a construction in which 'the authorship of reality lies within the beholder and the museum is constituted by the visitor.' In other words, reality becomes the way in which you choose to perceive or handle your model. 'Riverbed' is thus a part of this unreality, for as Eliasson concludes, 'There are no real things' (Louisiana Channel 2014, curator text with quotations from Eliasson).

In a similar interview with Ann Veronica Janssens concerning her light installations, she says:

It's a bit like a kind of evidence of a radiation that occurs, a radiation that... that allows me to show the manifestations of reality in a different way. I think that sometimes you have to erase reality[,] erase what's visible in order to see something else, to make the invisible visible in fact (Ann Veronica Janssens, in Louisiana Channel 2016, [00.00.25 - 00.00.41], [transcribed from the original English subtitles]).

What these two quotes show is that *Aurora – Connecting Senses* relates to a larger field of contemporary interactive performance art that concerns itself with nature or natural phenomena, and the way that these are perceived by humans. Interactive art must be considered suited to address these types of questions of social construction, even in areas which are most often the study object of the natural sciences and considered to be objectively understood, because interactive art constitutes a fluid and ever-changing performative potential dependent on the actions of the audiences. By insisting on an embodied and explicit performativity in constructing the work of art, the audience participant is faced with and challenged by a condition of all meaning making, the condition that it only comes into place through our own active performativity. Thus, interactive art is suited for pointing out not only the subjective understanding of nature, but also the human role in shaping conceptions about nature by allowing audiences access to a miniature 'model', cf. Eliasson, of a natural phenomenon, which is there for them to physically manipulate and cognitively engage with. But what happens then, when audiences seem to not yet be 'literate' in interactive art consumption, and when they prefer to stand on the side of the artwork not exposing themselves to the interactive performance? Does an interactive artwork *work* with audiences who 'only want a modest level of freedom' (Dixon 2007, 564)? Or would more scripted works working on the two lower levels of Dixon's scale function better, as they meet the audiences *where they are* in comparison with works designed for level-three or level-four interaction, which might have potential that will never be realized by audience participants?

We cannot speak for the cognitive or reflective effects of *Aurora – Connecting Senses*, but what we can say is that the artwork is to a large degree effective in engaging audiences bodily, in turning audiences into participants, and assumingly in making the

performative aspect explicit in the sense of making the different types of audiences aware of their own role in the construction of the artwork – and possibly through this even aware of the construction of an artistic version of the aurora and the interpretative nature of aurora conceptualizations. As is the case with art works, however, interpretation cannot and should not be completely restrained. In this article we have tried to describe and argue the aesthetic qualities of the work in the form of the sensorial address to the viewer (in our descriptions of the work) and its situatedness within a larger artistic tradition. Despite this, we cannot ultimately judge what meaning audiences will glean from the installation, as we cannot judge the installation as audiences ourselves. As Nielsen writes:

Since we are always dealing with a specific dialogue between a specific individual and a specific work, one cannot determine in advance the potential of a work to catalyze a high-quality aesthetic experience, but it is possible to indicate the features that can initially serve as productive invitations for the dialogue [sic] (2005, 64).

With this quote in mind, we cannot actually argue for the *specific potential* of the installation, as we have otherwise stated. But in providing our *own* reflections on the installation, and the thoughts and intentions that went into it, while also relating these to descriptions of audience reactions, we hope to have made the ‘productive invitations’ clear.

This difficulty is perhaps the most essential problem of artistic research, the fact that we are at once artists with an intention and knowledge of the thought processes behind the work and at the same time critics, but without the distance that normally characterizes art critics. A further problem is that since the installation was originally aimed at artistic contemplation and not framed as a research object, we have not sought to carry out interviews or surveys, which could have provided us with a more ‘authentic’ audience perspective. In future research, this might prove a fruitful investigation.

Ultimately, the only thing we might be able to conclude is that *Aurora – Connecting Senses* is an installation which sets up an encounter of people in a social space and an encounter of people with the objects, technologies, and conceptualizations that form our social reality, and which stem from other actors in our sociality. The fact that the interactive affordances of the installation were broad and unscripted enough to generate a number of different audience positions speaks for the performative potential of open-ended installations that do not presuppose one specific audience position, or one specific subject, but rather take the notion of audience participation and freedom seriously enough to allow for audiences to define their own meaning with the artworks, even if this meaning then moves the artwork in new and perhaps unpredicted directions. In order to highlight the performativity of actions, including the performativity in creating or recreating conceptualizations of the aurora, we must loosen the authoritative control and see what the audiences do with it.

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DEN NORDEN LESEN: ERINNERUNGEN, WAHRNEHMUNGEN UND BEDEUTUNGEN IM INTERDISZIPLINÄREN DIALOG

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Zusammenfassung

Unser Beitrag basiert auf der Methode der dramatischen Montage (Klok & Haselmann 2019). In der Begegnung mit zwei autoethnografischen literarischen Quellen, „Die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden“ (Gjems Selmer 1905) und „Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht“ (Ritter 1938), bewegen wir uns im Zwischenraum zeitlich und disziplinär getrennter Denkwelten. In unserer jeweiligen Rolle als Kulturwissenschaftlerin und Biologin treten wir in einen wissenschaftlichen Dialog über Erleben, Repräsentationen und Bedeutungen des Nordens. Ein Fokus liegt dabei auf den vielfältigen Modi, in denen der Norden sowohl in auf Erinnerungen basierenden literarischen Zeugnissen als auch in der aktuellen Wahrnehmung zum Ausdruck kommt. Die Montage macht deutlich, dass der Norden für uns im multimodalen Zusammenspiel von Rhythmen, Klängen, Licht, Temperaturen, Gerüchen und Farben von Landschaften, Menschen, Tieren, Pflanzen und den Relationen zwischen ihnen an konkreter Bedeutung gewinnt. Indem wir uns dem Norden durch einen interdisziplinären und zugleich künstlerisch-kreativen Zugangs nähern, wird das neugewonnene Wissen relevant und anschlussfähig für zahlreiche akademische Fachgebiete.

Stichworte: *Norden; Arktis; Alltag; Erfahrungen; dramatische Montage*

Abstract

Our contribution is based on the method of dramatic assemblage (Klok and Haselmann 2019). Encountering two autoethnographic literary sources – *The Doctor's Family in the Far North* (Gjems Selmer 1905) and *A Woman in the Polar Night* (Ritter 1938) we move between different temporal and disciplinary thinking practices. In our respective roles as cultural scientist and biologist we enter a research dialogue about experiences, representations, and meanings of ‘the north’. Our focus is on modes in which the north is expressed in both memory-based literary memoirs and current academic perceptions. The dramatic assemblage shows that the north gains concrete meaning in the multimodal interplay of rhythms, sounds, light, temperatures, smells, and colours of landscapes, people, animals, plants, and the relations between these. By approaching the north through an interdisciplinary and co-creative approach, newly gained knowledge becomes both relevant and accessible to a variety of academic fields.

Keywords: *North; Arctic; Everyday life; Experiences; Dramatic assemblage*

*We are – as readers – situated in a world of reading,
in which each ecological being reads its Umwelt,
in which reading [...] is an aspect of being.
(Reading the Future North, Schimanski 2018, 21)*

Thema, Fragestellung und Herangehensweise

Der Norden kann – je nach Standort – auf ebenso vielfältige Weise gelesen werden¹ wie es Betrachtende gibt. Oft werden die Begriffe „die Arktis“ und „der Norden“ im selben Bedeutungsraum verwendet. Seit jeher haben im Norden lebende und arbeitende Forscher und Forscherinnen die vielfältigen Diskurse im und über den Norden mitgestaltet, wobei der Ortsbegriff „Norden“ zunehmend als dynamisch und heterogen verstanden wird. Der Norden wird demnach in der Verknüpfung von Diskurs und Praxis immer wieder neu geschaffen (Førde et al. 2012). Großangelegte interdisziplinäre, staatlich geförderte Forschungsprojekte wie beispielsweise *Imaginatio Borealis - Perception, Rezeption und Konstruktion des Nordens* (DFG, 1999-2008), *Arctic Modernities* (RCN 2013-2016), *Future North* (RCN 2013-2017) or *ReNEW* (NORDFORSK 2018-2033) haben auf der Grundlage innovativer Gedankenexperimente Neukonzeptionen entwickelt, die wiederum wissenschaftliche Praktiken im und über den Norden beeinflussen (u.a. Ryall et al. 2010; Gaupseth et al. 2013; Klok & Sperling 2017; Hansson & Ryall 2017; Larsen & Hemmersam 2018; Stadius 2018; Spring 2018).

Trotz umfangreicher wissenschaftlicher Definitions- und Konzeptionsarbeiten in den Humaniora wird die Bedeutung des Nordens im DUDEN, der im deutschsprachigen Raum nach wie vor als Standardwerk für gesichertes Wissen gilt, primär geographisch als Gegenstück zum Süden definiert. Als beispielhafte Verwendung wird „das raue Klima des Nordens“ und „Der hohe, höchste Norden (die weit nördlich gelegenen Gebiete der Erde)“ genannt.² „Raueres Klima“ und „weit weg“ mögen gängige Wahrnehmungen sein, mit denen der Norden aus Sicht mittlerer Breitengrade und gemäßigter Klimazonen assoziiert wird. Diese eurozentristische Sicht des Nordens am äußersten Rand Europas, die in der Regel von jenen geschaffen und perpetuiert wird, die selbst kaum Kontakt zur Arktis haben, wird auch in der im Duden-Online gewählten Karte deutlich (Abb. 1).

Wir lesen den Norden und sind dadurch im Norden. Unser individuelles multisensorisches Erleben bildet dabei einen wichtigen Ausgangspunkt für unser Verstehen. Im Unterschied zu phänomenologischen und existenziellen Analysen der

¹ Mit „Lesen“ meinen wir hier im erkenntnistheoretischen Sinne das Verstehen, Begreifen, Erfassen und Betrachten des Nordens. Wir bedanken uns bei Anka Ryall und Martin Siefkes für wertvolle Kommentare zur Fertigstellung des Textes, Rolf Stange für Reflexionen zur Abbildung von Gråhukun sowie Synnøve des Bouvrie für die Wortneuschöpfung *imaginatio borealis feminina*. Der Text hat außerdem von spannenden Diskussionen innerhalb der Forschungsgruppen RESCAPE profitiert.

² Duden online: url: <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Norden>. Abgerufen am 19.6.2019.

1970er Jahre berücksichtigen wir jedoch auch strukturelle, diskursive, relationale und machttheoretische Bedingungen (Førde et al. 2012). In diesem Artikel wollen wir den Norden gemeinsam mit zwei auto-ethnographischen historischen Darstellung von Frauen des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts untersuchen. Dabei handelt es sich um *Die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden* (1905) von Ågot Gjems Selmer (1858-1926) und *Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht* (1938) von Christiane Ritter (1897-2000). Die Vorstellungen, auf denen dieser Artikel beruht, sind damit allesamt mit Erfahrungswelten von Frauen verknüpft.



Abb. 1: Repräsentation des Nordens aus dem 17. Jahrhundert. Die Karte von Johannes van Keulen (1680) wurde noch 2019 wiedergegeben im DUDEN-Online und reproduziert für den Betrachtenden (deutlich gemacht durch die Plakette im Bild unten rechts) eine eurozentrische Sichtweise. Die Verzerrung durch die gewählte Mercator Projektion entspricht der nach wie vor weit verbreiteten Vorstellung von den endlosen nördlichen Weiten.

Ob und inwiefern sich eine *imaginatio borealis feminina* von anderen Vorstellungen des Nordens unterscheiden, vermag ein differenztheoretischer Ansatz zu diskutieren und ist nicht Gegenstand unserer Untersuchung. Wir haben beide Bücher (wieder) gelesen und uns im realen und virtuellen Dialog mit ihnen auseinandergesetzt. Unsere Empirie besteht aus zwei Stunden Tonbandaufnahmen, E-Mails und eigenen Reflexionsnotaten. Zur Herstellung des Artikels haben wir uns verschiedener Methoden künstlerisch-kreativen Schreibens bedient (Ruf 2016) und eine dialogische Herangehensweise

gewählt (Freire 1970; Bakhtin 1981; Flecha 2000, Mittner et al. 2018). Diese bestand nicht nur in der Begegnung zwischen uns als Forscherinnen, sondern auch im Dialog zwischen dem Material, also dem Jugendbuchroman von Gjems Selmer und Memoiren von Christiane Ritter. Die Herstellung des Manuskripts verlief in sieben Phasen. Unser Vorgehen glich dabei einem Fadenspiel (Haraway 2016), in dem wir gegenseitig die gedanklichen Fäden einander abnahmen und weitergaben:

1. Erster Impuls für ein mögliches gemeinsames Gedankenexperiment
2. Originalquellen lesen
3. Erstes Arbeitstreffen und Dialog mit und über die Quellen
4. Schreibend denken, kommentieren, antworten und ändern basierend auf eigenen Erfahrungen beim Lesen und in unserer Umwelt
5. Zweites Arbeitstreffen und Dialog über unsere Arbeit, Kritik, Lernprozess und gegenseitiges Verstehenwollen
6. Konkretisierung des methodischen Vorgehens, zurück zu den Erlebnissen von Ågot Gjems Selmer und Christiane Ritter, Denken am und im Material, klären von Quellenfragmenten, Zitaten, Illustrationen etc.
7. Drittes Arbeitstreffen und Fertigstellen des Artikels

Wir lesen den Norden von zwei grundlegend verschiedenen Standpunkten: jener einer Kulturwissenschaftlerin (*1983) und der einer Chronobiologin (*1972). Wir kamen beide in den 2010er Jahren in den Norden, um in Tromsø zu leben und zu forschen, und treten in unseren jeweiligen Rollen als Forscherinnen und Alltagsmenschen auf. Für uns weisen die hier im deutschsprachigen Raum erstmals wissenschaftlich vorgestellten literarischen Werke zahlreiche Parallelen zum eigenen Erleben des Nordens auf. Trotz des etwa 100-jährigen Abstands bilden die Texte von Gjems Selmer und Ritter durch ihre Aktualität zwei wichtige Dialogpartner. Als Quartett behandeln wir einen Komplex von Fragen, der sich um Erinnerungen, Wahrnehmungen und Bedeutungen des Nordens entspannt: Was bedeutete der Norden für die Autorinnen der hier vorgestellten Bücher? Was bedeutet er für eine im Norden forschende und lebende Biologin und Kulturwissenschaftlerin heute? In welchen Modi kann der Norden wahrgenommen und erinnert werden und wie wirken diese zusammen und verleihen dem Norden Bedeutung?

Indem wir diese Fragen in einem interdisziplinären Faden-Denk-Spiel-Raum bearbeiten, wird neues Wissen möglich. Im Sinne einer Interdisziplinarität, in der verschiedene Disziplinen gleichrangig in Bezug auf eine gemeinsame Forschungsfrage agieren und voneinander lernen (Maxwell & Benneworth 2018; Klein 1996), denken und schreiben wir in einem Raum, der in der Begegnung zwischen zwei Disziplinen entsteht. Unser Vorgehen basiert auf der Methode der dramatischen Montage (Klok & Haselmann 2019), die innerhalb der Forschungsgruppe RESCAPE entwickelt wird

(Mittner et al. Dr. i. V.).³ Die Originalzitate von Ritter und Gjems Selmer haben wir ebenso im Berliner Blau gekennzeichnet. Der Farbton entspricht dem elektrochromen Material „Berliner Blau“, das auf der Basis des Charge-Transfer-Übergangs hergestellt wird. Das chemische Verfahren zur Herstellung des Farbtons weist auf interdisziplinäre Arbeitstechniken, bei denen neues Wissen additiv am Übergang zwischen den Disziplinen entsteht (Maxwell & Benneworth 2018).

Wir sind uns unseres situierten Wissens bewusst (Engelstad & Gerrard 2005) und gleichzeitig erhoffen wir uns in der Begegnung neue Wissenshorizonte zu erschließen. Unsere Aufmerksamkeit im Sinne Toril Mois (2013) richtet sich dabei auf Rhythmen, Klänge, Licht, Temperaturen, Gerüchen und Farben von Landschaften, Menschen, Tieren und Pflanzen. Wir zeigen, dass der Norden im multimodalen Zusammenspiel an Bedeutung gewinnt, die an der Schnittstelle zwischen Textform, Schreibenden und Lesenden entsteht.

Wir haben den Artikel entlang der drei methodischen Zugriffe Erinnerungen, Wahrnehmungen und Bedeutungen gedacht und geschrieben. (1) Zunächst präsentieren wir kurz die beiden literarischen Werke und ihre Autorinnen, die den Impuls für unser interdisziplinäres Nachdenken gegeben haben. (2) Mit Ausgangspunkt in ihren Erinnerungswelten, die gleichsam Teil eines weißen, weiblichen, europäischen, kollektiven kulturellen Gedächtnisses (Assmann 2010) sind, montieren wir einen Dialog an den Schnittstellen zwischen Zeit, Textform und Disziplin. (3) Abschließend diskutieren wir ob und inwiefern sich die Bedeutung des Nordens verändert hat und welche Implikationen dies für das Leben, Arbeiten und Sein im Norden heute hat.

Die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden von Ågot Gjems Selmer (1905) und Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht von Christiane Ritter (1938)

Ausgangspunkt für unsere Beschäftigung mit dem Thema Norden bilden der Jugendbuchroman *Die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden* von Ågot Gjems Selmer (1905) und *Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht* von Christiane Ritter (1938). Das zuerst genannte Buch umspannt 14 Jahre im Balsfjord bei Tromsø (Norwegen), das zweite umfasst einen Zeitraum von etwa einem Jahr auf Spitzbergen (Svalbard). Beide Bücher stellen die Arktis bzw. den hohen Norden als das Andere, Fremde und Exotische zur bürgerlichen Kultur Wiens bzw. Kristianias (heute Oslo) dar. Teils dokumentarisch-berichtend, teils aber auch ein literarisches Publikum ansprechend, bewegen sich beide Publikationen in einem Zwiespalt, der von der Reiseliteratur-Forschung (die immer auch autoethnographisch ist) vielfach aufgezeigt worden ist. Obwohl die Erlebnisse von Ritter eher in Rahmen der Polarheldenerzählungen fallen und weitaus extremer wirken als jene, die Gjems Selmer im häuslich-familiären Raum auf dem Festland berichtet, so beschreiben doch beide Autorinnen ihre untypische Umgebung entlang alltäglicher Handlungen. Inwieweit die Erinnerungen hier als „bare Münze“ (Unsel 2005, 10; siehe auch Unsel & Zimmermann 2013) genommen werden und als historisches Faktum

³ Mehr zu aktuellen Entwicklungen dieser künstlerisch-wissenschaftlichen Montagetechnik unter: <http://site.uit.no/RESCAPE>, zuletzt abgerufen am 17.11.2019.

gelten können, ist nicht Gegenstand unserer Untersuchung. Gleichsam möchten wir mit der Auswahl dieser beiden literarischen Werke zu weiterführender Forschung anzuregen. Obwohl davon auszugehen ist, dass beide Bücher in weiten Teilen Europas bekannt waren, wurden sie bisher kaum wissenschaftlich untersucht.⁴ Gjems Selmers Bericht erschien 1900 unter dem Originaltitel *Smaapigernes bok* (Buch der Mädchen) und wurde bereits 1905 mit einer Auflage über 33.000 Stück ins Deutsche übersetzt, später auch ins Schwedische, Finnische, Russische, Polnische, Ungarische, Holländische und Französische. Auch wenn es sich hier um zwei grundlegend unterschiedliche literarische Formen handelt, so ist ihnen gemeinsam, dass sie auf Erfahrungen von Frauen beruhen und beide Autorinnen ihr Erleben als explizit weibliche Erfahrungswelt für die Lesenden darstellen. Ritter wurde 1938 in Berlin im Propyläen Verlag herausgegeben und gilt als „moderner Klassiker der Arktisliteratur“ (Harald Dag, zitiert nach Ryall 2011). Das Buch wurde in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetzt, u.a. 1954 ins Englische (George Allen & Unwin Ltd *A Woman in the Polar Night*), ins Norwegische jedoch erst 2002 (Polar Forlag *En kvinne i polarnatten*).⁵



Abb. 2: Christiane von Ritter „Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht“ (links) in der Ausgabe von 2017 mit acht Aquarellen und 25 Federzeichnungen der Verfasserin. Ågot Gjems Selmer „Die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden“ (rechts) in der deutschsprachigen Ausgabe von 1917.

Ågot Gjems Selmer war eine jener professionellen Schauspielerinnen, die, wie zahlreiche andere Frauen um 1900, mit der Eheschließung ihre Karriere als Künstlerin aufgab, um ihre bürgerliche Integrität zu bewahren. Im Jahre 1883 heiratete sie Alfred

⁴ Zu Christiane Ritter siehe Ryall 2011 sowie Ryall 2018. Zu Gjems Selmer siehe insbesondere Aastebøl, 1991.

⁵ Weitere fremdsprachige Ausgaben: 1952 Paris, 1954 New York, 1956 London, 1964 Mexiko, 1966 Bratislava, 1967 Sofia, 2018 Amsterdam.

Selmer, der noch im selben Jahr eine Anstellung als Arzt in Nordnorwegen antrat. Die Familie lebte für 14 Jahre im Balsfjord bei Tromsø, wo Ågot Gjems Selmer acht Kinder zur Welt brachte (von denen fünf aufwuchsen) und in der Rolle als Ehefrau und Mutter ihre Zwischenräume zur kulturellen Handlungsfähigkeit (Mittner 2016) suchte und auch fand. Gjems Selmer war in der Frauenbewegung engagiert und hatte u.a. Kontakt zu Ellen Key, die 1901 die Familie im Balsfjord besuchte (Aastebøl 1990). Sie hatte Briefkontakt mit Aasta Hansteen, Betzy Kjelsberg, Olaus Löken und Ann Margret Holgren (ebd.) und setzte sich insbesondere für die Themen Mutterschaft und Frieden ein (Aastebøl 1990). Im Jahre 1917 hielt Ågot Gjems Selmer einen Vortrag am Nobelinstitut in Kristiania (Oslo) mit dem Titel „Was können wir tun, um den Krieg auszurotten? Eine Frage der Erziehung“⁶ Neben einer Reihe von Kinderbüchern schrieb sie mehrere Theaterstücke, Essays, Vorträge, Erinnerungen und religiöse Betrachtungen. Ihre Bücher richteten sich insbesondere an Frauen und junge Mädchen, und behandelten frauenspezifische Problemstellungen jener Zeit und fallen damit unter den Begriff einer weiblichen Schreibpraxis. Sie können als „weiblicher Blick“ (Weigel 1993) auf Mutterschaft, Erziehung, Krieg und den Norden gelesen werden. Zwischen 1900 und 1915 gab sie insgesamt zehn Bücher heraus: vier Kinder-/Jugendbücher, ein Erinnerungsbuch, drei Schauspiele, einen Essay, einen Vortrag und ein Buch mit „religiösen Gedanken“ (Aastebøl 1990). Darüber hinaus schrieb sie zahlreiche Gedichte und Kurzerzählungen, die jedoch ungedruckt blieben (ebd.).

Christiane Ritter (1897-2000) war eine österreichische Malerin und Schriftstellerin aus gutbürgerlichem Haus in Karlsbad. Ihr Mann, Hermann Ritter (1891-1968), war ein erfahrener Jäger und hatte bereits mehrere Jahre in der Arktis überwintert (siehe auch Howarth 1957). Christiane Ritter entschied sich 1934 ebenfalls einen Winter auf Svalbard zu verbringen. Die damals fünfjährige Tochter Karin bleibt bei der Oma, und Christiane Ritter macht sich, wie sie es selbst beschreibt, naiv und mit romantischen Vorstellungen beladen, auf den Weg ins Unbekannte. Auf Spitzbergen verbrachte sie ein Jahr in einer kleinen etwa neun Quadratmeter kleinen Hütte mit ihrem Mann und dem befreundeten Jäger Karl Nikolaisen (Reymert & Moen 2015). Sie dokumentierte ihre Erlebnisse in Form von Tagebuchaufzeichnungen und Aquarellen. Die Essensvorräte waren spärlich und die Gruppe war darauf angewiesen, frisches Fleisch, vor allem Eisbären und Robben, zu jagen. Christiane Ritter erhielt eine eigene Kammer. Beschreibungen von Intimität des menschlichen Dreiecks in der „Gråhuker“ Hüttelehnen gänzlich in dem Buch. Das Buch gibt einen Einblick in Stimmungen, Atmosphäre, Erleben der Arktis und scheint, den Neuaufgaben und Verbreitungskanälen nach zu urteilen, für die heutige Tourismusbranche von großem Interesse zu sein. Das Buch gilt als Reisezugabe für zahlreiche Spitzbergenenthusiasten und die Hütte kann heute mit ihrer originalen Einrichtung digital besichtigt werden.⁷ Christiane Ritters

⁶ „Hva kan vi gjøre for at Utrydde Krig? Et Optragelsspørsmål“ (Ovlien 2012).

⁷ Ritterhütte auf Gråhuker: <https://www.spitzbergen.de/fotos-panoramen-videos-und-webcams/spitzbergen-panoramen/ritterhuetten.html>, zuletzt abgerufen am 13.05.2019

Aquarelle liegen im Museum in Spitzbergen und sind über den Onlinekatalog des Digitalmuseums einsehbar.⁸

Bei einem Altersunterschied von etwa 30 Jahren ist es denkbar, dass Christiane Ritter Ågot Gjels Selmers Jugendbuch über die Doktorsfamilie im hohen Norden gelesen hat. Wenn auch der Balsfjord über 1000 km südlich von Gråhukuken liegt, so fielen beide Orte für die lesenden Mitteleuropäerinnen aus der Bürgerschicht unter den Begriff des „hohen Nordens“. Beide Autorinnen schufen sich – wie es Anka Ryall in ihrem Vortrag am 3. November 2018 im Buchkaffe im Polarmuseum in Tromsø formulierte – „im Schreiben ihre eigene Arktis“ (Ryall 2013). Wir werden darauf nach unserem Quartett noch einmal zurückkommen.

Wahrnehmungen im interdisziplinären Dialog mit dem Material – Das Quartett als dramatische Montage

Wir begegnen uns in einem Wohnzimmer mit Sicht über den Balsfjord. Unsere Kinder (3, 10, 11 und 14 Jahre alt) spielen in der oberen Etage mit dem Puppenhaus. Die Bücher von Agot Gjels Selmer und Christiane Ritter liegen vor uns auf dem Tisch. Beim Blick aus dem Fenster strahlt indirektes Licht von den schneebedeckten Bergen zurück. In der Ferne schwimmen Schweinswale vorbei. Als privilegierte Mitteleuropäerinnen, aufgewachsen in der Märkischen Heide bzw. den österreichischen Alpen, ist und bleibt der Anblick Faszination. Aber was genau ist es eigentlich, das uns so fasziniert? Welche Bedeutung hat der Norden für uns? Und was hat sich geändert, seit Ågot Gjels Selmer und Christiane Ritter den hohen Norden auf ihre Weise erlebt haben?

Lilli:⁹ Lass uns zunächst mit einem kleinen Wahrnehmungsexperiment beginnen: Was siehst du auf dem folgenden Bild? Wie „riecht“ es dort? Wie klingt es dort? Und wie fühlt es sich für dich an, gedanklich dort zu sein?

Gabi: Interessanterweise, obwohl man eine recht unschöne Baracke sieht, assoziiere ich dieses Bild mit „sauber“ – ein sauberer Geruch von verwittertem Holz und anderer, größtenteils natürlicher Gegenstände, die sich seit vielleicht 100 Jahren langsam verändern. Das Klima erodiert was hier war, der Wind trägt alle Gerüche her und fort, dauernd – ich denke an den Geruch von nahem Schnee und Eismeer, von unscheinbaren arktischen Pflanzen, die sich in die dünne Erde klammern. Ich denke an Fellreste von Tieren deren Pelze hier hingen und Tieren, die vielleicht Haarbüschel beim Vorbeigehen zurückließen. Ich würde gerne nach Tierspuren suchen – ob Füchse noch hin und wieder hier vorbeischaun? Ist der kaputte Ofen noch da? Riecht die Erde in der Hütte nach Rost? Ich vermute schnell wechselndes Wetter. Die Szene kann in ein paar

⁸ <https://digitalmuseum.no/search/?q=christiane+ritter>, zuletzt abgerufen am 17.11.2019

⁹ Der feministischen Kritik bewusst, dass Frauen oft lediglich beim Vornamen genannt werden, haben wir uns dennoch für die Verwendung der Vornamen entschieden, um eine Nähe zu den Protagonistinnen herzustellen. Siehe dazu auch Begleitheft zur Ausstellung „Like Betzy“, Nordnorwegisches Kunstmuseum 2019-2020.

Minuten ganz anders aussehen. Finsterer, kälter, bedrohlicher. Was für ein Wind diesen Berg herunterblasen muss! Der Wind ist vielleicht das einzige Geräusch hier. Wie geht es dir, was siehst du auf dem Bild?



Abb. 3: Gråhuken 2018. In dieser Hütte haben Christiane und ihr Mann Hermann Ritter zusammen mit dem Jäger Karl Nikolaisen aus Tromsø von 1934 bis 1935 überwintert. ©Rolf Stange. Für die Verwendung des Bildes bitte Rolf Stange kontaktieren.

Lilli: Ich sehe etwas von Mensch und Natur Erschaffenes. Material, Widerstand, Energie – etwas, das durch Kraft des Menschen und Kraft der Natur gleichermaßen zu dem geworden ist, was es ist. Kein Kräftespiel, kein Zerren, sondern eine Gemeinsamkeit. Eine ganz besondere Form relationaler Ästhetik (Bourriaud 2002), die nur im Zusammenspiel entstehen kann. Ohne den unbändigen Drang des Menschen zum Abenteuer wäre diese Co-Kreation nicht denkbar. Ohne die bedingungslosen unaufhaltsamen Momente der Natur auch nicht. Das Bild ist „beautiful evidence“ (Tufte 2006) für eine Beziehung, bei der es nicht darum geht, wer stärker ist, sondern darum, gemeinsam Raum und Zeit zu durchleben. Was denkst du Christiane?

Christiane: Die Landschaft ist trostlos, weit und breit kein Baum und Streu, alles grau und nackt und steinig. Ein Steinmeer, das unübersehbare breite Vorland, Steine bis hinauf zu den bröckelnden Bergen, Steine bis hinunter zur bröckelnden Küste, ein wüstes Bild von Tod und Zerfall (Ritter 2017, 23). War dein erster Eindruck des Nordens auch so kahl und grau Ågot?

Christiane: Obwohl wir beide in unseren Texten diesen ersten Eindruck des „kargen“, „nackten“ und „mageren“ Nordens im Laufe ihrer Beschreibungen differenzieren und zum Teil sogar entkräften, spielt das Thema Einsamkeit und Kargheit eine wichtige Rolle. Nachdem ich einmal einen gewaltigen Sturm allein in der Hütte durchlebt hatte, fühlte ich die gewaltige Einsamkeit um mich. Da [war] nichts, was mir gleicht, kein Wesen, in dessen Anblick mein Selbst mir bewusst bliebe, ich [fühlte], ich verliere die Grenzen meines Seins [...] (Ritter 2017, 81).

Lilli: Dieses Gefühl kenne ich sehr gut. Wenn ich in und mit der Natur bin, zum Beispiel auf langen Wanderungen in der Bergen oder auf einer Skitour in der Dunkelheit, dann bekomme ich das Gefühl, Teil eines großen Ganzen zu sein und alles scheint miteinander zusammenzuhängen. Keine Gegensätze, keine Grenzen, kein Mensch-Natur Dualismus, sondern einfach ein großes Ganzes und ich ein Teil davon.

Christiane: Wer weiß es, dass der Mensch in der totalen Einsamkeit, wo die Anregungen und der Widerhall durch den Mitmenschen fehlt, schließlich an das Ende des eigenen Ichs gerät? Wo beginnt der Mensch und wo hört er auf? (Ritter 2017, 190).

Ågot: Wir könnten auch fragen „Wo beginnt der Norden und wo hört er auf?“.

Gabi: Das lässt sich in meinem Fachgebiet recht eindeutig definieren. In der Regel werden die Grenzen des Nordens auf drei verschiedene Weisen definiert: geographisch, klimatisch und biologisch (Blix 2005). Der geographischen Definition zufolge gehört zur Arktis alles nördlich des Breitengrades $66^{\circ} 33' 39''$. Hier ist der Polarkreis (Abb. 5, blaue Linie), wo an mindestens einem Tag im Jahr die Sonne nicht unter- oder aufgeht. Je weiter nördlich man sich davon bewegt, desto länger wird die Periode des arktischen Sommers (die Sonne sinkt nicht unter den Horizont), bzw. der arktischen Nacht (die Sonne steigt nicht über den Horizont). Dieser Breitengrad hat eine rein geometrische Grundlage, aber ob man sich 50 km südlich oder nördlich davon befindet, hat kaum eine Auswirkung auf uns oder sonst etwas in der Natur.



Abb. 5: Die Grenzen des Nordens aus naturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive. Gestrichelte blaue Linie: Polarkreis; dicke rote Linie: 10°C Isotherme; grüne Linie: Boreallinie. Bearbeitete Version nach https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arctic_de.svg. ©Gabi Wagner [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Lilli: Die Übergangsbereiche finde ich besonders spannend. Die Grenzen werden immer wieder neu ausgehandelt, sind aber doch keineswegs beliebig, denn es gibt durchaus eine Übereinkunft innerhalb der Fachgemeinschaft, die situiert und damit zeit- und standortgebunden ist. Während, wie wir am Beispiel des Dudens gesehen haben, in der westlich-europäischen Welt primär Skandinavien und Island mit dem Norden assoziiert werden, wird aus nord-norwegischer Sicht häufig der zirkumpolare Raum, d.h. die baltischen Länder, Grönland, Kanada, Sibirien und weite Teile Russlands mitgedacht. Daneben existieren zahlreiche indigene Perspektiven, wie beispielhaft die Karte über Sápmi von Hans Ragnar Mathisen zeigt (Abb. 6). Den Varianten von Beginn und Ende des Nordens als kulturwissenschaftlichen Gegenstand sind keine Grenzen gesetzt.



Abb. 6: Die Karte zeigt indigene Vorstellungen von Sápmi und des zirkumpolaren Raums (unten rechts) aus der Hand des Künstlers Hans Ragnar Mathisen 1975. ©Hans Ragnar Mathisen, für die Verwendung des Bildes bitte [BONO](#) kontaktieren.

Gabi: Als Biologin verwende ich gerne eine Definition von Arktis, die etwas für *bios* (gr. das Leben) bedeutet. Die Temperatur ist in der Arktis ist von größter Bedeutung für Leben. Wir verbinden alle Orte an denen die durchschnittliche Temperatur im wärmsten Monat (Juli) die magische Grenze von 10°C unterschreitet. Diese *Isotherme* (gr. gleiche Temperatur; also eine Linie, die Punkte gleicher Temperatur verbindet) gibt ein ganz anderes Bild der Arktis, das kaum weiter vom geometrischen Polarzirkel sein könnte (Abb. 5, rote Linie). Hier sieht man warum ich Tromsø kaum noch als nördlich

betrachte – es liegt trotz seines hohen Breitengrades (69°40'58"N), ca. 350 km nördlich des Polarkreises, immer noch ein paar hundert km südlich der Arktis. Während auf dem gleichen Breitengrad Richtung Westen Grönlands dichtes Packeis liegt, erfreuen die Einwohner Tromsøs sich an ausgezeichneten Beeren, verhältnismäßig warmen Temperaturen und eisfreien Gewässern. Dank des Golfstroms sind die skandinavisch-russischen Küsten weitestgehend auch im Winter für den Schiffsverkehr befahrbar.

Pflanzen sind die Basis der Nahrungskette und auch hier gibt es eine magische Grenze zur Arktis – die Boreallinie (*gr.* Βορέας Boréas – ‚der Nördliche‘, Gott des Nordwindes in der griechischen Mythologie) verbindet alle Punkte nördlich derer es keine Bäume mehr gibt. Diese Linie bietet ein etwas weniger abstraktes Bild als ein durchschnittlicher Temperaturwert. Trotzdem verläuft diese Baumgrenze recht knapp entlang der 10 °C-Isotherme (Abb. 5, grüne Linie). Auch mit dieser Definition wird gleich klar, warum Tromsø für mich etwas von seiner nördlichen Exotik eingebüßt hat – mein Haus ist umgeben von einem Wald, der sich noch weit Richtung Norden erstreckt. Erst jenseits der Taiga, dem borealen Nadelwald, beginnt nach dieser Definition die Arktis.

Lilli: Mich beschäftigt weniger die Frage, wo der Norden beginnt und endet, als vielmehr, was er bedeutet und für wen? Aus ortstheoretischer Sicht würde ich den Norden daher in erster Linie als „place“ statt als „location“ beschreiben (Førde et al. 2012). Mir fällt auch auf, wie der Norden aus mitteleuropäischer Sicht oft als das Andere (Kreutziger-Herr 1998) beschrieben wird, als Sehnsuchtsort und Raum, in dem andere Mechanismen vorherrschen. Das Klima ist anders, das Licht ist anders, die Zeit vergeht gefühlt anders – das Zusammenspiel zwischen Menschen, Tieren und Natur scheint nach Regeln zu verlaufen, die sich von anderen Teilen der Welt unterscheiden. Ich nehme den Norden als Mischung von technologischem Fortschritt mit lokal verankertem, verkörpertem und oralem Wissen wahr. Es ist die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen, die mir tagtäglich über den Weg läuft. Hier besteht hochmoderne Technologie neben großflächig unberührter Natur. Am Rande Europas und dennoch auf Grund digitaler Medien und Flugtechnik angebunden: Berlin ist ein Katzensprung; die Großeltern sind am Samstagmorgen im Wohnzimmer. Das Alltagsleben im Norden ist gekennzeichnet durch ein Nebeneinander von Gegensätzen, das dem Puls des Sowohl-als-auch-Denkens des 20. Jahrhunderts entspricht. Dies folgt dem Entweder-oder-Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts (Henningsen 2000), ja vielleicht kann der Norden sogar als „Zukunftslabor“ des relationalen Da-zwischen-Denkens betrachtet werden (Enzensberger 1987), das für das 21. Jahrhundert wegweisend zu werden scheint (Barad 2003).

Christiane: Für mich gibt es so etwas wie eine Polarmentalität „mit all ihren scheinbaren Widersprüchen und Rätseln“ (Ritter 1925, 92). Das Thema der Einsamkeit, der Stille und der Weite zieht sich durch meine Wahrnehmung ebenso wie durch meine Erzählungen. Meine Aquarelle haben zwar eine andere Qualität als die heutigen Fotoaufnahmen mit dem Mobiltelefon. Aber irgendetwas ist ihnen gemeinsam.

Gabi: Ja, ich erkenne die Faszination der bewohnten Arktis sowohl am Festland als auch in Christianes Bildern wieder. Auf einem Foto, das ich aus dem Zug am Saltfjellet gemacht habe, erinnern Werkzeuge und Schienen vom Dasein des Menschen in weiter Landschaft – gerade so wie bei Dir, Christiane, die Hütte, der Rauch und die Spuren im Schnee die Großartigkeit der Landschaft nur verstärken (Abb. 7).

Lilli: Pflanzen, Temperatur, Licht und Töne bestimmen unser Erleben des Nordens. Wenn ich den Norden multisensorisch beschreiben soll, dann wären es Blautöne, Klarheit, Langsamkeit, Fokus, gleichmäßiges Atmen und zyklische Bewegungen. All diese Element lassen sich in deinen Aquarellen, Christiane, wiederfinden.

Christiane: Die Arktis liegt für uns im hohen Norden (Ritter 2017, 7) und war bis zu meiner Reise dorthin gleichbedeutend mit Frieren und Sicheinsamfühlenmüssen (ebd.). Aber in dem Moment als ich hier angekommen bin, ist es die weite Stille des hohen Nordens (ebd. 10), der „Reiz der Wildnis“ (ebd. 7) und ihr zeitloses Licht und unsagbarer Stille (ebd. 91), die mich faszinieren, und die ich versucht habe in meinen Bildern festzuhalten.



Abb. 7: Links: Aquarell ohne Titel von Christiane Ritter ©Christiane Ritter. Foto: [DigitaltMuseum/Svalbard Museum](https://www.digitaltmuseum.org/). Für die Verwendung des Bildes bitte Stiftelsen Svalbard Museum kontaktieren. Rechts: Momentaufnahme von der Bahnstrecke durch die Saltfjelletregion ©Gabi Wagner [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Gabi: Mich fasziniert das Erleben des arktischen Jahreszyklus, der Rhythmus. Die großen saisonalen Unterschiede sind vielleicht einer der wichtigsten Gedanken zum Norden – je größer der Unterschied zwischen Sommer und Winter, desto erfüllender empfinde ich den Norden. Ich studiere biologische Rhythmen, also die Veränderungen nicht nur der physikalischen Bedingungen (Licht, Tageslänge, Temperatur, Luftfeuchtigkeit, Niederschlag, Wind, Sonnenstand), sondern die damit verbundenen

Veränderungen der belebten Welt. Die großen arktischen Migrationen, die Artenexplosion im arktischen Frühling, das wahnwitzig beschleunigte Brüten, Gebären, Wachsen und, kaum erwachsen, auf den Winter Vorbereiten in der kurzen Wachstumsperiode des (sub)arktischen Frühlings – nur möglich durch 24 Stunden Licht. Auf Spitzbergen ist die tägliche Sonnenenergie, die pro cm² in 24 Stunden auf den Erdboden fällt, höher als am Äquator, z. B. in Kenia. Schwer vorstellbar und doch die treibende Kraft, die es für einen kleinen Vogel wie den *Großen Knutt* (der mit 145 Gramm gar nicht so groß ist) sinnvoll macht, zwei Mal im Jahr die Strecke Australien – Sibirien zu fliegen (Gill et al. 2008). Es ist unter anderem diese Eigenart des Nordens, die mich fasziniert und hierhergeführt hat.

Lilli: Seit ich hier bin, hat das Erleben von Licht, Wind und Niederschlag für mich eine ganz neue Bedeutung gewonnen. Hinzu kommt die Wahrnehmung von Tönen und Klängen. Inwiefern wird für dich der Fortschritt des Jahres durch die Wahrnehmung von Soundscapes, die ja sehr von Vögeln mitbestimmt werden, geprägt?

Gabi: Die Artenexplosion der nacheinander ankommenden Langstreckenzugvögel wird von den Kindern und mir jedes Jahr ab April aufs Genaueste notiert und auch von den Bewohnern im Balsfjord bewusst gefeiert. Alle feiern den ersten Austernfischer, der verspricht, dass der Frühling auch dieses Jahr kommt. Wenn die Brachvögel, Bekassinen, Rotschenkel, Seeschwalben, Sterntaucher usw. alle zusammen im Balz- und Brutgeschäft laut und unermüdlich ihre Partner rufen und Nachbarn warnen, dann ist kein Zweifel mehr am Sommer – auch, wenn's noch ein bisschen schneit. Im August verstummen diese Stimmen langsam und fast unscheinbar und dann zieht auch das Licht sich bald merkbar wieder in die wachsenden Nächte zurück. Im November kommt die dunkle Zeit (*norw. mørketid*), in der nur noch das leise Ohuuuh der Eiderenten weit draußen im Fjord in der Finsternis zu hören ist. Dann kommen die Stürme und wie in Ågots Anfangskapitel, sitzen wir 100 Jahre später auch hier im Balsfjord um den Ofen rum, oft fällt der Strom aus, und wir lauschen dem Toben des Nordwindes und hoffen, dass auch dieses Mal das Haus mit seinen alten Brettern und dünnen Fensterscheiben noch einmal durchhält – bitte – und ich frage mich wie verletzbar Christiane sich in ihrer kleinen Bretterbude in Spitzbergen gefühlt haben muss – und wie wichtig so ein kleiner Holzofen plötzlich für die Definition von „Mensch“ sein kann, wenn rundherum die Natur in aller Herrlichkeit und Schrecken tobt. Doch dann folgt immer wieder schneegedämpfte Stille und nur manchmal hört man wie die Insel Tromsøya ihre Anwesenheit leise in der Balsfjord Nacht verkündet.

Ågot: Geschieht es manchmal, dass der Wind den Glockenklang über die Landzunge zu uns herträgt, dann eilen wir alle hinaus in die Dunkelheit, um zu lauschen. Wir hüllen uns in Pelze – horch, ein schwacher Ton wird sachte zu uns hinübergetragen – ein milder Klang - und wir stehen ganz mäuschenstill da, um keinen Ton zu verlieren. Während wir so stehen und lauschen, kann es geschehen, dass das Nordlicht zu flammen beginnt. Ja, im Süden kann sich niemand denken, wie schön das Nordlicht hier oben ist. (Gjems Selmer 1925, 74). Sie hasten empor, leichte, feine, zitternde

Lichtstrahlen, die gleichen guten Gedanken, die immer mehrere zugleich kommen – einer lockt den anderen mit – plötzlich gleiten sie zusammen und werden zu einem breiten Band, einem strahlenden Lichtweg, der sich mit der Schnelligkeit des `Blitzen um das ganze Himmelsgewölbe schlingt. (ebd. 75) Welch strahlende Farben! Es kann [...] Rot, Grün und Blau hervorzaubern, in launenvollem Spiel züngeln sie in tausend Strahlen über den ganzen Himmel – immer neu und überraschend (ebd.).



Abb. 8: Aquarell von Christiane Ritter ohne Tittel. ©Christiane Ritter. Foto: [DigitaltMuseum/Svalbard Museum](#). Für die Verwendung des Bildes bitte Stiftelsen Svalbard Museum kontaktieren.

Christiane: Was du in Sprache ausdrückst, versuche ich in meinen Bildern zu übersetzen. Warum schreibt man überhaupt so wenig von den großen Übergangsstadien in der arktischen Natur, die so, zeitlich genommen, die Hälfte des Polarjahres ausmachen? (Ritter 2017, 91).

Gabi: Das Licht ist wohl eines der wichtigsten Elemente im Erleben des Nordens. Zehntausende von Touristen strömen jedes Jahr in den Norden, um die Polarlichter zu erleben. Mich interessieren mehr die Extremen des polaren Lichtes, das Spektrum, die Intensität und vor allem die Tageslänge (Photoperiode). Ich erforsche wie die jahreszeitlich schwankende Photoperiode die rhythmische Physiologie und das ebenso

rhythmische Verhalten der Tiere kontrolliert (Aktivität, Ruhe, Fell- und Federkleid, Körpertemperatur, saisonale Änderungen des Körpergewichts, des Metabolismus, Wanderungen, Navigation, Überwinterung, Reproduktion usw.).

Eines der grundlegendsten Experimente um die Eigenschaften von biologischen Rhythmen (z. B. Pittendrigh 1954) zu untersuchen, die ihren Ursprung *im* Organismus haben (also nicht eine Reaktion auf die Umwelt sind), ist den jeweiligen Organismus in eine unrythmische Situation zu versetzen, also zum Beispiel einen Vogel bei konstantem Licht ohne Nacht zu halten (z. B. Gwinner & Brandstätter 2001). Im experimentellen Zusammenhang wirkt das krass – aber hier, so hoch über dem Polarkreis, ist das monatelang im Jahr ein natürlicher Zustand. Für mich ist die Arktis ein riesengroßer experimenteller Spielplatz ungläublicher Möglichkeiten.

Jenseits meiner beruflichen Fragestellungen an den arktischen Sommer und Winter liebe ich die persönliche Erfahrung der Lichtextreme – jedes Jahr wieder. Auch hier intensiviert der saisonale Gegensatz das Sein im Augenblick. Nach der Dunkelheit im Winter erfahre ich die Sonne zuerst als Anwesenheit von scharfen Schatten in einer farbigen Welt, so anders als die grau-diffusen Mondschaten der *mørketid*. Die Freude über den ersten Schatten im Jahr, der - wohlgemerkt nur bei geeignetem Wetter - für ein bis zwei Minuten zu sehen ist, versteht man erst nachdem man drei Monate in Dämmerlicht und Dunkelheit gelebt hat.

Christiane: Das Besondere des Nordens liegt für mich in der Wiederkehr des Lichtes, im Zauber des Eises, im Lebensrhythmus der in der Wildnis belauschten Tiere, in der ganzen hier in Erscheinung tretenden Gesetzmäßigkeit alles Seins (Ritter 2017, 188). Man muss hindurchgegangen sein durch die lange Nacht, durch die Stürme und die Zertrümmerung der menschlichen Selbstherrlichkeit. Man muss in das Todsein aller Dinge geblickt haben, um ihre Lebendigkeit zu erleben (ebd.).

Ågot: Oft schickten wir Gedanken in den Süden zu all unseren Lieben im Sonnenschein – aber doch – unseren schönen Fjord mit seiner weißen Stille [...] für die Unruhe und den Lärm der Stadt hingeben – nein – das wollen wir nicht (Gjems Selmer 1925, 88). Mir fällt auf, dass beide das gängige Bild vom unwirtlichen, einsamen, dunklen Norden widerspiegeln. Mit deiner Rückkehr nach Wien jedoch, bestätigst du, Christiane, wieder die stereotype Vorstellung des Nordens als unwirtlich, einsam und dunkel. Der Norden scheint aus der Sicht Mitteleuropas ein anderer zu sein als aus der Sicht der hier lebenden Menschen.

Christiane: Ja, zurück in Wien sah ich plötzlich wieder die Weltferne und Dunkelheit (ebd. 190) des Nordens, der immer einsamer und enger, und wilder werden würde, je höher hinauf (Ritter 2017, 15) man kommt.

Gabi: Trotzdem gibt es alles in allem mehr Licht als Dunkelheit hier – zum einen genießen wir den Luxus der Mitternachtssonne zwischen Mai und Juli; selbst davor und danach, wenn die Sonne nachts wieder unter den Horizont sinkt, ist die Zeit um Mitternacht immer noch hell erleuchtet, da die Sonne eben nicht weit unter den

Horizont sinkt – das ist die Zeit der bürgerlichen Dämmerung (civil twilight), in die Menschen auch ohne künstliches Licht noch lesen kann. Selbst in der *mørketid* (November bis Mitte Januar), wenn die Sonne nicht über den Horizont kommt, ist es hier in Tromsø nicht richtig dunkel – der „Tag“ ist klar im Dämmerlicht zu erkennen und die Farben dieser Zeit gehören zu den Schönsten im Jahr. Viele Reisende sind enttäuscht, dass es in Tromsø (im Gegensatz zu Svalbard) gar nicht richtig dunkel wird im Winter.

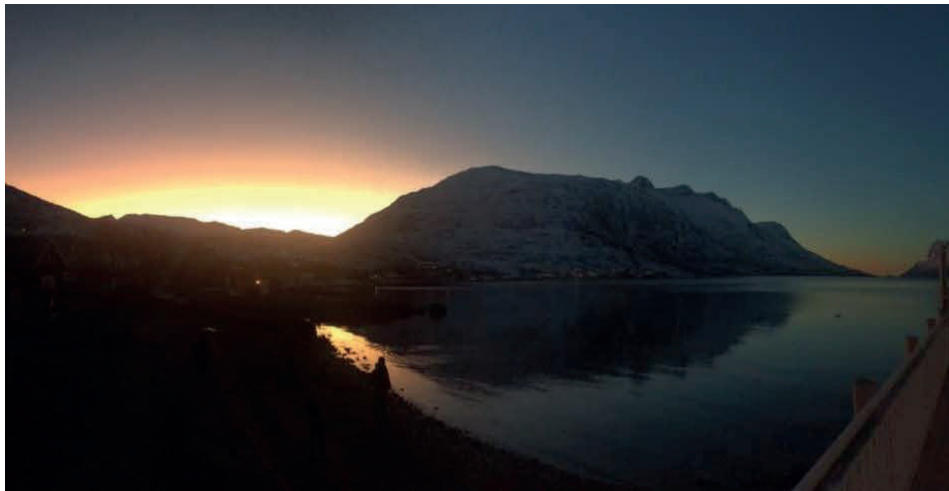


Abb. 9: Wintersonnenwende am Ersfjord 21. Dezember ©Lilli Mittner [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Bedeutungen des Nordens

Das übergeordnete Ziel dieses Artikels war es mit Hilfe der dramatischen Montage einen Dialog zwischen zeitlich und disziplinär getrennten Denkräumen zu ermöglichen. Ein zentrales Resultat der Methode ist das Erschaffen von Zwischenräumen und die Aufmerksamkeit für Übergänge. Im Oszillieren zwischen sich bewegender Standpunkte verändert sich das Erleben von Rhythmen, Klängen, Licht, Temperaturen, Gerüchen und Farben von Landschaften, Menschen, Tieren, Pflanzen und den Relationen zwischen ihnen. Das blaue Licht in Ritters Aquarelle erhält plötzlich eine biologische Dimension für eine Kulturwissenschaftlerin, die Einsamkeit auf der Strecke zwischen Mo i Rana und Bodø eine kulturwissenschaftliche Dimension für eine Biologin. Die bedrohliche Dunkelheit wird zum reinen Farbenspiel, die Stille nach dem Sturm wird zur Lebendigkeit des Lebens.

Dabei ist uns bewusst, dass Erinnerungsarbeit zu jedem Zeitpunkt eine zentrale Rolle spielt – wir erinnern unsere Gespräche, unsere Reaktion auf die Bücher und unsere Erlebnisse im Norden. Dasselbe gilt für die beiden Autorinnen, mit denen wir in ein imaginäres Gespräch führen. In dem Quartett schafft sich jede „ihre eigene Arktis“, wobei die Relationen zwischen uns zur Bedeutungskonstruktion beitragen. Die komplexe Konstellation besteht hier darin, dass aus zwei disziplinären Perspektiven

Bezug auf zwei Texte genommen wird. Der interdisziplinäre Dialog findet ausgehend von zwei Texten statt, die bereits in sich eine Vielzahl von Perspektiven und Widersprüchen beinhalten, um dem bürgerlichen Publikum Mitteleuropas den Norden anschaulich zu vermitteln. In der dramatischen Montage werden diese Texte abermals gelesen und wiederum in eine neue Textform transformiert.

Unser gemeinsamer Denkraum, den wir uns in diesem Artikel geschaffen haben, macht es möglich, gleichzeitig ganz unterschiedliche Perspektiven nebeneinander zu montieren. Gemeinsames Lesen setzt voraus, dass wir dualistisches Denken vermeiden und stärker auf die Vernetzungen unserer Wissenspraktiken fokussieren. Nur dann wird grenzüberschreitendes Forschen tatsächlich möglich.

In der gemeinsamen Arbeit wurde deutlich, dass der Norden auch immer das Andere ist. Christiane Ritter macht sich 30 Jahre nach Ågot Gjems Selmer auf die Reise in den Norden und beschreibt eben jene Alltagshandlungen (wie kochen, backen und haushalten) wie Gjems Selmer 30 Jahre zuvor 1000 Kilometer südlicher. Der weibliche Blick, mit der Fremdheitserfahrung der Marginalisierung vertraut, bietet hier einen von zahlreichen möglichen Zugängen. Im Sinne von Mitschaffenden werden die Lesenden dieses Textes Teil der hier geschaffene Denkräume, die neue Sichtweise auf den Norden eröffnen mögen.

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THE IMAGINARY NORTH IN FINNISH COMICS ON MIGRATION

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Abstract

This article analyses three comics published in Finland that are focused on migration and offer differing insights into the representation of ‘the north’: Pentti Otsamo’s *Kahvitauko* (2012), Leen van Hulst’s *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* (2011) and Lauri Ahtinen’s *Elias* (2018). These albums are both representative of the field in general and unique with respect to their treatment of the connections between place and migration. The analysis of the imaginary north is structured around the three tropes of the northern suburb, the northern climate, and the northern natural environment. What is common to them all is a construction of the north as a place without clear limitations and as an amalgamation of various relationships.

A central aspect of what a place is in the globalized world is that it constitutes a meeting place. In *Kahvitauko*, the drinking of coffee is used to show how ‘north’ and ‘south’ are connected on a global scale. In *Elias*, the symbols of the north, the snow, and the bear, are tied together with Afghanistan. *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* provides another viewpoint, as it lacks the representation of xenophobia. Read in parallel with the other two comics it not only shows that migrants of different kinds are treated differently, but also highlights how a place such as the north is defined in different terms depending on reasons for migration, race and ethnicity, and privilege in general.

A place is precisely a place for articulation of networks of meanings, experiences, and people. In addition, the three albums are posited in the broader field of Finnish comics on migration. This is carried out with a focus on how the very concrete places in the comics in the field are named and visually anchored.

Keywords: *North; Migration; Comics; Place; Finland*

Introduction

In this article we examine what ‘the north’ means in the context of Finnish comics about migration to the country. Most comics located in Finland would, of course, provide material for an analysis of the medium-specific imagination concerning ‘the Finnish north’, but we consider the comics on immigration to Finland an especially apt corpus as they highlight and focus on the place that is Finland precisely as a meeting place. According to geographer and social scientist Doreen Massey (1991; 1995), a central aspect that defines a place in the globalized world is that it constitutes a meeting place for various activities. A place is precisely a place for the articulation of networks of meanings, experiences, and people. In a globalized world places are marked by the various global flows forming the landscapes of our imaginations, namely, according to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996), the ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, finanscape, and ideoscape. In this setting, places are not static, nor do they have clear-cut boundaries or identities (Massey 1991). According to Massey, places

can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a larger proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent (Massey 1998, 21).

The lack of a definitive or essential identity of a place, however, does not imply the absence of the specificity of the place. Places, indeed, are specific, but this is due to an articulation that momentarily ties together various networks and flows.

Places constitute one aspect of the building blocks of migration stories, the other central ingredient being the people on the move. Both places left behind and places arrived at, as well as places in between (on an escape route, for instance), on the one hand, affect the meanings attached to migratory movement and the migrant, and, on the other hand, gain meaning as people leave and arrive, stay, and move onwards. Stories of migration work with the dynamics of difference and sameness, between people en route and rooted people (individuals can of course move from one category to the other), and between the meanings of places. The flow of humans – the ethnoscape – traversing places gives rise to new articulations, and changes the specificity of a place. This is true of geographically real locations, imagined regions, and spaces such as ‘the north’, as well as the places represented in stories such as comics on migration.

There is currently an international boom in migration-themed comics (see Rifkind 2018). While this is certainly also reflected in Finnish comics, the number of comics representing immigration to Finland is not yet very high, but there is already significant variation in the field, which is also reflected in the choice of material for the analysis presented here. The rise in the number of asylum seekers reaching the EU and Finland in 2015 sparked the publication of a number of comics and made migration topical in the comics field (see Kauranen et al. 2019).

Our analysis focuses on three comics published in Finland. They are all, in their own ways, focused on migration and offer differing insights into the representation of the north in this genre. They are both representative of the field in general and unique with respect to their treatment of the connections between place and migration.

Pentti Otsamo’s *Kahvitauko* (Coffee break, 2012) is a dreamy everyday story of a very mundane theme, having coffee (Figure 1). It is not a migration-themed comic in the sense that it describes a protagonist’s travels, escape, or movement from one place of residence to another. Rather, migration plays only a minor role as it is represented mainly in the form of an immigrant character that the comic’s protagonist encounters. The theme is also articulated in the comic in a scene in which the main protagonist is served free coffee by anti-immigration protesters. The setting in the album is a generic northern suburb, in which the idea of the north is put into question by both migration as a phenomenon and coffee as a sign of the connectivity of north and south.

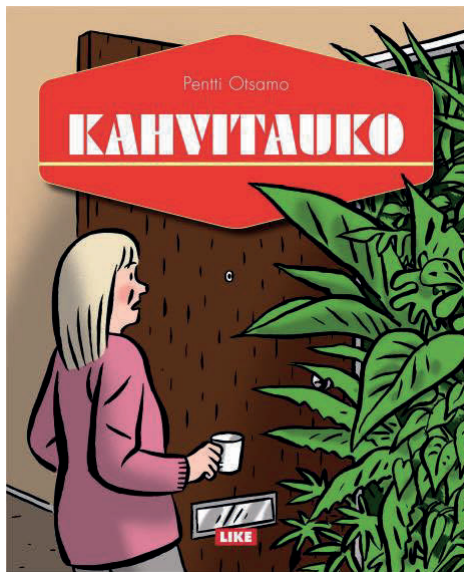


Figure 1. Pentti Otsamo, *Kahvitauko* (2012), front cover.

Leen van Hulst's bilingual *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* (2012) is a story of student mobility (Figure 2). The creator, van Hulst, is Belgian, and her comic was first published in 2011 in Dutch in Belgium. The story depicts the author's experiences as an exchange student in the south western town of Turku, Finland, and the bilingual translation to Finnish and English was published by the Comics Association of Turku. European exchange students make up a group of migrants on their own as compared to, for example, refugees, and the north reveals itself as a very different construct to each of these groups.



Figure 2. Leen van Hulst, *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* (2012), front cover.

The third comics album that we focus on is Lauri Ahtinen's *Elias* (2018), the story of a young Afghan Hazara refugee's immigration to Finland (Figure 3). Contrary to the story in *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*, the protagonist Elias's situation is extremely precarious. Still, the natural environment of the north, including its mythical fauna,

brings some sense of wonder to Elias, just as it does to Leen in *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*. The comic *Elias* highlights the shift that occurred in comics on migration in the late 2010s as it reflects the sudden arrival of increased numbers of asylum seekers in Finland as well as elsewhere in Europe from 2015.



Figure 3. Lauri Ahtinen, *Elias*, (2018), front cover.

Our analysis of the imaginary north in these three comics is structured around the three tropes of the northern suburb, the northern climate, and the northern natural environment. How these themes form the understanding of the north varies due to their different ways of approaching migration as a phenomenon. What is common to them all, however, is a construction of the north as a place without clear limitations and as an amalgamation of various relationships. The north itself is formed by the people traversing it, by their perspectives as they are conveyed in the comics, as well as by the depictions of the sceneries constituting the northern places in the comics.

In the following section we will posit the three albums in the broader field of Finnish comics on migration. We will do this with a focus on how the very concrete places in the comics in the field are named and visually anchored. A central dimension in this is the question of realism or referentiality. This is connected to both genre conventions and to forms of intertextuality as part of representation. Comics are fictional and documentary and everything in between. There is no absolute correspondence between a work's belonging to a genre and its treatment of place. Many a fictional work takes place in a real-world setting and even documentary comics often fictionalize various elements, for example, for the protection of vulnerable informants. Referentiality in comics is a form of intertextuality: places in comics are, for example, named with the same proper names as outside the storyworld, and places are visually depicted with reference to, for instance, real-life city views, public art works, and so on. In comics, where the story is constantly placed somewhere, not all places are referential in this sense. As a basically visual art form, events and characters' actions in comics are drawn

for the reader to see. There are, of course, exceptions to this, as a comics panel may show a close-up of something not situated in an environment, or an inner vision of a character, but as a general rule much of what happens in a comic is located somewhere, be that place sketchily drawn or presented in photographic detail. In this context, many places in comics are fictional, the result of an artist's imagination, even in a very realistic or documentary comic.

Setting the scene

The north of this article should be considered as a north under erasure. Although all the storyworlds of the comics discussed can be located in the north of the Mercator projection – they ‘take place’ in the northern part of the globe – we make this connection for the purpose of our argumentation. In other words, the geographical closure is arbitrary. However, all comics present the reader with their own, individual milieux. These places do not necessarily as such represent the north, other than being locations in Finland, a country situated in the northern hemisphere and being north of many locations on the globe. In this relative sense Finland is, of course, situated in the north for the majority of humans on earth. Illustratively, almost all of the migrants in the comics arrive in Finland from the south, that is, from a place of emigration south of Finland.

While a place is a relational, ever-changing articulation of various elements, the migrant's movement from, through, and to a place changes the character of the place or, indeed, what the place is. In comics depicting migration, the places that the migrant moves in are in many ways very concrete things. A place may be an airport, a room in a detention centre, a park in a town, a spot on a map, or more broadly a town or country that is named in the story. One aspect of these concrete places is related to their character as fictional or having a referential relation to the world and its places outside the comic's pages. For instance, Pentti Otsamo's story *Kahvitauko* takes place in a suburb that is not named or located in a specific city. Its connection to Finnish society is only explained once, in the depiction of anti-immigration protesters' placards, on which the word ‘Suomi’ (Finland) is written. Otsamo's comic represents the type of comics where migration as a theme is present in the form of a so-called immigrant character. These comics do not necessarily focus on how a character has ended up in the place, but make use of the dramatic function of the difference between characters.

One of the first immigrant characters in Finnish comics, and certainly the most well-known, is the Somali refugee character Muhammed Al-Zomal introduced in Tarmo Koivisto's long-running comic *Mämmilä*. First published episodically in a magazine and then collected in albums, the *Mämmilä* series (1975–2008, with some interruption in publication) follows the life and social change of a fictional Finnish small town called Mämmilä. The town is fictional, yet Finnish, and with some referentiality to the real-world town of Orivesi. Like Orivesi, Mämmilä is located in the province of Häme in southern Finland. The town can be described as the real protagonist of the comic. Referentiality, of course, does not end with the occasional geographical detail. For instance, the arrival of Al-Zomal in Mämmilä coincides with the arrival of the first Somali refugees in Finland in the early 1990s (see Koivisto 1992).

The real-world cities of Turku and Tampere are depicted in almost photographic detail in Toni Karonen and Harri Honkala's *Karim* (2014) and J. P. Ahonen and K. P. Alare's *Perkeros* (2013), respectively. *Karim* is a dystopian vision of an alternate 1990s

in the city of Turku. In the story, an economic recession has led to great social inequalities and an extremely insecure society, where the services and security offered by the state have withered away. The speculative story is tied not only to Turku, but also more specifically to one of its suburbs, Varissuo, where criminal immigrant and racist skinhead gangs fight with each other for regional power. *Perkeros* tells of an avant-garde metal rock band who sign a new lead singer, a man with a Turkish background whom they found working in the local kebab shop cum pizzeria. Aydin proves to be not only a heavy rock enthusiast and a dashing vocalist but also capable of using his pizza knife against the devil himself. The album contains several meticulous drawings of locations in Tampere.

Leen van Hulst's *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* and Lauri Ahtinen's *Elias* are comics where the journeys and movement of people play a more significant role than in the previously mentioned comics with so-called immigrant characters. *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* describes voluntary movement and a rather pleasant stay abroad. There are, perhaps, no other comics focusing on student mobility to Finland, but the comic may be connected to two Finnish comics that depict studies abroad from the perspective of a Finn moving to another country: Mari Ahokoivu's *Löydä minut tästä kaupungista* (2009; Find Me in this City, 2015) depicts loneliness in a strange city, whereas Wolf Kankare's eponymous protagonist *Miska Pähkinä* (2013) is an exchange student, who in Edinburgh processes issues of gender identity. *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* plays out in two Finnish locations, the city of Turku, again, and Luosto in Lapland where a group of exchange students, including the comic's protagonist, Leen from Belgium, go for a field trip. Despite its short duration, the trip to Lapland takes up a large part of the album. Travel is also present in a spread depicting scenery from above the roofs of Tallinn during Leen's brief visit there. Turku is presented in details, for example, posited on a map of the Nordic countries and in a couple of spreads that depict the pedestrian ferry that crosses the river Aura that runs through the city (van Hulst 2012, n.p.).

The afterword to van Hulst's album states that '[t]he people and places in this book are just as fictitious as the [sic] real life is. Therefore possible resemblances are not a coincidence'. This ambiguous statement can be related to the strong sense that the story depicted is more or less autobiographical or auto-fictitious. This sense of referentiality is partially created by the realistic depictions of places. *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*, however, shares this trait with *Karim* and *Perkeros*, which also offer the reader concrete viewpoints of Turku and Tampere and their landmark buildings. However, in these cases, the referential imagery only sets a realistic and, to some readers, recognizable scene for a fictional story.

With its strong autobiographical connotations, *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* is related to the genre of documentary comics, as outlined by comics scholar Nina Mickwitz (2016). Yet, as van Hulst's postscript and the realistic city views in *Karim* and *Perkeros* remind us, the dividing line between documentary and fiction is by no means unambiguous. Still, it is clear that those comics on migration that bear an affinity with the documentary mode of presentation are more likely to name the concrete places that are traversed by the migrants' movements.

While the memories of the protagonist take the reader to Afghanistan and to the route from there to Finland, Lauri Ahtinen's *Elias* takes place in northern Finland, in the city of Oulu. The place can be identified, for example, by the silhouette of buildings such as

an old church and by the recognizable and famous statue of a policeman (*Toripoliisi*, Kaarlo Mikkonen, 1987) situated in the pedestrian zone of the city centre.

Finnish comics on migration, and with immigrant characters, bring forth one aspect of the imagined places that are traversed by migrants' routes. These places in the comics' storyworlds are, especially in documentary comics, referential to and familiar from the outside world in many ways. Familiarity, of course, is dependent on the reader's existing knowledge. In all cases, except van Hulst's *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*, the implied reader is, based on publication context and language, to start with, the Finnish comics reader. This fact is also illustrated in the way one particular narrative trope is used in the comics. Maps are a frequent means of presenting a place or places to a reader, and in the Finnish comics maps are used to present and inform the reader about locations outside Finland. In van Hulst's comic, on the other hand, the Finnish city Turku is shown on a map of the Nordic countries.

The relevance of different places in a comic varies depending on whether a story's focus is on, for example, migrants' routes of travel or on their life after migration to a new environment. As is to be expected with a corpus consisting of Finnish comics on migration to Finland, Finnish places hold a prominent place in the comics analysed. These named places in Finland, be they the indirectly named suburb in 'Suomi' in *Kahvitauko*, the recognizable yet (auto-)fictional Turku in *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*, or the city of Oulu in the fact-based and in many ways fictional comic *Elias*, these localizations only provide one way of describing the environment for migration. What these places (in the comics) in fact are is a much more complex issue. One thing that adds to the complexity of these places and to their character as articulations of networks is their relation to 'the north'.

Put another way, setting the scene in Finland, in a real location such as the city of Turku or in a fictional suburb, only provides a starting point for an analysis of 'the north', which becomes visible in the ways these settings are characterized in the comics. These characterizations and the imagined norths are presented in the comics in different ways. They are, for example, made visible in the imagery and they are related to the reader with insight into the minds and feelings of the migrant characters of the comics. There are, however, a number of core thematics in these comics, through which the north as an imagined place is represented.

In the following sections, we will approach the imaginary north through three particular tropes that frequent Finnish comics on migration. These analyses will be based on three case studies of three comics albums, but the analyses are strengthened by some references to other comics. Firstly, we will focus on the suburb as a place representative of an idea of the north. In this section, the main focus is on Pentti Otsamo's comics album *Kahvitauko*. Secondly, another perspective on the construction of the north is offered by the climate and especially the natural phenomenon of snow. In this case, the main focus of analysis is on Belgian Leen van Hulst's *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow*. Finally, the third case study approaches the north through the representation of the natural world, in both concrete and mythical terms. Our analytical focus here is on Lauri Ahtinen's comic *Elias* (2018), in which a centrepiece in the narration is a bear, a natural animal of mythological significance in the Finnish and northern context.

The northern suburb

Pentti Otsamo's comics album *Kahvitauko* is a story over sixty pages long of a very ordinary situation, although it takes the reader over vast distances. The story depicts a mother, who, after having put her young son to sleep for his afternoon nap, desires a cup of coffee. The peaceful afternoon is disturbed by the realization that she has run out of coffee (Figure 4). Having pondered the solution to this problem she rushes out of the apartment, and as she is nervous about leaving the boy home alone she is visibly in a hurry when running to the nearest supermarket to purchase some more coffee. Queuing for the cashiers in the supermarket, the mother can no longer stay away from her son, whom she has imagined in different kinds of danger. Without a package of coffee she rushes back home, only to find her boy still peacefully asleep.



Figure 4. Pentti Otsamo, *Kahvitauko* (2012), p. 9.

The mother again rushes to the shop, only to realize, when it is time to pay for the coffee, that she has no money in her purse. Inspired by a bum outside the supermarket, she tries to beg for some money, but she is only driven away by a security guard. She now discovers the booth of a political group offering free coffee to promote their message. It turns out the message is one of anti-immigration and nationalism. Ready to enjoy the coffee (despite the messages on offer) the woman on her way meets a neighbour, a man of colour. Ashamed of the politics of her coffee, the woman throws it away, not to be discovered by the neighbour (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Pentti Otsamo, *Kahvitauko* (2012), p. 25.

Back home, she still has not had any coffee. She decides to approach her neighbours in her block of flats, and ends up at the home of the immigrant man she met previously. While there, the police rush in because of the suspected cultivation of cannabis. At this point the story takes a turn to the more fantastic: the woman is frightened by the police raid and rushes to hide among the neighbour's plants (that probably are not related to drugs). His rich collection of plants turns into a jungle where the woman stumbles upon a root, falls to the ground and loses consciousness.

On the following page a woman working on a coffee plantation gains consciousness after having fallen over a root. The comic now follows her work harvesting and roasting coffee beans. She and her friends put the coffee pot on the fire, but before she gets to enjoy the drink she falls asleep. A lion walks by her, indicating that we are in an African, coffee-cultivating country. Turning the page, the reader is taken back to the woman in the Finnish suburb. She wakes up on the bed where she put her son to sleep at the beginning of the story. The young son, however, is gone. He, now an adult man, comes to the bedroom bringing his mother a cup of coffee. It turns out the whole story to this point has been a dream, dreamt by the now elderly mother.

Kahvitauko cannot be described as a migration-themed comic in the sense that it depicts a migrant's travels, but it highlights the issue with the presence of both an immigrant character and the anti-immigration protesters in the story. Both are rather recent figures in Finnish comics. Their presence in *Kahvitauko* point to Finnish society in general and the Finnish suburb in particular as a multicultural setting where people of different backgrounds and experiences meet and interact.

The suburb in Otsamo's comic is both generic and particular. It is an area with apartment buildings, a playground, and some trees and bushes. The story starts in the

winter or late autumn when there are no leaves on the trees. The garments of the people outside also attest to the weather being a bit chilly. Based on all this, one could conclude that the comic's suburb is a generic northern European suburb. As was noted earlier, the nationalist protesters' signs tell the reader that the action takes place in Finland.

The suburb in *Kahvitauko* can, however, by no means be described as exclusively Finnish: it is precisely a meeting place for cultures and peoples from around the globe. It is also a place where north and south meet. In Finland immigrant populations generally settle in the larger towns, and often also live in the suburbs dotted around the city centres (Vaattovaara et al. 2010). The multiculturalism of Otsamo's suburb therefore is realistic, although it, of course, is also a narrative choice and the result of the storyteller's artistic vision. It is interesting to note that some short story comics by Otsamo also take place in suburbs and include significant protagonists representing people of colour and a so-called immigrant background (see the stories 'Elämää sota-aikaan' (Life in wartime) and 'Joonas täyttää 25 vuotta vuonna 2000' (Joonas turns 25 in the year 2000) in the collection *Eedenistä pohjoiseen ja muita kertomuksia* (North of Eden and other stories); Otsamo 2012a). Otsamo's work thus clearly attests to a wish to broaden and diversify the gallery of characters in Finnish comics.

The Finnish and Nordic suburb is historically a meeting place. The housing projects and garden suburbs in the urbanizing Nordic countries and the emergent welfare states were a solution to the influx of agrarian populations to the Nordic cities (Porfyriou 1992, 269). Often more affordable than living in the city centres, the suburbs in Finland, for example in Helsinki and in Turku, have attracted significant shares of inhabitants of migrant background (Rasinkangas 2013). Also, the immigrant-populated suburb has become a cultural trope repeated in the media and by xenophobes wanting to point out how problematic immigration is. *Kahvitauko* points at the tensions in the multicultural suburb, with its representation of racism, both in the anti-immigration protesters' pamphlets and, perhaps, in the actions of the police.

The more sensationalist imagery concerning the suburb is, however, lacking in *Kahvitauko*. In this context, the suburb of *Kahvitauko* can be compared to the one depicted in Karonen and Honkala's *Karim*. This story of speculative fiction is located in the Turku suburb of Varissuo, where immigrant and racist skinhead criminal gangs fight each other. The back cover of the *Karim* album plays with the fears and fear-mongering concerning the immigrant-populated suburbs: a colourful burning car is accompanied by a text addressing and challenging the reader: 'Welcome to Turku. Hopefully you'll survive the experience.' (Karonen and Honkala 2014, back cover.)

It is not only migration that defines the northern suburb in *Kahvitauko*. What is most significant for our understanding of this comic as a representation of the north is coffee, and the turns that the story takes around this beverage. The fictional story centres around the enjoyment of coffee, a most ordinary habit in Finland and the other Nordic countries, and the crisis of not being able to maintain this mundane custom. In this regard the north as place is a result of various articulations, and a place without clear boundaries. The northern suburb is here a place where various trans-social networks are tied together (Gielis 2009), or, to use another term, it is translocal (Dirlik 2002, 232; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013). Both 'trans-social' and 'translocal' have been suggested as alternative concepts to the 'transnational', which is, perhaps, too tied up with the level of national belonging or the nation as a place and construct (Pollari et al. 2015). As the networks in *Kahvitauko* suggest, the northern suburb connects, through

migration and coffee, the global and the local, while the national level is also present in the form of the nationalist demonstrators.

The main protagonist's dream sequence within a dream sequence, depicting her vision of African women harvesting coffee and working on the raw material for the Finnish suburban inhabitant's relaxation and pleasure, brings Africa and the global south to the concept of north depicted in this comic, and thus, gives meaning to this northern suburb. The mundanity of coffee in the northern context is questioned by the portrayal of coffee as a global product. The traditions of how coffee has become a part of the north are also pointed out in the comic, which in one panel shows the imagery on the side of the coffee-yearning woman's empty coffee jar (Otsamo 2012b, 9; figure 4). The image of a monochromatically black (dark brown in the colours of the comic), exotic 'African' woman holding a steaming hot equally exotic coffee pot on offer is a reference to the colonial past, still present, in many ways, in 'northern' culture (Rastas 2012). This image from the woman's jar also comes to her mind when she approaches her immigrant neighbour. His appearance, perhaps, his skin colour and headgear remind her of the image from the mundane object in her home. This is a strong reminder of how conceptions of racial difference and racialization have developed in the Finnish context, where, for example, popular culture and consumer goods have edified the citizens as to how the peoples of the world look and are. The exotic woman of the coffee jar also resembles, to some degree, the 'African' women in the protagonist's dream. The main character in this dream has a similar headgear and as remarkable an earring as the woman depicted on the coffee jar. Still, the dream sequence lacks the exoticizing character that is associated with the object in the Finnish woman's home (Figure 6). The women in the dream sequence live as mundane a life as the dreamer herself in the Finnish suburb. They go on with their lives, they have their fair share of worries, and they all look forward to having a cup of coffee. Also, the graphic depiction of the women in the dream is not as simplified as the depiction on the coffee jar. The skin tones of the women in the dream are more varied, with areas of white and lighter and darker brown that outline facial forms and bring out the contrasts of light and shade. In its depiction of coffee harvesting women in the dream sequence, Otsamo's *Kahvitauko* avoids the pitfalls of stereotypical racialized representations (Gardner 2010). The normalcy of the women's actions, their personal characteristics, the colouring of the comic, and the suggested similarity between lives in a dreamed African surrounding and a Finnish suburb all contribute to this.



Figure 6. Pentti Otsamo, *Kahvitauko* (2012), p. 54.

The opposition and relation between north and south, through which both components gain meaning, is further accentuated in a scene where the woman, approaching her neighbours for some coffee, is denied help. The negative response is in no way unfriendly. Instead, the neighbour, dressed hippie-style in a Paisley shirt and remarkable necklace, offers the woman a bag of dried and grounded root of the *Taraxacum officinale* plant, more commonly known as the common dandelion. This flower, which grows in North America and Europe, has occasionally been used as replacement for coffee in Finland since the 19th century, but was especially significant during World War II and the post-war years, when the consumption of coffee was regulated in the country. The local plant is contrasted to coffee in the narration, the result of which is yet another reminder to the reader of the opposition between north and south as well as the connectivity between the two, embodied in coffee drinking in the north.

Snowy climate

The cover of Leen van Hulst's *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* (2012) shows the auto-fictional protagonist of the album, Leen, lying on the frozen surface of sea (Figure 2). The same picture can be found inside the album in a spread (n.p.). The figure of Leen has its arms and legs spread out on the snow as if she is hugging the sky above – or making a snow angel (i.e. moving the arms up and down in order to leave the mark of an angel's wings on the snow). The following spread shows the view of the protagonist, the blue sky with white clouds and an airplane, a trope of mobility, with a white tail appearing in the corner. Two panels portray her directly from above: one of them is a 'full shot' showing the whole body, while the other one is a close-up portrait of her face.

The accompanying words tell that she is thinking of a girl she has fallen in love with. Thus, the natural phenomenon of snow and the icy surface covering the water provide a background for the protagonist's reflections. On the one hand, she is trying to figure out how to talk about her feelings to a person she is fond of, while on the other hand, the posture implies a deeper existential dimension: the empty space between the frozen sea and the open sky can be interpreted as a liminal passage from one phase of life to another. The whole experience of being an exchange student in a foreign land can be seen as a turning point in her life. The north will definitely present her with a new point of view.

In the course of history, the north has certainly been represented by European travellers as a *tabula rasa* on which a wide range of pursuits and aspirations have been projected. In their article on the Austro-Hungarian Arctic expedition in 1872–1874, Ulrike Spring and Johan Schimanski (2015, 14) suggest that the Arctic represents a 'symbolic resource for national or state identity formation and the different images of nature in the Arctic indicate different ways of legitimizing such symbolic exploitation'. One of the topoi that Spring and Schimanski find is the 'empty Arctic', that was used as a justification of a peaceful Austrian conquest of a seemingly vacant area (Spring and Schimanski 2015, 18). Correspondingly, the 'empty spaces' of northern nature and climate in van Hulst's comic function as a setting for Leen's emotional life and her identity formation as an exchange student and a young woman in love.

Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow opens with a sequence of an airplane arriving in Finland. A view from inside the plane is seen through a window displaying the wing and an engine. The land she arrives at is covered by patches of snow. The colour white, often in greyish and bluish shades, is predominant in the album. In addition, the colour white is in focus when Leen encounters one of the Finnish peculiarities displayed, together with snow, in the title of the album: the fact that people drink lots of milk.

Because the album is made by, and describes the point of view of, an outsider in Finland, it is evident that anything abnormal to her experience catches her eye as a newcomer. There is, for example, an image of a car attached to an electric socket for heating, that, although a mundane practice in Finland in winter, is presumably a new sight for the Belgian narrator-protagonist. In addition, there is a picture of a person fishing through a hole in the ice covering the sea, which may be an unusual sight for a newcomer to the north. In this sense, the milk and snow mentioned in the comic's title are signifiers of strange new phenomena that Leen encounters in Finland. Leen, who is a student of art, takes photographs of her friends and objects that arouse her curiosity. However, her main target of interest does not lie in Finland as a tourist site or geographical entity, but rather in the people who are her fellow exchange students. This becomes obvious when a group of exchange students from various European countries take a field trip to Lapland.

The trip includes typical tourist activities such as skiing and a visit to a reindeer farm. On their social evening, Father Christmas pays them a surprise visit. Although Father Christmas appears in several panels, Leen states that she is not really paying any attention to him since she is thinking about a conversation with an Irish girl she has just met. Leen is also challenged to take part in a 'snow swimming' competition in which she is the last one to finish. Leen does not comment on the experience but she seems to be quite content with it. All in all, the trip to Lapland is more about the relationships between the students and not about getting to know Lapland. Indeed, most of the panels

display interiors, the place where they sleep and party, and there are fewer pictures of their activities outside. She is evidently more interested in the people than in the surrounding countryside.

The central thematic of *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* is Leen's crush on a fellow exchange student, the Irish girl Gill. Leen is not able to express her emotions to the other girl, and the love goes unanswered. As the back cover of the comic states, it is a 'story about impossible love' (van Hulst 2012, back cover). The empty landscape offers Leen a space in which to ponder her feelings of loneliness and the melancholy of unanswered affection. The spread in Figure 6 shows Leen lost in her thoughts, in solitude in the grey and rather gloomy city of Turku, when she has heard that Gill's boyfriend has come to Finland for a visit.

Leen is in Finland as an exchange student for a relatively short period of time. When compared to the other comics discussed in this article, *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* stands out precisely because of the status of its protagonist. For Leen, Finland is a place for adventure, a place to take a break from her normal life in Belgium and to be overcome and have time to explore her emotions in a new setting that seems to provide her with plenty of space to explore her feelings of love and solitude. Overall, she seems to settle down quite easily. In the beginning, she wonders about the Finnish habit of drinking milk with meals, and later on she is shown buying a milk carton from a shop for herself (n.p.). The north seems a thoroughly positive experience for her: the snow and ice, the cold weather, the whiteness of the landscape all appear as exotic and pleasant – and definitely not frightening or unwelcoming. Then again, the landscape covered by snow, and especially the frozen sea, functions as a metaphor of her condition of being an outsider or stranger as well as of her emotional state. Perhaps the emptiness and monotony of certain landscapes in Finland represent to her, a Belgian who is presumably more accustomed to crowds of people and the visibility of the built environment, something uncanny.

Many of the larger panels in van Hulst's comic represent exteriors. It is as if the snowy and icy wintery landscape demands a larger picture frame than, for example, the different interiors in which the story often takes place (Figure 7). The panel size thus has a rhetorical function and the changes in size accentuate the large, open, deserted and wintery spaces that the exchange student from a fellow EU country experiences in the north. In this context, the north, with its seasonal changes during the academic year depicted, is a place that infuses a sense of wonder and puts the imagination to work.



Figure 7. A spread from Leen van Hulst, *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* (2012), no pagination.

Leen's experiences in *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* are reminiscent of the experiences of the German Sabine, whom the reader encounters in Filippa Hella's short, eponymous comic, published in the *Mitä sä täällä teet? Tarinoita maahanmuutosta* anthology on stories of immigration to Finland (2016). Sabine's story, based on an interview with her, describes her reasons for her migration to Finland as based on love (with a German man living in Finland). Also in this story the wonder of nature and open spaces is impressively present. For Sabine, at first, the seaside is a place of pleasure and comfort but when the autumn arrives her relation to the blackening expanse of the sea changes dramatically: 'I stand on the waterfront and find out how the great darkness is coming. Darkness that consumes all colors around me.' (Hella 2016, 69) Again, natural scenery is presented in larger panels than other occurrences in the story.

Nature and myth

Despite the xenophobia that Elias, the main protagonist of Lauri Ahtinen's graphic novel of the same name, encounters, the somewhat mystic nature of the north is not only overwhelming, it also provides him with a sense of relief and familiarity in an extremely precarious situation. Elias, a Hazara youth from Afghanistan, has arrived in the city of Oulu in northern Finland. He, like so many others, has applied for asylum in the country: 'Waiting for the asylum decision is like living in two places at the same time.' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.) Ahtinen's comic is an impressive take on the feelings that a person in this situation might go through, or, perhaps more to the point, goes through, as the work is based on research and interviews with asylum seekers and experts in the field (Ahtinen 2018, back cover).

The documentary character of the comic, however, is overshadowed by Ahtinen's open-ended style in which, for example, the tensions between word and image are often played out as to problematize any clear-cut interpretations. The visual world of the book is also very rich on metaphoric images and intertextual references. In addition, the sequentiality in the conventional, linear flow of narration from one panel to another is every now and then broken by whole-page images of a collage-like character. These narrative devices are effective as a strategy for conveying to the reader the feelings of insecurity, fear, and confusion felt by the story's main character.

Elias takes place in several locations. The story begins with a description of refugees' travel across the Mediterranean. This location is revealed with an intertextual image of the three-year-old Syrian boy Alan Kurdi who drowned in the Mediterranean and whose body washed ashore on the Turkish coast. Some pages in the story take the reader to Afghanistan and the world left behind by Elias. Both the turbulent history of Afghanistan and Elias's travel from there are depicted in maps. The narration, however, takes place in a now, situated in Oulu. The I-narrator Elias introduces himself to the reader a few pages into the story, and says: 'I made it all the way here, to the northernmost corner of Europe, half a year ago.' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.)

Oulu is present as city views, named cafés, landmark architecture, and public art, familiar (to the knowing reader) from outside of the storyworld. Such visual ingredients add to the comic's realistic feel, as do images of recognizable Finnish right-wing populist politicians (from the True Finns party) voicing their anti-immigration sentiments. These characters and their words are part of the milieu that make Elias's life insecure and filled with fear. Elias feels lost and strange in his new surroundings,

while the terrors he has escaped from also haunt him. The new place should feel safe, but it does not, both because of his past experiences and the current situation in Finland.

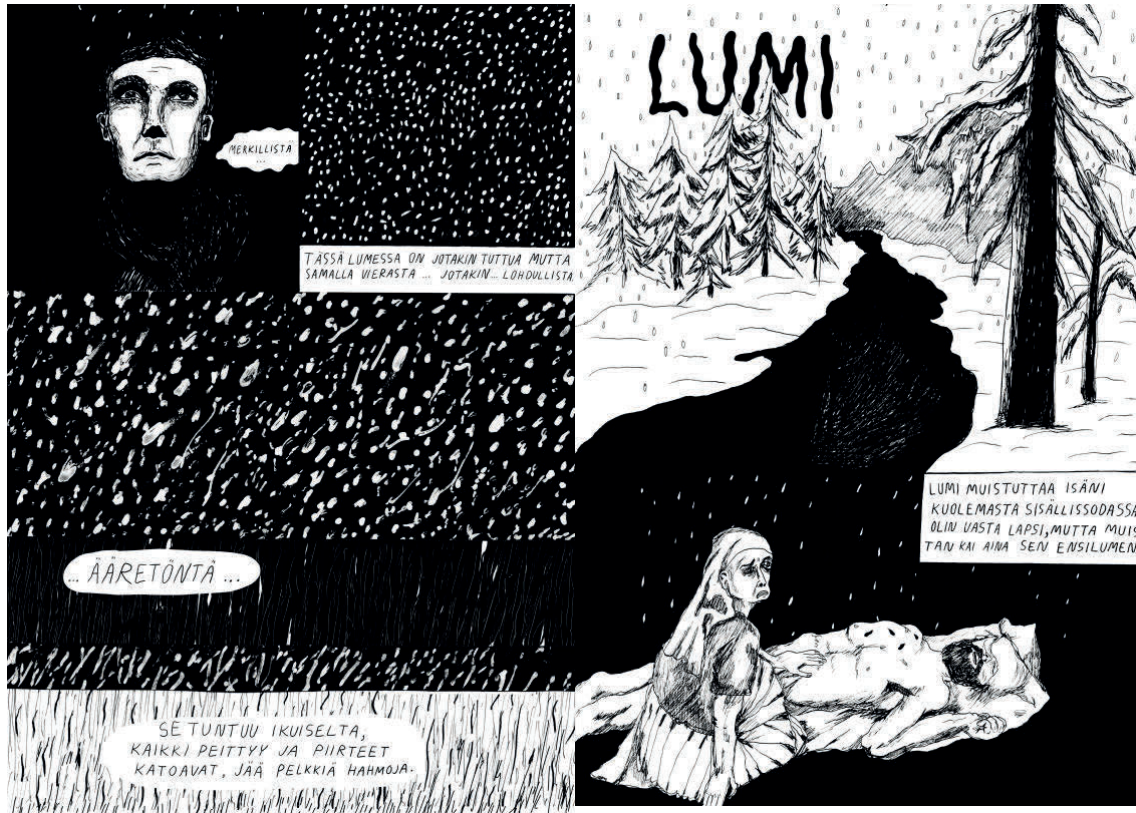
In this situation, the natural world, both in real and in mythological terms, provides Elias with some relief. The two central aspects of the northern natural environment that somehow have a soothing effect on Elias are snow and a bear. Although these are elements that clearly tie Elias's storyworld and experiences to a mythical north, they are, in Ahtinen's comic, not only related to the north. Instead, they are used to highlight the networked and translocal character of place in the north.

In a key moment in the narrative, the focus turns from the threatening aspects felt by Elias in his new hometown – the memories of war and escape, the negligent attitude of his co-residents, and the threatening discourse of populist politicians – to a more peaceful depiction of falling snow. In a three-page sequence – a two-page-spread and the following page – a male figure representing the sources of hostile racist slurs turns into a rolling snowball that at the turn of the page turns into part of a snowfall. The narration explains some of the visual sequence: 'When a person is empty, it is easy to fill his mind with hate. It is like a rolling snowball that absorbs more and more as it rotates downhill, in solitude...' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.)

The subsequent scene with the falling snow breathes calmness (Figure 8). While the images, including Elias's face, perhaps, are not unambiguously serene, the linguistic narration suggests serenity: 'How odd... There's something familiar, yet strange, about this snow... something... comforting ...infinite... It feels eternal, everything is covered and features vanish, all that remains is shapes.' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.) The familiar yet strange snow triggers Elias's memory. It reminds him of his first encounter with snow connected to the, perhaps, vanishing and featureless memory of the death of his father in the civil war in Afghanistan. The element of snow, a symbol of the north, is, after all, common for both Elias's current, northern place of living and his childhood home in the global south. The snow connects the two places. This may, of course, come as a surprise to the Finnish reader, but snow is not uncommon in mountainous Afghanistan.

In connection to the snow, Ahtinen depicts a number of images from Finnish national Romanticist paintings and their imagery based on the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. The two figures in the bottom of the right-hand page are the dead Lemminkäinen and his mourning mother. *Kalevala's* Lemminkäinen is a fair young man as well as a womanizer. His mother fished out his body parts from the river Tuonela that separates the dead from the living. The river depicted in Ahtinen's comic connotes the river Tuonela, as the depiction of the dead man and the mother is based on Finnish national Romanticist painter Akseli Gallén-Kallela's famous painting *Lemminkäinen's Mother* (1897), in which the mythical river runs behind the lying man and the seated mother. On the following page Elias's reminiscences of his father's death and the snow continue: 'How everything at first was black and noisy until the snow covered the sounds, colours and the chaos. All that was left were the light and the shapes of memories, silence.' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.) Elias's linguistic narration is accompanied by further references to Finnish national Romanticist paintings: again to Gallén-Kallela's *Lemminkäinen's Mother*, but also Magnus Enckell's *Boy with Skull* (1893) and Eero Järnefelt's *Under the Yoke (Burning the Brushwood)* (1893). While the reference to the latter may be read as an allusion to economic hardships or a difficult life more generally, the boy and the skull are more directly related to the boy Elias and his dead father. All in all, the intertextual references depict death and mourning, and in relation to Elias's disclosure

of his father's death, tie together, just like the snow, human experience in different places, in the Afghanistan of civil war and a Finland described in mythologically nationalist terms.



A few pages further on in the narrative, another transition from a frightening situation to a more soothing nature-based experience occurs. This time the panic-stricken Elias runs into a forest. Whether this is something that only happens in his mind or in the storyworld's reality is open for interpretation. In the forest, he meets a talking bear, the first of a few national Finnish animals he is to encounter or imagine.

The presence of the bear, as a fantastic speaking figure, can be interpreted as a reference to northern bear cults and mythology. In Finland, bear mythology can still be found in both regional and national imagery (Pentikäinen 2005). The bear is a figure that ties the young refugee man to a place in the north, but this connection is not developed further to, for example, references to the different powers that have been ascribed to the bear in the regional mythology. The national connotation, however, is clear: the bear is the national animal of Finland. The bear in *Elias* is nonetheless a powerful creature that offers Elias some consolation in his desperate situation. The bear speaks to Elias and with the bear Elias is able to speak 'quite proper Finnish', as he himself notices (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.). The bear is familiar with Elias's troubled situation and offers him words of wisdom. The bear notes that the strange land that he has arrived in will become familiar to him and advises him that he must 'remember to live' (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.; Figure 9). In a surprising phrasing the bear notes that his words

may appear a bit ‘coelhoesque’. The bear’s reference to the Brazilian, globally bestselling author Paulo Coelho, whose novels are rife with grandiloquent symbolism and whose *The Alchemist* is described as ‘more self-help than literature’ by one *New York Times* critic (Cowles 2009), reminds the reader in a self-ironic fashion of the transnational or prenatal character of myths in general and national animals in particular.



Figure 9. Lauri Ahtinen, *Elias* (2018), no pagination.

The bear reappears to Elias at the end of the story. Before this sequence, Elias has described his dreams of becoming a Finn: ‘free as a wolf’, ‘Finnish as a (northern) pike’ and as ‘noble, beautiful’ as a swan (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.). Again, the presented nationalist Finnish connotations of these animals are questioned. Elias explains that he has been taught in his Finnish language and culture classes that the swan is the ‘national bird of Finland’ and wonders why he needs to know this. In addition, the wolf depicted on the page wears a collar with the text ‘Liberté égalité [sic] frat[...]’, thus placing the animal in both a revolutionary internationalist tradition and in connection to the republic of France.



Figure 10. Lauri Ahtinen, *Elias* (2018), no pagination.

In the final meeting with the bear, it again reminds Elias of the importance of living his own life: ‘It is precisely what it is. Just do what you can.’ (Ahtinen 2018, n.p.) In the following sequence Elias receives a letter with the decision on his application for asylum from the Finnish Immigration Service. Through violent imagery (a hard-hitting fist, a crying face, a roaring bear) the message is shown to be a negative one, which drives Elias to dive into the sea, from which he is pulled up by a bear’s paw. As Elias surfaces the bear wanders off and its face transforms into Elias’s face (Figure 10). The boy and the bear and their metamorphic and intermingled character opens up for different readings. Firstly, the conclusion offers to the reader a vision of the national animal of the northern country of Finland having resided in the Afghan Hazara boy. This is a strong proposal, again, that the identities and boundaries of places and people are to be questioned and cannot be interpreted in a clear-cut fashion. Secondly, the bear as a national symbol turns its back on Elias, which may be seen as a metaphor for the policy of the Finnish Immigration Service, representative of the government of that time. One could say that the policy and the negative decision on Elias’s application denies his value and being as a human, a human worthy of government protection. Thirdly, the final panel on the page depicting the bear’s metamorphosis into Elias again contains an intertextual reference, this time to Michelangelo’s *The Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel. The comic thus suggests that Elias’s life does not end with the decision of the Finnish Immigration Service, and instead he as a result becomes (a) man. He is even reborn, which the symbolism of Elias diving into water and resurfacing

might suggest. On the following page the new man's feet are shown walking out of the top border of the page. Water is dripping from his upper body situated outside the page, and after him are left, instead of human footprints, the traces of a bear's paws. The motto following the image induces hope: 'I know I can survive anything. I am a wanderer.' The motto is ascribed to the name 'Jobe', perhaps one of the asylum seekers interviewed by the comic's creator. Elias wanders on, and leaves behind the Finnish bear, which during the asylum seeking process has become a part of him, yet has abandoned him.

Conclusions

In the previous sections we have analysed three tropes of the north as it is imagined in Finnish comics on migration. Pentti Otsamo's comic *Kahvitauko*, a tale of migration only in the sense that it makes use of a so-called immigrant character, builds on an idea of the northern suburb. Leen van Hulst's *Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow* rests on a perception of a north marked by a geographically defined climate and the related snow and ice. In Lauri Ahtinen's *Elias* the north again is marked by the natural world, both in more concrete and in mythical terms. Despite the differences in the storyworlds, and the characters, events, and actions that take place in them, the cultural frames of the north in terms of particular ways of life in a particular natural environment are quite clear.

What, however, is of paramount significance in our reading of the north in these comics is the fact that the north as a place (while tied to some cultural frames) is a meeting place for different networks of relations. An obvious dimension, given our choice of material, that is, comics on migration to Finland, is the presence of characters of various cultural, ethnic, or national backgrounds. But the relational character of the north is not limited to this kind of multiculturalism or to the meeting of different people in this setting. It is also, particularly in the cases of *Kahvitauko* and *Elias*, more convoluted: in *Kahvitauko* the drinking of coffee, often considered a mundane Nordic practice, is used to show how 'north' and 'south' are translocal or connected on global scale. In *Elias* the symbols of the north, the snow and the bear, are tied together with Afghanistan and the protagonist representing the Afghan Hazara minority. Snow ties together the different locations and their cultures, whereas the bear, the Finnish national animal, resides in the 'foreign' refugee man.

The mixed quality of places and characters is a strong humanistic or cosmopolitan reminder to the reader emphasizing common humanity despite superficial differences. This reminder is even stronger when situated in the context of racism, xenophobia, and extreme nationalism, as happens in both *Kahvitauko* and *Elias*. As stories of migration, they clearly state that the northern milieux, however mixed or relationally constructed in character, are also unwelcoming to the migrant or to one perceived as a newcomer or stranger.

Maitoa ja lunta / Milk and Snow provides another viewpoint, as its protagonist is a white EU citizen and the story lacks the representation of xenophobia. Read in parallel with the other two comics it not only shows that migrants of different kinds are treated differently, but also highlights how a place such as the north is defined in different terms depending on, among other things, reasons for migration, race and ethnicity, and privilege in general. Even a natural phenomenon such as snow, epitomizing a cliché of the north, changes in meaning depending on dynamics of privilege and inequality.

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DER NORDISCHE FREMDE: HISTORISCHE UNTERSUCHUNG DES MEDIALEN SCHWEDENBILDES IM HEILIGEN RÖMISCHEN REICH (1500–1721)

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Abstract

Until the beginning of the 17th century the north was a rather unknown and abstract space for the average German-speaking recipient of early modern mass media (for example illustrated broadsheets, newspapers, pamphlets). During the course of the 17th century due to Denmark's and Sweden's participation in the Thirty Years War, the northern regions became a central topic in early modern mass media and therefore forced the recipient to be more aware of it. In the course of the second half of the 17th century the northern kingdoms became less important for the publicists of the Holy Roman Empire and instead they laid their focus on the politics of the French and of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the image of northerners and their stereotypes, which had been introduced to the German-speaking readers over the course of the Thirty Years War, lived on until the beginning of the 18th century. Nevertheless, the Great Northern War (1700–1721) brought the people from the northern regions back into the media landscape of the Holy Roman Empire and about the same time the illustrated broadsheet – an almost antiquated genre of mass media that had struggled with the upcoming of the new modern genre the 'newspaper' – experienced a kind of a renaissance.


The aim of this article is to describe how the northern region, with focus on Sweden, was depicted in early modern mass media between the 15th and the 18th centuries. I will show the continuities and changes of the visual and textual representation of the 'northerners' and 'Sweden' in early modern mass media, which were published in the Holy Roman Empire between around 1500 until the end of the Great Northern War in 1721.

Keywords: *illustriertes Flugblatt; Zeitung; frühneuzeitliche Massenmedien; Dreißigjähriger Krieg; Großer Nordischer Krieg*

Introduction

Bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts war der Norden für die Mehrheit der durchschnittlichen, deutschsprachigen LeserInnen frühneuzeitlicher Massenmedien (Flugblätter, gedruckte Zeitungen, Messrelationen) ein abstrakter und unbekannter Raum. Die nordischen Königreiche Dänemark und Schweden wurden im Verlauf des 17. Jahrhunderts auf Grund ihrer Beteiligung im Dreißigjährigen Krieg für den Großteil des deutschsprachigen Lesepublikums ein zentrales Thema, mit dem es sich gezwungenermaßen auseinandersetzen musste. Im Zuge der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts verschwand das publizistische Interesse an die nordischen Königreiche aber allmählich und die deutschsprachigen Medien setzten sich stattdessen intensiver mit dem Osmanischen Reich und Frankreich auseinander.

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Die, in den frühneuzeitlichen Massenmedien vermittelten Medienbilder und damit einhergehend die Stereotype über die Bevölkerung der nordischen Regionen, die sich im Zuge des Dreißigjährigen Krieges etabliert hatten, lebten im weiteren Verlauf des 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschsprachigen Raum weiter. Der Große Nordische Krieg (1700–1721) katapultierte die nordischen Königreiche, insbesondere Schweden, aber zurück in die deutschsprachige Medienlandschaft. Gleichzeitig erlebte auch das totgeglaubte Massenmedium „illustriertes Flugblatt“ eine kurze Renaissance, nachdem es im Zuge der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts auf Grund des aufstrebenden Mediums „Zeitung“ hinsichtlich der Anzahl von herausgebrachten Exemplaren eindeutig zurückgegangen war.

Nach einer Skizzierung der zentralen Charakteristika des Flugblatt-Mediums und einer anfänglichen Introduction über das mediale Bild des Nordens vor 1600, soll in den darauf folgenden Kapiteln ein Überblick über die Darstellungsvariationen der nordischen Bevölkerungsgruppen geliefert werden, die ab etwa 1600 bis zum Ende des Großen Nordischen Krieges im Heiligen Römischen Reich vorherrschend waren. Das „Schwedenbild“ wird dabei als repräsentatives Beispiel herangezogen, indem frühneuzeitliche Massenmedien (insbesondere illustrierte Flugblätter) in Hinblick auf die Kontinuitäten und Brüche der visuellen und textuellen Darstellung Schwedens und dessen Bevölkerungsgruppen (Schweden, Finnen, Sami etc.) analysiert werden. So wird in diesem Beitrag davon ausgegangen, dass insbesondere das illustrierte Flugblatt, bedingt durch dessen visuelle und textuelle Kommunikationsebene, als meinungsbildendes Medium das Potenzial besaß, den Großteil der mentalen Bildvorstellung im Heiligen Römischen Reich – also die Bilder in den Köpfen der lesekundigen und leseunkundigen RezipientInnen – maßgeblich zu beeinflussen.

Das illustrierte Flugblatt als Produzent von mentalen Bildern

Das illustrierte Flugblatt hatte vor allem im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert seine große Blütezeit. Es war auf Grund der textuellen Kompaktheit, der vergleichsweise raschen und einfachen Vervielfältigungsmöglichkeit sowie auch bedingt durch die Symbiose der Bild- und Textebene von Anfang an prädestiniert für Propagandazwecke und wurde von der protestantischen sowie auch katholischen Publizistik im Heiligen Römischen Reich als meinungsbildendes und stimmungsmachendes Medium genutzt. So wurden anhand sprachlicher und visueller Bilder Flugblatt-Propaganda betrieben, um die Politik des Anderen zu schaden bzw. die Politik des Eigenen zu stärken. Der Umstand, dass die textuelle Ebene des Flugblattes meist sehr kompakt war und auch dass sie in Versform angeordnet war, lässt sich dadurch erklären, dass besonders beliebte rhetorische Bilder und Textinhalte von Ausschreibern und Krämern vorgesungen wurden (Schilling 1990, 40f.). Auch durch Bänkelsänger in Wirtshäusern und in Zusammenhang mit Stadt- und Dorffesten wurden Texte, die nicht selten in Form von beliebten Volksliedern vertont waren, ausgesungen. Der visuelle Charakter der Flugblätter darf bei den illustrierten Flugblättern ebenso nicht außer Acht gelassen werden, da auf diese Weise ein analphabetisches Publikum angesprochen werden konnte (Wolke, Larsson und Villstrand 2006, 313). Die Kupferstecher, Verleger, Autoren und allgemein die Flugblatt-Publizistik benutzten deshalb im Zuge von panegyrischen und satirischen Schilderungen von

Personen und Gruppen oft biblische Anspielungen und Themen, die von der städtischen sowie auch dörfischen Bevölkerung – deren Alltag größtenteils von kirchlichen Rhythmen und Zyklen geprägt war – verstanden und als glaubhaft wahrgenommen werden konnten (Tschopp 1991, 254). Auf diese Weise konnten einfache visuelle und textuelle Botschaften auch ganz subtil und unterschwellig die mentalen Bilder und Vorstellungen der RezipientInnen beeinflussen (Talkenberger 1994, 297).

Viele Arbeiten und Abhandlungen haben sich mit der Rolle des illustrierten Flugblattes während der Reformation (Schäfer, Eydinger u. Rekow 2016; Beyer 1994; Kastner 1982; Scribner 1994) sowie auch während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges (Bangerter-Schmid 1986; Pfaffenbichler 1985; Emich 2009; Tschopp 1993) auseinandergesetzt. Die zweite Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts – mit Ausnahme der „Türkenkriege“ (Hollenbeck 1999, 111–130; Scheutz 2016; Pietsch 1968) bzw. der Rivalität zwischen Frankreich und dem Heiligen Römischen Reich (Lüsebrink und Reichart 1996) – wurde in der Flugblatt-Forschung bislang eher stiefmütterlich behandelt. Für die erste Hälfte des 18. Jahrhundert gibt es de facto keine Forschungsliteratur, die sich mit der Gattung der illustrierten Flugblätter auseinandersetzt. Eine Reihe an ForscherInnen legte hier verstärkt den Fokus auf das Medium „Zeitung“. Die gedruckte Zeitung¹ war im Gegensatz zum illustrierten Flugblatt, welches zufällige und ereignisabhängige Einzelinformationen behandelte, durch eine Periodizität geprägt (Würgler 2013, 35f.). Spätestens ab der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts hatte die Zeitung das illustrierte Flugblatt als jenes Medium abgelöst, das dem Anspruch eines Massenmediums im modernen Sinn genügen konnte, weswegen sich hinsichtlich der Anzahl herausgebrachter illustrierter Flugblätter ein eindeutiger Rückgang verzeichnen lässt (ebd., 33). Den Konkurrenzkampf mit der periodischen Zeitung konnte das illustrierte Flugblatt auf lange Sicht nicht gewinnen. So erscheint es auch nicht verwunderlich, dass das illustrierte Flugblatt von HistorikerInnen und MedienforscherInnen eher selten herangezogen wird, wenn es um die Berichterstattung bzw. Darstellung spezieller historischer Ereignisse geht, die in den zeitgenössischen Medien der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts behandelt wurden. Erst die zweite Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts fand bei HistorikerInnen und MedienhistorikerInnen – in Zusammenhang mit der Berichterstattung über den Siebenjährigen Krieg (Schort 2006), der Amerikanischen Revolution (Brednich 1992) oder der Französischen Revolution (Kunze 1989) wieder vermehrt Beachtung.

Schon früh wurde von Seiten der Geschichtswissenschaft beobachtet, dass das schwedische Königreich in deutschsprachigen illustrierten Flugblättern des 17. Jahrhunderts im Heiligen Römischen Reich rezipiert und thematisiert wurde (Milch 1928). Der amerikanische Flugblatt-Forscher John Roger Paas hat nachweisen können, dass etwa die Hälfte aller im deutschsprachigen Raum herausgebrachten illustrierten Flugblätter, die im Jahr 1632 an den Medienmarkt gelangten, sich direkt oder indirekt auf Schweden bzw. Gustav II. Adolf beziehen (Paas 1996, 223). Im Zuge der Flugblatt-

¹ Das Jahr 1605, im welches der Strassburger Drucker Johannes Carolus (1575–1634) vom Strassburger Rat das alleinige Privileg zum Druck der gebündelten Nachrichten als regelmäßige Zeitung herauszubringen bewilligt bekommen hatte, wird hierbei zumeist als Geburtsstunde der Zeitung im modernen Sinn betrachtet.

Forschung wurde sowohl die pro- als auch die anti-schwedische Darstellung Schwedens bzw. Gustav II. Adolfs in deutschsprachigen illustrierten Flugblättern vielfach thematisiert (Paas 1996; Sedlmayer 1967; Tschopp 1993; Harms 1985; Hämmerle 2019a). Die Berichterstattung und Inszenierung Schwedens bzw. schwedischer RegentInnen in den Medien der zweiten Hälfte des 17. und der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts, fanden ansonsten erstaunlicherweise kaum Beachtung (Forssberg 2005; Sandstedt 1984–1986; Schumann 1998; Wrede 2004; Wåghäll Nivre 2008 oder auch Wåghäll Nivre 2010). Über die Analyse der Berichterstattung Schwedens bzw. der schwedischen RegentInnen in deutschsprachigen illustrierten Flugblättern, die in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts sowie auch in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts publiziert wurden, gibt es bislang keine bekannte Abhandlung.

Die Problematik des „Norden“-Begriffes für die Geschichtswissenschaft

Umgangssprachlich kommt es heutzutage oft zu Überschneidungen der Begriffe „Norden“ und „Skandinavien“. Während Skandinavien geographisch lediglich die beiden Länder Norwegen und Schweden beschreibt (=skandinavische Halbinsel), gibt es außerdem einen erweiterten Skandinavien-Begriff, der Dänemark inkludiert. Bei historischen Untersuchungen aber ist es durchaus sinnvoll, auch Finnland zu diesem Gebiet hinzuzuzählen, da Finnland und Schweden eine mehr als 500 Jahre lange gemeinsame Geschichte teilen. Eine Untersuchung des skandinavischen Raumes sollte somit auf jeden Fall auch den finnischen Raum miteinbeziehen (Schot-Saikku 1997, 27f.; Engman 2002). Auch die Regionen Ingermanland und Livland, die sich im heutigen Baltikum befanden, sollten bei historischen Untersuchungen bis zum Ende des Großen Nordischen Krieges und dem Friedensschluss von Nystad am 10. September 1721 mitgedacht werden (Hämmerle 2019b).

Der Norden-Begriff ist ebenso durch eine starke Ambivalenz geprägt: Einerseits beschreibt er in Bezug auf die Himmelsrichtungen – komplementär zu den übrigen Richtungen Süden, Westen und Osten – die Relation zwischen einem bestimmten Bezugspunkt und einem anderen Punkt auf der Erdoberfläche. Andererseits verweist der Norden-Begriff auf einen nicht klar abgegrenzten Raum, der durch sprachliche Gemeinsamkeiten² oder wirtschaftlich-politische, kulturelle und historische³ Verbindungen miteinander verbunden ist. Im Englischen wird in der Literatur unterschieden zwischen den Bezeichnungen „place“ und „space“. „Place“ kann dabei als

² Schwedisch, Dänisch, Norwegisch, Isländisch und Färöisch entstammen allesamt dem nordgermanischen Sprachzweig und teilen sich lange Zeit eine gemeinsame Sprachentwicklung, die zwar zu unterschiedlichen Varianten eines ursprünglich gemeinsamen „Urnordischen“ geführt hatte. Heutzutage verstehen sich lediglich Schweden, Norweger und Dänen untereinander, so lange diese ihre eigene Sprache in gemäßiger Form sprechen. Finnland, exklusive die Åland Inseln, wird bei diesem sprachlich definierten „Norden“-Begriff nicht dazugezählt. Zur gemeinsamen Sprachentwicklungen und den feinen Unterschieden der nordgermanischen Sprachen siehe (Kristiansen 1999) oder auch (Perridon 1997).

³ Norwegen, Dänemark, Schweden und Finnland waren zwischen 1397 und 1523 in der Kalmarer Union miteinander verbunden. Ab dem Ende der Kalmarer Union gehörte Finnland bis 1809 zu Schweden, während Norwegen bis 1814 zu Dänemark gehörte. Der Kieler Frieden am 14. Januar 1814 hielt fest, dass Norwegen zu Schweden (bis 1905) und Grönland, Island (bis 1944) und die Färöer Inseln zu Dänemark fielen.

ein eher statistisches Konzept und punktuell verstanden werden und wird aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Sicht als identitätsstiftender „Ort“ beschrieben, wohingegen „space“ als mobiler und wandelnder „Raum“ im Sinne eines nicht klar definierten Bereiches bezeichnet wird. Während daher der „Norden“ als Ort und Raum definiert werden kann, deutet die Verwendung des Skandinavien-Begriffes zumeist auf einen geographischen bzw. geologischen Blickwinkel hin und wird zumeist als Ort verstanden (Törnqvist 1997, 2–4; Lagerspetz 2003). In diesem Beitrag soll der Norden im räumlichen Sinn verwendet werden, basierend auf der Definition des französischen Soziologen und Historikers Michel De Certeau. Dieser beschreibt den Raum als etwas Dehnbares und Vages, das im Gegensatz zum Ort abstrakt ist. Den Ort hingegen beschreibt er vielmehr als einen eindeutig festgemachten Punkt, der für ein Individuum bzw. einer Gruppe von Menschen identitätsstiftend ist (Certeau 1988, 92, 218).

Bei historischen Untersuchungen kommt der Umstand hinzu, dass in frühneuzeitlichen Landkarten und in der Navigation man alternativ häufig von „Mitternacht“ statt vom Norden sprach, wobei man sich damit auf die Uhrzeit, zu welcher die Sonne im Norden steht (ergänzend zu den Regionen Orient=Osten, Mittag=Süden und Okzident=Westen), bezog. In zeitgenössischen ethnographischen Untersuchungen wurde aber zumeist über „Skandinavien“ geschrieben, das hingegen verdeutlichte, dass man sich mit einem geographischen bzw. geopolitischen Raum und nicht mit einer Himmelsrichtung per se auseinandersetzte. So wurden in deutschsprachigen Untersuchungen der nordischen Regionen zumeist Dänemark, Schweden und Norwegen und deren Einflussgebiete gemeinsam betrachtet. Historisch betrachtet war der Norden-Begriff daher von Anfang an ein schwammiger und undeutlich definierter Begriff (Harvard 2013). Dies kann auch in zeitgenössischen Kommentaren zu machtpolitischen Ereignissen erkannt werden, denn so sprach man bereits in frühneuzeitlichen Medien vom „Großen Nordischen Krieg“, obwohl an diesem neben Dänemark-Norwegen und Schweden-Finnland auch Russland, Polen, Sachsen und das Baltikum involviert waren. Wie sehr diese historischen Bezeichnungen noch auf uns einwirken, zeigt sich beispielsweise daran, dass man die russische Stadt St. Petersburg im deutschsprachigen Raum nicht selten als „Venedig des Nordens“⁴ bezeichnet. Eine Bezeichnung, die umgangssprachlich aber auch in Fachliteratur nicht selten für andere Städte wie Danzig (Fischer 2006), Stockholm, Hamburg, Kopenhagen oder auch Amsterdam verwendet wird.

Anhand der historischen Untersuchung können wir erkennen, dass der „Norden“ bereits in frühneuzeitlichen Quellen kein statisches, sondern ein flexibles und dynamisches Konzept war. Durch machtpolitische Entwicklungen konnten Räume neu bewertet und auch die (stereotypen) Eigenschaften, die mit der dort ansässigen Bevölkerung verbunden wurden, verändert werden. Auch die Vorstellung davon welche Regionen zu „Mitternacht“, „Skandinavien“ oder „Norden“ gehörten, war im Heiligen Römischen Reich nicht einheitlich, sondern von der politischen (Krieg–Frieden),

⁴ Siehe hierzu beispielsweise den Beitrag über St. Petersburg von Gorse, Christiane. 2019. «Russland. St. Petersburg». *Planet Wissen*, 21.11.2019, <https://www.planet-wissen.de/kultur/osteuropa/russland/pwiestpetersburg100.html>, zuletzt abgerufen am 02.02.2020.

geographischen (Norden–Süden) oder konfessionellen (katholisch–protestantisch) Situation im Heiligen Römischen Reich abhängig. Aufgrund der Tatsache, dass bis um etwa 1600 kein eigenes Schwedenbild vorherrschte, soll für die Zeit bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts ergänzend auch die mediale Darstellung des gesamten nordischen Raumes untersucht werden.

Im folgenden Beitrag soll die Bezeichnung „Norden“ verwendet werden, die eher den Raum beschreibt, der sich in vielen Punkten mit dem erweiterten Skandinavien-Raum deckt und so eine kulturelle, sprachliche bzw. wirtschaftlich-politische Einheit suggerierte, die aber oftmals de facto nicht zutraf. Unter „Norden“ werden somit die zwei nordischen Königreiche Dänemark und Schweden verstanden, wobei deren frühneuzeitlichen Interessens- und Machträume stets mitgedacht werden. Für die Zeit ab 1600 wird der Fokus aber auf das schwedische Königreich gelegt.

Das Nordenbild bis zum Beginn des Dreißigjährigen Krieges

Ein klares Bild davon, wie der nordische Raum bzw. dessen Bevölkerung eigentlich aussähe, hatte der Großteil der Bevölkerung im Heiligen Römischen Reich vor dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg wohl eher nicht. Bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg wurde das „Nordenbild“ in Form von Bildern, Karten, Reiseberichten, Druckgrafiken und schriftlichen Quellen bestimmt, die bereits bei Caesar und Tacitus benutzt worden waren, um die „Barbaren“ zu beschreiben. Bis zum 16. Jahrhundert war die Vorstellung vom Norden im Heiligen Römischen Reich eher wenig facettenreich, was auch darin zu erkennen ist, dass die ethnographischen Beschreibungen und geographischen Abhandlungen die drei nordischen Länder Schweden, Dänemark und Norwegen stets gemeinsam beschrieben. Die im Jahre 1493 in Nürnberg von Hartmann Schedel herausgebrachte „Schedel'sche Weltchronik“ ist ein Beleg dafür und illustriert schön, wie wenig man im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches über die nordischen Königreiche um 1500 wusste. Auf dem Blatt CCLXXX wird in der Schedel'schen Weltchronik über die drei Königreiche *Tennmarck* (Dänemark), *Schweden* und *Norweden* (Norwegen) geschrieben. Obwohl die Schedel'sche Weltchronik reich illustriert ist, werden die nordischen Königreiche visuell nicht dargestellt. Auf der Doppelseite CCLXXXV verso und CCLXXXVI rektro, somit gegen Ende der Weltchronik, ist aber zusätzlich eine Karte Europas abgedruckt, auf der auch Schweden, Dänemark, Norwegen, Finnland und Island abgebildet sind. Die Ostsee wird in diesem Beispiel interessanterweise als MARE GERMANICVM bezeichnet.



Abb. 1: Karte Europas und Teile Asiens in der Schedel'schen Weltchronik, 1493, von Hartmann Schedel.

Im Zuge des Beschreibungsteiles der Schedel'schen Weltchronik wird erwähnt, dass diese drei Königreiche gegen Mitternacht zu verorten sind. Schweden wird als Land beschrieben, das vollständig vom Meer umgeben ist und zu dem eine Reihe an Inseln gehören. Weiters heißt es zu einer diesen Inseln auch:

Vnder denen ist eine Scandania genant bey den alten geschichtschreibern langer gedechtnus. von dannen ein vnzallliche menig völcker außgeende ettwen alles Europam mit waffen beküمرت. die Gothas oder Hunos bestritten. Pannoniam Misiam Macedoniam vnd alle Illirische gegent belegert. Teütsche auch Welsche vnnnd Gallische lannd zerrüdet vnnnd sich zu letst in Hispania nydergelassen hat. von dannen her was der vrsprung (Schedel'sche Weltchronik 1493, CCLXXX).

Schweden wird somit als eine kriegerische Region beschrieben, die in direkte Verbindung mit den Goten gesetzt wird. Die Region „Mitternacht“ erhält in der Schedel'schen Weltchronik vergleichsweise wenig Beachtung und distanziert sich im Eigentlichen nicht von antiken bzw. alten Bildern „des Nordens“.

Als einflussreichste Quellen des 16. Jahrhunderts, die das „Nordenbild“ zu aktualisieren versuchten, sind an dieser Stelle die *Carta Marina* und die *Historia de*

gentibus septentrionalibus von Olaus Magnus⁵ anzuführen. Olaus Magnus, Kartograph und Kleriker sowie auch letzter Titularbischof von Uppsala, beschrieb 1539 in der in Venedig gedruckten *Carta Marina* den bislang eher unbekanntem nordischen Raum.⁶ Anhand einer naturkundlichen, ethnologischen und geographischen Gesamtdarstellung dieses Raumes, versuchte er gezielt, dem deutschen und italienischen Gelehrtenpublikum das Gebiet „des Nordens“ näher zu bringen, um somit den bislang bestehenden antiken Bildern entgegenzusteuern und das Nordenbild zu aktualisieren (Möller 2010, 73).



Abb. 2: Kartenausschnitt der *Carta Marina*, 1539, Olaus Magnus, Holzschnitt, Gesamtgröße 170 x 125 cm. Digitalisat der Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, online frei zugänglich unter: <http://art.alvin-portal.org/alvin/view.jsf?file=6964>, zuletzt abgerufen am 02.02.2020.

⁵ Olaus Magnus, eigentlich Olof Måsson, (1490–1557) war ein katholischer Geistlicher und musste nach 1527, als Schweden durch den Reichstag von Västerås von Gustav Vasa protestantisch wurde, das Land verlassen. Über Danzig ging es für ihn nach Rom, wo er bald feststellen musste, dass Schweden bzw. „der Norden“ in Rom den meisten unbekannt war. Er selbst hatte im Zuge von Reisen auch abgelegene Teile Schwedens und Norwegens kennengelernt und konnte zudem Kenntnisse bei der Erstellung von geographischen Karten vorweisen, indem er die Wege und Städte des Landes sowie auch die Fluss- und Seelandschaft kannte.

⁶ Diese im Jahre 1539 in Venedig gedruckte Karte sollte Grundlage für viele spätere geographische Darstellungen „des Nordens“ bilden, wie zum Beispiel für Gerhard Mercator, Abraham Ortelius oder Jakob Ziegler. Die *Carta Marina* und die *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, die dazugehörige Beschreibung, wurden auf Latein verfasst und wurden im Gelehrtenpublikum schon bald sehr populär. Die *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* wurde bald in weitere Sprachen, wie Französisch, Italienisch, Niederländisch und Englisch übersetzt und erschien im Jahre 1567 auf Deutsch.

Auch die 16 Jahre später herausgebrachte 22-bändige und reichlich mit Holzschnitten illustrierte *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* half maßgeblich, alte Stereotype zu revidieren bzw. neue Stereotype zu kreieren; teilweise wurden dadurch aber auch gewisse Bilder bestätigt. Olaus Magnus ging es alles in allem eher weniger darum, eine realistische Darstellung „des Nordens“ abzuliefern, sondern er wollte mit fantastischen Erzählungen über die übernatürlichen Begebenheiten, bei denen Menschen Feste in Häusern aus Walrippen feierten, legendäre Helden sowie auch Hexen lebten und Bären in Jungfrauen verliebt waren, Interesse bei einem Lesepublikum wecken.⁷ Zusätzlich wurde in der *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* auch über Magisches und Übernatürliches, wie Seeungeheuer und Meerschlangen, geschrieben und auf die Schwarzkünste und die Zauberei der Sami (Broomans 1997, 212–214) und FinnInnen eingegangen.

„Der Norden“ im Heiligen Römischen Reich Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts

Auf Grund der Tatsache, dass die Hanse⁸ und die deutschen Küstenstädte spätestens Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts die Kontrolle über den Handel in der Ostsee verloren hatten, konnten andere Territorialstaaten wie Polen⁹, Russland, Dänemark und Schweden in diese Interessenszonen nachrücken.¹⁰ Auf diese Weise näherte sich der nordische Raum dem Heiligen Römischen Reich auch wirtschaftlich, kulturell und politisch an.

Obwohl der Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches auf Grund der intensiven wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen nach Schweden, Dänemark und Norwegen wohl ein anderes Verständnis von diesem Raum hatte, vertrat der Großteil der deutschsprachigen

⁷ Siehe hierzu auch den Beitrag von Kurt Brunner, der darauf verweist, dass in der Karte durchaus Fehler enthalten sind. Beispielsweise ist am linken Rand der Karte die sagenhafte Insel Thule (*Thile*) zu erkennen. Siehe (Brunner 1990).

⁸ Bedingt durch die Blütezeit der Städtegründung und dem lukrativen Eisen- und Kupferhandel, hatten sich seit Ende des 12. Jahrhundert, vermehrt aber seit den 1250er Jahren, viele deutsche Händler im schwedischen Königreich niedergelassen. In Stockholm, Kalmar und Västerås stellten die Händler der Hanse bis zu einem Drittel der Bevölkerung und hatten dadurch auch einen großen Einfluss auf die Politik der Stadträte. Siehe (North 2007, 292). Über den literarischen Austausch des mittelalterlichen Skandinaviens und dem deutschsprachigen Raum siehe (See 1999).

⁹ Seit 1617 befand sich Schweden wieder im Krieg mit Polen, bei dem es zum einen um die ehemaligen Machtansprüche Polens auf die schwedische Krone ging und zum anderen um die Vorherrschaft an der Ostsee und um Livland. Der aktuelle militärische Konflikt mit Polen war zumindest bis ins Jahr 1600 zurückzudatieren und größtenteils im Thronanspruchszwist zwischen Karl IX. und dem polnischen König Sigismund begründet, der als Sohn Johann III. und Vorregent seinen Anspruch auf den Thron aufrechterhalten wollte. Siehe (Erbe, 2007, 72).

¹⁰ Die Voraussetzungen zum Aufstieg Schwedens in der Ostsee waren schon durch die beiden Söhne Gustav Vasas – Johann III. und Karl IX., dem Vater von Gustav II. Adolf – eingeleitet worden. Bedingt durch die staatliche Förderung von Bergbau, Eisenherstellung und Handwerk sowie auch des Exporthandels, hatte man eine Kriegsflotte geschaffen, welche es ermöglichte, die Ostsee sowie Gebiete im Baltikum zu erobern und Städte an der deutschen Ostseeküste unter direkten Einfluss zu bringen. Enge Handelsbeziehungen führte Schweden um 1600 herum mit den Niederlanden, England und den protestantischen Fürsten im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches. Unter der Regierungszeit Gustav II. Adolfs (1611–1632) unterzog sich Schweden einer Modernisierung durch mehrere innerstaatliche Reformen auf militärischer, politischer und wirtschaftlicher Ebene, die nach dem Tod Gustav II. Adolfs im Jahre 1632 zum Großteil unter dem schwedischen Reichskanzler Axel Oxenstierna fortgesetzt wurden. Siehe (Åselius 2010, 521).

Publizistik Anfang des 17. Jahrhundert noch ein sehr unkonkretes und undefiniertes Bild, wie „der Norden“ tatsächlich aussähe. Das beweist ein illustriertes Flugblatt aus dem Jahr 1620, das darüber berichtet, wie zwei dänische Reichsräte namens Wolff Rosensparr und Christian Holck, die sich als Gesandte auf dem Rückweg von einem Landtag in Norwegen nach Kopenhagen befanden, einen wunderlichen Meeremann aus dem Wasser gefischt hatten.

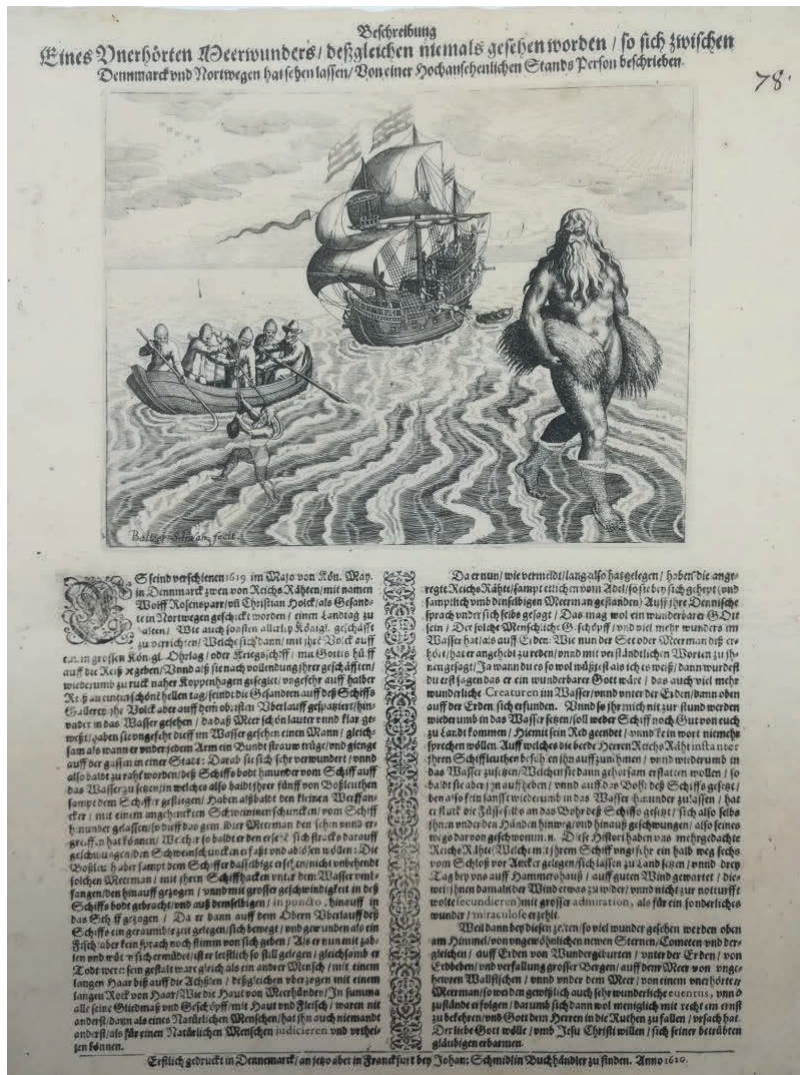


Abb. 3: Beschreibung eines Vnerhörten Meerwunders/ deßgleichen niemals gesehen worden/ so sich zwischen Denmarck vnd Nortwegen hat sehen lassen/ Von einer hochansehnlichen Stands Person beschrieben, 1620, Kupferstich, Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein Gotha, Kupferstichkabinett, G 44, 28.

So beschreibt dieses in Frankfurt von Johann Schmidlin herausgebrachte illustrierte Flugblatt, dass dieser Meeremann eine Mischung aus Seehund und Mensch gewesen sein muss:

sein gestalt ware gleich als ein anderer Mensch/ mit einem langen Haar biß auff die Achßlen/ desgleichen vberzogen mit einem langen Rock von Haar/ Wie die Haut von Meerhunden/ In summa alle seine Gliedmaß vnd Geschöpff/ mit Haut vnd Fleisch/ waren nit anderst/ dann als eines Natürlichen Menschen/ hat ihn auch niemandt anderst/ als für einen Natürlichen Menschen iudicieren vnd vrtheilen können (Beschreibung Eines Vnerhörten Meerwunders [...], 1620).

Diese Geschichte rund um den Meermann war hinsichtlich der Schilderung der Bevölkerung des nordischen Raumes keineswegs neu oder einzigartig, denn über ähnliche Figuren und wundersame Geschöpfe war wie bereits erwähnt in Olaus Magnus *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* geschrieben worden. Das Flugblatt verdeutlicht aber, inwieweit „der Norden“ Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts trotz geographischer Nähe kulturell noch weit vom Heiligen Römischen Reich entfernt war. Die geographische und kulturelle Distanz zwischen den deutschsprachigen RezipientInnen dieses Mediums und dem nordischen Raum war somit groß genug, dass die Verleger und Produzenten sicher sein konnten, dass diese Episode nicht per se als Übertreibung und Lüge verstanden wurde. Die These des Flugblatt-Forschers John Roger Paas, dass „die Leichtgläubigkeit der Menschen im Verhältnis zu ihrer Entfernung vom berichteten Wunder zu[nahm]“ (Paas 2010, 2f.), scheint somit zuzutreffen. So fanden in einer frühneuzeitlichen Gesellschaft und der damals gültigen göttlichen Ordnung durchaus auch fremde und eigenwillige Gestalten einen Platz. Der wundersame Meeresmann erweckte somit mit Sicherheit die Neugierde der zeitgenössischen RezipientInnen, aber beweist auch, dass die Platzierung eines solchen wundersamen Geschöpfes in den Norden und die Existenz eines solches Geschöpfes, das sehr wohl Gottes Werk sein konnte, dem Erwartungshorizont der RezipientInnen im Heiligen Römischen Reich gerecht wurde (ebd., 3).

Die Fremden aus „dem Norden“ und die Schwedenerfahrung während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges

Bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg herrschte somit ein wenig differenziertes Bild des Nordens bzw. Schwedens im Heiligen Römischen Reich vor. Die nordischen Königreiche und deren Bevölkerung waren wenig facettenreich und wurden in ethnographischen und geographischen Abhandlungen zumeist gemeinsam untersucht, falls man sich überhaupt mit dieser europäischen Region auseinandersetzte, die sich in wirtschaftlicher, kultureller und politischer Sicht in vielerlei Hinsicht zum restlichen Europa unterschied. Der Dreißigjährige Krieg hatte 1618 als Kampf zwischen dem protestantischen Lager im Norden und dem katholischen Lager im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches begonnen – im Jahre 1626 hatten die kaiserlichen Truppen jedoch schließlich die Ostsee erreicht. Die Präsenz des kaiserlichen Lagers wurde aus Sicht Gustav II. Adolfs und des schwedischen Reichstages als große Bedrohung wahrgenommen und resultierte in einen selbstproklamierten Defensionskrieg der schwedischen Krone. Mit der Landung der schwedischen Truppen auf der norddeutschen Insel Usedom am 6. Juli 1630 nahm der König die Rolle des Beschützers der Augsburgerischen Konfession ein. Neben dem schwedischen König Gustav II. Adolf waren es aber auch Soldaten und militärische

Würdenträger, die im Dienste der schwedischen Krone standen, über die in deutschsprachigen Zeitungen und illustrierten Flugblättern intensiv geschrieben wurde und die nun großen Einfluss auf die Bildung und Aktualisierung des mentalen Schwedenbildes im Heiligen Römischen Reich hatten.

In den Reihen des schwedischen Heeres kämpften aber nicht nur Soldaten, die aus Schweden stammten, sondern es fanden sich darunter auch Finnen, Livländer, Ingermanländer, Esten und Samen.¹¹ Die Publizisten im Heiligen Römischen Reich bedienten sich dabei der Neugier der Menschen, die bislang noch nie etwas über FinnInnen oder Sami gehört hatten, und so wurde vor allem zwischen 1630 und 1632 eine Reihe an illustrierten Flugblätter herausgebracht, die sich mit den „fremden“ und „exotischen“ Soldaten beschäftigten, die auf Seiten des Schwedenkönigs kämpften.

¹¹ Im Juli 1630 waren 13.000 Soldaten aus Schweden und Finnland gelandet, durch Rekrutierung von Söldnern wuchs die schwedische Armee binnen kürzester Zeit auf 40.000 Mann. Der Großteil der kämpfenden Soldaten waren aber nicht „National-Schweden“ und „National-Finnen“, sondern protestantische Söldner aus dem Heiligen Römischen Reich sowie auch Franzosen, Holländer, Schotten und Iren.



Abb. 4: Abbildung der wunderseltzamen Völckher so sich vnder der Schwödischen Armada befinden, 1632, Gesamtes Blatt: 205 x 126 mm. Aus: Paas, John Roger. 1998. *German Political Broadsheet 1600–1700*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (= Bd. 6: 1632) 89.

Den Publizisten war durchaus bewusst, dass sich solche illustrierte Flugblätter gut verkauften und so versuchten diese, in ihren Werken ein möglichst informatives und zugleich spektakuläres Bild der unterschiedlichen Soldaten abzuliefern, die im Dienste der schwedischen Krone standen.

Im illustrierten Flugblatt *Abbildung der wunderseltzamen Völckher so sich vnder der Schwödischen Armada befinden* werden beispielweise drei Soldaten – ein Lappländer (Same), ein Liffländer und ein Schotländer – dargestellt, die mit Kurzschwertern, Pfeil und Bogen sowie auch mit langen Gewehren bewaffnet sind. Ihr sonderliches

Erscheinungsbild wird dadurch zum Ausdruck gebracht, indem sie allesamt lange Gewänder und ungewöhnliche Kopfbedeckungen tragen bzw. auf einem rentierähnlichen Wesen (*rein thüer*) reiten, das bis zu 30 Meilen¹² reiten kann. Die Tatsache, dass der Soldat, der im Dienst der schwedischen Krone steht, dieses monströs aussehende Rentier reitet, im Gegensatz zu einem im Heiligen Römischen Reich gängigen Pferd, impliziert somit die Botschaft, dass die hier Abgebildeten „anders“ sind als die „eigene“ Bevölkerung. Der Flugblatt-Forscher Michael Schilling betont an dieser Stelle, dass es dem zeitgenössischen Kupferstecher eindeutig nicht darum ging, das in der Natur existierende Tier darzustellen, sondern man bewusst ein fremdes und möglichst wunderliches Tier visuell in den Kontext der Schweden stellte. Der Kupferstecher entschloss sich somit bewusst nicht eine akkurate Darstellung eines Rentieres zu liefern, das man in dieser Zeit durchaus kannte, sondern verwendete bewusst die Darstellung einer Giraffe, die zusätzlich etwas entfremdet wurde (*Die Sammlung des Kunstmuseums Moritzburg* 2018, 306).

Die aus dem Norden stammenden Soldaten sind im illustrierten Flugblatt auch entweder barfuß oder tragen, wie es im Text beschrieben wird, Schuhwerk an den Füßen, das aus Holz gemacht ist oder an dem Stollen angebracht sind. Der *Lapländer* (Same), von kleinem Wuchs, befindet sich links außen im Kupferstich und steckt sich ein Bündel Kräuter in den Mund. Alle drei Krieger werden im Text als hart und ausdauernd beschrieben. So heißt es beispielsweise im selben illustrierten Flugblatt über die Sami: *auch könens frost vnd hunger tragen. das nicht gnueg ist daruon zue sagen. die Lapländer schnel, gleich eim pfert Lauffen hin weckh auf ebner erdt* (Abbildung der wunderseltzsamen Völckher [...], 1632).¹³

Den Samen wird also nachgesagt, dass sie Frost und Hunger ertragen können und dass sie in der Lage sind, große Distanzen in einem raschen Tempo zurückzulegen. Sie werden somit implizit als abgehärtet und abgestumpft beschrieben, Charaktereigenschaften, die an jene erinnern, die Tacitus in seiner *Germania* verwendet, um die Germanen zu beschreiben.

Für die zeitgenössischen RezipientInnen muss es sensationell gewesen sein, etwas über die für sie bislang unbekannt und wunderliche Volksgruppe der Sami bzw. „Lappen“ zu lesen. Faktum ist aber, dass die Publizistik insgesamt sich keineswegs darum bemühte, ein möglichst akkurates Bild zu liefern. So wurden die Sami nachweislich in der zeitgenössischen Flugpublizistik häufig mit Finnen vermischt. Es ist außerdem auch nicht nachgewiesen und sogar eher unwahrscheinlich, dass „Lappen“ überhaupt in den Reihen der schwedischen Armee kämpften (Kunze 1971, 65–78).

Durch Anführung dieser drei nordischen Soldaten wird den RezipientInnen suggeriert, dass die „exotischen“ und bedrohlichen Krieger mit dem schwedischen König in Verbindung zu bringen sind. Obwohl in diesem illustrierten Flugblatt klar hervorgehoben wird, dass es sich um *wunderseltzsamen Völckher* handelt, die anders aussehen,

¹² Die Information, dass das Rentier 30 Meilen zurücklegen kann, ging auf die bereits angesprochene Beschreibung von Olaus Magnus über die nordischen Länder zurück. Siehe Olaus Magnus. 1567. *Beschreibung allerley Gelegenheyte/ Sitten/ Gebräuchen vnd Gewohnheyten/ der Mitmächtigen Völcker*. Straßburg, fol. 245^r.

¹³ Abbildung der wunderseltzsamen Völckher so sich vnder der Schwödischen Armada befinden.

bedrohlich sind und andere Sitten pflegen, ist doch ein Funke an Bewunderung zu erkennen. So werden die Fähigkeiten, dass sie beispielsweise viel marschieren können, gegenüber klimatischen Einflüssen resistent oder in ihren körperlichen Bedürfnissen genügsam sind, als Gründe genannt, weshalb der Zug des schwedischen Königs bislang so erfolgreich gewesen ist (*Illustrierte Flugblätter* 1983, 252). Nichtsdestotrotz ist das publizistische Bild der Livländer, Schotten und Samen durch eine klare Ambivalenz geprägt, wodurch den RezipientInnen des illustrierten Flugblattes der Freiraum geboten wird, um die Politik bzw. die Söldner rund um Gustav II. Adolf zu kritisieren (Harms 2014, 336f.).

Eindeutig negativ war dafür das zeitgenössische Bild der Finnen, die in einem anderen illustrierten Flugblatt dieser Zeit als brutal und gewaltsam beschrieben werden. So wird in diesem im Jahre 1631 herausgebrachten Flugblatt berichtet, wie zwei *Finländer* mit großen Messern ein ungeborenes Ferkel aus dem Leib einer Sau schneiden. Im Blatt heißt es hierzu: *O We ist das nit zu erbarmen das einer in seiner Mutter leib nicht sicher ist.* Das Schicksal der Muttersau wird dabei implizit auf die restliche Bevölkerung im Heiligen Römischen Reich projiziert. Der gewaltsame Akt unterstreicht hier eindeutig die brutale Vorgehensweise und Gewaltlust der finnischen Soldaten, die im Dienst der schwedischen Krone stehen, und sollte mit Sicherheit ein negatives Licht auf die Präsenz der schwedischen Soldaten und die militärische Operation Gustav II. Adolfs im Heiligen Römischen Reich werfen. Es gilt darauf hinzuweisen, dass die finnischen Soldaten, die grobe Gesichtszüge besitzen, auch nicht davor zurückschrecken ein ungeborenes Ferkel aus dem Mutterleib der Sau zu schneiden und dieses zu töten. Die finnischen Soldaten wurden somit implizit als diejenigen adressiert, die für das Elend und den Fortgang des Krieges im Heiligen Römischen Reich zuständig sind.



Abb. 5: Illustriertes Flugblatt darstellend zwei finnische Soldaten, 1631, Gesamtes Blatt: 112 x 156 mm. Aus: Paas, John Roger. 1996. *German Political Broadsheet 1600–1700*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (= Bd. 5: 1630–1631) 113.

Ähnlich brutal und unsittlich wurden die finnischen Soldaten aber auch in anderen zeitgenössischen illustrierten Flugblättern beschrieben. So konnte man beispielsweise in einem weiteren illustrierten Flugblatt, das nach der für die Schweden erfolgreiche Schlacht bei Breitenfeld herausgebracht wurde, über die Finnen lesen: *Die Finnen sind darzu zu grob vnd vnbescheiden/Sie schnitten zwar genug/ Sie schnitten gar zu viel/ Bald Arm bald Köpffe weg/ vnd endlich strumpf vnd stiel (Sächsisch Confect, 1631)*.

Obwohl somit die nordischen Soldaten (Finnen, Samen, Esten, Livländer, Ingermanländer) und andere „exotische“ Bevölkerungsgruppen, die in den Reihen der Schweden kämpften, oft als sonderbar bzw. brutal dargestellt wurden, fühlte sich ein Großteil der protestantischen Publizistik dennoch mit dem schwedischen König verbunden und verhalf somit, ein positives Schwedenbild im Heiligen Römischen Reich zu vermitteln. Der schwedische König Gustav II. Adolf wurde dabei in illustrierten Flugblättern der protestantischen Publizistik zumeist als Beschützer der Augsburger Konfession inszeniert (Paas 1996; Tschopp 1993; Wang 1975 oder auch (Hämmerle 2019a).



Abb. 6: Zeitgenössisches illustriertes Flugblatt darstellend Gustav II. Adolf im Kontext der „Befreiung“ von Augsburg, 1632, Gesamtes Blatt: 366 x 252 mm. Kungliga biblioteket, KoB Sv. HP. G. II A. A.148.

Im Zuge der „Befreiung“ der protestantischen Stadt Augsburg im April 1632 wurde Gustav II. Adolf als „starker Löwe“ bezeichnet; eine Formulierung, die auf die Prophezeiung von Paracelsus rund um den Löwen aus Mitternacht anspielt. So heißt es beispielsweise in einem zeitgenössischen proschwedischen Flugblatt: *Er ist der starcke Löw von kalten Norden Land: Er ists/ der Gottes Volck zum schutz beruffen worden* (Hertzlicher Wuntsch vnd sehnliches Verlangen/ Der hochbetrangten Evangelischen Burgerschaft zu Augspurg/ nach GOTT vnd seinem H. Wort/ so wol auch nach Ihrer Königlichen Mayestätt in Schweden/ deroselben ankunfft/ vnd Einzugs daselbsten, 1632).

Mit dem Tod Gustav II. Adolfs im Zuge der Schlacht bei Lützen am 16. November 1632 hatte die proschwedische Publizistik jene Figur verloren, welche vom Großteil der protestantischen AnhängerInnen als beschützende Person für die protestantische Sache respektiert worden war (Paas 1996, 237f.). Auch wenn die proschwedische Publizistik darum bemüht war, einen Nachfolger medial zu inszenieren (Johan Banér, Gustaf Horn, Axel Oxenstierna, Lennart Torstensson, Carl Gustav Wrangel etc.) gelang dies auf lange Sicht nicht. Die schwedischen Soldaten und das schwedische Königreich wurden spätestens seit dem Prager Frieden im Jahre 1635 vermehrt als Irritationsfaktor gesehen, der den Frieden im Heiligen Römischen Reich verzögerte bzw. verhinderte (Böttcher 1953, 190–202).

Ab 1645 befand sich Schweden unter dem neuen schwedischen Feldmarschall Lennart Torstensson wiederum im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches. Die Bevölkerung litt allen voran in Niederösterreich unter ständigen Plünderungen und Belagerungen durch die schwedischen Soldaten. Die schwedischen Soldaten zogen Lebensmittel und Vieh ein und forderten darüber hinaus Kontributionszahlungen und Brandschatzsteuern. Wenn die Bevölkerung nicht zahlungsfähig war, wurden dabei Exempel statuiert. Auf diese Weise wurden viele Gemeinden und ganze Landzüge verwüstet (Brocek 1989, 8f.). Die Wütereien der Schweden manifestierte sich in Spottversen, Sagen, Erzählungen und Straßenbenennungen, aber auch auf materielle Art in Kleindenkmälern und Schwedenkreuzen, die allesamt über die Anwesenheit der Schweden im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches (teils bis heute) bezeugen. Auch „Schwedenlieder“ (eine Strophe eines populären Schwedenliedes lautet beispielsweise: *Bet, Kindchen, bet! Morgen kommt der Schwed*) etablierten sich im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches und wurden als Abschreckung für KatholikInnen herangezogen (Bauer 2012, 165).

Obwohl diese Schwedenerfahrung im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches so intensiv war und sich eine Vielzahl an Schauergeschichten etablierte, ist es ein Faktum, dass die wenigsten Menschen im Heiligen Römischen Reich tatsächlich in persönlichen Kontakt mit einem „National-Schweden“ gekommen waren. So setzte sich der geringste Teil der schwedischen Hauptarmee, die im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches operierte, aus „National-Schweden“ bzw. „National-Finnen“ zusammen, sondern aus deutschen und schottischen Söldnern. Nichtsdestotrotz hatte sich durch diese Schwedenerfahrung ab 1630 ein neues und aktualisiertes Schwedenbild etabliert, wobei dieses im katholischen Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches anders aussah, als in den großteils protestantischen Regionen im Norden des Reiches. In den katholischen Regionen des Heiligen Römischen Reiches etablierten sich dabei wohl negative Schilderungen der Schweden, die sie als brutal, kriegerisch und abgestumpft skizzierten, während in den protestantischen Städten im Heiligen Römischen Reich, allen voran bedingt durch die intensive Propaganda-Kampagne rund um Gustav II. Adolf, sehr wohl auch ein positives Schwedenbild etabliert wurde.

Das Schwedenbild nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg bis zum Frieden von Nimwegen 1679

Der Dreißigjährige Krieg war mit dem Westfälischen Frieden zu Ende und so thematisierten viele Flugblätter zwischen 1648 und 1650 die Feste und Feuerwerke, die

im Zuge der Friedensverhandlungen stattgefunden hatten.¹⁴ Nachdem die schwedische Königin Christina am 16. Juni 1654, nach längerer Vorgeschichte, die Abdankungsurkunde verlesen hatte und zu Gunsten ihres Cousins Karl Gustav von Zweibrücken-Kleeburg abdankte, wurde auf Seiten der proschwedischen Publizistik im Heiligen Römischen Reich die Propagandamaschinerie erneut angekurbelt. Der neue schwedische König Karl X. Gustav musste propagandatechnisch einerseits nach innen¹⁵ sein Königtum stärken und andererseits nach außen die schwedische Präsenz im Heiligen Römischen Reich sowie auch die Außenpolitik (Kriege mit Polen-Litauen, Dänemark, Brandenburg-Preußen, Russland und dem Habsburger Reich) legitimieren (Wrede 2004, 226–229). Kurzum ging es darum, ein positives Bild Schwedens im Heiligen Römischen Reich zu vermitteln, welches spätestens seit der Mitte der 1650er Jahre vermehrt negativ dargestellt worden war.

Bei den illustrierten Flugblättern, die zwischen 1654 und 1660 im Heiligen Römischen Reich herausgebracht wurden, ist bemerkbar, wie Karl X. Gustav in vielerlei Hinsicht versuchte, sich ikonographisch wie Gustav II. Adolf zu inszenieren. Die Darstellung Karl X. Gustavs in der proschwedischen Flugblatt-Propaganda im Heiligen Römischen Reich fand aber mit dessen Tod ein frühes Ende. Da der Nachfolger des schwedischen Thrones, Karl XI., zum Zeitpunkt des Ablebens seines Vaters erst fünf Jahre alt war, wurde Schweden bis 1672 von einer Vormundschaftsregierung geführt. Es verwundert daher wenig, dass ab 1660 sehr wenige Flugblätter in Umlauf waren, die eine Aufwertung des Schwedenbildes im Heiligen Römischen Reich als Ziel verfolgten bzw. sich überhaupt mit dem schwedischen Königreich auseinandersetzten (ebd., 254). Faktum ist, dass der Großteil der illustrierten Flugblätter im Rahmen der textuellen und visuellen Kommunikation in Zusammenhang mit der Berichterstattung über ausländische Königreiche und Staaten sich zumeist auf die zentralen machtpolitischen Akteure fokussierten. Mit dem Ableben Karl X. Gustavs fehlte aber für den deutschsprachigen Medienmarkt eine schwedische publizistische Referenzperson über die im Heiligen Römischen Reich berichtet werden könne und folglich wurde auch das mediale Interesse an das schwedische Königreich im Heiligen Römischen Reich geringer. Erst mit der Krönung Karl XI. im Jahre 1672 kam es wieder zu einer publizistischen Welle an Flugblättern im Heiligen Römischen Reich, die sich mit dem schwedischen Königreich auseinandersetzten. Schon bald befand sich Schweden wieder im Krieg mit dem Kaiser und anderen Staaten des Heiligen Römischen Reiches; im Juli 1675 wurde das schwedische Königreich sogar zum Reichsfeind erklärt. Illustrierte Flugblätter, die im Heiligen Römischen Reich im Zeitraum zwischen 1675 und dem Friedensschluss in

¹⁴ Mit dem Westfälischen Frieden im Jahre 1648 wurde der Dreißigjährige Krieg offiziell zwar beendet, das bedeutete aber nicht, dass die Schweden im Heiligen Römischen Reich nicht mehr präsent waren. In weiterer Folge war noch zu diskutieren, auf welche Art und Weise die Söldner und Generäle im Dienste der schwedischen Krone abgezogen werden und wie die Gesandten Schwedens entschädigt werden sollen. Erst 1650, im Zuge des Nürnberger Exekutionstages, wurde die Demobilisierung der schwedischen Truppen festgelegt.

¹⁵ Karl X. Gustav war in männlicher Linie kein direkter Nachfahre der seit 1523 regierenden Vasa-Dynastie und begründete die Dynastie „Pfalz-Zweibrücken-Kleeburg“ (eine Nebenlinie der Wittelsbacher).

Nimwegen im Jahre 1679 herausgebracht wurden, weisen daher zumeist einen anti-schwedischen Ton auf.

Von Nimwegen bis Narwa

Mit dem Friedensvertrag von Nimwegen im Jahr 1679 endete die schwedenfeindliche Politik im Heiligen Römischen Reich. Die politische Interessenslage verschob sich stattdessen Richtung Osten, was das Einsetzen einer anti-osmanischen Propaganda nach sich zog, die in Zusammenhang mit der zweiten osmanischen Belagerung Wiens im Jahre 1683 qualitativ und quantitativ hinsichtlich der Publikation illustrierter Flugblätter ihren Höhepunkt fand. In dieser Phase kristallisierten sich wiederum die beiden Druckstädte Augsburg und Nürnberg als Hauptproduktionsorte illustrierter Flugblätter heraus (Paas 2010, 6). Der publizistische Fokus im Heiligen Römischen Reich lag somit in dieser Zeit eindeutig nicht auf Schweden, sondern in illustrierten Flugblättern wurde stattdessen das Feindbild des „Türken“ verschärft und beispielsweise Feldherren wie Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, Kaiser Leopold, der Kurfürst von Bayern oder auch der polnische König Jan Sobieski dargestellt.

In der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts kam es zu einem regelrechten Boom hinsichtlich der Gründung periodischer Zeitungen, wobei sich die norddeutsche Stadt Hamburg als einer der Hauptumschlagplätze für die periodischen Zeitungen durchsetzte.¹⁶ Ab der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts konnte das Medium des illustrierten Flugblattes nicht an frühere Auflagezahlen der Flugblatt-Produktion anknüpfen. Stattdessen war es vor allem das relativ neue Medium „Zeitung“, das sich ab der Mitte des Jahrhunderts als „das“ neue massenmediale Informationsmedium durchsetzte (Würgler 2013, 33f.). Während Nürnberg für den südlichen Raum des Heiligen Römischen Reiches der Hauptumschlagplatz für die Sammlung und Verbreitung von Informationen war, nahm Hamburg im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches die Rolle als Hauptinformationsventil von Informationen und Neuigkeiten aus dem Norden ein (Deternig 2017, 131). Dieser Umstand führt auch dazu, dass man im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches eine andere Beziehung zum nordischen Raum und somit auch ein anderes Bild von „Schweden“ hatte.

Das Schwedenbild während des Großen Nordischen Krieges 1700–1721

Im deutschsprachigen Raum hatten sich um 1700 eine Reihe an periodisch erscheinenden Zeitungen als Nachrichtenorgane etabliert, welche die intendierte Leserschaft der Zeitungen anhand regelmäßiger Berichte „up-to-date“ hielt. Einer dieser Zeitungen, die sich im deutschsprachigen Raum als Nachrichtenorgane manifestiert hatte, war der Hamburger „Relations Courier“¹⁷.

¹⁶ Über Hamburger Briefschreiber, die durch Informanten beispielsweise Neuigkeiten aus Skandinavien erhielten, verbreiteten sich Nachrichten aus „dem Norden“ über das gut funktionierende Poststroutensystem wie ein Buschfeuer rasch in diverse Städte des Heiligen Römischen Reich aus. Siehe hierzu (Deternig 2017, 100f.).

¹⁷ All die hier zitierten Textpassagen, die aus den Ausgaben des Hamburger „Relations Couriers“ stammen, werden mit dem Erscheinungsdatum und der Nummer angeführt und sind online auf „brema“, der digitalen

Obwohl die Blütezeit des Flugblattes (die ins 16. und die erste Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts zu datieren ist) somit vorbei war, gab es zu Beginn des Großen Nordischen Krieges für das Medium „Flugblatt“ nochmals eine kurze Renaissance des Mediums. Das illustrierte Flugblatt war um 1700 zwar nicht mehr das primäre Nachrichtenmedium, hatte aber gegenüber der Zeitung weiterhin den Vorteil der visuellen Ebene.

Im Rahmen des Großen Nordischen Krieges, der im Jahre 1700 begonnen hatte, nachdem die Allianz Russland, Dänemark-Norwegen und Sachsen-Polen dem schwedischen Königreich den Krieg erklärten, wurden auch illustrierte Flugblätter an den Markt gebracht, die die machtpolitischen Entwicklungen dieser Zeit kommentierten. Es war vor allem der schwedische Sieg bei Narwa, der Schweden zurück ins Medienlicht des Heiligen Römischen Reiches katapultierte. Bei Narwa konnten die schwedischen Truppen, die von Karl XII. angeführt wurden, am 30. November 1700¹⁸ eine russische Übermacht besiegen. Der schwedische Sieg wurde aber nicht nur in Zeitungen und Flugschriften kommentiert, sondern auch in Flugblättern medial aufgegriffen und intensiv rezipiert.

Der schwedische König gewann dabei enorm an Prestige, was damit zusammenhängt, dass die schwedischen Truppen, die aus etwa 10.000 Soldaten bestanden, die russischen Truppen, bestehend aus etwa 40.000 Mann, besiegt hatten (Findeisen 1992, 50f.). Anhand eines Extraktes aus einem Brief, der aus Stockholm gesendet worden war und mit 7. Dezember 1700 datiert wurde, konnte der/die zeitgenössische ZeitungsläserIn im Hamburger „Relations Courier“ erstmals lesen, dass eine Schlacht stattgefunden hatte (Hamburger Relations Courier Nr. 192 (17. Dezember 1700) pag. 8). Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war es aber noch nicht eindeutig, wer die Schlacht für sich entschieden hatte. Erst in der Ausgabe vom Dienstag, den 21. Dezember 1700, konnte man über den wahrhaftigen Ausgang der Schlacht lesen:

Von hieraus kan man itzo fast nichts anders/ als die importante Zeitung von der glücklichen und sieghafften/ wiewohl auch bluthigen Battallie/ so Ihr. Königl. Majest. von Schweden mit den Mußkowitern gehalten/ berichten/ welche stets so wohl mit Brieffen als Reisenden von dannan bestätigt wird. (Hamburger Relations Courier Nr. 194 (21. Dezember 1700) pag. 7)

In dieser Ausgabe, wurde erstmals auch eine Episode geschildert, die zwar in den späteren Zeitungsausgaben nicht weiterverfolgt wurde, aber dafür in den illustrierten Flugblättern und anderen Druckgrafiken, stark rezipiert wurde:

Sammlung von Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen, zu finden. Online unter: <http://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/zeitungen17/periodical/titleinfo/1163916>, zuletzt abgerufen am 02.02.2020.

¹⁸ In Schweden war zwischen 1700 bis 1712 der schwedische Kalenderstil – zehn Tage vor einem Datum im Gregorianischen Kalender – in Gebrauch. In schwedischer geschichtswissenschaftlicher Literatur, die sich mit dieser Phase des Großen Nordischen Krieges auseinandersetzt, wird zumeist die Datierung des schwedischen Kalenders bevorzugt, in russischer Geschichtsliteratur wird hingegen zumeist der Datierungsstil des Julianischen Kalenders – also elf Tage vor dem Gregorianischen – herangezogen. In diesem Beitrag soll aber stets die Datierung des Gregorianischen Kalenders angewendet werden, die von den meisten HistorikerInnen verwendet wird. Siehe (Lodén 1968).

Vor selbiger herrlichen Victorie haben Ihr. Kön. Maj. zuerst einen mit 6000 Muscowitern besetzten vortheilhafftigen Paß/ wohin dero beorderto Troupen von einem Bauren umb einen Morast geführet/ erobert/ und fast alle Feinde erleget worden; darauff sogleich die grosse Feldschlacht erfolgte/ da die Russen in nicht geringen Schrecken gerathen/ die einen so vigoureusen Anfall von Sr. Königl. Majest. von Schweden/ und dero Troupen nicht vermuthet. (Hamburger Relations Courier Nr. 194 (21. Dezember 1700) pag. 7)

Angeblich hatten Karl XII. und die schwedischen Truppen, nachdem sie von Wesenberg aufgebrochen waren und versuchten den Pyhäjöggi-Pass zu passieren, um rasch nach Narwa zu gelangen, von einem einheimischen Bauern den Weg gezeigt bekommen. Dieser Bauer verhalf den schwedischen Truppen sicher und zügig durch den Morast, sodass Karl XII. und die schwedischen Truppen den russischen Truppen entgegentreten konnten. Eine Reihe an illustrierten Flugblättern wurde relativ zeitnah publiziert und legte ihren inhaltlichen Fokus insbesondere auf diese Episode. Eines dieser Flugblätter wurde mit dem Titel *Kurtze RELATION Von der Belägerung und wieder Befreyung der Liefländischen Stadt Narwa* schon bald herausgebracht:



Abb. 7: Zeitgenössisches illustriertes Flugblatt darstellend den schwedischen Sieg bei Narwa, 1700, Gesamtes Blatt: 385 x 265 mm. Kungliga biblioteket KoB Sv. HP. C. XII A. 44.

Der Druckort ist bei diesem illustrierten Flugblatt zwar nicht bekannt, aber man kann erschließen, dass es sich wohl um einen Verleger handelte, der proschwedisch eingestellt

war. So schildert der Autor des illustrierten Flugblattes im Text zuerst die Geschichte rund um die Stadt Narwa und erklärt anschließend, wie der Konflikt zwischen Peter Alexejewitsch und Karl XII. zu Stande gekommen war. Weiters geht er dann auf die Episode ein, in der der Bauer den schwedischen Truppen den Weg zeigte. So ist im Text des illustrierten Flugblattes zu lesen:

Es war zwar dieser Anschlag vest gegründet und den Ansehen nach hatte Narva sich bald in die Fessel müssen schliessen lassen. In gegentheil aber so bald Se. Kön. Maj. in Schweden den Feind nur erblicket/ hat er solche schon mit den Augen geschlagen/ denn indem sie sich nicht vermutheten/ daß ihnen auf den Rücken/ durch Anführung eines einigen Menschen und Bauren der Feind uhrplötzlich gerathen wurde/ geriethen sie in eine Confusion/ u. namen/ da sie noch 4. Meilen von Narva waren/ 6000. Mann welche einen Paß bey| einen hohen Gebürg besetzt/ die Flucht/ wolten sich auch über eine Brücken salviren/ und solche hinter sich abwerffen/ welches aber von den König verhindert worden. (*Kurtze RELATION* [...], 1700)

Retrospektiv wurde diese Geschichte rund um den wegweisenden Bauern als entscheidender Moment beschrieben, der gar als göttliche Fügung betrachtet wurde. So wurde im illustrierten Flugblatt *Die Entsätzte Stadt NARVA und Miraculoser Sieg CAROLI XII.* die Wegbeschreibung des Bauern so dargestellt, als hätte dieser auf Geheiß eines Engels die Schweden sicher ans Ziel gebracht.



Abb. 8: Kupferstich darstellend den wegweisenden Bauern, 1700. Gesamtes Blatt: 325 x 395 mm. Kungliga biblioteket, KoB Sv. HP C. XII B.20.

Das Bild des wegweisenden Bauern wurde nun zu einem der bevorzugten Medienbilder der deutschsprachigen Publizistik. Es wurde hierbei dem zeitgenössischen RezipientInnen im Heiligen Römischen Reich suggeriert, dass den schwedischen Truppen und dem jungen, schwedischen König Karl XII. ebenso überirdische und wundersame Figuren zur Seite stehen, die die bisherigen militärischen Erfolge des schwedischen Königs erklärten.

Schlachtendarstellung visuell zur Geltung gebracht. Zusätzlich sind im linken, oberen Eck des Flugblattes das Konterfei des jungen, schwedischen Monarchen (hier mit Perücke abgebildet) und im rechten, oberen Eck das schwedische Königswappen zu erkennen. Bei diesem Flugblatt handelt es sich um eine Schlachtendarstellung, die versucht, die unterschiedlichen Phasen der Schlacht anhand angeführter Ziffern, die wiederum auf Kommentare verweisen, zu erklären. Dieses proschwedische Flugblatt wurde mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit, wenn man die unten angeführten Initialen (*Ios: Frid: Leopold excudit.*) auflöst, von dem in Augsburg wirkenden Kupferstecher und Verleger Joseph Friedrich Leopold¹⁹ (1668–1726) gestochen, auf den wir etwas später noch zu sprechen kommen werden (Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler 1929, 93f.).

Dieses illustrierte Flugblatt ist ein schönes Beispiel dafür, in welcher „Sinneskrise“ die Flugblattgattung sich gegenüber der Zeitung in dieser Zeit befand: Ab der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts konnte das Medium des illustrierten Flugblattes nicht an frühere Auflagezahlen der Flugblatt-Produktion anknüpfen. Stattdessen war es vor allem das relativ neue Medium Zeitung, das ab der Mitte des Jahrhunderts, bedingt durch eine Reihe an neuen Zeitungsgründungen, einen explosionsartigen Publikationsanstieg erlebte. Die Zeitung hatte spätestens ab der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhundert das Flugblatt als „das“ meinungsbildende Medium abgelöst und in weiterer Folge zog es sich aus dem Bereich der öffentlichen Diskussion und der Kommentierung von militärischen, konfessionellen und politischen Ereignissen zurück. Der Attraktivitätsverlust des Flugblattes erklärt sich dadurch, dass die RezipientInnen von Zeitungen und Informationen nunmehr höheren Wert auf neutrale Kriegsberichte legten und übertriebene oder stark gefärbte Kommentare, wie sie oft im Flugblatt in Verwendung waren, nicht mehr als angemessen empfanden (Schumann 1998, 254f.). Der Vorteil des illustrierten Flugblatt-Mediums bestand jedoch weiterhin in dessen bildlicher Ebene. Kombiniert mit einer Illustration bot sie den RezipientInnen der illustrierten Flugblätter die Möglichkeit, sich genauer über ein Ereignis zu informieren. Dieses Blatt ist ein Beweis dafür, dass die Flugblatt-Publizistik dieser Zeit mit der Zeitung zu konkurrieren hatte und darum bemüht war sich mehr und mehr dem objektiven Berichterstattungsstil der Zeitung anzupassen. Anhand der visuellen Kommunikationsstrategie ist zu erkennen, dass die zeitgenössische Publizistik sich dafür entschied, eine doppelgleisige Strategie zu wählen. Zum einen kommunizierte man ein scheinbares Festhalten eines zentralen Momentes in der für Schweden siegreichen Schlacht, die auch in zeitgenössischen gedruckten Zeitungen ausführlich beschrieben wurde. Dieser Teil der Bildebene deckt daher die visuelle Umsetzung des Informationstatbestandes ab, während aber die visuelle Präsenz des wegweisenden Bauern als ein sensationswirksames Element fungierte, dass die Neugierde der lesekundigen und leseunkundigen RezipientInnen wecken sollte.

Obwohl die Redakteure der Zeitungen möglichst um einen nüchternen und objektiven Berichterstattungsstil bemüht waren, konnte man in einzelnen Fällen durchaus Parteilichkeiten herauslesen. So war die Berichterstattung im Hamburger „Relations

¹⁹ Diesem Kupferstecher, der in Augsburg tätig war, wird auch das Werk des Leopoldstichs, der als offensichtliche Vorlage zur bekannten Steirischen Völkertafel diente, zugeschrieben. Siehe (Griehofer 1999, 47f.).

Courier“ stark auf Karl XII. fokussiert und stellte die Person des schwedischen Königs in der Berichterstattung ins Zentrum. Für den Hamburger „Relations Courier“ bzw. für dessen intendierte Leserschaft war es offensichtlich von großem Interesse über den Verlauf des Großen Nordischen Krieges informiert zu sein. Dies kann einerseits durch die geopolitische und handelsbedingte Nähe erklärt werden, liegt andererseits aber auch darin begründet, dass man sich politisch und konfessionell wohl eher mit dem schwedischen Königreich als mit dem Russischen Zarenreich bzw. dem katholischen Polen verbunden fühlte. Obwohl auch das Credo des Hamburger „Relations Couriers“ aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach eine objektive Berichterstattung darstellte, taucht in dieser Zeitung manchmal eine klare Positionierung zu Ereignissen auf. So ist in der Ausgabe vom 28. Jänner 1701 beispielsweise im Lokalteil des Hamburger „Relations Couriers“ zu entnehmen, wie man in Hamburg auf die Nachricht des schwedischen Sieges gegen Russland, reagierte hatte:

Heute/ als an Carls/ und Ihr. Königl. Majest. zu Schweden Namens=Tage/ ist in hiesiger hohen Dohm=Kirchen/ von dem Pastore selbst/ eine Oration zu Ehren des Königes gehalten/ und mit einer Allusion auff das Königl. Schwedis. Wapen/ als 3 Cronen/ und dem über 3 Ströhme springenden Löwen/ Ihr. Majest. zu dem neulich erhaltenen grossen Siege/ und anderen herrlichen Thaten/ gratuliret worden; dabey der Königl. Schwedis. extraord. Envope/ und andere Grosse sich eingefunden. (Hamburger Relations Courier Nr. 15 (28. Jänner 1701) pag. 8)

Trotz anfänglicher Erfolge auf schwedischer Seite (Schlacht bei Narwa 1700, Schlacht an der Düna 1701, Einnahmen von Krakau 1702 und Warschau 1704, Schlacht bei Fraustadt 1706, Friedensschluss von Altranstädt 1706²⁰), die zur Publikation einer Reihe illustrierter Flugblätter führten, wurde der Niedergang der schwedischen Großmachtzeit 1709 durch die Niederlage bei Poltawa eingeleitet. Zwar wurden einzelne Ereignisse des Großen Nordischen Krieges weiterhin in illustrierten Flugblättern aufgegriffen, nach der schwedischen Niederlage bei Poltawa ist aber ein eindeutiger Rückgang an publizierten Flugblättern zu erkennen (Wrede 2004, 292–302). Die Niederlage bei Poltawa bedeutete somit nicht nur aus machtpolitischer Sicht das Ende der schwedischen Großmachtzeit, sondern spiegelt sich auch in der Anzahl publizierter illustrierter Flugblätter im Heiligen Römischen Reich, die sich mit Schweden beschäftigten, wider.

Insgesamt ist festzuhalten, dass während des Großen Nordischen Krieges der Fokus im Süden des deutschsprachigen Medienmarktes nicht auf den machtpolitischen Entwicklungen Schwedens lag. Auch in anderen Gattungen, wie Zeitungen und Flugschriften, lag das Augenmerk nicht auf Schweden, sondern eher auf Frankreich, Spanien, Großbritannien oder dem Osmanischen Reich. Nichtsdestotrotz verfolgte man die einzelnen Ereignisse des Großen Nordischen Krieges aus machtpolitischer Sicht mit einem gewissen Interesse. Dies war aus Sicht des Kaisers dadurch bedingt, dass man Schweden aus dem Spanischen Erbfolgekrieg heraushalten wollte, um eine

²⁰ Der Friedensschluss bei Altranstädt am 24. September 1706 führte dazu, dass der sächsische Kurfürst gezwungen wurde, die polnische Krone zu Gunsten des schwedischen Kandidaten Stanislaus I. Leszczyński abzulegen.

Verschmelzung der beiden großen Kriege zu vermeiden. Der Große Nordische Krieg wurde somit vermehrt in Regionen rezipiert, für die die Entwicklungen Schwedens durch ihre geographische Nähe von Relevanz waren. Es erstaunt daher nicht, dass im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches oder in Sachsen mehr illustrierte Flugblätter produziert wurden, die das schwedische Königreich thematisieren. Außergewöhnlich ist hingegen, dass Nürnberg und Augsburg zu den Hauptproduktionsstätten gehörten, die das schwedische Wirken im Großen Nordischen Krieg in illustrierten Flugblättern thematisierten. Dies ist wohl vor allem darauf zurückzuführen, dass Schweden durch die protestantische Publizistik dieser beiden Städte mit der Rolle der Beschützermacht der Augsburger Konfession, welche während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges medial intensiv kommuniziert worden war, in Verbindung gebracht wurde. So verstand man dort wohl das Königreich Schweden um 1700 noch als Garant der protestantischen Konfession im Heiligen Römischen Reich. Diese Sympathie wurde bestimmt durch die anfänglichen militärischen Erfolge des schwedischen Königs verstärkt und können somit als eine Kontinuität in der medialen Inszenierung Schwedens in einzelnen Teilen des Heiligen Römischen Reiches beschrieben werden.

Durch den Tod des schwedischen Königs wurde für die außenstehenden Mächte eine Tür geöffnet, den Nordischen Konflikt – aus machtpolitischem und vor allem aus wirtschaftlichem Interesse heraus – möglichst bald zu beenden. In Bezug auf die Anzahl herausgebrachter illustrierter Flugblätter ist es signifikant, dass nach dem Tod Karl XII. im Heiligen Römischen Reich kaum illustrierte Flugblätter herausgebracht wurden, die sich mit dem schwedischen Königreich auseinandersetzen. Mit dem Ende des Großen Nordischen Krieges driftete Schweden somit aus dem deutschsprachigen Medienmarkt wiederum in den Hintergrund ab.

Das Schwedenbild nach dem Ende des Großen Nordischen Krieges

Bei der Bildung und Formierung eines mentalen Schwedenbildes im Heiligen Römischen Reich – das will heißen die Vorstellung davon, wie ein/e „Schwede/Schwedin“ aussieht oder welche Eigenschaften diese/r besitzt – trugen die frühneuzeitlichen Massenmedien maßgeblich bei. Allen voran dem illustrierten Flugblatt ist bedingt durch dessen visuelle und textuelle Kommunikationsform, wodurch es potenziell auch leseunkundige RezipientInnen erreichen konnte, eine große Rolle bei der Meinungsbildung der breiten „Masse“ zuzuschreiben.

Bis zum Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts war das Schwedenbild im Heiligen Römischen Reich noch sehr undifferenziert und vage gewesen und man unterschied wenig zwischen den einzelnen nordischen Königreichen. Das Schwedenbild war daher zumeist dem Nordenbild gleichzusetzen. Mit dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg änderte sich aber dies!

In der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges setzten sich die deutschsprachigen Massenmedien erstmals intensiv mit dem Aussehen und den Eigenschaften der Schweden auseinander, wobei wenig zwischen den einzelnen ethnischen Gruppen, die Teil der schwedischen Krone waren, unterschieden wurde. Einerseits befasste man sich mit dem Erscheinungsbild, den Sitten und den Eigenschaften von männlichen, jungen Soldaten, die im Dienste der schwedischen Krone standen (also Schweden, Finnen, Sami, Esten), wobei diese in katholischen Flugblättern zumeist negativ bewertet wurden. Dabei wurden

die Soldaten häufig als brutal, gewaltsam und gar monströs beschrieben, wobei deren kriegerischen Stärken und deren Ausdauer aus militärischer Sicht auch respektiert wurden. Andererseits waren es aber auch der schwedische König Gustav II. Adolf sowie auch die militärische und politische Elite (wie Axel Oxenstierna, Gustaf Karlsson Horn, Johan Banér oder Lennart Torstensson) die sehr präsent in den deutschsprachigen Flugblättern dieser Zeit waren. Diese hatten zumeist eine deutsche Erziehung am Hof hinter sich, was es der protestantischen zeitgenössischen Publizistik mit Sicherheit erleichterte, einzelne Vertreter des schwedischen Lagers auch als protestantische Verbündete darzustellen und sie medial positiv zu vermitteln. Auf diese Weise kam es teilweise, vor allem in protestantischen Städten im Heiligen Römischen Reich, zu einer medialen Aufwertung der Schweden. Ab der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts war die schwedische Krone bzw. dessen BewohnerInnen deutlich seltener Inhalt von deutschsprachigen illustrierten Flugblättern, was auch durch den allmählichen Niedergang der schwedischen Großmachtzeit zu erklären ist. Der Niedergang der schwedischen Großmachtzeit tritt somit interessanterweise in etwa zeitgleich mit dem Niedergang des Informationsmediums „Flugblatt“ in Erscheinung. Das Wirken Schwedens im Großen Nordischen Krieg führte nochmals zu einer intensiveren medialen Rezeption des Königreiches im Heiligen Römischen Reich. In dieser Zeit wurde die Publikationsmaschinerie im Heiligen Römischen Reich erneut angekurbelt und man reflektierte die machtpolitische Rolle Schwedens im restlichen Europa intensiver.

In der Phase des Großen Nordischen Krieges waren es aber allen voran die protestantischen Hochburgen Nürnberg und Augsburg, die den schwedischen König in den illustrierten Flugblättern thematisierten. Ebenso verfolgte auch der nördliche Medienraum Hamburg die machtpolitischen Entwicklungen im Großen Nordischen Krieg – primär bedingt durch die geographische Nähe – deutlich intensiver als die Regionen im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches. Während des Großen Nordischen Krieges fokussierte sich die Berichterstattung im Heiligen Römischen Reich in der Zeitung und in den Flugblättern zumeist auf die Person Karl XII., weshalb im eigentlichen Sinne auch kein Gesamtbild Schwedens medial kommuniziert wurde. Stattdessen lebte – vor allem im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reich – das Schwedenbild, das während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges introduziert worden war, weiter.

Das hier medial vermittelte Bild des *Schwed* war somit größtenteils nicht aktuell²¹, zudem hatte es sich trotz des schwedischen Wirkens im Großen Nordischen Krieg auch nicht geändert. Der Leopoldstich beschreibt daher ein Schwedenbild, das durch die „Schwedenerfahrung“ im 17. Jahrhundert introduziert worden war und das für den südlichen Raum im Heiligen Römischen Reich im 18. Jahrhundert noch Gültigkeit besaß. Der Leopoldstich, der in seiner Darstellungsweise zum einen stark von der Klimatheorie (Zacharasiewicz 1999, 119–138) und zum anderen von der antiken Ethnographie geprägt ist, wurde im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches produziert (Weiler 1999, 98–118). Es soll daher die Frage in den Raum gestellt werden, ob ein ähnliches Endprodukt wie der Leopoldstich im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches, beispielsweise in Hamburg, anders ausgesehen und ein aktuelleres, differenzierteres Schwedenbild vermittelt hätte.

Als Endergebnis dieses Beitrages ist festzuhalten, dass das Bild „Schwedens“ im Norden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches anders aussah, als in südlichen Gebieten, wie beispielsweise Wien oder München. Die Tatsache, dass der Leopoldstich im Süden des Heiligen Römischen Reiches produziert wurde und im Grunde genommen ausschließlich Stereotype auflistet, die man Schweden bereits während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges oder zuvor zugeschrieben hatte, lässt vermuten, dass der Produzent des Kupferstiches entweder kein Interesse daran hatte, das Schwedenbild zu aktualisieren, oder, dass dieser davon ausging, dass die RezipientInnen dieses Schwedenbild als glaubwürdiger bzw. korrekter wahrnahmen.

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²¹ Der Verweis in der Tabelle darauf, dass sie keinen starken Herrscher anerkennen, sondern eine *freie Herrschaft* – als Anspielung auf, die nach dem Tod Karl XII. introduzierte „Freiheitszeit“ – bevorzugen, ist als Ausnahme zu sehen.

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BANLIEUE NORD: A BRIEF CONTRIBUTION TO HOW WE INHABIT THE NORTH AND HOW THE NORTH INHABITS US

Lena Gudd and Antonin Pons Braley (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Enriched graphic version available on <https://anarchiveofnorths.com/nordlit>

Abstract

Beyond its many simplified representations such as cold, hostile, uninhabited, or unknown, the north reveals itself as a complex and multiple space of interwoven geographical, cultural, social, and conceptual dimensions. Influenced by world views, the power of maps and myths as well as the very relation to the landscape itself as one of extraction or attraction, humans subjectively apprehend these multiple norths. By dwelling in the northern lands through experience or imagination, ‘southerners’ and ‘northerners’ alike do not simply inhabit the north; they are in turn inhabited by it. Situated at the ‘gates of the north’ in subarctic Canada, the mono-industrial company town Fermont fits its town centre entirely under a single roof. Planned and commissioned in the 1970s by a mining company, the town’s Utopian purpose was to ‘make a society’ in an inhospitable climate, while serving the exploitation of the mine. Fermont’s case serves here as a laboratory to understand the complexities of the north in more general terms. At the crossroads of image-based practices and the humanities, this contribution engages with the question of how humans inhabit the north and how they are inhabited by it.

Keywords: *Multiple norths; Fermont; Mapping; Extractivism; Utopia; Inner and outer landscapes*



Wir sind die Stadt! Urbanes Leben in der Digitalmoderne (We are the city! Urban life in modern digital times) by Hanno Rauterberg, 2013. Babel series, 2018.

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*'The landscapes that we inhabit inevitably shape us,
our vantage determined by the hill on which we stand.'*
(Van Herk 1984, 15)

'People do not always agree about what is alive and what is not.'
(Ingold 2006, 10)

Prologue

For a few days, we have been heading to a place where, we understand, people have been living in 'a wall' – whatever that might mean. After the final six hours of wilderness, hydroelectric dams, craters, asphalt, and gravel, our arrival is heralded by crossing the railway tracks for the dozenth time. We make out the infrastructure of the mine before distinguishing the town. When Will and Will drop us off, the night adds to the confusion as we attempt to make sense of this urban giant before which we are now stranded – the Wall, as we will learn soon enough, is a megabuilding, hosting the whole town centre under a single roof. On this snowy October night, we have arrived in the heart of Fermont, situated in northern Québec, Canada, named, after its *raison d'être*, the town of the 'iron mountain'.

*Up Norths Dear from many Souths, Following the line
There is no line Up north from many souths, Digging inside
Dear, upside Norths fooling the line From many Norths
Digging Unsouth, Rivers Rivers so many lines*

What had been sparked by curiosity quickly turned into a long-term research project that has led us return to Fermont, since our very first stay in 2012, for about three months at a time in 2013, 2015, and 2017. Our experiences in situ have led us to gradually develop a multidisciplinary approach at the crossroads of image-based practices and the humanities, intertwining aesthetic and scientific aspects from fieldwork and its analysis to the final outcomes. Through experimental and participative methods on the ground, our 'sampling' based on 'the image' as process, approach, and philosophy acts here as a tool to connect and collect – a compass to manoeuvre in between visible and invisible spheres, a means to question landscapes and their materiality.

In the process of analysing our findings, we draw on theories linked to human geography and ecology, the ecological humanities, or once again landscape and northern studies – fields of research concerned with the entanglements of humans and other-than-humans including things, animals, natural phenomena, and other beings. In parallel, a graphic and scenographic vision becomes the binding glue in between layers of different natures, assisting in organising our findings, notably in the form of exhibitions, publications, and performative talks. From our experiences in Fermont, as well as in other polar and circumpolar regions, comes our project 'An Archive of Norths'. By assembling an imaginary space, consisting of multiple norths, it geo-poetically explores how we inhabit the north and how the north inhabits us, as also tackled here in this brief contribution.

In the following, scholarly, aesthetic, and poetic latitudes are intertwined by means of assemblage as a tool to convey knowledge. Acting as beings of their own, the images serve the study on a different level, as does the poetry, by preserving its narration. The resulting meshwork of thoughts, words, and photographs gives birth, dear reader, to this contribution, for you to immerse yourself in and find your own truths. While the ‘we’ in the title directly concerns you and us, as a mutual commitment, all southerners and northerners alike, the ‘we’ that pops up elsewhere refers to we the authors, to our involvement and stories.

Introduction

As a company town, Fermont’s survival depends on the mono-industry’s activities and the possibility of its closure continuously influences local identities. Fermont’s inhabitants and their vision of the town’s future are equally shaped by the lack of a maternity ward and, until recently, a cemetery, living alongside a growing ‘fly-in-fly-out’ population, and the awareness of having to leave the place by the end of a work contract. Meanwhile, the vastness of the surrounding white desert with its magnetic attraction also strongly forges this northern experience. Fermont’s urbanism has in its brief history always been closely linked to extreme weather conditions as well as an enterprise’s understanding of a worker’s life and needs.



Left & middle: One-to-one maths class at school and ice-skaters during training in the arena. Right: Both located inside the Wall, seen here from the leeward side. Fermont, Canada, 2013.

The resulting architecture leaves a significant impact on the societal structure, with the town centre fitting entirely into an iconic v-shaped building that is 1.3 km long, five stories high, and designed to protect from the icy north winds. Hosting the town hall, school, hospital, shops, bars, and apartments, the windscreen building, affectively called ‘the Wall’ by its residents and known as such in Québec’s contemporary mythology, was designed in 1974 to be a shelter, mall, and home. It incites a life in its insides, triggering a longing for the outside, while the surrounding immensity simultaneously calls for a profound interiority. Shaping the Fermontois’s sense of place, the locality’s precarious future induces a rooted impermanence at the same time as it brings about a relentless search for sustainable alternatives to the mono-industry. The community is to be understood in the context of a race for the north’s natural resources, as well as a declining interest in keeping whole cities alive in hostile environments, which has already led to the total dismantling of the neighbouring mining town Gagnon Ville – today ironed out to a vast wasteland of memories left on the side of the road leading to Fermont.



A miner's lunch box. Fermont, Canada, 2017. Babel series, 2018.

Nestled in between the numerous lakes and fir trees of the subarctic taiga, Fermont is situated at the 'carrefour d'ambiance', an intersection between what is without doubt either the south or the north (Hamelin 2002, 25). Without definable borders, the north is arguably at once both a product of experience and of the mind. Beyond its many simplified representations that include, for instance, cold, hostile, uninhabited, or unknown, the north reveals itself as a complex and multiple space of interwoven geographical, cultural, social, and conceptual dimensions. As such, it can be apprehended as a territory or a direction by unfolding its historical layers of conquest and exploration or by looking at indigenous relations to the land. It can also be grasped by its extensions of the Arctic, the Antarctic, the cold world, the winter, and the high mountains. Finally, the north can also be studied as the set of places where man has settled through imagination or experience (Chartier 2015, 1). Existing both in fiction and reality, the north resembles the wolf, who is at once a predator and a mythical creature, in that understanding any debate about it requires taking into account the duality of its character. According to Chartier, the north's white colour acts as semaphore, only covering by illusion the complexity of its history and construction. Once this cover is wiped from the ground, the North seems at the same time pluricultural, multidisciplinary, particular, simplified, universal, and multiple (Chartier 2008, 5–6).

*Depends on the landscape Whether or not Whether or not, Dear
Dealing the South, It depends on the landscape, Back or not
Weather inside As we try and try, Dear From many Souths
Rivers Rivers Between your North and mine*

*If upside Earth If only, now if North beyond healing inside, If upside Earth
Only North, Dear, Little by little Mountain Mountain, All starts restored
All in Above If line by line, Dear if upside Norths and back to South
Mountain Mountain And back to South, Lichens Lichens*

The landscapes we inhabit arguably shape us; our vantage is determined by the hill on which we stand. In the following we will thus elaborate on the ways humans inhabit the north, this complex landscape of the mind and the real, and how, in turn, the north inhabits us humans, from within. Entangled in words and images, this essay is structured around four themes with each elaborating on both notions of inhabiting and being inhabited. Fermont acts here as a laboratory in that understanding its complexities might help to understand the complexities of the north in more general terms. Linking the whole, our findings on Fermont surface regularly in the tapestry of argumentation. This contribution thus elaborates on how humans dwell in the north through architectural projects and how these in turn shape the dwellers' inner geography, and then discusses the imaginaries of north from both inside and outside perspectives. Diving into representations of the north through mapping its territories both real and imaginary, we finally delve into the various landscapes of attraction and extraction. A body of analogue and digital photographs by the authors, alongside other illustrations and archive images stemming from different imaginary and geographical norths, together with a poetic investigation, further explore the same themes.

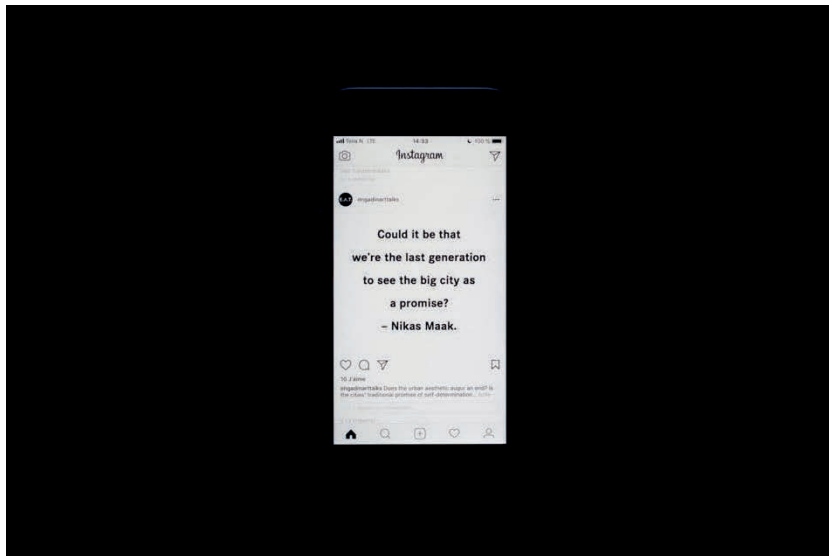


Marcel knows every corner of the Wall, having roamed it every day for thirty years. The caretaker's sweater shows his conviction that although the neighbouring mining towns Schefferville and Gagnon have been closed down, Fermont will not share the same fate: 'In Fermont we'll stay!' Fermont, Canada, 2013.

Dwelling

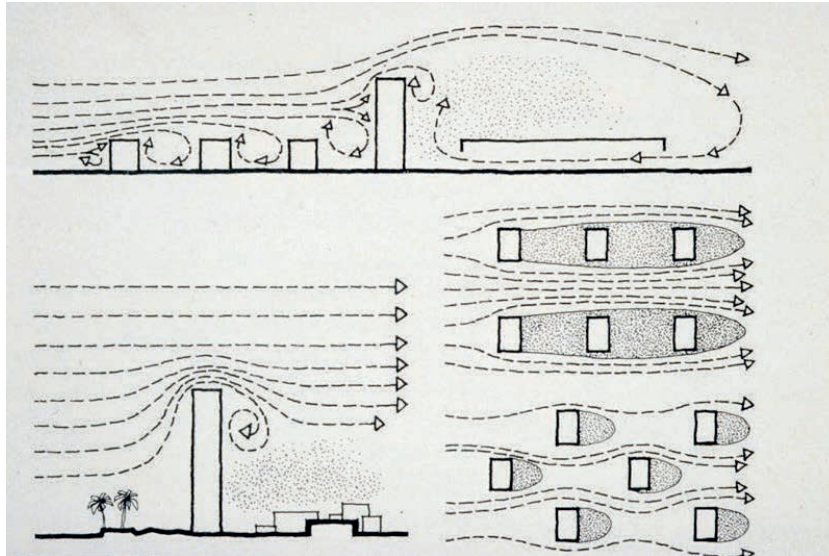
Contrary to the popular belief of the north as a virgin land, the subarctic and Arctic regions have been inhabited for millennia. However, ‘humans do not simply inhabit (and build) space, they are constructed from within it (...). Whatever humans build, be it of the imaginary, culture or physical kind, evolves as a consequence of practical engagement with one’s surroundings’ (McGeary 2015, 35). It is thus telling to look at the way humans inhabit the north and how they are in turn inhabited by the lands in which they dwell.

Driven by economic interests, Fermont's urbanism is a result of an occidental way to imagine the best quality of life in subarctic conditions. When the town was built in the 1970s, the large post-war reconstruction project coincidentally came to an end in Europe. Thus the conception of Fermont occurred at a time when simultaneously, in Europe and in Canada, so called 'new towns' were being erected, giving birth to the Utopia of the suburb. Thus, ‘the modern old world’ saw itself extended by a ‘new world’ consisting of geometrical forms and widened proportions (Houlette 2016, 35). Although the wind-screen building has not proved successful enough to be copied, Fermont was seen as the ‘subarctic cité radieuse’ after Le Corbusier’s Utopian architectural concept of a fully functional, city-like building in post-war Europe (Rodrigues 1976, 34).



Quote by arts editor and architecture theoretician Niklas Maak at Engadin art talks 2018. Babel series, 2018.

Fermont belongs to the fifth generation of mining towns in Canada, which were planned to be adapted to the northern climate instead of applying a model of a southern city to the north (Sheppard 2011, 6). It was in this context that the Wall was erected in the company town Fermont, inspired by British architect Ralph Erskine's buildings in Kiruna and Svappavaara in Sweden. Simulations of the local winds led the architects Schoenauer and Desnoyers to conceive a wind-screen building that would protect the residential areas from the local climate, densely grouping together public, private, and commercial spaces under one roof.



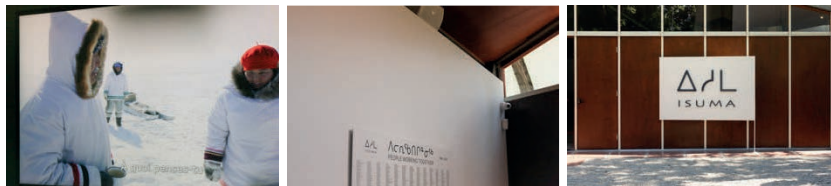
'Wind Shadow Studies', a preliminary study by one of the Wall's architects Norbert Schoenauer. Schoenauer Collections, McGill University. Reproduction: Allan Konga, year unknown.

Within it, animal icons and a system of numbers guide the dweller through the corridors, which, however, does not prevent them from getting lost due to the puzzling fact that all hallways, staircases, and doors look alike. This 'non-lieu' (Augé 2015), not planned for social interaction, takes on Kafkaesque dimensions when opening a door and stumbling into the school, opening another and standing in the swimming pool, while yet another leads to a dance bar, a hair salon, or the hospital. Some staircases lead to nowhere, and some doors open to walls – a jammed mechanism, far from the original plans that were redesigned at the very last minute for economical reasons under pressure from the company. The town's Utopian task was to 'build a society' in an inhospitable climate, serving with its functionality the exploitation of the mine. Yet its inhabitants have injected life into the planned city-building, establishing meeting places in the corridors, using the post office as point of encounter, or gathering smokers at one of the main doors. As unique as the Wall is, aspects of it can be found in multiple places such as Longyearbyen on Svalbard, Prora, the four kilometre long vacation home built by the Nazi regime in northern Germany, or the social housing project Block P in Nuuk, Greenland.



The 'Townsite of Fermont'. Photographs taken in 1976, 1982, 1976 respectively to document the construction of the Wall by its architects Norbert Schoenauer and Maurice Desnoyer. Schoenauer Collections, McGill University.

Before prospecting began where Fermont is embedded today, these lands were reindeer migration areas and hence hunting grounds for local indigenous populations including Innus and Naskapis. Today, these are basically absent in the town; many, however, settled in the former company-town Schefferville, north of Fermont, and stayed after the mine's closure in the 1980s. A general consideration of Canada's indigenous population, including Inuit and Innu, shows how differently the same land can be inhabited and how much architecture is a result of the respective cultures' relations to space. The semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Inuit and Innu, living in kin-based camps, migrating from winter camps to summer hunting grounds, gradually changed when the first settlers appeared on their territory in the 16th century. This change of living habits took new forms when, from the end of the 19th century onwards, the government actively suppressed their cultures and identities, with children sent to boarding schools and families severed. During the sedentarisation period of 1940-1960, indigenous people were forced to relocate to land and people unknown to them, moving into housing chosen by government interests (Kirmayer, Brass and Tait 2000, 607–608). During that time, the quotidian of the Inuit was intended to be systemically restructured through the introduction of Euro-Canadian housing. As a response to an imposed dwelling that did not meet their cultural needs and spatial use, the Inuit appropriated and transformed this accommodation according to their way of life. For instance, the families would spend most of their time at someone else's dwelling than in their own homes. Due to a different conception of individual privacy, a family would rather sleep all together on the floor, mostly in the living room, while repurposing the bedrooms for workshops or storage space (Dawson 2008).



'Isuma', led by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, Canada's pavilion, Venice Arts Biennale, 2019

The same development is exemplified in the functional building Block P in Nuuk, Greenland, where the lives of coastal Inuit changed drastically in the late 1960s when they moved in. Designed in line with the Danish social housing standards of the Western family ideal of that time, the 'traditional ways of living and social structures were thus written out of the architecture, out of the frames for everyday life that a home provides' (Huse and Aniksdal 2015, 23). Today, there is a heightened awareness of incorporating indigenous thinking into urban planning and architecture. In the part of Sápmi that lies in Norway, for instance, the artist and architect Joar Nango initiated Sámi Arkitekta Searvi, the Sámi architecture association, as well as the mobile Indigenous Architecture Library, as spaces for dialogue about modern Sámi identity and its place in contemporary architecture. Moreover, for the unprecedented exhibition 'Unceded – Voices of the Land', Canada's first ever indigenous-led entry for the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale, more than a dozen indigenous architects explored architecture connected to urbanism, indigeneity, resilience, sovereignty, and colonialization. This then paved the way for the 'Isuma' project, which in Inuktitut

means ‘to think, or a state of thoughtfulness’, which was the first Inuit video-based production company and presented in the very same pavilion during the 2019 Arts Biennale.

Compressed into one building, Fermont's town centre directly borders the wilderness, erasing a possible interface between the inside and the outside. The strong contrasts between this dense urban area and the wide open space of the subarctic taiga can evoke feelings of a strong interiority and exteriority, at once too open and too enclosed. It becomes difficult to avoid the landscape when dwelling in the Wall and vice versa, although both constitute two distinct spheres. Michel Foucault could have just as well written about the wind-screen building: ‘The boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea.’ (Foucault 1986, 9) Just as the ship, in Foucault’s opinion, draws its sense of existence from the ocean, the Wall retrieves its legitimacy from the landscape hosting it. Docked at Quebec's taiga, it seems to have travelled there from afar. With the duality between the natural world and the manmade world becoming evident, the “hard edges” of the city underscore this drama by allowing the virgin nature to be near and visible from all parts of the town [...] [which] also means eliminating the “pseudo-suburban” belt created around most settlements in the North’ (Sheppard 2011, 7).



Architecture in the mining town Fermont and the post-mining town Longyearbyen had the same initial aim, to accommodate their workers. However, the building conditions in both cities are different, with Longyearbyen, situated in the High Arctic, having to cope with permafrost. 1st photo: Fermont, Canada, 2013; 2nd photo: Longyearbyen, Svalbard, 2018.

In that sense, the Wall represents the dominant image of a line between the known and the unknown, a border above which the north appears, connected to ‘a “beyond” where the Arctic begins, at the end of the European ecumene and the beginning of a “natural”, unknown, empty, uninhabited, and remote world: the Far North’ (Chartier 2018, 117–118). Where the far north begins or ends lies in the eye of the beholder; a botanist, geographer, or farmer would give a different answer. Instead of thinking in terms of a clear-cut frontier, accounting for both the tangible landscapes and their ideological representations, Canadian geographer and linguist Louis-Edmond Hamelin developed a set of ‘valeurs polaires’ (polar values) to define the mental and physical ‘nordicity’ of a place. Believing that the state of the north is manifested in the spirits, mental nordicity

takes into account psychological and interior factors such as perceptions or a search for meaning, while for physical nordicity there is a set of criteria indicating the northerliness of a place that goes beyond simple delimitation by latitude and takes into account human and natural elements as well as geographical indicators (Hamelin 2002, 30–31, 349). Thus when considering the degree of the perceived as well as the experienced north, Hamelin situates Fermont in the ‘moyen nord’ or ‘medium north’, corresponding roughly to the subarctic regions, an area still highly influenced by human presence (ibid.).



Skulsfjord, Norway, 2018

*There Dear, Healing inside Mountain Mountain, If side by side
There perhaps, North by North Mountain Mountain How by how
Below zero Rhythm inside, Rivers flooding Dear, All stars all in*

Alors only there perhaps, Below the Known, Then perhaps

*If only then Back from Perhaps, Dear As North is telling us
Rivers Rivers As North is telling us, If only back, There perhaps
As North is healing us Rivers Rivers As North is healing us,
Talking doubts, Dear Taking stars*

Rivers Rivers So many lines

Banlieue nord



Houses sheltered by the leeward side of the Wall.
Fermont, Canada, 2017.

Inner and outer landscapes

Since the dawn of time, the North Pole, a sacred place and presumed paradise, has been the object of the most singular speculations, including a sea free of ice, an island, or a black boulder (Maurie 1990, 7). From the ancient Greeks to the Arctic explorers of the 19th century, two contradictory myths were told: the north was on the one hand pictured as ‘a place of darkness and dearth’ (Davidson, 2006, p. 25) and on the other as Hyperborea, where people were supposed to live ‘behind the North winds’ in happiness and unity with the gods (Maurie and Hoffmann-Darteville 2003, 8). Still today, the north evokes images of a hostile, inaccessible, cold, and dark place void of people, whilst simultaneously myths of indigenous peoples living cheerful lives in balance with beautiful, unspoiled white landscapes persist in the modern consciousness. This is how ‘the North could turn into a projection space for southern dreams, fantasies, and nightmares’ (Rosenthal 2009, 26). This leads to concrete implications, for instance how official policies concerning the northern regions and people are formulated. Although often represented more pragmatically from the inside due to daily experiences connected to the land, the north is also mystified and imagined from within. ‘My country is not a country, it is winter’, sings Gilles Vigneault in Quebecois collective memory. In his groundbreaking radio documentary of the 1960s, Canadian pianist Glenn Gould fictively sends a group of people on a northbound train to Hudson Bay, interweaving the travellers’ monologues like a multi-layered musical composition to an imaginary conversation. (See also Wetters, this volume.) Expressing that north can be more than a geographical location, namely a subjective concept, Gould named his documentary ‘The Idea of North’ (Gould 1967). The north takes shape in people’s minds, forming through myths and artistic works a system of signs that literary scholar Daniel Chartier calls the ‘imagined North’ (2018, 117).



Left: Creating the trails for the annual dogsled race Défi Taïga Carnaval. Fermont, Canada 2015. Middle & right: A straw fire’s smoke hanging in the forest after the dogsled race Défi Taïga Carnaval. Fermont, Canada. 2015.

As early as the 6th century BCE, people sought to answer why the so-called lodestone, today known as magnetite, attracted small pieces of metal. For centuries, legends and myths tried to explain why the stone would seek the north, suggesting that a magnetic iron mountain, situated at the North Pole, was responsible for it (Prothero 2018). Even today, the magnetic north remains a scientific puzzle. While the geographical North Pole, the northern end of the planet’s rotation axis, is static, the magnetic north is mobile, currently shifting from Canada towards Siberia at an inexplicably increasing speed – carrying in its migration a complex game of power relations. It not only makes compass needles point in its direction; humans also seem to be attracted to it.

Conceiving of the landscape as an other-than-human person, indigenous scholar Lana Kim McGeary finds that people's inner and outer geographies are affected through immersion. She argues that 'where the physical geography is invested with significance, the relationship becomes one of interdependence, where the outer landscape becomes part of the wayfarers' inner landscape and by extension the inner part of the outer' (McGeary 2015, xii). Geologist Jean Malaurie is a prominent example of an individual feeling this call of the north as he found his mind changed by living with Canada's and Greenland's indigenous populations, experiencing the magnetism of the landscapes and finding an inner space that had a lasting impact on his work (Malaurie 2001, 129). In Vermont, recurring stories are told about people that came for a three-year contract and end up staying for decades. If this is without doubt also due to factors including high wages or the particularities of a tight community, the attraction of the subarctic landscapes, their north, is most often given as the reason they are impossible to leave behind.

*Take me out Rivers Take me out
Dear, I leave them down
Take me out perhaps I'm Ready now*

With nature as omnipresent rather than humans, the 'white desert' of the Arctic regions is often perceived as a radical terra incognita, the blank spot on the map that attracts explorers and adventurers (Bouvet 2008, 61). Antoine de Saint-Exupéry reveals in *The Little Prince* that although one sees nothing, hears nothing in a desert, something throbs and gleams through the silence. What makes it magnetic is the well that it hides somewhere, like a supposed hidden treasure that casts an enchantment over a house. 'The house, the stars, the desert – what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!' (de Saint-Exupéry 2000, 52). It is the northern landscapes' immensity that draws in dwellers and travellers, fostering abstraction due to the measureless aspects of these spaces that transcend the imagination. Since immensity arguably remains elusive to the mind, it is impossible to picture it concretely. The white desert's unidimensionality and its sensory abstraction can thus evoke strong mental commitments, which explains why some people display an unlimited fascination for the north, turning it into a genuine landscape of choice (Bouvet 2008, 64) and a land of revelation.

*No moons no stars Rivers
Dogs flying above Winds blowing inside
Take me out Mountain And leave me now
Where no prayers no church, Dear*

Perspectives on the north diverge greatly, with some focusing for instance more on the geopolitical and others on the imaginary. Yet another view of the north has a spiritual and animist dimension, closely linked to the experience of the land itself. The Innu poets Joséphine Bacon and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, for instance, write about being inhabited 'from within the lands' (Bacon 2017) and incarnating the spirit of a powerful

woman, inhabited by the north's territory, by the rock that transmits memories through the millennia (La Fabrique Culturelle 2016). Moreover, what Westerners refer to as 'north' is called by the Inuit 'inuit nunangat', the land of the Inuit, which is commonly simply perceived as a good place to live, with plenty of resources of all kinds, that can also turn life difficult without the knowledge necessary to use wisely the natural and paranatural resources (Dorais 2008, 9). The Inuit also call their territory 'nuna', the inhabited earth. Not being restricted to a spatial entity, this term carries a cosmological and ontological meaning, so that 'nuna enriches the palimpsestic "idea of the North" with an indigenous viewpoint' (Pongérard 2017, 38). Nuna refers to a centre that most likely points to 'sila', a word sometimes translated as 'universe', meaning everything that surrounds nuna and of which nuna is itself a part. Sila also designates human intelligence, which is thought of as an air bubble, constituted by a microcosm of the natural environment, that every human receives within themselves at their day of birth. Thus, nuna is at the centre of sila, and sila, the intelligence bubble, is at the centre of the human being who is at the centre of nuna, the inhabited land (Pongérard 2017, 11–12). The French word 'milieu' carries a similar meaning, in that it is at the same time that which surrounds a centre and the centre itself (Berque 2010, 53). Anthropologist Tim Ingold conceives of the environment in a similar fashion, arguing that it cannot be a separate entity that literally surrounds us but must rather be a 'zone of interpenetration in which our own and others' lives are comprehensively entangled' (Ingold 2016, 16).



Antonin's notebooks on Fermont 2012-2017. Babel series 2018.

*No church perhaps As I need you now, Friend
Beyond the Wall, Mountain Mountain I'll do my best, Dear
beyond the lines, Friend, Pull me down*

As culturally represented space and experienced territory, the north has a force of its own, attracting travellers and making them stay for a lifetime. The inhabited north, according to Hamelin, is a human adventure with each presence of humans illustrating in one way or another a part of fiction (Hamelin 1988, 9).



Rock studies in the rising tide. Dinard, France, 2019.

*Alors Beyond beyond and only now, Dear
Him There, perhaps Beyond beyond and here perhaps Standing Alone
Flying inside Steering me down From up the Wall
Beyond beyond, From No Church no Lines, Dear Standing above
As He sees He knows Beyond beyond No rope Anchored No rope inside
No Doubts No Doubts Fooling Him down, Dear That's how I know
Rivers Rivers How I stand Rivers Rivers*

*Crossing the line crossing as He stands, Dear Lichens Lichens
Crossing no line Beyond inside, Passing the Wall Friend
The Dogs the doubts As we are the dogs
Lichens Lichens as we are the doubts Flying Mountain Friend
As we are the Wall, Dear we are the stars*

Mapping

Where is north? At the top of the map seems to be a predominant view. The influence of the earth's subjective representation in the form of a standard world map is stronger on our occidental minds than the knowledge that a sphere intrinsically does not possess qualities like up or down. Therefore an underlying notion in many assumptions about the north is its perception as an upwards facing direction. For the French, Paris is situated in the north, for Western Europeans, countries like Greenland or Iceland are thought to be in the far north. When in turn Icelandic schoolchildren were asked, north for them turned out rather to be a direction than a region, always further north, towards a cold and exotic land, of which Iceland was not part (Chartier 2009, 523). North is indeed always further north than where we are, unless standing on the geographical North Pole – whence every direction is south. In this sense, the north stays forever out of reach, with the compass embodying the idea that ‘North is always a shifting idea, always relative, always going away from us’ (Davidson 2006, 10).



Left: Map of the world created by geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi in 1154 for King Roger of Sicily (oriented with south at the top). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Right: ‘Inuit view to the South’ from Rudy Wiebe’s *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, 1989.

Illustrated by the common usage of ‘going down south’ and ‘going up north’ in many cultures and languages, the north as represented at the top of the world map largely influences people’s mindsets and thus their imagination. Research has shown that the ‘north-is-up heuristic’ (Brunyé et al. 2012, 2) is so heavily anchored in our occidental mindsets that the geographical north of a given country is associated as hilly while the south is pictured as level (ibid., 1). Moreover, the distortion of the Mercator projection, the standard world map, makes countries closer to the equator appear smaller, whereas Canada, Greenland, Russia, and also Antarctica are shown as much larger than they are. This certainly contributes to the popular image of the north as a large and empty space.

In order to ‘find yourself or lose yourself’, Gould’s characters, travelling to Hudson Bay, are not just retreating in any direction, they are retreating north. Indeed in the occidentally represented north, ‘the northwards journey is, as so often, a journey into a

kind of truth' (Davidson 2016, 122). Explorers have set sail to discover a magnetic mountain, the Northwest passage, or lost compatriots whose own quests have failed. A body of literature equally nourishes the imagination of north, where characters often seek enlightenment in the Arctic regions. Jules Verne lets his protagonists descend an Icelandic volcano to reach the centre of the earth, while Smilla sets out on an expedition to Greenland in order to find the last clues to resolve a murder. Lyra Belaqua, the protagonist in Philip Pullman's novel trilogy *His Dark Materials*, receives an alethiometer, a golden compass, that guides her towards a parallel universe to be seen through the Arctic's northern lights. But instead of pointing north, the device with quasi-magnetic properties points to truth (Pullman 1996). However, when looking at indigenous understandings of their territories, it becomes clear that such imaginary norths stem inherently from southern minds that in most cases have never set foot in the real territory of their imagination. According to Louis-Jacques Dorais, the Inuit, for instance, do not have the notion of north as a cardinal direction (or any other direction) in their language, since they orient themselves according to the strongest local winds. In Nunavik, however, people distinguish between 'in the shadow' and 'in the sun', which correspond to the occidental notion of north and south (Dorais 2018, 17).



Tattoo of a Svalbard map. Part of a photographic study investigating the identity of carriers of Svalbard map tattoos on intimate body zones. Longyearbyen, 2018.

*No fears Above
Beyond the rope*

As interpretations of human environments, maps mirror the predominant worldview. The 'land itself, of course, has no desires as to how it should be represented. It is indifferent to its pictures and to its picturers. But maps [...] create forceful biases in the ways a landscape is perceived and treated' (Macfarlane 2007, 10–11). However, since they 'proclaim truth, neutrality and objectivity and consequently invoke authority and gravitas' (Halder and Michel 2018, 12), humans have a tendency not to question the

maps that are used in the Western world, not seeing beyond their representational function. Grace (2002, 84) argues that ‘all maps, even the most fantastic or speculative, must obey the rules of reference and representation, which makes them inescapably available to an archaeology of geography, and here part of the discursive formation of North’. The map ‘An Inuit View to the South’ turns the familiar occidental perspective of the world upside down. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories are shown in great detail while the rest of Canada is depicted as a white empty space. It is a great visual reminder of the fact that the understanding of ‘north’ is a matter of perception and subject to interpretation. What further strikes the view of this map are the place names. Only selected names are shown, some in native languages, some in English, hinting at ‘the polyphony of the North by dialogizing its text’ (Grace 2002, 87). One example of claiming back a territory and its original names is a series of maps drawn by the Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen (Keviselie) that played an important role in the revitalization of the Sámi culture in the 1970s. His “cartography of connectedness” is an [...] example of indigenous counter-mapping that turns a critical searchlight on the lack of Sámi place-names in official maps of the region’ (Uhre 2015, 82). Mathisen’s probably most famous map shows Sápmi, the Sámi nation, without nation-state borders but with place names in Sámi, depicting the extent of his culture in Scandinavia and Russia (OCA Video).

Naming as claiming was mainly practiced by Western explorers, naming places they thought they had discovered and often named in their own honour, such as Gjøa Haven, Franklin Bay, Baffin Bay, Barents Sea, or Bering Strait, to mention only a few. Vermont’s street names continue this legacy and show a belonging to northern landscapes inherited by conquest, exploitation, and landscape: Rue des Glaces (Ice Street), Rue Boréale (Boreal Street), Rue du Sommet (Summit Street), Rue du Fer (Iron Street), Rue du Graphite (Graphite Street), Rue Comeau (Comeau Street), or Rue Franklin (Franklin Street).



Crossing Iceland, 2014.

With the retreating sea ice making resource extraction and commercial shipping easier, the Arctic regions are still of extreme geopolitical interest today. The far north is currently witness to the power struggles of the Arctic states, mainly Canada, Norway, Russia, the USA, and Denmark via Greenland, who all dispute the limits of their Arctic zones as determined in the UN convention on the law of the sea – while, despite a different geopolitical context, similar quarrels occur in Antarctica. In 2017, Russia went so far as to set up its flag at the geographical North Pole, at the bottom of the sea, an action that was compared by Canada to a colonial land grab of the 15th century (Parfitt 2007). Moreover, China as a non-Arctic state has established itself as a significant

player in the region, showing a great interest in economic possibilities primarily in the shipping sector and in natural resource extraction (Lanteigne 2019). This feudal theatre takes place against the backdrop of a drastically changing region with sea ice melting faster than scientists predicted and species vanishing.

In the winter, when the numerous lakes surrounding Fermont are frozen, a whole network of snowmobile tracks extends like fungus mycelium, some visible, others only used once and immediately snowed over. No map could ever account for all of these paths, except for the map of knowledge that the locals carry within themselves. It is a network that expands slowly with the winter as it builds up, and diminishes when the snow melts and the landscape becomes visible again. 'A map, after all, answers an enduring human question that is as much existential as it is directional: where are we?' (Brotton 2013) North is not per se 'up there', though the West has collectively put it 'up there' where it has become a geographical projection forging a particular view both of and on the world.

*Pulling Us down Pulling Us down Friend
As we see no line No dogs no doubts Steering Us now
Cutting the cord Leaving Behind No fears Above Friend
Far from the Wall No fears Alone as He stands inside*

Eldorado and Utopia

We think of Gould's fictive train ride to the north when, after one long period of fieldwork in Fermont, we take the train Tshiuetin, the 'North Wind', operated by the First Nations Innu Takuaihan Uashat mak Mani Utenam, the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, and the Innu Matimekush-Lac-John. More than merely travelling, the passengers inhabit this moving space, constructing temporary shelters or moving through the corridors to visit families and friends. This train connecting Schefferville with Sept-Îles stops not far from Fermont, next to a container turned into a station. Travelling to and from Fermont is part of its myth, passing through or over a horizonless subarctic wilderness, an experience that fosters the popular image of the town as being far away and isolated. The fact that it is only a stone's throw from Labrador City seems to be largely ignored in the self-perception of Fermont's inhabitants, due to the sometimes tense relations between the largely French-speaking Québec and the predominantly English-speaking rest of Canada. Far from being isolated, the Fermontois are hyper-connected to the rest of the world through the internet and an intense use of social media.

Gould's gold digger believes that the north is like the gold rush: 'It is not about the gold, it is about finding the gold. The north is process, is finding.' He thus believes that 'in the north we see the final playing-out of two great dreams of man: Eldorado or Utopia' (Gould, 1967). In the north, as the land of the possible, Fermont indeed incarnates both notions, an Eldorado to the occidental mind for its natural recourses, and a Utopian town planning. The Wall acts as metaphor of the Utopian idea of a hypermodern urbanism thought to create a comfortable and privileged society in a subarctic environment. As the first town in the Canadian north with modern facilities

and infrastructure, Fermont was indeed the exemplary model for urban planning in a modern world, just as Le Corbusier's architecture was in Europe. About one hundred years earlier, Jules Verne again drew the portrait of two imagined cities, one a dream, one a nightmare, in his 1879 novel *The Begum's Fortune* that questioned the relation of humans to urban space. At times when the impact of economical, social, and environmental transformations worried Western societies, the Utopian France-Ville is depicted as a sustainable city while Stahlstadt, a mining town extracting iron ore, appears as a dystopia – the golden city versus the steel city, only able to coexist in their duality (Dupuy 2012, 23–24).



Left: Emeril Junction, the train station closest to Fermont, served by the First Nations-owned train Tshiuétin. Emeril Junction, Canada, 2017. Middle & right: On board the First Nations-owned train Tshiuétin, the 'North Wind', connecting Schefferville with Sept-Îles. Canada, 2017

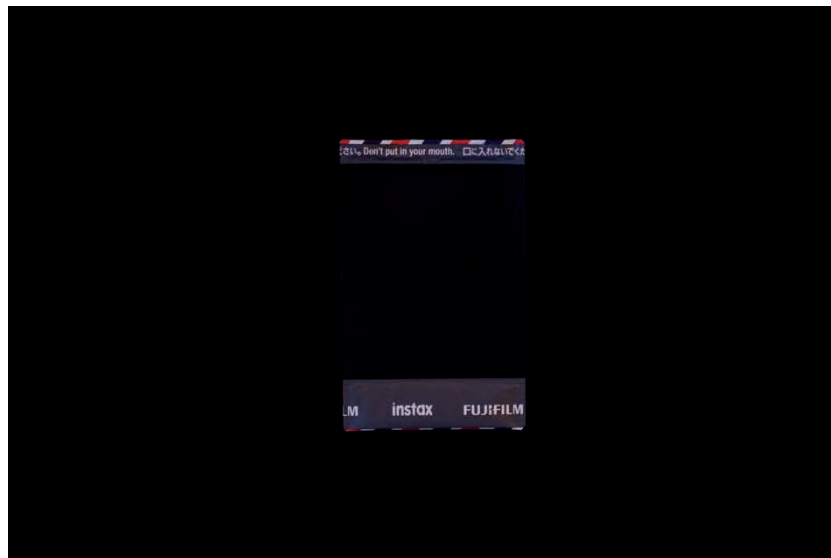
Fermont's construction was a third attempt to build a company town in that region, after two predecessors did not withstand the economic and political forces at play. The cities of Gagnon and Schefferville were the first two company towns commissioned by the mining corporation Québec Cartier, not long before plans were laid for Fermont. Each was situated a few hundred kilometres to the south or north, and each proved to be a failed Utopia. When the mines were no longer profitable, first Schefferville (1982) and then Gagnon (1985) closed. Michel Rivard sings in 'Schefferville, le dernier train' (Schefferville, the last train):

En novembre passé ils ont fermé la mine
J'ai vu pleuré mon père sur la table d'la cuisine
C'était pas tant de perdre une job assurée
Que de voir s'évanouir le rêve de trente années
Quand je suis venu au monde ils étaient jeunes mariés
Venus trouver l'amour et la prospérité
Dans une ville inventée par une grosse compagnie
En plein nord en plein froid et en plein paradis.¹ (Rivard 1983)

Because indigenous people had moved into the remains of Schefferville and services legally had to be kept up by the State, Gagnon was completely eradicated from the map.

¹ Last November they closed the mine / I saw my father crying at the kitchen table / It was not so much about losing a secure job / Than seeing his thirty-year dream vanish before his eyes / When I came into the world they were newlyweds / They had come to find love and prosperity / In a town invented by a big company / In the far north, in the deep cold, and in the heights of paradise.

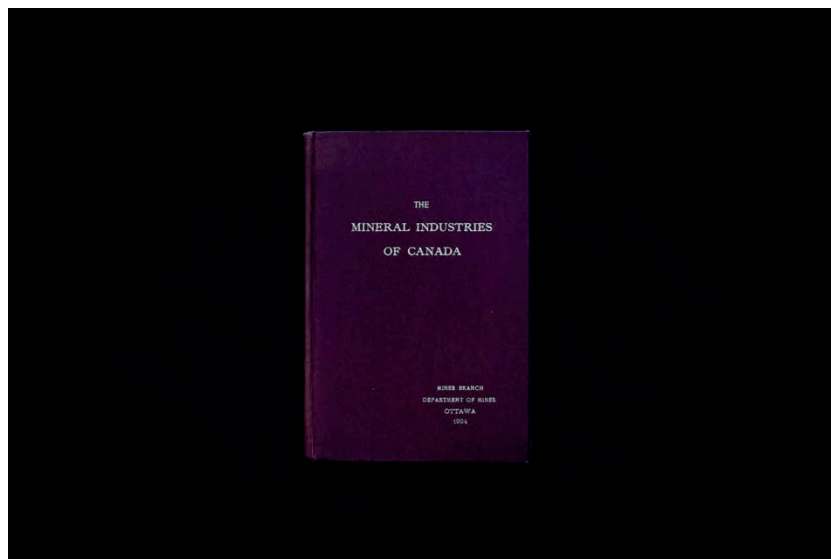
The fact that one part of the hospital was renovated while the other was demolished shows how arbitrary this decision was (Dion-Ortega and Blin 2014). Today, the only remains of Gagnon that have not been dismantled and buried, are the pavements along route 389, the airport runway, a cemetery, as well as a sign stating ‘Site de l’ancienne ville de Gagnon’ (site of the former town of Gagnon). This ghost town haunts Fermont, brutally exemplifying what its own future could hold. Many other company towns, built to be functional, shared a similar fate, a similar dependency on a productivist’s arbitrariness and Utopian thinking in extending a company into a fully-fledged town. Kiruna in Sweden, for instance, is in the process of being moved since the effects of decades of iron ore extraction under the town would otherwise result in the its partial collapse. The task of moving and rebuilding it anew, maintaining Kiruna’s sense of place, history, and traditions, is an ‘ideological fantasy’ (Nilsson, 2010). These towns embody Wilde’s claim that ‘a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail’ (Wilde 1891, 40).



Back of a polaroid. Instant photographs taken by an inhabitant of Svalbard as part of a series capturing people at the moment of leaving the archipelago. Babel series 2018.

The myth of El Dorado fuelled the imagination of numerous conquistadores that set out to discover the lost city of gold, situated in South America, and became a main drive for exploiting these lands in multiple ways. Four hundred years later, the promise of gold and thus wealth in the Klondike region, in Yukon, Canada, led thousands of prospectors to travel the hazardous route towards the north in order to take their share in this prosperous adventure. Since then, the north has been imagined by the ‘southist’ culture and it responds to its material needs (Chartier 2018, 129). The northern landscapes continue to be exploited for their natural resources but also for their beauty, as the high numbers of tourists show, who come to see the northern lights, polar bears, glaciers, or the cultures of Arctic towns. Thus as well as consisting of indigenous, agricultural, industrial, or modern urban landscapes, the north can also be divided into a “viewing landscape”, defined by the tourists, and an “extraction landscape”, defined by trade

cycles and world mineral markets: one above ground and one below ground' (Kampevold Larsen and Hemmersam 2018, 3). In this sense the north reveals itself as an occidental territory of consumption and extraction – just as the south in times of colonization, orientalism, or contemporary exploitation. In an often traditional indigenous world view, all beings are interconnected: the land and the tree and the people; the earth is holy and cannot be owned or dug into. More than that, the impact of mining frequently poses challenges to traditional ways of life. For instance, contaminated soils or railways and gas pipelines, running through the migration territory, are a threat to Sámi reindeer herding in northern Scandinavia or Russia. In the USA, the plan to build a gas pipeline through the Standing Rock Reservation has mobilized thousands of people to protest against the unlawful use of the indigenous population's holy lands and possible contamination of drinking water supplies.



The Mineral Industries of Canada. Mines Branch Department of Mines, Ottawa, 1924. Babel Series, 2018.

*Up Norths from many Souths Crossing Above and Back to Norths, Dear
Rivers my Friends From many Souths Mountain Mountain
Between your fears and mine as He stands aside as He stands aside
Horses Horses my Friends as You fear inside*

Fermont owes its existence to the exploitation of the open-cast iron mine, once owned by Québec Cartier, today owned by Arcelor Mittal, that every day inverts Mount Wright a little more. The development of the north of Québec has a particular flavour to that it is essentially driven by the economical and geopolitical interests of the state of Québec, that wants to get hold of the territory and use its resources in order to create wealth in the south and increase its influence among neighbouring provinces and states (Simard 2012, 110). The so-called 'Plan nord' officially aims at sustainably developing the territory north of 49° latitude by exploiting the north's natural resources, protecting the biodiversity and ecosystems, and improving the living conditions of local and indigenous communities (Action Plan 2017, 2). This political instrument, defended on

television by prime minister Stephen Harper in Fermont, is polemic due to its two-sided views on development, on the one hand economical and promoting the exploitation of natural resources, and on the other cultural and social (Rivard and Desbiens 2011, 83). A rhetoric of ‘opening the north’, as the Plan nord promotes, would mean following old geographical chimeras, conveying the idea of north as being void of people and culture, just waiting for the visions of the south to blanket its virgin territory (ibid., 88).



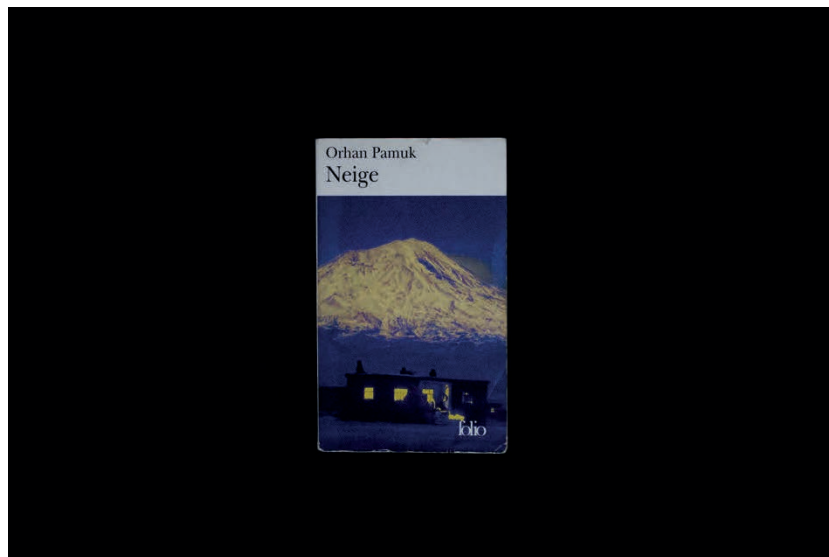
Mushers from different parts of Canada preparing for the local dogsled race Défi Taïga Carnaval. Fermont, Canada, 2015.

Every day at noon, the daily blast marks the extension of Fermont’s open-cast iron mine. It is a Jurassic Park-like territory with giant trucks whose wheels are over four meters high transporting 200 to 400 tonnes of iron ore in one load up and down the crater 24/7. As Fermont’s *raison d’être*, the mine was the main driving force behind the town’s urban planning: it forges social life and generates the inhabitants’ almost exclusive source of income. Fermont is thus an example of how economic interests create and accommodate a society from scratch. However, the town’s inhabitants have developed their own sense of belonging over the decades, with many accepting a Gagnon-like scenario for their town’s future, and others actively searching for alternatives to the mono-industry through, for instance, attracting tourists and organizing an annual dogsledding race, the Défi Taïga Carnaval that has grown continually since 2013 and is today the largest of its kind in North East America. The stories of Fermont exemplify how the north has been and is systematically exploited for its various resources. It becomes evident that:

The journey into the North in search of treasures and marvels comes round in a circle: a movement from the unaffected rapacity of the Renaissance, harvesting amber, fur and the horns of unicorns to the complex appropriations of our own time, seeking both oil and shamanic enlightenment, while at the same time longing to believe that the Arctic can remain a reservoir of peoples undamaged by civilization, a natural world, unexploited, pure.’ (Davidson 2006, 73)

The north’s territories are manifested in their complexity: next to being agricultural, urban, or indigenous, contemporary northern landscapes are also predominantly marked by tourists and by the extraction industry. The case of Fermont exemplifies how extraction turns indigenous hunting grounds into a fully fledged urban area, creating a society from scratch that searches in turn for alternatives to the mono-industry, turning towards tourism which again seeks and exploits the authenticity and wildness of the land itself. The world we inhabit inevitably inhabits us. Complex and multidimensional,

the north reveals itself through imagination and experience in northerners and southerners alike. Exerting a transformative and magnetizing influence on people's inner geography, the landscapes of the north arguably cause humans to both preserve and exploit them, depending on how one dwells in them or is made to dwell. Climate change and globalization make rapid change in the region possible and viable. The presence of a considerable amount of micro plastics in the Arctic Ocean and strong impact on weather in the southern hemisphere due to the melting of the polar ice caps exemplifies how interconnected the whole world is. In that sense, the north is not unique as such and many of our findings hold true for other regions as well. While this work has focused on the north's contemporary aspects, it is vital to take a look into what its future might look like and to help shape it accordingly. How might we humans inhabit a future north with a future past, living with post-industrial ruins and remains, things as traces of modernity? How will we be inhabited by this very heritage and how will we take care of it? Þóra Pétursdóttir's work on the 'ruins of modernity' (2013, 44) might give some clues on how post-industrial landscapes could turn into heritage sites. Vermont's fate is yet to be determined, either by extractivists' interests, by people's engagement with the place, or by the forces of nature itself.



Neige (Snow) by Orhan Pamuk, 2005. Babel series 2018.

*A hundred and two days walking now
Lichens Lichens and no more tears inside
The Wall way back Old Friend as He stands behind
Far from Now A hundred and two days anchored
Lichens Lichens Along the Rivers down*

Epilogue

The north is like a drug. We are inhabited by it ourselves. We have to admit, for us too, the north has revealed itself as a magical place that we stumbled into like Alice fell into Wonderland. Feeling a longing for the wide open spaces that open up hearts and minds, our north became our adopted home, our land of revelation, as well as a place inhabiting our imagination. Helplessly we fall for the north, for what is north for us, reproducing probably what thousands of other southerners before us have felt and accordingly represented in images and texts – but yet contributing specifically with who we are to this organic idea of north. Participating in a better understanding of this place of the real and of the mind is the main driving force behind studying how we inhabit the north and the north inhabits us. This brief contribution can thus also be read as a call for more holistic research on this subject by breaking down boundaries between disciplines and provoking multiple ways of knowing, taking into account the whole and all of its parts.



Sahara expedition. Morocco, 2011.

*As we the Horses, Friend, we the fears And no more map
Lichens Lichens Beyond the stars A hundred and two days
walking now Lichens Lichens between you Friends and I*

*All in Now All in Friends No Rope, Dear No Eyes, Told you
No Blood Inside You knew Above above Cutting Beyond Now
We are the Map Fooling the Wall A hundred and two Dear
Now You North Freeing the Dogs Between your hand and mine
Following Lichens Lichens From many Souths*

*Rivers And no more Back, Dear Mountain standing
Horses Horses Friends From many Souths, as You Lichens Lichens
As We Dear are the North inside*

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PIMITAMON: CONCEPTUALIZING A NEW CANADIAN NORTH THROUGH THE GRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF JEFF LEMIRE

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Abstract

In *Essex County*, in *Secret Path* (his collaboration with Gord Downie), in *Roughneck*, and in his creation of the indigenous Canadian superhero Equinox for *Justice League United: Canada*, Jeff Lemire highlights a vision of the Canadian ‘north’ as transformative space. In Lemire’s hands, ‘the north’ is where Chanie Wenjack’s historical reality (*Secret Path*), Derek and Beth Ouelette’s personal demons (*Roughneck*), and Miyyahbin Marten’s life as an ordinary indigenous teen in Moose Factory, Ontario (*Justice League United Volume 1: Justice League Canada*) all undergo a transformation which speaks to shifting perceptions of identity, responsibility, and belonging in Canada. The north becomes a site where Lemire (and Lemire’s readers) directly confront how even a deliberate act of intended reconciliation between settler-colonial and indigenous peoples can effectively colonize the space in which it occurs. All three works, in different ways, deploy rhetorical strategies to minimize the ‘collateral damage’ that is probably unavoidable, and even perhaps necessary, in the articulation of the kind of anticolonial dialogue toward which Lemire’s work is oriented.

Keywords: *Jeff Lemire; Canada; Rhetoric; Crossroads; Indigenous studies; Settler-colonial studies*

Daniel Chartier tells us that ‘The imaginary of North [...] refers to a series of figures, colours, elements and characteristics conveyed by narratives, novels, poems, films, paintings and advertising which [...] have forged a rich complex network of symbolic meanings’ (2007, 35). We pick up his list of genres and media and add one more in this essay: the comic book. Nicole Pissowotzki writes that Canadian accounts typically treat the north as ‘an imaginary zone: a frontier, a wilderness, and empty “space” which, seen from southern Canada, is white, blank’ (2009, 81), defined by what Urban Wråkberg called ‘the sublime experience of nature’ (2007, 196). As historian Elena Baldassarri (2017) puts it, ‘In Western culture the North is not just a matter of geography but a place where humans are forged and strengthened’ – in the popular imagination, in the contest between human and nature. Graphic novelist Jeff Lemire’s vision of the Canadian north touches these features of the broader genre, but creates something new. Lemire reconfigures the north as a different site of tragedy, struggle, and of fantasy.

Jeff Lemire: Comics, Canadian literature, and reconciliation through the arts

Jeff Lemire is one of Canada's most-celebrated artists working in the medium of comics and graphic novels. As both writer and as illustrator, his oeuvre crosses a wide range of genre boundaries, from mainstream superhero comics to science fiction and horror to a magic realism proceeding from a closely observed sense of daily life. In collaboration with a number of international illustrators, he has written for established DC and Marvel series including Green Arrow, Justice League, Hawkeye, and X-Men, and has pursued multiple creator-owned series across genres, including the dystopian science-fiction series *Sweet Tooth* (2009-2012), 'revisionist' superhero comics such as *Descender* (2015-2018) and *Black Hammer* (2016-2017), the magic-realist series *Royal City* (2017-2018), and, most recently, the *Gideon Falls* horror series (2018-), to name but a few.

Lemire's emergent status as a major figure in Canadian literature has come through his graphic novels, most notably in works such as *Essex County* (2009), *The Nobody* (2009), and *The Underwater Welder* (2012). In *Essex County* and *The Underwater Welder* in particular, Lemire's subtle, magic-realism-inflected exploration of rural and working-class life in Canada has been compared to the fiction of Nobel-prize winner Alice Munro (MacDonald 2017), with whom he shares roots in south-western Ontario. *Essex County* was the first graphic novel to make the shortlist in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's battle-of-the-books Canada Reads competition in 2011, and although it didn't win (some panellists being uncomfortable that it had 'too few words' in it (Reid 2016), it was named one of the '40 Essential Canadian Books of the Decade' and, notably, won the Canada Reads People's Choice award for 2011 (Reid 2016).

The publication of *Justice League United Volume 1: Justice League Canada* in 2015, *Secret Path* in 2016, and *Roughneck* in 2017 marked a significant new alignment of factors in the focus of Lemire's work. Occurring in the wake of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's release of its final *Report* with its 94 Calls to Action 'to redress the legacy of the residential schools [for indigenous children] and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation' (TRC Vol 6, 223), Lemire's attention to indigenous identity in the realm of Canadian popular culture was timely. *Secret Path* was embraced as a work which 'could be the tipping point for the changing of the conversation about Canada's residential school history' and which, as Ry Moran, Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation put it, brought 'a lot more people to this conversation now [...] we had a lot of people show up at the TRC events. But we never somehow really got mainstream Canada showing up somehow' (CBC 2016). While Gord Downie was formally recognized for his contributions to the Reconciliation process at an Assembly of First Nations ceremony in December 2016, Lemire has taken a low-key approach to the role his work might play in that process; in a 2014 interview, prior to the release of *JLU*, indigenous scholar Waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy asked if the storyline would reflect 'the realities of indigenous peoples', to which Lemire replied that, while his *JLU* 'would be something hopefully young people would enjoy and can hopefully educate them a little bit about Cree culture', he was conscious that

I'm not Aboriginal or from the area and as good as my intentions are, I can never create an authentic story. My hope, my real hope, is that maybe one of these kids I talk to or give copies to or talk about comics with, in ten or fifteen years from now, will end up making their own comics and telling their own stories. That will be the real victory of the project. (Sy 2014)

As we demonstrate later in this paper, Lemire's attitude towards the play of identities and narratives across cultural boundaries in the comics genre aligns with the respect for 'opacity' which Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* (1997) saw as foundational to a healthy diversity in cultural discourse.

Lemire's north is not northern Canada as the people of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, or Yukon would define it. Nor is it 'cottage country' as people in Southern Ontario's Golden Horseshoe mean when they speak of 'going up North' (cf. Grace 2002, 264–265; Kulchyski 2004, n.p). Lemire himself is from Canada's southernmost region, the region of south-western Ontario that has manifested itself in Canadian literature in Robertson Davies's Deptford trilogy and throughout Alice Munro's fiction (an acknowledged influence on Lemire discussed in MacDonald 2017). Katie Mullins has noted connections between Lemire's aesthetic and the subgenre of Canadian literature known as Southern Ontario Gothic, suggesting a 'southern-ness' as context for thinking about the north. It is tempting to cast Lemire's north simply as a foil to the deeply rooted Euro-Canadian culture of his home region, the cultural psyche of which he has explored in probing detail in *Essex County* (2008-2009) in particular.

We start our essay with *Essex County* but resist those temptations and go further, to find in Lemire's work a tragic history, a contemporary struggle, and a future fantasy for the Canadian north as the crossroads where indigenous and settler-colonial cultures meet.

The transformative space of the Canadian north: 'The Essex County Boxing Club'

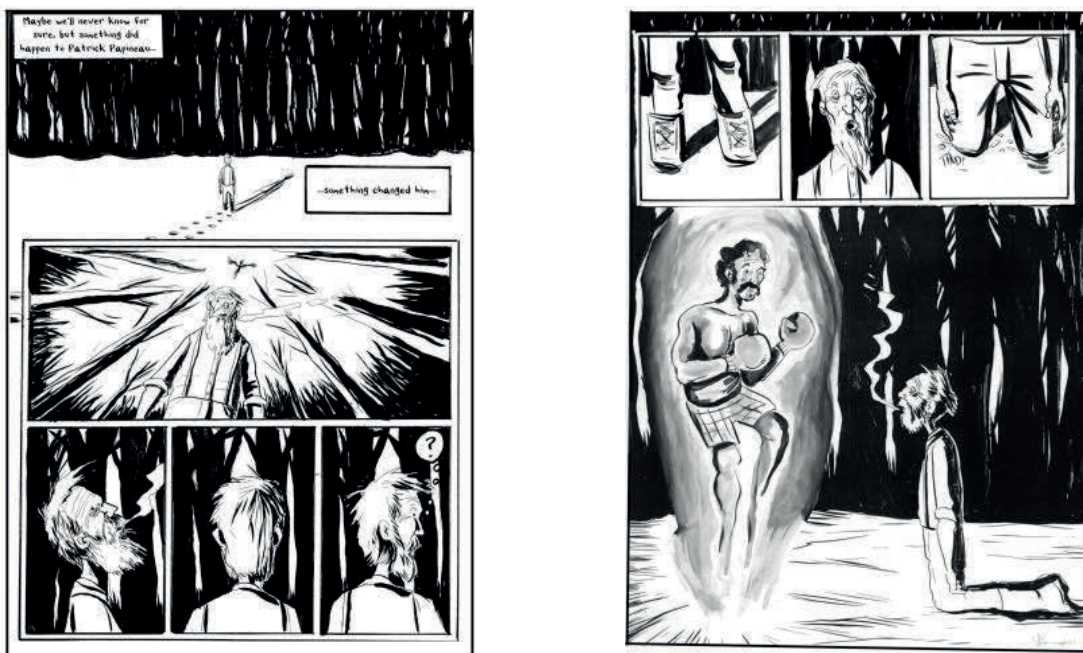
Essex County is the most popular of the texts in which Lemire begins his exploration of a new Canadian north. That work's multigenerational saga of rural life is a powerful articulation of the mythopoeic impulse in Canadian literature as people raised and educated in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s would have experienced it. Lemire's characters (who are, like him, English speakers with French names) live out their bittersweet, and sometimes violent, experience of settler communities trying to put down roots in the spaces to which history has brought them. Native but not indigenous, French Canadian but not Francophone, English speaking but not British, North American but not American, Lemire's rural Canadians inhabit a liminal space. Where the old, often colonial narratives of the Canadian north emphasized 'the end of the world, devoid of reference points, enveloped in mist and fog' (Chartier 2007, 47), the residents of Essex County exist in a north of cultural mist and fog, devoid of reference points for the construction of Canadian identity.

Lemire's initial account of his new Canadian north in *Essex County* has resonated deeply; the 2011 collected edition won the Alex Award for young adult literature and two awards in the comics industry (the Doug Wright Award, and the Joe Shuster

Award). The book's selection as one of *Canada Reads* The Essential Canadian Novels of the Decade in 2011 demonstrates the depth of its resonance.

'The Essex County Boxing Club', one of the short graphic narratives included in the collected edition of *Essex County*, cracks open the north as a transformative space. After the accidental death of Ted Diemer, his friend and cofounder of the eponymous club, a traumatized Patrick Papineau undergoes a transformation:

No one really knows what happened to Punchin' Patty for the next five years. The common belief is that he moved up north away from everything and everyone. Maybe we'll never know for sure, but something did happen to Patrick Papineau ... something changed him. (Lemire 2011, 468–469)



We are shown a bearded, haggard-looking Patrick stark against a backdrop of skeletal trees.¹ More significantly, as we shall see, a bird passes overhead, specifically the crow who recurs as a visual motif throughout the different narratives of *Essex County*.² The next panel shows the spirit of a younger Ted Diemer appearing before Patrick who drops to his knees in the snow. On the next page, we learn that 'In the fall of 1995, Papineau rolled back into town, with a new wife and seemingly a new lease on life' (Lemire 2011, 471), from whence he goes on to rejuvenate the Essex County Boxing Club, which found 'its niche, not as a big time glitzy show, but as what it was always

¹ The visual language of *Essex County* foreshadows *Secret Path* and *Roughneck*, including the crow and the trees as visual motifs. Note that in this article, the authors use images in accordance with fair use principles for criticism of copyright law.

² The crow becomes a visual motif of Lemire's work, appearing in *Secret Path*, *Roughneck* and corporate works like his three-volume set of stories about *Moon Knight* published by Marvel Comics.

meant to be, a local treasure' (ibid.). Patrick Papineau goes north and undergoes a transformation.

There is little that is revolutionary in this short story; it fits within the genre Urban Wråkberg (2007) identifies as the trip north for a sublime experience that transforms the self. And yet this small episode points to concerns and tropes which Lemire develops as he recrafts a vision of a new Canadian north.

Jeff Lemire recrafts a north for a postcolonial Canada

In this essay for this special issue of *Nordlit*, we trace a line through Lemire's narratives which return to the landscapes and social situations seen as integral to Canadian identity. In returning, Lemire offers an alternative to traditional narratives that construct northern identity in Romantic nationalist and colonial terms.

Lemire's work speaks to the moment where a fairly traditional Canadian mainstream settler culture is brought into a confrontation between two powerful visions of history, one being a *heroic narrative* which bestows identity through continuity with the acts of 'pioneer' ancestors who 'claimed' the land and built a country on it, and the other a *tragic narrative* which sees the heroic narrative in light of the space and people it has damaged and displaced. Margaret Atwood's poem, 'Backdrop Addresses Cowboy', encapsulates the tension between these two narratives: 'I am the space you desecrate / as you pass through' (Atwood 1976, 71). Lemire's comics attempt to manifest and negotiate that tension as he rewrites the experience of the north for contemporary Canadian life.³

In *Essex County*, in *Secret Path*, in his graphic novel *Roughneck*, and in his creation of the indigenous Canadian superhero Equinox for *Justice League United Volume 1: Justice League Canada (JLU)*, Lemire highlights a vision of the Canadian north as transformative space. In Lemire's hands, 'the north' is where Chanie Wenjack's historical reality (*Secret Path*), Derek and Beth Ouelette's personal demons (*Roughneck*), and Miiyahbin Marten's life as an ordinary indigenous teen in Moose Factory, Ontario (*Justice League United: Canada*) all undergo a transformation which speaks to shifting perceptions of identity, responsibility, and belonging in Canada. The north becomes a site where Lemire has to directly confront how even a deliberate act of intended reconciliation can effectively colonize the space in which it occurs. All three works, in different ways, deploy rhetorical strategies to minimize the 'collateral damage' that is probably unavoidable, and even perhaps necessary, in the articulation of the kind of anticolonial dialogue toward which Lemire's work is oriented.

To make our point, we make four moves. First, we identify a conceptual north across several of Lemire's works. We use the imaginary place name 'Pimitamon' from Lemire's *Roughneck* as a shorthand for Lemire's new Canadian north – where Pimitamon is the Anglicization of a Cree word for 'crossroads.' We propose crossroads as a governing metaphor for understanding how Lemire's work constructs the north.

³ Readers of *Nordlit* will recall the attention given to Sweden and Norway (Hazell 2004; Halvorsen 2004) as they endured sociocultural processes like the Canadian attempts at Truth and Reconciliation.

Second, we see the crossroads at work in Lemire's historical writing: in *Secret Path*, the Canadian readers of settler-colonial origins are placed at a crossroads in responding to the trauma of the residential schools policy. In *Roughneck*, the same readers are at the crossroads with First Nations people today. And in *JLU*, the readers are placed at the crossroads of a colonial fantasy of superheroes and indigenous traditions.

Across these three genres, the north is transformed from a barren land of cold and snow. The north becomes a contact zone, a place where Canadians move past what Jack Granatstein (2008) calls the 'Canadian multicultural fantasy' toward an authentic engagement with each other and with our shared traumatic history.

Pimitamon: The imaginary north, a crossroads in the real Canada

Prior discussions of the imaginary Canadian north have focused on frozen wastelands. At the same time, discussions of the literal Canadian north have centred on Quebec and Montreal as the region demonstrating both 'winterity' and 'nordicity' (Hamelin 1975).



Lemire's new Canadian north, expressed in the fictional town of Pimitamon, is within the reach, the experience, of every Canadian. In this section of our essay, we will outline Lemire's strategy for embedding the fictional town of Pimitamon amid the geographic realities of Ontario. Then, we will look at the ways Lemire embeds Pimitamon in the linguistic and cultural history of the region as a contact zone between settler-colonial and indigenous peoples. The end result is the creation of a new space, a new north, as a crossroads that we will trace across Lemire's works.

First, the geography of Lemire's writings embeds the imaginary in the real. Essex County can be found on a map and its grid of named townships appears in Lemire's text (2011, 121). The historical Chanie Wenjack, the central character in *Secret Path*, escaped from Cecilia Jeffery Residential School in Kenora in north-western Ontario, heading east along the CNR (Canadian National Railway) tracks, hoping to make his way northeast to his home of Ogoki Post. The distance between Kenora and Ogoki forms the western border of these narratives. Pimitamon itself, as indicated in the highway signs that appear in the narrative, is at least 250 km south of Fort Albany on James Bay, and within driving distance of Timmins, ON, as indicated by the arrival of a minor-league hockey team from that city. The line from Fort Albany to Timmins, passing through Moose Factory, where Miiyahbin 'Mii' Marten (of *JLU*) lives, forms the eastern boundary of Lemire's north. Timmins is the southernmost northern community to which the texts refer, with Toronto appearing to be the next logical stop for the characters who leave home, although Derek Ouelette's hockey career takes him as far as New York.

The ambiguity of Pimitamon's relative location, along with the relatively undefined southern boundary of the fictional territory, allows readers to draw the town into their

own particular north, and their own experience of north. Lemire's visual depiction of the town will resonate with anyone familiar with the small communities found along any of Ontario's highways running north-south or east-west, north of Lakes Superior and Huron.

Lemire's north, then, is not the north of Inuit musician and novelist Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* (2018) or Tlicho novelist Richard Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed* (1996). By virtue of its simultaneous ambiguity and proximity to the most populous regions of Canada, it is accessible to Canadians outside the zones of 'winterity' and 'nordicity' that typify scholarly considerations of the north. By definition, Lemire's north is a place that southern Canadian readers can seek out and define for themselves.

Second, Lemire embeds Pimitamon in the complex linguistic and cultural history of the region. The territory in which Lemire's fictional Northern Ontario community is located is home to several groups of Algonkian-speaking First Nations people: their languages are Anishnaabemowin (Ojibway), Oji-Cree (sometimes called Severn River Ojibway), Swampy Cree, and Moose Cree. The indigenous place name for a fictional Ontario town is metonymic for all the North American place names whose meaning is lost on the settler population, an untold story.

Pimitamon does have a meaning, however, which is relevant to the story that Lemire is telling. In the Plains Cree language, *pimitamon* means 'crossroads' (cf. Wolvengrey 2001, 183). While Plains, Moose, and Swampy Cree are all dialects of the same language, they are not identical, and the use of a Plains Cree term where no Moose or Swampy Cree equivalent can be attested is problematic. This incongruity of dialect and territory is indexical to all the ways in which the diversity of indigenous languages and cultures remains a closed book to non-indigenous North Americans. Settlers live at a crossroads whose history they do not understand.

While a search through a variety of print and online dictionaries of Moose Cree and Swampy Cree will not turn up that precise term, it can be reconstructed in Moose Cree. The *Moose Cree Talking Dictionary* (http://www.talkingdictionary.org/moose_cree), published online by the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, offers the particle *pimic*, meaning 'crosswise', and the construction *itamon*, meaning 'it (path, road) runs thither'. One can possibly take Pimitamon as an Anglicization of *pimicitamon*, the sounds subjugated to English phonology as in the case of so many indigenous place names.

Interestingly, the *Moose Cree Talking Dictionary* also lists, as its primary meaning for *itamon*, 'it is fixed, installed, or stuck thus', a term which also exists in Plains Cree meaning 'it hangs thus' (Wolvengrey 2001, 41). The tension between the image of one path or road running across another, and the idea of something being fixed, stuck, or hanging, crystallizes the experience of people in Lemire's north, whether settler or indigenous.

Writing about northern spaces, Sylvia Bowerbank tells us that 'we need to develop a multi-layered sense of place as co-created by generations of diverse people that have inhabited, and still inhabit' a place (1998, 76). In giving us Pimitamon, Lemire gives us a place of multiple layers, multiple histories, that as Bowerbank says are central to our understanding of the north. Though Pimitamon is named only in *Roughneck*, we believe

that the north Lemire creates across his works is of a piece, an intellectual whole: in *Roughneck*, *Secret Path*, *Justice League United*, and more, Lemire's north is a crossroads of multiple histories. We will now trace the spirit of Pimitamon across these three works.

***Secret Path*: The trauma of the residential schools that runs through Pimitamon**

Taken as a concept, Pimitamon, embracing the whole semantic range of the term and its components, is a key, a portal, a point of entry into Lemire's north. The term is a touchstone for the Canadian consciousness that first appears in *Essex County*, and which Lemire and Gord Downie actively pursue as a rhetorical strategy in *Secret Path*. On the back cover of *Secret Path*, Downie categorically states that Canada is 'not the country that we think we are' and that Canadians will only be able to 'truly call ourselves "Canada"' when they confront the legacy of colonialism and engage in good faith with the reconciliation process.

Gord Downie began *Secret Path* as ten poems/songs, having been introduced to Chanie Wenjack's story through Ian Adams's 1967 account in the Canadian magazine *Maclean's*. In winter 2014, Jeff Lemire illustrated Chanie's story as told in Downie's poems.⁴

Adams tells us that 'Charlie Wenjack was an Ojibway Indian attending Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ont' (1967, n.p.). From the first, we see the colonial conditions under which that story was written visible in the name reported: Chanie's teachers called him 'Charlie,' an Anglicization of his name which was preserved in this account of his death. As Downie described it, 'Chanie was a young boy who died on October 22, 1966 walking the railroad tracks, trying to escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School to walk home' (Downie, 'Statement' 2016, n.p.).

⁴ Gord Downie, lead singer and songwriter for the popular Canadian band The Tragically Hip, wrote the texts as lyrics for the songs which featured on the album and in the film versions of *Secret Path*.



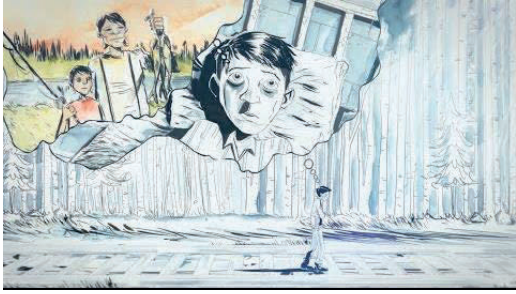
Children often fled the schools: ‘The day that Wenjack and his friends left, nine other children also escaped from Cecilia Jeffrey’ (Carley 2016). But Wenjack was not only going toward home; he was fleeing from abuse: ‘Wenjack’s sister, Pearl (Wenjack) Achneepineskum believes that he may have run away because he was sexually assaulted. Many students were sexually and physically abused at residential schools’ (Carley 2016). Chanie was the only one to die that day; across the history of the residential school system, he was one of thousands to die. Of the 150,000 aboriginal children in the residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) has documented the deaths of over 6,000 students in its *Final Report* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2016).

The facts of Wenjack’s story are not unique, but the story has become uniquely powerful. Adams said that ‘[i]t is unlikely that Charlie ever understood why he had to go to school and why it had to be such a long way from home. It is even doubtful if his father really understood either’ (1967, n.p.). The TRC noted that an indigenous child in the residential school system was more likely to die than a Canadian soldier in World War II. But a soldier understands why he is dying. Wenjack died only because he wanted to go home.

Wenjack lived his short life at the crossroads between Canadians of settler-colonial origins and Canada’s indigenous peoples, as Lemire and Downie portray it in *Secret Path*. Lemire’s works are filled with image after image of roads, hydro lines, and furrowed fields running off to a vanishing point. In *Secret Path*, the railway tracks along which Chanie walks away from the residential school, towards home, are both tied down and fixed, and yet also emblematic of movement. The image of parallel lines,

running infinitely yet never meeting, similarly speak to the isolation of individuals, communities, and cultures in Lemire's worldview.

The railway in *Secret Path* is the path of progress described by popular Canadian folksinger Gordon Lightfoot in his centennial anthem 'Canadian Railroad Trilogy' as an 'iron road running from the sea to the sea' to facilitate the efforts of those who 'built the



mines, the mills, and the factories / For the good of us all' (Lightfoot 1967); however, the railway is also the sheer distance that lies between Chanie and his home, and between an indigenous past and a colonial present.

Pimitamon, as a place of crossroads, is where Chanie Wenjack will remain fixed on that endless railway track unless the reader acknowledges the tragedy, not just of a lost

boy, but of a system that, in the name of an ideal, alienated that boy from his home and from himself. Chanie's crossroads offers contemporary Canadians of settler-colonial origins a choice between wilful ignorance, perpetuation of misunderstanding, and miscommunication, or reconciliation. Coming to terms with the story will let Chanie be something other than a ghost, and will let his story become a prime mover in the reconciliation process. Being 'haunted' by Chanie Wenjack and all the victims of the Indian Residential Schools becomes the rhetorical exigence, 'an imperfection, marked by urgency, remediable by discourse' as Lloyd Bitzer would term it (1968, 6), that *Secret Path* is intended to address.



When the raven flies away at the end of *Secret Path*, leaving Chanie's body untouched in the vastness of the northern landscape, we can read Lemire and Downie striving not to be seen to exploit or 'feed on' Chanie's tragedy. Instead, they exhort that the broad view of national identity in Canada must include Chanie's tragedy.

***Roughneck*: Finding personal identity at the crossroads of indigenous and settler-colonial Canada**

As the primary setting of *Roughneck*, the town of Pimitamon can serve as the central panel of Lemire's triptych of narratives on the north as crossroads in the Canadian imagination. Where *Secret Path* pushes contemporary Canadians into engagement with the troubled history between the Canadian government and First Nations, *Roughneck* pushes contemporary Canadians into engagement with First Nations peoples today.

The 'roughneck' of the book's title, Derek Ouelette, is a hockey player whose glory days are behind him. His career ended after a fight on the ice, and he returned to the

northern town where he grew up.⁵ Derek drinks too much and solves every problem with his fists. His estranged sister Beth flees her abusive boyfriend by returning to Pimitamon, seeking shelter with her family. She is pregnant and so seeking a new start. Derek and Beth Ouelette represent a composite portrait of individuals at a crossroads in their lives: male and female, enforcer and victim, settler and indigenous, they have both been through a pattern of escape and return, and find themselves virtually trapped in ‘the Pit’, as the locals call the town, in a kind of holding pattern where their actions, destructive and in Derek’s case often violent, only underscore their status as fixed at that crossroads. Their regime of alcohol and drug abuse points to death as one likely escape, but Beth is pregnant, and so life is also an option.

Perhaps in choosing life, the two run away, and hide, in a hunting camp in the woods – their own experience of the north which reconnects them to their Cree heritage. They spend time with Al, a Cree man from the Fort Albany reserve where Derek and Beth’s mother also came from. Lemire draws Al, bespectacled and sporting a baseball cap, in a manner reminiscent of Chanie’s father in *Secret Path*, a wiry, somewhat unkempt figure with kindly features. Al quietly supports Derek when he’s off the rails and sleeping on the floor at the rink, and when Beth relapses into drug abuse, Al takes Derek and Beth to stay at his trapline cabin. He informs Beth that her grandmother and other family members are still in Fort Albany, and, at the end, he and Beth are last seen heading north, in an image whose elegiac tone recalls the raven’s flight at the end of *Secret Path*.

In presenting Al as the Ouelette’s guide to take them out of ‘the Pit’, and past the crossroads symbolized in the town’s name where they have been psychologically and emotionally trapped, ‘stuck’, Lemire must negotiate some hazardous rhetorical territory, if he is not simply to cast the character as the Romantic stereotype of the ‘wise old Indian living on the land’, a kind of Canadian equivalent of the trope of the ‘magic negro’ as mystical spiritual guide to in American popular culture (Ikard 2017, 10–11). Al has nothing of the mystic about him; he has traditional skills, which Lemire displays when he shows Al skinning an animal caught on the trapline, and when he takes Derek hunting, the spray of blood when the bullet strikes the deer, which echoes the spray we see whenever Derek hits someone, serves to de-Romanticize these skills.



⁵ Derek Ouelette has much in common with Jimmy Lebeuf of *Essex County*. The authors are still working through whether this is a shorthand for a broader Canadian cultural commentary, or just a trope that grounds Lemire’s work in Canada, as discussed in Jacobs and Paziuk 2016

Lemire creates Al primarily as a witness; he has no authority to make anyone do anything, and he is never depicted as making anyone do anything, but merely offers options, often in hedged terms like ‘You might wanna ...’ or ‘What if you ...’ In one of the text’s lighter moments, he responds to Derek’s complaint about a lack of coffee on the trapline by saying, ‘No coffee. *Real Indians* drink tea in the bush.’ When Derek comes back with, ‘But I’m only half-Indian’, Ray responds, ‘So only have half a cup’ (2017, n.p.). Lemire does not invest Al with any further indigenous motifs in his speech or behaviour beyond a restrained manner and a quiet sense of humour. Al is neither stoic nor otherworldly, but serves as a signpost that Derek and Beth can either read or choose to ignore. Derek appears to have spent years ignoring this message, but when we see Al and Beth driving past the highway sign pointing to Fort Albany, we understand his influence although we are not shown the result for Beth.

Derek’s decision to ‘let it go’ at the end, when he lets Wade beat him until the police



arrive to arrest him, represents a choice to walk away from the crossroads as the Pit. It is unclear whether Derek survives the attack; he does not accompany Beth and Al north. In his final appearance, he walks into the forest around Al’s camp, in the company of the stray dog who, rather like the crow in *Essex County* and the raven in *Secret Path*, has been observing him from the

periphery. It has been suggested on social media (cf. ‘Roughneck by Jeff Lenore (sic) [Maybe Spoilers]’) that, in this scene, when Derek walks, his boots don’t make the scuffing sound that has been one of his characteristics throughout the book, and readers disagree about whether this change means that he is no longer a physical being, or simply that he has learned to ‘walk lightly on the earth’. While the two options represent complementary tragic and comic resolutions to Derek’s story, the latter risks introducing a level of benevolent stereotyping into the depiction of Derek embracing his indigenous side. The ambiguity about Derek’s state can be seen as a strategy to resist this reading, and it is somewhat enhanced by the final word of the text. When Al says to Beth that they are ‘almost there’, she smiles and replies ‘almost’. The word hangs in the air as Derek and the dog walk into the forest, and in the final panel Al’s truck passes the sign indicating that they are 230 km from Fort Albany. The idea of heading north, and nearing a destination while still having a distance to go, suggests a reticence on Lemire’s part to portray the conclusion of the story, to introduce any new fixity into the experience.

We learn to negotiate the crossroads of Pimitamon through the narrative of *Roughneck*. As readers, we are, perhaps, the visitors (snowmobile tourists, members of

visiting junior hockey teams) who come to gawk at Derek as a ruined NHL player, and who come away with a bloodied face for their/our pains. We are also the kindly woman in the Husky restaurant who both tries to help Beth and who is bullied into tipping off her abusive boyfriend Wade about her whereabouts, and we are the two indifferently sexist men whom Beth advises to ‘fuck off’ outside the restaurant. In *Roughneck*, the audience as rubbernecker at a train wreck is a more pointed commentary on the settler-colonial Canadian audience than we saw in *Secret Path*. Lemire implicitly reproaches the Canadian audience in particular for falling into the role of bystander while ‘the just society’ that former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau encouraged us to be back in the 20th century goes off the rails.

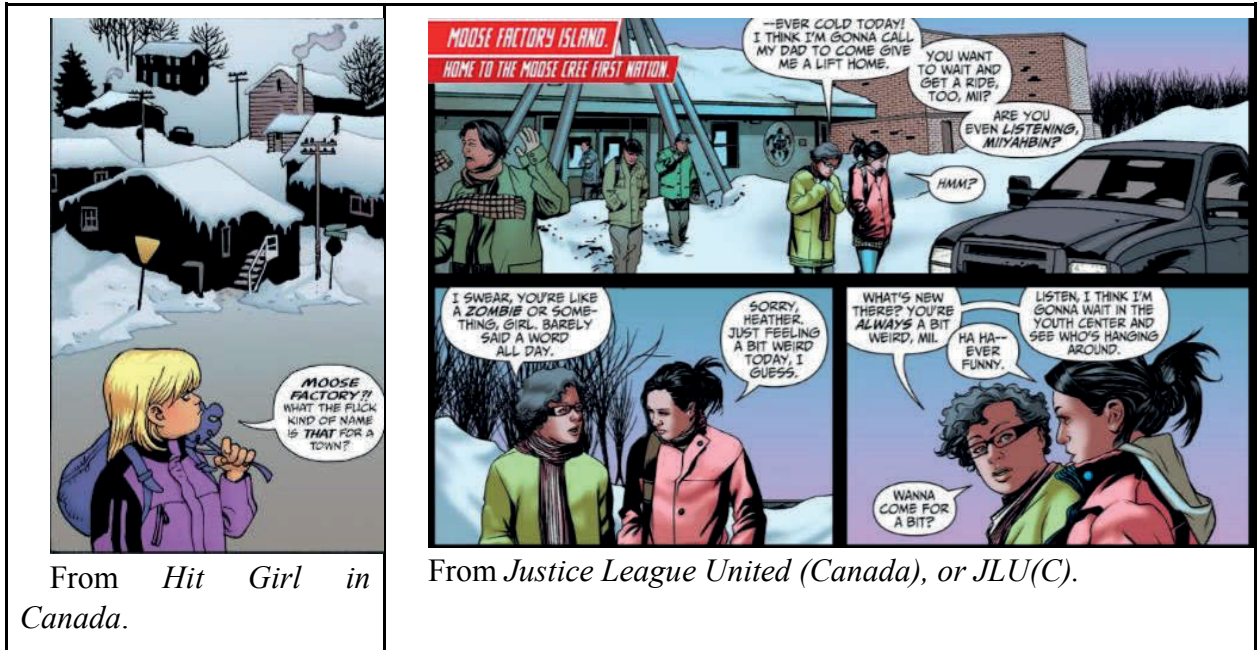
Beyond the critique, we can learn from Derek and Beth’s example. If we see hope for the characters to be reconciled with the world and with themselves, we remain conscious of the need for effort to be made, to stay on the path. Derek walking into the forest with the dog exists at a considerable remove from Chanie Wenjack running into the forest with the other boys, and Al and Beth driving along the highway offers an alternative to Chanie walking alone along the railway line. We can follow their example, and negotiate the borderlands, the contact zone, between settler-colonial Canada and First Nations Canada in new and better ways.

Justice League United Volume 1: Crossroads in Superheroic Fantasy

Our third and final example of Lemire’s north as a crossroads or contact zone moves us as far away from the trauma of *Secret Path* as possible, by entering the genre of heroic fantasy. Yet even in a world of capes and alien invasions, Lemire remains grounded in the real. In our discussion of Pimitamon as an imaginary space embedded in a real geography, we located Lemire’s new Canadian north by reference to real place names and landmarks. One of those places, Moose Factory, also called Moosonee, is located in an isolated part of Northern Ontario and appears in multiple Lemire works – including books he has written freelance for other publishers who retain the copyright ownership of the work. This area is home to the Moose Cree First Nation, and it is the area of Ontario that ‘Hit Girl’ visits in the *Hit Girl in Canada* graphic novel.⁶ It is also the place where Lemire creates a new member of the Justice League,⁷ depicted in the images below.

⁶ Hit Girl is a character in the *Kick Ass* universe of comic characters. These characters have appeared in two major motion pictures, for example, and are owned by their creator, Mark Millar.

⁷ The *Justice League* is a trademark of DC Comics; characters created within the pages of this series remain property of Warner Brothers.



Lemire’s northern aesthetic appears in *JLU*, which is drawn by British artist Mike McKone. When we first meet Miiyahbin ‘Mii’ Marten coming out of school in Moosonee, Ontario, the street scenes are not unlike Pimitamon (a few low-slung, nondescript buildings, a church on the right-hand side of the street), and they feature a couple of indigenous motifs outside the school (a symbolic lodge shape, a turtle crest). The encircling wall of black forest and an emphasis on hydro lines and receding lines of streetlamps recall *Essex County* as well as Pimitamon. Moosonee aligns with Lemire’s own northern and Canadian communities, locating Mii’s daily life on a continuum shared by the characters in *Roughneck* and in *Essex County*.

Moose Factory exists in the real world; it also coexists with the terrain where superheroes find evidence of an alien incursion. These bleak northern landscapes, centring on the aliens’ Zeta Bunker, which represents a ‘real-world’ alien invasion of the north, are in their turn consubstantial with conventional DC Comics settings like Superman’s Arctic Fortress of Solitude. The text thus situates Lemire’s creation of the indigenous super-heroine Equinox at the intersection of two of his own artistic worlds, the world of the superhero comic tradition and the world of his Canadian-centred exploration of family and community. The north is, for Mii Marten (who would become the superheroine Equinox) a crossroads, a border space.

In the *JLU* story, Mii discovers that a single word, shouted (‘Keewatin’), will transform her into Equinox, a superheroine. Within the larger story of an interplanetary battle between the Justice League and an interstellar invasion, Mii discovers that as she has the power of ‘The Seven,’ the seven pillars of Cree life – love, humility, bravery, truth, respect, wisdom, and honesty – that she learned from her grandmother. Equinox can use these powers to fight the ‘Whitago’ (a monstrous figure related to that which settlers distorted into fictions about the ‘wendigo’). The Whitago manifests the power of dominion, control, aggression, deception, greed, selfishness, and fear. As Equinox

defeats the Whitago, she realizes that the monster manifested itself by controlling her father.

Lemire's creation of Mii as the first indigenous Canadian superhero opens up a whole new front in his work's effort to engage with issues of indigenous representation in popular culture. Lemire uses the corporate-controlled, spandex-centric comics medium as a platform for his exploration of the reconciliation process in Canadian culture.

In 2017, Lemire spoke to David Friend of the *Canadian Press* about his limitations as a writer in the spaces shared with indigenous peoples. While writing *Roughneck*, he grappled with being a white storyteller portraying indigenous characters.

'In no way was I ever intending to create a piece of work that would represent a community, speak for a community or indigenous people,' he says.

'That would be very wrongheaded in my point of view, especially as a white guy. I have no business telling their stories (...)

'Obviously I'm not from there so I'll always be an outsider,' he says. 'But by doing that I learned a lot more.' (Friend 2017, n.p.)

Despite his outsider status, Lemire does create, in *JLU*, an indigenous Canadian character – following interaction with the Moose Cree First Nation. In the supplementary materials accompanying *JLU*, he expands on his experience in the Cree communities around James Bay, sharing images of superheroes created by students from the region. Lemire writes:

Early in the process of writing *JLU*, I decided to set the book, and its eclectic cast, in an isolated part of Northern Ontario called Moosonee/Moose Factory. This area is home to the Moose Cree First Nation, and I wanted to create a new character that would represent all the grace, humour, resilience and courage of the Cree people I've had the pleasure of coming to know.

I've made two trips to the area so far and in addition to marathon snowmobile trips, helicopter rides, and my first taste of Moose stew (don't tell Animal Man!), I've spent time in a number of schools, talking to kids about comics and sharing my story with them. And in turn the kids shared some of their stories, their art and their amazing stories with me... (Lemire and McKone 2017)

This passage discloses Lemire's footing in this situation; we know where he has been, how often, and what he has done while visiting the north. He emphasizes his status as a southern visitor.⁸ Lemire presents his experience among the Moose Cree as personally transformative.

⁸ Lemire's establishment of ethos is informed by two significant contextual factors: Lemire, as an individual and as a Canadian writer addressing indigenous realities, would be aware of both. On one hand, Lemire does *not* lay claim to Gord Downie's activist legacy, positioning his work somewhat differently from how it appeared in *Secret Path*. On the other hand, he also takes a clear stance that distinguishes his ethos from that of controversial Canadian novelist Joseph Boyden, who, around the same time, was fighting charges in the Canadian cultural community of having passed himself off

Lemire has also stated that part of his inspiration to visit northern communities, prior to creating Mii/Equinox, came from the example of the late Shannen Koostachin, a Cree teen from Attiwaspiskat on James Bay. Koostachin gained national media attention as an activist and advocate for education in her community, in the face of government inaction, prior to her untimely death at age 15 in a car accident in 2010 (CBC News 2013).⁹

His credentials thus carefully managed, and with the blessing of the community, Lemire created Mii, an act which he has consistently presented as intended to set an example for indigenous comics artists to build upon in their own way. However, the project still confronted him with a number of problems to negotiate if Mii/Equinox was not going to be stuck in her own 'Pit', or at her own crossroads, as a kind of token figure, burdened with stereotypes, and no way forward.

Lemire points to an awareness that his Canadian superhero, indigenous or not, risks being seen as a kind of novelty; he acknowledges the incongruity of Canadian stereotypes with the superhero context. For example, Animal Man makes fun of Canadian professor Adam Strange's accent ("“Aboot” a week ago?"), and towards the end of the volume, Animal Man asks 'But what are we? Are we the new Justice League of America?' When Green Arrow responds, 'We're in Canada, dummy', Animal Man replies, 'Justice League Canada? Come on, man. That would be RIDICULOUS.' This incongruity between Canadian identity and the superhero context provides an oblique opportunity to acknowledge the potential problem of a First Nations superhero and to locate it in a broader context within Canadian discourse.

Some of the large questions that hang over what Lemire can do to keep Equinox from appearing as a token, or manifestation of benevolent racism, involve how to handle the character's cultural resonances, the character's visual representation, and, still more importantly, how Lemire uses Cree language and metaphysics in defining the character.

At the level of cultural traditions: Mii is a hereditary superhero; she follows her father and grandmother in being one of the Midayos. As her grandmother says, in revealing their powers,

We are the Protectors of this land, Miiyahbin. **Our land.** We are the **Midayos.** We always have been ... The Seven Grandfathers have always guided us, Miiyahbin. You learned about them in school. All of our children do ... The seven pillars of Cree life: **Love, Humility, Bravery, Truth, Respect, Wisdom and Honesty.** And it's with these seven virtues that our grandfathers empower us to protect our people ... all people.

misleadingly as an indigenous writer, when his connection to First Nations communities is actually tenuous at best (cf. Andrew-Gee 2017, n.p.). Lemire seeks a third path for his own ethos.

⁹ In an interview with Waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy, Lemire clarified that while he found Shannen Koostachin's story inspiring, he did not in any way base Mii on the details of Shannen's life; he states, 'I would never presume to appropriate a story that is so real and then turn it into a cartoon, especially without her parents', her family's, awareness or approval' (Sy 2014).



Her grandmother explains how the Midayos oppose the contrary forces, ‘**Dominion, Control, Aggression, Deception, Greed, Selfishness, and Fear.** These dark pillars came to be embodied by a terrible force ... the monster you have seen, **The Whitago.**’

Mii is thus established within an indigenous tradition centred on protecting the land which is identified specifically with Cree territory, but which also includes a responsibility to protect all people. As a Canadian, Lemire would be aware of the significance of listing Dominion as the first of the evil forces that the Midayos oppose, given that Canadian nationhood was initially constituted as the Dominion of Canada. All of the horrors that the world unleashed on Chanie Wenjack are symptomatic of Canada’s dominion over indigenous peoples and their territories. Equinox resists those horrors.

The Whitago (variously known in other Algonkian traditions as Wiitiko, Windigo, and Wendigo, among others) as it appears in *JLU* is a variation on a central figure in Algonkian tradition (cf. Smallman 2014). Often portrayed as a cannibal spirit, associated with famine, the Whitago’s ethical dimensions also embrace greed, antisocial behaviour, and addiction as symptoms of the condition of indigenous cultures under colonialism, and is associated with the negative influence of Euro-Canadian society in general (cf. Rasevych 2002, 3). Mii’s grandmother acknowledges a range of receptions for the tradition when she tries to put off the revelation by telling Mii ‘You know that’s just a story’, and her friend Heather describes them as ‘our bogeymen’.

The way that the Whitago transforms in the narrative from a child's story to a cosmic threat, and the deployment of traditional Cree knowledge against it, provides an insight into Lemire's strategy to accommodate traditional belief in his story without appearing to reduce an entire worldview to a 'superpower' like X-ray vision or the ability to fly. Mii's abilities are revealed in a meta-narrative that contrasts different ways of looking at those powers, Cree, Canadian, and Superhero, so as to avoid seeing Equinox simply as a Cree Supergirl with some beadwork on her costume.

At the level of visual representations: Mii's costume, when she fully manifests as Equinox, witnesses careful management. While the costume, which closely resembles that of her grandmother when transformed, involves a form-fitting bodysuit and 'superhero' cape (which sometimes resembles dragonfly or wasp wings), Mike McKone's design holds back from the overt sexualization of the depiction of heroines like Supergirl. The cape conceals a bit more than it reveals, as does a long apron-like front panel reminiscent of a breechcloth; otherwise there is little in the design that is implicitly or uniquely Cree; on another character it would probably look more like something that Thor's Asgardian compatriots wear in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The costume differs from the appearance of the other Midayos;¹⁰ it appears as a kind of crossroads of the superhero and indigenous Canadian traditions.



At the level of language: Lemire uses language to both root Equinox within Cree traditions and place her at the centre of the crossroads with colonial culture. The 'superhero name' that Lemire chooses for his indigenous protagonist has no clear equivalent in Cree or Anishnaabe dialects. The idea of an equinox as a balance of day and night seems appropriate to the position which Miiyahbin will assume. Her given name, like Lemire's other uses of indigenous language, can only be interpreted on the basis of analogies, in this case, with the Plains Cree term miyopa'iywin, a term which suggests good luck, welfare, prosperity, and a good heart (cf. Wolvengrey 2001, 110).

It is tempting to assume that Lemire deliberately complicates the interpretation of indigenous names and words to indicate to the non-indigenous reader that cultural knowledge requires effort, and that not every concept in English or in Cree is readily translatable. The impossibility of such translation is a characteristic of the crossroads.

At the end of *JLU*, Mii is poised to bridge multiple worlds: Cree, Canadian, the world of the Justice League, and the realm of the Midayos. The injunction to 'protect our people ... all people' speaks to this bridging process, and mitigates against a depiction of the Midayos simply as an alternative Justice League. The crossroads at which Mii

¹⁰ It is worth noting that in one of Lemire's own drawings which accompanies the text, the same costume appears on a version of Mii who strongly resembles Beth Ouelette.

stands (childhood versus adulthood, the mundane world versus the ‘super’ realm, Moosonee versus larger national/Canadian, North American, and cosmic communities) involves looking for how the values she derives from her Cree background can translate into the other realms in which she participates, rather than merely being transposed into them. And we, as readers, are invited to occupy the crossroads alongside her.

Diversity and the ‘poetics of relation’ in *JLU*

Lemire’s handling of the cultural politics of introducing indigenous elements into a ‘mainstream’ superhero narrative offers an interesting case study in the late Édouard Glissant’s ‘poetics of relation’. Glissant’s understanding of *métissage* as ‘generally speaking, the meeting and synthesis of two differences’ (1997, 34), and of creolization as ‘a limitless *métissage*, its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable’ (ibid.) are immediately applicable to Lemire’s project in *JLU*, where narratives of both Canadian and specifically Cree identity represent challenges to the established culture of the superhero comics genre. Mii Marten’s emergence as Equinox and the Canadian context in which it happens speak to a different kind of culture in *JLU* than one might encounter in conventional superhero comics.

Glissant insists on the recognition of what he terms *opacity* in the interaction of cultures, where the transparency of a writer’s motivation in approaching Otherness is informed by a recognition of that Otherness as resistant to the writer’s grasp, especially in the context of colonial and post-colonial discourse. When opacity is confronted directly, as part of the project of narrating Otherness, the writer may be seen to proceed with his/her perception of the interaction, while at the same time recognizing the Other’s implicit agency and capacity to resist appropriation. As Glissant puts it,

The power to experience the shock of elsewhere is what distinguishes the poet. Diversity, the quantifiable totality of every possible difference, is the motor driving universal energy, and it must be safeguarded from assimilations, from fashions passively accepted as the norm, and from standardized customs. (Glissant 1997, 29–30)

Lemire’s problematic, or rather, problematized use of Cree language and other markers of indigenous identity closely resemble Glissant’s principle of opacity and its role in the *métissage* of narratives. As we have suggested, Lemire’s deployment of Cree vocabulary can be demonstrated to point to problems and choices in translation, thus participating in an opacity which requires readers seeking to understand the cultural references to make a meaningful effort. At the same time, Lemire’s deferral of the meaning of terms such as Mii’s name and her *keewahtin* invocation beyond the reach of easy dictionary searches is at once a kind of guarantor of respect for the opacity of Cree culture and a way of putting the issue of cultural appropriation on the table in plain sight. In doing so, Lemire’s practice participates fully in the kind of conversation to which Glissant invites creators and critics alike.

It is not impossible to approach *JLU* as an American-style superhero narrative with a superficial Canadian ‘Northern Wilderness’ setting where conventional acts of cultural

appropriation of tokens of indigenous identity occur in conformity with stereotyping. The uninformed reader who knows or cares little about the cultural politics of indigenous-settler relations won't be unduly challenged by the text, and those readers for whom a non-indigenous author creating an indigenous character is a non-starter will either take or leave Lemire's overt engagement with appropriation. However, both attitudes effectively sidestep the interest of *JLU* as a cultural and rhetorical artefact, which lies in its capacity to enact key elements of Glissant's poetics.

In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant approaches cultural development in what he calls creolized societies (especially in the Caribbean) in terms of what he calls *tout-monde*, *écho-monde*, and *chaos-monde*. His English-language translator Betsy Wing has discussed the untranslatable character of these terms (cf. Glissant xiv-xv); Ulrich Loock (2012) characterizes them as follows: as *tout-monde* (the world in its entirety), *écho-monde* (the world of things resonating with one another), and *chaos-monde* (a world that cannot be systematized); attention to these overlapping and interlocking 'worlds' is the basis of Relation as an 'open' and generative approach to cultural interaction and evolution, which he associates with a desirable state of diversity in culture. Glissant opposes these concepts to 'the whole principle of generalization' where

The self's opacity for the other is insurmountable, and, consequently, no matter how opaque the other is for oneself (no myth ever provides for the legitimacy of the other), it will always be a question of reducing this other to the transparency experienced by oneself. Either the other is assimilated, or it is annihilated. (Glissant 1997, 49)

To resist the imposition of a mythology or narrow ideology through generalization, Glissant argues for a

poetics of Relation [which] remains forever conjectural and presupposes no ideological stability [...] A poetics that is latent, open, multilingual in intention, directly in contact with everything possible. Theoretician thought, focused on the basic and fundamental, and allying these with what is true, shies away from these uncertain paths (Glissant 1997, 32).

In *JLU*, Lemire clearly shuns Glissant's 'theoretician thought', and strikes out on the 'uncertain paths' of initiating a fresh dialogue between genres and cultures. In his text, the reader simultaneously engages with the *tout-monde* of the superhero comic as a genre in popular culture, the 'resonating' *écho-monde* peculiar to *JLU* with its dissonant 'mainstream', Canadian, and indigenous elements, and the *chaos-monde* embracing a disregard for orthodoxy in terms of genre, content, and theoretical convention in confronting assumptions about identity and appropriation.

Conclusion: Keewahtin and the power of naming loss, desolation, and hurt

As we conclude this essay, we want to avoid a facile hope that we can decide to recognize Chanie, to do the work of reflection engaged by Derek and Beth, to leap into

battle alongside Equinox, and undo the legacy of colonial violence. Lemire would not let us, and a final dive into Lemire's use of language will make this clear.

In *JLU*, Lemire makes no effort to depict his indigenous protagonist, her family, and her friends as speaking Cree, beyond having Mii address her grandmother as *Gohkum*. The term *Midayos* is Anglicized in its plural form; it derives from Cree and Anishnaabe terms related to traditional religion and medicine (the Moose Cree Talking Dictionary translates *mitew* as *conjuror*), and its usage in *JLU* casts the role of the traditional shaman in a larger conflict with the seven vices.

The most significant linguistic feature in *JLU*, however, is the word which Mii and her grandmother use to transform into their Midayo personae. At a glance, the cry 'Keewahtin!' seems to evoke the Cree *kîwêtin*, which variously translates as *north wind*, *the north wind blows*, and generally as *north*. The district of Keewatin, a historic name for the northern district that ran up the western shores of northern James Bay and Hudson's Bay, once an administrative district of the Northwest Territories, locates the term in this context.

However, the unambiguous pronunciation *Keewahtin* is at odds with the Cree word. One might accuse Lemire of not doing his homework (and indeed, the Cree terms he uses do not follow any of the standard orthographies, probably for the convenience of the mainstream reader), until one investigates the meaning of *keewahtin* itself, or rather *kîwâtan*. Just as *Pimitamon* can be found in Plains Cree to mean 'crossroads', *kîwâtan* in the Plains dialect means 'it is a lonely, desolate area' (Wolvengrey 2001, 76). The term is cognate with *kîwâtis*, 'an orphan, bereaved person' (Wolvengrey 2001, 76), which occurs in Moose Cree as *kîwašišân* (Talking Dictionary). The terms derive from roots suggesting *lonely*, *forsaken*, or *abandoned* (cf. LeClaire and Cardinal 1998, 40).

Rather than channelling the 'power of the north', as we might expect a Canadian superhero to do, following Romantic nationalist conventions in Canadian culture, Mii manifests as Equinox by invoking the desolation that the Midayos are called to remedy, whether in terms of a damaged physical environment, or in terms of being orphaned, literally and/or figuratively, like Mii herself, like Beth and Derek, like Chanie. An invocation that summons a remedy by stating the trauma in need of healing is in keeping with the kind of ethos that readers might expect Lemire to uphold, given his work on *Secret Path* and in *Roughneck*. A superpower in the context of decolonization begins with being witness to the problem, and given that denial is an explicit exigence in *Secret Path* and an implicit one in *Roughneck*, to have the newly minted Equinox utter a cry of desolation to summon ancestral powers seems highly appropriate.

Birkwood tells us that the north, far from being an empty space of sublime beauty, is tainted by a legacy of colonial incursion: 'Historical events and the painful legacy of colonization in Canada do not allow (authors like Lemire) to indulge readers by giving them a happy ending' (2008, 36). Mii, Chanie Wenjack, and Derek and Beth Ouelette all must bear witness to the damage in their worlds before they can find the strength, or the help, to initiate change. As we, the readers, occupy Pimitamon (Lemire's world, the crossroads we share with Lemire's characters), we are called, first, to name and recognize the hurt, before we move toward healing.

Lemire's new Canadian north becomes an act of seeing and being, where an imagined north, rather than being an empty space on the map, becomes instead a generative space where tension, hurt, and trauma are to be embraced rather than erased, so that the healing of all the divides between indigenous and settler-colonial people can begin.

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COMPOSING THE NORTH: A MUSICAL STUDY OF IDENTITY, TRANSFORMATION, AND REFLECTION

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Abstract

In 2015, *occursus* – a network of artists, researchers, and academics with an interest in space and spatialities in art – commissioned a series of musical compositions based on a small patch of land close to the centre of Sheffield, England. The land in question, which houses one of the world's oldest cementation furnaces, has witnessed a remarkable period of transformation; initially standing among some 2,500 furnaces in the heart of the industrialised city centre, the national decline of steel production resulted in dereliction and for much of the past sixty years the furnace towered over wasteland. *occursus* acquired the land in 2012, and turned it into a community arts space, now known as *Furnace Park*. This article explains how a series of composers responded to this park through the creation of new musical works. Although most attention is directed to the author's own work, *Foundry Flux* (2015), the primary focus of the article is on the collective approach to *occursus*' objectives which, to the surprise of all of the commission-holders, focused their attention way beyond the tiny patch of land in the heart of Sheffield; the project became a catalyst for: 1) studying the identity of the city; 2) observing and initiating transformations of that identity; and 3) reflecting upon one's own role within such identity transformations. In combining these three, those in the group found themselves engaged in a practical process of *composing the north*.

Keywords: *Plasticity; Composition; Music; Identity; Transformation; Sheffield*

Introduction

From the outset, I confess that I was more than a little bemused when I was asked to compose a piece of music about a park in Sheffield, in the north of England; not only was the name, *Furnace Park*, completely unknown to me, but I found it impossible to imagine how any kind of public space could act as inspiration for my own creative practice which has, on the whole, involved the composition of contemporary classical music, typically including electronics. Even so, I thought it worth attending an initial meeting on the grounds that my students, who have often shown a great deal of interest in the kind of Romantic music that took green pastures and rolling hills as divine inspiration, might want to involve themselves in such a project. Perhaps, I thought, I might act as mediator.

The initial meeting, hosted by *occursus* – a network of artists, researchers, and academics with an interest in space and spatialities in art – turned out to be quite inspiring. The discussion had less to do with the park and more to do with Sheffield's famous music scene; like many northern English cities, Sheffield boasts a gritty and distinctive musical legacy which, particularly in the 1980s and 90s, included vibrant

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electronic music, whose luminaries drew on, and made use of, the industrial sounds that could be heard all over the city, emanating from the drop forges, works, and foundries. Among others, we discussed the well-known *Cabaret Voltaire* and *The Human League*, and the less well-known *Forgemasters* and *Sweet Exorcist*, who first signed to Sheffield-based record label *Warp Records*.

By the end of our meeting, I was persuaded that there were no underlying Romantic aspirations, and that *occursus* would be broadly accepting of my musical ideas, allowing anyone involved to explore a wide range of musical possibilities and ideas without insisting on any particular set of influences or imposing any particular aesthetic: in short, musical freedom. I subsequently agreed to complete one of the commissions and, more importantly, to invite five of my composition students from The University of Sheffield to join me. What I did not realize was that *occursus* had an extremely sophisticated agenda, that had not only led them to create the park in question, but was designed to challenge all of those involved to learn from and reflect on their unique approach to the city. As the project started to develop, this agenda became ever-more present in the minds of those commissioned to write pieces and, by the end of the project, it became abundantly clear that the exercise had little to do with representing a park through music, and much more to do with understanding the identity of spaces and cities, the ways in which such identities have been transformed through time, and reflecting upon one's own role within such identity transformations. This article describes how the group approached the commissions. However, since the project involved a highly personal approach to both composition and the subsequent reflection, attention is directed towards my own contribution, *Foundry Flux* (2015). I start by introducing the commissioning body and their central objectives.

***occursus* and the commission objectives**

occursus is an open framework for practice, a kind of agora in which shifting constellations of artists and researchers are invited to get together, hang out, and reflect on critical questions pertaining to cities and the urban built environment. Each member of the *occursus* group has, in some way, re-imagined what the city is, either through some form of individual or group creative practice, or through a series of thought experiments and theoretical exercises. In doing so, they have each responded to *occursus*' belief that voices from the arts have a critical role to play in the ways in which our cities are designed, produced, distributed, and lived.

occursus members do not treat the city as an object to be represented. Rather, they treat it as a plastic object that we all, as inhabitants or residents, have a democratic right to sculpt. This idea has its roots in the writings of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre who, in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* [*The Right to the City*], rather than making the case for the redistribution of urban property, instead, advocated for the democratic right of the people to participate in and to appropriate the city as *œuvre* (a 'work', or 'artwork'). By this Lefebvre meant that the ideal city, for him, would be one that is worked perpetually by its inhabitants and that this process of inhabiting (in other words making and re-making the city) would take priority over consuming ready-made cityscapes (or 'habitats'). The city he evokes is a working site, characterized by

disequilibrium, unpredictability, desire, and encounter; a place that survives ‘in the fissures of planned and programmed order’ (Lefebvre 1996, 129). It is a space of untold possibilities, in which the meaning of what is, and what can be, remains perpetually at stake.

occursus aims to open up such possibilities, encouraging us to take an active role in the shaping of our cities. Like Lefebvre, however, they see this as an inherently political, rather than social, gesture. Their aim is not to embellish cities with public art, nor is it to design blueprints for a better urban future. Instead, through the very processes of reflection, creation, and engagement, it is to open up the possibilities for rethinking the city. They argue that capitalist logic forecloses the possibility of making new meanings in and of the city. It transforms the use value of the city into exchange value, concealing the emancipatory plasticity with the hard signs and values of profit. In the capitalist city, the inhabitant, the user of the city, is conceived as a consumer of scapes and signs: a client to be satisfied. As Lefebvre points out, the city as a place of consumption goes hand in hand with this idea of the consumption of place (Lefebvre 1996, 182).

Following Lefebvre’s call for the city to be inhabited as *œuvre*, *occursus* argue that the relationship between art and the modern capitalist city is a difficult and ambivalent one. In the mid nineteenth century, Baron Haussmann – the self-proclaimed ‘demolition artist’ responsible for dramatically remaking the urban fabric of the French capital – commissioned photographers such as Charles Marville to make propagandistic ‘before and after’ images that would be used to persuade the people of Paris of the social usefulness of an initiative born largely, in fact, of military, political, and financial interests. Similarly today, art is frequently harnessed to the needs of the regenerating, branded city. Artists (when they are not asked to work for free) are offered financial incentives to package and sell their practice as product to the public and private corporations who manage our cityscapes. ‘Percentage for art’ schemes variously request or require of developers of residential, commercial, and public spaces a small percentage of their overall budget for the purposes of commissioning art that will be publicly sited. This is perceived as ‘adding value’ to regeneration and ‘enriching’ urban space. Artists are also employed to work with communities whose landscapes are being transformed or ‘regenerated’, with a view to encouraging the latter’s ‘buy-in’ to the project and reinforcing the illusion that they have some creative say in what is happening.

Beyond these funded opportunities, there are also, of course, invitations from councils and businesses to sell artworks in pop-up shops and galleries, or make street art, or window displays in vacant retail premises. And then, at another level again, there is the infamous ‘Bilbao effect’. Every city worth its salt wants a contemporary art space that draws in the tourists, drives inward investment, and renews the urban fabric, though since the crisis of 2008 art’s magical effects can of course no longer be guaranteed. Writing in the middle of the last century, Lefebvre was alert to the dangers of art’s problematic complicity in the top-down meaning making of the capitalist city, yet also keenly aware of its critical and creative potential. He writes: ‘To put art at the service of the urban does not mean to prettify urban space with works of art. This parody of the

possible is a caricature’. Rather, Lefebvre argues in favour of ‘time-spaces [that] become works of art’ and in which ‘that former art reconsiders itself as source and model of appropriation of space and time’ (Lefebvre, 1996, 173)

Through this prism, art is reconceived as ‘a capacity to transform reality, to appropriate at the highest level the facts of the “lived”, of time, space, the body and desire’ (Lefebvre 1996, 164). The space-time of the city, rather than being endured or accepted with passive resignation (Lefebvre 1996, 156–157), becomes the very material from which the properly urban might be sculpted. In other words, the city itself should be understood as a plastic object, the consistency, form, and texture of which we certainly inherit, but the stakes and future of which remain open to (re)appropriation by its inhabitants. It is in this sense, and in contrast to the ‘full egg’ model of the capitalist city, that Lefebvre perceives a gap between the *fact* of the city and its *practice*. It is in this space that we might interrogate and denaturalize all that we assume to be *given*. To inhabit the city, in other words, is to imagine that *all this* might be *otherwise*.

Putting these ideas into practice, rather than leaving them as mere thought experiments, is *occursus*’ primary mandate; they aim to establish contexts, within the city of Sheffield, in which notions of plasticity might be enacted, allowing inhabitants to involve themselves in the shaping of the city. A small patch of land right at the edge of the city centre became a testing ground for these ideas, and it is this particular space that inspired the musical commissions discussed in this article. The patch of land, now known as ‘Furnace Park’, takes its name from the cementation furnace, constructed in 1848 by Daniel Doncaster & Sons, that stands at the edge of the site’s northern perimeter; once home to an earlier eighteenth century foundry. It was located in the industrial heart of the city, nestling alongside some 2,500 cementation furnaces employed in the production of blister steel. At that time, the imposing cementation furnace (which still towers over the plot; shown below) was a characteristic feature of the industrial landscape, and an emblem of Sheffield’s manufacturing prowess.



Image 1: Photo of the Furnace (photo by Chris Allen, licenced under creative commons)

The national decline of the industry left the land derelict and, ultimately, forgotten from the 1950s onwards. *occursus* acquired the land in 2012, cleared the waste, and established the newly formed Furnace Park. It is upon this transformed patch of land that the commissions were based.



Image 2: Photo of Furnace Park (photo by Amanda Crawley-Jackson)



Image 3: Activities in Furnace Park (photo by Amanda Crawley-Jackson)



Image 4: Activities in Furnace Park (photo by Amanda Crawley-Jackson)

More than just another park within the city of Sheffield, Furnace Park is a working example of the *occursus* ideal; it is precisely their mandate in action, giving all those keen to become engaged an opportunity for the hands-on sculpting of the city. In that sense, therefore, the park is really a microcosm for thinking about the city as a space that we all have the democratic right to transform.

From what has been said thus far, we can therefore distil the *occursus* objectives down to three central points: 1) they aim to understand, reflect, explore, and reimagine the *identity* of spaces and places; 2) to observe and participate in the *transformation* of such spaces and places; and 3) to *reflect* upon one's own role in identity transformation and one's own capacity for becoming an active participant in the building of the city.

Action and creative practice underlie these three objectives, and the commissions were therefore a call to arms, requiring those involved to become actively engaged.

Clearly, the commissions on offer were not as straightforward as I had first thought. What follows is an account of how the group grappled with these three objectives - *identity*, *transformation*, and *reflection*. Since large swathes of the discussion are highly personalised, however, I have directed attention towards my own experience of the project and my resultant work, *Foundry Flux* (2015).

Identity

Initially, the project seemed to focus exclusively upon a particular point in time and space: Furnace Park in the present day. During the very first meeting, however, it became immediately clear that it was impossible to say anything meaningful about the park without widening the scope to include additional spaces throughout the course of history. This was largely due to the substantial furnace towering over the park: although this particular furnace was built in 1848, Sheffield's reputation for steel, along with tools and cutlery made from steel, dates from a much earlier time. For example, the 1379 census has 25% of the male population of Sheffield listed as metalworkers, and the reputation of Sheffield knives was clearly already established when Chaucer mentioned the Sheffield *Thwitel* (whittle, knife) in *The Reeve's Tale* in the late fourteenth century:

Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche.
A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose. (Chaucer 1985, 75)

Thus, for at least 650 years, the identity of Sheffield has been intimately connected with the production and manufacturing of steel and associated products.

Furnace Park occupies an important place in history: the furnace was built shortly after Benjamin Huntsman invented the crucible method of making steel, in 1740, substantially decreasing the amount of time required to produce steel whilst increasing overall quality. Around the same time Boulsover's *Old Sheffield Plate*, involving the fusion of silver and copper, made cutlery and ornaments from the city of Sheffield a desirable commodity for the middle classes, and this surge in consumer demand led to a population explosion, from 10,000 inhabitants in 1750 to 45,000 by 1800. By 1900, the population of Sheffield had reached 400,000, largely due to the gravitational pull of jobs in the steel industry, alongside the relative wealth of the city; at this point in time, the slums started to be demolished, and the horse-drawn tramway company was replaced by electric trams taking workers from the city centre to the suburbs, which were subsequently drawn into the newly expanded city limits. Shortly after being officially listed as a city, Sheffield designed and built a beautiful town hall that was officially opened by Queen Victoria; a state visit that firmly spoke to the important part that Sheffield was playing in the building and maintenance of the British Empire. By most accounts, the city was characterized by extensive slums, and poor working conditions and pay for the working classes, who also endured limited social and educational opportunities, low life expectancy, and a complete lack of social mobility. One

redeeming fact, however, was that employment was plentiful; the Empire was demanding steel for the production of industry and railways and, even after independence, the USA continued to be a major market, with as much as one third of Sheffield's steel being exported across the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century. Sheffield was becoming a truly industrial city, powering the expansion of the British Empire, and taking its rightful position as one of the great industrial cities of the industrialized north.

Although Sheffield is geographically located in the southern end of what the English commonly refer to as 'The North', this designation is not entirely geographic; unlike the south of England, which claimed the economic and political mantle of the British Empire, the north was synonymous with heavy industry. For example, Manchester was famous for its extensive textile industries, most notably cotton, Leeds was similar albeit for the production of wool and wool-related products, Barnsley for the extensive coal mining, Hull and Liverpool for shipping trade, Newcastle and Tyneside for shipbuilding, and Sheffield for steel. As early as the middle of the eighteenth century, references to 'The North' served to group the many towns and cities that historically relied upon heavy industry, splitting north and south in terms that only vaguely designate a geographic location but very specifically imply a socio-cultural and economic distinction. In this respect, it is fascinating to note how all of these cities have continued to hold on to their industrial identity, thus allowing their past to become a cornerstone of their post-industrial present; there is clearly a sense of civic pride involved in the knowledge of what, exactly, each city was founded upon. Perhaps this is because despite being in the relatively impoverished north, these cities played an essential role in the growth of the British Empire. Evocations of the Empire, of course, raise yet further conceptions of The North which again appear to bypass straightforward geographic designations; aside from certain parts of North America, for example, the vast majority of the British Empire was located south of London, and this certainly helped to create a sense that the whole of the United Kingdom was situated in the global north. Although the structures underpinning this substantial empire have partially disappeared, the lasting impression and influence is arguably evident in these kinds of non-geographic constructions of the north and, in a sense, play their part in pushing the industrialized cities, such as Sheffield, further into the north than it would seem by any geographic reading alone.

Unsurprisingly, given what has been said above, the Sheffield past is ever present. It is physically present in the crumbling relics of old foundries and forges scattered throughout the city, and is virtually present in the collective memories of those who have worked, or have elderly relatives who worked, in the steel industry. There are surely some who still recall the aerial bombing campaigns during the Second World War, targeting Sheffield's steel factories, during which the furnace (over Furnace Park) was fitted with a black-out lid, so that the flames could not be seen from above. Operations at the foundry continued beyond the end of war, ceasing in 1951 and presupposing a dramatic and sudden transition in the fortunes of the city; the second half of the twentieth century was marked by economic decline, widespread unemployment, along with a range of societal and educational challenges. Although the

blame cannot be put solely at the door of industry, it is clear that steel was in crisis, and the industry suffered a dramatic decline in which many of the famous firms disappeared. Reasons for the decline in the steel industry are many and varied, and one might find numerous political and economic explanations for the relatively sudden demise (Hay 1998; Binfield 1993; Tweedale 1995). It is the case, however, that in 1955, the British steel industry was working at 98% of capacity, but this had dropped to 79% by 1966. Local unemployment quickly rose from 4% in 1978 to 11% in 1981 – a figure that put unemployment in Sheffield above the national average for the first time in history (DiGaetano and Lawless 1999, 530). By 1984, this had risen to 16%. The steel industry, which had employed 50% of the city workforce just a decade earlier, was reduced to just 25% by that year (Sheffield City Council 1993, 5).

Sheffield became a post-industrial graveyard, whose loss of purpose was famously played out in films such as *The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off*; both films, based in the Sheffield area, brought to the national consciousness a graphic portrait of the social damage of economic restructuring (Lane, Grubb, and Power 2016, 12). On the national stage, however, the scene was set for the division between north and south to become toxic: mass-unemployment across the north of England was an inevitable consequence of industrial decline, plunging entire cities into economic and social turmoil. During this period, the area that housed the furnace deteriorated, abandoned and forgotten. To this day, the looming furnace is an ever-present reminder of the economic and social difficulties of the 1980s and 90s which, for many Sheffield residents, is within memory.

In recent years, Sheffield has started to transform once more, with a wide range of modern apartment and office blocks, alongside a revamped city centre. A *Heart of the City Project* created a splendid winter garden on the site of the much derided ‘egg-box’ town hall extension, the canal basin was restored for leisure and commercial use, the historic markets were redeveloped, trams have returned (in the form of Supertram), Dixon’s famous Cornish Place works and a number of other former industrial premises have been converted for residential use, and the Botanical Gardens and Norfolk Park have been restored (Olive 2006, 11). Perhaps most surprising of all, however, was the renovation of the famous brutalist Park Hill flats, which are now luxury city centre apartments, along with the substantial gentrification of Kelham Island – once the industrial heart of the city.

These changes are, perhaps, a consequence of recent government policy which, in 2014, saw the Conservative government call for the establishment of a ‘Northern Powerhouse’ (BBC 2015), with plans for substantial investment in the north of England, along with renewed transport links, European funding initiatives, and a devolved civil service which extends more substantially into the north. In this context, one might be forgiven for thinking of Furnace Park as part of the gentrification of Sheffield: when *occursus* took an interest in the space, a university project was underway to clear the mounds of rubbish and waste from the site as Amanda Crawley Jackson, founder of *occursus*, observed in an online diary entry of September 2012:

Furnace Park is being cleared by two men sent by the university’s environmental services team. I watch them scrape up scratchy foliage, broken

glass, iron rods, lumps of metal stuff that we can't identify, condom wrappers, syringes, plastic bags, CD boxes... The detritus of lives played out around the edges of the security fence, thrown over its gates. [...] The upper part of the site is becoming visible for the first time. Here and there, the dried-out, headless carcasses of birds, greasy feathers ligatured to hollow bones, their substance sucked out by the foxes I've heard live on the site. (*occursus* 2012, 1)

In this way, the land was gradually transformed into a community space, which invites artistic activities and projects, serving to reconnect the land with the city of Sheffield. In this context, the newly named Furnace Park seems appropriate: it connects the land of the past with that of the present and, hopefully, future. Further to this, it is an appropriate embodiment of the various ideas proposed and supported by *occursus*. On the one hand, Furnace Park is a physical space in which diverse communities have formed, sometimes fleetingly, sometimes more enduringly, in the very hands-on processes of making the place. On the other hand, the idea of Furnace Park has also served as a crucible of sorts to bring people together in discussion, not necessarily on the site itself, but in a variety of projects, symposia, and workshops.

During an initial visit to Furnace Park, the group of composers reflected on this sense of Sheffield's identity, noting the many twists and turns on which the small patch of land had transitioned, from the heat of industry, to wasteland, and now to a social space. Identity, as elsewhere, is rarely static but in constant flux. The conversation turned to ways in which we might express something of this identity in our music, and we quickly settled on the idea that we should make recordings in and around the park, and use those recordings as the musical material of our works. At this point, the composers involved in the project were Chris Bevan, Alex Gowan-Webster, Jonathan Higgins, Martin Hogg, Jordan Platt, Vanessa Sorce-Lévesque, and Adam Stanović (me). Most of these composers produce a wide range of different musical types and styles, including instrumental music, electronic music, and mixed-media works including film, animation, live electronics, and music for dance, theatre, and other such contexts, and therefore a series of pieces made from recorded sound seemed perfectly plausible.

The group paid a second visit to Furnace Park to discover which sounds might be collected. Armed with a range of sound recording devices, kindly provided by the University of Sheffield Sound Studios, we set about making a wide range of recordings relating to the area. Each person had a unique perspective on the recording process. For example, one composer decided to record the sounds of objects found within the park perimeter, another stayed within the perimeter but recorded sounds emanating from outside of the park, another embarked on a soundwalk from Sheffield University to the park. These variations in collection methods produced a diverse range of different sound materials that were collected together in the form of a sound-bank: a collection of all of the recordings that would be open for anyone to access and use within compositional practice. In this respect, the sound-bank idea ensured that composers had the option of using the same set of sounds within our works. Furthermore, it gave us the option of using sounds that we did not capture, similar to the three cities project, in which Suk

Jun Kim, Pete Stollery and Ross Whyte shared recordings from three different cities; the composers did not necessarily know the origins of the sounds that they ultimately employed, and this may have led to a range of compositional decisions that might otherwise have been navigated quite differently (Kim, Stollery, and Whyte 2013).

Being familiar with the writings of soundscape composer R. Murray Schafer, most members of the group tried to record a selection of the following categories of sound: *Keynote Sounds* (those which are always present in a given space, defining its ambience); *Signal Sounds* (those which call our attention away from the keynote, either through a sudden interruption or transition); and *Soundmarks* (the aural equivalent to the visual landmark; something which is strikingly and distinctively a characteristic of a particular place or environment) (Schafer 1993). It was felt that these kinds of materials, particularly soundmarks, would most coherently capture the identity of the city, and give something for listeners to recognize, reflect upon, and understand.

After several visits, a diverse palette of sounds had been recorded. These were edited and collected together for the group to share and subsequently use. At this point in time, however, something seemed remiss; *occursus*' objectives invite hands-on, physical engagement with the city, empowering activity through a sense of ownership over the spaces that we inhabit. The act of collecting sound materials, by contrast, seemed to be merely sonic harvesting; we were doing little more than documenting the sounds of the city, rather than engaging with the space in order to play a part in its sculpting or moulding. Although we had thought about the identity of Sheffield, particularly in terms of its historic position as one of the great northern English cities, we did not, collectively, feel as though we were achieving the aims and objectives of *occursus* at this stage in the project. In discussing these feelings, however, a clear sense of how we might navigate the next stage in the compositional processes started to develop: rather than simply using those sound materials to compose new works of art, we started thinking about how we could repurpose the sounds in order to establish a commentary upon the city itself. In short, just as the patch of land underwent a transformation, so might our musical materials.

Transformation

The particular method favoured by the group was that of the electroacoustic composer. This is an approach to music-making that includes the use of recorded sound materials. There are various different approaches to electroacoustic composition, including instruments, microphones, electronics, live performance, installations, and many more. These forms, which are all subsets of electroacoustic music, have received numerous different names throughout history, including acousmatic music, musique concrète, electronic music, and computer music, among others. The key determining factor in all of these, however, is the use of an electronic medium and loudspeakers. In the vast majority of cases, composers of such music start with recorded sound materials, which are manipulated or transformed during the act of composition. In this respect, electroacoustic music is very closely aligned with the plastic arts: throughout its sixty-year history, most forms of electroacoustic music have been compared with different art forms. For example, James Urmson (1976), Levi-Strauss (1969), and Nicholas

Wolterstorff (1980) have compared works of musique concrète with works of painting; Stan Godlovitch has associated works of electronic music with sculptures (Godlovitch 1998); Linda Ferguson has compared works of tape composition with works of sculpture, painting, and film (Ferguson 1984); and Stephen Davies has compared electronic music with film (Davies 2004). Such comparisons are certainly not lost on practitioners. For example, Pierre Schaeffer, founder of musique concrète, once suggested that the term musique plastique might be more appropriate (Schaeffer 1966, 115), and Rick Nance's *Compositional Explorations of Plastic Sound* considered how notions of plasticity may inform compositional practice (Nance 2007).

The methods employed by electroacoustic composers are, in many cases, similar to those employed by plastic artists: both work directly with the materials of their art which, in the case of electroacoustic music, is sound. The compositional process typically begins when a composer records a sound or a set of sounds, first selecting something (a sound source) to record before exploring the chosen source by exciting it in numerous different ways to produce a varied range of sounds. Once captured, recorded sounds will be auditioned and assessed by the composer, enabling them to make compositional decisions on the basis of audibly verifiable criteria (Harrison 1999, 118). The electroacoustic composer may, as a result of an aural assessment, choose to use recorded sounds without any further modification or transformation. However, it is likely that the composer will, at the very least, edit these sounds, or, as is often the case, transform or manipulate them during the compositional process. In many cases, electroacoustic composers employ digital sound processing tools and computer programs to facilitate the manipulation of sounds. At this stage, we find another commonality with the plastic arts: sound processing tools afford a degree of direct, hands-on control that has striking parallels with the direct manipulation of physical materials common to the various plastic arts, such as painting and sculpture.

Given this sense of plasticity and hands-on engagement with sound as a physical material, electroacoustic composition seemed perfect for the commissions in question, since it enabled those involved to take those recorded sounds of the city and then treat them as pliable, or malleable, plastic objects. At this point, however, it becomes difficult to generalize about the practices of the group, since each composer made different choices about which materials from the sound-bank they wished to use, and this resulted in radically different approaches to their sculpting and shaping. What follows is therefore my own approach to the recorded materials, foregrounding what I understood to be the central notion of plasticity and transformation.

When listening through the sound bank, I was immediately drawn to a single-take recording that composer Chris Bevan had captured, as both stereo and binaural recordings, of the sounds of traffic made using both in-ear microphones and a hand-held stereo microphone. Bevan had undertaken a short sound-walk along the main road leading from The University of Sheffield to Furnace Park. In the following two images we see him making the initial recordings, followed by a Google satellite image showing the area, and the route of the walk. This starts from the University of Sheffield Sound Studios (at the bottom of the map) and leads towards Furnace Park before returning back to the studios.



Image 5: Chris Bevan recording sounds of traffic (photo by Alex Gowan-Webster)

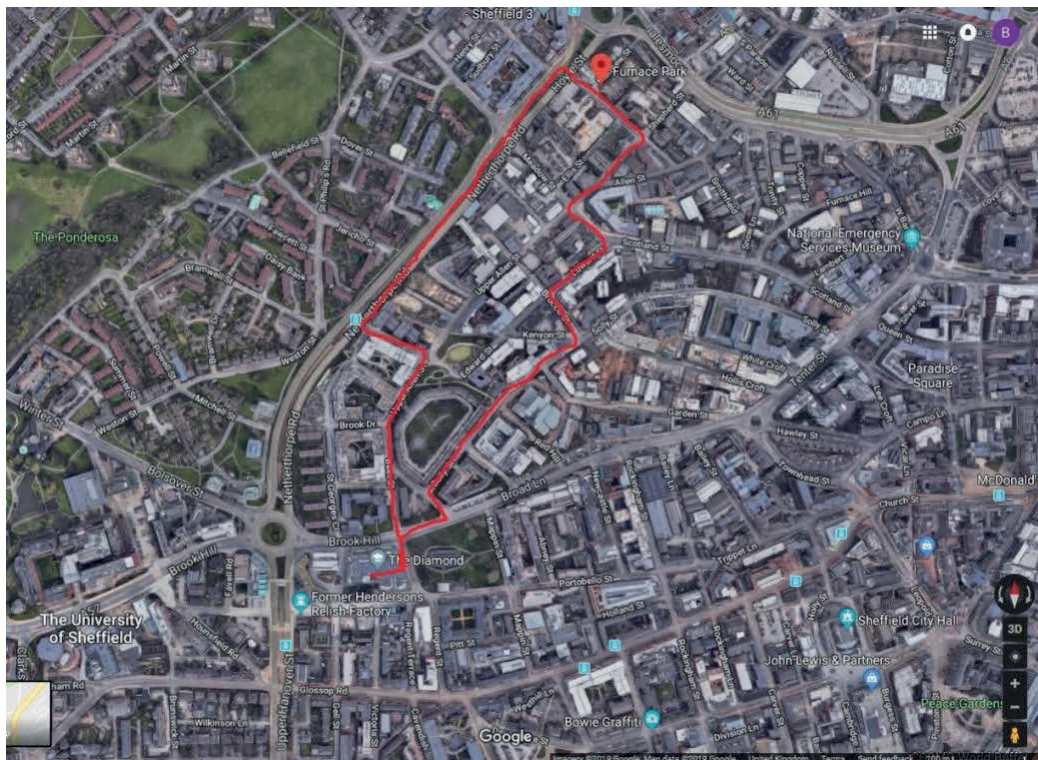


Image 6 Google satellite image of the area, with the soundwalk highlighted

In terms of their potential for compositional use, Bevan's recordings were immediately appealing; they offered something of akin to a cinematic 'establishing shot', in which the location of Furnace Park was instantly apparent, plunging the whole site into an

unambiguous cityscape. Moreover, there were two specific features of those recordings that were of particular interest to me. Firstly, the nature of the binaural and stereo recordings produced a very meaningful impression of the space around the park: not only had the recordings captured the sound of traffic on the main road, they had also captured and presented the emergence of traffic from a distant location, and tracked it to a point of arrival before it disappeared into the distance. In some of the recordings, this process of emergence, arrival, and disappearance traverses the stereo image, crossing from left to right, or vice versa. In other cases, the stereo image is relatively uniform across both left and right sides and, instead, the image merely serves to create the impression of traffic approaching the listener from a fixed point on the auditory horizon. In many cases, traffic is approaching from multiple directions, and this invariably creates the impression of enhanced activity across the stereo image, particularly in cases where traffic is entering from, and crossing, both sides simultaneously. Secondly, the recordings do not merely capture sounds of motor vehicles: pedestrians walking past, the sounds of Bevan walking and breathing, birdsong and, notably, the passing of the Sheffield Supertram all feature prominently in the recordings. In this way, the recordings have multiple levels of signification which, using R. Murray Schafer's terminology for markers of the soundscape (Schafer 1993), may be said to include *Keynote Sounds* (largely the undifferentiated sound of the traffic itself), *Signal Sounds* (in the form of people passing, birds emerging, and Bevan himself making noises), and a specific *Soundmark* (in the form of the passing Supertram with its characteristic tolling bell). Given the range of spatial information and these various markers of signification, Bevan's recordings were immediately appealing since they invited numerous avenues for exploration.

Despite using essentially soundscape recordings, the intention at the outset was to initiate a process of exploration and investigation, in which materials are transformed and explored to gain a greater understanding of their constitution and the possibilities that they may yield. In this instance, the time-stretching and -shrinking of the materials was accompanied only by the re-pitching (multiple octaves above and below the original) of the same. Two particular observations seemed pertinent. Firstly, despite ostensible differences in the traffic noise (largely due to proximity to the microphones, type of vehicle, and speed of movement through the stereo image), all of the materials were essentially noise-based; although the occasional prominent frequency might be detected in the sound of traffic passing, these rarely persisted for any substantial length of time, and they certainly did not receive the support of any overtones or harmonics. In most cases, frequencies were seemingly scattered and randomized within relatively narrow bands, approximating filtered noise. Secondly, the emergence, arrival, and disappearance of vehicles within the stereo image created a very specific spectromorphological shape. Denis Smalley invented the term spectromorphology to refer to the spectral content of a sound and the way that such content shapes, or morphs, over time (Smalley 1986) and, in this particular case, the overall content (which is essentially noise-based) shapes in a more-or-less uniform manner, albeit with some slight variations in speed and dynamics.

Two important discoveries in the recordings transformed my entire approach to the material and, consequently, the plan for the piece itself; following these discoveries, I decided to compose the entire piece using nothing more from the sound-bank. Thus, the finished piece is not exactly a single-source work, since it employs recordings of various different sources captured throughout the soundwalk, but it is certainly a product of a restricted sound palette in which all recordings relate to the same recorded walk. The first discovery relates to one of the signal sounds. At a given moment, a large lorry (or, at least, a vehicle with a particularly large engine) pulls up next to the microphone with the engine running. This particular moment is notable for two sonic details: the chugging engine at a very low frequency, accompanied by high frequency squeaks, possibly from the vehicle's brakes. Through listening alone, it was clear that the engine sound was pitched. Following tests, the drone turned out to be almost perfectly tuned to the C two octaves below middle C. More surprising still was the fact that a higher frequency drone appeared to be in some kind of harmonic relationship with the lower frequency, albeit fluctuating by a semitone interval. Following more tests, this turned out to be a drone that fluctuated between exactly nine and ten semitones above middle C; this created an almost melodic line that was, altogether, very surprising given that it was discovered within recordings of a lorry's engine. The second discovery occurred at the point of processing. The re-pitching and time-stretching/shrinking of the sounds of traffic produced a rather unexpected sonic result: although these relatively straightforward processes retained the spectromorphological directionality of the traffic materials, those recordings pitched up by an octave or more appeared to have a sense of motion or movement similar to strong gusts of wind.

Responding to these discoveries, an idea for the form of the piece started to emerge. Firstly, I decided that the piece would start and end with the recorded sounds of traffic, thus creating the impression that any intervening exploration of the sound materials takes the form of a departure and subsequent return. In this respect, the idea was directly influenced by the *occursus* notion of the city that is a '[...] representational plastic object, in the sculpting of which we all have a democratic right to intervene' (*occursus* 2015, 5). In responding to this idea, the proposed form would see the opening of the piece simply establish the sonic environment and familiarize the listener with the soundscape. The conclusion would return to very similar materials, but would also include the moment at which the lorry suddenly appeared. The intervention in the middle would be the sculpting of the plastic city, taking us from the clear moments of recognizability to flights of fancy and fantasy.

Secondly, between these two poles, a gradual accumulation of traffic sounds would act as a foil, allowing for transformed versions of the traffic to be introduced while the listening attention is diverted. In doing so, a gradual transformation from state to state appears, having two key functions: firstly, to create a large body of noise-based sounds (which would later create a clear contrast with the subsequent pitch-based section) and, secondly, to allow for the introduction of the wind-like materials described above.

Thirdly, once the large, noise-based section had been realized, pitch could be carved out using a filtering, or equalization (EQ), tool to replicate the engine drone and the fluctuations between nine and ten semitones above. Thus, an introduction to a

soundscape that gradually transitions into noise, from which pitch emerges, leading ultimately back to the original soundscape in which both pitch and noise, is clearly heard.

Following this plan, the finished piece chains together sequences leading from the source recordings through a series of transformations involving a transition from noise to pitch before returning to noise once more. In a sense, then, just like the park and its manifold state changes throughout history, the piece explores a series of contrasting transformations. The name *Foundry Flux* was chosen: rather than its meaning in the context of steel production, the term *flux*, which otherwise refers to a flowing or purifying agent used in the smelting process, is employed to capture the flowing, changing state of the land itself upon which there stood a *foundry*.

The finished project, including works from all of the composers, was presented as an installation in the 2015 exhibition 'The Art of Wandering', curated by Liz Dickinson and Becky Gee at the 35 Chapel Walk gallery in Sheffield. Visitors were able to listen to the complete set of composed works through cheap but technically innovative listening posts engineered by Thom Wilson, Sam Varcoe, and Ben Wadsworth using lily pad MP3s, reed switches, magnets, discarded paint tins, and donated headphones. Thus, the listening posts, like the sound pieces themselves, were site-specific and made from found, repurposed materials. Thus, in a sense they performed an act of *détournement*, extracting some locally sourced 'waste' materials from the cycle of consumption and obsolescence, reconfiguring them as conductors of sound.

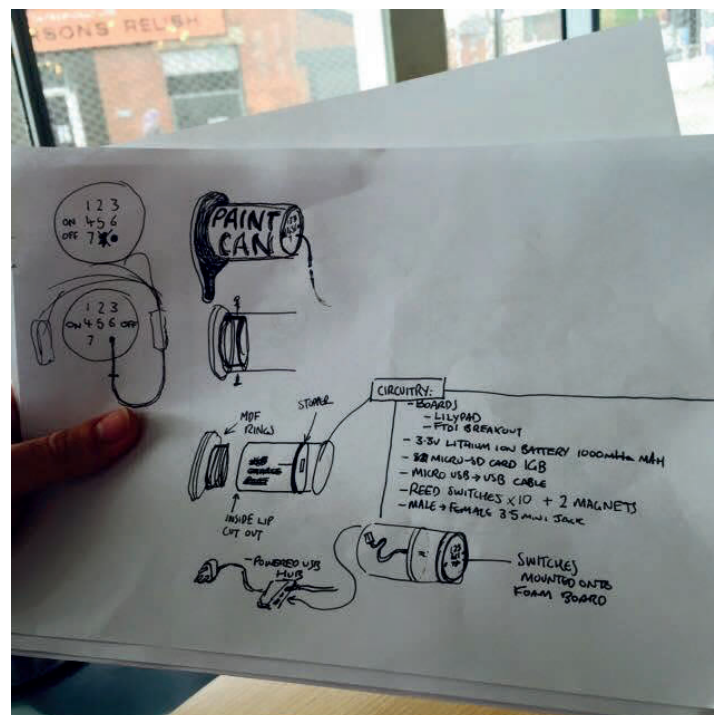


Image 7: Initial schematic for producing listening posts (photo by Thom Wilson)

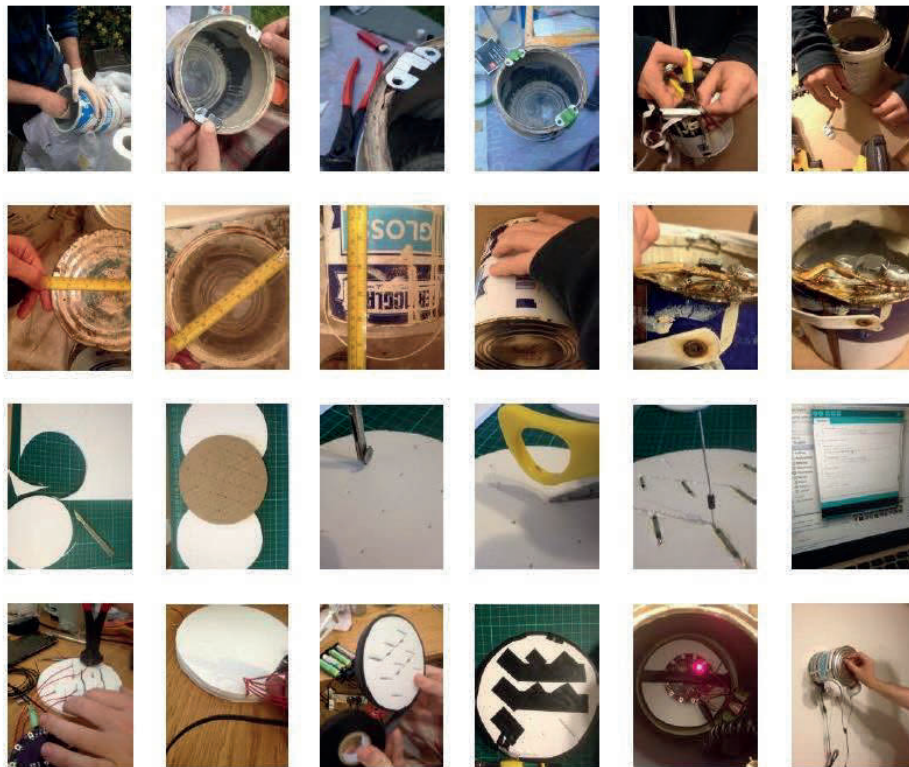


Image 8: The making of the listening posts (photo by Thom Wilson)



Image 9: A finished listening post (photo by Thom Wilson)

Image 10: Still from the exhibition (photo by Thom Wilson)

Foundry Flux has gone on to have an independent life beyond the project; it received performances in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Mexico, Portugal, and the USA, among others. It was awarded second prize at the Eleventh International Competition of Electroacoustic Composition and Visual Music at the Destellos Foundation, Argentina, in 2018, and an ‘Honourable Mention’ in the international composition competition *Musica Viva*, 2016, hosted by Miso Music, Portugal. *Foundry Flux* is published by the Canadian-based electroacoustic label, *empreintes DIGITales* (Stanović 2018).

Reflections and conclusions

One of the most surprising things to come out of this project was the amount of self-reflection involved. Of course, composition always involves a degree of self-reflection, but something quite different happened in this particular case: as per the *occursus* objectives, we all started to reflect on our own sense of engagement with the city of Sheffield and, as a direct result, we started to think about our pieces as vehicles through which to reflect, critique, and rethink the city, rather than as autonomous works in their own right. In this context, it would be remiss not to end the article with a brief set of reflections on what the process of doing actually meant, and whether we achieved the *occursus* aims. Since these are invariably personal, however, I may only share my reflections, which were mixed.

On the whole, I feel like the group of composers did extremely well in terms of responding to the identity of the city: by using a series of recorded sounds as keynotes, signals and soundmarks, I genuinely believe that the series of compositions reflects something of Sheffield's identity. Further to this, the notion of transformation is clearly well served: the idea of processing and manipulating those recordings using electroacoustic techniques resulted in a surprisingly straightforward sense of the transformation of identities, particularly where those techniques were enacted upon recognisable soundmarks. In some cases, I felt as though the transformations were relatively arbitrary. In others, however, it certainly seemed as though the composer had thought carefully about a specific part of the city's identity and transformed it in order to sculpt that identity from one state to another.

Reflections on our own role in the future transformation of the city were, by contrast, the least successful part of the project. I do not realistically believe that anyone involved in the project has the sense that they upheld some kind of democratic right to the transform the identity of the city. Furthermore, there was no clear sense of how our actions (which, after all, involved recorded sound) would have any bearing on the actual sound of Sheffield. In this respect, I felt as though we missed a substantial opportunity to do something radical. Probably, the idea of composing a series of fixed-media pieces was misguided. Although the act of recording sounds did involve a large degree of collaboration and discussion among those involved, the subsequent retreat into the studio, and the inevitable solitary practice that fixed-media works tend to require, did not particularly help with meeting the project aims. Nor, for that matter, did the choice of media employed: the decision to produce spatiotemporally delimited artworks, which demand concentrated listening, resulted in headphone listening in a gallery; this is not exactly an ideal mode of presentation, one might argue, if the aim is to reflect on the sounds around us. If the project were to be repeated, something akin to site-specific sound sculptures might be more appropriate, allowing for the creation of spatiotemporally open works, which an audience may walk around, in conversation, whilst hearing both sounds of the sculpture and the city blending together. Something of that nature would surely better approximate the kind of ideas that *occursus* had in mind. I cannot help but feel that we would need to rethink the actual soundworld of Sheffield, rather than simply responding *to* it through manipulations of recorded sounds.

In other respects, however, I did find that my own personal engagement with the city was, genuinely, transformed. In *Foundry Flux*, the intention was to explore notions of plasticity: starting with concrete, recognizable sounds of the city, and through a process of gradual state-change, I planned to lead the listener into a series of distinct scenes hovering between the real and the unreal. These scenes culminate in a moment of high tension, in which a series of pitches felt almost cathartic (at least to me) both at the moment of composition and in subsequent listenings. Whether this is experienced by other listeners I do not know, and this personal observation is in no way intended to direct how others engage with the work. Since the aims of *occursus* required a highly personalized act of engagement, it is necessary to engage in a moment of personal reflection on what the creative process actually meant, and produced, for me. There are two significant discoveries worth sharing.

The first relates to the specific process of composing with the sounds of a city. Despite retreating indoors to compose the piece, the use of city sounds meant that it was impossible to forget, even momentarily, that the studio was located in Sheffield, and that many of the same sounds were occurring, at the same time, just beyond the studio door. For this reason, the act of leaving the studio became extremely significant; after working for hours with sounds of Sheffield, the same sound-world was lying in wait, and this created a very tangible sense that boundaries between the work and the city had dissolved. If this was the sense of engagement between city and action that *occursus* had in mind, then the foundry project was indeed successful – at least from my point of view. My actions had a transformative sense on both my engagement with the city and, for that matter, my own composition.

The second discovery relates to one specific soundmark: the Sheffield tram. It is entirely likely that people unfamiliar with Sheffield will not even notice the sound of a tram in *Foundry Flux*, since it is relatively hidden in the work. Even so, it makes several appearances, and occupied a very significant part in the compositional process, since it was used throughout the first half of the work to introduce and remove significant gestures and events. More importantly, this is one of the first sound materials that was transformed, during the act of composition, and also one of the first that is introduced (albeit under the layers of traffic noise) in a transformed state. What is of interest here, however, is the fact that four years after composing this piece, I cannot walk down a Sheffield street without expecting the arrival and departure of city trams to transform, spontaneously before my eyes and ears, into something that would produce similar gestures and events. The ‘real’ tram has merged, perhaps forever, with the ‘unreal’ trams that are heard in my piece. This was neither anticipated, nor expected, but is entirely a consequence of engaging with the plasticity of this material through an act of artistic engagement. In a very surprising way, then, sounds were not simply harvested and shaped to form a piece. Rather, the act of shaping has fundamentally impacted upon my subsequent interactions and experience with the city. Thus, the city gave the work, and the work the city. In this sense, and perhaps this sense only, Lefebvre might be satisfied; the city has become an *œuvre*.

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KEVIN O'CONNELL'S *NORTH*: MODERNISM, SIBELIUS, AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

The influence of Jean Sibelius and Scandinavian modernism can show up in unexpected quarters: the Northern Irish composer Kevin O'Connell (b. 1958) names the Finnish great as one of his crucial influences, particularly evident in the composition *North*. Having grown up under the shadows of the Northern Irish Troubles since the late 1960s, O'Connell's music can be read as a way to engage with this specific identity crisis. Another northern influence on this piece, albeit non-musical in topic, includes Seamus Heaney's collection of poetry of the same title and structure, with Heaney also hailing from Derry in Northern Ireland.

Alongside such issues of identity, this article will assess the determinacy of Kevin O'Connell's orchestral composition, entitled *North* (1997–98), on Sibelius's Symphony No. 4. *North* displays motivic transformation as a significant element of O'Connell's orchestral style and the central element utilized to construct an extended and coherent piece of music. His processes rely upon the continuous development of a small number of motivic cells that appear in increasing degrees of variation and sophistication, within an overarching formal structure. Despite a heightened awareness of form, his treatment of the thematic motifs includes extremely little direct repetition and extensive intricate variations. The opening of *North* borrows that of Sibelius's Symphony No. 4 and, given the aforementioned compositional technique, the consequent treatment of this phrase illustrates the significance of Sibelius's influence upon O'Connell's music.

Sibelius's influence is not only musical however, but also relates to issues of identity, in his position as a composer from northern Europe negotiating a path between nationalist political movements and the productive engagement with the central European artistic tradition, in the process laying claim to full membership of the exclusive club of European composers – all of which contribute to 'Conceptualizing the North'.

Keywords: *Kevin O'Connell; North; Ireland; Identity; Jean Sibelius; Modernism*

Kevin O'Connell: Education and Career

Kevin O'Connell was born in 1958 in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. His education was the British curriculum provided by Catholic schools.¹ To further his education O'Connell moved to the Republic of Ireland on being accepted to Trinity College, Dublin (1978–82) where he completed a Bachelor of Music undergraduate

¹ He took composition, piano, and organ lessons with organist Michael Hoeg and studied composition with Redmond Friel (1909–1979) at St. Columb's College – his secondary/grammar school.

degree.² On completing this degree O'Connell moved back to Northern Ireland where he had several teaching positions but after a while returned to Dublin, teaching in Trinity College, Dublin, where he also completed a Master's in Anglo-Irish Literature.³ O'Connell then came to his current position of head of composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin.⁴ During this time O'Connell completed a Doctorate in composition. He has maintained his academic interests alongside composing, resulting in numerous conference presentations and publications. A broad sweep of topics ranging between Stravinsky, Berg, and Stanford to poetry have received O'Connell's attention, with contributions made to *The Musical Times* and *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Explorations*. O'Connell is a member of Aosdána, Ireland's state-sponsored academy of creative artists.

O'Connell the composer

O'Connell began composing at the age of twelve and was granted his first commission at the age of twenty-five, from BBC Radio 3.⁵ To date he has composed for many genres, including opera, orchestral, solo, and chamber ensembles. A complete list of his compositions is available on the Contemporary Music Centre's website.⁶ He has only written one piece under the category of electro-acoustic and mixed media,⁷ illustrating his perhaps traditionalist preference for acoustic instruments.

The 1990s were dominated by opera, with three chamber operas, but orchestral pieces are consistent throughout O'Connell's compositional timeline, appearing at the start of his career as a composer in the 1980s with *From the Besieged City*, again in the 1990s with *North* (the work upon which this article will focus), the 2000s with *Four Orchestral Pieces*, the symphony premièred in 2011, and the more recent première of *Early Music* in July 2015.

Social context

Hailing from Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, O'Connell grew up during the Troubles. This was when a divided society in Northern Ireland with a 'Catholic' minority accounting for approximately one third of the population led to tensions between them and the predominantly Unionist government, escalating sharply with the emergence of the civil rights movement's campaign (Connolly 2007, 4-5). The

² During this time, O'Connell was proactive in student performances of contemporary music. He won the composition prize of the RTÉ Young Musician of the Year competition – this was beneficial in introducing him and his music to more influential composers of the time. A continuing interest in music education and writing for young players has been the result of these experiences.

³ The Master's in Anglo-Irish Literature focused his attention on Heaney and Beckett.

⁴ In this he has composed works for many of the RIAM's soloists and ensembles.

⁵ A number of commissions followed, including *String Trio* (a work which has received some 50 professional performances) *Saxophone Sonata*, *Einzeichnung* for large ensemble, and *Fáilte don Éan* for choir. The BBC Radio 3 piece is entitled *Concertino for 12 players (1985)*

⁶ Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, Kevin O'Connell biography www.cmc.ie/composers/kevin-connell

⁷ *Apollo and Marsyas* (2003) is the only work for which O'Connell has used tape. It is, however, used along with live performers

deployment of British troops in 1969 to halt major civil strife on the streets of Derry and Belfast is commonly cited as the start of the Troubles although it could be argued that they started

in 1169 with the arrival of Strongbow, or with the Plantation in the seventeenth century, or with the partition of Ireland in 1920. Theoretically one could start with the arrival of the Celts in Ireland and the consequent dislocation of Ireland's first inhabitants (Hennessy 2005, ix).

It is difficult to contest that the Troubles have caused much grievance to all of the people of Northern Ireland and it is a sensitive topic for most to talk about. Extensive interviews as well as the scores and other secondary sources indicate that extra-musical influences related to the composer's Catholic Northern Irish identity play a part in his musical thinking as is evidenced particularly in the first two orchestral compositions, *From the Besieged City* and *North*, with their non-generic titles and quasi-programmatic content. Combining the purely musical features with extra-musical issues, such as his interest in Anglo-Irish literature and arising identity issues, provides enhanced insight into and understanding of O'Connell's music.

While a simplistic understanding of the society often reduces the conflict of Northern Ireland to a binary Catholic-Protestant division, this ignores the sub-categories of Loyalist, Nationalist, Republican, and Unionist, and it completely fails to consider the ways in which such traditions can combine. O'Connell frequently refers to a quality of 'Ulsterness', by which he means the combination of Irish and British influences that the people of Northern Ireland⁸ uniquely experience. Such a label suggests an alternative identity to describe the people as products of the situation into which they were born, neither solely Irish nor British despite what they might choose as their nationality – perhaps some similarities with which Sibelius could also identify come to mind as during his lifetime he experienced changes in nationality and politics, as well as the Second World War.

Musical identity

In his PhD dissertation, O'Connell stated: 'I have at times had the reputation of being both a populist and a difficult modernist.' (O'Connell 2007, 8) Musical, as well as social, identity then comes to play in this discussion, with O'Connell's own writings proving the best place to start as they express not only where his interests lie but also his views on them. His academic writings cover a wide range of topics, with most being published in *The Musical Times*. His article from 2005 entitled 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music' is the most relevant to this article as O'Connell's interest in Charles Villiers Stanford, more particularly as a teacher rather than as a composer, could reflect how he considers his own position as a senior lecturer in Composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), Dublin, whilst being an active composer and member

⁸ There is a loose use of the term Ulster here with a lack of distinction between the six counties of Northern Ireland that are under the rule of the United Kingdom and the nine counties that form the geographical province of Ulster on the island of Ireland.

of Aosdána. In considering his position as similar to Stanford's, through his position as lecturer in the RIAM where his teaching impacts the next generation of Irish composers, O'Connell notes Stanford's lasting influence provided by his publication *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (1911). A shared viewpoint between these composers relates to colour:

But of what use is colour if the drawing be bad? It may conceal deficiency, but it will not hide it from the keen eye; such an art as sculpture cannot depend on it for a single detail. Wealth of language cannot hide the fault of a poor poem. Magnificence of decoration cannot glorify an ill-constructed building. Colour, the god of modern music, is in itself the inferior of rhythmic and melodic invention, although it will always remain one of its most important servants. Fine clothes will not make a bad figure good. (Stanford 1911, 53–54)

O'Connell often refers to Stravinsky in his own teaching, and how good compositional technique is revealed if a piece can be reduced to a piano score and still make musical sense; there is no dependency upon colour to maintain the interest (O'Connell, 2005). The thorough working of his motivic material that is presented later in this article supports O'Connell's adherence to such practice, however, through the orchestration he then adds a further dimension.

A point of conflict between the two composers arises in Stanford's objections to modernism. O'Connell summarises them thus:

(1) Its connection with the literary and dramatic. This offended Stanford's radically conservative idea of music as a self-contained language. The title alone of the chapter dealing with this subject expresses Stanford's objections: 'Extraneous influences in instrumental music.' (2) Its allegiance to 'colour'. Stanford says on this subject: 'No painter who relied on colour alone has survived the test of time.' The modernists elevated this secondary quality to a primary one. Allied to his suspicion of colour is Stanford's dislike of what he calls 'apparatus', in other words the huge late-Romantic orchestra. (Stanford often quotes Richter's remark: the greater the number of staves, the fewer the ideas.) (3) Chromaticism and the whole-tone scale. Stanford's dislike of these expansions of the language was obviously a matter of personal taste. His prejudice against them rests primarily on their tendency to obscure line. 'Chromatics are, as their name implies, colour and not drawing.' But he tried to anchor his prejudice in the supposed acoustical impossibility of an equal-tempered scale, which he regarded as an unhappy compromise dictated by the needs of keyboard instruments. (O'Connell 2005, 35)

O'Connell is a notable offender in this area; by using titles such as *North* and *From the Besieged City*, his employment of a large orchestra, albeit with a traditional orchestration with no experimental performance techniques, and the non-tonal harmonic language utilized. In saying that, O'Connell has perhaps returned to an aesthetic more to Stanford's liking through later works such as a small work for string orchestra entitled

Suite in C where he uses C major and traditional forms somewhat as a technical exercise to help when composing the larger work that followed, his symphony.

In assessing the idea of development, however, O'Connell notes that this might have been a 'weakness in his [Stanford's] practice' (O'Connell 2005, 40), continuing with quite a telling remark: 'Perhaps the Irishman in him [Stanford] responded more to the conversational mode of the concerto form than to the abstract rigours of the symphony. (I think this holds true for modern Irish composers, among whose orchestral works concertos figure prominently).' (O'Connell 2005, 41) This may be interpreted as an adverse observation, and with O'Connell's actions and the results of in-depth study of his larger scale orchestral works (O'Connell 2005, 41), this is not a brush with which he wants to be tarred. This leads back to the debate about his identity and his rigorous Ulster upbringing with an emphasis on technique: 'That's what we bring [...] you see this in people like Heaney or Mahon, or Longley [...] their poetry has a very Irish flavour, but when you read it there is sense of organisation that for want of a better word I can only describe as very Ulster.' (D. O'Connell 2010, 75) Kevin O'Connell does not directly refer to his own issues in his article, but such remarks from Ulster artists bring an air of mutual experience, perhaps an understanding of Stanford's position. On a broader musical European spectrum, 'Stanford's identification with Brahms is also that of a self-made provincial. [...] Forced unto the defensive, the provincial makes the plea for "eternal" values, generally a sure sign that the immediate battle has been lost' (D. O'Connell 2010, 43-44). Perhaps it is in similar ways that Kevin O'Connell reaches to European composers from abroad for his own inspiration rather than towards that of his fellow composers of Ireland. In the blog entry entitled 'On Torsten Rasch' O'Connell comments upon this search:

The broader implications of this sprawling work [orchestral song-cycle *Mein Herz Brennt*] and of what academics drearily call its 'reception' are interesting to think out. Rasch was praised by some of the British critics for plastering a big 'shut down for good' sign across the whole modernist project in music. This is the kind of mis-aimed praise that should make a composer careful of the friends he picks up. As a composer, I could not suppress a pang of annoyed envy. Here is a German of my age who needs only to dip into the ancestral note-board for everyone to fall over him in Mahlerian faints and ecstasies. When you have spent 25 years in search of your own language, sifting, rejecting, including, and then sifting again (as I suppose an Irish composer has to), it can seem like a rum deal. (O'Connell 2011a)

O'Connell's North

North was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 in 1997 and premièred by the Ulster Orchestra, under the baton of Robert Houlihan, at the BBC Invitation Concert 'Sonorities' on 15 May 1998, in Belfast.⁹ Subsequent performances have been in the

⁹ 'Sonorities Festival' according to the CMC website, but 'BBC Invitation Concerts 1998' according to the programme.

National Concert Hall, Dublin, by the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (RTÉ NSO), first in 2001 (20 February) with Colman Pearce conducting and then in 2003 (21 November) under the baton of Gerhard Markson.¹⁰

North was O'Connell's first orchestral commission after moving out of the North of Ireland following several teaching positions there after his university studies. The choice of title for this music was borrowed from fellow Derry-man Seamus Heaney's first publication following his own move out of 'the North'. The twenty-minute orchestral piece has a very clear break in the middle creating two ten-minute sections, or movements. This structural divide combined with the title *North* will be considered as a reference to the divided society of Northern Ireland, notwithstanding O'Connell's claims that this work is not programmatic, as will be discussed later in this article.

O'Connell found the writings of Schoenberg to be influential; for example on unity, Schoenberg has written:

Music in its primal condition consists of most primitive repetitions; and the element which functions as a unifying factor in the higher forms to which it has developed, the element which guarantees that one may be able to relate all the sections to each other – the motive – can manifest its presence only through repetition. (Schoenberg 1975, 265)

This is in keeping with O'Connell's manipulation of motivic content to construct his works. This creative process has been associated with modernism, of which Elliott Carter identified the following features:

The use of equally intense melodic shapes, often broken up into short, dramatic fragments, joins with a very varied rubato rhythmic technique to produce a new kind of what might be called instrumental recitative. The rapid increases and decreases of harmonic tension, quick changes of register, and fragmented, non-imitative counterpoint are also worthy of note. (Carter 1997, 207)

Such features can be identified in O'Connell's music, with the use of short motifs as the main musical construction, his employment of rhythmic features, and the challenging of tonal harmonies with extreme contrasts in register.

This is relevant to the variations and derivations in O'Connell's manipulation of his compositional motifs that will be discussed later in this article. Definitions of motifs offered by Schoenberg and Réti are not too dissimilar:

Schoenberg:

The features of a motive are intervals and rhythms, combined to produce a memorable shape or contour which usually implies an inherent harmony. Inasmuch as almost every figure within a piece reveals some relationship to it,

¹⁰ Pre-concert talks were given by O'Connell before both National Concert Hall performances; the 2003 programme also toured to Mullingar, Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Waterford.

the basic motive is often considered the 'germ' of the idea. (Schoenberg 1967, 8)

Reti:

We call motif any musical element, be it a melodic phrase or fragment or even only a rhythmical or dynamic feature which, by being constantly repeated and varied throughout a work or a section, assumes a role in the compositional design. (Réti 1951, 11)

Due to such appropriateness, 'motif' is the most applicable term to be used in this assessment.

The source of O'Connell's motifs is also telling regarding his influences and admirations. His admiration of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4* (1911) is evident from the following answers to parts of a questionnaire that the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, circulated to numerous Irish composers in 2003:

CMC Q. 9: What is your greatest ambition?

O'Connell: To write something as good as Sibelius's Fourth Symphony, or better.

CMC Q. 16: What is your concept of heaven?

O'Connell: Writing a piece as good as Sibelius 4. (O'Connell in association with CMC 2003)

He also presented his findings of an analysis of the symphony at the annual conference of the Society for Musicology in Ireland in 2006. It was entitled 'The law of the nearest way: polyphonic aspects of the first movement of Sibelius's Fourth Symphony', illustrating that O'Connell came to know this work in great detail through such research. In correspondence about this matter O'Connell has written:

Considering that Sibelius is possibly my favourite symphonist, I'm amazed at how little of him is in my own symphony. He's just impossible to imitate. [...] Maybe the truth is that we all borrow, and in the act of trying to cover our traces we become composers.' (O'Connell 2011b)

O'Connell might find Sibelius impossible to imitate and so simply made a direct quotation; the opening motif of *North* is a quotation of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4*, easily seen in extracts from the opening of the two scores:

Sibelius's Symphony No. 4, bar 1

Bassoon
Violoncello
Double Bass



The image shows a musical score for the first bar of Sibelius's Symphony No. 4. It features three staves: Bassoon, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The music is in the bass clef with a common time signature (C). The notes are: Bassoon (G2, A2, B2, C3), Violoncello (G2, A2, B2, C3), and Double Bass (G2, A2, B2, C3). The notes are connected by a long horizontal line, indicating a sustained or legato passage.

North, Part I, bar 1

The image shows the first bar of the score for 'North, Part I'. It features two staves: Viola (top) and Violoncello (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Viola part begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, an eighth note B4, and a half note C5. The Violoncello part begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G3, an eighth note F#3, an eighth note E3, and a half note D3. A slur covers the final two notes of both parts.

The notes of C, D and F# are identical, but are pitched an octave higher. The low sustained note that enters in the double basses (in bar 2) following the viola and violoncello motif of *North* maintains an element of Sibelius's original character. There is some rhythmic alteration with the note values of the Sibelius motif halved, but the proportions and the effect remain the same, with a shorter note value to springboard to two longer note values. Sibelius's treatment of this motif is somewhat similar to that of O'Connell's *North*, in that it is developed and occurs throughout the symphony – and is not confined to one movement.¹¹ Hence O'Connell may have also been influenced by Sibelius's techniques of motivic development alongside his borrowing.

The four main motifs that significantly contribute to the construction of *North* are the 'repeated pitch' motif, the 'bacchius' gesture (the step-leap 'bacchius' gesture is defined by the weak-strong-strong rhythm), the 'chorale-like' homophonic texture, and the 'alternating' gesture. Other secondary motifs include clusters, trill and tremolo effects, scalic passages, and a 'bouncing ball' rhythmic gesture. Some of these may be seen as effects rather than motifs, and some have a much stronger presence than others.

Example 1: North, Part I, bar 1

Opening motif

This image is identical to the previous musical score but includes interval labels. Above the first note of the Viola part (G4) is the label '1a'. Above the first note of the Violoncello part (G3) is the label '1a'. This indicates that the interval between the first notes of the two parts is a first octave.

The intervals and rhythmic gestures of Example 1's motifs are manipulated throughout the entire work. Note the imitatory strands presented by viola and cello, both commencing with the melodic intervals of two semitones followed by a larger leap; the viola ascending through four semitones followed by the cello descending through six. Similarly the more sustained harmonic tension created in Example 2 by four solo violins recurs throughout *North* with the small intervals of two, three, and four semitones being exploited.

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4*, see Tawaststjerna 1986 (vol. 2, 128).

Example 3: *North*, Part II, bars 1–3

Variation of motifs 1a and 2a in the opening of Part II

The musical score for Example 3 shows three staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, and Viola. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. Motif 2a is indicated above the violin staves, showing a sequence of notes with a dynamic marking of *p*. Motif 1a is indicated below the viola staff, showing a sequence of notes with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The violins play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the viola plays a more complex rhythmic pattern with some rests.

Example 3 illustrates that the first bars of Part II combine the major second interval of motif 2a with the rhythmical leap of motif 1a moving through the interval of a minor third (a variation of motif 2b). In this example, however, instead of ascending through four semitones, the leap in the viola has been reduced to three semitones. A similar intervallic manipulation is seen in Example 4 in which the violins' intervals of four semitones (from motif 2b) are reduced to three in bars 4–6 of Part II, creating an interplay between major and minor thirds:

Example 4: *North*, Part II, bars 4–6

Variation of motifs 2a and 2b

The musical score for Example 4 shows a single staff for 2 Flute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The flute part consists of a sequence of notes with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

These are particularly evident upon listening to the opening of *North's* Part II (O'Connell 2014). Not only does O'Connell use intervallic variation but he also develops rhythmical and accompaniment motifs, initially presented in the first part and then varied in the subsequent second part of *North*. Example 5 illustrates the first presentation of a rhythmically repeated chordal idea, and Example 6 shows the establishment of an accompaniment pattern alternating between two voices. Both figures also utilize the upbeat semiquaver from the opening idea (motif 1a) with Example 6 displaying the alternating nature seen previously in Example 3.

Example 5: *North*, Part I: Bars 39–42

Rhythmically repeated chords

The musical score for Example 5 shows two staves: 2 Oboe and 2 Trumpet in Bb. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The oboe part consists of a sequence of chords with a dynamic marking of *p* and *mf*. The trumpet part consists of a sequence of chords with a dynamic marking of *p* and *mf*. The chords are: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

Example 6: *North*, Part I: Bars 93–94

Alternating accompaniment pattern idea based on motif 1a

The musical score for Example 6 shows two staves: Oboe and Clarinet in B \flat . The Oboe staff is in 4/4 time and features a motif labeled '6a' consisting of a sequence of chords. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). The Clarinet in B \flat staff is also in 4/4 time and features a motif labeled '1a' consisting of a sequence of chords. The dynamics are marked *p* and *f*.

These features are then varied in Part II: Example 7 displays motif 5a's repeated chord idea in the flutes, rhythmically augmented on this occasion (hemiola effect). Motif 2a's harmonic colouring has been widened from a major second to a minor third in the violins, and the manipulation of motif 1a's rhythmical ascending leap of four semitones is in the viola. Also the alternating accompaniment pattern of motif 6a is suggested by the violin and pviola relationship here:

Example 7: *North*, Part II, bars 7–10

Combination of motifs 1a, 2b and 5a with inference of motif 6a

The musical score for Example 7 shows four staves: Flute, Violin 1, Violin 2, and Viola. The Flute staff is in 3/4 time and features motifs labeled '2b and 5a' with dynamics *p*, *mp*, and *p*. The Violin 1 and Violin 2 staves are in 3/4 time and feature motifs labeled '2b' and '1a' with dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *mf*. The Viola staff is in 3/4 time and features motif '1a' with dynamic *mf*.

These examples represent the first occurrences of the thematic material in each section but many variations of the motifs are found throughout *North*.

The correlation of *North*'s main thematic material between the two halves of the piece proves the thematic unity of this music as well as highlighting the significance of Sibelius's contribution to the work through O'Connell's borrowing and manipulation of the opening line of *Symphony No. 4*. The subsequent presentations of this opening motif are for example not exact reproductions but variations and developments, as Example 8 demonstrates:

Example 8: *North*, Part I, bar 1

Subsequent presentations of motif 1a in bars 5–6 and 8

The image shows a musical score for Viola and Violoncello. It consists of three measures, labeled 1, 5, and 8 (Horns). The top staff is for Viola and the bottom staff is for Violoncello. The time signature is 3/4. In measure 1, the Viola plays a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4 and B4, and a quarter note C5. The Violoncello plays a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes B3 and A3, and a quarter note G3. In measure 5, the Viola plays a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4 and B4, and a quarter note C5. The Violoncello plays a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes B3 and A3, and a quarter note G3. In measure 8, the Viola plays a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4 and A4, and a quarter note B4. The Violoncello plays a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G3 and A3, and a quarter note B3.

In bar 5, the viola line begins the same way as in bar 1 but the cello's response is altered; contrary to the previous a to b movement, on this occasion it begins on b and moves to a.¹² The cello's descent is then extended from where it previously stopped on the f down to e flat then c sharp before ascending a semitone and resting on d. Quaver syncopation dominates the rhythm and is also subjected to the variation process with the displacement of entries; for example in bar 5 the cello enters a quaver value earlier than in the original presentation in bar 1. Longer durations are given to the e flat, c sharp and d than those of the foundational three notes of the motif. These longer notes provide balance and contrast against the shorter note values at the original stem of the motif, but where the initial statement faded in dynamics this one increases to a sustained *fortissimo* throughout bar 7 before a rest of one beat and the third presentation of this motif in bar 8. On this third presentation the motif commences on the second beat, that is, without an upbeat, yet the semiquaver value of the first note is preserved. (This rhythmical displacement is further utilized in bars 47 and 48 but is yet again varied.) Bar 8 sees the motif rhythmically displaced to commence on the beat in contrast to the previous semiquaver upbeat. This is the first note of thematic material to be heard on a beat without an upbeat; it is not until bar 39 that thematic material commences on the downbeat with the first hearing the of repeated chord motif 5a, featured in Example 5. Despite supporting chords articulating the downbeats of bars 2 and 17, a sense of metre or pulse is greatly blurred through the avoidance of downbeats and whole beat articulations.

Depending on the listener, such minute motivic variations may or may not be apparent on the first listening of *North*, but what is apparent is the degree to which the work is unified, with continually present threads of familiarity in a constantly changing soundscape. This analysis displays how O'Connell achieves such cohesion: through smaller units rather than a longer memorable component simply being repeated.

***North*: Sibelius**

Sibelius's influence is not only musical, however, but also relates to issues of identity, in his position as a composer from northern Europe negotiating a path between nationalist political movements and the productive engagement with the central

¹² Helmholtz Pitch Notation is employed throughout this article with middle c being c', an octave higher being c'' and octave lower being c.

European artistic tradition, in the process laying claim to full membership of the exclusive club of 'European' composers.

Sibelius composed his *Symphony No. 4* during a difficult time with a number of distractions taking his attention away from his writing and causing periods of depression. Reflections on death had followed his recent operations to remove a tumour in his throat. He also faced huge financial difficulties and worried that, following his more classical *Symphony No. 3* (1907), his contemporaries saw his writing as outdated: 'With the third symphony he becomes more international, a "European-Classical" composer' (Tawaststjerna 1971). Following the 'national Romanticism' of his first two symphonies and then the classicism of the third, Sibelius considers (in his diary) 'A change of style?' before embarking on the fourth (Tawaststjerna 1986, 128). With a new style of course comes the risk of how it might be received. O'Connell might have identified with such a pressure of recognition, considering that upon leaving Northern Ireland he received a commission from the BBC. Finances also tend to be an issue in trying to succeed as a composer in Ireland, with many turning to alternative occupations such as teaching for a secure source of income.

At the time of composing this symphony, the political climate in Finland was still an annoyance to Sibelius, despite his withdrawal from political awareness; he expresses it as such in correspondence during the composition of *Symphony No. 4*: 'Politics can drive me to despair but have up to the present had little effect on my work. [...] I can't help matters or affect them in any way other than by continuing to compose "for King and Country".' (Tawaststjerna 1986, 144) This lack of direct engagement with the issue is evident through a response he gave in a newspaper interview in Norway when asked about the situation in Finland – where legislation had just been introduced so that all important matters involving Finnish affairs were to be decided in the Russian Duma. "Everything is fine. We dance, drink and make merry" – a response that raised a few eyebrows in Norway and in his own country!' (Tawaststjerna 1986, 144) He was obviously avoiding a true engagement with the issue. In another interview when Sibelius was asked if he thought that the understanding of music was related to one's ethnic origin, he answered affirmatively: 'But as far as inspiration is concerned, I think that nature and landscape play a greater part than national origins.' (Tawaststjerna 1986, 145)

An extra-musical programme for Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4* was proposed by critics following the première but Sibelius himself responded, in writing, in rejection of the idea: 'Your correspondent's assertions about a programme for my new symphony are quite inaccurate.' (Tawaststjerna 1986, 171) Despite this denial a link seems to be present considering his statement in relation to nature and landscape and the seeds of the work being planted whilst being immersed in the natural environment.¹³ A similar debate is seen with O'Connell's statement that *North* is 'a title, not a description' (O'Connell 2010 [quoting Joe Kondo]) but the various norths that unfold in connection to his piece suggest otherwise.

¹³ More information on the debate surrounding the suggested programme of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4* is available in Tawaststjerna 1986, 132, 170–171, 197.

The environments that these composers experienced may not be intentionally expressed in their music, but they are present. With O'Connell's familiarity with such political upheaval through growing up in the divided community and the Troubles of Northern Ireland, another connection between the composers emerges: both share issues of identity that arise from political situations. Sibelius was born when Finland was under the Russian rule that followed the centuries-long Swedish occupation. At this time Swedish was still the language of the upper class and a number of Sibelius's songs are in Swedish (Tawaststjerna 1986, 134). O'Connell grew up under a British education system and United Kingdom government in Northern Ireland (a young state established in 1920) but has lived in the Republic of Ireland for longer. Therefore their nationalities and musical influences are mixed, with Sibelius having Swedish-Finnish and Russian connections and O'Connell having Irish-British (McCay 2014).

Through O'Connell's motivic references to Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4* he not only infers the admiration he has for this piece and brings a European north into the equation to complement Heaney's north of Ireland, O'Connell also connects the circumstances surrounding its composition with both personal and political troubles leading to issues of identity. These issues relate to the recognition and acceptance of each composer's work by their audiences and contemporaries, as well as to issues of nationality which is consequently influential on their work – albeit without either composer taking a strong nationalist slant but rather through the extra-musical inferences in their pieces.

North: Identity

The dilemma of being labelled Irish or British, without the consideration of Northern Irish, ignores the fact that through cultural and social experience, Northern Ireland is very different from both the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain.¹⁴ This is considered in O'Connell's reference to Seamus Heaney through his composition *North*. In relation to the artist from Northern Ireland commenting on its political situation in their art, opinion on Heaney notes that

there was a sense in which the writers in Northern Ireland were expected to respond to the conflict in their work: 'a simple-minded pressure also to speak up for their own side' (Donnelly, 1977: 60), and clearly this pressure was felt by Heaney who said that it would 'wrench the rhythms' of his writing procedures to 'start squaring up to contemporary events with more will than ways to deal with them' (O'Brien 2005, 21).

In saying 'more will than ways to deal with them', Heaney acknowledges that the situation in Northern Ireland affected everyone, but it is in not knowing how to deal with it that creates the problem of addressing it. This relates to the popular music at the time of the Troubles with The Undertones creating escapism for their audience rather than a way of addressing the difficulties at hand. (Indeed, other popular music tried to

¹⁴ Note that the United Kingdom consists of Great Britain (which is England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. The full name of the nation state is The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

address the situation but did not gain the following and popularity of *The Undertones*.) O'Connell's music could be seen to act in such a way, that without knowing how to deal with contemporary events, he immersed himself in music, following his dreams more intensely because it was perhaps easier than coping with what reality brought him.

The use of a non-generic title raises the question of to what O'Connell is referring. A venture down this path initially brings O'Connell's birthplace of Northern Ireland to mind. In an interview O'Connell was asked why he chose the title *North* and he mentioned Heaney's *North*; a collection of poems that was Heaney's first publication on leaving Northern Ireland.¹⁵ O'Connell then found himself in the same situation, with a commission from the BBC, the broadcasting company of the place he had just left. O'Connell mentioned the two-part structure of Heaney's collection but said that this parallel was a later realization and not a conscious choice at the time of composition. His aim was simply to borrow the title (O'Connell 2010). This might have been O'Connell's intention, but the use of such a title cannot escape certain connotations, especially as it attaches this work to his birthplace of Northern Ireland. O'Connell's literary study of Heaney's work alongside his manipulation of a musical structure similar to this collection of poems strongly suggests that this particular title is more than just a title.

O'Connell's essay entitled 'Representing Violence: Irony, The Symbolic Order and Seamus Heaney's *North*' is prefaced with a quote from Heaney:

The two halves of the book constitute two different types of utterance, each of which arose out of necessity to shape and give palpable linguistic form to two kinds of urgency – one symbolic, one explicit. I don't know whether it succeeded, but I am pleased that it appeased and hardened out into words some complex need in me (Heaney 1987, 71 quoted in O'Connell 1993, 1).

This quotation is of greater value than is initially apparent in relation to O'Connell and his own work. Indeed the initial division of the book into two relates to that of O'Connell's *North*, but the second sentence seems somewhat redundant in relation to an assessment of the poetry; it rather informs the reader of Heaney's reaction to his work. The 'some complex need' in him was expressed through writing this work, and perhaps with O'Connell's same birthplace and similar upbringing, O'Connell can identify with this in his own *North*. As O'Connell states in the essay, '[t]he poet is not only gazing but has become aware of the gaze' (O'Connell 1993, 6).

O'Connell's essay is generally of a philosophical nature, referring to epistemology, Foucault, and Hegel, as well as Lacan's theory of the symbolic. He focuses heavily upon the term 'representation' and the ability of language to effectively represent 'violence':

The question then remains: what is language doing in the realm of violence?
The inadequacy of language points to revenge as the only possible perpetuation

¹⁵ Heaney moved to the Republic of Ireland in 1972 and his collection of poems entitled *North* was published in 1975 by Faber and Faber.

of violence. This may be the very dynamic of revenge. [...] Violence, being linguistically irreducible, reduces us to tautology: the only language of violence is violence. (O'Connell 1993, 6)

A great deal of reflection is apparent from O'Connell's consideration of Heaney's work, making it a platform upon which he can voice such deliberations. Having read the context of O'Connell's upbringing in Northern Ireland, it is not surprising that such a topic grabs his attention. Further engagement with the statement above could be to assess the representation of violence in O'Connell's *North*, but as he has deemed this to be difficult to conclude from Heaney's work that has text, it would be quite tentative to approach his work with this objective as it is without text.¹⁶ O'Connell's cautionary distance to contemporary events is similar to that of Sibelius.

The two parts of Heaney's collection are not of an equal length, like O'Connell's two ten-minute sections, but a clear divide is present. Unlike O'Connell, Heaney uses the medium of words to address specific subject matters, and his views on them, allowing readers to ascertain a clear divide in the content of the two parts of his collection. According to Eugene O'Brien the first part is 'broadly mythic in theme and tone' and the other deals 'with issues of a more contemporary nature' (O'Brien 2005, 32). Heaney's 'Part I', as he calls it, consists of poems using his personal 'digging' and 'bogland' motifs, referring to his birthplace in 'the North' of Ireland in County Derry where he grew up experiencing farm and country life (O'Brien 2005, 31). In 'Part II', Heaney turns his attention to more contemporary times, particularly of when this work was published in 1975. As Heaney stated in an interview with Denis O'Driscoll, 'they come out of the "matter of the North" of Ireland' (O'Driscoll 2008, 179). By this he is referring to what is now commonly called the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. In 1979 Heaney made the point that his leaving of Northern Ireland in 1972 was viewed in some quarters with a 'sense of almost betrayal', adding that the political situation had generated 'a great energy and group loyalty' as well as a 'defensiveness about its own verities' (O'Brien 2005, 16). This displays the underlying conflict between Northern and Southern Ireland. It is not simply a change of address, but moving between these areas results in a change of country and was interpreted as a political statement by some.

Given O'Connell's familiarity with Heaney's *North* and the intention of the two sections of his *North* being contrasting in character, the correlation between his *North* and Heaney's is strengthened. Another link between Heaney and O'Connell is the commissioned piece for string quartet on the occasion of Heaney's seventieth birthday in 2009, entitled 'Where Should This Music Be?' In the programme to RTÉ's 'Heaney at 70' celebrations O'Connell described Heaney as 'a beacon especially for anyone who, like him, grew up in Derry', highlighting the importance of this affiliation to O'Connell (RTÉ, 2009). The composer might attribute no particular significance to the title, but once again one can argue that the decisive use of such a title rather than a more generic functional title would suggest otherwise, especially when one takes into account

¹⁶ Literary assessments of Heaney's *North* that O'Connell referred to for this essay include Longley 1979, Longley 1985, and Morrison 1982.

the biographical facts of O'Connell's relationship with this place and his close engagement with Heaney's work.

Heaney's influence on O'Connell's *North* thus goes beyond the title, and it might also be responsible for the structure of the work. These associations also evoke a further connection of O'Connell's *North* to his birthplace of Northern Ireland. Heaney's contrasting angles on the theme of north, however, together with O'Connell's reference to another north bring an alternative perspective to the piece. This alternative supports the idea of two 'norths' and so is in keeping with Heaney's presentation of the theme.

Similarly, in an essay by Seamus Deane (poet, novelist, and professor of Irish studies who is also from Derry), entitled 'The Artist and the Troubles', he opens with a discussion on the impact of a crisis on the artist: 'Artists can often be more troubled by the idea that they should be troubled by a crisis than they are by the crisis itself.' (Deane 1984, 42) The essay offers both general and specific references to the visual and literary artists of Ireland during the twentieth century, with some assessment on the development of 'A new Ireland or a new idea of Ireland' being 'created by artists and politicians, military leaders and poets' (Deane 1984, 42). His discussion of the artist in Northern Ireland, however, is more related to this article:

The Northern troubles have developed in a world in which the anti-imperialist ethos has weakened and been replaced by an anxiety to preserve established institutions and systems, precisely because they appeared to have reached a point of exhaustion which it was terrifying to contemplate. (Deane 1984, 43)

Deane's conclusion is that despite the artist of Northern Ireland not engaging with the same 'heroic commitments of the past, it is none the less a dedication to the idea that an [artist] has a function in society even though it may not be as consolatory as the society would like it to be' (Deane 1984, 49). Artists have perhaps not felt as willing or able to engage as directly with the Troubles, as for example their counterparts did during the formation of the 'new state' in the Republic, but in considering that even today, more than thirty years after Deane's essay was written, the peace in Northern Ireland is not stable, there is perhaps good reason for their reluctance.

The issue of identity for the artist in Northern Ireland is also raised in Deane's essay: 'Ulster's peculiar fate - to be neither Irish nor British while also being both - gave to its regional art a characteristic blend of stridency and indecision which ominously prefigured the regional politics of later decades.' (Deane 1984, 44-45) His reference to Ulster, as an alternative to Irish or British, resonates with O'Connell's similar separation, as does the idea of this region's art being different.

Conclusion

The deliberations of the musical analysis, in conjunction with the cultural issues and their significance, address influences upon a Northern-Irish-born composer and his work *North*. The manipulation of the motif from Sibelius's *Symphony No. 4* and the manner in which it was processed highlight the significance of this composer on the young O'Connell's developing compositional style. Furthermore, the political and

geographical circumstances in these countries at the time of both pieces' composition strengthen their parallels. Finally, the title brings inferences to O'Connell's birthplace as well as to the European north with which he associates.

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THE SÁMI ART MUSEUM: THERE IS NO – OR IS THERE?

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Abstract

This article aims to answer two questions. The first is: What is a Sámi art museum? The second question considers whether there is no Sámi art museum, as assumed by the Nordnorsk kunstmuseum (NNKM) as the title of a museum performance and exhibition in 2017.

To answer the first question, it is necessary to tell the long story of the Sámi cultural-historical museum in Karasjok, Samiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (SVD). This museum was inaugurated in 1972 as an act of resistance against the increasing assimilation politics towards the Sámi population in the post-war period. The building that was erected became a cultural and political centre, and a living cultural institution that housed the increasing Sámi ethno-political movement and its energy. Furthermore, as I will argue, the activity that took place at the site became a part of Sámi cultural heritage.

The museum has also collected art since 1972 – a collection that today comprises 1400 artworks. Since the 1980s, various plans have been made for a Sámi art museum in a separate building, somehow connected to SVD, however, none of these plans have yet been realised. The article discusses the different reasons for this, and points to the connotations embedded in the SVD building as a cultural and political centre as one of the contributing factors.

To answer the question of whether there is no Sámi art museum, a critical reading of the Nordnorsk kunstmuseum's 2017 museum performance *There Is No* is necessary. My answer to the question is that NNKM, unfortunately, fell into several traps in their attempt to focus on the fact that there is no physical building. One such trap, that is very common in Western museums displaying indigenous art, is their use of traditional art-historical models as interpretive lenses when displaying indigenous art.

A different concept of what an art museum could be today, as a place where things happen, where we could meet counter narratives, or Sámi art and culture could be presented as being part of the present as well as the past and future, would have been closer to a Sámi art museum. I offer this conclusion both through the deeper understanding of Sámi cultural and ethno-political movements as offered in the story of SVD, and through my reading of the theories of the indigenous American scholar John Paul Rangel. While there may indeed be no physical building claiming to be a Sámi art museum, it does in fact exist through the Sámi concept of árbevierru.

Keywords: *Sámi art; Sámi art museum; There Is No; Árbevierru; The Sámi Museum (SVD); The indigenous and the contemporary*

Introduction

In February 2017, the Nordnorsk kunstmuseum (NNKM, The North Norwegian Art Museum) in Tromsø, put on an exhibition performance entitled *There Is No*, transforming the art museum into a potential Sámi Dáiddamusea, a Sámi art museum

(Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum 2017a). On display were selected works from the Sámi art repository (a collection of 1400 artworks managed by RiddoDuottarMuseat (RDM) in Karasjok), as well as a few works belonging to the collection at NNKM. The exhibition turned out to be a great success for NNKM, attracting many visitors and receiving several prizes including Museum of the Year in Norway. However, the great success leaves some questions in its wake. One question is: What is a Sámi art museum? Another question relates to the allegation ‘there is no’. Is there no?

One reason for these critical questions is that whenever there is an asymmetric relationship between those with power and those without, whether racial, based on gender, age, or geography, those in power tend to assume that their standards are the only valid standards. If you do not have the same words, body parts, or institutions as those in power, this is too often characterized as a condition of lack. In this case, the assumption was that there was a lack of a Sámi art museum, since the title stated ‘there is no’. This allegation was formulated by NNKM as the representative of the majority, Norwegian establishment about an indigenous art collection managed by a minority. The allegation is correct in so far as there is no physical museum building with the purpose of displaying the collection of Sámi art. I will, however, argue that this is a misconception of how a Sámi art museum as a concept exists today, drawing upon ideas and critical theories including those of the indigenous American scholar John Paul Rangel. He claims that Western museums displaying indigenous art often fall into traps when using their art-historical models as interpretive lenses. According to him, these lenses work to sublimate indigenous peoples and cultures into an imagined or romanticized past, creating an absence of authentic indigenous representations in the present (Rangel 2012, 32). I will return to how NNKM falls into traps with *There Is No* later in the text.

To elaborate the question of what a Sámi art museum is and how it could be understood, it is necessary to tell a long story, rather than to write about art works. According to Sámi literary scholar Harald Gaski, storytelling, rather than physical legacies, is of great importance in the construction of Sámi history and cultural heritage (Gaski 1997, 11). The late Sámi artist Nils Aslak Valkeapää also indicated the importance of immaterial, inner codes, claiming that art is a part of everyday life for the Sámi people, a part of their philosophy, connected to and in connection with nature, without leaving traces (Valkeapää 1979, 63).

To situate my text as a story, I will apply the Sámi concept *árbevierru*. The Sámi scholar Jelena Porsanger explains this concept as containing two interrelated parts: *vierru*, meaning mode or custom, and *árbi*, meaning heritage or inheritance. The two parts have a reciprocal relationship, which means that neither part of this dual entity is ‘first’ or ‘second’. In turn, this can be connected to indigenous conceptions of time as cyclical, a history without linearity, beginning, or end (Porsanger 2011, 240). To exemplify this, she mentions a specific Maori conception of time based on the idea that ‘the past is never behind but is considered as always in front of the present.’ (Porsanger 2011, 239 quoting Henare 2001, 218). In this conception, I imagine that the history of a Sámi art museum is ahead of us, as something yet to be experienced in an imagined future, while a Sámi art museum might also exist in both the past and the present. As the story will tell, a Sámi art museum is closely connected to and embedded in the story of the Sámi cultural historical museum in Karasjok.

Samiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De samiske samlinger/The Sámi Museum (SVD)¹

Like many other museums and art collections, The Sámi Museum started as a number of private collections. A museum association was created in 1939 with the aim of establishing a Sámi museum in Karasjok. Objects as well as funding were collected among individuals (Johnsen 2014, 4). Everything that was collected as well as the protocols were lost during WW2, as the Nazi scorched-earth retreat destroyed housing and infrastructure throughout Finnmark. The population was forced to evacuate further south. After the war, the Norwegian Labour government, working to rebuild the country as a new welfare state, did not allow the Sámi population to resume some of their old ways or re-inhabit some of their former territory. Furthermore, the government laid down strict, discriminatory laws around education and assimilation that might have succeeded in destroying the Sámi languages and culture entirely if it had not been for local resistance against such politics (see Bjørklund 2000).



Samiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De samiske samlinger/The Sámi Museum (SVD) in Karasjok

Photo: Hanna Horsberg Hansen

The museum association in Karasjok was one example of this resistance. Its members continued their work after the war, realising that the increased assimilation politics inflicted upon the Sámi population in the post-war period would cause a gradual disappearance of traditional Sámi culture (Johnsen 2014, 6). Many plans for the museum were presented to different authorities. In 1968, the municipality of Karasjok

¹ My sources for the history of SVD are partly written sources such as annual reports, articles, and book sections. In addition, I have had personal communications with people who have played different roles in the history of SVD: Anne May Olli, Berit Åse Johnsen, Vigdis Stordahl, Gry Fors, Irene Snarby, Anders Henriksen, Magne Svineng, Hjalmar Strømeng, Knut Eirik Dahl, and Harald Gaski.

granted permission for a property. Four years later, in 1972, the building was completed and given the name Samiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De samiske samlinger/The Sámi Museum (SVD). The architects were Magda Eide Jessen and Vidar Corn Jessen. In their brief presentation for an architectural review, they claimed that both the structure and the surface materials were based on the specific site's physical characteristics: pinewood and concrete made from sand as a 'native soil argument' (Haugdal 2018, 810). They collaborated with the Sámi artist Iver Jåks, who designed permanent decorations inside and outside the modernist-style building (Haugdal 2010). Jåks's use of materials and iconography was deeply rooted in Sámi mythology, while his style, as well as the designs of the interior and furniture, were contemporary and modernist.

The first years

In 1972, SVD was the first building built with the purpose of housing a Sámi cultural institution. At the time of its inauguration, there was no permanent museum exhibition, but the museum both acquired art and hosted art exhibitions.² Alf Isak Keskitalo, a pioneering Sámi philosopher, was employed as museum leader. Jon Ole Andersen, a pioneering *duojár* (practitioner of traditional Sámi aesthetic practice, *duodji*), worked alongside Keskitalo as museum technician. He would later play a pivotal role in the construction of a permanent museum design together with Jåks. Anne Marie Skoglund had a position responsible for housekeeping (Sará 2014, 24).

This was at the time when the ethno-political movement among Sámi people as well as among indigenous people internationally was becoming stronger, and resistance to the Norwegian assimilation politics was increasing (Bjørklund 2000, 26). The SVD building came to play an important role as a physical site for this evolving resistance movement (Johnsen 2014,18). As there was no permanent museum exhibition during the building's first ten years, the spaces were used for other purposes. The Norwegian broadcasting company's Sámi department (NRK Sámi Radio), Karasjok's association for reindeer herders, and the local branch of The Norwegian Sámi association rented space for their offices and meetings in the building. Tromsø Museum had a field station there, where scholars could stay during field trips to the area. There was a collection of books available, long before a Sámi library existed. From the beginning, the museum was also an important institution for Sámi scholars. During my reading of annual reports, as well as other documents, the name of current scholars appeared frequently; Vigdis Stordahl, Gunvor Guttorm, Hartvig Birkely, and Asta Balto, to mention just a few. They all worked in the institution in different roles, for example as museum guides when at high school, and later as scholars, directors, or board members.

In the first three months of 1973, sixty-three different events took place in the building. Occasionally, the activity exceeded the building's space capacity, as well as its service and staff resources. Nevertheless, the impression was, according to Keskitalo's annual report, that this activity was of great importance to the museum's function in society, hence there was no need to decrease the level of activity (Keskitalo 1973).

² The first proper registrations of art at SVD did not begin until 1978, but art had been collected since 1972 according to the annual reports (Teigmo 1975). Since 1978, there have been two collections at SVD; a cultural-historical collection and an art collection.

A living cultural institution

In 1975, Mari Teigmo³ was appointed as director after Keskitalo resigned. She continued to use the space in much the same way, claiming that the functions of the building extended far beyond its original purpose as exhibition space for the cultural-historical collection. Due to lack of funding, there was still no permanent exhibition, but the limited budgets allowed acquisitions and exhibitions of art, which at the time were a priority. Artworks by Ellen Kitok Andersen, Iver Jåks, Klemet A. Veimæl, and Nils Turi were acquired. The building also hosted the annual travelling exhibition of north Norwegian art (Nordnorsken) in 1974, as well as a temporary exhibition by the Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen.

Teigmo wanted to further extend the political and cultural activities in the building and made plans for cultural history classes to take place in order to educate Sámi people in the history of their own culture, arguing that this topic had never been taught at school (Teigmo 1975). She also emphasized the need for the museum to be able to play an internal role as a Sámi cultural institution as well as to mediate information about Sámi issues externally to the non-Sámi population (Teigmo 1977). Teigmo also underlined the need for the museum to be an active part of the contemporaneity and the community in Karasjok; far from urban centres, but at the core of Sápmi (the Sámi area) (Teigmo 1976, 81).

The activity and energy of the people who worked in or visited the building during these first years is, as I will argue, important for what later happened to the planned art museum. At that time, the SVD building was a site where people went to be educated in their own culture, to celebrate, to attend meetings, to work, and to discuss politics. According to the first president of Sámediggi (The Sámi Parliament), Ole Henrik Magga, this was the first location where Sámi people did not need to ‘bow and scrape’, and it became extremely important in furthering Sámi rights (Snarby 2017, 122). The museum building was alive, and all those who lived through this time share a collective memory of how the Sámi politics of the day changed the Sámi community thanks to the activities that took place there (Sará 2014, 31). Formally, there was a director, but the museum was inherently community-based. It was an early example of how museums in indigenous societies replaced a focus on objects with a focus on social subjects and concerns (Harrison 2005, 43).

Art was acquired every year, and was considered very important for the Sámi population; hence, there was a need for a permanent place to house and display the growing art collection. Otherwise, the director feared that external buyers would acquire the art and make it inaccessible to the Sámi people themselves (Teigmo 1978). This attitude formulated by the museum director must be read in the context of the development of Sámi organizations that took place at the time. The Sámi Artists’ Union/Sámi Dáiddačhepiid Searvi (SDS) was established in 1979, as well as the Sámi Authors’ Union/Sámi Girječálliid Searvi (SGS). The ethno-political movement considered the Sámi people as independent and with the same rights to nation- and organization-building as other nations. To establish one’s own cultural institutions, and to include the local community rather than external experts in the process, was a way for Sámi people to claim the right to be active subjects during the revitalization of the Sámi culture that was going on (Teigmo 1976, 80).

³ She later became known as Mari Teigmo Eira

Parallel in time to the institutionalization of the Sámi museum, a political movement evolved to protest against a gigantic hydroelectric plant project on the Kautokeino-Alta river. The demonstrations lasted throughout the 1970s until 1981. Together with the cultural revitalization that took place, the protests led to a change in the Norwegian constitution, and the passing of the Sámi act that secured Sámi people the right to maintain and practise their own cultural traditions and language (Government.no). Finally, in 1989, Sámediggi was established. The fight against the gigantic dam project was lost, but the protests led to a significant change in the relationship between the majority and the indigenous people (Stordahl 1996, 92).

A Sámi way of exhibiting

In 1982, the permanent cultural-historical exhibition was finally completed. The idea behind the exhibition was to promote a Sámi way of exhibiting. What this Sámi way might be was a recurring question.

The discussions about ‘a Sámi way’ also touched upon the relation between tradition and modernity in Sámi art and culture. One result was that objects classified as *duodji* were on display in a separate section of the cultural-historical exhibition, while the growing art collection, which was not considered as *duodji*, was archived in the basement. This perception of the different status of traditional *duodji* and modernist art has been a frequently debated topic and object for negotiation in the construction of Sámi heritage. According to the Sámi social anthropologist Vigdis Stordahl, a dichotomy between tradition and modernity was typical of the first years of the Sámi ethno-political movement in the 1970s (Stordahl 1996, 97).

One consequence of this construction was that the ‘traditional’ art, labelled *duodji*, was considered authentic Sámi and connected to a specific past. The modernist art, *dáidda*, was considered to be non-Sámi, hence more in line with Western or Nordic art. This was indeed a construction borrowed from Western academic discourses and understandings of the privileged West as developer of modernity as well as modernist and contemporary art (Phillips 1994, 39, Clifford 1988, 198). To exhibit in a Sámi way seems in this context to lead to an exclusion of what was not considered as ‘traditional’.

During the 1980s, ideas about the art collection and its purpose changed. The annual report from 1984 states that the art collection, if exhibited, would enable SVD to show the development and diversity of Sámi art and crafts. These ideas opened up a new understanding of Sámi art that exceeded the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, instead emphasizing the connections between tradition and modernity as part of the creation of development and diversity in contemporary Sámi art. The Canadian curator and art historian Diana Nemiroff writes about a parallel change in perspective in North America. Nemiroff explains that while reading texts from the 1980s by indigenous artists such as Robert Houle and Jimmie Durham, she realised that for them, the most fundamental was reclaiming change and diversity as integral aspects of indigenous traditions carried into the present (Nemiroff 1996, 429).

As a continuation of the discussions about a Sámi way, there was a discussion about how a Sámi museum differed from other museums. These discussions about specific ‘Sáminess’ evolved in many areas within Sámi societies at the time. In the aftermath of the Alta struggle, the focus was more inward and self-reflective, rather than in opposition to the majority society (Stordahl 1996, 101). The conclusion of the discussion was that Sámi museums are cultural institutions where Sámi languages,

values, and social conventions are applied (Eira 1988). The focus was not on objects as heritage constructors, but rather upon more immaterial aspects as dynamic processes and ongoing interactions between people.

The first plans for a Sámi National Gallery

The Sámi Artists' Union (SDS) was well established by the end of the 1980s, and they put pressure upon SVD to work towards the establishment of a Sámi art museum. Though some works from the art collection participated in travelling exhibitions, most works were inaccessible and stored in the basement of SVD. Pressure also came from the Sámi association in Karasjok, who addressed Arts Council Norway about the case. The local Sámi association established a group consisting of Arne Nystad, Iver Jáks, and Mari Teigmo Eira to develop a pilot project for a Sámi art gallery, or as they put it in brackets, a national gallery (Nystad 1990). The group collaborated with Blå Strek architects, based in Tromsø, represented by Knut Eirik Dahl and Nils Mjaaland, who were already involved in plans for a sculpture park and an indigenous art academy in Karasjok together with the Sámi artist Aage Gaup and the medical doctor Knut Johnsen.

In a letter to Arts Council Norway, the group working for a Sámi national gallery described the conceptual frame for the museum/gallery as a site that should display a Sámi approach to landscape. It was to be a site where, they claimed, the encounter between history and new art could have the potential to create confrontation and thereby become a foundation for new understandings and insights. They argued that a close relation to and experience of nature inside the gallery should play a decisive role. The interior should provide the visitor with a flow of experiences where contrasts between exterior and interior would become an additional experience. They considered buildings to be of less importance than the surrounding landscape (Nystad 1990). A sketch of the planned building shows a low, star-shaped house, connected to the existing SVD building.

The plan was never realised, but provides a glimpse of how ideas around a Sámi art museum exceeded the constraints that traditional art museums were subject to at that time. The idea was not to make a copy of the Western art-historical concept of a linear history explained by a canon, but rather a postmodern approach blurring the difference between art and life, text and context, culture and nature. The proposed building itself was to be strongly connected to the landscape and the site, rather than to the Western concept of art museums that situates these in the same architectural class as temples, churches, shrines, or certain kinds of palaces: buildings constructed so as to dominate or simply neglect the landscape (Duncan 1978, 28). The ideas expressed from the group about the function of an art museum or gallery also differ from the white-cube context of modernist art galleries. The plans exaggerate the importance of contact between spectator, art, and context, while the white cube, according to Brian O'Doherty, aims at the opposite: the main purpose of the white-cube context is to keep the outside world outside and separated from the inside where art is on display (O'Doherty 1986, 15).

Later in the 1990s, the Boym committee was established to make plans for a future Sámi art museum. The committee concluded that it should be built physically connected to the existing SVD building. The reason for this was, according to the committee, the

important relation between art and tradition. Thus, the art-historical and cultural-historical collections could mutually benefit from and enrich each other (Boym 1995, 42). The committee also proposed to appoint an art professional to the museum, and in 1998, Morten Johan Svendsen was employed for a limited time. One of his tasks was to be a spokesman for Sámi art as a professional field (Boym 1995, 35).

Sámediggi established another local committee, the Guttorm committee, in 1997. They agreed with the Boym committee's proposals regarding the museum's purpose, and additionally proposed that the art museum should be part of the cultural-historical museum and thus create a Sámi national museum of art and cultural history (Guttormkomiteen 1997). Sámediggi accepted these proposals.

In 2002, Sámediggi took over the responsibility for Sámi museums. SVD was organized into departments: art; cultural history; and conservation. At the same time, a permanent position for an art professional was established. The first to be employed was art historian Irene Snarby. This was of great importance to the art collection. Exhibitions based on the art collection were curated and displayed both at SVD and as touring exhibitions. Connections were developed both internationally, as part of the rising global indigenous art world, as well as with local and regional collaborators. Diversity and dynamics in Sámi art became leading ideas, such as in connection with the travelling exhibition *Gierdu* that was curated and produced in cooperation with the organization SKINN⁴ (Snarby and Vikjord 2009, 7).



Exterior of the exhibition area of SVD. In the window, a part of the Sámi artist Aslaug Juliussen's work *Oktavuođat* (Connections) from 2004 is visible. The work belongs to RDM.

Photo: Hanna Horsberg Hansen

⁴ Se Kunst i Nord Norge (See art in northern Norway)

In 2002, Sámediggi gave a grant to SVD to start planning a new building for an art museum physically connected to the SVD building. The plan was completed in 2007 (Nordvest Samisk 2007, 4). At the same time, and on a larger scale, a Norwegian museum reform took place. This reform turned out to have a great impact on the planning of the art museum.



Doorhandle at the entrance of SVD in brass, designed by Iver Jåks
Photo: Hanna Horsberg Hansen

The rise and fall of plans

For a while, SVD functioned as a Sámi national museum in Norway. This changed, however, in 2002, when Sámediggi took over the responsibility for all Sámi museums, and the aforementioned Norwegian museum reform took place. One consequence of this was that it was decided that no single museum should have the position of a Sámi national museum. Thus in 2006, a new organization was established, Nordvestsamisk museumssiida, later named RiddoDuottarMuseat (RDM). This organization consisted of SVD, Porsanger Museum, Kautokeino bygdetun (a local museum in Kautokeino), and Kokelv sjøsamiske museum (a sea-Sámi museum in the coastal municipality of Kvalsund) (Johnsen 2011, 21).

When RDM was established in 2006, an agreement concerning the relation between SVD and RDM was signed. RDM was given the responsibility to conduct all museum activities, to maintain the buildings, to use them, and to take over responsibility for the staff.⁵ The ownership to the building, as well as the cultural-historical collections,

⁵ Driftsavtale mellom Stiftelsen Nordvestsamisk museumssiida og Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De Samiske samlinger (agreement between the board of Nordvestsamisk museumssiida and Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat),

remained with SVD and was to be managed by a foundation represented by a board elected by the museum association. SVD's art department, which had managed the art collection, became an art repository – not as part of SVD, but as part of RDM.

The planning of the art museum continued until 2009, and then Sámediggi asked Statsbygg, the Norwegian government's key advisor in construction and property affairs as well as its building commissioner, to conduct preparations for new premises for the art collection in connection to the existing museum building. In the assignment, Statsbygg was asked to conduct the planning in close collaboration with RDM as well as the owners of the museum building – SVD – as agreed in 2006. Statsbygg delivered their report and building programme in December 2010. The report states that the programming was conducted in collaboration with RDM employees in 2010. The report was partly based upon previous plans from 2007, made by SVD/RDM, stating that the art museum would make Sámi heritage visible to the public as well as to future generations. In addition, the report says that the art museum would operate in close connection with the Sámi community, and be available, open, and open minded in an ongoing dialogue with them. The report also stated that the museum should demonstrate the diversity and the best in Sámi and other indigenous art in a flexible and expressive manner (Statsbygg 2010, 12).

In the introduction to the report, Statsbygg stated that the existing SVD building would need renovation in order to be physically connected to the planned new building (Statsbygg 2010, 12). To carry out these renovations, Statsbygg would need to acquire the building. Sámediggi then sent a letter to the board of SVD, asking them whether they could accept such a solution (Svineng 2012).

The board replied that due to lack of funding from Sámediggi to work on further ownership models for the building, they refused to give an answer.⁶ Instead, an answer was sent from the owners of the building, the museum foundation's board, terminating the 2006 agreement between SVD and RDM.⁷ Sámediggi then sent a quick reply to the SVD foundation to inform them that previous plans for a shared location for SVD and any future art museum would be set aside. This meant in practice that Sámediggi preferred to discuss other solutions with the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Statsbygg than to include the premises of SVD in further plans for a Sámi art museum.⁸ This new turn was not rooted in any new political decision, and it was in fact never realised.

signed by chair Liv Østmo, Nordvestsamisk museumssiida, and chair Ragnhild L. Nystad, Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De Samiske samlinger in Karasjok, 20th June 2007. Nordvestsamisk museumssiida was the first name of the new museum structure. The name was later changed to RiddoDuottarMuseat, which is the name I use here in order to avoid confusion.

⁶ Letter from chair of the board at SVD The Sámi Museum, Thoralf Henriksen, to Sámediggi – Sametinget, att. Vibeke Larsen. Karasjok, 27th August 2012.

⁷ Letter from Stiftelsen De Samiske Samlinger/Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat (The SVD foundation) to RiddoDuottarMuseat att. Chair Kåre Olli. Oppsigelse av driftsavtalen (Termination of management agreement), dated 27th August 2012.

⁸ Letter to Stiftelsen De Samiske Samlinger/Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat (The SVD foundation) from Vibeke Larsen, rådsmedlem (member of advisory board) Sámediggi/Sametinget, 29th August 2012. 11/5253-8.

It seems that the SVD foundation was a scapegoat in this case. The fact was that neither Statsbygg nor Sámediggi had included them in the process, and no attempts were made to negotiate with them. The assignment from Sámediggi to Statsbygg was clear: to conduct the planning in cooperation with both the owners of the building (the SVD foundation) and RDM. Statsbygg, however, conducted their work in close cooperation with the staff at RDM, but did not include SVD.

The elders as gate watchers

The only official supporter of the rejection was the local history and museum association (NRK Sápmi 2013). There were probably many reasons for the rejection of the proposal to hand over the building to Statsbygg, but certainly all the memories connected to the building played a role: the energy; the political discussions; the identity building that took place there; the importance of the building as a cultural institution where Sámi language, values, and social conventions were applied. The colonial power, represented by Statsbygg, was perhaps not welcome as the owner of this heritage without any negotiations, understanding, or recognition of the symbolic significance of the building. All the personal communications I have had with people involved in the process confirm this impression.

From being the first, and for a long time the most important site of Sámi resistance, revitalization, identity building, and politics, SVD and its owners had over the course of a few years experienced what they regarded as a robbery of status: not only as the national Sámi museum, but also as a competent and professional museum (compared to the other museums in RDM), and as the owners of the art collection (now a Sámi art repository). They had no representation on the RDM board, and as such little influence on the decisions it made. To be ignored as the owners of this significant building was out of the question. They would rather use it for their own purposes (NRK Sápmi 2013).

Following my research into this story, I would claim that the SVD foundation's decision can be understood as an example of how the elders in Sámi communities – as in other indigenous communities – manage and protect *árbevierru* (See Gaski 2019). As stated earlier, *árbevierru* is not just about the past, but connects past, present, and future time. In this case, the SVD foundation, acting as 'elders', sought to preserve the collective memory embedded in the building. This memory includes the building's early years, and the political significance of the activities that took place there. As the SVD building itself was based on the physical characteristics of the specific site, pinewood and concrete made from sand as a 'native soil argument', forty years of ethno-political struggle was also immaterially embedded there. It had in fact become part of Sámi cultural heritage, and it demonstrates how indigenous connections to place also happen in contemporary urban settings, as well as in rural areas (Greenop 2018, 547). In this case, the SVD foundation took the responsibility to protect this heritage for the future.

A museum performance in Tromsø

The story of SVD, the art collection, and the plans for a Sámi art museum did not come across at NNKM's exhibition *There Is No*, which instead constructed a very different narrative.

In an introductory text, mounted on the wall by the entrance, the curators presented the twofold project: 'To shed light upon the fact that there is No, and to give visitors to Sámi Dáiddamusea an introduction to the wide diversity of Sámi art, with the materials, formats and media employed matched by the range of motifs and concepts communicated.'

The introduction then highlighted a few well-known Sámi artists in chronological order: 'from pioneers like John Savio (1902-1938) and Iver Jåks (1932-2007), through to Synnøve Persen (b. 1950), Britta Marakatt-Labba (b. 1951), and other members of the Máze Group, and onwards to today's generation such as Joar Nango (b. 1979) and Hanne Grieg Hermansen (b. 1984)', and ended with the following claim: '*There Is No* offers up a series of dynamic and vibrant manifestations of cultural expression that strategically resist, extend, and challenge established ways of thinking about mainstream art history' (Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum 2017b).

I find these statements problematic. In fact, the diversity of Sámi art is well demonstrated and documented in previous exhibitions, for example *Gierdu*, that was curated by SVD/RDM together with SKINN in 2009. Diversity has also been an important feature in all the ideas and discussions around a Sámi art museum since the 1980s. Therefore, how can you challenge established ways of thinking by confirming what is already said and done? The listing of 'central figures within Sámi art' appears to be an attempt to construct a canon of Sámi artists. Is this the way to 'challenge established ways of thinking in mainstream history'?

NNKM's introduction also touches upon the idea that 'there is no word for art in my language'. This has been an important concept in North American indigenous discourses since the 1980s, including as a way to reject the Western concept of art (Mithlo 2012, 116). I have, however, not found any reference in Sámi discourses to this means of understanding, though the description of a lack of a Sámi word for art is frequently repeated as a reason for the construction of the word *dáidda*. Rather, what I have found is an embracement of and the application of the concept of 'art'. As I demonstrated earlier, this embracement was formulated by Valkeapää who claimed that art is part of everyday life, a part of Sámi philosophy, connected to and in connection with nature, without leaving any trace (Valkeapää 1979, 63). The phrase 'there is no word for art in my language' is not only a description of a lack, it also lays claim to the ownership of language, 'my language'. Today such an understanding of art is frequently questioned in favour of a rejection of existing categories and a construction and articulation of counter-narratives drawn from indigenous traditions and philosophies (Mithlo 2012, 123). NNKM's appropriation of the concept thus achieved the opposite of what it (presumably) intended: rather than validating indigenous understandings, it instead pandered to Western assumptions of art ownership and the status of museums.

In the exhibition at NNKM, all objects identifiable as *duodji* were placed in one room, except for the knives on display in a glass-covered display case in the ‘Identity and portraiture’ section. Most of the *duodji* objects were rather small. They were all placed inside a freestanding wooden frame in the middle of the room. Some were displayed on a small platform on top of vertical metal poles of different heights, and others were suspended from the top of the frame. There was a rope surrounding the frame to prevent spectators from touching or coming close to the objects. The display labels for each object were mounted on the wall some distance away from the objects themselves, which made it difficult for visitors to find the connection between object and label.

Coffee bags, boxes, silver necklaces, and small bags were displayed side by side without any explanations or opportunity for spectators to relate the objects to each other or perceive them as independent works of art. Instead, they floated in the air or upon tiny poles as if in a timeless frame at a distance from us. Fifteen *duojarát* participated with works, but none of them were included in the ‘canon’ presented in the introductory text. The fact that each little piece of *duodji* carries a story about the *duojarát*’s origin or family connection was ignored. Nor was there any information about the unique story that unfolds in each piece through carved ornamentation, the patterns of the woven bands, the different techniques, and how they are conducted (Fors 2017, 13). Why ignore this?

‘Portraiture and identity’ was another topic. The accompanying text explained it thus: ‘A common feature of many of the works in this exhibition is the conversations they initiate between the past and the present, blurring boundaries of history to address themes of identity politics, cultural belonging, and self-determination.’ Some of the artworks can certainly be analysed in this way, but the museum’s description is nevertheless stereotypical. This is precisely what the mainstream, Western art world expects indigenous artists to be concerned about in their art production.

One example is Arnold Johansen’s folded photographs in the ‘Identity and portraiture’ section. His images could be read as dealing with identity, as they merge two portraiture photos into one. However, I find this reading superficial. Some of these photos, which are part of a larger series, merge two different people. Others merge one person who is differently dressed in the two images. The *en face* portraits are reminiscent of and connected to former ethnographic portraiture – like the photographs taken of Sámi people in the 19th century by Roland Bonaparte. In its turn, this connection evokes ideas about identity as something essential and reflected in physiognomy. In Johansen’s photographs, two different identities are interconnected and indeed inseparable. What you see depends upon your position or perspective as spectator. In my view, the photographs play with the spectator’s expectations about identity through the reference to early ethnographic descriptions. The reason why ‘portraiture and identity’ is chosen as a specific topic in the exhibition seems to be a curatorial construction. To my knowledge, this topic is seldom mentioned by Sámi artists, and according to my research was hardly raised either during the discussions about a future Sámi art museum or in previous exhibitions based upon the collection.

The third topic was ‘Sámi Artist Group (Máze Group)’. This was an artist group that was established in 1978 and existed until 1983 and was of great importance for the

ethno-political struggles as well as in organization building among Sámi artists (Hansen 2014b, 97). The text that presented the group claimed that ‘eight young artists united by a common interest in redefining the terms of Sámi identity established the Sámi Artist Group in the town of Máze’. This misconception about their motivation and desires may have a connection to the exhibition’s misguided notion of ‘portraiture and identity’. I have conducted extensive research on the Sámi Artist Group, but this motivation never came to light (Hansen 2014b). In fact, they were recently graduated artists, proud of being Sámi, and in need of a place to work. They wanted to work together in an artist group, just like other artists with a political agenda at the time (Hansen 2014b, 89). What they did as artists, how they performed their Sámi identity and took part in the construction of new Sámi identities at the time, was an effect of the group, but this was never their motivation or *raison d’être*. The group was more engaged in broader political struggles such as the Alta conflict, more concerned about institution- and nation-building in Sápmi, than in their own, individual identity struggles.

The text also claims that when the Sámi museum in Karasjok acquired one work from each of the artists that participated in a touring exhibition staged by the group, ‘this marked the start of a collection for a future museum that would grow to become Sámi Dáiddamusea almost forty years on’. This is simply incorrect, as we have seen. The collection of art started at the inauguration of the museum building in 1972.

The third topic was ‘Iver Jåks’, described as ‘a trailblazer in the history of Sámi art’. He was, however, also very important as a mediator between Sámi and Norwegian institutions in the 1960s and 70s, as a constructor and designer at SVD and at Tromsø Museum for the permanent exhibition on Sámi culture, as well as a developer of *duodji*. In 1998, he had a solo exhibition at Museum of Contemporary Art in Oslo. Obviously, he was important, but why should NNKM canonize him within the history of Sámi art as a pioneer? Why not rather consider previous attempts at canonization, such as Sámediggi’s presentation of their art in the building published in connection to the 25th anniversary? This canon is listed as Per Hætta, Lars Dunfjeld, Iver Jåks, and Jon Ole Andersen (Isaksen 2014). There is also a canon from 1940, listing Johan Turi, Nils Nilsson Skum, and John Savio (Fett 1940), and another from the 1970s: Johan Turi, Nils Nilsson Skum, John Savio, Jon Pålsson Fanki, Per Hætta, Iver Jåks, Esajas Poggats, and Lars Pirak (Manker 1971). It would surely have been better to leave out old-fashioned, Western canon-building in art history, since it is unlikely to be the best method for telling the histories of Sámi art.

Falling into traps

Although this was not the intention, NNKM fell into several traps. Rather than a potential Sámi art museum, *There Is No* was an example of how an exhibition of real, authentic, indigenous art, as something different from contemporary or modernist art, fictionalizes a fissure in cultural production instead of allowing for a more nuanced representation of a living, continuous, thriving culture, as underlined in all previous visions of a Sámi art museum. According to Rangel, referring to the North American discourse, this dichotomous taxonomy of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ utilized in

interpreting indigenous art results in a reductive privileging of the non-indigenous voice and its presentation as the authority that decides what constitutes the field.

Rangel claims that the indigenous museum, on the other hand, is tasked with the responsibility of casting off these reductive and constrictive binary models and recontextualizing what indigenous art is and means within an indigenous context (Rangel 2012, 32). In my view, this should also be the case with a Sámi art museum. The plans and ideas that have evolved over the decades emphasize openness and dialogue with the surrounding community. As far as I can see, *There Is No* applied none of these ideas, but rather the traditions from Western art history and museum practice, analysed through interpretive lenses coming from that same tradition.

My conclusion is that *There Is No* failed at its attempt to be a potential Sámi art museum. The director of RDM, Anne May Olli, who was the main partner for NNKM, made a speech at a seminar in connection with the museum performance. In the speech, she declared how happy she was for all the attention given to the fact that there is no Sámi art museum. She added to this a reservation about the exhibition as a potential Sámi art museum because NNKM and its curators probably used a different approach from those that a Sámi institution and curator would have used.¹⁰ I think she is right, and RDM demonstrated a very different curatorial and conceptual approach in a small-scale exhibition at Sámediggi in 2019. RDM was invited to present works from the art collection in a small glass display case in the hallway of the Sámediggi building. Rather than bringing in Western ideas of art display, they instead used the opportunity to make a statement about the still unresolved situation regarding a Sámi art museum. Their choice was to display only the rear side of two paintings by Nils Nilsson Skum, a pioneering Sámi artist. This way of protest could perhaps be perceived as an iconoclastic act, refusing to show the art. Another interpretation could be to understand this act as a demonstration of the fact that the artworks in the collection are inaccessible. However, a third possibility could be to interpret this act as a specific Sámi way of protesting, in order to make an inversion or a silent, paradoxical protest, saying one thing by saying something else. Perhaps this explains Olli's reservations concerning *There Is No* as a potential Sámi art museum, and perhaps the curatorial and conceptual decision made by RDM in the small-scale exhibition can give us an idea of what this difference might be, pointing to 'a Sámi way of exhibiting'.

Despite the failure as a potential Sámi art museum, the NNKM performance perhaps demonstrated the urgent need for a place for the Sámi art collection, and succeeded in its aim to refocus attention on this issue. In 2018, after further and more inclusive negotiations, the SVD foundation agreed to hand over the SVD building to Statsbygg. The planning of a Sámi art museum in connection to the SVD building was resumed in 2019.

Is there no?

Looking into plans and ideas for a Sámi art museum, as well as to the example of RDM's display of Nils Nilssons Skum's paintings at Sámediggi, I am convinced that it

¹⁰ E-mail communication with Anne May Olli, 14th February 2019.

will not resemble the standard Western museum format. Since SVD was a political and cultural community centre that took part in contemporary culture in the 1970s, the existing plans will open up the same possibilities for the art museum. This corresponds well to what we might call the global age and a changing art world. According to art historian Hans Belting, art museums no longer represent a master narrative of art. As contemporary art production expands across the globe, traditional museum practice no longer follows a single, mainstream notion of art – the purpose for which the museum was invented (Belting 2013, 246).

One example of this change in how art museums operate could be the plans for a Sámi national gallery from 1990, but it also fits a description of The Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA by John Paul Rangel. He underlines the importance of moving beyond the expected, to present counter narratives, and to promote living people. He claims that the museum's effort to interpret and contextualize indigenous people and cultures as being part of the present is an essential model of indigenous representation (Rangel 2012, 46). The philosopher Boris Groys also points to the importance of contemporaneity and to the fact that museums today have ceased to be spaces of contemplation but have instead become places where things happen. Thus, he claims, the museum presents not a universal history of art, but rather its own history, in the chain of events staged by the museum itself (Groys 2016, 18).

I find these ideas very much in line with the current ideas about a Sámi art museum. The building is not yet there, but as *árbevierru* it exists, both in the past and in an imagined future. In the present, we can tell stories about it, share dreams, victories, and failures along the way. These actions are already building it, as an everyday practice, without leaving any traces.

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FÖRSTA / SISTA

Torbjörn Ömalm

Jag lyssnar och hör om

*gruvbolagens första bud på våra bostäder
den första pusselbiten i samhällsomvandlingen
det första spadtaget till multiarenan
den första laddningsstolpen för elbil vid kommunhuset
den första befolkningsökningen i byn
de första vindkraftverken i östra skogslandet
de första prideparaderna i Pajala och Jälkka
den första minoritetsspråksfestivalen i Malmfälten
den första notisen om ålderdomshem på eget språk
de förstföddas första annons med avbildat bönehus
den första konstutställningen där fåglarna aldrig sjunger*

*min första publicerade dikt
Malmivaaras första frijazzskiva
den första sparkjazzhyllningen
den första konflikten i bandet
kompisens första barn
kompisens andra barn
den första drive-in
min första punktering som snabbt blev till tre mellan Lappeasuando och Mertainen
den första glimten av spökägda Nuortikon station – är hängsnaran kvar?
det första doppet i Rautakoskis vattenfattiga stengryta
min första betalda semester
den första sommaren då folk dansade för regn*

den första, hens första, din första, min första

*det första ghattot på Reepis
den första skogsbranden utanför Tjotti
den första promenaden under Kuolpajärvis brända tallar
det första kalhygget att andas naturreservatet i nacken
den första laxen att stiga uppåt längst Våhtjerjohkas dieselindränkta lekbottnar
det första norrskenet i september – vissla inte!
den första vintern utan stödfoder åt ren och älg
den första björnen att skjutas under jakten
det första mörkrostade kokkaffet
den första biten från det balkongtorkade renhjärtat
de första solglimtarna i januari
mitt första flyttlass till Pikku*

*de första brasorna i kriget mot elräkningen
den första skidturen runt en förgiftad Ala Lombolo
den första skridskoturen på ett glittrande Sautusjärvi
min brors första cancerbesked
mitt första sammanbrott*

ett första steg i en ny tillvaro

...

Jag lyssnar och hör om

*den sista chansen att se föreläsningen om Jukkas-vantar
den sista promenaden på Repisvaara innan villorna kväver mark
den sista åkturen på Dunkka innan sittliften faller på sitt eget pris
den sista flygturen till Persereikä för ännu ett konkursdrabbat flygbolag
den sista allmänna vägen norrut – Välkommen till Maunu!
den sista klassen i en snart nedlagd byaskola
de sista fastboende i Keinovuopio
det sista lassot att kastas i Harrå
det sista av skogen till försäljning
årets sista tömning av stugans utedass
Målmavårres sista frijazzskiva
den sista 800 M.Ö.H
det sista gigget på Nordkalottsturnén
min sista konsert med Saajo
mitt sista album under eget namn*

till sist

*den sista julmarknaden i Kåkstan
det sista fiket i Spara och Slösa-huset
den sista hockeymatchen i Mamppas ishall
det sista skrovmålet på Dannes
den sista smörgåsen från mommos pehmeäleipä
min sista snusprilla
det sista doppet i Blåå laguunän
det sista inbrottet i en mögelsjuk disponentvilla
de sista bebodda kvarteren i ett negligerat Malmsta
det sista året för Kilen
mitt sista halvår på Fjällnäs
den sista månaden för Malmbergets bibblo
den sista veckan innan tjänstledigheten
de sista dagarna innan Jesu födelse
den sista dagen innan hunden blir stjärnstoft
den sista timmen innan blodmåne*

*den sista färden för kamratens pappa
min fasters sista kamp
min brors sista cancerbesked*

ett sista farväl

CONCEPTUALIZING THE MULTICULTURAL ‘NORTH’ IN THE *ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR*: PEOPLES, PLACES, AND PHENOMENA

Solveig Marie Wang (University of Aberdeen)

Abstract

Despite often being described as ‘desolate’ and ‘remote’ (especially in the *terra nullis* colonialism exercised by the Scandinavian nation states in early modern times), the northernmost parts of the Fennoscandian landscape complexes are described as already inhabited in several medieval Scandinavian texts, including the *Íslendingasögur*. Primarily, these texts explicitly assert that the ambiguous and distant ‘north’ of Fennoscandia was a special, preternatural place, simultaneously internal and external to what medieval Icelanders perceived as ‘Nóregi’. Whether enforced by the ‘othering’ of characters depicted with expressive features and abilities traditionally associated with the area or its indigenous inhabitants, by the descriptions of different landscapes and communities unequivocally ‘othered’ and distinct from that of the saga-writers’ reality, or by extraordinary phenomena connected to the two, ‘norðarliga í Nóregi’ is portrayed as somewhat distinct from that of the rest of the ‘national’ landscape. Encompassing an area extending further south than contemporary northern Norway, the notion of a supernatural north in the *Íslendingasögur* goes beyond an idea of a unified Nóregi. By discussing the portrayal of north Norwegian landscapes and geographical understandings in these texts, in conjunction with an examination of the depiction of the Sámi, this essay aims to demonstrate how north Norwegian spatial awareness in the *Íslendingasögur* can help enlighten cross-cultural relationships and liminal identities, and present fewer rigid contrasts between people and cultures in Fennoscandia than previously accounted for.

Keywords: *Norse-Sámi relations; Íslendingasögur; Liminal landscapes; Medieval spatial understandings*

Landscape is omnipresent. As a means of engagement in the world, human knowledge is produced, reproduced, and circulated through active relational involvement (Skandfer 2009, 92). Our contemporary perception and experience of the landscape is never similar to the way it was perceived or experienced in the past (Bergstøl, 2008), even though certain archaic features might remain: ‘The landscapes, with natural borders and diverse natural conditions, were fundamental for existence and for the establishment of industries in past societies, and might be a major factor in creating long-term historical development.’ (Amundsen 2017, 191) Because of this, the textual representations of landscapes presented in the *Íslendingasögur* can portray the ideological nature in which they occur, in a sense therefore presenting certain early medieval perceptions of the geopolitical and sociocultural situations in which they were written, as well as an understanding of the past they represent.

One of the most prominent conceptions of the north Norwegian landscapes from the medieval period onwards, particularly clear in the *terra nullis* colonialism of the early modern era but with roots in the early medieval period and even continuing in present-day portrayals (e.g. www.finnmark.no), is that of the last wilderness and its untouched nature (Ojala 2009, 64). In general, this conceptualization of the far north tends to enforce assumptions of an uncivilized, dark, and cold periphery, as expressed by the German chronicler Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century: 'Beyond Norway, which is the farthestmost northern country, you will find no human habitation, nothing but ocean, terrible to look upon and limitless.' (trans. Tschan 2002, 215) This conceptualizing of northernmost Fennoscandia as a distant and deserted place is also sometimes accompanied by negative stereotypes about its indigenous population, emphasized by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus in the late twelfth century: 'To the north it [Norway] faces an undefined and nameless territory, lacking civilization and swarming with strange inhuman races.' (ed. Friis-Jensen and trans. Fisher 2015, 17) However, regardless of their own assumptions of an area in northern Norway void of [civilized] people, both authors later assert the presence of a people known to them as *Scritefingi* and *Finni*, synonymous with the *Finnar* found in Old Norse texts, rumoured to be expert hunters and powerful magicians (trans. Tschan 2002, 212; ed. Friis-Jensen and trans. Fisher 2015). Predominantly, these historical exonyms are considered to correspond to the modern-day Sámi (Mundal 1996, 98), the indigenous population of the region now known as Sápmi.

An extract from the Icelandic family saga *Vatnsdæla saga* is particularly interesting both concerning the naming of the indigenous group in historical sources and in introducing some of the literary stereotypes associated with the Sámi in Old Norse sources. Here, the Norse chieftain Ingimundr invites three Sámi men 'from the north' to his farm on Hefni island in Hálogaland. In exchange for butter and tin, these three men agree to undertake a 'mind journey' across the sea to Iceland, in order to search for his missing amulet, hidden by a high-standing Sámi seeress earlier in the saga,¹ and report back about the lie of the land:

Þeir svara: 'Semsveinum er þat forsending at fara, en fyrir þína áskorun vilju vér prófa. Nú skal oss byrgja eina saman í húsi, ok nefni oss engi maðr', ok svá var gort. Ok er liðnar váru þrjár nætr, kom Ingimundr til þeira. Þeir risu þá upp ok vopuðu fast ǫndinni ok mæltu: 'Semsveinum er erfitt, ok mikit starf hǫfu vér haft, en þó munu vér með þeim jarteinum fara, at þú munt kenna land, ef þú kemr, af várri frásǫgn, en torvelt varð oss eptir at leita hlutinum, ok mega mikit

¹ Sveinsson 1955, 29. The description of the 'Finna ein fjǫlkunnig' is fascinating as the author has paid extreme attention to the 'othering' of the woman, however, it is not based on her ethnicity alone. The woman is presented as having magical powers and exercising the rites of the 'old heathen fashion', predicting the future and hiding Ingimundr's amulet, whilst dressed in splendid attire and placed on the high seat in the middle of the hall. The fact that she is portrayed as Sámi only enforces her 'othering' alongside these factors.

atkvæði Finnunnar, því at vér höfu lagt oss í mikla ánauð'. (Sveinsson 1955, 34-35)²

This extract is particularly fascinating as it includes the first (known) written Sámi endonym, expressed in the Old Norse as 'semsveinum'. Only appearing in this extract in the Old Norse corpus, the term is used twice by the men, in addition to the more common exonym 'Finnar', mentioned above. The first component of the word, 'sem', is used by the Sámi men to describe themselves and is therefore probably related to the contemporary endonym 'Sámi', denoting the Sámi people (the Norwegian equivalent is 'same'). The term itself, alongside the name of the cultural region, Sápmi, is generally agreed by Finno-Ugric linguists to descend from the common Sámi-Finnic word 'šämä', which is related to the Baltic word 'zeme', meaning country or land (Hansen and Olsen 2017, 47). The second compound of the word is the Old Norse word for 'boy' or 'lad' ('sveinn'), in the plural dative indefinite form 'sveinum'. In general, the appearance of the word in the original text is crucial due to its nature as an endonym, being the earliest surviving written self-designatory act of the Sámi. On a more basic level, the term is of paramount importance as it indicates that medieval writers and their audience were familiar with and used Sámi endonyms and words, although 'translated' into Norse. Furthermore, it is indicative of the bilingual nature of Sámi people when expressing themselves during interaction with Norse people. It also reveals that language loans occurred on levels not isolated to majority influence alone and that words could consist of components from both languages. In addition to this, a literary narrative is introduced in the portrayal of the Sámi men. Alongside the emphasis on the men as capable finders with magical abilities is the postulation that they came 'from the north', somewhere not too distant but also external to the community on Hefni island.

Most often we see the introduction of a Sámi literary narrative in a text with introductory passages or descriptions of people deemed unique for their characteristics as a direct result of their descent. In the Icelandic family saga *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, written sometime between 1220 and 1240 with the action taking place in the years 850-1000, this is enforced from the introductory passages, where the ancestry and characteristics of Egill's paternal grandfather, the smith and *berserkr* Kveld-Úlfr Bjalfason, are emphasized: 'Úlfr hét maðr, sonr Bjálfa ok Hallberu, dóttur Úlfs ins óarga; hon var systir Hallbjarnar hálftröls í Hrafnistu, fōður Ketils hængs.'

² 'They answered, "This is a hazardous mission for [Sámi]* messengers to undertake, but in response to your request we want to make an attempt. You must now shut us together in a shed and our names must not be revealed". This was duly done. And when three nights had passed, Ingimund went to them. They stood up and sighed deeply and said, "We [Sámi] messengers are exhausted and have had much toil and trouble, but nevertheless we have returned with these tokens so that you may recognize the land from our account, if you go there; but it was very difficult for us to search for the amulet, and the spell of the [Sámi] woman was a powerful one because we placed ourselves in great jeopardy".' (Wawn 1997, 17) This story is also known from *Landnámabók*, where it is stated that two, not three, 'Finnar' were called for by Ingimundr, undertook a 'mind-journey' to Iceland, and reported back about the lie of the land (Benediktsson 1968, 218). In both instances, no language conflict is reported and bilingualism seems to be the method of communication, unless a translator is involved but not mentioned in the text.

* Wawn translated the terms 'semsveinum' and 'Finnar' as 'Lapp', however, due to its contemporary nature as a derogatory term with colonial undertones, I have in this text chosen to substitute all such instances with the self-designating term Sámi.

(Nordal 1955, 3)³ Here, Kveld-Úlfr's maternal uncle, Hallbjörn of Hrafnista (the father of Ketil hængs, a legendary hero associated with a Sámi narrative in Norse literature),⁴ is nicknamed 'hálftrölls', indicating potential Sámi ancestry, as the portrayal of the Sámi in the literary narrative tends to be associated with 'othering'.⁵ This is achieved through connotations of magic and witchcraft, forest animals such as bears and wolves, and legendary beings and the otherworlds, in addition to allusions to winter weather, skiing, archery, and strong physical characteristics (Aalto and Lethola 2017, 12-16). It is also interesting to note that both Kveld-Úlfr's mother and uncle have names with the component 'bear', alluding to their 'othered' descent. The 'othering' of Kveld-Úlfr is further continued when he notoriously gains his nickname 'Evening Wolf' due to his nightly bad tempers and claims of shapeshifting, another feature sometimes connected to the Sámi tradition (Aalto and Lethola 2017, 13, 21; Scudder 2005, 113). Throughout the text, both Kveld-Úlfr and his grandson Egill are contextually 'othered', described as stronger, wilder and with swarthy complexions darker than most men,⁶ with Egill's appearance described as 'mikill sem tröll' (Nordal 1955, 143, 178).⁷ Another instance from the same saga sees the introduction of the Hálogalander Björgólfr hálfbergrisi, from Torget island in present-day southern Nordland (Nordal 1955, 16). As with the half-troll siblings, Björgólfr's nickname, literally meaning 'half mountain-giant',⁸ alludes to a multicultural background, with the northern location re-enforcing the notion of Sámi affiliation.

³ 'There was a man named Ulf, the son of Bjalfi and of Hallbera, the daughter of Ulf the Fearless. She was the sister of Hallbjorn Half-troll from Hrafnista, the father of Ketil Haeng.' (Scudder 2005, 8)

⁴ See the legendary *Hrafnistamannasögur*. The location of Hrafnista coincides with modern-day Ramstad in northern Trøndelag.

⁵ I employ the term 'othering' here in a postcolonial sense after Hillerdal et al. 2017 (34, 175).

⁶ Darker complexions are traditionally associated with indigenous characters elsewhere in the Icelandic family sagas. This is particularly clear in the descriptions of the brothers Geirmundr and Hámundr heljarskinni (dark-skinned) (Grettla: Scudder 1997, 50), whose mother Ljúfvinu was the daughter of a Bjarmian king, also mentioned in *Landnámabók* (Benediktsson 1968, 150). Bjarmarland was located somewhere around the White Sea, and its inhabitants are sometimes viewed to be the ancestors of one of the indigenous Permian-speaking Komi-groups or as ancestors of one of the later known native Finno-Ugric peoples such as Vepsians, Votes, or Karelians (Hansen and Olsen 2017, 158-159).

⁷ 'Much like a troll'.

⁸ The nickname is interesting because it alludes to both Björgólfr's multicultural descent and the literary trend of 'finding' the Sámi 'up in the mountains', as demonstrated below. This connection possibly mirrors actual interactions between Norse and Sámi groups in the medieval period, with the Sámi geographically connected to the mountainous regions of the inland, as mirrored in *Historia Norwegiæ* (Ekrem et al. 2006, 59-61).

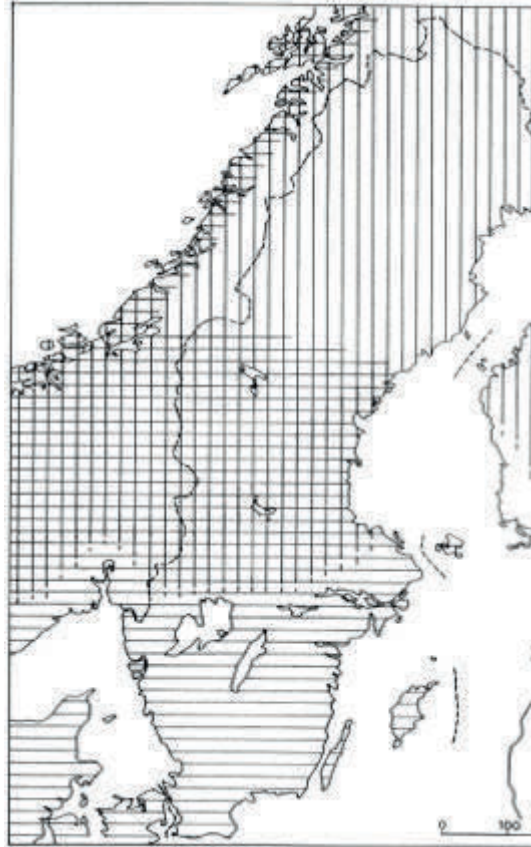


Figure 1. Spread of Sámi culture (vertical) compared to Norse settlement (horizontal) in the early medieval period (Zachrisson 2008, 33).

The majority of scholarship concerning the literary representations and cultural perceptions of the *Finnar* in the sagas predominantly prioritises the ‘othering’ of these characters, that which sets them apart from the Norse or how they diverge from the portrayal of (what are seemingly) Norse actors (Barraclough 2018, 28). However, as the extracts above exemplify, the actual texts represent a relationship far more complicated than a simple dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’, with the texts themselves indicating cross-cultural negotiations of identities (Barraclough 2018, 29). This is actually expressed in the short Latin chronicle *Historia Norvegiæ*, which states that the Norse and the Sámi in Hálogaland were extensively involved with each other and that this contact was normalized: ‘The fourth is Hálogaland, whose inhabitants dwell a good deal with the Finns, so that there are frequent transactions between them.’ (Ekrem *et al* 2006, 57) Despite some conflicting views in literary scholarship (Aalto and Lethola 2017, Barraclough 2018), the majority of archaeologists focusing on early medieval Fennoscandia agree that society was socially and economically stratified, and that extensive contact between Sámi and Norse cultural groups occurred on both the geopolitical and sociocultural levels (Zachrisson 2008, 32). Archaeological excavations that have found female burials with Nordic types of ornamentations in otherwise archaeologically typical Sámi areas and vice versa (Storli 1991, Scanche 2000, Zachrisson *et al.* 1997) have been interpreted as examples of exchanges of marriage partners between the groups, indicating that contact also occurred on personal levels.

Some archaeologists even suggest that certain multicultural and fluid societies based on an amalgamation of Sámi and Norse cultural groups cooperating in the same area can be seen in the archaeological material (Bergstøl 2008, Zachrisson *et al.* 1997). This would certainly support the idea of smoother cultural boundaries between the groups in the early medieval period than suggested by Saxo and Adam of Bremen, potentially providing a new outlook on the characters in later textual sources with nicknames such as hálftrölls and hálfbergrísi.



Figure 2. Northern Norway as imagined in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* (Nordal 1955, n.p.). Notice how the cartographer has neglected to depict the saga voice.

Furthermore, several instances in the *Íslendingasögur* allude to notions of a shared cultural landscape in Hálogaland, where strong Norse chieftaincies and their power elites (potentially given power through multi-cultural co-operation) are asserted (*Egils saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* as already mentioned here, *Eyrbyggja saga*, ch. 7, *Grettis saga*, ch. 20, *Svarfdæla saga*, ch. 1, *Finnboga saga ramma*, chs. 10, 12, 35, *Heiðarvíga saga*, chs. 42-43, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, ch. 7). This idea is further elaborated in *Egils saga*, when Gunnhildr konungamóðir is introduced to the narrative, meeting her husband and later king Eiríkr blóðøx somewhere in Hálogaland on his way back from a battle in Bjarmarland: ‘ok í þeiri ferð fekk hann Gunnhildar, dóttur Qzurar tóta, of hafði hana hem með sér; Gunnhildr var allra kvenna vænst ok vitrust ok fjölkunnig mjök’

(Nordal 1955, 94).⁹ Although *Historia Norwegiæ* views her as the daughter of the Danish king Gormr gamli (Ekrem *et al.* 2006, 81-83), it is interesting to note that most of the sources mentioning her view Gunnhildr as the daughter of the Hálogalandian chieftain Qzur tóti (Perabo 2016, 150), demonstrated in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*:

Þá er hann kom apr á Finnmörk, þá fundu menn hans í gamma einum konu þá, er þeir höfðu enga sét jafnvæna. Hon nefndisk fyrir þeim Gunnhildr ok sagði, at faðir hennar bjó á Hálogalandi, er hét Qzurr toti. 'Ek hefi hér verit til þess,' segir hon, 'at nema kunnostu at Finnum tveim, er hér fróðastir á mörkini. (Aðalbjarnarson 2002, 135).¹⁰

Alongside being the daughter of a chieftain from northern Norway and marrying the king-to-be of Norway, Gunnhildr is described as a beautiful but evil woman, skilled in magic and with the ability to shapeshift, attributes possibly granted to her by medieval writers hoping to accentuate the claim that she was of northern descent. In *Egils saga*, she is presumably given to Eiríkr somewhere between the Bjarmian coast and her father's dwelling somewhere in Hálogaland, and in *Heimskringla* she is found by Eiríkr's men in the hut of two Sámi men somewhere, probably along the coast, in Finnmörkr. Interestingly then, the entire coastal strip from Hálogaland (which in the *Íslendingasögur* includes the area north of Hrafnista in Naumdælafylki, from Torget island in the south to Trondenes and Bjarkarey in the north) via Finnmörkr and then to Bjarmarland, is viewed as populated (see images 2 and 3). This is also the case in the descriptions in literary sources, particularly Icelandic, of King Háráldr hárfagri's sometimes violently persuasive acquisition of land in late ninth and early tenth century Norway, which led people to flee the country in order to escape his alleged tyranny. As explained by *Egils saga*, these people went to settle various 'uninhabited' parts of many places, such as modern-day Jämtland, Hälsingland, the Hebrides, the shire of Dublin and Ireland, Normandy, Caithness, Orkney, Shetland, the Faroe Islands, and even Iceland (Nordal 1955, 12). It is interesting in this context that there is no mention of migration northward internally in north Norwegian Hálogaland or into Finnmörkr, and that despite later conventions, both these areas are viewed as already inhabited. The writer of *Egils saga* imagines the area as remote, up in the mountains, with large forests and even mountain settlements, beyond Hálogaland's imagined borders:

Finnmörk er stórliga víð; gengr haf fyrir vestan ok þar af firðir stórir, svá ok fyrir norðan ok allt austr um; en fyrir sunnan er Nóregr, ok tekr mörkin nálíga allt it efra suðr, svá sem Hálogaland it ýtra. En austr frá Naumudal er Jämtaland, ok þá Helsingjaland ok þá Kvenland, þá Finnland, þá Kirjálaland;

⁹ 'and on the same journey he married Gunnhild, daughter of Ozur Snout, and brought her back with him. Gunnhild was outstandingly attractive and wise, and well versed in the magic arts' (Scudder 2005, 59).

¹⁰ 'When he [Eiríkr] returned to Finnmark [from Bjarmalandi], his men found in a hut a woman so beautiful that they had never seen the like of her. She gave her name as Gunnhild and said that her father dwelled in Hálogaland and that his name was Ozur Toti. 'I have dwelt here', she said, 'to learn sorcery from two Finns who are the wisest here in Finnmark' (Hollander 2015, 86).

en Finnmark liggir fyrir ofan þessi öll lönd, ok eru víða fjallbyggðir upp á morkina, sumt í dali, en sumt með vötnum. Á Finnmark eru vötn furðuliga stór ok þar með vötnunum marklönd stór, en há fjöll liggja eptir endilangri morkinni, ok eru þat kallaðir Kilir. (Nordal 1955, 36)¹¹



Figure 3. A map of Fennoscandia with relevant place names informed by saga accounts (Perabo 2016, 41). Notice Finnmark.

¹¹ 'Finnmark is a vast territory, bordered by the sea to the west and the north, and all the way to the east with great fjords, while Norway lies to the south of it. It extends as far south along the mountains as Halogaland does down the coast. East of Naumdal lies Jamtland, then Halsingland, Kvenland, Finland and Karelia. Finnmark lies beyond all these countries, and there are mountains settlements in many parts, some in valleys and others by the lakes. In Finnmark there are incredibly large lakes with great forests all around, while a high mountain range named Kjolen extends from one end of the territory to the other'. (Scudder 2005, 25)

In toponymical terms, Finnmörk suggests a defined geographical area, as perceived by the Norse. Consisting of the components ‘Finn’, meaning Sámi, and ‘mörkr’, denoting a border, forest, border forest, or periphery, it defines the area as ascribed to Sámi groups or on the periphery of Norse culture. However, interpreting the place name in terms of a border, margin, or periphery is unhelpful as it introduces the risk of falling back to a simplistic understanding of the area and its inhabitants as something more static than dynamic (Barracough 2018, 30). Instead, the term should rather be perceived as a frontier, where colliding worldviews interfere and norms are challenged, in turn dissolving stricter cultural identities and creating space for more hybrid identities (Barracough 2018, 30). Despite Saxo Grammaticus’s declaration of this area as an undefined and nameless territory with no civilization, *Egils saga* states the opposite. Describing the area as ‘up in the mountains’, separated from Norway but stretched to the east of it as far as the Hálogalandian coast following the Kjølen mountain range (the geological border between Norway and Sweden), the author emphasizes the large lakes and great forests of the territory, also including the detail that the area is not uninhabited but has mountain, valley, and lake settlements. It is probably one of these settlements that Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, Egill’s uncle, trades with somewhere in Finnmörk, ‘up in the mountains’ from Sandnes, in an earlier chapter:

Þórólfr gerði um vetrinn ferð sína á fjall upp ok hafði með sér lið mikit, eigi minna en níu tigu manna; en áðr hafði vanði á verit, at sýslumenn höfðu haft þrjá tigu manna, en stundum færa; hann hafði með sér kaupskap mikinn. Hann gerði brátt stefnuleg við Finna ok tók af þeim skatt ok átti við þá kaupstefnu; fór með þeim allt í makendum ok í venskap, en sumt með hræzlugæði (Nordal 1955, 27).¹²

Þórólfr’s journey ‘up in the mountains’ to trade with and collect tax from the Sámi is mirrored in the later *Finnboga saga ramma*, where the protagonist Finnbogi, named after a trader from Hálogaland, meets the traveller Álfur afturkempa en route to Finnmörk to collect tax (Kennedy 1997, 234). Similar to Þórólfr’s acquisition of the right to ‘finnferð’ and ‘finnkaup’ after the death of his companion, inheriting both his widow and farm in Sandnes, Finnbogi inherits the right to trade with and tax the Sámi after the death of Álfur, marrying his daughter (Kennedy 1997, 240). Reserving the rights to ‘finnferð’ and ‘finnkaup’, land, female (or male) relatives, and other privileges for kin (also including close companions), seems to be closely connected to the ambitions of the Hálogalandian power elite, a feature of maintaining power in the area and building stronger networks, as well as strengthening it against southern outsiders.

Journeys to Finnmörk made by this power elite, and others, usually take place in the winter (perhaps with the exception of maritime journeys along the coast), conceivably

¹² ‘That winter Thorolf went up to the mountains and took a large band of men with him, no fewer than ninety in number. Previously the king’s agents used to take thirty men with them, or sometimes fewer. He also took a great quantity of goods to sell, soon arranged a meeting with the [Sámi], collected their taxes and traded with them. All their dealings were cordial and friendly, partly because the [Sámi] feared them’. (Scudder 2005, 20)

due to easier overland travel access granted by the snow and frozen rivers and lakes, a polar opposite to most other saga journeys and events, which usually take place during the summer months. This type of arranged trade seems according to the sagas to occur quite often, at least several times during the winter months, as addressed, again, in *Egils saga*: 'Þórólfr fór þann vetr enn á mörkina ok hafði með sér nær hundraði manna; fór hann enn sem inn fyrra vetr, átti kaupstefnu við Finna ok fór víða um mörkina'.¹³ The relationship between Þórólfr and the Sámi groups he traded with was so good that they collaborated against a common enemy, the Kylfingar:

Þórólfr fór víða um mörkina; en er hann sótti austr á fjallit spurði hann at Kylfingar váru austan komnir ok fóru þar at Finnkaupum, en sumstðar með ránum. Þórólfr setti til Finna at njósna um ferð Kylfinga, en hann fór eptir at leita þeira ok hitti í einu bóli þrjá tigu manna ok drap alla svá at engi komsk undan, en síðn hitti hann saman fimmtán eða tuttugu. Alls drápu þeir nær hundraði manna ok tóku þar ógrynni fjár ok kómu aptr um várit við svá búit (Nordal 1955, 27-28).¹⁴

Once again, the main route consists of large forests and mountains. Here, on the other hand, we meet a new people, the Kylfingar, whose origins and locations are unknown, but who were probably of Eastern Fennoscandian origin (Lind 2009, 31-32). In a later incident, news of the collaboration reaches the Kvens, an ethnic group associated the Bothnian coast and Finland, who seek out Þórólfr in Finnmörk, requesting his help against the Kirjálár (Karelians: a modern-day Baltic-Finnic ethnic group) in return for great a bounty split with their king:

En er hann sótti langt austr ok þar spurðisk til ferðar hans, þá kómu Kvenir til hans ok sögðu, at þeir váru sendir til hans, ok þat hafði gjört Faravið konungr af Kvenlandi; sögðu, at Kirjálár herjuðu á land hans, en hann sendi til þess orð at Þórólfr skyldi fara þangat ok veita honum lið; fylgði þat orðsending at Þórólfr skyldi hafa jafnmikit hlutskipti sem konungr, en hverr manna hans sem þrír Kvenir. En þat váru lög með Kvenum at konungr skyldi hafa ór hlutskipti þriðjung við liðsmenn ok um fram at afnámi bjórskinn qll ok safala ok askraka (Nordal 1955, 35-36).¹⁵

¹³ 'That winter Thorolf went to Finnmark again, taking almost a hundred men with him. Once again he traded with the [Sámi] and travelled widely through Finnmark' (Scudder 2005, 24).

¹⁴ 'Thorolf travelled at large through the forests, and when he reached the mountains farther east he heard that the Kylfing people had been trading with the [Sámi] there, and plundering too. He posted some [Sámi] to spy on the Kylfing's movements, then went to seek them out. In one place he found thirty and killed them all without anyone escaping, then found a group of fifteen or twenty more. In all they killed almost one hundred men and took enormous amounts of booty before returning in the spring. Thorolf went back to his farm at Sandes and stayed there for some time' (Scudder 2005, 20).

¹⁵ 'As he advanced farther east and word about his travel got around, the Kven people came and told him that they had been sent to him by their king, Faravid. They told Thorolf how the Karelians had been raiding their land and gave him a message from the king to come there and give him support. Thorolf was offered an equal share of the spoils with the king, and each of his men got the same as three Kven. It was

On their way to where the Karelians had been raiding the Kven, Þórólfr's group along with three hundred Kven are said to have taken the highland route through Finnmörk, presumably into Kvenland, before reaching the Karelians and attacking them. It is explained that despite being fewer than the Kvens, the Norwegians had stronger shields than them and attacked fiercely, leading to the defeat of the Karelians. After this, it is stated that Þórólfr travelled back to Finnmörk, parting with the king in great friendship, descending the mountains at Vefsna and reaching his farm at Sandnes (Scudder 2005, 25). Although ethno-cultural terms such as 'Kven', 'Karelian', and 'Kylfingar' are very much still debated in scholarly research (for example, on 'Kven' see Hansen and Olsen 2017, 162-164), the care attended to distinguishing these groups in the text is interesting.

Despite this emphasized distinction between cultural groups, the text describes cross-cultural travel as mainly unproblematic, accentuating the notion that borders between people were not sharp (Zachrisson 2008, 33), particularly between the traditional Sámi Finnmörk and the fluid Norse Hálogaland. As noted by Eleanor Barraclough, 'frontiers and borderlands are not absolute lines in the landscape with two discrete cultural groups standing on either side. Rather, they are areas where identities are contested, adopted, and reformed, regions where fringe players step centre stage to be recast as the chief protagonists' (Barraclough 2018, 51). This is particularly clear in the weighted threat that the unification of the two areas imposed, as claimed by the jealous Hildiríðar brothers who envied Þórólfr's success in trading with the Sámi, assuming the royal privilege themselves by slandering him. The brothers complained to the Norwegian king that Þórólfr, despite losing his royal privileges to do so, had traded with the Sámi and decreased the brothers' revenue:

Hafði hann kaup ǫll; guldu Finnar honum skatt, en hann bazk í því at sýslumenn yðrir skyldi ekki koma á mörkina. Ætlar hann at gerask konungr yfir norðr þar, bæði yfir mörkinni ok Hálogalandi, ok er þat undr, er þér látið honum hvetvetna hlýða (Nordal 1955, 43).¹⁶

What is interesting here is the weighted threat of the unification of the 'northern territories' of Hálogaland and the mörkinni (Finnmörk) as a separate unity or even kingdom independent from Norway. The threat imposed by the consolidation of the two spatial areas demonstrates the geopolitical importance of the landscape, and the sociocultural significance of its peoples, their strategies, and special abilities. It also highlights the abundant resources found in the northernmost part of the land, including hides, ermine, squirrel skins, and other furs, alongside artefacts imported from the east, all of which are factors that led to strong and extremely rich chieftaincies in northern

a law among the Kven people that their king received a third of his men's plunder, but reserved all the beaver skins, sables and martens for himself' (Scudder 2005, 24-25).

¹⁶ 'He took all the trade there and the [Sámi] paid him tribute, and he gave them a guarantee that your collectors wouldn't enter the territory. He intends to proclaim himself king of the northern territories, both Finnmark and Halogaland, and it is astonishing that you let him get away with everything he does' (Scudder 2005, 29).

Norway in this period.¹⁷ The threat also demonstrates the kind of separateness Hálogaland long held in Norwegian sociocultural and geopolitical affairs, as it was neither fully part of the Norwegian kingdom nor part of Finnmørk. Instead, Hálogaland represents something in between both: a less defined and more fluid, and possibly multicultural, area that seeks to strengthen its place as a sort of frontier land rather than a border, where cultural connection is more crucial than cultural delineation. In a later chapter, we are told that the more remote tributary lands were harder to govern and that there was little supervision of places such as Hálogaland in Norway and Varmland in Sweden in King Haraldr's old age: 'var þá lítt sét eptir um skattlöndin, þau er fjarri lágu' (Nordal 1955, 220).¹⁸

An interesting exception to this type of fluidity, and to the dynamic societies presented in particular in *Egils saga*, are the literary portrayals of the mysterious and otherworldly Dofrafjöll that appear in some of the *Íslendingasögur*. In these instances, despite the general semi-normalcy offered by the saga descriptions mentioned above, we find semi-legendary stories of men with 'troll kin' visiting giants that inhabit great halls located inside the mountains of Dofri, similar to the story of Peer Gynt and Dovregubben in Ibsen's work from 1867. In the relatively late *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, a fantastical narrative is established from the very beginning of the text with the introduction of the protagonist Bárðr's family background. His father, king Dumbr of Helluland (a semi-mythical place located somewhere north of Greenland), is said to have been the son of female giants and male trolls. By abducting Bárðr's human mother, Mjöll, the daughter of Snœr the Old from Kvenland (Anderson 1997, 239), Dumbr consolidates power in Helluland.¹⁹ However, due to a conflict between the king and the *þursar*, a type of entity contrasted with the Norse gods, Dumbr sends his son south to Norway, deep into the mountains of Dofrafjöll, to be fostered by the *bergbúi*, or mountain-dweller, Dofri. After the death of Bárðr's first wife and Dofri's daughter, Bárðr marries Herþrúðr in Hálogaland. Their daughter Mjöll marries Rauðfeldr the strong, the son of the giant Svaði from a place north of Dofra (Anderson 1997, 239). Settling somewhere in Salten, in Hálogaland, Bárðr and his family integrate into a Hálogalandian power elite, with the story ending with his son fighting a giant residing in a mound somewhere north of Finnmørk.²⁰ With its heavy supernatural theme, *Bárðar saga* differs from the sources previously mentioned. However, a Sámi literary narrative is clearly present, firstly with the portrayal of Bárðr's ancestry, which focuses on his otherworldly ancestry through his half-giant/half-troll father, and his north-eastern Fennoscandian descent through his mother named after fresh, powdery snow (possibly

¹⁷ This is probably one of the main reasons behind the power elite's wishes to maintain strong bonds within the kin groups of the area.

¹⁸ 'There was little supervision of the more remote tributary lands' (Scudder 2005, 135).

¹⁹ Both their names refer to winter weather, fine blowing snow, and snow respectively. Dumbr's name is interesting in connection to Dovrefjell (as it is called today) and the nearby village Dombås. The place name is made up of the words for mute and is probably a description of a quiet river, and 'ássr', the Norse term for the Norse deities. Potentially, then, Dumbr is named after the area he was associated with, and might have formed parts of a creation myth in the area of Dombås and Dovrefjell.

²⁰ The literary motif of travelling north of or into Finnmørk to fight giants or dead Vikings is found in several other sources. In *Gull-Þóris saga*, the Icelandic settler Þórir travels to Finnmørk from Trondenes in Hálogaland, where he fights three dragons and gains their bounty, also described in *Landnáma*: 'he got much gold in Finnmørk' (Benediktsson 1968, 154).

named after her father, a man from Kvenland literally called snow). Secondly, the location of Dofrafjöll and its *bergbúi* on the fringe of society alludes to a differentiated sociocultural area inhabited by ‘others’. Despite this, the relations between Bárðr and the *bergbúi* are good and mutually beneficial.

Similarly, in *Kjalnesinga saga*, the Icelander Búi Andriðsson is challenged by King Haraldr hárfagri in Þrándheimr to travel to his foster father Dofri in Dofrafjöll and collect his old board game. Waiting to travel until winter, Búi ventures north, at one point staying with the farmer Rauðr on ‘ofanverðri byggðinni’ (‘the fringe of the inhabited area’ ((Halldórsson 1959, 29, trans. Cook and Porter 1997, 319)). Entering after befriending Dofri’s daughter, Búi receives an audience with the mountain dweller Dofri, who exclaims that ‘Fáir koma slíkir ór Mannheimum nema Haraldr konungr, fóstri minn’ (‘not many such people come here from Manworld, except my foster son King Harald’ (Halldórsson 1959, 29, trans. Cook and Porter 1997, 321)). Búi is successful in his mission, travels to see the king in Steinkjer, and presents him with his board game. The fostering of king Haraldr by Dofri is also mentioned in *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum* and *Flateyjarbók*, both of which narrate the beginning of the so-called foundation myth of Norway as a result of Norse-Sámi fostering arrangements (Mundal 2009, 31-32). Here, King Haraldr is fostered by Dofri, whom the texts imply is a Sámi chieftain, after a conflict with his biological father, King Halfdán svartí. Whether or not the stories have any basis in actual real-life events, expressing the relationship between the Norse and the Sámi in terms of foster child and foster parent creates strong literary images that enforce a clear symbolic meaning (Mundal 2009, 32). As the foster son of the Sámi people in these literary texts, King Haraldr emerges as a symbolic expression of community, a literary motif which could also be used to enforce medieval Norwegian stately claims or rights in more traditional Sámi areas. However, as Else Mundal states: ‘as long as learned people and authors belonging to the Nordic culture expressed their view of the relationship between Sami and Nordic people in terms of family relations, whether they believed the stories or not, their attitude towards the Sami must have been predominantly positive’ (Mundal 2009, 35).



Figure 4. Norwegian stamp design based on a painting from the farm Tofte, Dovre. The stamp depicts the first meeting between spouses King Haraldr hárfagri and the Sámi woman Snæfríðr in Dovre, with her father Svási finnakonungs (king of the Sámi) in the background (Hermanstrand 2018).

The literary expressions denoting the area just south of Dofrafjöll as ‘on the fringe of the inhabited area’ and ‘Manworld’, alongside the interpretation that the inhabitants beyond these areas were Sámi, supports the literary assumption of two distinct areas marked by the borderlands of Dofrafjöll. Nevertheless, as we have seen, both geopolitical and sociocultural relations are maintained between characters from either side of these fringes, which again supports the idea of cultural connection rather than cultural delineation. With archaeological excavations asserting Sámi presence in the area during the Viking Age (Bergstøl 2008), and so-called fluid societies as far south into Østerdalen as the Elverum area (Bergstøl 2008), the instances in the literary texts with Dofrafjöll as a meeting place for Norse-Sámi contact and expressions of cultural exchange might actually connect to the very concrete reality of actual interactions which took place in the early and later medieval periods.

By emphasizing geopolitical landscape relations, most often without any specific intent to actually do so, descriptions highlighting spatial awareness in the *Íslendingasögur* enlighten shared sociocultural landscapes, liminal frontier societies and borderlands, hinterlands, peripheries, and meeting places. As the extracts show, particularly in the Hálogaland-heavy *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, frontiers and borderlands are never demarcated spaces to be monitored or managed, but rather emerge as culturally fluid spaces to be lived in (Barracough 2018, 51). Although not as extensively ‘othered’, remote, inhuman and uncivilized as suggested by medieval chroniclers such as Saxo Grammaticus and Adam of Bremen, the north of Nóregi and its ambiguous population is undoubtedly associated with a literary supernatural motif or phenomenon. Particularly dominant in the stories connected to Dofrafjöll, this motif possibly stems from both its connection to the unique geopolitical and sociocultural situation of societies based on cross-cultural negotiations of identities, contacts, and exchanges, and an overall literary trend associating the north with the preternatural. Characters with multicultural backgrounds are nicknamed accordingly and awarded with specific characteristics and abilities following a literary pattern associated with magic, shapeshifting, strong features, swarthy, smithery, winter weather, and hunting. Nevertheless, the characteristics and abilities awarded to these characters are predominantly positive, albeit quite mysterious, such as in the example of Kveld-Úlfr and his descendants. The associations welcomed by these descriptions indicate an awareness of distinct groupings in society, as represented by the Sámi people encountered through trade and exchange in *Egils saga*, and overlapping cultural and religious conceptions connected to magic and folklore, as with the Sámi magicians visiting the Norse chieftain Ingjaldr in *Vatnsdæla saga*. The descriptions also introduce notions of fluid societies, demonstrated by characters such as Björgólfr hálfbergrísi, Hallbjörn and Hallbera hálftrölls, and Dofri bergbúi.

The weighted threat of the unification between the spatial power complexes encompassing the ‘northern territories’ Hálogaland and Finnmark point to their geopolitical and sociocultural importance, demonstrating that, at least in the eyes of the learned elite, the areas were sometimes understood together. Hálogaland, however, is viewed as a sort of liminal space, not fully part of either Nóregi or Finnmark. As recognized in the source material, this empowered the Hálogalandian power elite, who through kin privileges were able to cultivate strong relationships with different Sámi groups, based on personal, cultural, and economic strategies, with the exotic objects gained from the *finnkaup* boosting both their power and prestige in the Norse market-

trade, differentiating them sociopolitically from their southern neighbours. The fact that cross-cultural travel is mainly unproblematic enforces this assumption and demonstrates that borders between the people inhabiting northern Norway were not absolute. However, the portrayal of the multiethnic north in literature, as well as the actual reality of it, was not without conflict, as expressed by the first meeting between Þórólfr and a Sámi group in *Egils saga*, emphasising that despite the cordial and friendly dealings, the potential for conflict is nevertheless present (Scudder 2005, 20).

Rather than focusing on the delineating features of the texts, which quickly results in falling into the trap of embracing early modern colonialist views on medieval history (Ojala 2009, Spangen *et al.* 2015, 1, 3), a more fluid and flexible understanding of the northern peripheries and their inhabitants must be stressed. Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that the texts clearly assert that the Norse and the Sámi were two distinct cultural and ethnic groups, with different societies, subsistence strategies, ways of life, and cultures. The texts quite explicitly distinguish the different cultural groups, however, there is a stronger distinction drawn between the Bjarmians, Kvens, and Karelians and the Norse than between the Sámi and the Norse. Nevertheless, dynamic societies can never be without conflict, and the relationship between the Norse and the Sámi is portrayed as far more complex than a simple dichotomy based on ‘us’ versus ‘them’. It is also paramount to stress that the extracts from the *Íslendingasögur* are external observations of Sámi ways of life, kin groups, and economy, and they are heavily laden by the value perceptions of a learned Icelandic elite. As stressed before, this notion does not take away from the fact that the texts have much to say about cross-cultural negotiations of identities and a liminality evident in northern Norway, a liminality that is also expressed in the archaeological material. Furthermore, it is crucial to move the scholarly focus away from an excessive emphasis on the stereotypes presented in the literary narrative, which tends to enforce an idea of Sámi society as static and unchanging (as in Pálsson 1999). Instead, the relationships and cross-cultural negotiations of identities these stereotypes might narrate are crucial for our understanding of Norse-Sámi relations in the medieval period.



Figure 5. ‘Sámi man presenting Norse man with vair’ (Bjørklund 2014, 1).

As demonstrated in this article, landscape descriptions and the portrayal of spatial understandings can help enlighten cross-cultural relationships and liminal identities, and present fewer rigid contrasts between people and cultures in Fennoscandia than previously accounted for. The several allusions to cross-cultural personal relations, communication, and settlements point to a less stratified society in medieval northern Norway than often assumed. When removing the focus from the archaic accentuation of the literary stereotypes connected to the scholarly emphasized 'othering' of Sámi characters in the source material (Pálsson 1999), portrayals of Sámi characters, relations with the Norse, fluid cultures, and personalities, as well as Sámi allusions in general, become clearer and less static, demonstrating a clear Sámi presence which enforces the assumption that 'the Sámi and the Norse of early Scandinavia cannot be understood in isolation, only together' (Price 2000, 25).

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TYPOLOGIES OF THE NORTH: MEDIATING ‘NORTHERNESS’ IN JAZZ IN SCANDINAVIA

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Abstract

In this article I examine some of the ways that accounts of jazz in Scandinavia have been focusing on a taxonomy of features most often associated with folk music and the remote geography of the north. I focus on specific musicians and collaborations from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden in the second half of the twentieth century, to explore issues of folklorism and landscape, questioning the degree to which perceptions of ‘northernness’ in jazz have been paired with notions of nationalism. I conclude by looking at the extent to which elements of neo-traditionalism were at play in diverse forms of cultural practice in the late twentieth century, examining the inward-looking folklorism often associated with ‘the Nordic tone’.


Keywords: *The Nordic tone; Jan Garbarek; Scandinavian jazz; Northernness*

The only worry I have about this LP is that you dismiss it as an example of ‘Norwegian jazz’ before listening. Nothing could be more wrong. Take time to listen to Nerem and you will find that his tenor saxophone playing is directly out of the American tradition.
(Petersen 1984)

It is not really my tradition [...] The so-called ‘standards’, are not my standards. I don’t feel a close attachment to that music, music that’s made for Broadway shows. They’re great compositions, but I’ve never had an urge to use that music as the basis of my playing. (Bourne 1986, 27)

I begin with these two very different images by way of introducing what seems to me a significant connective among observations that, although obviously linked by a common subject (jazz by Norwegian artists), in other ways range rather freely. Placed as they are in a chronological order, for some they may show a certain progression, an *evolution*, if you will: a word that carries its own ideological burden in jazz. In the first we have Bjørn Petersen’s sleeve notes to Bjarne Nerem’s album *This Is Always*, firmly positioning the saxophonist’s music within a particular North American jazz aesthetic. The second is from an interview with Jan Garbarek, the Norwegian saxophone icon whose music, commentators agree, is responsible for introducing the world outside Scandinavia to a particular northern sensibility in jazz, ‘the Nordic Tone’ (Nicholson 2010), but whose sonic outputs present all kind of idiosyncrasies that resist easy assimilation into this or that orthodoxy. Of course, the seeming simplicity and directness of expression included in both observations masks layers of complex ideological strands, and of often contradictory meanings that are difficult to unravel. Perhaps because of the prevalence of the term in the public press, for example, or

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because few scholars have engaged with jazz in Scandinavia, attempts to outline a single definition of ‘the Nordic tone’ have proven impossible. Likewise, defining a place for Garbarek in the history of jazz has never been a straightforward task; it was only until recently that, in the thousands of books written about the history of jazz, one had to look in later chapters for post-1960s jazz and its fusions for fleeting references to Garbarek and the other members of Keith Jarrett’s celebrated European quartet. Even then, allusions to musical outputs from Garbarek and jazz musicians from Scandinavia were blatantly put under the vague category of ‘world jazz’: a distant and exotic cousin, only faintly related to ‘America’s classical music’.

With changing times and mores, because of audience demand and critical acceptance, the worlds of jazz are no longer a saucerful of secrets, and collaborations that otherwise attracted little attention have come to the fore. The twenty-first century has seen jazz festivals celebrate cross-cultural collaborations from all over the world and, even more recently, promoters have expressed a keen interest in presenting music with a clear label and national identity, whether that is jazz or an ‘authentic other’. Thus, ‘Nordic jazz’, ‘Mugham jazz’, ‘Balkan jazz’ and other such denominators have gained more and more attention on an international and commercial arena. Scholars have, of course, followed these developments and jazz music from other parts of the world has been pushed from the periphery of musicological enquiry to the centre of attention. As a result, there have been significant advancements in documenting jazz in Scandinavia. Fabian Holt, as part of a larger effort to locate jazz in the world, explains how jazz in Scandinavia became associated with ‘home’ as a place of sensory construct that ‘always involves music’, noting that it can demonstrate its potential in ‘new forms of transnationalism in modernity’ (2016, 52–53). Francesco Martinelli’s *The History of European Jazz: The Music, Musicians and Audience in Context* (2018) surveys jazz in Europe: the focus is historical and includes thorough accounts of jazz in the Nordic region by Tore Mortensen (‘Denmark’), Jan Bruer (‘Sweden: 1919-1969’), Måns Wallgren (‘Sweden: 1970-2000’), Juha Henriksson (‘Finland’), Bjorn Stendahl (‘Norway’), and Vernhardur Linnét (‘Iceland’). Christopher Washburne explains that a number of extramural actors have played an important role in shaping Danish jazz into an independent and self-consciously Eurocentric expression. Washburne situates his examination within the context of ‘pan-European developments as well as the transnational dimensions that have been essential to jazz since its inception’ (2010, 124). John Ward examines the role that the internet has played in the underground global dissemination and preservation of jazz recordings from Northern artists (2011). Taking a wider perspective, journalist Luca Vitali has written one of the few monographs that focus on jazz in Norway (2015). The author identifies ‘the beginning’ of jazz’s Eurocentric expression in the role of U.S. musician George Russell, who is often portrayed as a jazz evangelist, a prophet without whom jazz in Norway would not have had its contemporaneous outlook. This seems, at first glance, problematic. Russell’s influence on jazz is undeniable and Vitali does well to highlight the cult status that important U.S. musicians enjoyed across the pond, but the particular discussion further mythologizes music and musicians, something from which jazz performance has routinely suffered since its very beginnings. Michael Tucker’s study of Jan Garbarek (1998) weaves

together a remarkable amount of musicological enquiry to discuss the work of the Norwegian jazz icon. I conclude this brief and partial historiographical excursus with Stuart Nicholson (2002; 2005; 2010), who has offered a sustained discussion of ‘the Nordic tone’. This is an issue taken up by Haftor Medbøe (2012) to challenge the essentialist ideals that confine jazz music to national borders.

Building on frameworks established by these authors, in this article I am concerned with how musical outputs by a range of artists across Scandinavia have been described by references to the region’s remote geography. I concentrate on the second half of the twentieth century, when important album releases were instrumental in imprinting ‘the Nordic tone’ – this perceived invisible force that seems to unite jazz production from across Scandinavia – in the consciousness of the broader public. To this end, I focus my analysis on ‘northernness’ in jazz by exploring how the patently monotonous demarcation of geographic location or nation in front of the term ‘jazz’ may refer to sonic difference but, more importantly, embodies a plethora of political, social, and cultural forces at play. In so doing, I attempt to summarize what are otherwise heavily loaded categories: I begin with race and ‘otherness’ in early jazz in Scandinavia to explore the various approaches taken towards jazz and its usability in questioning (or enriching) the rhetorical fabric attached to the philological enterprise of ‘northernness’. I then move on to explore cultural policy and the economies of jazz in the region, as well as a perceived aesthetic magnified by the press and its relationship to a dominant national(ist) meta-narrative. I conclude with a brief discussion of how these perceptions are communicated through folk music, technology, and typography. For my purposes, I engage with several paradigms from the Nordic region, but focus most prominently on examples from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. In this process, it is important to note, I have no intention in generalizing across populations from Scandinavia, nor do I subscribe to the association ‘Scandinavian’ or ‘Nordic’ jazz, but I do trust that narratives of ‘the Nordic tone’ were modelled on similar prototypes. Instead, where and when necessary throughout this article, I focus on more localized musical production and, like Holt, move from distinct moments to parallel national situations in the second half of the twentieth century, to highlight ‘an increasingly powerful identity of transnational Scandinavian and Nordic fusions that move beyond the pastoral models of the past and invoke a more abstract, placeless relation between music and North Atlantic wilderness’ (2016, 54). The elasticity of boundaries and meanings that I sketch here extends to the ontology of repertory and genre that has haunted jazz since its very beginnings.

Listening to the music, imagining ‘the other’: A brief history of jazz in Scandinavia

Jazz has for a long time now occupied a significant part of Scandinavian cultural life. From the first recordings of African-American music made in Sweden in 1899, ‘Cake Walk’ by the Kronoberg Society Regimental Band conducted by Erik Hogberg, to the Swedish entertainer Ernst Holf’s 1919 recording of his ‘Swedish Jazz Band’, as well as the first jazz acts to arrive in Norway, the English ‘Feldman’s Jazz Band’ and ‘The Five Jazzing Devils’, jazz has proved instrumental in articulating meanings and identities in

Scandinavia (Stendhal 2018). What did audiences understand by the term when it first appeared? Much like in the rest of the world, jazz was used to describe anything new, a trendy term often associated with frenzy music, forcing George Gershwin to admit as early as 1926, and only a few years into ‘the jazz age’, that jazz was used to denote so many different things it had ceased to have any definite meaning (Wyatt and Johnson 2004, 98). Equally, Anne Dvinge notes that the Danish public had a rather ‘hazy concept’ of what jazz was (Brown et al. 2014, 59). This ‘haziness’ resulted in jazz having an ambiguous relationship with taste hierarchies, high and low culture, as it developed an ability to bring together audiences of diverse economic backgrounds. Its attraction, Johan Fornäs explains, was ‘built upon the fact that large groups of musicians and dancing listeners were at the time looking for difference, novelty and surprise, and for cultural forms capable of expressing the new sensibilities and values of modern urban life’ (2003, 208). Olle Edström notes that in 1920s Sweden public dancing became increasingly common in restaurants and ballrooms. He explains that ‘the activity of going out dancing was often phrased as *att gå ut och jazz* (to go out and jazz). For some time, *jazza* generally meant “to dance”’ (2013, 481).

How did audiences and commentators of the time respond to the popular *jazzdansen* craze that had caught hold of the Nordic countries and the rest of the world by the end of the First World War? As these things often go, jazz was not immediately accepted. For the more conservative commentators of the time, jazz was vulgar, uncivilized, and its hedonism was seen as a threat to local morality and culture. Stendahl recounts the racist reception of the ‘Five Jazzing Devils’ in Norway in 1921 (2018, 238). Mortensen describes the ugly, racist and primitivistic accounts associated with Louis Armstrong’s visit to Denmark in 1933 (2018), whose first Swedish tour in the same year received a similar reception (Fornäs 2003). Equally, Washburne (2010) describes the hateful critiques that the international and interracial membership of Egberth Thompson’s group attracted in the Danish press. This is no surprise, perhaps, given the fascist sentiments and racial ideologies brewing in the region. Jazz was, after all, a culture originating primarily from African-Americans, disseminated widely by black and Jewish people and, to a lesser extent and in Europe, Gypsies. In the years leading up to World War II, traditional enemies of jazz, whether influenced by racist doctrines or not, joined the Nazi anti-jazz campaigns for their own purposes. Musicologist Theodor Adorno for example, who, as a Jew and one-time composition student of Arnold Schonberg, was in the process of losing his teaching privileges at the university but hoped to retain his influential position as critic for various musicological journals, was widely critical of jazz. Adorno not only cited approvingly National Socialist politicians such as Baldur von Schirach and Goebbels, but also mounted a scathing attack on jazz, applauding the imminent governmental prohibition against it (Kater 1989, 14). By 1937, in anticipation of the first climactic persecution of Jews in November the following year, verbal assaults on jazz as a Jewish cultural by-product became more vituperative, without forgetting the African-American contribution. For Max Merz, a fanatically *volkskisch* preceptor, the fight against jazz turned into an obsession (Kater 1989). He began lecturing audiences far and wide across the nation. For him, jazz was the symptom of an ‘inner crisis, which has touched the entire white race’ (1937, 16). Such

thinking saw jazz as the antipode to a music anchored solidly in a Nordic heritage (Blessinger 1938). Among the most controversial attacks that jazz received on racial grounds came from Nazi Erik Waller who saw the music's African-American imprints and the popularity of Jewish-American musicians as a threat to local morality and values (for more detailed readings see Bruer 1977, 3; Kater 1989; Fornäs 2003, 224; Brown et al. 2014, 66).

Conversely, for the more progressive critics, jazz was seen as a way to liberate local audiences from cultural conservatism. Fornäs notes that in their attempt to cope with modernity young Swedes interacted with what for a moment seemed to be its ultimate expression (2003); jazz was, after all, the music of the younger generation as much as rock 'n' roll and pop were to be later on. Jazz was a nation-defying and global popular music, one that became associated with the Harlem renaissance and the black civil rights movement, prohibition and the war effort, high fashion and Art Deco, sexual liberation, short skirts, and cigarette-smoking women (Brown et al. 2014, 57). For a good part of the twentieth century, it offered to youth platforms for resisting forces of repression and racism, of rising social inequality, and of hyper-capitalism, even though it became inextricably bound up with some of these same social dynamics (Chapman 2018). Some admired the blackness and sensuousness that jazz culture embodied, as opposed to the white and cerebral traditional Scandinavian values. In primitivistic rhetoric, songs and lyrics celebrated the happy swinging black folk, transposing blackness onto other ethnic minorities: Romani (Gypsy), or Sámi ('Lapps') people (Fornäs 2003; Brown et al. 2014). This is evident in the poem of the Swedish writer and national icon Artur Lundkvist (1906-1991):

Play Negro, black brother!
You new Christ, redeem us with your shining saxophone!
Set the flesh on fire,
Bestow us with that primordial bliss and smell of earth in the morning—

Stun us!
Deliver us from the ordinary, from what has been and what is,
From all the memories, all the deeds, from the thousands of years of
civilization—

Fornäs explains that Lundkvist's 'articulate primitivism, was a marginal position in the Swedish mainstream at the time, even if beliefs about racial primitivism were widely echoed in popular culture in less programmatic ways (Brown et al. 2014, 59; for a more detailed reading see Fornäs 2003).

Key here to understanding how the music was received in Scandinavia is a discussion of how persistent the European drive towards transatlantic 'othering' was for a good part of the twentieth century. As much as jazz was 'the music of urban modernity' it was also a template of exoticism (B. Johnson 2002, 41; for a similar reading see Fornäs 2003). This contributed to the reception of Scandinavian (and, to a broader extent, white) musicians as more intellectual than traditional black bearers of jazz culture (for a similar reading see Brown et al. 2014). Within this context, Scandinavian musicians

offered an antithesis to the ‘noble savage’ myth that had tortured jazz since its early days, a prejudiced rhetorical practice that had foundations for arguments about diasporic forms of African music as essentially rhythmic, which guided the interpretation and analysis of jazz for most of the twentieth century. Ronald Radano (2003) has traced the origins of this sort of essentialism to early European writing about the African continent, in which perceptions of savagery and primitivism were linked to African dance and musical performance, highlighting the civility and supremacy of white cultural products. Extensions of this ‘noble savage’ Enlightenment motif typified French jazz critiques during the interwar period, especially the idea that unique musical ability resided in the biology of African descendants (Jackson 2002). The institutional centre of early French jazz criticism, Hugues Panassié, Charles Delaunay, and Robert Gofin, had strong links to the primitivistic movement. For them, the primitive was something positive, a romanticized ideal towards which artists should aspire. Panassié praised African-American musicians but in terms that revealed insulting presuppositions about the nature of African-American culture (Monson 1994, 286). Commentators of the time wrote of black rhythm and white harmony, of black talent and white knowledge, reinforcing a historic essentialization of rhythm in African-American musical discourse. For Panassié (1936) the ability to ‘swing’ resided in the biological predisposition of African descendants towards an overtly percussive musical style. The tendency of an eroticized subculture to stand for the jazz community has been widely resented, and such perspectives distorted the general perception of African-American cultural life, in which jazz was the product of ‘untutored, unbuttoned semi literates for whom jazz history does not exist’ (Marsalis 1988, 21). Ingrid Monson reports that during her ethnographical research one of her interviewees remarked in passing that ‘If a black man knows some shit, that’s talent. If the white guy knows the same shit, he’s smart’ (1994, 311). Of course, this stance was not exclusive to jazz. The work of poet Langston Hughes, for example, received similar reception. Given North America’s historic, symbolic, and de facto centrality for the jazz world, it should come as no surprise that this narrative pattern of ‘northernness’ played a significant role in polarizing jazz discourse.

In Scandinavia, jazz did not long remain a commodity, a world-music fad framed by an exotic gaze destined to be consumed and forgotten. On the contrary, the music grew steadily from humble beginnings and local artists left their mark on jazz’s historical legacy; a mark that is thoroughly imprinted on the music’s contemporary outlook. In this journey, from exotic to modernist, from folk to art music, Scandinavian musicians played an important role in emancipating European jazz from its North American counterpart; their innovations anticipated only by Django Reinhardt’s adventurous musical excursions within the context of the *Quintette du Hot Club de France*. On one occasion, Stuart Nicholson observed that ‘the Nordic tone’ constituted the first major global fusion of jazz and musical cultures from around the world outside the US (2002, 241). George Russell even compared Garbarek’s contribution to that of Django Reinhardt (1970), as did Joe H. Klee, writing for *Downbeat* in 1972. Indeed, in the European case the Nordic framing was of a particular importance and Scandinavian musicians contributed original, robust interpretations of North American jazz. But jazz

generated far greater meaning than the music's audience and was represented in a striking number of ways and by a variety of means; understandably then, jazz in Scandinavia developed along some of the central paradoxes of our age: between modern and primitive, between individualism and collectivism, between authenticity and interpretation, and between grassroots and mainstream.

Taking a broader view, I do not fully agree with Nicholson's observation on the originality of the fusion inherent in 'the Nordic tone'. Historical particularities allowed jazz to flourish in some parts of the world more than in others. During the Second World War, for example, whilst record productions in the U.S. had come to a halt because of the Musicians' Union strike, in Denmark 650 jazz records were released during the occupation; a substantial increase from the 270 released in the 1930s. The Danish Broadcasting Corporation regularly transmitted local jazz production on the radio, a policy silently sanctioned by the Nazis to keep the Danes away from Allied propaganda transmitted by the BBC and on American shortwave signals (Mortensen 2017, 175; Brown et al. 2014, 64), but also because of the relative failure of the regime to stamp out jazz due to the confusion about permissible standards and of a lack of definition for what constituted jazz (Kater 1989). For Holt, Sweden's policy of neutrality during the Second World War benefited Swedish jazz in shaping a recognizable Scandinavian sound (2016), whilst for Jan Bruer this resultant self-sufficiency meant that Swedish musicians were isolated rather than empowered (1977). From its very beginning of its inception, however, and more importantly for my purposes here, because of the menacing colonial networks established by the British Empire, jazz quickly found its ways to distant places, where local musicians fused indigenous musics with jazz. Naresh Fernandes (2012) and Bradley Shope (2008), for example, have shown that Mumbai, a city distinguished for its influence on both archipelago traders and colonial culture, boasted an impressive – in both number and jazz pedigree – volume of music and musicians. In Mumbai, Goan musicians were quick to embrace jazz and Western popular music and, concomitantly, the power and success that their African-American counterparts commanded in there. The resulting diversity of the music scene in the mass-mediated space of urban Mumbai challenged ways of thinking about global modernity in terms of colonization, westernization, modernisation, urbanisation, and Indianisation as Martin Stokes maintains (2004). Jazz in Scandinavia, conversely, did not evolve as 'global fusion'; rather, I argue – succumbing to the traps that one's subjective responses to music results in – that Scandinavian jazz artists proposed an alternative to the dominant jazz expression, but within the parameters that defined North American jazz. This is an issue to which I return later.

'The sound of jingling kroner': cultural policy and transnational exchange

The support that the arts receive in Scandinavia dominate public discussions of jazz in 'the north' (Andriessen 2017, Jarenwattananon 2012, Mercer 2013, Nicholson 2010, O'Dair 2009, Potter 2005, Williams 2005). Christopher Washburne recounts how cross-cultural exchanges at Café Montmartre prompted the Danish Ministry of Culture to recognize the benefits of the club's booking policies for local culture and to provide

governmental subsidies for the club's operations (starting in 1972), a practice that continues to this day (2010, 131). The Danish composers' and musicians' organizations in cooperation with the *Danish Music Information Centre* (MIC) distributes Danish music of all kinds to radio stations, music magazines and newspapers, critics, and promoters all over the world, through a special grant from the Danish ministry of foreign affairs. Similarly, 'in today's strained environment for arts support', Michelle Mercer notes, 'the funding wonderland of Norway can incite jealousy' (2013). Since the mid-1950s jazz awards have been established (the 'Buddy-Prizen' by the Norwegian Jazz Federation, the JazzIntro prize for young musicians), school curricula have been changed to accommodate musical developments, and audiences have embraced the new music. Public support has helped the country's improvised-music scene expand from a handful of artists in the late 1960s to a thriving network of recording, performing, and work opportunities today. Mercer comments: 'It's a cliché to refer to a "Nordic tone" in Norwegian jazz. Many still do, ascribing the geography of fjords and mountains to even the most urban musical productions. But', she concludes humorously 'if a single tone underlies Norwegian improvised music, it's probably the sound of jingling kroner' (2013). Grants from, among others, Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Arts Council's Ensemble Support, and the Norwegian Jazz Launch scheme, have generously supported many overseas tours. Equally, jazz is nurtured at influential higher education institutions, a point emphasized by Rune Kristofferson and British saxophonist Ian Ballamy (Williams 2005).

State-sponsored cultural policies, an upsurge in nationalistic fervour, broader political and economic changes in Scandinavia, and the efforts of both public and private institutions in collusion with local and visiting musicians, have over the years propelled jazz musicians from Scandinavia to become some of the most distinctive in Europe. But such policies were the result of continuous efforts by musicians to gain respectability for their craft, as the 1968 Swedish demonstrations evidence (Figure 1). The demands raised became concrete politics through a radicalized labour movement that stretched over several decades from the close of the 1950s until the dawn of the 1980s.



Figure 1. Cover of the album *Music in Sweden 3* (1977)

One may trace such activism in the early days when jazz began to creep into Scandinavian life, and for a moment the jazz craze became a threat to local musicians' employment. The Danish Musicians' Union, for example, strived to ensure employment for its members: in 1927 they created a rule stating that foreign orchestras and musicians could not work without hiring a corresponding number of local Danish musicians (Brown et al. 2014, 60). Like elsewhere in the world, such policies allowed visiting U.S. jazz artists to meet local musicians and engage in mutually beneficial collaborations, which allowed local musicians to play with more experienced players and maverick young musicians to test their craft against the jazz elite. Among the countless examples, bassist Nils-Henning Ørsted Pedersen is perhaps one of the most celebrated. Pedersen's regular work at Café Montmartre in Copenhagen led to a lifetime of collaboration with pianist Oscar Peterson. The booking policy at Café Montmartre drew from the Musicians' Union's 1927 policy, ensuring that the entourage of visiting musicians, 'jazz greats', was made up of local Danish players. Such cross-cultural exchanges also had a profound impact on international jazz musical production. To give

one such example, ‘Ack Värmland, du sköna’, a traditional Swedish folk song that has been appropriated in diverse contexts, has been broadly known in jazz circles as ‘Dear Old Stockholm’ since the well-known renditions by Stan Getz (1951) and Miles Davis (1952). The introduction by Davis on a D pedal is perhaps an example of the modal sonic imprint that this influence left on the music (example 1).

Example 1. ‘Dear Old Stockholm’ with an introduction by Miles Davis (1952).

Sounding ‘the North’: Folk music, contexts, and collaborations

Jan Garbarek has been widely acknowledged as a central figure in the emergence of a distinctively Scandinavian tone in twentieth-century jazz and his music has somehow been exclusively associated with exotic images of the north, melancholy and cold, rainy and deserted. Writing for *Jazzwise Magazine*, Nicholson described Garbarek’s music as combining the intensity of Albert Ayler with the economy of Dexter Gordon, but inscribed with Nordic folkloric allusions (2010), a comparison that has often been repeated (Whitehead 2012). On another occasion Nicholson credits the saxophonist’s music as representing ‘an ordered calm’, noting that Garbarek ‘created an evocative tranquillity strongly rooted in Nordic folk-forms that gave prominence to his saxophone tone as the main expressive force’ (2002, 243). Garbarek’s ‘Nordic tone’ has also been described as sparse and cold, an open sound that evokes the moods of the long nights and short days in the northern landscapes of the Nordic countries (Knauer 2009; Ward 2011). Vitali explains the ‘Nordic tone’ as a distinctive mood evoking ‘snow, mountains and icy fjords’ (2018). Equally, Whitehead (2012) likens Garbarek’s saxophone howl to an icy wind blowing off a fiord, whilst Bourne describes the saxophonist’s sound as ‘sometimes dark and robust, or high and shimmering (not unlike the Northern Lights)’ (1986, 27). Holt explains Garbarek’s sound as ‘clear and majestic, with the long, wide reverb of a mountain valley’. For Holt, the saxophonist’s lyrical folk-based melodies are key in painting an image of him as ‘a sincere storyteller’ (2016, 52). The plethora of references to the integration folk material and geography in discussions of jazz in the

music of Garbarek invite special attention. Garbarek's 1971 album *Afric Pepperbird*, for example, has been instrumental in defining a particular Nordic sensibility, despite the fact that he did not use any Norwegian folk material until his recording *Triptykon* (1972).¹ Still, lopsided historiographical portrayals have become the norm for Garbarek's music, reaching back to the 1970s when, Nicholson argues, 'the Nordic tone' was given its present transhistorical status (2002). Garbarek's sustained interest in folk music from around the world became clear with *Folk Songs* (1981), a stellar collaboration between the saxophonist, bassist Charlie Haden, and guitarist Egberto Gismonti. His particular interest in Sámi culture is particularly evident in his *Legend of the Seven Dreams* (1988), *I Took Up the Runes* (1990), as well as *Twelve Moons* (1993). But he repeatedly noted that it was a U.S. musician, trumpeter Don Cherry, who encouraged him to seek inspiration in folk music, and that he was not motivated by the light of any status accorded to folk music during that period.

Pianist Jan Johansson's 1964 recording *Jazz på svenska*, the best-selling Swedish jazz record of all time, is often accredited as the most influential album in defining the 'Nordic tone' in jazz. Recorded in 1962–63, *Jazz på svenska* draws its material from an anthology of 8000 Swedish melodies and folk songs. Johansson's music is described as 'a Scandinavian kind of blues that places intensity, tone, space and meaning ahead of virtuosic athleticism' (Nicholson 2010). Johansson, an accomplished pianist who had toured and recorded as a member of the Stan Getz quartet in 1960, appropriated old Swedish folk melodies from the collection *Svenska låtar*. He had begun exploring Swedish folk music during his music theatre stint at Chalmer's Technical College in Gothenburg between 1953 and 1955 (Holt 2016, 59). Gothenburg was the second biggest city of jazz in Sweden at the time, which Holt attributes to the fact that the city was the primary port for sea traffic from North America. Kjellberg describes how Johansson researched Swedish folk music (1998, 16–22) and, although the pianist did not record folk songs until later, in 1961 he became active in both the folk and jazz scenes. In 1961, he recorded the album *8 bitar*, released in the U.S. as *Sweden Non-Stop*, which received a rare four-and-a-half stars from *Downbeat* magazine. The record documents a selection of standard songs and original compositions, as well as the Swedish folk melody 'De sålde sina hemman'. Nicholson explains that Johansson's *Jazz på svenska* secured substantial airplay on Scandinavian radio, especially in Sweden, propelling two songs from this bestselling album, 'Visa från Utanmyra' and 'Emigrantvisa', to become adopted as a symbol of Nordic tradition in the midst of an increasingly pluralistic culture (2002, 241). His music is often understood as being influential on Jan Garbarek, Esbjörn Svensson and, among others, Tord Gustavsen. Nicholson notes that:

By the time of Johansson's premature death in 1968, the Vietnam War was causing a crisis of conscience, prompting a lively debate around nationalism

¹ Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stanko also stands out because of his long history of playing with jazz musicians from the Nordic countries. I do not engage with Stanko here, who poses an interesting paradigm. While not from Scandinavia himself, his contributions were highly influential in shaping the concept of northerness in jazz.

and what constituted the national soul. Johansson's music fitted perfectly into a Scandinavian culture that had become intent on reclaiming its Nordic sensibility, and music from *Jazz på svenska* was in perfect synchronicity with the times, assuming the trappings of a 'visionary statement'. Odd Sneeggen (of Svensk musik) claimed it was 'a rural symbol of security in a [Scandinavia] marching towards anonymous big city wildernesses' (2002, 242).

Johansson's carefully nuanced sound, the gradation of his touch and the exquisite detail of his playing communicates a sort of purity in the melodic and folk material. His work resonates in more modern efforts, such as in Jan Lungren's recording *Swedish Standards* (1997), which includes a selection of Swedish hymns, folksongs, and popular songs which for Fabian Holt play into the pianist's imagination of home and are inseparable from 'the concepts of the vernacular, local, and national' (2016, 62).

Johansson's merger of Scandinavian folk music and jazz came with the backdrop of a long tradition. In 1929, Kristian Hauger led an eight-piece band that recorded the song 'Norwegian Jazz Fantasy', a jazz-influenced potpourri of Norwegian folk songs (Stendhal 2018). While it is impossible to compare these efforts, the latter conceived as light entertainment, it is remarkable to notice the material that the musicians chose to interpret, as well as the power of assimilation they saw in those forms of early jazz. In the late 1930s, the Swedish singer Alice Babs combined swing with yodelling which, for Fornäs, offered a more familiar exoticism than jazz, given that European mountains were commonly used as exotic ingredients in domestic entertainment (2003, 241). In 1952, Lars Gullin, an accomplished baritone saxophonist, recorded an arrangement of 'Sov du lilla vida ung', a nineteenth century poem by Zachris Topelius, set to music by the Swedish composer Alice Charlotte Tegnér and published in 1895. For the Norwegian critic Bjørn Kolstad, jazz in Europe had by that time taken on new forms; he noted: 'jazz has hitherto been practised by many gifted European musicians. But European jazz has not previously adapted itself to any national characteristic style, it has been a slavish copy of American ideals, and it has in fact been evaluated according to how closely it could copy American models.' (quoted in Nicholson 2002, 133) Writing for the Norwegian daily newspaper *Bergens Tidende*, Kolstad praised Gullin and concluded 'we felt we were on home ground, we felt that perhaps we, in our small corner of the world, could in such a way make jazz our own' (ibid.). Indeed, such cultural outputs may at first glance seem to be nationalizing jazz by integrating the music into more highbrow Scandinavian culture, yet Gullin's take on 'Sov du lilla vida ung' poses an interesting problem. The melody is performed freely, with piano accompaniment, and is simply presented. Conversely, after the exposition of the melody, Gullin takes a 32-bar solo, which is followed by another chorus by the pianist, and bassist, before the recapitulation of the melody. Here we are presented with two contrasting images. Gullin's 'Sov du lilla vida ung' is, to my knowledge, one of the first melodies performed in such manner in jazz performance; such freely played melodies before structured improvisations became quite regular practice in later years in U.S. jazz. But Gullin's choice to perform a 32-bar solo, his phrasing, and the quality of the

chord changes, are notably closer to its North American counterparts than later attempts to integrate folk material into jazz practice.

Swedish trumpeter Bengt-Arne Wallin's *Old Folklore in Swedish Modern* (1962) was another recording that, although steeped in U.S. cool-jazz aesthetics, is considered a document of Scandinavian jazz identity. In the sleeve notes of the homonymous album, Wallin noted that folksongs are a kind of definite music 'not as notes on paper but as a living phenomenon, created by the right people, inherited and made perfect through the generations – and still full of life today' (quoted in Tucker 1998, 156). Writing for *Downbeat* magazine, Don DeMicheal commented favourably on Svend Asmussen's 'cool Nordic playing' (1963, 22). Given the proximity of the recordings, would it be fair to understand these cultural outputs as the product of strong-willed individuals, shaped by forces of chance and an invisible logic inherent in social change, or as situated within particular constellations of ideas and concerns, developed against a backdrop of Nordic cultural resurgence? The list of collaborations and initiatives that I discuss is partial but shows that, all at different times and contexts, they share something as important as their attempt to nationalize jazz: namely, the imagination and the capacity of folk material to encourage musicians and listeners to reconceive the possibilities of the past, present, and future outside of the parameters of established narratives, as well as jazz's capacity to shape such narratives. The 'Nordic tone' then, although as a term was artificially coined, was a particularly important site of collective cultural meaning; one that became part of the national narrative of jazz in Scandinavia.

Whilst it may be difficult to find sustained expressions of an elaborated generational 'folk consciousness' in Scandinavia, the elision of folk songs and nationalism was crucial in the advancement of 'northernness' in jazz. Musicians sought to develop their own versions of jazz and sonic signatures, 'voices' that express identities rooted in their historical and cultural positions as Nordic (again a point laboured in several of the interviews discussed previously). This was seen positively in jazz discourse communities. Saxophonist Ian Ballamy praised the Norwegian success in nurturing a generation of highly creative musicians with a firm grasp of their own cultural heritage and an instinct for experimentation. He noted: 'They have a strong folklore tradition and a healthy nationalism of the kind we've lost in Britain. They're well educated, fearless in their willingness to pile in with whatever's happening, and they're supported by the state.' (Williams 2005) This type of Scandinavian romanticism seems to legitimize local jazz production, responding to concerns that jazz had no relationship with Scandinavian culture. Also, for Holt the appeal of folk music to jazz musicians was because its status as a more authentic genre than contemporaneous popular music (2016), a point that is confirmed by the ample comparisons between folk music and the blues. Here we are faced with issues concerning the negotiation of identification processes, where the local infiltrates the global and vice versa. The consumption ethos that characterizes the music industry as well as the development of mass-media forms of communication has played an important role in disseminating national imaginations, as well as in shaping dominant norms of 'northernness'. This is an idea that resonates with Benedict Anderson, who argues that it is through such developments of mass-media communication that any national imagination can be disseminated (1991).

The notion of nation as a collective identity or community through a shared ethnic, linguistic, or cultural heritage (see Hobsbawm 1997) may be crucial in the advancement of any discussion of ‘the Nordic tone’. But to what extent have historical tensions in Norway been articulated in jazz, and how justified are we in retrospectively hearing, for example, Garbarek’s work as the individual expression of a collective Nordic jazz identity? It begs the question as to whether the first sustained attempts at integration of jazz and folk songs and the formation of the Nordic council in 1952 were a mere coincidence, or whether broader forces drew artists into such explorations. This is not to say that jazz encourages nation building; it does quite the opposite, in fact, in George Lewis’s succinct take: jazz celebrates difference and the imperative of criticality, ‘always inconvenient, even anathema, to the myth making that attends nation building’ (2016, xxii). In his exploration of Grieg, Daniel Grimley (2006) cites Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, for whom the collective process of invention is central to the operation of any temporal vision; for Anderson the process of invention through which a nation imagines itself is one of the defining features of nationhood: ‘communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined’ (Anderson 1991, 6). For Hobsbawm, the process of invention is allied to the idea of a national tradition, ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (1983, 1). That nationalist notions such as these are old suggests that they will outlive their usefulness; yet, whatever the critical reservations, as markers of the cultural commonalities that have resulted from the presence and legacy of ‘the Nordic Tone’, their days may not be over. The prominence of Scandinavian jazz artists in festivals around the world and, more importantly, the way their outputs are discussed, demonstrates how the notion of nationalism still resonates with political discussions in jazz discourse communities, not only in Europe but also in the wider world.

Several of the aforementioned cultural outputs by Johansson and others seemed to translate jazz into Scandinavian contexts. But are they to be taxonomized in discussions of nationalizing jazz in twentieth-century Scandinavian life or in discussions of musical cosmopolitanism? In this instance, the line between the two seems rather blurry. Comments such as those by Garbarek could be easily understood within an ecumenical space of jazz performance, as internationalist rather than nationalist; yet, there are undeniably elements of both, which opens up a whole new spectrum of meaning constructions and interpretations. ‘We have players from any part of the world now doing their own [...] native version. They find their own direction, influenced by their own culture, but still using the very strong basic elements of jazz’, Garbarek notes (Bourne 1986, 26). He explains his work as an attempt to bridge the divide between the international community and his traditions, allowing us to listen to his musical outputs as a move towards global sensibility rather than nationalist exclusivity. The focus on community and collaboration, the abundance of references to spirituality, and the internationalist profile that the artists maintain may reinforce this last point. In reviewing *From Gagarin’s Point of View* (1999), a collaboration between the pianist

Esbjörn Svensson with the bassist Dan Berglund and drummer Magnus Öström that maintains an important place in the pantheon of most influential jazz recordings, Stuart Nicholson praised ‘the honest humanity’ of the musicians’ playing, noting their attachment to ‘deeply felt melody, unhurried intensity, framed with the Nordic Tone’ (2010). This is in striking contrast to the accepted ethos of improvisation in more traditional, straight-ahead, forms of North American jazz,² where market-centred ideologies have celebrated a masculinist, heroic, individualism, and the dexterous risks that soloists take in turbulent environments, celebrated at least since Ralph Ellison’s famous assertion quoted below:

There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity; as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition. Thus, because jazz finds its very life in improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazz man must lose his identity even as he finds it (1995, 234).

Jazz discourse has customarily valorized the tropes of storytelling as a metaphor for improvisation, but we have seen that the stories that Scandinavian musicians have to tell are rather different from those in the U.S. As much as North American jazz, during the 1940s in particular, became known for its after-hours and masculinist demonstrations of virtuosic bravado, jazz musicians in Scandinavia became known for their contributions to shifting the focus onto other aspects of performance, namely attention to sound and minimalism. Minimalism as virtuosic performance implies a certain critical skill in the deployment of one’s abilities: the ‘control’ demonstrated by performers attracts particular prestige as it shifts the focus from *execution* to *judgment*. A heightened sensitivity to ordinariness of tone could almost be seen as the rejection of virtuosity, in particular by a performer no less capable of dazzling audiences. The value of this minimalistic sensibility, as demonstrated by the clarity and economy of many Scandinavian jazz musicians, is that it can be interpreted as being more communal; whereas virtuosity sets the performer apart from their colleagues, minimalism and collaboration celebrates the ordinary and the shared skills whilst allowing the appreciation of singular differences (see Ramsay 2017 for a similar discussion on dance). Such dichotomies rendered Scandinavian jazz musicians as the antithesis to the aesthetic conservatism that neo-classicist jazz cliques have in more recent years represented, allowing, once more, fluid and contestable ideas of jazz, and for jazz scenes to be understood as culturally charged sites of identities.

² For a discussion of straight-ahead jazz see Travis Jackson (2012, 6).

Technological prosthesis and mediated geography: ‘Seeing northerness’ in Scandinavian jazz

Afric Pepperbird signalled the collaboration between Garbarek and Manfred Eicher’s Edition of Contemporary Music records (ECM), a long lasting and mutually beneficial relationship that shaped the future of both the Norwegian saxophonist and the iconic label. Mervyn Cooke has already noted the significance of the ECM label ‘in establishing a variety of internationally appreciated musical idioms’ (2017, 5), as well as its importance in ‘drawing European jazz thinking to the attention of American players and audiences in the 1970s’ (9). ECM was paramount to the idea of ‘the Nordic tone’; pianist Bobo Stenson notes and affirms the role that Eicher played in shaping a broader European jazz aesthetic. Pat Metheny was critical of Eicher: for him the iconic producer’s resistance to employing musicians who could swing was crucial in producing a non-American sound (Metheny interviewed by John Alan Smith 1978, 53). From its beginning, the company sought to transmit a subtle ‘aesthetic of atmospheres’ that suggested a ‘sound scenario of nature and history’ (ECM: Sleeve notes of *Desire* 1996, 14; quoted in Nicholson 2002, 243), which brings to mind the work of later electroacoustic composers’ sound painting and acousmatic environments rather than established outputs in the jazz idiom. Although today, musicians and sound engineers exchange information about how to get the ECM sound, going as far as to suggest microphone set-ups and other technological specificities, Eicher has given a plethora of interviews in which he explains that there is little technological prosthesis to ECM production. The fact that ECM albums have been recorded in several places and not in one location may emphasize Eicher’s point, who insists that ECM’s success is due to engaged listening and a selected roster of musicians. But the iconic producer did in fact record Garbarek playing against a Norwegian fjord to capture a more natural reverb sound in *Dis* (1976) which had a profound effect on the reception of the saxophonist’s music.

The understated typography, abstract paintings, and photography that accompany ECM album covers create a mood similar in effect, although not in style, to the iconic work of Reid Miles in the heyday of the Blue Note label, or that of Sadamitsu ‘S. Neil’ Fujita for Columbia. As much as the soulful Blue Note recordings where distinguishable for the images of black artists sweating and yielding to their instruments, over the years, visual cues of Scandinavian localities fed an idea of ‘northerness’ to the public. A recent audio-visual feature of the music of Tord Gustavsen on the ECM’s official YouTube channel cross-fades images of the trio with scenes of lakes, snowy mountains and landscapes suggestive of the Nordic countries, all juxtaposed with a yacht humorously named ‘Fjord’. Garbarek’s 1984 album *It’s OK to Listen to the Gray Voice* in particular drew from the Swedish poet Tomas Gösta Tranströmer, whose work, for Tucker (1998), reveals a close relationship to the Nordic landscape, whilst the iconography of his *All Those Born with Wings* features two photographs of the Aurora Borealis. Ole Kock Hansen’s *På en grøn bakketop* (1978), for example, included a Danish flag on the cover. Pedersen’s 1990 recording *Hommage: Once Upon a Time*, which includes the track ‘Det haver så nyeligen regnet’ – a song that has survived in Denmark as a national

song, sung every year to commemorate Denmark's liberation at the end of World War II – displays on its cover an ideal Danish village (figure 2).³



Figure 2. Pedersen's 'Danish village', Hansen's piano playing posture on a backdrop of a typical Danish landscape that also includes a Danish flag, Johansson's *Jazz på Svenska*, and the Runestones's *Exodus*.

Birgitte Sandve explains that traditional notions of national identity were re-actualized in the 1960s when Norway experienced significant immigration from non-Western countries. She notes that the 'invention of Norway' was centred upon images of nature and traditional peasant life and notes the Romantic movement's increased attention to nationalism in poetry and folk tales, visual arts, and traditional folk music (Sandve

³ Still, in the plethora of records produced in Scandinavia, such visual cues were not the norm as the informative *Jazz Birka Archive* tells us: http://birkajazz.se/archive/sweden_3.htm.

2015, 47). This is of course not to diminish the imagination of any of the aforementioned artists, who have the right and need to imagine and visualize their music within whatever context they deem necessary. But it is important to investigate the discourse communities in the arts or the wider public and the extent to which these efforts were situated within a broader fabric of concerns. Although any claims about music as actively shaping contemporary conceptions of place and geography are only formulated as tentative suggestions, perhaps the presence of these visual cues have the power to instil in listeners a novel sense of geography and, in their own fragile way, to allow them to envision a distant and impenetrable celestial ‘other’.

Visual cues to landscape and geography have been important in making jazz a saleable commodity to audiences worldwide as well as in how jazz artists negotiated their representation, but were not exclusive to jazz production from Scandinavia. Mervyn Cooke notes that Pat Metheny’s work *New Chautauqua* (1978) ‘embodied a prominent “Americana” dimension, partly as a result of a fresh perspective on his homeland’ (2017, 117). Like his Scandinavian counterparts, Metheny’s inventions departed from mainstream jazz styles and reworked musical material that fell under the broad category of ‘country’ music. Cooke explains that country music had also a profound influence on vibraphonist Gary Burton, with whom Metheny previously had played for several years:

In 1967, Burton was playing with [Larry] Coryell, who had in the 1950s been influenced by country guitarist Chet Atkins, whose example inspired him to play ‘finger style’ in a mix of country, classical, and jazz techniques. Burton had spent some time in Nashville as a teenager during the summer of 1960 and he was later to draw broad parallels between jazz and country music on account of their shared rhythmic drive, improvised solos, and ‘an enormous respect for instrumental skill and creativity’ on the part of the players. (Cooke 2017, 117)

In later years, bassist Charlie Haden who, although North American, was influential in establishing a distinctive European aesthetic to jazz described the duo album with him and Metheny *Beyond the Missouri Sky* (1997) as ‘contemporary impressionistic Americana’ (sleeve notes, 5). Metheny highlighted the importance of Midwestern landscapes in his creation of a rural-sounding jazz-rooted Americana, paying particular attention to the simplicity and clarity of the countryside (for a detailed reading see Cooke 2017, 117–150). In similar terms, it is perhaps surprising to hear Havana-born flautist, composer, and vocalist Magela Herrera talk about inspiration drawn from Norway’s white landscapes, forests, and fog. Herrera explains that living in this Nordic country for six years afforded her a different way of ‘seeing’ music. She refers to the song ‘Ahora’, from her new album *Explicaciones* (2019), for which she took inspiration from Norway’s natural landscape and beauty: the mountains, the smell of the air, the vibe of the cities and people, and even Norwegian folk music (C. M. Johnson 2019).

Conclusion

As much as studying jazz outside the U.S. has much to teach us about the increased cultural complexity involved in modern jazz production, studying jazz in Scandinavia invites us to reconsider notions of ‘northernness’. If there are certain inherited aesthetic predilections in accounts of jazz music from ‘the north’, the music’s inherent ambiguities have made it a particularly tempting place to seek validation for descriptions that may otherwise limit the music to a particular imagery. My observations here are not ultimately geared toward the conclusion that commentators should avoid talking about ‘the Nordic tone’, but that such descriptions are all too easy to attribute to certain cultural outputs, and that they confine music that may resist categorization into predetermined classifications. Jazz production from Scandinavia is worthy of some serious ethnographic and historical study; rather than distort it to fit in a particular description of ‘northernness’ we should seek to delve deeper into the bewildering richness of its particular spatial realities. If anything, studying how jazz has been assimilated in the world outside the U.S. teaches us how jazz – a music invoked by so many diverse cultures in so many places – has been used as a tool in overcoming the national fragmentation and monotonous appreciation it may receive. Most importantly, it sets smaller music cultures against grander narratives (the place of jazz in the world as well as the place of the world in jazz), telling us, in this instance, how under special conditions jazz and folk music have been reimagined. In this respect, I am reminded of Scott DeVeaux’s formulation where, in his celebrated essay on jazz historiography, he noted that ‘the struggle is over the act of definition that is presumed to lie at the history’s core; for it is an article of faith that some central essence named jazz remains constant throughout all the dramatic transformations that have resulted in modern day jazz’ (1994, 528). The paradox lies in that the locally situated expressions and discursive productions of national imaginaries, ‘the Nordic tone’, ‘Mugham jazz’, ‘Balkan jazz’, and so forth, although they are brought on for a variety of reasons by young generations of musicians invested in establishing locally inflected musical explorations, and the transformative political, economic, and cultural European landscape which emerged in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War, they are always part of a bigger picture that includes, well, the world.

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NORTHERN GENEALOGIES IN ‘THE SNOW QUEEN’ AND *FROZEN*

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Abstract

H. C. Andersen’s ‘The Snow Queen’ (1844) and its self-professed adaptation *Frozen* (2013) both maintain a combined focus on origins and development. I approach the two texts as narratives that explain aspects of human life by showing how they came into being – as accounts that, although not primarily historical, are still bound up with genealogical ways of thinking: how, and from what beginnings, do humans and their communities evolve? What happens in the transition from non-existence to being? In both texts, the northern setting is a requisite part of these narratives of development – in the dual sense of growth and emergence. In this article, I describe the interaction between the texts’ genealogical discourses and their northern settings. I also discuss how the two texts reflect and rephrase current and past discourses where northerness is associated with genealogical issues.

Keywords: ‘*The Snow Queen*’; ‘*Sneedronningen*’; H. C. Andersen; *Frozen*; *Genealogy*; *Northernness*; *Arctic literature*

Beginnings

In their final passages, both H. C. Andersen’s ‘The Snow Queen’ (1844) and its self-professed adaptation *Frozen* (2013) turn to face back in time, leading the reader’s or audience’s attention towards their apparently simple beginnings. At the end of the film *Frozen*, Elsa, the queen who has returned from her exile on the North Mountain, uses her special gifts to create winter fun for the citizens of Arendelle, much like she did with her sister Anna in a blissful past (1:31:36). At the end of ‘The Snow Queen’, Gerda and Kai have cracked the Snow Queen’s ‘ice puzzle of the mind’ (7)¹ and are finally home again. The narrator stresses their adulthood but still places them in children’s chairs, piously listening as the Grandmother reads from the Bible. The two texts tell stories about coming of age by placing particular value on the retrograde tendencies in the characters’ growth. Gerda, Kai, Elsa, and Anna can only embark upon adult life after having returned to something ingenuous and originary.

Despite their status as central texts in their respective genres, and despite a growing research interest, few attempts have been made to discuss H. C. Andersen’s fairy tale and The Walt Disney Company’s animated musical adaptation in context. Considering the distance between the two, one might rather see *Frozen* as an appropriation of Andersen’s tale (cf. Schmerheim 2015, 5). Apart from the northern setting, the

¹ When I cite from Maria Tatar’s unpaginated edition of ‘The Snow Queen’ (Andersen 2007[1844]) the numbers in parentheses refer to chapter numbers. In the case of *Frozen*, I use timestamps from the DVD edition (Del Vecho, Buck, and Lee 2014[2013]), occasionally combined with page references to the film’s script (Lee 2013).

similarities are limited. In the ‘The Snow Queen’, the main plot is constructed around Gerda’s quest to find her playmate Kai, who has been abducted after first getting his judgment impaired by splinters from an enchanted, satirically smirking mirror. In *Frozen*, the protagonist Elsa is compelled to hide her magical ability to manipulate snow and ice after a childhood accident involving her little sister Anna. Unable to conceal her powers on the day of her coronation, Elsa is branded as a monster. After a number of hardships, and with the help of her universally affectionate sister, she returns to society with new confidence.

The combined focus on origins and development is maintained throughout both texts. In this article, I view them as narratives ‘that explai[n] an aspect of human life by showing how it came into being’ (Bevir 2008, 263) – as accounts that, although not primarily historical, are still bound up with genealogical ways of thinking: how, and from what beginnings, do humans and their communities evolve? What happens in the transition from non-existence to being? In both texts, the northern setting is a requisite part of implicitly or explicitly formulated narratives about how people and communities develop – in the dual sense of growth and emergence. In this article, I attempt to describe the interaction between the texts’ genealogical discourses and their northern settings. I also discuss how the two texts reflect and rephrase current and past discourses where northernness is associated with genealogical issues.

I use the term genealogy in a way that is only loosely connected to its still ongoing development as a philosophical concept over the last 130 years. My main field of interest is the two texts’ focus on questions of origin, descent, and coming-into-life, seen through the metaphoric lens of hierarchic and horizontal family relationships. Although this use of the term ‘genealogy’ may seem distant from that of, e.g., Michel Foucault, there are some points of contact. To state that *Frozen* and ‘The Snow Queen’ share a (Foucaultian) genealogical focus in the sense that they attempt to expose ‘the contingent and “shameful” origins of cherished ideas and entrenched practices’ (Bevir 2008, 264) is hardly a plausible reading. At the same time, there are connections between the language used in Foucault’s presentation of his methodical approach and the texts’ involvement with genealogical issues – for example in their aesthetically formulated scepticism against the assumption of an ‘existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession’ (Foucault 1984[1971], 78). Through their northern settings, the two texts simultaneously postulate and reject the idea of an inaccessible pole of pure abstraction – both as the origin of human development and as an objective of personal growth.

Landscapes

Although it is never explicitly stated in the film, Arendelle, the fictional kingdom where the action of *Frozen* takes place, is commonly seen as being situated in rural Norway (cf. Macaluso 2016, 79; Crosby 2016, 10). The presence of characteristics that are stereotypically connected with Norway in US-American popular culture supports this assumption. In *Frozen*, these characteristics – fjords, a wooden congregation building, lutefisk, among others – are used emphatically, but not unambiguously. The movie’s setting is simultaneously Norwegian and transnational. Alongside the Norwegian local

colour there are features that insistently point viewers towards other Scandinavian settings: a stereotypically Swedish maypole (12:05), a sauna (Finland), a domesticated reindeer (Sápmi), and geothermal activity that keeps a valley inhabited by trolls green throughout the film (Iceland). Furthermore, the relatively stable nineteenth century temporal setting, signalled, for example, in the costumes, is slightly disrupted by the presence of traits that point towards the Viking age: the runes present in the film, e.g., on the royal couple's cenotaphs (10:28), and the priest's use of Old Norse when addressing the audience during Elsa's coronation (19:33).

In Andersen's tale, we find a similar mix of northern features. At the beginning of the main plot, the reader is placed in a milieu that, to biographically interested critics, recalls the author's childhood home in Odense (Lederer 1986, 9–10). This relatively stable setting forms a contrast to the many stopovers of Gerda's journey. Even the goal of her voyage, the Snow Queen's residence, is presented with remarkable inconsistency. In the tale's fifth story, a reindeer tells Gerda that the Queen has her summer tent in 'Lapland' (in the north of the Scandinavian Peninsula),² but that her main residence is located 'closer to the North Pole, on an island called Spitsbergen'. Apart from the brief and intense encounter with Kai in the abduction scene (2), the Snow Queen always tends to be somewhere else – as when the readers first meet her, seen through the peephole of a frosted-over window (2). When Gerda finds Kai in the Snow Queen's summer residence, she has left for Italy, where she is busy sprinkling snow on the summits of Mount Etna and Vesuvius. The stations of Gerda's journey to Lapland present an assorted mixture of northern features: a Lapp woman who lives in a hovel resembling a Sami *lavvu* and writes a letter on a piece of dried cod, and a Finn woman who reads from a scroll of enchantments written in 'strange letters' – runes, presumably. Even the lighting of the action is kaleidoscopically northern, ranging from a lamp fuelled by cod liver oil (6, trans. altered) to the ubiquitous polar lights.

At the same time, the northernness of *Frozen* and 'The Snow Queen' is not evenly distributed throughout the narratives' places of action. Although their settings are northern *per se*, both texts present worlds that are narratively centred around an extreme of frost. The two texts' constitutive journeys proceed gradually towards these places of thermal extremity. Much like ideas jotted down on a modern-day mind map, the diverse signs of northernness appear to be scattered around the narrative poles associated with Elsa and the Snow Queen. Instead of presenting landscapes with features that are organically connected in terms of temporal succession and causation, *Frozen* and 'The Snow Queen' display them as synthetic conglomerates. The northern worlds that are constructed in the two texts are placed outside the realm of organic createdness.

Creations

'The Snow Queen' and *Frozen* combine a persistent focus on genealogical issues with a northern ambience which is, at the same time, indispensable for their respective plots. The first story of Andersen's fairy tale sets the stage. In a mythological tone that sets it

² The terms Lapp, Lapland, and Finn, employed in Tatar and Allen's translation, reflect Andersen's 19th century usage.

off from the rest of the tale, this story explains how a destructive power comes into the world. The harmful influence originates from a distorting mirror created by ‘the “devil” himself’, a mirror capable of shrinking the ‘image of whatever was good and beautiful down to almost nothing, while anything worthless and ugly was magnified and would look even worse’ (1). When fragments of this mirror infest people’s hearts and eyes, their mindsets change from childish ingenuousness to a worldly and shrewd, satirical attitude reminiscent of the mirror’s own mocking grin. Thus, the fairy tale’s first story, itself not without satirical traits, presents a mythological take on the philosophical question of how Evil entered the world.

The introductory sections of *Frozen* also show how things come about. In the film’s first scene, a group of workers perform the now outmoded task of splitting up ice covering a lake into blocks that are harvested for use in refrigeration. In the scene’s first seconds, ice appears to be a static and lifeless raw material that lends itself brilliantly to the men’s efforts – they are able to abruptly (and unrealistically) saw right through it. This changes towards the end of the first scene. As the ice harvesters sing the line ‘Ice has a magic, can’t be controlled’, an ice floe threateningly overtakes them (2:36). Apparently, this is the lake’s way of reacting against the men’s activities. Its triangular, pointy shape foreshadows the ice barriers that Elsa will create later in the movie (e.g., 27:29). Through the lake’s apparent (and luckily transient) emotional outburst, one of the main themes of *Frozen* is introduced – the interconnectedness of ice and life.

Frozen’s next scene brings a more conspicuous display of lifelike, congealed water. Elsa and Anna magically construct a snowman and play with him as if he were a puppet. Elsa supplies him with a voice (her own) and a name (Olaf), and moves his arms in order to suggest that he wants to hug her little sister. In the next shot, the illusion of autonomous movement is taken further, as Olaf and Anna dance across an ice rink – until it is revealed that Elsa is the one propelling them (4:54). Throughout this scene, Olaf shows no signs of life, unlike his namesake later in the movie, and dissolves into a heap of snow after the plot-changing accident has broken the magic. However, whether or not Olaf is alive is a question of perspectives. To the playing children, he appears to be animated. Although Elsa has not, at this point, created a lifelike being, in this scene one of the film’s central, genealogical aspects – the magical creation of lifelike beings from snow – is palpable.

Frozen features several anthropomorphous characters, but their degree of human likeness tends to fluctuate in the course of the film’s action. The trolls that Anna’s parents consult about her injury are first seen as rocks that tumble down the valley. Seconds later, the rocks literally unfold themselves as being animated and endearing (6:34). Here, *Frozen* plays with the well-known idea that trolls stand in perpetual danger of turning into rocks when exposed to sunlight. Instead of affirming a genealogical myth that has helped explain the human traits of countless rock formations, *Frozen* replaces a narrative of unidirectional development with one where neither of the two states – neither the troll nor the rock that it might turn into – has chronological or ontological priority.

A similar fluctuation between human-like and inorganic states characterizes the snow creatures that Elsa makes. Marshmallow, the snow golem who guards Elsa’s castle,

never fully loses the character of being an inanimate snowman – whose foot can be severed without any risk that film authorities would deem the film unfitting for children (1:11:01). At the same time, he constantly shifts between different degrees of human likeness, and much of his function in the plot is connected with these shifts: Marshmallow is both an inconspicuous mass of snow outside Elsa’s castle (1:09:44) and a bouncer throwing out unwelcome guests with a friendly-unfriendly ‘go away’ (58:27); later, a burst of anger causes him to grow spikes of ice that change his appearance from mildly aggressive to unquestionably horrid. A salient feature of Marshmallow’s fellow snowlem, Olaf, is the modular structure of his body. From the outset of Olaf’s reintroduction (45:23), he is presented more like a construction kit than like an upshot of organic growth. His voice is first heard off-screen. As the voice materializes, the snowman is immediately dismembered. Following a sudden panic attack where Anna kicks his head off, she and Kristoff appear to be playing a game of hot potato with it. Their attempts at reconstructing him end up underlining his modular character, such as when his head is first replaced upside down. Olaf is the outcome of a process of magical, inorganic creation that can either be seen as lacking (because he can still be transformed and is thus not *perfectus*, completed) or as celebrating the idea that creativity is not oriented towards a fixed end result, and embracing the freedom of constant self-transformation.

Relatives

Families are both features and playhouses of genealogies. The only time the audience of *Frozen* sees a human, conjugal family as a group is in a situation of crisis – when the royal couple seek help from the trolls after the ballroom accident. At the scene’s beginning, the family appears to be threatened by a rockslide, drawing tighter together as the boulders approach (6:21). A facet of this imagery returns when the parents’ empty graves are marked with giant bautas (10:27). Unlike the trolls, Elsa’s and Anna’s parents are unable to transform back into life. On the two occasions in *Frozen* where the word is used, ‘family’ denotes less traditional constellations. Kristoff, Anna’s travel companion and love interest, has been adopted by the shape-shifting trolls. Anna’s astonishment when hearing him refer to a group of rocks as family almost causes her to flee, but she quickly accepts the term’s unknown applicability (1:04:25). The word’s multiple uses also come into play – insistently, but at the same time not unequivocally – when the mountain trader Oaken salutes a person of male appearance and four children waving from a sauna nearby with ‘Hi, family’ (37:43). On the other hand, all the children who occupy major roles in the film are orphans. Like the previously mentioned shot where Anna kicks Olaf’s head off, the action at the end of the film’s first scene, where a very young Kristoff is left behind by the ice harvesters, is characterized by a brutality only sufferable because neither victim seems to be upset by it.

In interpretations of *Frozen*, Elsa’s ice creatures are sometimes viewed as her progeny, conceived without the involvement of a male consort (cf. Crosby 2016, 39). Considering Elsa, Olaf, and Marshmallow as a parthenogenically created family may incite contrary readings: either her offspring could be seen as suffering from deficiencies resulting from being created by an evidently cold (or self-sufficient)

mother, or one could consider their distinctive traits as elements in *Frozen*'s frequently acclaimed celebration of diversity. Whichever of these readings one might prefer, a more interesting conclusion might be that in *Frozen*, the idea of family is to some extent dissociated from its double, genealogical context. Previously an exclusive arena for procreation and a self-evident basis for a person's closest relations, the traditional family is now viewed as one possible model among others.

Readers of 'The Snow Queen' have frequently addressed the protagonists' family relations. At the beginning of the tale, Gerda and Kai are neighbours and friends. Although an embryonic love relationship may be discernible for an adult audience, the children are apparently not yet acquainted with such qualities of feeling. The text might also suggest that the children are more than just friends in another sense. The character referred to as Grandmother is introduced in a way that leaves it unclear whose relative she is. This ambiguity is maintained throughout the narrative. One of its effects is the intimation that Gerda and Kai are, in fact, related, perhaps as cousins. At the end of the tale, they have returned home from the polar regions. Although several years appear to have passed, the Grandmother is still alive, taking a role very much like the one she had at the fairy tale's beginning. Gerda and Kai have realized 'that they had turned into grown-ups', but, curiously, still sit at their children's chairs and recite the same hymn verse as at the tale's beginning, 'grown-ups and children at the same time, children at heart' (7). The fact that this ending may seem dissatisfactory for an adult couple has puzzled readers like Alvild Dvergsdal, who concludes that their liaison is 'similar to that of playfellows rather than to an adult relationship between man and woman' (Dvergsdal 1988, 24, my trans.). Although their encounters are frequently styled with palpable, sensual undertones, the text keeps them at a distance that may seem more than chaste. One critic is left with the impression that Andersen's fairy tale 'wants to stir up its readers to the worst kinds of abuse', and that during her journey, Gerda is exposed to a pandemonium of lust and lewdness; at the same time, the tale represses her sexuality in an emphatic manner, leaving the sexual strands of interpretation to the reader' (Christensen 2000, 44, my trans.). The Snow Queen's abduction of Kai is also laden with intimated sexuality. For today's audience, it is hard not to see the icy figure who wraps Kai under her bearskin coat as a Venus in furs *avant la lettre*.

Throughout 'The Snow Queen' the protagonists' feelings of spiritual and friendly love are ostentatiously detached from their adjacent, reproductive counterpart. It is hard to imagine that their relationship could generate any physical offspring. At the same time, Gerda and Kai are placed outside a genealogical context in another sense. Their parents have no role in the tale's action. Apart from the numerous and for the most part problematic mother figures (the Snow Queen herself being one example), their only individually named familial connection is the Grandmother – a term that in Danish can also be used generically, as an affectionate description of any elderly woman (Ordbog over det danske Sprog, 'Bedstemoder'). Although Gerda and Kai are repeatedly (though not unequivocally) presented as children, they are scarcely seen as someone's offspring. Many of the troubles they experience are connected with being placed into constellations that suggest alternatives to a traditional family model. This applies not only to the relationship between Kai and the Snow Queen (where Kai can be seen as

having the double role of son and husband), but also to Gerda's digressions in the garden of an old sorceress who wants to keep her around for company (3), or as a flesh-eating robber-girl's playmate (5). Like in *Frozen*, much of the plot in 'The Snow Queen' can be seen in relation to an underlying conflict between a traditional though already crumbling family ideal, and non-genealogically oriented forms of cohabitation that are at once uncanny and sheltering, inescapable and arbitrary.

Modules

'Love is an open door', the refrain of Anna and Hans's engagement song, diverts attention towards another aspect of the interplay between the northern setting and the genealogical discourse in *Frozen* and 'The Snow Queen'. A central narrative feature of the two texts is the opposition between elements that are discrete and compartmentalized and forces that counteract the tendency towards isolation. Several viewers of *Frozen* have noted that doors form a recurring theme, often with patent figurative meanings (cf. Bunch 2017, 94-96). Heike Steinhoff sees the imagery of doors as part of a subtext connected with non-normative sexuality in *Frozen*, and suggests that Elsa's life behind the closed doors of her parents' castle implies a metaphorical resignation to the 'cultural and parental pressure to hide in the closet' (Steinhoff 2017, 167). The different stages of Elsa's isolation are coloured by the interaction between some of the film's metaphorical and literal strands. After the accident, Elsa's parents both advise her to hide her powers (9:03), and physically isolate her in her chamber. This isolation also applies to Arendelle, at least in the sense that tradesmen from abroad are excluded (cf. 12:34). The connection between these two features of the plot – Elsa's and Arendelle's isolation – is left unexplained, but repeats itself after the mishaps at the coronation party. This time, the film offers an explanation. Whereas Elsa appears to be coping fine in her exile on the North Mountain, her magical ability of turning out coldness is unrestrained and causes the fjord around Arendelle to freeze solid. Little seems to have changed between Elsa's first and second phase of isolation, except that some accents have been set differently. Anna's attempts at contacting her sister is another common trait between the two periods of isolation, and here too, Anna's continuous movement forms a contrast to the sister's static isolation. Elsa's life-worlds are strictly compartmentalized, and a main strand of the plot consists in blurring or transgressing the borders that have been drawn, by herself and others.

'The Snow Queen' shares this focus on compartmentalization. The transitions between the tale's seven stories are also movements between closed-off spaces – most often separated by physical objects. Kai first sees the Snow Queen through the peephole of a window. It is mentioned twice that she takes him through the town gate, and as Gerda starts her quest, the narrator again points out this geographical marker (2; 3). The ensuing stages of her journey are all marked by doors or similar objects. Both the house and the garden of the sorceress in the third story are closed off by doors that Gerda passes through (3). Throughout the tale, this pattern is varied, often in a playful manner – as when Gerda has to knock on the chimney of the Finn woman's house, 'for she did not even have a door' (6). Even the topography of the second story's opening paragraphs, where the idyllic living conditions of Gerda's and Kai's families are

presented, signals a strongly compartmentalized housing situation: the two families live in the garrets of two adjoining buildings. During summer, the apartments are connected by wooden flowerboxes and the children can play relatively freely, but '[d]uring the winter months, the fun was over' (2).

In both texts, a triangle of oppositions is formed between the isolated and compartmentalized spatial conditions, the destructive forces (diabolic satire and physical frost, respectively) that spread like a contagion, and the adolescent heroines' movements towards the centres of coldness in order to break the isolation and save their loved ones. In one of the fairy tale's central passages, Kai is sitting inside a castle with 'more than a hundred rooms'. He broods over a task assigned to him by the Snow Queen, 'moving sharp, flat pieces of ice and configuring them in all sorts of different ways – just as we arrange and rearrange pieces of wood in those little Chinese puzzles' (7). The Snow Queen has requested that he form the pieces into the word *Eternity*. Kai's labour with the brilliant shards is doubly fruitless. From a spatial and aesthetic point of view, the pieces fall into the same category as the inorganic, barren, and compartmentalized conditions that are predominant (and disavowed) elsewhere in 'The Snow Queen'. Any grouping of these fragments will remain inorganic and aesthetically lifeless. Kai's manipulation of the ice pieces takes place outside a genealogical context; in this sense, it is just as fundamentally static as Olaf's permutations.

The modular, inorganic, and non-genealogically oriented construction principles that I have discussed in the foregoing paragraphs are also noticeable as structural elements in the two texts. The concept of aesthetic unity appears to be of little relevance when discussing them, neither as a way of describing the loose relationship between their single components nor as a measure of quality. Recent criticism on 'The Snow Queen' does not deny that the tale consists of 'episodes that jar tonally, seemingly irrelevant motifs, and details which are as charming as they are gratuitous' (Weitzman 2007, 1107). This applies not only to the individual stories but also to their often rhapsodic internal structure – e.g., the third story, were a sequence of six flowers voice their sometimes perplexing impressions. The sequence of loosely connected segments is likewise a characteristic of *Frozen*'s composition – also in the sense that the film at one point 'stops being a musical and resolves its remaining issues [...] through narrative action' (Bunch 2017, 99, referring to 1:08:14). The readers and viewers of both texts may have the impression of watching how different parts of a construction set are being put together before their eyes – unapologetically, one might add, and not without resemblance to the construction principles that form both Olaf and Kai's tangram game.

Anthropologies

The meta-aesthetical elements in both texts are closely connected to another aspect of their genealogical focus – the interest in what constitutes a human being and how we evolve or change, physically and mentally. In the case of *Frozen*, this aspect has particularly been discussed by viewers concerned with the main characters' perceived non-conformities – for example, by connecting the lyrics of Elsa's power ballad 'Let it Go' to the coping mechanisms of people with eating disorders, by discussing the sisters' relationship in the light of (post)feminism and queer theory, or by approaching the skill

of creating snow and ice (or the inaptitude to control this skill) as a disability (Holmes 2015; Rudloff 2016 and Whitfield 2017; Resene 2017). Concerning Elsa's skills, the question of their origin falls at the same time as they are erased from her little sister's memory. The troll who heals Anna asks their father if Elsa was '[b]orn with the powers or cursed' (6:50). From the question's immediate context, it does not become clear why this should be of relevance for the task of curing Anna from her head injury. A possible explanation is that the troll implicitly describes what kind of conditions he is willing to offer treatments for, in the sense that he will not hesitate to reverse Elsa's condition if it is the result of a curse, but cannot (or would refuse to) offer any kind of conversion therapy if it is congenital.

The acknowledgement that the condition that causes Elsa to be seen as a monster in the film's public discourse (28:24) is not something that has to be removed through a healing process is a feature that distinguishes *Frozen* from its alleged model. In 'The Snow Queen', Kai's state of mind as he plays the Queen's game is the result of a process that has gone through several stages. Through what is apparently a coincidence rather than the result of an innate affinity, he has been hit by two fragments of the Devil's magic mirror. In themselves, these fragments only cause him to adopt a lofty and sarcastic tone – in addition, perhaps, to making him susceptible to the Snow Queen's attraction. Gerda's attempt at rescuing Kai is pictured in a way that stresses the exogenous nature of Kai's ailment. When the mirror fragments are physically removed from his heart and eyes, he experiences a near-immediate recovery, as if the fragments were aching teeth (7). In 'The Snow Queen', Kai appears to be flawless as long as no external force exerts its influence on him. This ethical prevalence of innate qualities is a common feature in Andersen's tales. The newly hatched swan in one of his most famous tales is apparently perfect in itself, but misunderstood because it is held up to standards not in accordance with a genealogically fixed potential. In this case, *Frozen*'s stance may seem more in agreement with modern views – but also as concurrent with the adage that people are disturbed not by things themselves, but by the view which they take of them (cf. Epictetus 1959[ca. 100], 487 (= *Enchiridion*, ch. 5)). During the course of the action, multiple encodings of Elsa's abilities are presented. A central twist in the film's plot occurs when her faculties go from being a source of joy to something that needs to be hidden. Considering the citizens of Arendelle's prompt adherence to a foreign dignitary's categorization of her as a 'monster' (28:24), the parents' choice of isolating her may seem understandable. Michelle Resene points out that *Frozen* neither questions nor explains Elsa's powers: 'their origin remains a mystery, but not one that Disney is interested in solving' (Resene 2017, n.p.). To the citizens, Elsa's abilities distance her from being human, but the film's audience is effectively steered towards a genealogical view where all her inborn traits are seen as equally precious and constituting elements of her humanity. If the inhabitants of Arendelle had shared this enlightened view, her problems would have been far less serious – and theirs too.

Personifications

It is a central feature of the genealogical discourses in 'The Snow Queen' and *Frozen* that entities with different degrees of lifelikeness are explicitly or implicitly contrasted

and evaluated against each other. One example is the constantly shifting presence of roses in 'The Snow Queen'. Apart from having a central function as symbols of transcendent love in a repeated quote from a hymn by H. A. Brorson, they occur both as living organisms (sometimes endowed with human voices), in a state resembling subterranean hibernation induced by the spell of a garden sorceress, and as painted decorations on the sorceress's hat (3), the coincidental discovery of which helps Gerda break the magic. In both texts, the juxtaposition of organic and inorganic (but lifelike) entities finds an emblematic representation in the contrast between real-life flowers and ice crystals. The suggestion of an ontological hierarchy consisting of life-forms with varying degrees of distance to the lifelessness of ice crystals is also present in *Frozen*, where the embroidered patterns of 'rosemaling', traditional Norwegian arabesques consisting of stylized flowers and leaves, appear to form a middle ground between organic life and dead, symmetrically shaped matter. The same applies to Arendelle's national symbol, a highly stylized, cinquefoil flower shape. In both texts, Elsa's and Kai's attempts at transcending the accepted notions of what creative processes humans can take part in are placed in landscapes where the borders between life and non-life are already blurred.

Another aspect of the blurring of these borders is the frequent tendency, in both texts, to present situations that bring the human characters' status as human beings into question. This applies, for example, to the relationship between Kristoff and his reindeer Sven. Olaf's constant misnaming of these characters is one of the film's running gags. First-time viewers may assume that Sven has a voice of his own (like his distant predecessor in Andersen's tale), but the conditions are more complicated: it is Kristoff who – perhaps because of prolonged lack of conversation partners – purveys Sven with the faculty of speech. As his adoptive parents put it, the relationship between the animal and his handler is 'outside a few of nature's laws' (1:06:08). Would it be apposite to see this sentence in a genealogical light? We could rather turn our attention towards the likewise anthropomorphic reindeer in 'The Snow Queen'. The fact that the creature with the voice-mimicking name can talk is, of course, a common fairy-tale trait, but Baa emulates his passenger in a surprisingly literate way: when they arrive at the Lapp woman's house, the reindeer starts the conversation, telling his story first 'since he believed it was far more important' (6). Here, too, the tale adds to – and comments on – the conventional anthropomorphism of fairy-tale animals: by connecting the all-too-human vice of self-importance to the reindeer, the tale plays with readers' notions of humanness. Would it also be reasonable to say that these and similar passages suggest a genealogical relationship between animal and human characters? Perhaps not, but at the same time, the texts humorously stress their relatedness.

Evils

With their focus on questions of origin and development, *Frozen* and 'The Snow Queen' place themselves in a historical context where the north has frequently been associated with genealogical narratives. The first story of 'The Snow Queen' is one example. Modern readers might feel that this part of the fairy tale is only vaguely connected with the stories that follow. The idea that the fragments from the Devil's

shattered mirror make Kai an easy victim for the Snow Queen might seem self-evident. The connection between the mirror's satirical attitude and Kai's fascination for the Snow Queen's abstract games might not be so obvious. There is, however, a theological reason for assuming that Kai's first encounter with the Devil's contrivance predisposes him to seek a different and pernicious way of life in the far north. The opinion that the Devil has his abode in the north has been held since the times of the Old Testament. In *Paradise Lost* (1667), John Milton allegorically presents him as a sea monster roaming the Polar regions ('Norway foam') (Milton 2007[1667], 1.201ff.). Among the Bible verses that led to this localization are Isaiah 14:13–14, where Satan states his intention to set his throne on a mountain in the north and 'ascend to the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High' (Coogan 2018, 1000–1001). From an early date, south and north were conceived of as representing spiritual states. This allegorical interpretation is present in Augustine's biblical exegesis:

[T]he Devil and his angels, by turning from the light and warmth of charity, and going over to pride and envy, were benumbed as by an icy hardness. Therefore they are figuratively located in the north. (Augustine 1953[ca. 400], 103–104)

The northern connotations of the Devil's project in the first story of 'The Snow Queen' may give new nuances to the theological subtext of Andersen's tale. In recent criticism, this subtext has primarily been discussed in connection with the tale's seemingly naïve and affirmative reuse of a few lines from an edifying hymn by H. A. Brorson (cf. de Mylius 2000; Yngborn 2010, 163–165). Although knowledge of the time-honoured superstition makes it possible to construct an apparently cogent reading of the first story and its connection to the rest of the plot, one should not underestimate the satirical potential of Andersen's approach to these and other theological issues. Much like in the case of the excerpt from Brorson's hymn which, as it turns out, has been altered in devious ways, it is not easy to determine if this story about an evil's origin is chiefly a popularization or a satire.

Gerda encounters magic at almost every turn of her journey northwards. Considering the theological topic discussed in the previous paragraphs, this suits the locations. The perceived connection between sorcery and the north was apparently a corollary of the Bible's topographical account. In Andersen's tale, the common idea that the Sámi people had a special inclination for witchcraft may have contributed to some of the presence of magic. In *Frozen*, the colonialist implications of this and other cases of popular anthropology are, at least occasionally, questioned. The foreign dignitaries that return to Arendelle after the period of isolation have traits that make them recognizable as French, Spanish, and British, and it is hardly a coincidence that the last of these, Weselton, is both the most meddlesome and the one who first accuses Elsa of sorcery, and thus qualifies her special faculties as being unlawful and frightening. Another point of interference between the theological tradition and the action of *Frozen* becomes visible in the scenes following Elsa's escape. Viewers of *Frozen* often connect the lyrics of her most famous number, 'Let it Go', to expressions of pride in gender identity and

sexual orientation. At the same time, the paradoxical relationship between the lyrics and the filmic action is frequently mentioned: Elsa sings about her freedom but ends up slamming the door of her new-built castle in the face of the spectators, effectively closing herself off (Bunch 2017, 96). Seeing this scene in the light of the theological tradition also opens up a contrary interpretation: the world that Elsa creates for herself shares more than its location at the North Mountain with the Devil's mythical or allegorical residence. Although the song 'Let it Go' famously states that there is 'no right, no wrong, / no rules', the castle she creates for herself emulates the one she has just left, a fact that is underlined by the introductory re-creation of the snowman from her childhood (32:14). Although Elsa's song has been celebrated as a display of self-respect and independence, it also has a more sinister aspect. It not only signals her own, personal breakthrough, but also a time of hardship for the people of Arendelle. Thus, Elsa expresses pride not only in the word's positive meaning, but also in the theological sense of *superbia* – the deadly sin of self-importance or arrogance.

Another aspect that has received relatively little attention is that the film's conclusion also represents a stage in Elsa's own, personal development. She has been through a period of hardship that has forced her to revise the idea of self-sufficiency, both on an emotional and on a practical level. During the time of her exile, Elsa partially lives up to the idea that she is a witch. She lives on a mountain with diabolical connotations (cf. *Magica de Spell's* Mt. Vesuvius), creates lifelike creatures, and causes weather conditions that threaten to destroy Arendelle. Seen in the context of *Frozen's* construction of (and adherence to ideas of) genealogical notions of northerness, one could also point out that Elsa's creativity tends to have a reductive or privative aspect, and that it frequently borrows characteristics from the activity of creating a likeness of God. Another aspect of Elsa's escape is touched upon in the shot where she briefly sees a female citizen of Arendelle and her infant. The film's script states explicitly that Elsa 'backs away from the baby.' (28:01; Script, p. 33). Is it the heteronormative family ideal and its association with a genealogical perspective that makes her draw back in this way? Her reaction against Anna's rushed wedding plans is materially judicious, but at the same time emotionally immoderate (26:57).

Concerning the connections between a Nordic setting, emotional isolation, diabolical undertones, and a redemptive act of love performed by a female, 'The Snow Queen' and *Frozen* use a blend of motifs that has also shown its commercial merits in front of other audiences. One example is Richard Wagner's opera *The Flying Dutchman* (1843), which is set in 'Sandwike', and where the local heroine has the supposedly Norwegian-sounding name Senta. In Wagner's opera, marriage and its outcomes are at the core of the plot. In the first act, the Dutchman mentions his relationship status more than once ('Ah, I have no wife and child, / nothing to bind me to this earth!' (Wagner 2012, 99)), and Senta, whom the Dutchman wants to marry in order to break the spell that keeps him roaming the seas, is frequently referred to as a child ('Kind'). Confined by the hull of his ship and the ocean's vastness, he is only allowed to go ashore once every seven years. Unlike Gerda (who only has to endure an inhospitable climate without shoes and mittens) and Anna (who survives her projected self-sacrifice), Senta lets her life go for

the sake of the Dutchman's liberation and the opera finishes, happily, with their conjunct apotheosis.

Births

Frozen and 'The Snow Queen' combine a northern setting with ontogenetically oriented descriptions of the pathways between childhood and adult life. Both texts also display affinities with a historically significant way of conceptualizing the north as a place of human development – again in the double sense of growth and emergence. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton draws on a phylogenetic view of northerness in the lines describing the Devil's cohorts, which form a 'multitude, like which the populous North / Pour'd never from her frozen loyns [...]' (Milton 2007[1667], 1.351f.). To a modern audience, Milton's comparison may seem paradoxical. The commonplace image of barren northern landscapes does not seem to go well with the idea of fertility second only to the Devil's own productiveness. Milton's contemporary readers would have seen it differently. In the seventeenth century, the notion of the European north as *vagina gentium* ('womb of peoples') was well known. As an anthropological theory stating that humans (or a subgroup of this species) had their origin in the north, the idea was taken seriously until the end of the Second World War (Nagel 1991).

Although Andersen's and the Walt Disney Company's tales apparently stay well away from the brazenly racist, phylogenetic deployment of this idea, found, for example, in Johannes V. Jensen's novel *The Glacier* (1945[1908]), they both allow (and, to some extent, suggest) readings that transcend a purely individualistic, ontogenetic perspective. Both texts invite their audiences to see the protagonists' stories as something more than strictly personal, not least because of the fairy-tale genre's traditional orientation towards collective psychology rather than towards naturalistic portrayal of individual development. Although the notion that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny on a psychological and cultural level – implying, for example, that some cultural expressions are more childlike than others – may seem both antiquated and repulsive today (though it is not without support, for example, in historical linguistics, cf. MacNeilage 2008, 105), this idea might still be subliminally active in expressions of popular culture.

In this context, it is not insignificant that both texts present fictional worlds less technically advanced than those of their audiences. Although it might be both difficult and problematic to attempt to range the stations of Gerda's journey according to degrees of exoticism or magic (cf. Conrad 201, 262), there is little doubt that she is continually moving away from civilization. At the same time, she has begun a spiritual journey where a variety of common fairy-tale traits – among them an indistinct medievalism (castles, a robbers' den, etc.) and colonialist indications of primitiveness (e.g. the Lapp and Finn women's houses) – also reflect her ingenuous states of mind. From the start, *Frozen* appears to use similar techniques to evoke a childlike mindset. The film's action begins with a young boy's attempt at mimicking the archaic practice of collecting ice, performed by men in 'traditional Sami clothing' (Script, 1) singing a faux folk song (Bunch 2017, 93). *Frozen* brings the princesses, whose aristocratic life is evidently too

restrained, back into contact with more originary ways of living, and in the last scenes, they are again seen playing together.

From an antiquated, phylogenetical point of view, the north is considered as the place where peoples are born. Would it make sense to say that *Frozen* and ‘The Snow Queen’ tell a similar story, but on a personal, ontogenetic level? The combination of a coming-of-age theme and a northern setting in both texts makes this assumption somewhat appealing. In fact, the denouement of Andersen’s tale is told in a language that could, at many points, also describe a physical delivery. After Gerda manages to make contact with Kai he bursts into tears, and his first impressions of his surroundings read like a dilettante account of the so-called trauma of birth (cf. Rank 1993[1924]). ‘It’s so cold here! And it’s immense and empty too!’. On the first stopover on their way back, Gerda and Kai receive help from a female reindeer that has turned up out of nowhere, with ‘udders full of warm milk for the children. She kissed them on the lips’ (7). For both Kai and Elsa, the most significant aspect of the recovery of their personalities is the return of a childlike way of thought. In Kai’s case, this is said explicitly. He and Gerda are ‘grown-ups and children at the same time, children at heart’. At the end of *Frozen*, Elsa uses her powers in a way that resembles the scene where she and Anna are introduced. For the first time since the film’s beginning, she uses them in order to interact with others in a playful way – and to create joy for people other than herself. In her case, too, the strategies used in order to adapt to the conditions of adult life have been revised through re-acquiring a more youthful mindset.

One of the two texts’ shared graphic features also places Anna’s recovery from being an ice-stature in connection with the idea of the north as a cradle of creation. In the first stories of ‘The Snow Queen’, both the mirror fragments and the Queen are imagined as fluttering through the air – in the latter case as the queen in a bee swarm of snowflakes (1; 2). These and similar flurries are realms of transformation from inorganic matter to (imagined) life, for example, near the end of the sixth story, where Gerda fights an ‘entire regiment of snowflakes [that comes] swirling toward her’ in the shape of hedgehogs, snakes, and cubs. A similar flurry appears when the pieces of Kai’s puzzle game are ‘dancing for joy’ before collapsing on the ground, where they transform into the solution that Kai was not able to find on his own. *Frozen* reuses this imagery by connecting the snow flurry explicitly to Elsa’s creativity. Starting with the ill-fated game with Anna at the film’s beginning (4:23), her lifelike creations typically originate as snowflakes that magically appear between her hands, swirling. Towards the film’s end, as Elsa collapses after having been led to believe that she has caused her sister’s death, the surrounding snow storm changes into a state of near-inertia (1:25:43). The almost photographic immobility continues until the congealed Anna slowly starts recovering her previous colours. The thawing that has started in Anna’s heart spreads across the frozen landscapes, which warm up in a process involving a flurry similar to the one that has accompanied Elsa’s acts of creation (1:28:03). Thus, Anna’s sacrifice and subsequent revival assume the character of a mythical rebirth brought about by Elsa’s creative powers. Through the combination with the fairy-tale trope of the healing of the land (Bunch 2017, 90), this rebirth is not only pictured as occurring on a personal, ontogenetic level. Because of the life-inducing snow flurry’s status as a distinguishing

feature of the northern landscapes, Anna's return to life also inscribes itself in a specifically genealogical discourse of northerness.

Conclusions

In the introduction, I stated as a main field of interest the interaction between features of the two texts' northern settings and their focus on genealogical issues. I also mentioned that the genealogical orientation in these texts seems to imply something different from Foucault's stated objective of exposing the contingent and shameful origins of ideas and social practices that, before a genealogical scrutiny, appear to be self-evident. Although elements of social and ideological critique are not absent in *Frozen* and 'The Snow Queen', this is hardly their primary focus. In both cases, the more crucial concerns seem to be of a commercial nature. Among other things, these commercial concerns may show themselves in the texts' publication dates. The volume where Andersen's tale first appeared was rushed in order to be available before Christmas 1844 (Topsøe-Jensen 1971, 95); *Frozen* had its general theatrical release on November 27, 2013. The audience of these texts are not only readers and spectators, but also, and perhaps not least, consumers who do not only buy movie tickets and books, but also franchise products (Elsa's dress was famously sold out in record time (Bunch 2017, 100)) and children's toys like the ones mentioned or alluded to in 'The Snow Queen'.

It could be seen as a consequence of the texts' primarily commercial orientation that some of the more recognizable features of narratives of origin and coming-into-life are only present in rather faint intimations – hints that are cautiously withdrawn in the concluding scenes, where the main characters return to childlike innocence rather than continuing the path laid out by their pubescent demeanour. Elsa's and Kai's attempts at transcending into more mature and autonomous living conditions end up by being disavowed by the texts' endings, where their northward journeys are turned into retrograde movements. Elsa's pride and Kai's satirical conceit are not, however, only negated by the in this case parallel narrative developments. They also form an opposition to more salient and widespread features of pubescent life – to the feelings of shame or awkwardness that have been associated with this developmental stage since antiquity (Cairns 2002, 103–105). In *Frozen*, the strongest reminiscences of these feelings are – tellingly, I think – associated with one of the musical's choreographic *leitmotifs*. Throughout the film, the characters repeatedly³ *almost* fall – to the ground after having bumped into each other, into water, into various abysses – but in most cases, and always when the protagonists' wellbeing is at stake, some lucky incident prevents a collapse. That the stumbling persons are, in most cases, rescued in this manner may not only be seen in a theological context, but also in the light of the film's broader presentation of coming-of-age issues. *Frozen* not only takes interest in rescuing its protagonists from the dangers of falling in a physical or moral sense, but also from other experiences of shame and embarrassment commonly associated with puberty. As

³ The useful and interesting TvTropes (www.tvtropes.org) wiki page on *Frozen* mentions twelve occurrences of the 'Arc Symbol' of 'Falling, and catching people' – repeatedly in the scene where Anna and Hans first meet (17:01), but also observable, for example, when she 'turns to inanimate objects to catch [...] including an empty suit of armor' (13:52).

mentioned earlier, the protagonists of ‘The Snow Queen’ also overcome the sexual threats that they are subjected to, and their own relationship fizzles out in a bland exhibition of childish piety.

‘The Snow Queen’ and *Frozen* are texts where the genealogical focus is not only linked to the northern ambience but also coloured by a prudeness that, despite being occasionally challenged, ends up as almost universally triumphant. Thus, both the northern, genealogical perspective and the prude mindset form an opposition to the perhaps more identifiable, but at the same time more shame-laden aspects of the coming-of-age stories that are told. The northern genealogies that are presented in these texts show a particular aptitude for forming parts of this opposition. Instead of picturing genealogies in the light of the gory splendour of sex and childbirth, ‘The Snow Queen’ and *Frozen* nourish and cherish narratives about depersonalized and untainted, spontaneous and crystalline forms of conception and growth. The relationship between these narratives and the potentially shameful and (perhaps not least commercially) threatening aspects that they replace is emulative rather than allegorical. Perhaps this also applies to some of the other, culturally significant narratives where stories of origin are placed in a northern setting – not necessarily because single features of these stories are shameful in themselves, but rather because these two subjects, shame and origin, are not easily distinguished from each other.

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KUUK, SKRAP, AND THE RESISTANCE VERNACULAR

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Abstract

How are gendered identities enabled, contested, and performed through Nordic popular music? Building on relevant approaches in popular music analysis, this article offers an investigation into the function/s of language and musical style in enabling and engendering agency and subjectivity via two case studies in Norwegian popular music. Gender and language are crucial factors in this. In a global context of popular music, bands and artists who choose to sing in their local language may be seen to take up marginal positions compared to artists who choose to sing in English, as the choice of language would naturally limit their audience. I argue that this overlooks the efficacy of using one's local language to express points of view that are relevant on a local level; what is more, it overlooks the possibility of subverting globalized trends and using these to one's own ends.

In this article, I offer close readings of Norwegian-language albums by two all-female groups: the hip-hop duo Kuuk (Live fra Blitz) and the electronica duo Skrap (Atlantis). Applying Russell A. Potter's (1995) concept of the 'resistance vernacular' as it has been expanded and operationalized by Tony Mitchell (2004), I contend that the bands' use of their local language opens their music to a broader set of possibilities when it comes to subverting gender and genre norms at the same time as it enhances the music's political potential.

Working in discernible genres enables both bands to create music that expresses a feminist stance; in the case of Kuuk, deconstructing and subverting expectations of gendered behaviour through parodying hip-hop misogyny, and in the case of Skrap, drawing on strategic naïvety to steer clear of gender stereotypes.

Keywords: *Resistance; Language; Gender; Popular music*

Introduction

Popular music, as a global platform of popular culture that is ostensibly available to everyone everywhere, finds itself at the junction of a particular paradox. Music is produced locally, but according to ever-changing globalized norms; possibly the most important of these is that music has to be accessible to a large audience. Hence, English frequently appears as the undisputed standard, with all other languages seemingly relegated to the margins. In this article, I argue that this marginal position enables performers to resist the streamlining of music, chiefly by using their native language, and by extension shaping ideas of gender and subjectivity.

Central to this is the contention that lineages of styles and genres transport with them sets of assumptions (Hawkins 2002, 2) – that is, assumptions about what pop music is, which may overlook how pop is always 'shaped by social, political and cultural

conditions' (Hawkins 2002, 2). Hawkins suggests that this pertains to the legitimizing and privileging of trends, notably through discourses of music journalism. I would add that this is also central to language, as English no doubt shapes ideas of authenticity as well as gender, through the interplay of the language with aesthetics of style and genre.¹

Recent studies in popular music from the Nordic countries (Sandve 2015a, Holt and Kärjä 2017, Björnberg and Bossius 2017) frame the popular music of the Nordic region as distinct and competitive in a global context, but also as subject to a range of perceptions that would exoticize and maintain the Nordic countries' position as Other in a globalized, English-speaking world of popular culture. This process of exoticization, notably in how pop artists such as ABBA would be characterized by their Swedish accents when singing and speaking in English, highlights how gender and language are inextricably linked in popular music. This assertion opens for an investigation into how native language, rather than limiting bands' possibilities of creating music, enables critical musical modes of expression and of negotiating subjectivity.

My focus falls on two now-defunct Norwegian bands, Kuuk and Skrap. Both bands utilized stylistic traits from a number of genres belonging to the larger umbrella term of electronic music, such as hip hop and rap, which are discernible first and foremost in their vocal performances. In both cases, there is also a conscious use of their native language. Making use of expletives and the kind of self-aggrandizing that evokes machismo, Kuuk can be seen to deconstruct tropes of hypermasculinity, drawing on strategies of gender performativity that are exemplary of what Halberstam (1998) has interrogated as 'female masculinity'. Employing Potter's (1995) and Mitchell's (2004) theories of the resistance vernaculars of marginal non-Anglophone bands, I intend to unpack these concepts and apply them to analyses of albums by both bands.

Theoretical background: Resistance vernaculars

Central to my methodological apparatus in this article is the concept of resistance vernaculars (Potter 1995). Significant in rap and hip hop as well as bands and artists from non-Anglophone regions, the idea of resistance vernaculars is indicative of a multilingual dexterity that situates the English language side by side with other languages in a context of popular music. However, Potter suggests that this situation is also characterized by a division of classes of vernacular languages: on the one hand, there are hegemonic vernaculars such as 'Received Standard English'; on the other hand, there are any number of resistance vernaculars that challenge and change 'the rules of "intelligibility" set up by the dominant language' (Potter 1995, 67-68). Extending Potter's theory to 'languages other than English in rap music outside the USA' (2004, 108), Mitchell argues that the global presence of this music corresponds to the formation of syncretic "'glocal" subcultures' and enables 'local indigenizations of

¹ Mitchell (1996, 2004) and Pennycook (2007) tend to assume a binary division of 'mother tongue' and English, where authenticity typically resides in the former. I would argue against this in that the English language carries with it assumptions about authenticity that become accessible on a local level, notably in the case of bands and artists who harbour ambitions of 'making it' abroad. See Hawkins and Ålvik (2019) for a discussion of a-ha in this context.

the global musical idiom of rap' (2004, 108). This sort of resistance enables artists to do 'linguistic damage' that is 'directed against the language of the colonizers' (Whiteley, Bennett, and Hawkins 2004, 13), thus indicating that the theory of the resistance vernacular originates from a postcolonial musical context where English is the dominant language.

In this sense, the theory of resistance vernaculars stems from Potter's (1995) idea of spectacular vernaculars. In his analysis of rap and hip-hop as radical postmodern music, Potter sees the multiplicity of black vernaculars in music as 'a condition of *the vernacular*'; taking inspiration from Luce Irigaray, he terms this linguistic situation as '*that language which is not one*' (1995, 63). Regarding hip-hop as 'a transnational, global artform capable of mobilizing diverse disenfranchised groups' (1995, 10), Potter also acknowledges the music's potential for resistance, 'forming and sustaining a culture *against* the dominant, using materials at hand' (1995, 108, all emphases in original). Paving the way for Mitchell's theory, Potter thus illuminates important facets of global popular music in general and hip-hop in particular, such as the mutability of language and the use of local means – the 'materials at hand' – to create music that may nevertheless be intelligible on a global scale. What is more, we may understand resistance vernaculars in a context of code-switching (Greenall 2015). In the case of Kuuk, the mix of English and Norwegian (read: not-English) signifies that which Greenall calls 'linguistic tattoos' that situate bands' and artists' identities and make them intelligible socially, historically, and culturally (2015, 161).

Notably, even though Mitchell does not explicitly state that 'doin' damage in my native language' is the prerogative of minority languages, his examples are still taken from the margins – non-English-speaking regions where people use English in ways that draw on globalised popular culture. Here, 'damage' could be read as implying that it is the dominant culture that suffers the damage. How, then, could this be carried out in a context of Norwegian popular music? What then happens when the artist who does the 'damage' does so without regard to being acknowledged by the dominant gaze? This is the point of entry for this article.

In the light of this, one obvious flaw in Mitchell's model of resistance vernaculars is that the mode of address depends on the mother tongue – in this case, English. Consequently, the reader will have to imagine the situation in a country such as Norway, where a large part of the popular music industry is based on communication in English, particularly in song lyrics. This exposes an essentialist strand in Mitchell's model, as the reader is obliged to imagine a situation where a language other than one's mother tongue has the status of carrier of meaning and authenticity.

It is my contention that Kuuk and Skrap go against this in distinct ways. Skrap use their native language to formulate resistance with regard to perceptions of gender. Kuuk use a mix of languages (Norwegian and English) and regional dialects as part of an audiovisual spectacle to spell out resistance on a number of levels; what is more, they effectively displace the authenticity of the English language by always already bastardizing both languages into their own idiolect.

Despite (or rather because of) this flaw, I find the theory of resistance vernaculars useful for my purposes here. I see the idea of 'linguistic damage' as an analytical tool

for engaging with the complex situation of language in Norwegian popular music. This would include interrogating ‘urban’ Norwegian language as both a minority vis-à-vis the dominant globalised English language and as a majority vis-à-vis regional dialects.² In the case of both Kuuk and Skrap, this difference between the urban (non-marked) and the regional (as different from urban) comes across in the music, notably in the singers’ performances of song lyrics.

Mitchell also takes up strategies of mixing languages, notably in the case of the group Zimbabwe Legit, whose 1992 EP ‘Doin’ Damage in my Native Language’ mixes English with the regional dialect, Ndbele. Mitchell suggests that the English expressions ‘serve two purposes for the Anglophone listener: they locate Zimbabwe Legit firmly in their country of origin’ and also ‘prioritize the group’s native dialect as the main source of their art of rhyming’ (2004, 108). Enquiring into what ends music might serve for the non-Anglophone listener (a notion which illuminates both the dominance of Anglophone culture and the simple binary oppositions of centre-margin that result from this dominance), I propose that the resistance vernacular also enables a use of one’s ‘native language’ that is not necessarily contingent on Anglophone listeners’ comprehension of it. This in turn opens for a view that resistance vernacular is not limited to language, but also encompasses musical style as well as audiovisual aesthetics, all of which feed into artists’ identity politics.

Against this background, I read a selection of songs by Kuuk and Skrap as resisting sexist stereotypes, to different ends. These examples come across as relevant on multiple levels. Kuuk may be perceived as deconstructing masculine swagger and macho jargon to their own ends, framing a sex-positive attitude via an appropriation of stylistic traits of US rap music and an effective use of their native language. Skrap, on the other hand, employ strategies of resistance in a frame of low-key electronic music, where they eschew song structures and demands to theoretical competence and also take a pronounced feminist stance in their songs.

‘Piss in my ear and call me a man’: Kuuk

For reasons I have discussed above, I find Kuuk a pertinent example of a band that uses resistance vernacular as part of identity politics. Fronted by rappers and songwriters Mira Berggrav Refsum and Ragna Solbergnes, Kuuk are characterized by a name that is a designation of the male organ (and, as such, a phallic symbol), and also an expletive, commonly used disparagingly as well as lovingly. Crucially, the band’s use of this word not only exposes the constructed-ness of gender stereotypes but also flaunts the humour in the choice of band name. The visual style of the band is no less sensational: their trademark attire on stage and in videos included exercise outfits imprinted with the American flag (Figure 1). By way of distinction, Refsum wears a swimsuit while

² Even though English is inevitably the dominant language of several aspects of global popular culture, notably popular music, this does not mean that there is one monolithic, immutable ‘English’ that dominates the world at any given time. Rather, as Pennycook suggests, we may view the global English in the plural, as a set of global ‘Englishes’ that change with the context and become *localized* – a language being in the world (Pennycook 2007).

Solbergnes wears a sports brassiere and boxer shorts (Sandve 2015b). Any use of a nation's flag could well be seen as offensive, not to say sacrilegious. Then again, the Stars and Stripes flag has long been used to decorate (read: sell) clothing to Norwegian consumers.³ In the case of Kuuk, the use of this flag arguably also pertains to musical style, considering the status of rap and hip-hop as African-American music.



Figure 1: Kuuk. Front cover image for *Live fra Blitz*. Photo by Linn Heidi Stokkedal. Reproduced by permission of Bangles & Brass Records.

Characteristic of rap music, the band's lyrics are laden with expletives. While the lyrics are in Norwegian, Refsum and Solbergnes as a rule mix English words and phrases into the narratives, drawing on an impression of rap as globalized music, notably through the sort of language mix that Mitchell (2004) would call linguistic damage. Two more views may be added to this. On the one hand, the resulting mix of Norwegian and English recalls Dai Griffiths' concept of the anti-lyric, where song lyrics move away from resembling structures of poetry – being *like* poetry – and 'tend towards being *like* prose' (2003, 42). This enables 'anti-lyrics' where words work within the verbal space

³ One especially relevant example of how the Stars and Stripes are used on clothing in US popular culture is the DC Comics cartoon character, Wonder Woman. This provides a link to popular music via Lady Gaga's video for 'Telephone' (2010), where Gaga and Beyoncé are seen wearing Wonder Woman outfits. In their analysis of the video, Burns and Lafrance point out that Gaga and Beyoncé's hyper-able-bodiedness is reinforced by the superhero costumes and that the protagonists are themselves represented as superheroes, 'a force for good in society' (Burns and Lafrance 2014, 143).

of a song (2003, 43), and, I argue, where the resistance vernacular also gains efficacy in that the lyrics are not necessarily bound to any one understanding of language or style, but are contingent on performance.

On the other hand, the extensive and seemingly arbitrary use of English catchphrases in Kuuk's songs exemplifies Greenall's concept of code-switching. As examples of this, terms such as 'high five' ('10 000 high fives') and abbreviations such as 'HTG' (hard to get) pervade the lyrics, making the songs polyvalent.

We may add another crucial point to Kuuk's use of language. Central to the band's lyrics and vocal performances is Solbergnes' use of her regional dialect. Originally from Rossfjord, Solbergnes has also lived in Tromsø, where she was part of the scene around the venue Blårock (Moe 2014, 21). Importantly, this signifies on two levels: that of 'authenticity' via origins, and that of 'authenticity' in language. Moreover, her use of dialect situates Kuuk in a context of a number of Norwegian bands, and also in an intersection of styles: the broad Northern Norwegian hip hop scene that includes Tungtvann and Sirkus Eliassen, Northern rock groups such as Senjahopen, and rural rap groups such as Side Brok. Notably, these groups share a dexterity in language that is also characteristic of Kuuk, exemplifying a resistance to globalized stylistic traits in popular music that circumvent any simple demands to intelligibility (read: English lyrics) in favour of a broad range of vernacular expressions.

On Kuuk's album *Kuuk live fra Blitz*, resistance vernaculars are realized on several levels, notably language, vocal performance, and gender politics. A recording of a live concert by the band, the album showcases the rappers' interaction with their audience as well as with their backing band.⁴

My focus falls on the songs 'HTG' and '10 000 high fives'. In 'HTG', Solbergnes troubles clichés of machismo by shouting out spoken lines such as 'Er det noen som vil bli penetrert her?' (Is there anyone that wants to be penetrated here?) Refsum, in the song's chorus, engages with ideas of correct feminine behaviour in stating that she 'æ'kke en sånn jente som flørter / Jeg bare squirter' (I'm not a girl who flirts / I only squirt), with Solbergnes interjecting shouts of *aah* that underpin the point. The sex-positivist attitude is here flaunted as a shameless pride in the ability to achieve squirting orgasms, in a vocal style that signifies excess in that the performers avoid conventional singing styles in favour of shouting and belting techniques. The troubling of gender is further emphasized in that the women turn the idea of playing 'hard to get' around, instead enticing the antagonist (ostensibly, a man) to join in: 'Ikke prøv å leke HTG / når jeg vet du vil være med' (Don't try and play HTG / when I know you want to join in). Further destabilizing conventional gender binaries, Solberg's microphone technique employs close-up noises and near-feedback, again signifying the sort of excess that

⁴ The choice of venue for the concert is also significant in a context of resistance vernaculars. Starting out as an illegal squat in the early 1980s, Oslo's Blitz later became a legal cooperation for actors on the radical left, as the location for a concert venue, a vegetarian café, and notably radiOrakel, an all-female-run radio station with a feminist stance. See Eide et al. (2012) for a comprehensive history of radiOrakel and the significance of Blitz for the Norwegian feminist movement.

resists categories of normative behaviour, expanding the idea of resistance vernacular to also include the voice itself.

Resistance to regulating and limiting ideas of acceptable behaviour are even more pronounced in ‘10 000 high fives’. A bass line that is as cheeky as it is funky underpins Solbergnes’ assertive, gender-bending opening lyric line: ‘Piss meg i øret og kall meg mann’ (Piss in my ear and call me a man). Even though she immediately bends it back again, in the line ‘Æ brøle sånn som bare damer kan’ (I roar like this as only women can), the linguistic damage has in a sense been inflicted already. Despite the essentialist trap of speaking on behalf of ‘all women’, Solbergnes makes the valid point that she is not afraid to be called a man, thus appropriating a role that connotes agency and power.

Sandve has noted that Refsum and Solbergnes utilize opposites in their interplay, both musically and visually. The performance mode of the two rappers, which includes hypersexualized dialogues that are chock-full of expletives and that showcase a clever play with language that includes dialect and a relentless mix of Norwegian and English words, highlights a playfulness that in turn alerts us to the space of possibilities where the performers operate – a space that accommodates gendered identities that are not easily categorized in binary oppositions (Sandve 2015b). The idea of a resistance vernacular is made to function as a deconstruction of machismo, where language and vocal performance become tools for destabilizing masculinity via markers of Anglo-American popular culture.

Sandve also suggests that we see Kuuk as exponents of what Halberstam has termed female masculinity (Sandve 2015b). In Halberstam’s work, this pertains to a number of identities available to women, from butch to drag king, and also enables a critique of male masculinity as ‘the real thing’. According to Halberstam, masculinity ‘inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege’, and, in patriarchal logic, is also simultaneously made to function as a natural trait of biological men; consequently, a critical interrogation discloses masculinity as legible ‘where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body’ (1998, 2). In Kuuk’s project, this goes all the way to the naming of the organ, which however becomes a palindrome,⁵ disabling any straightforward reading.

Also building on Halberstam’s theory, Marita Buanes Djupvik has investigated the idea of female masculinity as staged through popular music. Suggesting that strategies of blurring, e.g. through female masculinity, help women gain access to masculine-coded roles in music, Djupvik analyses rap vocal practice and expressions of attitude. In her research into Missy Elliott’s music, she suggests that Elliott succeeds in appropriating ‘the necessary degree of raunchy braggadocio’ and thereby ‘reclaims all the privileges that come with male power’ (2017, 123). This is arguably also significant in Kuuk’s project, notably in ‘10 000 high fives’.

What is more, Kuuk may be seen as exponents of a sex-positive feminism, which also enables a critique of stereotypes of sex. As Kath Albury suggests, ‘the misrecognition of [heterosexual] desire serves a dominant culture of heteronormativity – the subtle or not

⁵ The spelling of the band’s name as ‘Kuuk’ adds a U to popular spellings of the word.

so subtle enforcement of particular kinds of heterosexual identity as the norm', adding that, if we argue that 'most men are sexual aggressors, and most women are sexually put-upon, we support normalising stereotypes where Male = Active/Strong/Desiring, and Female = Passive/ Weak/Desired' (Albury 2002, xxi). In the light of this, Kuuk's broad-legged postures and lyrics that emphasize sexual bravado may be seen to turn this model on its head, or rather destabilize it, exposing the constructedness of gender roles but also grounding this destabilization in sex-positivism, with an emphasis on pleasure.

On the one hand, this pertains to what Cecilia Björck terms 'claiming space'. Notably, this pertains to taking the opportunity to turn up the volume, both literally and figuratively: both making loud music and taking a stance against what Björck calls middle-class notions of moderation and discipline (Björck 2011). This brings to mind Fabian Holt's critique of the concept of 'Nordic cool' as being characterized by ideas of control and restraint (Holt 2017). Moreover, loudness, in Björck's analysis, is also about finding one's voice and thereby deconstructing the connection, chiefly in rock music, between masculinity and authenticity (Björck 2011, 129). In this, Björck's analysis entails a critique of how ideals of femininity seem contingent on and policed by masculine ideals. This makes the case for Kuuk, where pleasure is closely related not only to sex-positivity and destabilizing gender norms, but also to what Björck calls a 'transgression of stereotypes of sound and gender', as exemplified by 'women who growl' (Björck 2011, 129) – a vocal technique which would sit well as a description of Refsum's and Solbergnes's vocal performance.

On the other hand, the emphasis on sexual pleasure that characterizes Kuuk's songs recalls Mireille Miller-Young's concept of the 'illicit eroticism' of rap music (Miller-Young 2008). In her investigation into black sexualities in hip-hop, Miller-Young suggests the intersection of hip-hop and pornography, where 'illicit eroticism' becomes a sexual economy that offers up possibilities of pleasure, agency, and power. As an analytical tool, illicit eroticism enables critical analysis of hegemonic white definitions of non-normative black sexuality and opens inroads into subverting such constructions and producing 'new spaces for desire and pleasure through counter-fetishization' (Miller-Young 2008, 275).

Importantly, Miller-Young asks whether pleasure, particularly sexual pleasure, can 'become an anti-racist and anti-sexist platform' (Miller-Young 2008, 286); following this, we may see how the pleasure of Kuuk's music may also accommodate a potential for change.

'Man or not': Skrap

I now turn my attention to the duo Skrap. Consisting of pianist Anja Lauvdal and tuba player Heida Jóhannesdóttir Mobeck,⁶ Skrap originated in the fertile environment around the music conservatoire at the University of Trondheim, colloquially known as the *Jazzlinja*. Like Kuuk, the band's name has several layers: the Norwegian word *skrap*

⁶ In addition to their main instruments, Lauvdal and Mobeck are both multi-instrumentalists, as evidenced in their participation in jazz, electronica, and pop-rock bands such as Moskus, Skadedyr, and Broen.

translates into English as garbage (e.g. scrap metal), but also designates sounds such as scratch or scrape (pertaining, for example, to the sound of the needle of a record player as it slides across a vinyl record, or a snow shovel scraping across gravel). Their music is similarly multi-layered, drawing on jazz and electronica, and utilizing strategies of improvisation and voice manipulation. In addition to their own records as a duo, Skrap have worked with Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, further highlighting the creative dimension as well as the opportunities for artistic cooperation enabled by the jazz community in the region of Central Norway, with Midtnorsk jazzsenter as their base.⁷

Against this background, which spans a wide variety of genres and approaches, Skrap appears as a project where the musicians' exploration of styles and themes is intrepid, but also subdued. Notably, vocal performances are characterized by a laid-back singing style that avoids the full chest voice in favour of more ordinary-sounding voices that resemble speaking registers or *Sprechstimme*. Taken together with the band's avoidance of conventional song structures (i.e. verse/chorus), this furnishes Skrap's style with a quirkiness that arguably creates an impression of untutored, do-it-yourself (DIY) music. Reynolds and Press argue that this vocal strategy may be seen as adhering to a 'DIY ideology' that 'agitates against acquiring musical technique' (1995, 327). A discernible trait of this ideology is the presence of 'untutored, artless voices' (1995, 367). As I will demonstrate in my analysis, Skrap may be seen to utilize their vocal style to defy musical as well as gender conventions.

On Skrap's album *Atlantis* (2018), the two musicians operate as singers and multi-instrumentalists, exploring electronic music that draws on strategies of improvisation. Starting with 'Vær så god', I offer analyses of three songs from *Atlantis* that may be understood as enabling alternative subject positions in various ways.

Drawing on intertextual connections to two children's songs, 'Så gjør vi så' and 'Bjørnen sover',⁸ 'Vær så god' invokes stereotypes of heteronormativity and masculinity. The former song is re-written so as to illuminate how gender is contingent on categorical differences ('Så gjør vi så når vi setter hverandre i bås' (This is what happens when we put each other in boxes)), while the latter brings up questions of fear of failing, but also fear of knowledge, and possibly the 'dangerous female' or even vagina dentata ('Vi er ikke farlig[e] / Bare du går varlig' (We are not dangerous / You just tread carefully)).

Skrap also use the children's song 'Bjørnen sover' to indicate a chorus-like section in a song that is otherwise exemplary of the band's method of avoiding pop-song conventions of verse/chorus. This is also exemplified in the band's use of programmed drums that rhythmically displace the phallic snare drum (Hawkins 2002, 56) in that the vocals do not necessarily follow the 4/4 logic of the drum machine. Hawkins makes

⁷ Midtnorsk jazzsenter: <https://midtnorsk.jazzinorge.no> (accessed 15 April 2018).

⁸ 'Så gjør vi så', also known in a festive (Christmas) version as 'Så går vi rundt om en enebærbusk', is a Norwegian translation of the English nursery rhyme, 'Here we go round the Mulberry bush'. 'Bjørnen sover', a popular song in both Sweden and Norway, utilises the melody of 'Gubben Noak', an 18th-century Swedish traditional song with lyrics by the composer Carl Michael Bellman. The lyrics function as words of subtle warning, indicating that the bear will not wake up and harm you if you tread carefully.

reference to McClary's argument that the options available to woman musicians in rock are 'especially constrictive, for this musical discourse is typically characterized by its phallic upbeat' (quoted in Hawkins 2002, 56-57). In the light of this, Skrap open up possibilities via their vocal performance, enabling a subject position that is not constricted by conventions that may appear as masculine in a context of popular music.

This strategy is also identifiable in the lyrics. The line 'Du lægg' for stor vekt på min vagina' (You put too much weight on my vagina), sung by Mobeck, adds to this by employing regional dialect. This includes a shifting of emphasis on syllables, as Mobeck places emphasis on the first syllable in the word 'vagina'. As in the case of Kuuk, this use of dialect furnishes the song with a sheen of authenticity, in that it provides Skrap with a grounding in the use of dialect. Equally important, though, is the resistance that is discernible in the singer's admonition of the antagonist for their preoccupation with her biological sex.

Using double-tracked vocals that are joined by harmony vocals, the voices express an attempt to disappear in order to avoid the antagonist's definition of the protagonist as woman: 'Jeg prøver å forsvinne / Vil ikke bli sett på som din definisjon av kvinne / Uansett hva vi gjør / Vi deles inn i mann eller ikke' (I try to disappear / Don't want to be seen as your definition of woman / Whatever we do / We are divided into man or not). The idea that society operates at any given time with the categories of men and 'non-men' (read: nothing), in effect giving the man priority over the woman, invokes a lineage of feminist thought that may be traced at least as far back as Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 book, *Le Deuxième sexe* (The Second Sex). In line with this, the song signifies individual disidentification with expectations directed at women.⁹ To this end, Skrap formulate a critique of categories and adherent social norms that recalls Toril Moi's theory of the fallacy of inferring from biological sex to gender norms: '[The] best defence against biological determinism is to deny that biology grounds or justifies social norms. If we consistently deny this, we do not have to assume that the idea that there are only two sexes must be steeped in sexism and heterosexism' (Moi 1999, 113).

Like Moi, Skrap do not deny the existence of biological facts, notably with regard to female anatomy in 'Vær så god'; however, this may be read as in line with Moi's observation that 'invocations of nature usually come wrapped up in sexist or heterosexist ideology' (Moi 1999, 113). Moi emphasizes that it remains a necessary feminist task to point out the pervasive presence of this ideology. As such, 'Vær så god' may be interpreted as alerting the listener to structural obstacles in music and elsewhere, with a musical backing that does not insist, but sustains the listener's interest via strategies that eschew conventional song structures.

⁹ I take the term *disidentification* here from José Esteban Muñoz. Building on feminist theory as well as cultural studies, Muñoz suggests disidentification as a tool for resisting unfavourable identification with any group and being Othered as part of being categorized (Muñoz 1999). Linking this to pop music's potential for 'articulating traits of gender and sexuality' in music, Hawkins employs Muñoz's concept as a tool for analysing how pop productions can 'entail resistance, facilitating disidentification within a specific system' (2016, 218). I see this as a valid understanding of Muñoz's ideas that is also applicable to my own analysis of both Kuuk and Skrap, as both bands can be seen to disidentify with conceptions of the 'female musician' in various ways.

Similar strategies are employed to different ends in ‘Marianna’. Here, Skrap seemingly utilize a more conventional song structure, with the recurring vocal hooks, ‘Digger når du smiler’ (I like it when you smile) and ‘Du er bra slik du er’ (You are fine as you are), implying a verse/chorus difference. However, the stop-start mode of the music complicates this, with the programmed drums entering and exiting at salient points in the song, and the irregular metre of the lyric lines creating the impression of a monologue or even a love letter. The synthesizer sounds (which recall dance-floor music as much as anything else) contrast this, destabilizing not only the song structure but also the protagonist’s subject position. This helps Skrap avoid locking the song into any one position, instead opening the song’s address to more listeners than the antagonist, who is the obvious recipient of the words.

Ostensibly, the song is a declaration of friendship or maybe a love song to the title character (Marianna), but also takes up questions of self-esteem: ‘Du er bra slik du er’ is easily perceived as a declaration of support. This is underlined by the fact that the name of the title character is sung by double-tracked voices or by two or more voices in harmony. This way, the protagonist’s subjectivity becomes multi-layered, not easily pinpointed as either friend, lover, or authority.

What is more, in the lyrics, Skrap employ a variety of gazes to visualize Marianna in time and space: imagining them as growing old ‘with flowers in your hair’ and as dancing with a (male) character, but also delight in seeing their smile. Then again, the gaze is not only individual, as in the line, ‘Du forstår at du er dritbra / Når du ser på deg selv gjennom dine venners øyne’ (You will understand that you are great / When you see yourself through your friends’ eyes). The heteronormative dimension of the lyrics, where the protagonist wishes for Marianna to find a man, frames the narrative; however, the protagonist’s cordiality and the gaze suggest that attention is firmly focused on the title character. In addition, there is nothing in the lyrics that suggests that Marianna is or is not a trans woman; this observation leaves the lyrics more open to interpretation, and, I would argue, to notions of both resistance and disidentification.¹⁰

As factors in identity politics, markers of authenticity are neither universal nor unambiguous. Skrap provide an example of this in the song ‘Allerede da’, where they ostensibly criticize the ivory-tower quest for knowledge that characterizes universities. Via a series of images that include old hypotheses and ancient texts about nature and the elegance of physics, and a dropping of names that includes philosophers Democritus and Spinoza, Skrap convey an image of theory as remote and irrelevant to their modus operandi: the insistent repetition of the decree to ‘read, read, read’ positions theoretical knowledge as antithetical to the band’s sense of self.

A series of questions that are apt to confuse, and to complicate identity (‘hvordan da, hvilken vei, hva er hva’ (how then, which way, what’s what)) is underlined by a violin that sounds subdued and non-virtuosic, complementing the voices and creating a counterpoint, both to the voices and, by association, to the ‘stressful’ accumulation of intellectual knowledge.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Kate Maxwell for this point.

This indicates the possibility of reading 'Allerede da' as sustaining a simple dichotomy of academics and musicians, where the remoteness from the 'real life' of the former is set against the anti-intellectual (read: authentic), and possibly populist, poise of the latter. To this end, a banal idea of academic knowledge is used as a straw man. Notably, the lyrics name-check several male theorists, but do not mention any women. The absence of female theorists may be seen as adding to the populist notion of theory that is pitted against real life in a binary opposition, and arguably creates an impression of strategic naivety as a facet of the musicians' personae (Ålvik 2017).

However, in the light of songs such as 'Vær så god', Skrap also open the song to interpretation in the light of a gender binary that positions man as the universal subject (Butler 1993), who bases his understanding of the world on theories invented by 'ancient Greeks with beards'. While such an understanding, as part of the band's identity politics, would certainly be contingent on strategic (fake) naivety, we may also favourably read Skrap here as negotiating a feminist position that is not subordinate to theoretical (read: masculine) hegemony.

In their songs, Skrap create characters that signify in contexts where they are encouraged to live up to expectations. In 'Marianna', the protagonist/narrator is supportive of the title character, but also advises them to see themselves through the eyes of her peers, implying a gaze that conditions and controls. The protagonists of 'Allerede da' offer an alternative to rigid and irrelevant 'theory', but run the risk of placing themselves in an anti-intellectual position that locks in both themselves and the Others they appropriate. The song nevertheless lends itself to interpretation as an attempt to negotiate identities that are not bound by expectations of knowledge and submission to norms, a suggestion which is underlined by the songs' avoidance of unambiguous song structures and regular repetitive metre in the lyrics.

The dexterity with which the musicians perform lyrics within the loose structure of the songs is likely a result of improvisational skills, considering the musicians' broad background and professional musicianship. As such, Skrap's employment of resistance vernaculars encompasses a range of details in their work, including genre and form, thus enabling a feminist stance and a use of language that goes with this.

We may perceive of this stance as an attempt to formulate women's experience in music, albeit not in any formulaic or otherwise limiting way. Rather, we may well interpret Skrap's project in the light of Renée Cox Lorraine's theory of feminist aesthetics in music. Engaging critically with concepts of 'women's music', Lorraine suggests that, rather than 'attempt to separate ourselves completely from male concepts of the feminine', feminists – and, by extension, feminist research – 'could expose these concepts or images and reformulate them in a positive light' (2001, 15). To this end, Lorraine calls attention to the critical possibilities of music research: 'What is critical is not so much what we call women's experience or the feminine in music, but rather what are a work's or an era's perspectives on women or the feminine, on how what is regarded as feminine is approached and handled in a particular social and historical context' (2001, 16). As trained and skilled musicians in a Nordic context where one effect of Metoo is the expansion of music spaces to accommodate women's stories,

Skrap use their music to voice experiences that may well be of relevance in broader contexts.

Concluding thoughts

In this article I have argued that gendered identities are enabled, contested, and performed in Nordic popular music, notably through the use of language and by troubling gender stereotypes. Following both Potter and Mitchell in their work on resistance vernaculars, I contend that language is especially central to these processes. Seeing as language carries with it sets of assumptions on a par with music, it is worth asking not only how language shapes ideas of gender and sexuality, but also what role music plays, and what the significance of musical codes may be.

In the cases of Kuuk and Skrap, I have expanded the idea of resistance vernaculars to include not only language as a fundament for song lyrics, but also vocal performance and musical style. This way, the notion of resistance is broadened to encompass musicalized subjectivity and agency, and, by implication, identity politics.

Concerns with authenticity inevitably become part of the discussion. In Mitchell's model, where English may be perceived as the global norm, other languages are always in danger of becoming Othered, essentialized, in ways that differentiate works with regard to identity. However, through their consistent engagement with questions of gendered identity, Kuuk and Skrap avoid this contingency on their Otherness in an Anglophone global context, not least because they can both be seen to make a conscious effort to dissolve any binarisms that lock self and Other in their respective positions. Negotiating individual and group identities through a myriad of audiovisual factors, both bands provide the kind of resistance that may open non-normative projects to critical scrutiny as more than just peripheral phenomena in a global context of popular music.

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ICELANDIC KAMI

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Abstract

Utamakura is a traditional Japanese technique of recognizing, interpreting, and utilizing the web of intertextual meanings which have accrued around particular place names over centuries of poetic practice. In general, these *utamakura* places were originally (in the 7th-9th centuries) associated with Shintō gods (kami), though in later periods the web of meanings in most cases came to include (and often became dominated by) secular rather than spiritual associations. Japanese poet Takahashi Mutsuo, who has published both poetic and theoretical works on the subject of *utamakura*, seeks to recover the original spiritual power of *utamakura* place names. He has also expanded the concept to include places of mythic spiritual importance outside of Japan, mostly in the Greco-Roman world.

Taking inspiration from Takahashi's revivification of this mediaeval poetic device, I am currently in the midst of a three-year project to write a series of (at this point seven) multimedia chamber music pieces called the *utamakura* series, pieces inspired alternately by traditional Japanese locations and locations in Northern Europe. My 2018 piece *utamakura 2: Arnardalar* for violin, piano, and fixed audiovisual media is an exploration of the Icelandic valley of Arnardalur in the Westfjords, the setting of a key early scene in the *Fóstbræðra saga*. My work draws on both the saga's descriptions of the place and the current place as it is today, highlighting the flux of time and exploring the power of art to infuse itself into – and change perceptions of – physical locations.

In this paper, I will explain the conceptual processes involved in writing the piece, with an emphasis on the intercultural aesthetic of my work and how Japanese philosophy of art and religion can offer a creative new perspective on the Scandinavian lands which are the settings of the North's oldest literature.

Keywords: *utamakura*; *Ueda Shizuteru*; *Takahashi Mutsuo*; *Nō*; *Japanese aesthetics*; *Icelandic sagas*; *Fóstbræðra saga*; *Intercultural artistic practice*; *Multimedia music*

Introduction

My first day in Iceland was the last that the aurora borealis could be seen from Reykjavík in the winter of 2018. It was also, despite being mid-March, warm enough to not need to wear a jacket. A perennial sign of seasonal change and an unseasonable 'warm wave', these were also reminders that neither weather nor celestial phenomena – nor, indeed anything – exists permanently. Whatever we hope and fear – the increasing amount of energy (and thus volatility) in our global climatic systems, the destruction of manmade cultural artefacts of the past, extinction of animals, or death – the only thing we can know about the future for sure is that it will be different from the present.

I had come to Iceland to make audio recordings, take videos, and begin composing a piece for violin, piano, and those audiovisual field recordings. I did this over three weeks at the ArtsIceland residency in Ísafjörður in Vestfirðir (Westfjords), the remote northwest region of the country. This is a part of the country rich in history, legend, and cultural activity. It is also the least densely populated area of this already sparsely populated island; as I drove north from Reykjavík through heavy, dark mountains and snowy landscapes melting before my eyes in the unexpected warmth, I passed through fewer and fewer – and tinier and tinier – human settlements.



Figure 1. Unseasonably warm drive north along Route 60, 20 March 2018. Photo: Daryl Jamieson.

Travelling alone – both in the sense of being by myself in the car, and not seeing another vehicle for tens of kilometres at a time – I often stopped and got out to breathe in the landscape and observe the air, to get – as much as I could – a physical sense of the land I was driving through, to get out of the high-tech steel and glass bubble I was encased in and which ‘protected’ me from nature. I tried to listen, not only to the ephemeral sounds of the moment, but to reach back with my ears into the past, to do what landscape archaeologist Matthew Johnson claims it is ‘blindingly obvious’ that one cannot do – that is, to ‘stand in the middle of a muddy field or on top of a hill ... listen very carefully [and hear the past]’ (Johnson 2012, 519).

Of course, Johnson is correct to say that ‘you will hear nothing of the past’, and I didn’t. Though sounds are simply vibrations of the air, vibrations simply energy, and energy perpetually conserved, even if there might theoretically be a way to map the

movements of all the particles in the universe at any given moment and extrapolate back to the vibrations they would have been making at a certain point in history so as to be able to listen in the present to the sounds of the past, such a feat would require such an astounding amount of data as to be literally impossible in practice. Empiricism, though useful as a tool ('intense empiricism is the first step to immanence' (Macfarlane 2015, 66)), cannot fully describe even the present moment (and to which of the constantly changing presents does the word 'present' refer?) to the degree of precision which science seems to promise, lest, like Borges' 1:1 map in 'On Exactitude in Science', the detail overwhelm the object of observation (and let's not get into the weird things that occur when particles at the quantum level are observed). No, to have a soundscape archaeology back beyond the era of sound recording – to 'hear' the past – one needs imagination and documentation: art, diaries, literature, the legends and stories of oral cultures.

The project I had come to Iceland to execute was not in any way empirical. It was a philosophical exploration of the fanciful concept of soundscape archaeology, via the ontology of the Kyoto School philosophers and revived medieval Japanese poetics, a fusion of a conceptual, intercultural approach to sound- and video-art with intuitive musical response. The piece which occupied most of my time in Ísafjörður is part of a series of works called the '*utamakura* series', the overarching aim of which is a re-enchantment of landscape in the present via the artistic and spiritual traces of the past and projection of hopes and fears for the future.

Utamakura

Utamakura are fundamentally names of famous places. In the 7th to 9th centuries, when Japanese poetry was taking form and establishing its conventions, these would have been places of spiritual significance or the sites of famous battles. These amounted to the same thing, since when a hero is killed in battle, he would become a *kami* – a word which can mean anything from a local spirit within a rock, tree, or mountain to a human soul, all the way to the omnipotent monotheistic god of the Abrahamic faiths. In this early period, the place names which would later become *utamakura* were used literally, to evoke the beauty of nature (and hence worship or appease the *kami* who resided in that sacred spot and lent their beauty and power to it) or to commemorate directly or obliquely a fallen hero at the spot where he fell (and hence placate the *kami* that he had since become) (Takahashi 2011, 123).

In later centuries, from the Heian period on, the use of *utamakura* place names became more conventionalized and abstract. As the composition of poetry increasingly became an urban, aristocratic pastime and less involved with the spirits of the land and the rhythms of nature, poets' use of *utamakura* came to have much less to do with the places the names signified – and even less to do with any commemoration of battles that had been fought centuries prior – and more to do with the associations these words had accrued. These associations developed out of the themes of the original poem or poems to have used the place name, themes such as beauty, betrayal, intrigue, or more generic seasonal occurrences like the blooming of cherry blossoms or viewing the full moon.

This is when these place names became *utamakura*, when they stopped signifying events and places in the real world and began to symbolize poetic ideas.

Poets and other artists began to use these words as a shorthand, an intertextual reference to both the landscape itself and – increasingly more importantly – to the emotional world manifested by the previous poem(s) that had previously made use of them. As the centuries passed, the same *utamakura* place names¹ continued to be used, and with each poem – or *nō* play, or painting – that made use of the word, the web of associated meanings increased, so that, by the mid 15th century, the poet Shōtetsu could say that the *utamakura* Mount Yoshino *is* the cherry blossom in spring and Tatsuta River *is* the maple leaf in autumn (Takahashi 2005, 161). The putative place names no longer referred to their physical locations at all; emptied of their conventional meaning they came to exist solely in an abstract poetic world.

The word *utamakura* (歌枕) itself literally means ‘poem pillow’. Analogically, pillows being the place where you set your head (especially at night, to sleep, to dream, to go into another world), the *utamakura* could be conceived of as a place where one sets one’s poem. Poet Takahashi Mutsuo suggests another etymology for *makura*. *Kura* can be read as ‘seat’ (座), and *ma* can be read as both ‘truth’ (真) and ‘space between’ (間). In this way, he suggests, *makura* might mean ‘the seat of truth is in the void’. This Buddhist interpretation of *makura* resonates with Fujiwara Shunzei’s use of Tendai Buddhist terminology to explain *utamakura*’s poetic effect on our perception of reality. In Shunzei’s view, the false (that is, conventionally real) view of an *utamakura* place is the one seen through the inescapably subjective eyes of a visitor. The literate viewer’s view of the landscape, however, is ‘immediately modified by textual knowledge’ (Marra 2010, 66). The resulting hybrid perception of landscape is a Middle Way: neither the pure abstraction of Shōtetsu nor false trust in fallible human perceptual faculties, but an interdependent combination of both. We see through lenses of poets’ words.

Kyoto-School philosopher Ueda Shizuteru’s tri-level theory of language is a contemporary attempt to understand how language shapes human perception. Ueda’s three levels are sign words (words which manifest mental objects in a one-to-one fashion), symbol words (words which suggest or metonymically allude to larger, more abstract concepts), and hollow words (words which do not signify things in the conventional world, i.e. poetic, humorous, absurd, or religious language). Hollow words can trigger an aesthetic response in the listener which suddenly throws them into an understanding of the world as it really is (i.e., radically interdependent, hollow, void, empty), thus giving poetry and art a soteriological function (Ueda 2011, 776).² Or, to paraphrase using less religious language, poetry (art) expands minds by introducing conceptual layers on top of what is conventionally called ‘reality’, modifying how ‘reality’ itself is perceived, and thus demonstrating that there is more to ‘reality’ than

¹ There are around 2000 *utamakura*, though this number includes ones that literally every educated Japanese person knows and others that even experts would have to check their reference books to identify.

² Cf my more in-depth summary of Ueda’s system in relation to music (Jamieson 2018, 332-334).

the viewer/listener had previously been aware. This is the function of art that I like to think of as a kind of re-enchantment.

Saga landscapes

During the 12th to 15th centuries, overlapping with Shunzei's development of a Buddhist interpretation of Japanese poetry and the period when the ancient art of *sarugaku* was being refined into *nō* (to which I will return), in Iceland centuries of traditional oral storytelling were being written down in the form of the sagas. As Shunzei implanted Buddhist spiritual meaning into *utamakura* which had begun centuries earlier as spells to worship and appease Shintō *kami*, in a somewhat parallel manner, the predominantly Christian saga writers were also looking back on a time in their country's history when Iceland had been governed by Old Norse pagan religious and social codes. As in the Japanese case, while the culturally more powerful, systematised religion (Buddhism / Christianity) had superseded the native, diffuse, animist one (Shintō / paganism) in the official writing of the period, in both countries the native animist religions continued to be practiced, albeit in modified forms.³

However, my principal concern here is with the various ways in which landscape is and has been perceived, and not religion *per se*. There is a significant emphasis on the land, movement through the landscape, and human interventions on the landscape (in the sense of farms and settlements) in the Icelandic sagas that mark out a unique relationship between these texts and the land they describe. As the foundational texts of Icelandic literature, taught in schools and known to a certain extent by the entire literate population, they undoubtedly contribute an *utamakura*-like layer of literary allusion that affects how Icelandic people perceive the landscape of their country.

Emily Lethbridge has written of the 'persuasiveness' of the idea of landscape itself as the original manuscript of the sagas, one which 'is best regarded as a palimpsest – a manuscript which is characterised by multiple stages and reuse, with accretions of text building up over time, newer text being written over older, scraped-away text' (Lethbridge 2016, 55). She describes how, in the Age of Settlement (874-930), the newly arrived settlers carved meaning out of the landscape through naming, and how the saga writers subsequently (centuries later) used these names to enhance (or even create) their narratives. Jürg Glauser called this 'a transformation of nature into culture' and a 'semioticization of the landscape' (Glauser 2000, 209). This imposition of 'culture' on 'nature' allowed for narratives to be preserved – for the first settlers and later heroes to be remembered via the places where they lived and loved, fought and fell. In an oral culture, as Iceland largely was prior to Christianization, this also helped people understand the landscape and to be able to 'read' it and orient themselves in it.

As with *utamakura* words and the poems in which they are mentioned, as the time when a place was named retreated further into the past, the associations of place names and their meanings evolved and widened. Lethbridge relates several examples from the

³ Though there is no space here to develop the idea, I am intrigued by the similarities between Japanese *kami* and the elves who are said to populate Iceland to this day (see generally Hall 2007, 21-53)

sagas where, despite the saga itself explaining the etymology of a particular place based on a so-called historical incident in the saga, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the saga author was in fact inventing stories based on place names, rather than the places being named after actual historical events (cf. Lethbridge 2016, 60-66). So while human habitation, other natural forces, and simply time itself slowly changed the physical environment of Iceland, the place names, myths, and sagas passed down both orally and in writing, as well as personal memories and family legends, continued to impress their meanings on the landscape as well. Shunzei's Tendai-inspired explication of the function of *utamakura* is also applicable to places which play a role in the sagas: when we view them, the perceptual data we receive through our senses are 'immediately modified' by the cultural data we associate with that place; we see a palimpsest of the present (nature) overwritten by the past (culture).



Figure 2. The location of Gísli's farmstead, just west of Þingeyri (30 March 2018).

Photo: Daryl Jamieson

Where *utamakura* theory adds something unique to what has already been amply explored by scholars of and writers on the sagas is the recognition of transience as a fundamental principle and its resistance to any identification of the layers of the palimpsest. Shunzei's Middle Way may not go in for pure abstraction (a nihilistic interpretation of the idea that the ground of reality is emptiness), but it recognizes that, to paraphrase Heraclitus, you can never look at the same sight twice; you certainly can not visit 'the place' where, in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, Gísli lived and where Vestein was murdered, for example. Thus, since all things are in a constant state of change of arising

and subsiding (i.e. birth and death; *samsāra*), there is a certain Idealism (in the Kantian sense) in how we interpret the experience of this palimpsest of landscape and legend, nature and culture. When we are at a location mentioned in a saga, it should be ‘blindingly obvious’ that we are not seeing the same sights, any more than we can hear the same sounds, that the characters in the sagas – or those who, centuries later, wrote them down – would have seen or heard. Each of us has our own cultural context – some of which is shared with our fellow citizens, but some of which is unique to ourselves – so we will all experience the same landscape through our own lenses. Even if you stand at the site of the farm⁴ where he lived you will never be able to experience the same landscape that Gísli did – but nor can you experience even the same landscape that the person standing next to you does. An understanding, an appreciation of the palimpsest of landscape in this way allows us to traverse all three of Ueda’s language levels at once: the sign (the landscape as pure physical presence at a particular moment in time [i.e., now]), the symbol (the cultural, legendary, literary history connected with the place), and the hollow (the liberatingly paradoxical realisation of the impossibility of experiencing the myriad unique strands of interdependent connections linking you to both the signal and symbolic interpretations of the scene in front of you whilst simultaneously, overwhelmingly, actually experiencing it). In a Zen manner, one transcends the build up of intertextual cultural associations to return to an even purer (hollow) experience of the land itself. This direct, unmediated experience is unachievable without first moving through and overcoming the cultural (symbolic) level.

Nō

My ‘utamakura series’ is a (projected⁵) series of seven pieces united by their use of field recordings in combination with small chamber groups of traditional and modern European/American instruments (with the ensembles ranging in size from soloists to a septet). Conceived as instrumental dramas, each piece in my series is conceptually ‘set’ in a particular place, which is where the field recordings were made. Like Takahashi Mutsuo’s *utamakura awase* (2005) (a collection of contemporary *utamakura*-based *waka* poems), which alternates between Japanese places and foreign ones (mostly locations related to ancient Greece and Rome), my series alternates between traditional Japanese places (the odd-numbered pieces are set in Nara, Matsuo, Kamakura, and Shioyama) and places in northern Europe (the even-numbered pieces are set in Arnardalur, Iceland, St Dunstan-in-the-East, London, and Gotland, Sweden). Also like Takahashi, who has sought to revivify the spiritual element of *utamakura* in order to rescue them from meaningless formalism and empty word games, I also want to both internalize and thence transcend the cultural associations of my chosen locations and rediscover the divinity of – the *kami* manifest in – the land itself.

⁴ Or watch it on video, as you can in the excellent documentary about landscape and memory in the sagas made by the aforementioned Emily Lethbridge (Chadwick 2012).

⁵ As of April 2020, five of the seven are complete.

The musico-dramatic structure of my pieces is inspired by *nō*, a genre of sung and danced drama which – heavily inspired by the poetry of the previous centuries – came to its current form (more or less) in the 14th century. *Nō* are often set in *utamakura* locations, and frequently quote *waka* poems directly or refer to them indirectly (Zeami 2006, 112-113). *Nō* is, to a certain extent, a spiritual drama; when *nō* was being formed by Kan’ami and his son Zeami, their troupe was associated with Tōdaiji temple and Kasuga shrine in Nara. At that point in history, Zen was in its period of political ascendancy in Japan. Kan’ami’s success and new-found prestige allowed Zeami to be educated in a Zen temple (Wilson 2006, 43-44), and Zenchiku (Zeami’s son-in-law and official successor) was also highly knowledgeable about both Zen and Shintō. Japan was and is a syncretic religious society, seeing no particular issue with following the local Shintō and imported Buddhist (and Confucian) creeds simultaneously. *Nō* was performed in both Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples, and its texts show concern with the philosophies of both religions. Zenchiku wrote that *nō* ‘follows Shinto and Buddhist ritual, not personal preference’ (trans. Thornhill 1993, 166).

Studying *nō* was the principle reason why I first went to live in Japan, and it remains the wellspring of my fascination with the country and its culture. *Utamakura* were a later discovery for me, discovered as a result of their use in *nō*. Hence, though my cycle foregrounds ‘place’ as its defining element, and thus takes its name from the poetic device concerning place names, *nō* principles are the backbone of how I dramatize the stories of those places.

One of the *nō* styles defined by Zeami was *mugen nō*. In a typical *mugen nō* (*mugen* literally means ‘dreams [*mu*] and illusions [*gen*]’), there are only two speaking characters on stage: the first character to appear (the *waki*⁶) is a ‘traveller, often a vagrant monk whose station is somewhere between priest, shaman, and beggar’ (Wilson 2006, 27), in other words a character who, through his training, is knowledgeable of the spiritual world but, because of his low social status, is also very much aware of the trials of the conventional world. The second is the main character (*shite*). In the first half of the play, the *shite* manifests as a low-status local individual who strikes up a conversation with the *waki*. The *waki* asks about the history of the place (an *utamakura* place, and thus having some famous story or event attached to it) and then the *shite*, after first demurring, tells the story of the place. In the second half of the drama, the *shite* manifests as the main character of the story – she or he is, in fact, the spirit of the person they had been discussing in the first half, still attached to this place and unable to accept the inherent transience of things (i.e., unable to let go of their desire to be in the world, and thus now haunting it as a ghost). Usually – though not always, especially in Zenchiku’s works – the *waki* utilizes his Buddhist learning to enlighten the distressed spirit, allowing him or her to be released from their attachment and enter Nirvana. Some scholars read the second half (or indeed the entirety) of *mugen nō* dramas as occurring

⁶ *Waki* is the term for the secondary character in all forms of *nō*, and doesn’t specifically refer to the type of character played by the *waki* in *mugen nō*.

in the dreams of the wandering monks (Wilson 2006, 28), a reading with which I generally concur.

In my *utamakura* series, then, the instrument(s) take on the *shite*-like role of (wordlessly, of course) explicating the poetic and artistic history of the chosen setting, while the field recordings (and video, in those pieces that use video) show images and impressions of the place as it existed on the day(s) I visited them. There is no *waki* part *per se*, since I ascribe to the view that the *shite* actually manifests in the mind (dreams/illusions) of the *waki*, so in my *utamakura* pieces the audience – in whose minds the aural and visual stimuli I have created are manifesting new virtual worlds – are themselves all *waki*.

Manifesting Icelandic kami: *utamakura 2: Arnardalur*

My compositional praxis, in general, is to prepare a great deal of structural, textural, and extra-musical ideas and concepts over a long period of time, allow them to mingle and ferment in the *miso* of my brain, and – when the time feels right – to produce, as quickly and spontaneously as possible, the notes on the page. Though working with video and audio has somewhat altered that process (and has certainly slowed the creative production phase down), in writing *utamakura 2: Arnardalur*, I roughly followed that model. The ingredients that went into the series as a whole – animist landscape spirituality (*kami*), Buddhist poetics, *nō* dramatic forms – were fixed and developing in my head long before I went to Iceland. Once in Iceland, I set about looking at and around the landscape and listening to and through the soundscape, imagining the past sights and sounds, conjuring images out of my limited cultural knowledge and drawing on the deep Nordic (though not Icelandic) roots of my family's heritage. In Ísafjörður, through reading books and discussing with local people, I learned as much as I could about the history and spirituality of the area, especially the sagas set there and their reception in the present day.

In Ísafjörður, I was drawn to two sagas as promising source material for an *utamakura* piece – *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and the *Fóstbræðra saga* (The Saga of the Sworn Brothers).⁷ My eventual choice for the setting of *utamakura 2* was the valley of Arnardalur, which features in the eleventh chapter of *Fóstbræðra saga*. The story can be roughly summarized as follows. Þormóður sets out by ship from Bolungarvík travelling east through the Ísafjarðardjúp (a large fjord just north of the current town of Ísafjörður). Due to inclement weather, he lands at Arnardalur (about 12km from Bolungarvík) where he is taken in by a widowed mother and her daughter: Katla and Þorbjörg. Þormóður falls for Þorbjörg (nicknamed Kolbrún, or 'dark eyelashes' (Ross 2001, 39)), writes love verse so beautiful and of such lasting popularity that he thereafter becomes known as Þormóður Kolbrúnarskáld (the poet of Kolbrún). But

⁷ I must thank Dr Emily Lethbridge at this point, whose exhaustive Icelandic Saga map – pinpointing every single location mentioned in every saga – was immensely useful in narrowing down my location choices (Lethbridge 2019).

eventually he feels the need to resume his journey to rejoin his sworn brother Þorgeirr, and so leaves the valley.

Of all the possible saga-related locations near Ísafjörður, Arnardalur intrigued me because it was a rare exploration of a romantic relationship in the saga literature, and Þorbjörg a rare example of an emotionally-complex female character in a saga.⁸ Additionally, Þormóður Kolbrúnarskáld – the main male character in the scene, and one of the two sworn brothers of the title – was a skald (poet), an occupation that fit well with the generative poetic preoccupations of my overall project. Finally, later writers (e.g. Halldór Laxness⁹) had taken up this story and thus contributed new layers of cultural meaning to the location.

Though I will not here try to analyse my own piece, I will share a few of the techniques I used when writing it. Like a *nō* drama, the piece is divided into two halves. The first half focuses on sounds and images of the sea as recorded in Bolungarvík, the second on sounds and images of the land as recorded in the valley of Arnardalur (which has a river running through it). In the first half, the images and sounds are expansive, layering multiple images and sound files – like a palimpsest – in the fixed media part, and employing wide leaps across the full range of the violin and piano. I aimed to create an expansive feeling in these parts, increasing in density and intensity over the first eight minutes. All of the material is disjointed and fragmented – there are blackouts on the screen and silences in the instrumental and field recording parts – and the video and sound files are manipulated slightly to create an unsettled feeling of not-quite-realism.

The second part is the key section, exploring the love story. It is much more intimate, with the piano and violin sharing a duet in singable registers (the piano in a tenor register and the violin in a soprano one). The video plays continuously, with no blackouts and little manipulation (other than colour adjustments); it shows the valley in both close-up, intimate detail and more expansive sublimity. The audio is still fragmented, though it is also more present and less diffuse in quality than the field recordings used in the first half. These recordings consist largely of sounds of the river, melting ice, birds, and insects – the natural world intruding and/or complementing the love duet in the instrumental parts.

The romantic interlude is short-lived, however, and from 11:30 to the end, honour and duty calls Þormóður Kolbrúnarskáld to return to his journey, leaving his lover Þorbjörg Kolbrún in the valley. This final section mixes wide shots of the sea (as seen from Arnardalur this time) with intimate shots of the valley, with the instruments also mixing textures and material from both previous sections. It ends with the sound of an airplane flying away from Ísafjörður airport over the valley, and noisy, high-pressure violin playing, while the video fades out over a close-up of an insect moving through the melting snow.

⁸ ‘In *Fóstbræðra saga* women tend to be more assertive than those in the core skald sagas and they also enjoy the poets’ love verses about them, which they and their kin recognise as public declarations of the poets’ affections’ (Ross 2001, 39).

⁹ Laxness retold the *Fóstbræðra saga* in his 1952 novel *Gerpla*, translated as *Wayward Heroes* by Philip Roughton (2016).

The performance of the piece by Ilana Waniuk and Cheryl Duvall, the directors of Thin Edge New Music Collective (2014-19), on 6 September 2018 in Tokyo can be seen here: https://youtu.be/TOvugK_ByZ8



Figure 3. *Utamakura 2: Arnardalur*, performed by Ilana Waniuk and Cheryl Duvall, the directors of Thin Edge New Music Collective, on 6 September 2018 in Tokyo.

Conclusion

My return trip from Ísafjörður to Reykjavík on 7 April 2018 was, in contrast to the balmy vernal journey three weeks previous, dangerously snowy and icy. There were far fewer cars on the road, and the drive itself took twice as long. Weather, in Iceland as everywhere else on the planet, is becoming even less predictable than the past, and, as per both Buddhist doctrine and scientific consensus, the only thing we can be sure of for the future is further change.

Looking at the past through its cultural artefacts – its literature, paintings, and music – and trying our hardest to hear the sounds of the past helps us understand how our world changes, and, even more so, how peoples' perceptions of the world change. Shunzei's *utamakura* theory uses poetry to enhance our perceptions in the present; Takahashi uses *utamakura* to re-enchant a disenchanted landscape. With my *utamakura* series, I hope to accomplish both of those goals, while also drawing attention not just to the unavoidable natural processes of arising and subsiding but also to the changes that humanity has imposed on nature.



Figure 4. Takashi-no-hama (meaning Takashi shore), a traditional utamakura site associated with pines, wind, and waves, is now in the Osaka suburbs and has been hemmed in by an industrialised artificial island, though some token pines have been preserved (2 March 2017). Photo: Daryl Jamieson.

Iceland now is largely treeless, but it had been well forested until the settlers cut them down in the first centuries of the Age of Settlement (Loftsson 1993, 453). Japanese *utamakura* sites, often championed in poetry for their natural beauty and pristine spiritual power, are as often as not now concreted over or otherwise urbanized – in other words, disenchanting, the *kami* forced to move on. If in my series I mostly focus on natural sounds and close-up views of delicate flowers pushing through snow or pavement, it is to find echoes of the environments that once were in the environments that exist now. In contrast to a lot of modern saga adaptations – which tend to focus on the violence of the pre-Christian, honour-code society (whether to revel in it or critique it) – I wanted to seek out the delicate, the beautiful, and the spiritual – the animist or pagan view of an enchanted, holy nature; I came in search of Icelandic *kami*. In both *utamakura 2: Arnardalur* and my work to come (including future pieces utilizing the extensive video footage and audio recordings related to places in *Gísli saga Súrssonar* I made), I hope I succeed in communicating this feeling to the audience.

Humanity has a great wealth of intellectual, spiritual, philosophical, and artistic resources for understanding the landscape and our place in it. While there is merit in focusing on the traditional ways the people of a particular landscape have developed in response to centuries of living there, culture and tradition, like all things, are ephemeral and constantly changing. Each individual creates their own subtly different and unique

picture of the world in their mind; we share a conventional core reality but the details are different. All spiritual traditions have different ways of dealing with those fraying edges of reality, and *nō* is an artistic manifestation of the Japanese syncretic approach, combining Buddhist and Shintō responses to the universal ground of emptiness. The sagas – tales of a pagan society related by its Christian descendants – are one of the ways Iceland’s history is written over and through its land. Through opening our minds and our art to as many perspectives as possible – spiritual and scientific, historical and mythological, directly sensed and indirectly imagined, native and foreign – we can rediscover an appreciation of our varied (hi)stories and of nature – and participate in their mutual re-enchantment.

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