

## Special Issue:

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### Changing Concepts of Nature in Contemporary Scandinavian Literature and Photography

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**MARIE-THERES FEDERHOFER AND DÖRTE LINKE (BERLIN) ON:**

Introduction to the Special Issue: Changing Concepts of Nature in Contemporary Scandinavian Literature and Photography, pp. 97–104.

**REINHARD HENNIG (KRISTIANSAND) ON:**

Anthropocene Aesthetics: Norwegian Literature in a New Geological Epoch, pp. 105–130.

**DÖRTE LINKE (BERLIN) ON:**

String Games and Entanglements — On the Idea of »Interconnectedness« in the Works of Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Josefine Klougart, pp. 131–157.

**SISSEL FURUSETH (OSLO) ON:**

Nordic Contemporary Fiction Grieving the Loss of Snow, pp. 158–173.

**MAIKE TEUBNER (ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG) ON:**

Photographic Encounters in the Arctic Ice. Mette Tronvoll's Series *Svalbard* (2014), pp. 174–198.

**ANNA CHRISTINA HARMS (BERLIN):**

**Nature and Identity: Sámi-ness in the Novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* by the Sámi Author Kirsti Paltto, pp. 199–218.**

Anna Christina Harms (Berlin):

## Nature and Identity

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### Sámi-ness in the Novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* by the Sámi Author Kirsti Paltto

#### Zusammenfassung

Natur und Naturverbundenheit sind in der literarischen Darstellung der Sámi häufig wiederkehrende Motive. Dieser Artikel untersucht die Frage, ob mit Hilfe von Naturelementen im Roman *Zeichen der Zerstörung* (1997) der samischen Autorin Kirsti Paltto ein bestimmtes Außenbild der Sámi geschaffen und unterstützt wird. Dabei konzentriert sich dieser Artikel auf die Elemente *duottar*, *sieidegeađgi*, *juoigan* und »Rentier« und diskutiert an ausgewählten Beispielen, wie diese Naturelemente im Buch zur Selbstrepräsentation der Sámi eingesetzt werden.

#### Abstract

Nature and closeness to nature are two motifs that are often used in literary depictions or descriptions of the Sámi. This article researches the question of whether, in the book *Zeichen der Zerstörung* by Sámi author Kirsti Paltto, nature as a literary means is used to create or support a certain public image of the Sámi. The article will focus on the elements of *duottar* (fell), *sieidegeađgi* (sieidi stone), *juoigan* (yoiking) and »reindeer« and discuss with reference to selected examples how they are employed in the book to present the self-image of the Sámi.

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### Introduction

Bleak wasteland and inhospitable nature populated by lazy, undersized inhabitants? Or people living in harmony with nature, whose way of life presents a solution to current environmental problems? These are the two stereotypes most commonly applied to the Sámi (the indigenous people of Northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula) and Sápmi (the region inhabited of the Sámi people), both in travel literature and in poetry and fiction.<sup>1</sup>

Since the first contacts between Europeans and the indigenous population of Sápmi, these prejudices about the Sámi and the natural world in Sápmi have stubbornly persisted. Indeed, such ascriptions can be found as early as Tacitus (1st century A.D.). In the centuries that followed, they were enriched and reinforced,<sup>2</sup> as travelogues about Sápmi and its people written in the 18th and early 19th centuries vividly testify: they overlay the territory and its inhabitants with either a dystopian vision, or a utopian promise of salvation.<sup>3</sup> The same stereotypes persist in contemporary European popular culture: in her article »Touring the Magical North – Borealism and the Indigenous Sámi in Contemporary English-Language Children’s Fantasy Literature«, the literary scholar Sanna Lehtonen points out that even today the Sámi are portrayed as a group that has its own shamanic belief system, or as a people living close to nature, leading environmentally sustainable lives.<sup>4</sup>

But how do the Sámi represent themselves? The present article seeks to answer this question by looking at the stereotype of closeness to nature that has been widely propagated, both colonially and by different Sámi groups.<sup>5</sup> It is thus both an outsiders’ and a self-ascription. The article examines the novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* by the Sámi author Kirsti Paltto, which was originally published in Sámi as *Guržo luottat* in 1991 and translated into Finnish in 1993. Regine Pichel’s translation into German, published in 1997, is based on the Finnish translation; this German edition of the novel is the source for the present essay. The novel is set in northern Finland, and describes the life of the family of a *badjealmmái*<sup>6</sup> named Antaras during and after the Second World War.

Since this research project arose out of a conference at a Western European university, it is important at this point to establish clear limits on what the article can accomplish. Due to my own socialization, I can only try to approach the Sámi’s way of thinking and self-representation respectfully, always keeping in mind that my views are subject

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Naum 2016 and Mathisen 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lehtola 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Naum 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lehtonen 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. on this aspect *inter alia* Gaski 2008, p. 224: »The idea of a Sami territory is strongly associated with Sami ways of living and a distinct Sami culture. Also, for the Sami politicians the relationship between the Sami people and the land is considered to be profound, and to protect and preserve the land and the natural resources are viewed as absolute conditions if the Sami culture is to be maintained and developed.«

<sup>6</sup> In the German translation by Regine Pichel, the North Sámi term *badjealmmái* is rendered as »Rentiermann« (»reindeer man«). This term better captures the traditional work of the Sámi reindeer keepers than the terms »Rentierzüchter« (»reindeer breeder«) or »Rentierhirte« (»reindeer herdsman«). The North Sámi term will be used throughout this essay, except in the passages quoted from the German translation.

to Western and colonial influences. Due to my Western European socialization, I myself grew up with the stereotypes of the Sámi described by Sanna Lehtonen and historian Magdalena Naum, as a mystical people living close to nature in a world of perpetual winter. Hence, the original aim of the study was to critically examine the stereotypes in Western European literature. This aim crystallized in the course of the research process, but also broadened to encompass increasing the attention and space given to the Sámi culture and way of life in non-Finnish-speaking research.

Before turning to the book *Zeichen der Zerstörung*, it is important to set it in context by defining which self-representation of the Sámi is to be examined. For an understanding of the novel, the first key point to note is that while the repercussions of stereotyping and stigmatization are deeply rooted in the past, they still stamp their mark on the development and formation of a Sámi cultural identity even today.<sup>7</sup> Sámi culture has also been affected by other external influences besides stigmatization and stereotyping. In their book, *No beginning, no end. The Sámi speak up*, the social anthropologist Elina Helander and the women's studies researcher Kaarina Kailo enumerate, among other issues, »[f]orms of contact including raiding, trading, tax-collection, state borders and administrative encapsulation, colonization, missions combined with schooling, racism, cultural oppression and assimilation«.<sup>8</sup> The primary aim of these forms of colonialist, racist and cultural oppression was to re-educate the Sámi into Norwegians, Swedes or Finns.<sup>9</sup>

From the example of the Sámi living in the national territory of Finland, it is plain to see that state control, especially in the period after the Second World War, has contributed to a loss of identity. During the retreat of the German army at the end of the Second World War, large areas of Sápmi were destroyed and burned to the ground. The same was true of many Sámi settlements in northern Finland. When it came to reconstruction on Finnish territory, Finns exerted a great deal of influence. Houses were rebuilt in the Finnish style, new Finnish clothing was purchased as it was more readily available, and places like Ohcejohka switched from the Sámi to the Finnish language in their official council meetings. Important cultural markers such as language and clothing were exchanged and replaced. The strongest influence on this development was the new education decree of 1946, which made school attendance compulsory for children. Given the local conditions, this compelled many Sámi children to go to boarding schools a long distance from their families and Sámi traditions.<sup>10</sup>

The author Kirsti Paltto, whom the literary scholar Vuokko Hirvonen counts among the generation of »mothers«, experienced this influence from the »external world« at first hand. At boarding schools, the generation that Hirvonen referred to as »mothers« were personally subjected to the loss of their own language and the imposition of the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mathisen 2004, p. 17: »These representations have deep historical roots, and they can only be understood with reference to power, and the relation between majority and minority cultures. This is important to keep in mind as these narratives continue to influence contemporary strategies for identity construction and heritage building.«

<sup>8</sup> Helander & Kailo 1998, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *inter alia* Lehtola 2004, p. 44ff. and p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lehtola 2004, p. 53.

## Nature and Identity

Finnish language and way of life. For many women authors who grew up in that era, it was due to these formative experiences that preserving their Sámi language and culture became an important concern.<sup>11</sup>

Although many research papers point out that the situation of the indigenous minority collectively known as Sámi in the Sápmi area, which includes parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, has greatly improved since the 1950s,<sup>12</sup> various sources show that this is not the case for the Sámi as a whole. The Sámi cultural studies scholar Veli-Pekka Lehtola, for example, writes: »People often speak of Sámi culture, Sámi attire and Sámi language as if there were one unchanging, uniform people. It is often forgotten that Sápmi is very diverse, both economically and culturally.«<sup>13</sup> The same view is expressed in the following quotation from art historian Tuija Hautala-Hirvioja:

When researching indigenous people, like the Sámi, one should be careful not to simplify and homogenise them. Therefore, it is important to handle artists and their artworks individually rather than treat entire generations as a single group.<sup>14</sup>

This aspect – the heterogeneity of the Sámi – is an important background condition for the study of the novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* and for the question of whether the Sámi-ness presented in the novel can be generalized to every Sámi group unreservedly. The historian Jukka Nyssönen dealt with this in 2008 in his essay »Between the Global Movement and National Politics: Sami Identity Politics in Finland from the 1970s to the early 1990s«. He concurs that the situation of the Sámi in Finland is quite different from that of the Sámi living in Norwegian or Swedish national territory, and emphasizes that the Sámi are not a homogeneous population group. Rather, they consist of a variety of groups, differentiated in part by various cultural markers such as language or *gákti*.<sup>15</sup>

From this it follows that Sámi-ness, which is the theme of this research and which is expressed via elements of nature in Paltto's book, does not constitute a universal Sámi identity. Even though single facets of it may appear in the self-representations of, say, the Aanaar Sámi or the Lule Sámi, no generalizations can be assumed without separate study. All the assumptions made in the present article apply only to members of the Northern Sámi community who identify as belonging to the *badjealmmái* group and are resident in the territory of northern Finland. It is the self-representation of the said community of Sámi in northern Finland, who are predominantly *badjealmmái* by occupation, that is the focus of this article. Whenever the terms »Sámi« or »Sámi-ness« are used below, for the purposes of this essay they refer to this subgroup only.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hirvonen 2008, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. on this aspect *inter alia* Gaski 2008, p. 221: »The changes in Sami society over the past fifty years have been dramatic. From being a poor, stigmatized and politically unorganized population, the contemporary Sámi constitute a much more self-confident society.« Cf. also Nyssönen 2008, p. 87: »In the same manner, the strengthening of Sámi identity through participation in the indigenous peoples' movement has been celebrated in research conducted in Norway on Sámi history.«

<sup>13</sup> Lehtola 2004, p.12.

<sup>14</sup> Hautala-Hirvioja 2017, p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> North Sámi term for traditional Sámi clothing, translated by Lehtola as »attire« or »garment«. Cf. Lehtola 2004, p. 12.

Since this article will examine how Sámi ways of life and thinking are supported and represented by descriptions of nature in Kirsti Paltto's book, it is important to begin by defining the term »nature« more precisely. Contrary to the definition of nature frequently used in Western European discourse as something that is already »there«, not made or modified by human hand,<sup>16</sup> a suggested alternative to this abstract understanding<sup>17</sup> is a definition taken from the two anthropologists Andreas Roepstorff and Nils Bubandt. They argue in favour of understanding »nature« as that which is established as an entity in discourse, and then examining the processuality of these constructions.<sup>18</sup>

In order to draw closer to the concept of »nature« as it might be understood in Sámi discourse, a study by the social scientist Tapio Nykänen and the artist and environmental activist Leena Valkeapää is instructive. The two of them conducted qualitative interviews among a group of reindeer herders in the north-west of Finland and published the results of their study in the paper »Ethnic Reindeer Herders: Groupness among Reindeer-herding Sámi in Northwest Finnish Lapland«.<sup>19</sup> Among other findings, they concluded that nature occupies an important place in the cosmos of the Sámi *badjealmmái*. From their paper, it can be concluded that Sámi *badjealmmái* understand the term »nature« as referring to concrete phenomena such as wind, snow or reindeer and other phenomena and occurrences that enable them to do their work as *badjealmmái*.<sup>20</sup> In their study, the two authors sum this up as follows:

In all, »nature«, »fells« and »reindeer« form important categories for everyday identifications of Sámi people in Northwest Lapland. Their Sámi-ness is not only connected to but constructed through living with reindeer in their »land«, which they strongly belong to.<sup>21</sup>

Nykänen and Valkeapää further emphasize that the interrelatedness of nature and culture is an essential component of the Sámi way of life: »Nature is an essential part of the culture and the culture is part of nature.«<sup>22</sup>

For the purposes of my line of inquiry in this article, it follows that a range of landscape features, such as *duottar*<sup>23</sup> or *sieidegeađgi*,<sup>24</sup> but also cultural elements associated with nature, such as *juoigan*<sup>25</sup> or reindeer husbandry, can be

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<sup>16</sup> Cf.. Horatschek 2013, p. 556.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Spanier 2003, p. 55f.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Roepstorff & Bubandt 2003, p. 16f.

<sup>19</sup> Nykänen & Valkeapää 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Other elements in this category are not expounded in the interview. An example might be birch-forest damage by geometer moths, as distinct from the moths themselves which are clearly covered by the term »nature«. Since the moth damage has a significant impact on the wellbeing of the reindeer herd by reducing the food supply, the damage is also considered to fall within the term »nature«.

<sup>21</sup> Nykänen & Valkeapää 2018, p. 1197.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 1196.

<sup>23</sup> North Sámi for »fell«; throughout the article, the North Sámi expressions from the original text are used. The same applies to *sieidegeađgi* and *juoigan*.

<sup>24</sup> North Sámi for »*sieidi* stone«, a ritual object of the Sámi.

<sup>25</sup> North Sámi for singing in the *joik* style, as opposed to the North Sámi term *luohiti*, which describes the piece performed. The relationship between the two terms *juoigan* and *luohiti* is approximately comparable to that between playing a role (»He is playing the lead role.«) and the play itself (»The play was written by Shakespeare.«). Cf. in this regard Salchner (2009) and Ramnarine (2009). Since this article does not discuss the *luohiti* as a literary-musical work, but rather the expressive form or performance of *juoigan*, the latter term is preferentially used, unless reference is made explicitly to the *luohiti* as a work.

## Nature and Identity

understood as parts of nature. To keep the discussion from exceeding the scope of this article, the analysis will concentrate on the four elements mentioned above: *duottar*, *sieidegeađgi*, *juoigan* and the reindeer.

### Nature as a means of expressing Sámi identity

The novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* is part of a trilogy by the author Kirsti Paltto. The Sámi original with the title *Guržo luotta*<sup>26</sup> was published in 1991 and translated into Finnish under the title *Juokse nyt naalin poika*<sup>27</sup> in 1993. On the basis of this Finnish version, a German translation entitled *Zeichen der Zerstörung*<sup>28</sup> was published in 1997. Like the other two books in the trilogy, *Guhtoset dearvan min bohcco*<sup>29</sup> (1987) and *Násttit muohtagierragis*<sup>30</sup> (2007), the novel describes the life of the Sámi population in the north of the nation state of Finland. The plot of the novel is set during the Second World War and the post-war years.

The German version<sup>31</sup> of the work is divided into three main parts. The book's central theme is the impact of the Second World War on the Sámi community. Various strands of the plot bring to light how drastically the war affects and changes the individual members of the community. The first part of the book begins with the Sámi, Antaras, driving his herd of reindeer into the *duottar* in winter instead of being evacuated with the rest of his family. It is from Antaras' perspective that the effects of the war in the *duottar* are presented. On the one hand, he faces the loneliness of being separated from his family, while on the other, he experiences the loss of one of these companions, a young *badjealmmái* named Aimo, whose life is taken when he steps on a landmine. The second part begins with the return of the evacuated Sámi to their village, which has been destroyed by the Germans. The Sámi community is confronted with the situation of having to rebuild their devastated village with little in the way of financial resources. During reconstruction, the Finnish influence grows more and more conspicuously apparent. This is seen in the evacuation of the Sámi population to Ylivieska in Finland, for example, but also in the fact that the Finnish state offers inducements such as the prospect of building a road to Lake Rievan or the promise that forest clearance will result in new sources of income. Shortly before the end of the second part of the novel, the Sámi man, Jon-Erhke, who resides in the village being reconstructed, finds Antaras's *siida*,<sup>32</sup> which prompts Antaras to return to

<sup>26</sup> The Sámi titles of the works are not easy to translate; this title was rendered into German by Hirvonen (2006) as: »*Mögen meine Rentiere gesund weiden*« (»May my reindeer graze in health«), and into English in Hirvonen (2008) as: »Tracks of an evil spirit«.

<sup>27</sup> Literal translation: »Run now, fox boy« or »Run now, little Naali«.

<sup>28</sup> Literal translation: »Signs of destruction«.

<sup>29</sup> Official Finnish title: *Vojjaa minun poroni*. Rendered in English by Hirvonen (2008) as: »Dig well, our reindeer«.

<sup>30</sup> Literal translation: »Stars in the snow«. Finnish translation by Kirsti Paltto: »Tähtiä lumiangella«.

<sup>31</sup> When studying the novels, it must be kept in mind that the German version is a translation of a translation. This harbours a risk that terms have been unintentionally reinterpreted or watered down. The reading offered here therefore consists of suggestions, not instructions, for interpretation.

<sup>32</sup> North Sámi word. Pichel writes in the glossary of her German translation »*Lager der Samen in den Fjälls*« (Sámi camp in the fells), see Paltto 1997. This description is very imprecise, however. In simplified terms, *siida* can be understood as an association of several *báikedoalut* (husbandry units) for the purposes of reindeer husbandry throughout the seasons. The *siida* shifts location depending on the current grazing site but the composition of individuals remains largely the same. For more detailed information, see Sara 2009. A historical overview on the *siida* system is found in Lehtola (2004).

the village. The most defining theme of this final part is how the Sámi inhabitants come to terms with their new living situation. It transpires that wartime has also brought a great deal of envy and resentment to the village, and Antaras becomes the subject of an intrigue. Antaras almost loses his reindeer herd due to this intrigue, while feelings of guilt about it cost his brother-in-law Liemmi his life.

The novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* engages especially deeply with the motif of loss: loss of property, Sámi identity and cultural heritage. In common with other authors of her generation, in her books Kirsti Paltto deals principally with the motif of loss of cultural identity.<sup>33</sup> In an interview with Kaarina Kailo, she says that the driving force behind her work as an author is her desire to preserve her Sámi language and culture.<sup>34</sup> The motifs of her texts often reflect political problems of the Sámi that were prevalent in the 1970s. »It was necessary to wake up the Sámi themselves and inform outsiders.«<sup>35</sup> Kirsti Paltto goes on to point out that Sámi books are inevitably political books.<sup>36</sup> These two aspects – the danger of the loss of cultural identity and the political situation of the Sámi in Finland – are evident in the novel, not least from the places in which the plot is set.

### The *duottar* as a canvas for unconstrained Sámi-ness

To pre-empt a significant finding of the present study, in the novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung* the *duottar* and *sieidegeadgi* perform important functions for the presentation of Sámi identity and the self-representation of the Sámi. In this regard, the *duottar* can be understood as a place that is essential to Sámi-ness,<sup>37</sup> as will be argued below. The *duottar* is portrayed as the place where people and nature meet and where people are in harmony with themselves and with others, be they people, animals or landscape. Sámi traditions of reindeer herding are kept alive in the *duottar*. At various junctures, the novel characterizes the *duottar* as a place where traditions, reindeer and people are afforded refuge and survival. This is especially evident in the first part of the book. Instead of becoming embroiled in warfare, Antaras leaves his family and heads for the *duottar*. Here he spends the winter, tending his reindeer, shielded from the rest of the world and the war: »Now they [Antaras and the reindeer herd; author's note] could safely move westward [...]. On the west side lay vast, uninhabited areas.«<sup>38</sup> The description of the reindeer migrating into the vast, uninhabited areas chimes with Kirsti Paltto's comment that only shielding reindeer herding

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hirvonen 2006, p. 495ff.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Helander & Kailo 1998, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Helander & Kailo 1998, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> »One difference between Finnish and Sami literature is that since the beginnings Sami literature has had to assert itself against much greater odds, greater cultural pressures. [...] Finnish writers have rarely had to act as politicians and writers at the same time.« Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> As noted earlier, the analysis of Sámi-ness here refers only to the group of *badjealmmái* living in Finnish national territory and cannot be generalized to all groups of Sámi.

<sup>38</sup> »Jetzt konnten sie getrost nach Westen ziehen [...]. Auf der Westseite lagen weite, unbewohnte Gebiete.« Paltto 1997, chapter 3, p. 21.



## Nature and Identity

from the influences of mainstream society would guarantee the preservation of Sámi culture.<sup>39</sup> Figuratively speaking, this happens in the book. For although reindeer usually graze far from human settlements, this migration into the *duoddarat*<sup>40</sup> can also be interpreted as a reversion or retreat into old Sámi traditions.

The *duottar* itself is also the place where the ripple effects of mainstream society's actions can be felt. Even though the war and the changes in society have not yet arrived in the *duoddarat*, the fact is that when Antaras goes to the *duottar*, he takes agitated feelings from the village with him:

Before that a great loneliness, such as he never known, had overwhelmed him. Usually he did not feel lonely, although he was almost always alone on the mountains and *duoddarat*. But now that his family was gone, he felt like an orphaned child.<sup>41</sup>

Antaras feels a sense of loss and loneliness, in the very place that he had previously associated with positive emotions.

In the book, the *duottar* itself is not an inanimate entity, but is understood as an actor: »The fell reared and fed the reindeer, not people.«<sup>42</sup> People are at its mercy;<sup>43</sup> the *duottar* is a being and entity beyond human control. This is an idea that Kirsti Paltto refers to explicitly in the above-mentioned interview with Kaarina Kailo.<sup>44</sup> Yet despite the lack of control over the *duottar* (or nature), the strength of the bond between people and the *duottar* is clear from the scenes set in this narrative space. This strong bond is illustrated in the novel by the death of Hansa, the last *noaid*<sup>45</sup> in the village of the Sámi community that Antaras's family belongs to. Instead of being buried in the modern, non-Sámi style, in a coffin made from the planks he prefabricated, Hansa dies in the *duottar*. Antaras accompanies this scene with the words, »Rest in peace, Hansa, rest here in the midst of your mountains and plains. They belonged to you before, but now you belong to them«,<sup>46</sup> which also express the idea of a cycle: first the mountains and plains belong to a Sámi; later the Sámi becomes part of them. In the imagination, nature and Sámi belong together; Sámi-ness cannot be separated from the nature that surrounds the Sámi.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Nyysönen 2008, p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> North Sámi, plural of *duottar*.

<sup>41</sup> »Zuvor hatte ihn eine große, nie gekannte Einsamkeit überwältigt. Gewöhnlich fühlte er sich nicht einsam, obwohl er fast immer alleine auf den Bergen und *duoddarat* unterwegs war. Doch jetzt, da seine Familie fort war, fühlte er sich wie ein Waisenkind.« Paltto 1997, chapter 1, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> »Der Fjäll erzog und ernährte die Rentiere, nicht der Mensch.« Ibid., chapter 15, p. 145.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. ibid., chapter 3, p. 20: »Ahta und er waren von nun an völlig dem Fjäll ausgeliefert.« (»Ahta and he were completely at the mercy of the fells from then on.«).

<sup>44</sup> »The notion of the wildness of the North derives perhaps from urban living circumstances and that so-called community of systematic organization not known to people who live in nature. After all, you cannot ultimately organize nature according to your own desire, as you can organize traffic and radio shows. [...] Wildness might well mean, in this connection that which exists outside of society, beyond control.« See Helander & Kailo 1998, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> The Sámi term »*noaidk*« is used in the German novel in preference to »*Schamanek*« (»shaman«) because the connotations of the latter term in German usage are too ambiguous.

<sup>46</sup> »Ruhe in Frieden, Hansa, ruhe hier inmitten deiner Berge und Ebenen. Sie gehörten vorher dir, aber jetzt gehörst du ihnen.« Paltto 1997, chapter 3, p. 22.

At various points in the novel, the character of Hansa introduces the reader to the world of Sámi beliefs. Every appearance of Hansa – in physical form in the third chapter, when he is found by Antaras<sup>47</sup>, but also in spiritual form when he appears to Antaras's eldest son Johanas in a dream<sup>48</sup> – is accompanied by elements of Sámi beliefs and knowledge, which are conveyed via descriptions of nature, for example the wolf or the mountain. These scenes repeatedly draw attention to the absence of a boundary between people and animals: »But Hansa had not transformed into a dangerous wolf as Piehti was said to have done.«<sup>49</sup> What is more, transitions exist between the mountains, the people and the animals. »Strangest of all was that the mountains had the shape of both a man and a wolf, they had a dangerous face and a placid one.«<sup>50</sup> The transitory relationship in this scene represents the absence of boundaries between people and nature.

Not only does the scene reveal how the boundary between man and nature is understood; it also contains many references to the shamanic belief system. Since he can switch between different realms, the *noaidi* can carry messages from the ancestors to their descendants. Although Hansa, unlike one of Johanas's departed ancestors, Piehti Menonen, is not explicitly described as a *noaidi*, there are various scenes in which he acts like one. In the dream scene, Hansa presents himself as an »active« deceased person who can maintain contact with the living across different spheres, as the following passage illustrates:

Johanas remembered a dream he had had some time ago in Ylivieska [...] He was standing with Hansa at the foot of the Neita mountains. »Johanas«, Hansa said in a soft voice, »it's good you returned home from evacuation.«<sup>51</sup>

Sometimes Hansa also performs the role of a spiritual guide for Johanas, on this occasion for example: »Johanas leaned against the backboard and stared at Spalli's antlers. There weren't any stars twinkling in the sky at that moment, but even so, wasn't everything just the same as in Hansa's story?«<sup>52</sup> The portrayal of Hansa is also in keeping with Paltto's view of the *noaidi*. In an interview with Kaarina Kailo, she describes *noaidit* as spiritual

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.* chapter 3, p. 2ff.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.* chapter 6, p. 53ff.

<sup>49</sup> »Doch Hansa hatte sich nicht in einen gefährlichen Wolf verwandelt, wie es Piehti angeblich getan hatte.« *Ibid.*, chapter 3, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> »Am merkwürdigsten war, dass die Berge sowohl die Gestalt eines Menschen als auch die eines Wolfes hatten, sie hatten ein gefährliches und ein ruhiges Gesicht.« *Ibid.*, chapter 6, p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> »Johanas erinnerte sich an einen Traum, den er vor einiger Zeit in Ylivieska gehabt hatte, [...] Er stand mit Hansa vor den Neitabergen. »Johanas«, sagte Hansa mit weicher Stimme, »gut, dass du aus der Evakuierung zurückgekehrt bist.« Paltto 1997, chapter 6, p. 53. On the cultural significance of reports of encounters with the dead, and of the »soul time«, the period of time after physical death during which the deceased still dwells in the same spiritual realm as the living, see Pentikäinen 1997, p. 199 ff.

<sup>52</sup> »Johanas lehnte sich ans Rückbrett und starrte auf Spallis Geweih. Es blinkten zwar gerade keine Sterne am Himmel, aber war nicht trotzdem alles gerade so wie in Hansas Geschichte?« Paltto 1997, chapter 34, p. 307. There are other scenes in which Hansa points Johanas in the right direction; in chapter 8, for example, when Hansa talks to Johanas about the magic pouch: »Johanas spürte deutlich, wie Hansa sich neben ihn setzte und von Morgentau und Piehtis Beutel zu erzählen begann.« [»Johanas clearly felt Hansa sit down beside him and begin to tell him about morning dew and Piehti's pouch.«] *Ibid.*, chapter 8, p. 72; and in chapter 29, when Johanas is at the *seita* stone trying to recall what Hansa told him about making offerings to the *sieidl* stone, cf. *ibid.*, chapter 29, p. 262f.

## Nature and Identity

guides who teach the Sámi to live in unity with nature and at the same time give the Sámi foresighted help and support in their dealings with strangers and enemies.<sup>53</sup>

If the scene referenced above is considered alongside other scenes highlighting the bond between Johanas and Hansa, or between Johanas and the *sieidegeađgi*, the question arises of whether these portrayals signal that Johanas might be chosen as a new *noaidi*, or has the inner potential to become a *noaidi*<sup>54</sup> and thus perpetuate a part of the traditional Sámi imaginative paradigm.<sup>55</sup> The novel does not develop this further, but anticipates it as a possibility when it is mooted in the conversation between the Sámi Ante and Johanas's uncle Liemmi: »Your Johanas is turning into a new Piehti [Johanas's and Liemmi's ancestor, who was a *noaidi*; author's note], it seems.«<sup>56</sup>

### The future of spiritual power and Sámi traditions

This spiritual aspect of nature relates as much to the community and community life as to any religious practice. It is also found in the function of the *sieidegeađgi*<sup>57</sup>, a recurring element in the novel. *Sieidegeađggit* were important ritual objects in the Sámi belief system and part of the rite of sacrifice. In his monograph *Mythologie der Saamen*,<sup>58</sup> the scholar of religion Juha Pentikäinen mentions various reasons for ritual sacrifices, the most common of these being requests for support and success. Pentikäinen also describes the consequences of failing to make a sacrifice, and by way of an example, cites an account by the Sámi translator Lars Haetta (1834–1896). The report concerns the Sámi man Rasmus Anders Spein, who forgot to make his sacrifice to the *sieidegeađgi* one year, whereupon he lost a good reindeer buck for no apparent reason. From this turn of events, it was concluded that the *sieidegeađgi* had caused the reindeer buck's death as a punishment for omitting the sacrifice.<sup>59</sup>

However, the *sieidegeađgi* in Paltto's novel not only features as part of spiritual practice but also frames those scenes in which she shows that »Sámi-ness« is currently in limbo and could move in one of several directions. While the old traditions and Sámi-ness could fade away, the traditions might equally be brought up to date and gain renewed vigour. This is illustrated by the scene in the sixth chapter, where Johanas tells his mother Sofe nothing about having visited the *sieidegeađgi*. Sofe, who sees herself as a Sámi, does not believe in the magical power of

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Helander & Kailo 1998, p. 27f.

<sup>54</sup> On *noaidi* initiation practices, see Mebius 2003 and Pentikäinen 1997.

<sup>55</sup> On this aspect cf. also Pentikäinen 1997, p. 164. He writes that shamanism cannot be called a religion in the strict sense, even if it carries considerable weight in the belief system. Shamanism is distinguished by a complex system of beliefs about the world order, in which the *noaidi* is a »specially trained and inspired mediator« (ein »speziell ausgebildeter und inspirierter Mediator«<sup>9</sup> between different layers of reality.

<sup>56</sup> »Aus eurem Johanas wird anscheinend ein neuer Piehti.« Paltto 1997, chapter 31, p. 281.

<sup>57</sup> North Sámi term for a ritual object of the Sámi religion (cf. in this regard Mebius 2003, who mostly uses *sieidi*). The German translation by Pichel employs the term *Seitastein* (*seita* stone).

<sup>58</sup> Pentikäinen 1997, p. 137ff.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 137.

the stone, nor in the abilities of the shaman Piehti.<sup>60</sup> She relies on her own mind and, while in Ylivieska, learned to fit in so that – unlike the other Sámi – she would not be called superstitious: »It had contributed a little to this attitude that in Ylivieska, the Sámi had been called superstitious and even witches. That had sharpened Sofe's handling of these things.«<sup>61</sup> She presents a Sámi-ness adapted to circumstances in which ritual places and practices no longer have any place.

Apart from its spiritual function, the *sieidegeadgi*, much like the *duoddarat*, is a point of contact with the past, a function that it embodies for Antaras and Johanas especially. At the physical location of the *sieidegeadgi*, remembrance of the past connects with outreach into the future. It is a place of rendezvous, where spiritual tokens are handed over:

A sense of yearning came over him when he remembered how he had stood with Johanas at the *sieidi* stone. Johanas had given him a tiny leather pouch, which he had called Piehti's pouch. [...] The magic pouch had brought its former owner, Piehti, happiness and prosperity.<sup>62</sup>

But it is also a place of farewells: »Once again, he [Johanas; author's note] had to think of his father, on that dismal morning when they were evacuated and he had stood with his father at the *sieidi* stones.«<sup>63</sup> The scenes at the *sieidegeadgi* also contain numerous references to Hansa and the old Sámi belief system, since the two – Hansa and the *sieidi* stone – are repeatedly mentioned in conjunction. A particularly vivid example of this is the scene in chapter 30, when Johanas's father returns the magic pouch, dispelling his remaining doubts about the power of the *sieidegeadgi*. Johanas sums up: »Hansa's power and that of the *sieidi* stone were greater than the scorn and derision of the Tahkonens.«<sup>64</sup>

The *sieidegeadgi* represents a firm anchor point in Johanas's worldview, and a place where he had »passed [...] many hours«.<sup>65</sup> In his mind, it is associated with significant memories like the evacuation-day farewell from his father in the passage already quoted. Moreover, Johanas goes to the *sieidegeadgi* to seek help, and believes in the stone's power and its ability to show him things. Several passages in chapter 6 provide evidence of this, such as the following quotation: »He had looked for signs of his father [when he visited the *sieidegeadgi*; author's note], had

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Paltto 1997, chapter 6, p. 43: »Sie glaubte nicht daran und bezweifelte die Fähigkeiten des verstorbenen Piehti, der im Ruf eines Schamanen gestanden hatte.« (»She didn't believe in it and doubted the abilities of the deceased Piehti, who had been reputed to be a shaman.«).

<sup>61</sup> »Ein wenig hatte zu dieser Einstellung auch beigetragen, dass man in Ylivieska die Samen als abergläubisch und sogar als Hexen bezeichnete. Das hatte Sofes Umgang mit diesen Dingen geschärft.« Ibid., chapter 6, p. 44.

<sup>62</sup> »Sehnsucht überkam ihn, wenn er sich daran erinnerte, wie er mit Johanas am Seitastein gestanden hatte. Johanas hatte ihm einen winzig kleinen Lederbeutel übergeben, den er als Piehtis Beutel bezeichnete. [...] Der Zauberbeutel hatte seinem früheren Besitzer Piehti Glück und Wohlstand gebracht.« Ibid., chapter 2, p. 12f.

<sup>63</sup> »Erneut musste er [Johanas; author's note] an den Vater denken, an jenen bedrückenden Morgen, als sie evakuiert wurden und er mit dem Vater am Seitastein gestanden hatte.« Ibid., chapter 6, p. 53.

<sup>64</sup> »Hansas Kraft und die des Seitasteins waren größer als Spott und Verachtung der Tahkonens.« Ibid., chapter 30, p. 270.

<sup>65</sup> »[V]iele Stunden [...] zugebracht.« Ibid., chapter 6, p. 43.

## Nature and Identity

hoped to discover something or other that told him whereabouts Antaras was now.«<sup>66</sup> Chapter 6 in particular expresses how important the stone is to Johanas. It is at the *sieidegeađgi* that he makes contact with Hansa, whom he considers a spiritual guide. The scene at the *sieidegeađgi* is used in chapter 21 to make the point that ritual places and one's own knowledge of Sámi culture must be protected from non-Sámi, including other minorities. It describes how Johanas only very reluctantly shares information about his *duoddarat* with the Karelian refugee, Pietikäinen. At the same time, Johanas recalls in this scene what his grandmother Magga had imparted to him about the Lanta from an early age: »A Lanta was unpredictable.«<sup>67</sup>

It is clear from these examples that the elements of nature mentioned previously have an important function in the Sámis' access to their own culture. It is not that Sámi-ness itself is characterized by nature; rather, nature seems to be a protection-worthy component of Sámi-ness.

An additional challenge that becomes visible at the *sieidegeađgi* is the difficulty of transmitting oral traditions when the keepers of knowledge, such as the character of Hansa in the novel, have died and traditions can only be lived out very much more guardedly. This is underlined by an example in chapter 29 at the site of the *sieidegeađgi*. Johanas wishes to make an offering to the *sieidegeađgi*, but can no longer remember what Hansa taught him about the subject: »What if he now gave the *sieidi* stone a gift? [...] --- But what did one have to give to the stone? Hansa had told him that once. The *sieidi* stone hissed behind Johanas's head.«<sup>68</sup> Since Hansa is dead, he can no longer be asked for advice.<sup>69</sup> Forgetting is an impending danger when the chain of information from the elders to the younger generation is interrupted and traditions can no longer be passed on verbally because people have died and too few members of the community possess the necessary knowledge. At the same time, the character of Johanas shows that the danger of forgetting goes hand in hand with an opportunity for transformation and modernization. All traditions can be adapted to new ways of life and thus be kept alive.

At the same time, appreciation for the stone and the bond felt with it are also expressed in this chapter. In a similar way to the *duottar*, it is not perceived as an inanimate, soulless object, but as part of one's own world – a part that needs to be heard just as much as a person: »If you learn to hear what the stone wants, you'll have an easy time. Don't torture or harm something weaker or smaller, but carefully touch something that can barely withstand any pressure.«<sup>70</sup> In this passage, appreciative and considerate treatment of what »is« (in this case, the *sieidegeađgi*)

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<sup>66</sup> »Er hatte nach Zeichen von seinem Vater gesucht, hatte gehofft, irgendetwas zu entdecken, das ihm erzählte, wo sich Antaras jetzt befand.« Ibid., chapter 6, p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> »Ein Lanta war unberechenbar.« Ibid., chapter 21, p. 198.

<sup>68</sup> »Wenn er nun dem Seitastein ein Geschenk machte? [...] --- Aber was musste man dem Stein geben. Hansa hatte es ihm einst erzählt. Der Seitastein rauschte hinter Johanas' Kopf.« Ibid., chapter 29, p. 262f.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., chapter 29, p. 263.

<sup>70</sup> »Wenn du lernst zu hören, was der Stein will, hast du es leicht. Quäle oder schädige nicht, was schwächer oder kleiner ist, sondern berühre vorsichtig, was kaum einen Druck aushält.« Ibid., chapter 29, p. 263.

clearly shines through. The description of the *duottar* and the *sieidegeađgi* in the novel repeatedly highlight the closeness of the bond between man and nature in the Sámi culture.

### Concealment of Sámi-ness in public

Further signs of the bond with nature and ancient cultural traditions are seen in the use of *juoigan*, both in Paltto's work and in the cultural history of the Sámi. In order to be able to make sense of *juoigan* in the novel, an important prerequisite is to know its function in Sámi culture. Originally, *juoigan* was an integral component of Sámi religious practice, but in the wake of Christianization and especially under the influence of the Laestadians,<sup>71</sup> it became a forbidden practice that could only be performed »under cover«.<sup>72</sup> *Juoigan* makes it possible to express personal emotions and moods<sup>73</sup> and to grant access to one's own emotional world. Lehtola explains that »[t]he yoik represents the clearest of all the age-old Sámi cultural traditions.«<sup>74</sup> Often *juoigan* takes the form of singing about a person's life situation, with the help of atmospheric images created by nature.<sup>75</sup> Lehtola makes a similar point, and additionally points out that *juoigan* draws a picture which reduces the object of the song to its essential core, and which transcends distance, thereby creating closeness.<sup>76</sup> One last aspect of significance that is mentioned by both Hirvonen<sup>77</sup> and Lehtola<sup>78</sup> is the importance of the *luohiti* to the identity of the Sámi.

These aspects are also evident in the novel, most prominently in relation to the right place for *juoigan* and the handling of *juoigan* in the Sámi community. For instance, most of the scenes with *juoigamat*<sup>79</sup> are set in the surroundings of the *duottar* and while working with the reindeer. An example of this is found in chapter 5, where it is apparent that knowledge about the different types of *juoigan* is still preserved in Antaras's generation: »He often yoiked a yoik that his father Njalla-Piera used to yoik [...].«<sup>80</sup> It also becomes clear that Antaras is conscious of the effectiveness of *juoigan* – he »yoiked the new calves«<sup>81</sup> – and that he uses *juoigan* to express and communicate his own access to the world of the *duottar*: »Just look at the Anna rock face, look how Piehti's bride is beaming«, said

<sup>71</sup> Laestadianism is a pietistic religious revival movement which started in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Sápmi and was led by Lars Levi Laestadius.

<sup>72</sup> »[I]m Verborgenen« (under cover) is used very broadly here to denote *juoigan* in private, which in this case means out of earshot of Laestadians or Finns.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Hirvonen 2006, p. 489ff. and Hirvonen 2008, p. 128ff.

<sup>74</sup> Lehtola 2004, p. 106.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hirvonen 2008, p. 131.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Lehtola 2004, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hirvonen 2008, p. 132.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Lehtola 2004, p. 106.

<sup>79</sup> North Sámi, plural form of *juoigan*.

<sup>80</sup> »Er joikte oft einen Joik, den sein Vater Njalla-Piera zu joiken pflegte.« Paltto 1997, chapter 5, p. 36.

<sup>81</sup> »[J]oikte die neuen Kälber.« Ibid.

## Nature and Identity

Antaras, whereupon he began to yoik:«<sup>82</sup> Here, *juoigan* is a spiritual vehicle as well. Apart from its function as an emotional expression, it is also an appropriate means of requesting help and counsel, as shown in a scene in chapter 5 where Antaras asks the mountains and *duottar* for help.<sup>83</sup>

The novel continues to feature *juoigan* as a firm component of the culture, but – except in the *duottar* – not in public. This is illustrated by a scene in chapter 44, in which Sofe praises her son for his extraordinary talent for *juoigan*, but immediately cautions him not to yoik in front of others in case they come to regard him as a heathen.<sup>84</sup>

The concern raised here by Sofe about being seen as a heathen harbours a further danger, since the instruction only to yoik if nobody else is present endangers the transmission of knowledge about *juoigan*. This erases an important cultural asset from the public sphere, denying the Sámi access to their own past and origins. Whereas the family *juoigan* of the Naalis<sup>85</sup> in chapter 38 is a vehicle of self-representation and identity formation, which imparts a story to Johanas about his heritage and fills him with self-confidence and pride,<sup>86</sup> it is scarcely possible for *juoigan* or the *luođit*<sup>87</sup> to have a similar, positive effect when the *duottar* is the last remaining place that anyone can yoik, and the family *luođit* can no longer be handed down.

### Reindeer as outward markers of Sámi-ness

The final area of descriptions of nature for self-representation is concerned with reindeer husbandry, or life as a *badjealmmái*. As outlined earlier in this essay, among the Sámi, life as a *badjealmmái* is not just a means of earning a living, but an attitude that ties in closely with the Sámi understanding of nature and represents an avowal of Sámi-ness.

In *Zeichen der Zerstörung*, the natural element of »reindeer« is used to express affiliation with the Sámi group. The novel makes reference to life as a *badjealmmái* and reindeer husbandry in its treatment of two themes, modernization, including of Sámi-ness, and changes in Sámi society due to the war.

The example of the brothers Johanas and Ovlla makes it clear that life as a *badjealmmái* and owning reindeer is synonymous with being Sámi. Unlike his older brother Johanas, however, Ovlla does not want to be a *badjealmmái*. Ovlla sees few future prospects living as a *badjealmmái* in the Sámi community and would prefer to attend school instead.<sup>88</sup> He is prepared to give up his reindeer in return for being able to live a different life. A non-Sámi life.

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<sup>82</sup> »Sieh nur den Annenstein, sieh Piehtis Braut, wie sie strahlt«, sagte Antaras und begann gleich darauf zu joiken [...].« Ibid., chapter 38, p. 336.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 5, p. 33.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 44, p. 373.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 38, p. 337.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 42, p. 360.

<sup>87</sup> North Sámi, plural of *luohti*.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Paltto 1997, chapter 18, p. 170.



This contrasts with the description of the »modernizer« Elias. While the group of Sámi around Olles Ante are considering how Sámi territory can be profitably sold and cleared of forest,<sup>89</sup> Elias thinks similarly to Antaras: »A herd belongs to a reindeer man when he has tended it himself and protected it from predators, that is my opinion. [...] The fells and the forest nourish those who know how to deal with them.«<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, Elias tries to adapt the Sámi tradition of reindeer herding to the modern age. This is shown in his understanding of road construction and the usefulness of cars. The question of concern to Elias is which practices are still up to date and in step with the times:

We got into a fight because I wanted to slaughter a few old reindeer cows to raise the money for a car. [...] Father doesn't grasp that the draught ox is too slow in the long run, and even the reindeer man needs a vehicle that takes him everywhere in double-quick time.<sup>91</sup>

Elias's remarks show that he also sees the *duottar* and the forest as living entities. Despite this primordial Sámi way of thinking, the figure of Elias shows that Sámi-ness is far from homogeneous, and that even modern ideas are part of it. A final aspect linked to *badjealmmái* life and the reindeer is how the war has changed the Sámi community. At the same time, a marked change is taking place in the Sámi's relationship to their work as *badjealmmái*, from which some have become estranged. The novel portrays the drinker Jovvna as an example of this:

He himself had grown so estranged from reindeer herding during the war years that he had lost any desire whatever to be in the mountains with the herd. Now if Sara-Kutnel accompanied his father as a helper and partner, he would no longer have any reason to complain.<sup>92</sup>

Although the female characters in the novel are seldom mentioned in connection with reindeer-herding work, Jovvna reckons he would prefer to send his new partner to the *duottar* as a helper in his stead. It turns out that the war not only destroyed the Sámi's villages but also distanced the people from their most primal occupation and their lives as *badjealmmái*, and in effect, alienated the Sámi from themselves.

## **Summary and conclusion**

The cited examples illustrate how important the various elements of nature are for the description and representation of the Sámi in the novel *Zeichen der Zerstörung*, since their self-representation or identity is negotiated by invoking these elements. The natural elements of the *duottar*, *sieidegeađgi*, *juoigan* and reindeer are also employed to convey

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 27, p. 249f.

<sup>90</sup> »Einem Rentiermann gehört seine Herde, wenn er sie selber gehütet und vor Raubtieren geschützt hat, das ist meine Meinung. [...] Der Fjäll und der Wald ernähren den, der mit ihnen umzugehen weiß.« *Ibid.*, chapter 32, p. 285.

<sup>91</sup> »Wir haben Streit gekriegt, weil ich ein paar alte Renkühe schlachten wollte, um Geld für ein Auto zu haben. [...] Vater begreift nicht, dass der Zugochse auf Dauer zu langsam ist und dass auch der Rentiermann ein Fahrzeug braucht, mit dem er im Handumdrehen überall hinkommt.« *Ibid.*, chapter 32, p. 285f.

<sup>92</sup> »Ihm selbst war während der Kriegsjahre das Rentierhüten so fremd geworden, dass er keinerlei Lust mehr verspürte, in den Bergen bei der Herde zu sein. Wenn Sara-Kutnel dem Vater als Hilfe und Partnerin zur Seite stünde, hätte der nicht länger Grund zum Schimpfen.« *Ibid.*, chapter 15, p. 138.



## Nature and Identity

an understanding of the situation of the Finnish Sámi after the end of the Second World War and the different problems faced by the North Sámi community of *badjealmmái*. Here, the elements of nature show how heterogeneous the previously closed group of *badjealmmái* has become.

The differences between them are conveyed not only through the various elements of nature but also by means of the different characters in the novel, including Antaras, Elias, Ovlla and Johanas.<sup>93</sup> These characters also point up the divergent paths on which Sámi-ness evolves and develops. Antaras acts as a link to the past; he knows the *duoddarat* and the traditional life as a *badjealmmái*; he yokes undaunted by Finnish laws or Christian commandments. His every interaction with nature reveals a very primal Sámi-ness and a nature-including mindset. Antaras's conversation with his son in chapter 30 illustrates this attitude: »Eternity and the gods are here, on our pastures. When we realize this, the Earth is both our mother and our child. It nourishes us, but we must also care for it. Do you understand?«<sup>94</sup>

Elias and Johanas fulfil the roles of innovators. Johanas sticks to the old Sámi traditions, or carries them on even though knowledge about them has gone missing. The scene with Johanas at the *sieidegeađgi*, in which Johanas cannot remember the right sacrifice to make, may serve as an example of this. Where the traditional knowledge about the old practices is incomplete – in this case knowledge of what sacrifice is appropriate – Johanas fills in the gaps and creates something new out of the deficit.

The character of Elias can be seen as an antipole who, while continuing to lead the classic life of a *badjealmmái*, recognizes the benefits of modern advances, such as a snowmobile, for the traditional work of the Sámi. Both characters renew Sámi traditions and keep them alive, yet they accomplish this in very different and sometimes contrary ways.

It is not just the characters who act as vehicles for the various aspects of Sámi-ness. As mentioned at several points above, it is with reference to the various elements of nature that Sámi-ness is described and, to a certain extent, negotiated.

The *duottar*, in particular, appears as a place of seclusion where it is possible to preserve old Sámi traditions and live by them, free from other influences. It contrasts with other narrative spaces in the novel, which are more heavily subject to Finnish influences and the resultant changes.<sup>95</sup> The *duoddarat* also provide the narrative backdrop for the

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<sup>93</sup> Other characters, who cannot be examined here for reasons of space, can be understood primarily as personifications of the destructive forces. Among these are Olles Ante, who plots against Antaras and wants to destroy nature to make money, cf. *ibid.*, chapter 15, p.139ff. and chapter 27, p. 249f.

<sup>94</sup> »Die Ewigkeit und die Götter sind hier, auf unserem Weideland. Wenn wir das begreifen, ist die Erde gleichzeitig unsere Mutter und unser Kind. Sie ernährt uns, aber wir müssen auch auf sie aufpassen. Verstehst du?« *Ibid.*, chapter 30, p. 275.

<sup>95</sup> To mention one example, a road to Lake Rievan is to be constructed: »Sie wollen hier Wald abholzen und Straßen bauen. Neue Häuser sollen her, und auf jeden Hof ein Auto. So haben sie es mir erzählt«, sagte Jovvna. [...] Niemand wusste recht, worum es ging, und wie Antes Clique es anstellen wollte, eine Straße zum Rievansee zu bauen, denn sie hatten ja weder Geld noch Maschinen. Aber sie beabsichtigten wohl, kapitalkräftige Leute für den Bau der Straße zu gewinnen, damit sie selber Wald verkaufen konnten.« (»They want to cut down the forest here and build roads. New houses are wanted, and a car on every farm. That's what they told me,« said Jovvna. [...] Nobody really knew what it was all about and how Ante's clique would manage to build a road to Lake Rievan;

character of Antaras. Of all the characters, Antaras is the one who can withdraw the furthest from the Finnish influences on Sámi-ness. He pursues the traditional work of a *badjealmmái* in the *duoddarat*, is a skilled and knowledgeable *juoigan* singer and does not shrink from living out this traditional Sámi-ness openly. The close bond that exists between Sámi-ness and the *duoddarat* can be seen from his character.

The reindeer themselves are another important element of Sámi-ness in the *badjealmmái* group. Ownership or non-ownership of them can be read as a marker of Sámi-ness, which is especially clear from the example of Ovlla. He has a desire to do something different, and to part with his reindeer. Ovlla strives to be more like a *láttán*<sup>96</sup> in all that he does, and to leave his Sámi existence behind.<sup>97</sup>

What the *sieidegeađgi* shows, above all, is an important link between old and new Sámi cultural practices. In the novel, it is an important point of reference for Johanas, even if the religious rites of sacrifice are only touched upon briefly in *Zeichen der Zerstörung*. The ritual object of the *sieidegeađgi* outlasts the changes in Sámi culture, but also points up the difficulties with which the Sámi are confronted: old traditions are being forgotten while new traditions still have to emerge, and need to be appropriate as well.

A final point to be mentioned is *juoigan*. Although individuals who yoik can quickly be perceived as heathens, this cultural asset remains embedded in Sámi life and cannot be obliterated by Christianization. Most notably, Antaras's *luohiti* and his fearless, matter-of-fact *juoigan* exemplify how there are always spaces for the Sámi way of life. On considering the places where Antaras yoiks freely, for example in his *siida*, singing about the arrival of Jon-Erhke or when Johanas rides cross-country from the *siida* towards Härkäsaari on his draught ox Spalli,<sup>98</sup> it might be added that spaces for the Sámi way of life exist as long as there is *duoddarat* and the open expanse of the landscape. At the same time, the survival of *juoigan* and *luohiti* shows that connection with one's own Sámi past cannot be destroyed by the Finns.

In overall conclusion, it is important to note that nature is the guideline for existence and for Sámi-ness alike. Although individual Sámi such as Elias or Sofe adapt their Sámi-ness to the new realities, there is one prevailing tendency common to all the characters and narrative spaces that have been discussed from the novel: Only as long as people and nature remain connected, including spiritually, is Sámi-ness possible. Wherever a rift opens up between people and nature, mainly due to alcohol, war, greed or Western lifestyles, the novel's characters become estranged from Sámi-ness and grow ever closer to the Finns.

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they certainly had neither money nor machines. But they probably intended to recruit well-capitalized people for the road's construction, so that they themselves could sell forest.«). Ibid., chapter 27, p. 250.

<sup>96</sup> North Sámi for Finns.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Paltto 1997, chapter 18, p. 169ff.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. ibid., chapter 34, p. 300f.

## Nature and Identity

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## Anna Christina Harms

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