

Article

Sámi on Display: Sámi Representations in an Early Nonfiction Book for Children

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Abstract: Lisbeth Bergh's nonfiction picturebook *En lappfamilie: tekst og bilder fra Nordland* (*A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland*) from 1905 is one of the first Norwegian nonfiction picturebooks for children about the life of Sámi. It contains Bergh's own illustrations and text passages in Norwegian, English, and German, which signals that the book addresses a national and international audience. Simultaneously, the book is published in an era characterized by an increasing interest in indigenous tourism, demonstrated through the popularity of world exhibitions and «human zoos». In this article, I explore Bergh's nonfiction picturebook in the light of “human zoos” and “living exhibitions” at the beginning of the 1900s and how her book alludes to the depiction of the Sámi for entertainment and information purposes. My close reading shows how the book reflects the categorization and systematization of the world and of exotic ethnic groups at the time. Furthermore, the reading confirms the book's very distinctive position in Norwegian children's literature history, and how it may have acquired a particular role in the promotion of Norwegian tourism at the beginning of the 20th century.

Keywords: nonfiction picturebooks; Sámi; Lisbeth Bergh; living exhibitions; dual reader



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1. Introduction

In 1905, the children's book author, teacher, and illustrator Lisbeth Bergh (1861–1927) published one of the first Norwegian nonfiction picturebooks for children about Sámi, *En lappfamilie: tekst og bilder fra Nordland* (*A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland*, my transl.) (Bergh 1905). The book is about a Sámi family and the family member's life through four seasons in Nordland, with a particular focus on the summer season. The reader acquires information about the family's daily activities, which include drafting and preparing meals as well as receiving visitors (tourists). The absence of nonfiction books for children about the Sámi at the beginning of the 20th century is probably related to the Sámi's position in Norway at that time. Already in the 18th century, the Sámi were subjected to missionary efforts, and the Norwegianization policy of the mid-19th century led to a ban on speaking Sámi in schools and a devaluation of Sámi culture. This makes Bergh's book an important contribution to the history of Norwegian children's literature. Another reason for the book's particular position is its verbal text representation, provided in three languages (Norwegian, English, and German). Beyond aiming to reach Norwegian children, it also seems to address foreign readers interested in Norwegian and Sámi culture. The dual reader address of the book may be due to the fact that Bergh's book was published during a period of increasing interest in Sámi and other indigenous groups, as evidenced by the large world exhibitions and numerous “living exhibitions” in Europe and the USA, as well as the marketing of new tourist destinations involving the Sámi-dominated areas in Norway. The living exhibitions of the early 20th century reflected a need to organize and categorize the environment, and they were the result of «(. . .) this juncture between exoticism and knowledge, between fantasy and rationality» (Blanchard 2008, p. 2). Simultaneously, a new sense of national identity developed in Norway after many years of Swedish

control (Baglo 2011, p. 15). This reinforced the need to publish literature for children that clarifies both the familiar and the exotic parts of Norwegian culture, for instance, biographical accounts of Norwegian explorers and historical heroes (Vie 2020).

In this article, I explore Bergh's nonfiction picturebook in the light of the "living exhibitions" (Baglo 2011, p. 13) at the beginning of the 1900s, and how it alludes to the depiction of the Sámi for entertainment and information purposes. The intention is to find out what characterized the earliest Norwegian nonfiction picturebooks for children about Sámi life and work, and their functions at that time, and how Bergh's book obtained a unique position, which has been scarcely explored within the research on children's literature. The article attempts to answer the following questions: How are the life and activities of a Sámi family portrayed through Bergh's text and images? How is the book's dual readership addressed? How does the book's portrayal of the Sámi align with or diverge from the ongoing living exhibitions of indigenous people?

While newer nonfiction literature for children usually incorporates aesthetic strategies that invite readers to engage, investigate, and question when encountering nonfiction (Sanders 2018), older nonfiction, such as Bergh's book, appears less open to interpretation and critical approaches. According to Marc Aronson (2011), previous authors of nonfiction books considered themselves translators of knowledge rather than explorers, which involves a more investigating approach (p. 57), something that favored an expository way of presenting the information rather than a narrative one. Nonfiction for children was considered "books of instruction"; "books containing the kind of information that adults think children should know" (Grilli 2024, p. 153). Furthermore, it seemed to be of less importance to have an emotional connection with the reader (Isaachs 2011, p. 16). But this does not mean that older nonfiction books for children, in this case Bergh's picturebook, lack qualities open to interpretation. On the contrary, by studying the composition, the iconotext, and the ideological perspectives reflected in Bergh's book, we can gain greater insight into the type of knowledge it conveys, its intended audience, and how the book reflects contemporary representations of indigenous people.

Examining the portrayals of Sámi people in Berg's book requires a closer examination of the interplay between the text (conventional signs) and images (iconic signs) and how the text and images contribute to its semantic value. Character's features may be conveyed visually to the reader through their physical appearance, poses and gestures, size, and placement, while the verbal text extends or elaborates on the meaning of the images (Barthes 1977, p. 39). Furthermore, the paratexts play a central role because they have an impact on how one reads and understands the book, in addition to expanding the main text (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006). The paratexts frame the book, prepare the reader for what is to come (information about the Sámi), and foreshadow the visual aesthetic that is prominent throughout the book. Additionally, the way the information is composed is relevant to how the life and activities of the Sámi family are portrayed and understood. According to Nina Goga (2019), there are three various organizing approaches in nonfiction for children, which in turn shape how we interpret and grasp the information. A chronological organization represents a more traditional and familiar way of organizing information and is commonly used in biographies (Goga 2019; Vie 2020), while a taxonomic organization has a thematic approach in which knowledge is organized into superior, secondary, and subordinate categories. In contrast, an organic compositional form has a more exploratory presentation. Examining the organizational methods present in the book can reveal the prevailing views on knowledge dissemination at that time.

In order to study the picturebook's dual address and how the book aligns with or diverges from the human exhibitions at that time, it is pertinent to investigate the ideological perspectives that underpin Bergh's book. The ideological perspectives have implications for who the book is addressed to and how the Sámi people are presented. That nonfiction in several contexts reinforces already existing ideological notions is emphasized by Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer when they claim that nonfiction «(...) tends to relate facts from certain viewpoints, becoming slanted or partial versions of the

truth» (Nodelman and Reimer 2003, p. 129). Petros Panaou and Angela Yannicopoulou draw attention to how the form of presentation convinces the reader to believe that what is in the text represents an indisputable truth: «And the more credible the knowledge provided in the book seems to be, the more likely it is to be passively accepted by readers, who might not recognize the ideological significance of the mode of presentation and the choices that have been made» (Panaou and Yannicopoulou 2021, p. 56). As stated by Patricia Larkin-Lieffers (2010), the construct of the implied reader of nonfiction picturebooks reflects the underlying ideology of the book and shapes the reading experience (p. 1). The implied reader is revealed with different literary and visual strategies, such as the portrayal of the characters and the environment, the amount of verbal text, and the complexity of the iconotext (Hallberg 1982). Furthermore, the implied reader «gives us insight into the author’s concept of a child-reader, of what he or she believes a book for children should be and what he or she believes childhood is about’» (Thompson 1991, p. 183). However, some picturebooks address a diverse, cross-generational audience that involves readers of all ages (Beckett 2018, p. 209). This applies to Bergh’s book, and in the following, this will be elucidated through a closer reading of the text. My investigation highlights that some nonfiction for children of that era reached wider audiences, extending beyond the country’s boundaries. Furthermore, it validates how early nonfiction literature for children reveals past perceptions of indigenous populations.

2. The Book’s Position in the History of Norwegian Nonfiction for Children

An increased number of German and English tourists visited the northern parts of Norway at the beginning of the 20th century, in order to experience the many Sámi camps that were established for commercial purposes (Baglo 2015b, p. 30). The growing interest for Sámi people was reflected in the representations of Sámi in simultaneous Nordic fiction for children, such as Laura Fittinghoff’s *Barnen från Frostmofjället* (*The children from the Frostmo Mountain*, my transl.) (Fittinghoff [1907] 2011), *Lille Lapp-Natti och hans fostersystrar: berättelser för barn* (*Little Sámi-Natti and his foster sisters: stories for children*, my transl.) (Fittinghoff 1912), and Elsa Beskow’s *Olle’s skifärd* (*Olle’s skiing trip*, my transl.) (1907). In Nordahl Rolfsen’s reading books published a couple of decades later, a few Sámi characters are represented in Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson’s story about “Else Marie Schanke” (Rolfsen 1939, pp. 66–67) and Andreas Austlid’s “Tamreinen og finnane” (“The tame reindeer and the Sámi”, my transl.) (Austlid 1903, p. 260).

However, *A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland* is an early and rare example of an independent Norwegian nonfiction picturebook for children about the Sámi. Most nonfiction texts for Norwegian children in the early 1900s consisted of textbooks for schools (such as reading books, ABC-books, and instructional texts) or leisure reading materials (for instance, biographies or children’s magazines). These texts frequently focused on nation-building themes, illustrated by depictions of notable, strong Norwegians (Birkeland et al. 2018, p. 486). There are a few descriptions of Sámi in *Naturhistorie for ungdommen* (*Natural history for the youth*, my transl.) by Peder Christian Asbjørnsen from 1838, where the Sámi are mentioned in connection with depictions of the reindeer and its crucial role in the Sámi’s livelihood. In *Lesebok fyr høgre skular* (1893) (*Reading book for older students*, my transl.) by Arne Garborg and in *Lesebok for folkeskulen 2* (Garborg 1903) (*Reading book for primary school 2*, my transl.) by Anders Austlid, certain Sámi characters are represented in a few poems and stories. These early reading books put a great emphasis on what is close and familiar to Norwegian children, in particular Norwegian nature and fauna, and in a few cases, other countries and cultures. However, the focus on the local and the distant does not seem to encompass Sámi culture and identity. The emphasis is on other societal aspects, such as idleness and vagrancy, and the importance of a good family life where parents are educators and caregivers (Kvam et al. 2020). The absence of information about Sámi life might also be explained by the prevalence of translated texts in reading books and the religious foundation (Ørjasæther 1981, p. 105) of many of these works.

Even though Bergh's book appears to be a pioneering work, it has received little research attention. The limited interest in the book within the field of children's literature research may be related to the fact that nonfiction for children from the early 20th century has been ignored, while fictional texts, including those about Sámi people, have sparked more interest (for example, [Kjelen 2019](#); [Lindskog 2000](#); [Conrad 2020](#); [Fredriksen 2020](#); [Lahtinen 2020](#); [Stokke 2020](#); [Weld 2020](#)). The book was the Norwegian contribution to a collection of international children's books in the anthology *Barnas store billedbok: en samling norske og utenlandske billedbøker fra mange tider* (*The children's big picturebook: A selection of Norwegian and international illustrated picturebooks from different epochs*, my transl.) ([Petersen et al. 1969](#)), in a revised version. However, the commercial value of Bergh's book has been underlined, as Sonia Hagemann's description of the book indicates: "It is significant that this particular book was the only one to represent Norway in Den norske biletboka (. . .). The Sámi have always been considered suitable for the export of Norwegian culture!" ([Hagemann 1986](#), p. 98, my transl.). While the book is barely mentioned in *Den norske biletboka* (*The Norwegian picturebook*, my transl.) ([Birkeland and Storaas 1993](#)), it receives more attention in Ulla [Bergstrand's](#) (1999) description of Bergh's artistic work. She refers to *A Lappish family: text and images from Nordland* as a "reportage" (p. 24), because it, more than aiming to idealize, provides an authentic and intimate portrayal of Sámi people from a child's perspective. Whether the book also addresses adult readers is not discussed. Gudmund [Hovdenak](#) (1989) criticizes the book for being more informative than narrative and claims that the Sámi family is seen with "tourist eyes" because it neither shows "(. . .) human immersion in nor particularly in-depth knowledge of Sámi culture and way of life" (p. 39) (my transl.). Hovdenak does not look into the reason for such a description or how the book positions itself in relation to contemporary nonfiction picturebooks for children about Sámi. It may seem that the book's commercial value has received more attention than its visual and textual qualities.

3. Lisbeth Berg's Artistic Career

The absence of interest for *A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland* may be due to other reasons. Bergh's artistic pursuits have received little attention, even though she was an established and well-known Norwegian artist and writer of children's books from 1890 to 1914 ([Birkeland and Storaas 1993](#), p. 75). Bergh was born in Nes in Romerike, and was one of the first Norwegian women to receive education in art¹. Eventually, Bergh worked as an illustrator, landscape painter, art teacher, and writer. Sonja Hagemann describes her as an artist of «international class» (my transl.) ([Hagemann 1986](#), p. 96), she is depicted as a pioneer in visual arts education ([Wichstrøm 1983](#)), and a significant writer and illustrator of fiction and nonfiction for children. According to [Birkeland and Storaas \(1993\)](#), her illustrations stand out, because they are less sophisticated and sumptuous than other contemporary illustrations (p. 143). More precisely, her illustrations are naturalistic and modest, with simplified motives and bright colors. Furthermore, Bergh's books differ from those of other contemporaries because of her unsentimental descriptions of the difficult lives of children and adults rather than the nostalgic and national romantic representations prevalent in that era ([Håberg 1993](#)). The inspiration from Jugendstil is striking in her books because of the bright colors, curved lines, and nature motifs ([Bergstrand 1999](#), p. 24).

From 1896 to 1922, Lisbeth Bergh published seven illustrated fiction books: a counting book, two nonfiction books, and some educational resources for adults, including a drawing book for teachers. She illustrates a large number of textbooks, Christmas booklets, and fiction books written by other Norwegian children's book authors (such as Hans Aanrud and Elling Holst); she produces workbooks for adults, as well as instructions for preparing toys and booklets with cut-out works. In addition, she creates four children's bedroom pictures and illustrative posters for classrooms. Her position as a drawing teacher at Christiane Bonnevie's school in Oslo may have been the starting point for, or the reason for, her interest in children's learning processes, especially children's encounters with nature through visual expressions. Kirsten [Håberg \(2012\)](#) emphasizes Bergh's central role as a

driving force behind activity-based pedagogy: “She saw it as important that the students themselves were active in the learning process. (...) By letting the students study together and talk to each other about what a plant looked like and later individually drawing it, they acquired knowledge in a varied and lively way” (p. 112) (my transl.). Key motifs in her books and illustrations are primarily drawn from nature and children’s encounters with it.

The reason for publishing *A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland* seems unclear. Inger Dorothea Shetelig (1998) claims that Bergh tried to sell the book *Fra sæteren* (*From the Mountain Pasture*, my transl.) to an English audience, but Bergh believed that the content was not exotic enough (p. 48). Publishing a book about the Sámi would thus potentially garner her greater international attention at the time. Another reason might be the growing fascination with Sámi culture in contemporary children’s fiction at that time (Bergstrand 1999, p. 25), along with the abundance of photographs featuring Sámi individuals in the early 1900s editions of the *Norwegian Children’s Magazine* (Shetelig 1998, p. 48, my transl.). However, we know less about Bergh’s personal interest and knowledge about Sámi, but her use of the term “Lapp” in the book’s title implies that she utilized the majority population’s term for the Sámi, instead of the term preferred by the Sámi themselves.²

It is not unlikely that the book was included as one of several souvenirs in the marketing of the north, representing «a memento» of the travel to the north, summarizing «the complex experiences of the journey» (Spring 2021, pp. 107–10). According to Ulrike Spring, multimodal objects working as souvenirs enabled the travelers to «perform the journey anew over and over again» (p. 110).

4. The Human Exhibitions

Staged events where the Sámi and other indigenous groups were presented to an audience are referred to by Cathrine Baglo as «living exhibitions» (2015a, p. 13) or «human zoos» (Blanchard 2008). The large human exhibitions took place between 1875 and 1910 (Baglo 2007, p. 3) and were intended to entertain and serve as a source of knowledge about the world. The exhibitions sprung from the advent of increasingly «(...) visually oriented institutions, technologies, and practices such as wax cabinets, world exhibitions, illustrated newspapers, zoos, panoramas, and dioramas (...)» (Baglo 2011, p. 13, my transl.). They were arranged in a period characterized by racial theories and Darwinian ideas, and researchers sought out the exhibitions because they «(...) needed anthropological and ethnographic collections, but they also needed to be able to see, touch, measure, and study living humans» (Blanchard 2008, p. 5). Several hundred Sámi from Norway, Sweden, and Finland worked as exhibition participants in European and American cities, in zoos, amusement parks, circuses, and large world exhibitions from the 1850s, and eventually in Norway (Baglo 2015a, p. 34). For many Sámi, this meant an opportunity to earn money, travel abroad, and be treated “(...) as equal human beings than participants experienced in their respective home countries (...)” (Baglo 2014, p. 13).

The exhibitions gained such widespread popularity and dissemination that they can be regarded as mass media, which came to convey «(...) a very special image of other cultures, an image that both derived meaning from—and gave meaning to—the cultural views and racial theories of the day.» (Baglo 2007, p. 4, my transl.). Carl Hagenbeck’s «Hagenbecksche Völkerschauen» from 1874 to 1930 (Keil 2004, p. 3) represents one of the most famous European exhibitions, and was perceived as important for cultural and information dissemination (Rothfels 2007, p. 19). Authenticity was a crucial criterion, and the visitor was supposed to experience the real life of an exotic group of people (Baglo 2007, p. 4). At the same time, the exhibitions were supposed to meet the public’s expectations (Rothfels 2007, p. 22), which often meant reinforcing the stereotypical perceptions prevalent about the Sámi. Thus, the exhibitions existed in the tension between popularization of the exotic and scientific research, but they were quickly perceived as common entertainment for the whole family, and «(...) women, men, and children flocked to the exhibitions to observe the exotic people on display» (R. Andreassen 2015, p. 18).

Simultaneously, one must consider the exhibitions in the context of the development of a national identity and the need for tourism. From 1870, several Sámi camps were established in Norway, mainly in the western and northern parts of the country (Tromsdalen, Hammerfest, Harstad, and Bergen) (Baglo 2007, p. 20). The composition of the exhibitions had a clear structure, where the place of residence, the family, and the staging of everyday routines were the core of the exhibitions (4). The exhibited Sámi families had to have the right appearance and appropriate clothing in order to fulfill the tourist's stereotypical expectations. In some cases, the public had a participatory role, being able to touch the Sámi and the objects that surrounded them; occasionally, they were allowed to talk to them with the help of an interpreter or walk around in the camp area (Baglo 2011, p. 45). The exhibitions reflected various views of the Sámi and how they should be presented to an audience. On the one hand, indigenous people were considered primitive, wild, and misplaced in an otherwise civilized society. On the other hand, they were described as «noble», untouched by modern times and with their own authenticity (Mathisen 2007, p. 16). Thus, a common perception was that the Sámi represented both the original and authentic with closeness to nature while needing clear control because they were seen as more primitive than Norwegians were.

The informative and entertaining functions of the exhibitions, as well as how the Sami were portrayed to a large audience, provide a crucial context for examining Bergh's nonfiction book about the Sami. The exhibitions and the growing fascination with indigenous peoples can explain why the book seems to address both children and adult readers, both nationally and internationally.

5. A Lappish Family: Text and Pictures from Nordland

A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland have pictures on every spread, which indicates that it is a picturebook. As in Bergh's previous publications, the illustrations are characterized by simplified motifs and bright colors. The pictures are naturalistic and primarily have an informative function. The iconotext reveals what the Sámi family wears and how they live, while at the same time excluding the harsher aspects of a Sámi life. According to Birkeland and Storaas (1993, pp. 146–47), this may be due to the neo-romantic style in picturebooks for children at the beginning of the 20th century. Even though the images are informative, the verbal text contributes to the clarification of the information conveyed by the images. Furthermore, rendering the text into three different languages (English, Norwegian, and German) implies that the anticipated reader might be unfamiliar with the Sámi heritage. Consequently, the visual and textual descriptions are clear and focused, avoiding unnecessary details.

A Lappish family: text and pictures from Nordland does not have the story as a basic chronological structure, which often characterized Norwegian nonfiction for children at the beginning of the 20th century (Birkeland et al. 2018, p. 82). Instead, it contains cyclical descriptions of Sámi life through diverse seasons, with a particular focus on summer and winter. The cyclical composition is expressed in several ways. The book's second spread provides a concise summary of the needs and life of the reindeer through different seasons and how it affects the living conditions of the Sámi family (Figure 1):

“Far up in Nordland, where the snowy mountains rise high and beautiful and where the fjord cuts deep into the country, live the Laplanders in summer. The winter they spend far up in the mountains with the herds of reindeer. The reindeer must constantly have new pastures, so they have to move from place to place, putting up their tents, and often they have to endure great hardships in the stormy weather and cold climate, far from all the population” (spread 2).



Figure 1. *En lappfamilie*, spread 2. Copy from the National Library in Oslo.

Large parts of the book revolve around the summer months when the Sámi family lives down in the valleys: «In this way, the summer days pass with the Lapps» (spread 11). Soon after, the arrival of winter is announced, and the book's closing sentences signal that a year has passed: «But winter also comes to an end, and next summer they go down to the valley again». The cyclical composition emphasizes the Sámi family's close relationship with nature and creates a feeling of idyll where people and nature live in harmony. At the same time, parts of the book include a taxonomic organization since the information about the Sámi is introduced thematically. Various slides outline where the Sámi live (spread 2), who the family members are and their characteristics (spread 2–3), the dogs' features and position in the family (spread 4–5), the old woman Kathrine's visit (spread 5) and how the lavvo is furnished (spread 5–6), their religious affiliation (spread 6–7), tourist visits (spread 9), childcare (spread 3), and sleep rituals (spread 11). Each section is devoted to activities that family members carry out, either alone or together. The first paragraph on spread 2 explains how they execute their nomadic lives, while the next paragraphs present the different members of the family. The text thus thematizes both Sámi's working life and family life, as Bergh sees it. On the book's 9th spread, the book describes how the family's daily routines are interrupted by the arrival of tourists. The family has to move the reindeer herd down from the mountain and to the camp, and the camp area is turned into an exhibition in honor of the guests. Everyday life returns when the tourists leave («After the tourists have left, the deer are driven up into the mountains again and everything assumes its old aspect», spread 10). The book ends with a summary description of how the different seasons affect the Sámi's everyday life, but the family has learned how to adapt to the seasons.

5.1. Descriptions of the Family Members and Their Surroundings

The book's iconotext conveys an impression of the family's role allocation, their experiences with tourists visiting the camp, and how the family engages with their environment. The cover of the book gives the reader a first impression of the Sámi family (Figure 2). All family members are lined up next to each other in an unnatural posture. The father and mother are located to the left, with the mother holding the youngest child in her arms, who sleeps in a komse (a Sámi cradle), while the three other children are positioned to the right. Everyone is wearing a Sámi costume (kofte), with matching hats and slippers. The background is neutral and bare, giving the impression that the family has been removed from its natural environment. The book's title and author's name appear to be handwritten and are without serifs, with some decoration that does not reduce legibility. This harmonizes with the simplistic aesthetic style that dominates in the book.



Figure 2. *En lappfamilie*, front cover. Copy from the National Library in Oslo.

Placing the child in the middle of the front page signals the child's central position in the book. This also indicates the child's prominent position in early children's literature, enabling identification for the child reader. Unlike the parents, the child in the middle looks away from the observer (the reader), and the moving body reminds the reader of a child's impulsive and restless nature. The four children (El (Ellen), Lars, Sigran, and Ane) are all represented on most of the spreads, illustrating how the oldest children contribute and assist in the daily work. Four-month-old Ane is usually positioned in her komse, while three-year-old Sigran «(...) toddles about with mother, for then she feels so safe, but once in a while she goes off by herself, for you know, there is so much to be looked after» (spread 3). Lars is six years old and active, while El (Ellen) is eight and goes to school three months a year. She is the one who helps the most with the everyday activities, usually in collaboration with her mother. The verbal text says little about whether the children have time to play, but in spread 8, the children's playful nature is hinted at when one of them appears to crawl under the tent canvas instead of using the tent entrance.

The book conveys a sense of a traditional gender role pattern, and identity markers such as the kofte (traditional Sámi costume), lavvo (tent used by Sámi), and reindeer are prevalent throughout the book. The mother figure, Inger, holds a central position both in the illustrations (depicted in eight out of twelve images) and in the verbal text. She is consistently portrayed with a pipe in her mouth and the komse on her back; she weaves and milks the goat; she cooks; she takes care of the children; she makes clothes and shoes; and she is also the one who guards the family's Bible. She represents faith and superstition, which is expressed through the meticulous placement of the Bible: «They have a small chest, which they keep locked, for in that are their best things, and there they keep their Bible too» (spread 5–6), and the placement of the silver cross above the komse: «Mother says that the cross is sacred and that it will keep the child from evil» (spread 11). At the same time, the Christian affiliation signals a distance from the ancient spirit world, the world of ancestors, and mythology.

The father figure is scarcely mentioned; we learn that he carves knives and smokes a pipe, but otherwise, he is absent. The reader must assume that the father takes care of the reindeer herd while the rest of the family stays near the campsite. However, the animals they surround themselves with (the family's only goat, the two dogs, and the reindeer) have a central place. The reindeer is the most important animal for the family, and the descriptions of the animal represent its cyclical nature: «The reindeer is a handsome animal; it is much smaller than a horse and is slender and graceful; it has greyish brown fur and big, beautiful horns. In springtime, it sheds its horns, which grow out again during the summer» (spread 9). The fact that they adapt to the surroundings in which the reindeer move indicates that they live in harmony with nature without any efforts to control it. The animals' useful value is highlighted several times: the dogs warn when strangers or others

are approaching, the family gets milk from the goat, and clothes, shoes, and meat from the reindeer.

While the verbal text sometimes provides a relatively detailed description of how tourists' visits have a significant impact on the Sámi family's daily lives, they are depicted to a lesser extent in the pictures (Figure 3). In just one of the pictures, the reader can make out some figures that look like tourists (spread 9), and they are otherwise referred to as curious about the reindeer and want to buy the Sámi's handiwork. We otherwise get to know little about whether the tourists interact with the Sámi, although the illustration on slide 9 indicates that some communication takes place. This may express that the Sámi are the most central figures in the book, while the tourists, who in many ways represent the book's adult readers, are diminished to background characters. However, it is important for the Sámi family to generate income from the tourists' visits. Large parts of their daily routines involve preparing goods they can sell to tourists, and they look forward to these visits: «Oh, the day that the steamer comes up the bay and all the tourists are to go up to the camp to visit the Lappish families. —What a great time it is! Then they put on their very best things, and then they offer their goods for sale—skin and horn, knives and spoons, which father has made, ribbons they have woven, and the 'komager' not to be forgotten» (spread 9). While tourists are important for the Sámi livelihood, there is ambivalence in the descriptions of the tourists' arrival in the camp. This is evident in the descriptions of how the animals must adapt to the visit, even though this is not beneficial for the reindeer: «The herds of reindeer have been driven down from the mountains, and of course the tourists also wish to see the deer. The deer are confined in an enclosure to prevent their making for the mountains, for they find it rather hot down there in the valley and greatly prefer their usual hunt.» (spread 9). The visits of the tourists require an adjustment that is not necessarily beneficial for the reindeer.

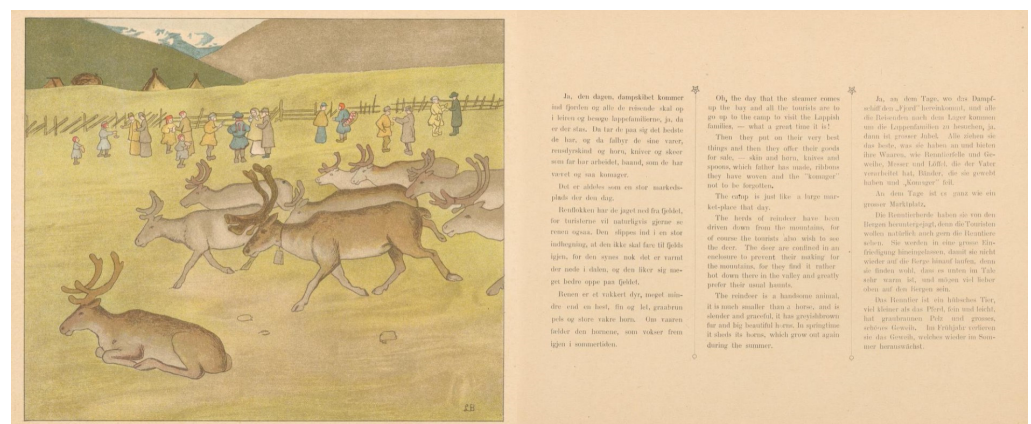


Figure 3. *En lappfamilie*, spread 9. Copy from the National Library in Oslo.

Despite the austere presentation that permeates large parts of the book, nature occasionally appears mythical and distant: «Far up in Nordland, where the snowy mountains rise high and beautiful and where the fjord cuts deep into the country, live the Laplanders in summer » (spread 2). The white, dramatic, and distant mountains are consistently depicted as a backdrop, as seen in spread 5 when old Katrine visits and in spread 9 when the tourists arrive at the camp and the reindeer are released into a fencing to the delight of the tourists. These descriptions contrast with the factual and nuanced portrayals of the family's daily life and assume an idealized representation of the closeness between the Sámi family and nature. The combination of a cyclical composition and a seemingly harmonious portrayal of Sámi life evokes associations with pastoralism (Gifford 1999), characterized by a harmonious depiction of the relationship between humans and nature, where humans and nature follow the same rhythm, rooted in the same place. Nature and humans are the result of each other's existence. Thus, the portrayals of the Sámi family take on the character of representing escapism; an escape from reality and withdrawal from

the modern and urbanized world. However, the idyllic atmosphere is suddenly dispelled when the verbal descriptions once again direct the reader's attention to the routine activities taking place in the camp. Especially the close details, such as the furnishings in the lavvo, are described relatively thoroughly for the reader, emphasizing that the Sámi have no more than what they need: «There are no chairs or tables, no bed, and not even a window. In the middle of the floor, large stones are placed in a circle, and that is the hearth» (spread 5).

5.2. *The Dual Implied and Distant Reader*

Whether the book primarily targets a child reader or an adult tourist remains unclear. The concise verbal descriptions of the Sámi family, as well as the use of simplified, drawn illustrations, suggest that the implied reader is a child. Furthermore, the thematic composition allows the child reader to flip back and forth without having to start from the first page. One could also argue that the child reader does not need to be able to read to learn something about the life of a Sámi family because the pictures alone provide a relatively clear impression of the Sámi family's way of life. However, it is natural to assume that the textual translations into Norwegian, English, and German make the book more appealing to an adult and international audience. The fact that the images depict objects that have a particular place in Sámi culture (for instance, the traditional Sámi costume, reindeer, lavvu, etc.) promotes greater awareness of the characteristics of the Sámi culture.

The book possesses other qualities, implying that it appeals to readers of all ages. The life of the Sámi family is portrayed with a certain distance, partly because the implied narrator maintains a highly withdrawn position. The recipient becomes an observer when encountering Bergh's visual and verbal descriptions, which are further reinforced through certain textual and visual techniques. Because the text contains no dialogue between the characters and is more descriptive than narrative, the Sámi family members appear distant to the reader. Thus, the reader must imagine how communication among family members takes place. The reader's perception of nature as distant from his or her own life is further amplified through the illustration on the book's first spread. Bergh's pastel-colored illustration of white mountains, green plains, and blue water feels dreamlike, aided by the ultra-close-up view and the use of bright colors. Extensive use of bird's-eye view shots where the reader looks down on the small family as they go about their daily activities, as well as frequent use of normal perspective, make the reader a remote spectator. The reader adopts the role of the visiting tourist (both adults and children), albeit the reader's 'visit' extends beyond that of the tourist.

Nevertheless, the distance also arises in the descriptions of nature and the family's geographic location. The towering mountains surrounding the Sámi camp remind the reader of the vast geographical distance between nature and culture, the barren mountain areas, the urbanized city, the Sámi family, and the reader. The first sentences of the text establish this distance («Far up in Nordland, where the snowy mountains rise high and beautiful and where the fjord cuts deep into the country, live the Laplanders in summer»). Furthermore, the text states that the Sámi family stays «far into the mountains» with the reindeer herd, and they live «far from people». The distance between those portrayed in the book and those to whom the book is addressed amplifies the gap between «the others» and us. At the same time, the illustrations enable a potential aesthetic experience by portraying the beautiful aspects of nature and appealing to the reader's sensory experiences. Bergh's Jugend-inspired style and muted color palette deviate from the otherwise sober style of the book, creating a hint of nostalgia and encouraging the readers to imagine an environment distant from their own lives.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Bergh's book invites the reader to gain knowledge about the lives and activities of the Sámi family, while the exotic and foreign elements appeal to the reader's curiosity and add an element of entertainment to the reading experience. However, the book's informative function is the most prominent. Consequently, the recipient becomes an observer who

explores the Sámi family with «observational lens». The restrained tone enhances the book's informative function and contrasts with many other descriptions of Sámi people in contemporary nonfiction texts for adults, where Sámi people are described as unclean and alcoholic (Askeland 2016, p. 81). In Friedrich von Hellwald's book *Europas lande og folk* (*The countries of Europe and their people*, my transl.) (von Hellwald 1883, p. 189), the Sámi people are depicted as both greedy and having an «unfortunate» gender role pattern, and they rank lower on the social ladder than most Norwegians: «In Tromsø we find, in close contact with civilization, the first traces of barbarism. There, Lapps live in their vicinity, and although the missionaries among them have achieved true miracles in the educational field, they remain a subordinate race. Their abilities seem to be small» (p. 189, my transl.). In contrast, Bergh's book represents a *generalized* portrayal of a culturally rich ethnic group with diverse characteristics, as emphasized by both the title («A Lappish Family») and the lack of an individual-oriented description. Bergstrand (1999) remarks that the somewhat general description « (...) may give a certain museum-like scent to the pictures for us modern observers» (p. 28, my transl.). Only under certain circumstances is the reader compelled to ponder or assume a more probing stance. This applies to the almost mythical and distant descriptions of the Sámi people's lives and surroundings, which appeal to the reader's imagination. However, the ambivalence in the descriptions of how the tourists visit represents a source of income for the family while also disturbing the animals and the Sámi people's rhythm, suggesting an eternally relevant dilemma. How should one preserve traditions while also adhering to progress and development in a society that is changing?

There are some similarities between the depiction of the Sámi family in Bergh's book and the depiction of Sámi in human exhibitions of the early 1900s. The portrayal of the family as a relatively homogeneous group without any particular distinctiveness seems to be a recurring trend both in the living exhibitions and in textbooks of the past (Mortensen-Buan 2016, p. 95), reflecting the categorization and systematization of the world—and of exotic ethnic groups—at the time. Just as the museum attempts to put the complexity of the world into a rational order (Keil 2004, p. 69), the book's tight composition and arranged presentation are examples of the same. The consistent use of total and half-total cropping and normal perspective reinforces the impression of assuming a reader role that involves staring at something foreign with an observing eye. Through the book, Bergh stages Sámi culture for more than those who had the opportunity to visit the «living exhibitions» in Europe or the Sámi camps around Norway. The pictures and the various text versions provide access to information that would otherwise not have been available.

There is little doubt that *A Lappish Family: Text and Pictures from Nordland* must have contributed to the marketing of Sámi in Norway and tourism in general. That it concerns reindeer-herding Sámi people and no other Sámi groups reflects a central feature of the marketing of Sámi people in the tourist industry in the early 1900s. In many contexts, reindeer-herding Sámi people in the north represented Sámi culture as a whole, even though reindeer-herding Sámi people constituted a smaller part of the Sámi population (Bjørklund 2000, p. 6). Perhaps this was because reindeer-herding Sámi had a particular closeness to animals, something that was considered both foreign and exotic for international readers. The book's full title immediately suggests that the book's setting is in a specific geographical area in Norway (Nordland), but it can also refer to the more extended meaning of the term. According to Ulrike Spring (2021, p. 113), Nordland was a relative concept for many tourists, encompassing a country in the north of Europe. This emphasizes that Norway, and especially the indigenous people living there, were perceived as distant from the lives of tourists from other parts of Europe.

Bergh's book emerges as an important contribution to the history of children's literature, not least because it provides insight into the possible roles that nonfiction literature for children played in the early 1900s. The book gives us a clearer picture of the kind of information about Sámi people that was conveyed to children (and adults), and especially the interest that this type of literature generated both nationally and internationally. At the same time, the book gives us insight into the significant changes that characterized the

contemporary era. The book's descriptions of the Sámi family's life and activities suggest a transition from the traditional, represented by the Sámi's clothing and way of life, to the modern, represented by Christian faith and nature, giving way to tourism. Bergh's descriptions of the Sámi family's encounters with tourism foreshadow the conflicts about the loss of pasture and the assimilation process that occur later in the same century.

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Notes

- ¹ Her teachers were famous national and international artists, such as Erik Werenskiöld, Christian Krohg and Puvis de Chavannes in Paris.
- ² According to I. Andreassen (2017, p. 54) the Sámi preferred the term "Sámi" during the first part of the 1900s. Furthermore, the lack of clarification in the book that the Sámi culture recognizes eight seasons may also reflect a limited knowledge.

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