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TEASING PEOPLE INTO HEALTH? SAMI CARTOONS, INDIGENOUS HUMOUR, AND PROVOCATIVE THERAPY

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Abstract

Maren Uthaug's razor-sharp and self-deprecating cartoons reflect Sami people in a seemingly offensive way, addressing sensitive Indigenous issues such as cultural disorientation, racism, suicide, and addiction in an outspoken way. However, it was Sami people – Uthaug's relatives – who asked for and successfully published these cartoons. Why do Sami people request cartoons like these? Outlining some relevant aspects of highly divergent Western Comics Studies, the analysis and interpretation of selected cartoons is an opportunity to compare Uthaug's provocative strategies to the functions of humour in First Nations literature. Accordingly, the paper focuses on Indigenous humour as a means of emotional and social healing in the processes of decolonization and reconciliation and, additionally, adopts Frank Farrelly's concept of provocative therapy which is defined as a way of teasing people into health. Relying on Native American Terry Tafoya's (Taos Pueblo) description of Farrelly as a kind of medicine man, the paper asks whether also Uthaug acts as a cartoon-drawing Chiffoneti, a blend of priest, healer, and trickster regarding Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers.

Keywords

Sami, First Nations, Indigenous literature, decolonization, cartoons, humour, reconciliation, provocative therapy, comparative Indigenous literary studies

1. Introduction: Weird Forms of Aboriginal Jocularity? The Potential of the Visual, the Written, and the In-Between

A firework of self-deprecating illustrations and ironic comments, Maren Uthaug's three books of razor-sharp cartoons humorously reflect Sami people in a seemingly ignorant and offensive way, addressing sensitive Indigenous issues such as the aftermath of colonialism, cultural disorientation, racism, sexual abuse, suicide, and addiction in an outspoken way (Uthaug, 2010, 2011, and 2012). However, it was Sami people – Uthaug's relatives – who asked for and successfully published these cartoons (cf. Platou, Vialatte, 2014). Why do Sami people request cartoons like these?

"Humour is a way of keeping ourselves from going absolutely crazy," Indigenous author Thomas King said in an interview with Rosanna Deerchild recorded at Montreal's Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival in 2016. Admitting that humour might not be the answer but helps to handle Aboriginal peoples' experiences with Western society, King claims that humour also deepens the tragedy (Deerchild, Wheeler, Daniels, Lazowsky 2016, 13'10"-15'50"; for King cf. also Busby, 2008). In this, King also performs a "humorous treatment of painful events" which is much in line with "many Aboriginal artists [who] have commented that laughter enables their people to bear the unbearable and thus to survive" (Fagan, 2009, [204]). While Kristina Fagan (Labrador Métis Nation) talks about "dark humour" (Fagan, 2009, [204]), King defines humour as an edge to tragedy, a magic spot to be found where one can laugh and say "My God, this is horrible" (Deerchild, Wheeler, Daniels, Lazowsky 2016, 14'50"-15'50").

Do Maren Uthaug's cartoons provide exactly this magic spot which helps Indigenous people to deal with the contemporary processes of decolonization and reconciliation? If so, how do they provide it? Which visual and writing techniques do they use?

In order to answer these questions, I first give a definition of the graphic-literary genre cartoon concentrating on some relevant aspects of current comics studies.

Second, I investigate Indigenous humour, underlining some of its key characteristics by using a transatlantic perspective. In order to legitimize this perspective, I refer to Shawn Wilson's global definition of "Indigenous" and "Indigenous peoples":

Indigenous is inclusive of all first peoples – unique in our own cultures – but common in our experiences of colonialism and our understanding of the world. ...
So many of the conditions that we have faced as colonized peoples are the same, but more important to me, our views of the world seem to be so similar. ...
I have noticed that we share similar beliefs and a common spirituality.
(Wilson, 2008, 16, 28, and 32)

Building on this definition, I suggest that a "common understanding of the world", "[similar] views of the world", "similar beliefs and a common spirituality", and especially being "common in our experiences of colonialism" also are followed by a common or at least similar kind of Indigenous humour in order to cope with the historical events of colonialism, post-colonialism, and the ongoing process of decolonization. What is more, Sami scientist Harald Gaski encourages to include Sami literature in global Indigenous studies and repeatedly recommends a broader comparative perspective on Sami and global Indigenous literature (Gaski, 1997, 1997a, 1997b, 201-202; 2003, and 2004). Applying methodological pluralism and a transatlantic perspective, I wish to follow Gaski's suggestions.

Third, I use the Western concept of provocative therapy which seems comparable to essential characteristics of contemporary Indigenous humour and helps to understand the healing functions of Uthaug's art. I hereby propose a new and different theorizing approach to Indigenous humour, rather following King's "magic spot-model" than the hitherto applied

concepts of Indigenous ethics of communication and Western psychological trauma theory, most prominently post-traumatic stress disorder. While Fagan has already pointed out "that psychological theories do not necessarily apply cross-culturally and that Western trauma theory may be insufficient in understanding Aboriginal expressions of trauma" (cf. Fagan, 2009, 205), I show that provocative therapy is very much in line with Indigenous concepts of the healing functions of humour. All along with these explanations, I will present analyses and interpretations of selected cartoons by Maren Uthaug.

2. Defining "Cartoon" – and Information on the Special Genesis of Uthaug's Cartoons

From a historical and narratological perspective, the cartoon is the nucleus of graphic narrative and graphic literature. As Jared Gardener points out,

[t]he sequential comic as we know it was born in the illustrated magazines of the late nineteenth century, emerging slowly and unevenly as a solution to narrative problems presented by the single-panel cartoon that dominated the pages. As the popularity of illustrated magazines and the cartoon increased, so did the ambition of cartoonists to tell stories. ... But the cartoon of the illustrated magazine remained largely fixed by the rules of the cartoon: a single panel with accompanying text affixed below. (Gardener, 2015, 241)

In the illustrated magazines of the 1880s and 1890s, more examples of sequential graphic short narratives were printed, although features associated with the twentieth-century comic strip, such as dialogue balloons and combinations of text and image were still missing (Gardener, 2015, 241). Contemporary comics and graphic narratives, therefore, have gradually evolved from single-panel cartoons and small sequential cartoon strips. Cartoons, cartoon strips and comics as well as graphic novels are forms of graphic narratives that are analyzed and interpreted with transgeneric and intermedial approaches within the field of contemporary narratology (Meister, 2009, 340; cf. also Stein, Thon, 2009, 1). The books investigated in this article contain single-panel cartoons as well as small sequential cartoon strips. They do not extend to the length of comics or graphic novels.

The term "cartoon" is also used to mark stylistic conventions and elements. While comics often show pictures in different degrees of realism, a cartoon combines formally schematized pictorial elements with written text. Defined as highly abstracted, simplified icons with a small degree of resemblance to their real-life counterparts (cf. McCloud, 1994, 28-29), cartoons are characterized by a simplified, stereotyped, naïve, and non-naturalistic but nevertheless clearly recognizable drawing style which heightens dramatic economy. Cartoons are pictorial iconic signs that morph their object (although they clearly refer to it) by leaving out a great number of its details while at the same time exaggerating a small number of its characteristic features (Abel, Klein 2016, 81, cf. also Packard 2009, 30).

Often produced in a division of labor (writer and illustrator, for instance), comics and cartoons offer opportunities for creative sharing and participation. This also applies to Uthaug's cartoons and cartoon strips. The "purpose", "impulse", and the "work's content" which according to McCloud lie at the core of any artwork (McCloud, 1994, 170), originated from Uthaug's relatives as they proposed and shared their ideas of creating Sami satire in a verbal-visual art form (Platou, Vialatte 2014, 3'12"). In the beginning, Uthaug remained skeptical about the request. Additionally, she was only a visitor in her Sami relatives' home community in northern Norway and has been living in Denmark for the most part of her life. Her first reaction was "no" since one didn't ridicule ethnic minorities or – as she put it – "Indians". She also admitted having a kind of reserve or fear of contact with Sami issues. Despite her reservations, she engaged in the project and collaborated with her Sami cousin Mona Solbakk, a journalist

who was careful about the satire being "within" Sami community, preventing Uthaug of being lapidated out of Sápmi (Platou, Vialatte, 2014, 3'24"-4'00'). Uthaug's uncles, owners of *Forfatternes Forlag / ČálliidLágádus* [Authors' Publisher] took great pleasure in publishing their niece's cartoon books which were well accepted among readers. As an insider of the Sami community, Uthaug finally claimed that she can obviously very well play Sami for a fool (Platou, Vialatte, 2014, 21'01"-27'25").

Uthaug's three cartoon books were successively published in Norwegian (Uthaug, 2010, 2011, and 2012), followed by translations in Northern Sami, Southern Sami and Lulesami languages (Uthaug, 2010b, 2011b, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013, 2013b).¹ The high-quality hardcover material of these small, square, monochromatic volumes gives them a serious appearance. Provided with a durable binding and high gloss paper – similar to art collections or art books – the cartoon books exceed the binding of newspapers by far and are, indeed, very different from early cartoons and cartoon strips printed in magazines or on thin newsprint (cf. Gardener, 2015, 241).

With solid hardcovers in signal colors (orange, yellow, and a sarcastic black), they look noble and classic. Each front cover holds a declarative drawing (figure 1). In sum, the high-quality material and the pompous design contradict any newspaper cartoon's transient and ephemeral appearance. Instead, the cartoon books convey a clear message of being a cultural and artistic manifestation. Their significance forces recipients to place the cartoon books as small precious items neatly on well-sorted bookshelves.



(Figure 1, Uthaug 2010, 2011, 2012, book covers)

3. Cartoon Analyses

3.1 Sequentiality – Used to Depict Cultural Disorientation

While comics, as mentioned above, consist of a narrative sequence of pictures, a cartoon is generally defined as a single-panel picture. However, there are numerous exceptions in Uthaug's cartoons which take the form of small sequential "cartoon strips" or "funnies" (cf. Abel, Klein, 2016, 144-146).

¹ Actually, there is a fourth cartoon "history book" (Uthaug 2015, translated Uthaug 2015b, 2016, and 2017) which I do not comment on in this article as it is slightly different in format and style. I gave a presentation on this cartoon "history book" at the University of Regina (Saskatchewan), Canada, in 2018, and have already submitted a paper on it to a peer-reviewed edited volume planned to be published in 2021.

Bare jeg var same på ordentlig.



Jeg er bare en jukse-same, som hverken kan samisk, joike, fiske en laks eller fange en rein.



If only I were a real Sami.

I am just a fake Sami who can neither speak Sami nor yoik [i.e. sing in a traditional way], fish a salmon, hunt a reindeer.

Lurer på hva som ville skje hvis jeg tok på meg áhkku sin samelue?



Hui, så fin jeg ble.
Tør jeg prøve kofte ... ?



I wonder what will happen when I put on my grandmother's samelue [i.e. a traditional Sami hat]?

Wow, I look great.
Will I take a chance and try on the kofte [i.e. traditional Sami clothes]?

... o ... le ... lo ... le ... lo?

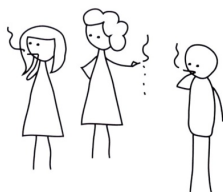


lelooooooooooooo!



... o... le... lo... [traditional singing, yoiking]

Men jeg føler meg fortsatt ikke som riktig same.

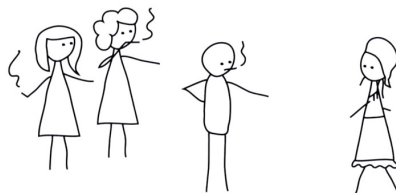


But I continue to not feel like a real Sami.

Jævla lapp!

Samefitt!

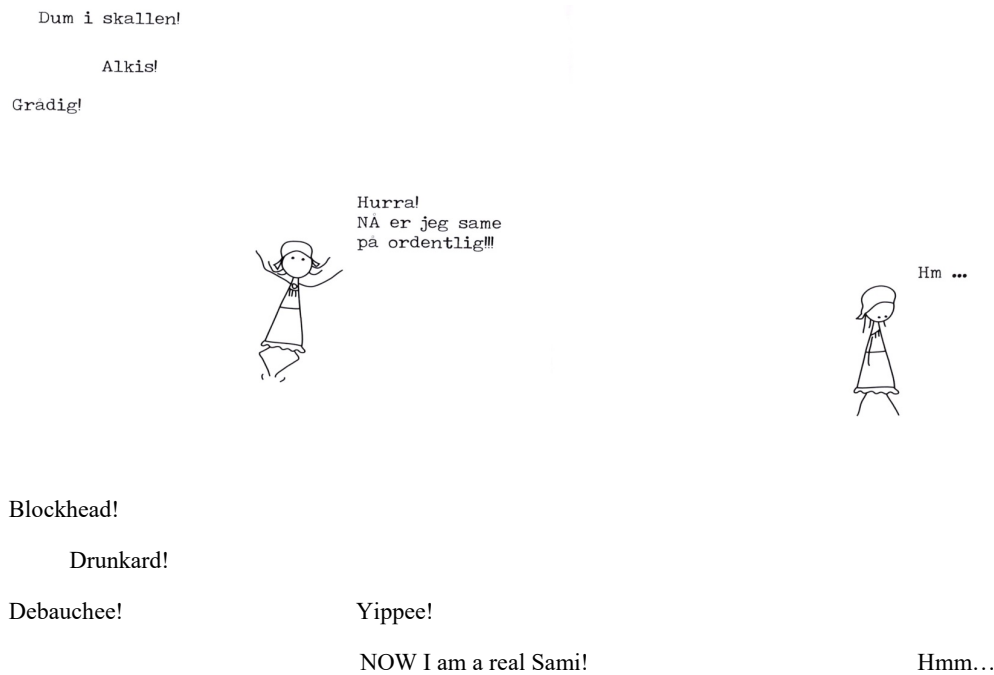
Æsj du stinker!



Damn Lapp!

Sami whore!

Ugh, you are stinking!



(Figure 2, Uthaug 2012,12-21, my translation)

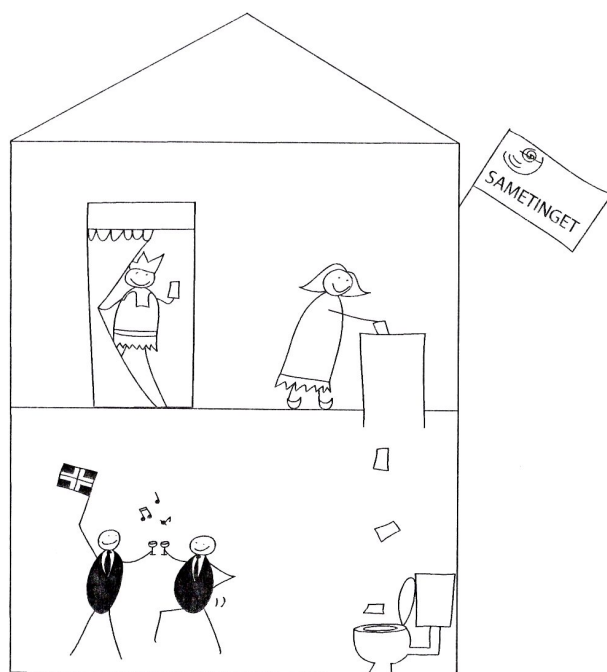
This ten-paneled cartoon (figure 2) postpones the punchline because of sequentiality. As the pictures successively unfold, we see that in the process of claiming one's identity, the Indigenous girl first has to overcome her fear of tradition. She then immerses herself into traditional yoiking. An obviously deep Sami feeling, however, first emerges when she is heavily insulted by Western, non-Sami people. Remarkably, the cartoon has an additional picture after the climax, showing the girl thinking, although she doesn't come up with a final solution of the scene.

Here, sequentiality is used to depict cultural disorientation. The process of claiming one's Indigenous identity is ridiculed as it refers to a disrespectful marginalization rather than to Sami tradition and cultural values.

3.2 Schematization – Used to Depict Systemic Racism (Norwegians)

In drawing abstracted, simplified matchstick-figures, Uthaug makes extensive use of formal schematization, i.e. the cartoon's main stylistic characteristic.

As the following cartoon shows (figure 3), Sami and Norwegians are obviously living in the same house, i.e. at the same piece of land, though on different floors which represent different cultural communities. Placing the Sami on the second floor implies a raised (decolonized) standard of living and a future perspective within a democratic system which recognizes Sametinget, the Sami Parliament.



The Sami Parliament

(Figure 3, Uthaug 2010, 24, my translation)

However, this simplified picture tells the story of post-colonialism in its political scale and reveals the delusiveness of a seemingly great nation-to-nation relationship. Norwegians happily waving the national flag have already prepared for the Sami election to have no impact at all. They regard the ballot paper as faeces. A simple line dividing ground floor and first floor shows the discrepancy of knowledge and clearly indicates inequality. In utmost simplification and schematization, this cartoon criticizes continuing systemic racism.²

3.3 Amplification through Simplification – Used to Depict Colonialism

Despite picturing a simplified reality, a cartoon is capable of involving people (cf. McCloud, 1994, 30). According to McCloud,

cartooning [is] ... a form of amplification through simplification. When we abstract an image through cartooning, we're not so much eliminating details as we are focusing on specific details. By stripping down an image to its essential 'meaning', an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't. ... Simplifying characters and

² On June 20, 2017, Stortinget, The Norwegian Parliament, voted with 53 to 47 for the "Representantforslag om en sannhetskomisjon for fornorskningsspolitikk og urett begått mot det samiske og kvenske folk i Norge" ("Representative's Suggestion on a Truth Commission Regarding the Politics of Norwegianization and Injustices against Sami and Kven People in Norway") which was supported by Sametinget, The Sami Parliament. The suggestion explicitly refers to the Canadian "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as its model (cf. Stortinget 2017 and Sametinget 2017). Read in this current political context, Uthaug's cartoon gets even more provocative as Norwegians now voted themselves for an investigation into their assimilationist policies and political relations to the Sami people. *Sannhets- og forsoningskomisjonen – kommisjonen for å granske fornorskingspolitikk og urett overfor samer, kvener og norskfinner* (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission – The Commission to Investigate the Norwegianisation Policy and Injustice against the Sámi and Kvens/Norwegian Finns) are now conducting their investigations and will report on September 1, 2022 about their findings (cf. Stortinget 2017-2018 and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, n.d.).

images toward a purpose can be an effective tool for storytelling in any medium. Cartooning isn't just a way of drawing, it's a way of seeing!
(McCloud 1994, 30-31, emphases cleared)

Selvfølgelig elsker
Gud også samene!



Men hvorfor sendte han
prestene nordover da?

Of course, God does also
love the Sami!

But why, then, did he send priests
to the North?

(Figure 4, Uthaug 2011, 18, my translation)

Surprisingly, Uthaug tells the whole story of colonization by a stylized drawing showing a priest and a Sami boy (figure 4). Assured by the priest that God, of course, also loves the Sami people, the boy counters with the question, why, then, God sent priests to the North. Amplifying the simple drawing to the colonial and missionary context, the picture provides a decolonizing cartoony turn. In our perception, the clever boy is not nearly as helpless as he seems to be at first.

The more iconic and cartoony a drawing style, the higher its ability to draw the readers' attention to the message rather than to the medium itself. In this case, the suppression of Sami faith by Christian priests is clearly emphasized.

Uthaug's characters do not have intriguing individual biographies but represent the historical experiences of the Sami community. In using de-individualized people who are involved in grotesque situations and merely assigning them with some recognizable features, Uthaug verbal-visualizes collective emotions, inner thoughts, and collective memory. Regarding this, McCloud points out that

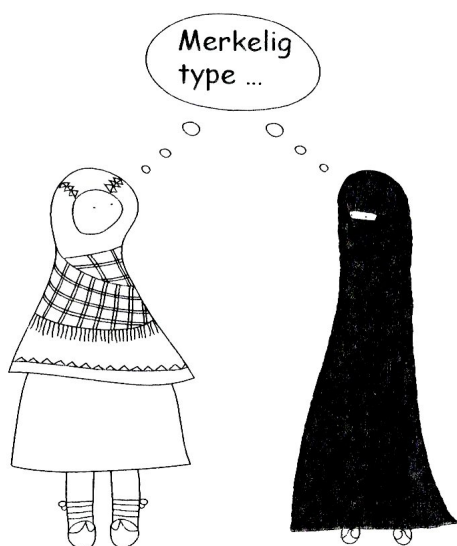
by de-emphasizing the appearance of the physical world in favor of the idea of form, the cartoon places itself in the world of concepts. Through traditional realism, the comics artist can portray the world without [i.e. outside, the physical world] ... and through the cartoon, the world within [i.e. thoughts, ideas].

(McCloud 1994, 41, emphases cleared)

The more abstract and non-realistic the drawing style, the more likely it is to express invisible things. Being rather simple than complex, rather iconic than realistic, rather subjective than objective, and rather universal than specific (cf. McCloud, 1994, 46), the cartooning style is an ideal means of handling complex problems and emotions. This is exactly the magic spot King was talking about in my introductory quotation.

3.4 Verbalizing and Visualizing the Invisible – Used to Depict Racism (Sami and Arab)

In contrast to McCloud's general definition of comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (McCloud, 1994, 9, emphases cleared), Robert C. Harvey focuses on the interaction of words and pictures. Harvey claims "that in the best examples of the art form, words and pictures blend to achieve a [humorous] meaning that neither conveys alone without the other" (Harvey, 2009, 25). This verbal-visual interdependence is vital to modern gag cartooning, as neither the picture nor the words have humorous meaning alone (cf. Harvey, 2009, 26 and 29). The humorous meaning is just discernible in the verbal-visual blend (cf. Harvey, 2009, 38).



Strange guy ...

(Figure 5, Uthaug 2010, 88, my translation)

In this cartoon (figure 5), the loops tied to a single speech balloon indicate a shared thought, a non-verbal agreement between two persons, saying "strange guy". The picture of a Sami woman clothed in a luhkka, i.e. a traditional Sami cape, and a Muslim woman wearing a burka, looking at each other suggests a peaceful intercultural encounter.

However, applying distinctive reading and viewing strategies to the hybrid medium of the cartoon (cf. Heer, Worcester, 2009, XIII) leads to the verbal-visual blend which displays how racism might start with just a suspecting thought about the respective counterpart's strangeness. Ironically, it is exactly this thought that is shared. In addition to that, the cartoon uncovers that also Sami people in spite of having experienced disrespect are inclined to racist thinking. The same, however, seems to go for Arabs. In this cartoon, Uthaug suggests that it is just a common human character trait to be distrustful of strangers.

3.5 Verbalizing and Visualizing the Invisible – Used to Depict Sexual Abuse within Sami Community

As Chute and DeKoven point out, "graphic narrative offers an intricately layered narrative language ... that comprises the verbal, the visual, and the way these two representational modes interact on a page" (cf. Chute, DeKoven, 2006, [767]). It opens up for transmitting multilayered and often thought-provoking information.

Aldri før sett #5:
Kautodamer som forsøker å rette skyld og
skam nye veier.

Never seen before #5:
Women from Kautokeino who try out new perspectives on guilt and
shame.



You know that Mom has been going to therapy for five years now. And this caused me to think that MAYBE it is not your fault that your uncle and your cousin and our old neighbor forced you to have sex with them since you have been 12.

(Figure 6, Uthaug 2012, 97, my translation)

In a series of five cartoons on social issues introduced as exhibits of the fictitious photo exhibition "Never seen before", Uthaug gives a picture of a mother talking to her teenage daughter, the sarcastic headline saying "Women from Kautokeino who try out new perspectives on guilt and shame" (figure 6). Although sexual abuse by friends and family members is known, it is not spoken about, let alone prosecuted.

The fact that a mother needed five years of therapy to draw a tentative conclusion about who might be the culprit in the sexual abuse of her daughter seems to be overdone. At the same time, it refers to a very slow process of healing within Sami communities. Additionally, the cartoon emphasizes that despite her mother's knowing, the daughter did not receive any help. To this completely grotesque social environment King's exclamation "My God, this is horrible" truly applies.

Uthaug does rarely use any speech balloons. The written text is mostly put in or somewhere around the picture, sometimes with a tiny line tied to the person who is speaking. In this cartoon, there is a headline and a picture containing more text than drawing. The verbal content is underlined by the drawing: While the mother poses in a thinking position, the daughter's simplified body language suggests that she is at a loss with the present situation as well as the sexual abuse she is exposed to. She is just waiting for explanations. The text is clearly marked as the mother's speaking.

Hatfield states that learned assumptions about the different codes – written and pictorial – exert a strong centripetal pull on the reading experience. As the tension between the codes is fundamental to the art form, the juxtaposition, blending, or separation of words and pictures is important (cf. Hatfield, 2009, 133, cf. also Mitchell, 2009). In this case, the prominent framing and the informative headline ironically underline the historic moment caught on photo and identify the picture as a remarkable exhibit.

As a highly reflecting, caricatural art form, graphic narratives and cartoons with their verbal-visual blend provide a subversive potential or, as Chute and DeKoven suggest, "the potential to be powerful precisely because they intervene against a culture of invisibility by taking the risk of [visual] representation" (Chute, DeKoven, 2006, 772).

In sum, of the diverse approaches, sequentiality, schematization, amplification through simplification and verbal-visual blend are essential to Uthaug's art, to the achievement of subversive potential, and to the magic spot of humour. The cartoons' significance as a social-historical mirror, as instruments of humorously provoking and criticizing (cf. Heer, Worcester, 2009, XI-XII) gives them a seminal role in the process of and the reflection on decolonization and reconciliation as well as transcultural understanding.

4. What Is Indigenous Humour?

Yet, what is humour from an Indigenous perspective? How does it help people to bear the unbearable, to heal, to survive? Ojibway author and artist Drew Hayden Taylor (Curve Lake First Nation) states that

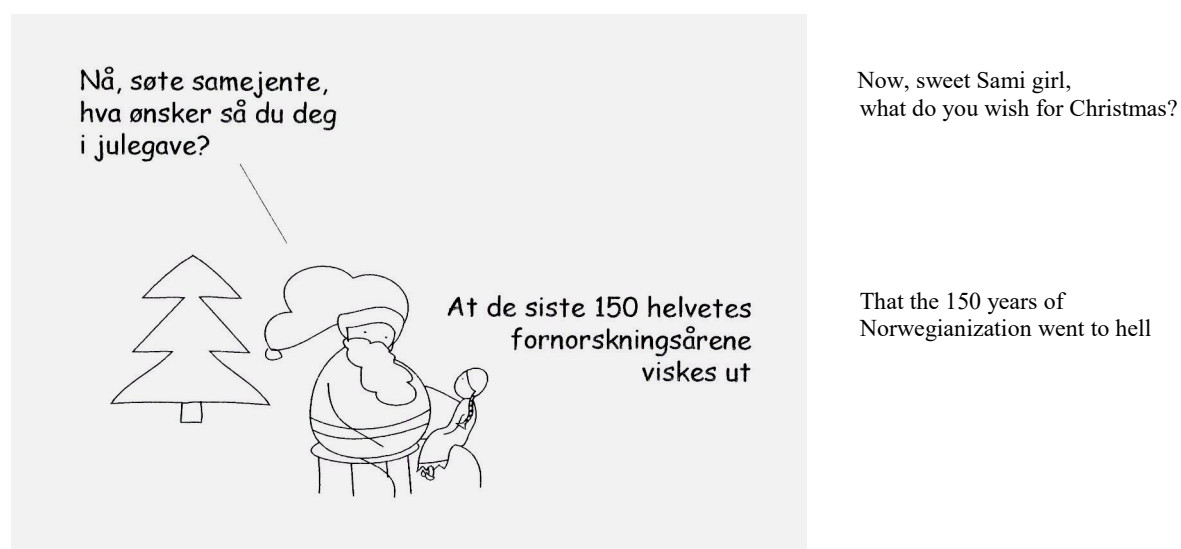
[h]umour requires intelligence. It calls for the ability to take in information, deconstruct it and reconstruct it in a new, improved, refined format. The humorist then reintroduces that information to the world to achieve a completely different reaction. (Taylor, 2005, 3)

4.1 Humour as a Means of Survival – Decolonization

In the tension between de- and reconstruction of information, humour emerges. According to Kristina Fagan (Labrador Métis Nation), "numerous writers and critics have asserted that humour has been the key to Aboriginal communities' survival" (Fagan, 2005, 24-25). She points out some vital functions of humour in Indigenous writers' texts:

Humour can allow the tolerance of disruptive forces, teach social values and enforce social norms. But these functions can have a problematic side, sometimes leaving people feeling excluded or humiliated Thus, Native writers also use humour not only to shore up community but also to complicate and problematize it. (Fagan, 2005, 25)

In a similar way, Uthaug's cartoons, too, exemplify how humour serves as a means of survival for Sami people (cf. also Vine Deloria quoted in Fagan, 2005, 25).



(Figure 7, Uthaug 2010, 94, my translation)

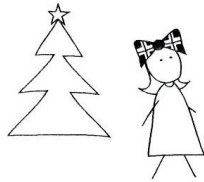
In a seemingly idyllic Christmas scene, a julenisse or Santa is generously offering to fulfill a Sami girl's wish (figure 7). Her reply, however, is ironic and contradictory in a trifold way: First, she uses the swearing "hell", a Christian coined term which represents punishment as well as dark and negative aspects of Christianity. Second, she talks to a julenisse, a character known from Christian folklore. Third, she names 150 years of Norwegianization which she wishes to be erased completely from history. Given that the Sami girl's wish came true, the cartoon borders on the absurd as the encounter of the julenisse and the Sami girl would never have taken place. The cartoon itself would not even exist. Refined and improved, the conveyed information clearly shows that Sami people's dearest wish is caused by Christianity and colonization. At the same time, a Sami's dearest wish is to erase Christianity and colonization from Sami history. In offering the Sami girl the fulfilling of her wish, the julenisse essentially abolishes himself. Or even more pointed: In offering a helping hand to the Sami people, probably meant as an act of reconciliation, but solely based on a colonizer's perspective, the Western system abolishes itself. In spite of the basic information behind the funny thing being appalling, inhumane, or even traumatic, the humour here serves as a means of survival.

Fagan generally identifies provocative and at the same time humorous strategies in First Nations Literature and claims that a character's "... undefeatable comic attitude is an essential model" which obviously also invites recipients to "focus on the ridiculous, avoid anger or sadness, and keep going" (Fagan, 2005, 28, exemplifying with a play). In their self-deprecating way, Uthaug's cartoons speak of the Sami as a sovereign people who have already successfully survived and who are fiercely taking the next step in the decolonizing process which seems to be a paradoxical mixture of critical, confident, and humorous self-reflection right at the magic spot suggested by King.

4.2 Encouragement of Sami Self-reflection – Addiction

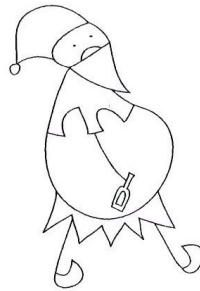
Fagan also puts forward the proposal "that humorous responses to trauma can be understood in terms of traditional Aboriginal ethics around communication" (Fagan, 2009, 204). Claiming the insufficiency of Western psychologic theory on post-traumatic stress disorder – the most recognized model of explaining Aboriginal peoples' contemporary emotional and social problems – and proving the shortcoming of the therapeutic model of narrating unconscious events which caused the trauma, Fagan turns to traditional Indigenous ways of psychological interpretation. In the creative act of storytelling, Indigenous people use humour and narrating as a means of connecting past trauma with the present (Fagan, 2009, 205-206). Following Fagan, I argue that Uthaug's cartoons similarly employ humour to tell Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers alike how to deal with the colonial past. Additionally, by "depicting the complex inner workings of Aboriginal communities" (Fagan, 2005, 24), they encourage Sami people to reflect on themselves.

Kjære samemann, jeg har hørt at julenissen bor her i Lappland, kan du fortelle meg hvor?



Dear Sami man, I heard that Santa lives here in Lappland, please, can you tell me where?

Sikkert på Alfreds kro...



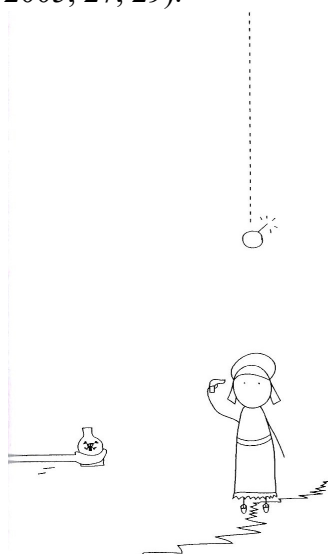
At Alfred's Inn, for sure.

(Figure 8, Uthaug 2010, 57, my translation)

This cartoon again shows a supposed idyllic Christmas scene (figure 8). A little Norwegian girl meets a Santa-like Sami man, asking him where the Scandinavian julenisse (or Santa) can be found. While it is disturbing that the man has a bottle in his hand, it is first and foremost the text which intensifies the strangeness of the scene, referring to the problem of alcoholism and addiction. Strikingly, the Sami julenisse walks away from the girl matter-of-factly, not questioning the existence of Santa, but rather emphasizing that he surely can be found at the local inn. This weird humorous attitude serves as the magic spot and encourages Sami self-reflection on the sensitive issue of addiction among Aboriginal people.

4.3 Coping Humour – Lack of Identity

Fagan argues that humour is – mostly used by Elders laughing at themselves and others – a socially harmonizing act of survival in Indigenous communities, and a mode of getting along, offering a sense of relief and an acceptance of tragic or dangerous situations (cf. Fagan, 2005, 26–27 and Gerald Vizenor quoted in Fagan, 2005, 27). Thereby, she points out accepting and coping humour which is healing in troublesome situations and personal difficulties (Fagan, 2005, 27, 29).



Det er så vanskelig å være same.
Ingen forstår meg.
Ingen hører på meg.
Ingen bryr seg.
Alle har bare tatt.
Mitt språk, min historie, min stolthet, min kultur.
Jeg gråter, dag og natt.
Nå er jeg tom for tårer.
Men jeg gråter stadig.
Tørre tårer uten lyd.
Som brenner seg inn i sjelen min.
Og etser bort det tynne, sarte hudlaget mitt, som ligger som et knust eggshell rundt min hardt utsatte kropp.
Jeg er en rein uten gevir.
En rype uten fjær.
En laks uten elv.

Åh, kjære Gud, gi meg et tegn,
er dette virkelig den eneste løsningen for meg?

It is so difficult to be Sami.
No one does understand me.
No one listens to me.
No one cares.
They all have just taken away.
My language, my history, my pride, my culture.
I am crying night and day.
Now I don't have any more tears.
But I am still crying.
Dry tears without sound.
Which brand my soul.
And etch my thin, tenuous skin which lies like a broken eggshell around my heavily exposed body.
I am a reindeer without antlers.
A snow grouse without feathers.
A salmon without a stream.

Oh, my dear God, give me a sign,
is this really the only solution for me?

(Figure 9, Uthaug 2010, 101, my translation)

Lamenting the loss of cultural and individual identity due to colonialism, this cartoony poem by Uthaug negotiates the sensitive issue of suicide as a solution to an Indigenous person's troubles (figure 9). Alarming enough, an invisible power provides numerous aids to the suicidal person – a bomb falling down, a bottle of poison presented to her, a crack opening exactly beneath her feet – in addition to the gun which she herself directs tightly at her temple. Sarcastically, these aids are presented as the Sami girl asks God for help in the poem's coda.

In the final analysis of this highly provocative cartoon, it is yes, God wants to kill the Sami, and he wants it to be done now rather than later on, willing to assist in performing the deed. Ironically, God is also invoked in Thomas King's above-quoted exclamation "My God, this is horrible". Fagan argues that a comic perspective has its limitations in that it helps to survive in a socially difficult community but does not help to change poor living conditions. However, in her exemplifying textual analysis, she admits that "coping humour ... while not itself a force of change, opens up psychological space for future change to take place" (Fagan, 2005, 29).

Uthaug's cartoons avoid explicit in-depth investigation. Despite this fact, the past always resonates implicitly and at the same time very clearly with the drawings and the text, making the trauma of colonization and its results omnipresent. As Uthaug's cartoons open up for identification and reflection, Fagan's findings on Indigenous humour are clearly applicable: on the one hand, coping and accepting humour, humour as a means of survival, humour teaching self-reflection, socially affirming humour; on the other hand, on a meta-level, humour as a means of critique.

5. Provocative Therapy

As we have seen, Uthaug often uses provocative strategies. How does this further Indigenous healing? Provocative therapy as a psychotherapeutic approach different from client-centered therapy was established by Frank Farrelly in the 1960s and 1970s, based on his daily practical experiences with patients in different mental health institutions in Madison, Wisconsin. Starting with this new method, Farrelly noticed

... that the more passive, receptive, traditional role of the therapist was not for me. I was increasingly unable to listen solely to the patient while ignoring the loud and clear signals from my own viscera. ... I wanted to put into the interview not simply a sensitively empathic understanding of the patient's experiencing, but also to program in the way *other* people experienced him, to give him feedback from whatever source I derived it.

... I realized that I was learning as much, if not more, from people who disagreed with me (because they provoked and stimulated my thinking) as I was from those who supported and agreed with me.

(Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 20, and 25-26, original emphasis)

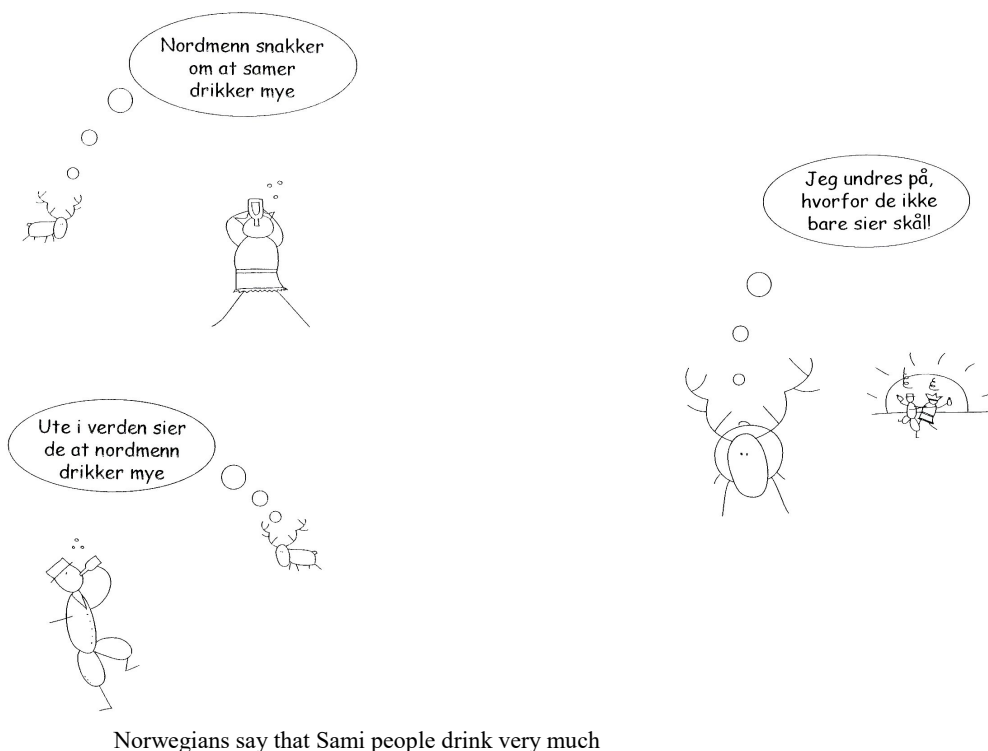
By telling his clients in an " 'emotionally honest' type of therapy" the truth about how he and their fellow patients, as well as family and community members, experienced them, Farrelly was achieving surprisingly positive results (Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 29). Showing empathic but dishonest agreement and understanding of a patient's experiences, however, resulted in belief on the patients' side. In contrast to this, being merciless, direct, open, and honest even about hurting and most personal things provoked the patients' disbelief, indignation, and laughter resulting in noticeable and often lasting behavioral changes (cf Farrelly, Brandsma 1974, 29-31, 41-44, and 56). Farrelly, therefore, succinctly defined provocative therapy as "teasing people into mental health" (Wippich, Derra-Wippich, and Farrelly 1991, 26).

The provocative therapist in a travesty of traditional approaches *over-focuses* on what is wrong with the patient in an effort to provoke the patient's affirming what is right with him.

(Farrelly, Brandsma 1974, 43, original emphasis)

5.1 Accepting Humour

In many of her cartoons, Uthaug does exactly this, i.e. she over-focuses on what is wrong, weird, painful or extreme and sheds light on the opposite, emphasizing what is right by not naming it directly.



Norwegians say that Sami people drink very much

In the rest of the world, they say that Norwegians drink very much

I wonder why they don't just say "Cheers"!

(Figure 10, Uthaug 2010, 68-69, my translation)

The weirdness of prejudice and racism is revealed by showing that they are just a matter of perspective (figure 10). For the rest of the world Norwegians are heavy drinkers, while Norwegians don't blame themselves, but point out Sami people as chronic alcoholics. In addition, Uthaug chooses a cartoony reindeer as a neutral non-human character and "spokesperson" for the cartoony truth: Why don't the two opponents just drink together?

As Terry Tafoya (Taos Pueblo) pointed out, Farrelly's way of directly naming unpleasant, shocking, and threatening feelings and, thereby, teasing people into health is much in line with what the Chiffoneti does to people. In the Tiwa language of the Taos Pueblo Indians, the term Chiffoneti is used for the traditional "medicine man", "a fascinating blend of priest, healer, and trickster" (Tafoya in Wippich, Derra-Wippich, and Farrelly, 1991, 8). A Chiffoneti's role is,

indeed, similar to the role of the therapist described by Farrelly. For "teasing into health" to be a successful endeavor rather than a fierce battle, aside from honesty, responsibility, and accountability, humour, and humorous self-reflection is needed.

In terms of therapist behaviors what distinguishes provocative therapy from other approaches is its degree of directness and use of confrontation, its contradictory and equivocal communicational style, its systematic use of both verbal and non-verbal cues, and the eschewing of professional dignity and deliberate use of humor and clowning.

(Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 56)

These aspects not only fit provocative therapy but also are inherent features of Uthaug's cartooning. Read in a social and political context, her cartoons fulfill a provoking role as well, the cartoonist being the "Devil's Advocate" which Farrelly claims to be "[t]he single most succinct label for the role of the provocative therapist" (Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 57).

Therefore, the role of the cartoonist, the Chiffoneti, and the provocative therapist show obvious parallels. To prove this statement, one will substitute the word "therapist" for "cartoonist" (or for "Chiffoneti" and for "Uthaug" as well as the female pronoun, for that matter) and "client" for "recipient" in Farrelly's following expression:

The therapist [cartoonist] attempts to verbalize all the taboo things that people cannot say in our culture to one another; he endeavors to *express the unutterable, feel the unfeeleable, and think the unthinkable* with the client [recipient] He [i.e. the therapist/cartoonist] "takes over" rationalizations, excuses, and cop outs by expanding them ironically and "plausibly" (a *reductio ad absurdum*). Attitudes are lampooned and burlesqued – while continually agreeing with them and presenting them in a "positive" context.

(Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 58-59, original emphases)

If one broadens the meaning of the word "verbalize" to "verbal-visualize", one gets a description perfectly fitting the relationship between cartoonists and their readers.

6. Conclusion

According to Farrelly, the purpose of humour is " 'blowing the mind', increasing awareness and leading to at least momentary uncertainty in the person experiencing the incongruous juxtaposition or humor in a joke" (Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 97). He also claims that "a sense of humor toward one's self is an important part of a definition of maturity" (Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 114) and his goal is to irritate, as

[u]ncertainty can be very beneficial when it causes a person to examine his behavior, attitude, or construct of reality more carefully or from a different vantage point. In therapy, this occurs functionally as a confrontation when the patient realizes that he is both the listener and butt of a joke that has personal relevance.

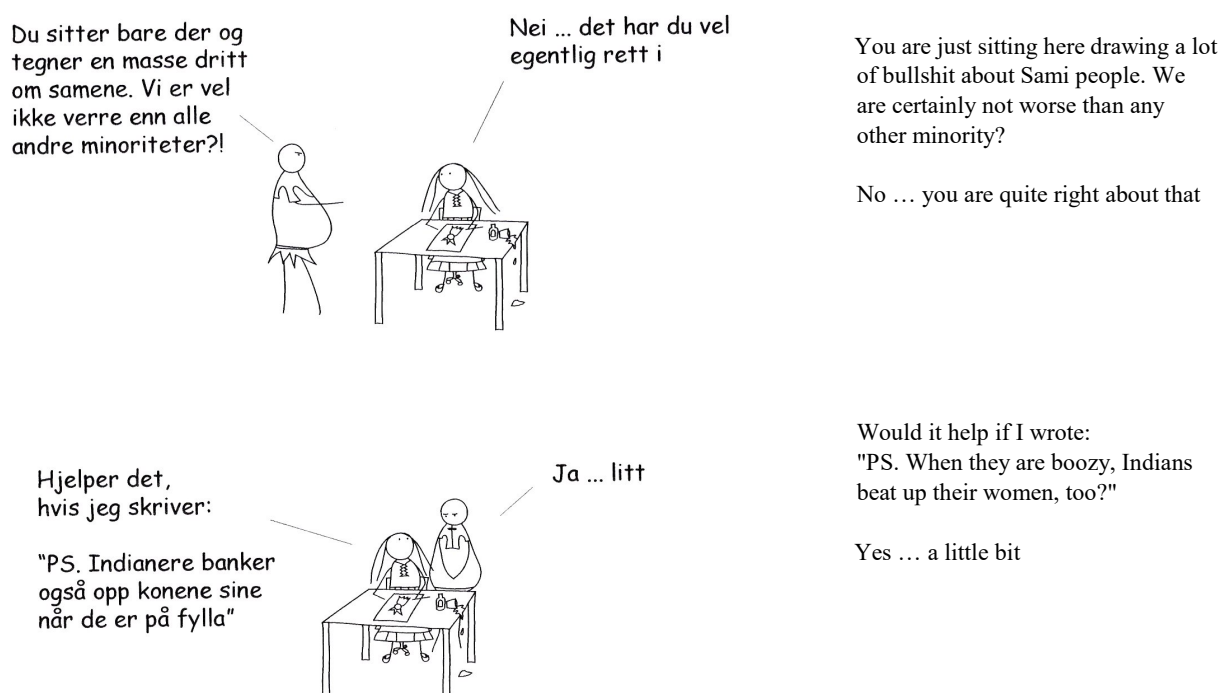
(Farrelly, Brandsma, 1974, 97)

This is exactly what Uthaug does in her cartoons. What is more, she uses her own intercultural identity. Being an insider in Sami, Norwegian, and Danish community, Uthaug is predestined for the role of a provocative intermediary.

Employed in the current process of decolonization and reconciliation, provoking helps to provide a different perspective. This allows Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike to

gather around an unchangeable history and enables to directly naming mutual feelings of hatred, fear, and shame in order to be each others' therapists and healers. While Indigenous people try to heal from the trauma of colonization, non-Indigenous people should try to heal from their applying racist, inhumane and exploitative concepts as this, of course, is inappropriate behavior, too.

As an artist, Uthaug plays a pivotal role in the current process of Sami decolonization and reconciliation. In my view, she acts as a Chiffoneti, a kind of trickster, healer, and teasing therapist. In provocatively addressing highly sensitive issues, she does not exclude herself from the humorous and self-reflective process, either. Displaying a seemingly charming naïveté, she tries out self-reflexive cartooning à la "Maren Uthaug on Maren Uthaug" (figure 11). In a cartoony allusion, she also opens up a comparative, transatlantic perspective on North America and Scandinavia, respecting the common struggles of Indigenous peoples as well as the similarity in humour:



(Figure 11, Uthaug 2010, 139, my translation)

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