

Bodies in Transition: Somatechnics and the Experimental Art of Liselotte Wajstedt's

*Sámi Nieida Jojk (Sámi Daughter Yoik, 2007)*

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### **Biography**

Kate Moffat is a PhD candidate at the University of Stirling where her research focuses on race and ethnicity in contemporary Nordic film culture. Her interests also extend to the film practices of the Indigenous Sámi people. She has published work on both areas in Finnish and English in journals such as *Lähikuva* and the *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*.

## **Abstract**

Swedish-Sámi filmmaker and artist Liselotte Wajstedt and her experimental road movie documentary *Sámi Nieida Jojk* (*Sámi Daughter Yoik*, 2007) provide unique insight into displaced Indigenous identity. To explore her mother's repressed Sámi ancestry, Wajstedt uses an eclectic mix of techniques, including animation, collage illustrations, photographs, and superimposition. Throughout the film, Wajstedt uses her body as a physical canvas, projecting images of her autobiographical journey onto herself. These methods contribute to a sense of metamorphosis, where the filmmaker plays with and challenges conventional Sámi representations through film form. I propose that *somatechnics*, a concept that describes a reciprocal relationship between the body and technology, provides a helpful way of understanding Wajstedt's work. I argue that cinema can work as a somatechnic tool that can help unpack the Indigenous body as a symbol of cultural, geopolitical, and ethnic identity politics. I also explore *Sámi Daughter Yoik* as a nomadic film, arguing that the somatechnic potential of cinema is most evident when themes of space, transition, and the body converge to create a more fluid understanding of Sámi identity onscreen.

## **Keywords**

Sámi cinema, somatechnics, Indigenous cinema, nomadic cinema, road movie, visual sovereignty

# **Bodies in Transition: Somatechnics and the Experimental Art of Liselotte Wajstedt's *Sámi Nieida Jojk* (*Sámi Daughter Yoik*, 2007)**

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## **Introduction: Emerging Voices, Universal Aspirations**

The Sámi people live in the northernmost parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia in an area collectively known as Sápmi. As Indigenous peoples, the Sámi have been, and still are, subjected to many forms of social, cultural, and political colonisation at the hands of the ruling host nations.<sup>1</sup> Responding to these restrictions, organisations such as the International Sámi Film Institute (ISFI) have emerged over the last several decades, supporting rapidly expanding Sámi audiovisual cultural production in which themes of sovereignty and cultural authenticity play a central role.<sup>2</sup> Liselotte Wajstedt is an emerging Swedish-Sámi filmmaker and artist whose work makes important contributions to Sámi identity politics through experimental documentary and visual art. Wajstedt was born and raised in the Sápmi mining town of Kiruna, where Sweden's long-standing assimilationist policies limited her exposure to the Sámi cultures and languages. This article analyses the use of technology, bodies, techniques, and film form in Wajstedt's first, feature-length, experimental documentary *Sámi Nieida Jojk* (*Sámi Daughter Yoik*, 2007). Here, I use the concept of somatechnics to unravel the way Indigenous bodies and technologies intermingle, and how this intermingling plays out through techniques of "representational sovereignty" (Wilson, 2016) and a "nomadic gaze" (Braidotti, 1994). Building on Cheryl Fish's (2017) and Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport's (2016) analyses of Wajstedt's work, I argue that *Sámi Daughter Yoik* uses place, space, and the body to break down conventional hegemonic binaries between Sámi and non-Sámi.

### **Somatechnics and *Sámi Nieida Jojk (Sámi Daughter Yoik, 2007)***

*Sámi Daughter Yoik* was co-produced by Stockholm-based LittleBig Productions and Film pool Nord with funding from national public broadcaster SVT (Sweden's Television), the Swedish Film Institute, and the Artist's Council. It premiered at the 2007 ImagineNATIVE<sup>3</sup> film festival in Canada and is now streamed through digital distribution platforms like Movieboosters. Shot over six months, the documentary follows Wajstedt's journey from her home in Stockholm to Kiruna, where she attempts to connect with the elusive notion of what it means to be a Sámi. She takes Sámi language classes and documents her own frustrated attempts to overcome each linguistic hurdle. The narrative is broken up with a patchwork of experimental animated sequences and abstract imagery.

Wajstedt also attempts to feel closer to her Sámi roots by having a kolt, or Sámi outfit (known as a gákti in the Northern Sámi language), made for herself. She faces resistance from the seamstress when she tries to have the kolt made in a non-traditional colour. We see Wajstedt wrapping herself in various fabrics, eventually settling for the traditional blue with red braided trim. Wajstedt's use of the kolt, a key symbol of cultural identification, initially backfires. In series of video diary entries, she expresses feelings of fraud, as though simply physically dressing in authentic clothing is nothing more than a staged performance. A somatechnic approach helps us better understand the intersections between Wajstedt body, her identity as a filmmaker, and the film's experimental techniques.

The concept of somatechnics, developed by cultural theorists Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker in 2004 (Pugliese and Stryker 2009:1), examines the relationship between bodies (*soma*) and techniques or technology (*techné*). Media scholar Nikki Sullivan describes how technés 'are techniques and/or orientations (ways of seeing, knowing, feeling, moving, being, acting and so on)' (2012: 302). For these scholars, bodies and technés are not simply stand-alone elements. Bodies are not only reflected by technés, nor are technés applied to existing

bodies; they shape and reshape each other in a continuous process of redefinition. As cultural scholar Goldie Osuri states, ‘somatechnics has to do with the manner in which bodies are constituted through technologies of knowledge production (e.g. writing/mapping, reading and representation), it is simultaneously the techniques that have material effects on embodiment’ (Osuri 2009: 36). She refers to this process as ‘normative somatechnics’ (2009: 31-14), where the dominant powers use technology to assert hegemonic and ideological control over how bodies are represented.

In the fields of critical race and whiteness studies, scholars have adopted somatechnics as a way of exploring how Indigenous and non-white bodies are defined by and represented through various technological means. These investigations reveal specific types of somatechnic relationships, where power is sustained through technological control over the characterisation of Indigenous people. In the context of race, cultural studies scholar Elaine Laforteza describes how ‘somatechnics is revealed as the means through which everyday belonging to the world becomes constituted’ (2015:5). Placing Indigenous bodies in a somatechnic context has implications when we consider the Nordic countries’ colonial history, where the coloniser manages, controls, and redefines Indigenous bodies through different technics. As Indigenous studies scholar Daniel Heath Justice states, ‘The indigenous body is more than flesh, blood and bone [...] Native bodies are sites of both colonised conflict and passionate decolonization’ (Justice 2008: 161). I now turn to the somatechnic significance of the Sámi body as a cultural subject.

### **Bodies and Technologies: Somatechnics and Sámi Indigeneity**

The cultural drive to reclaim the Sámi body from the colonisers grew in response to ventures like Sweden’s State Institute for Racial Biology, established in 1922. During this period, the

Sámi body became an object of fascination for Swedish and international eugenics researchers. The Institute used this pseudo-science to constitute the Sámi body as part of an ‘academic’ corpus of ‘knowledge’ that reinforced the perception of their genetic inferiority (Gustafsson 2014: 185). This is a somatechnic example in which the technologies of knowledge production contributed to the oppression of the Sámi. Although the attitudes upheld by the Institute are now widely condemned, the subject of the Sámi body remains a key theme in the contemporary political and cultural landscape.

As Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan have argued, the medium of cinema also shapes bodies, both literally and figuratively, through editing and framing (2009: 49-65). Consequently, we must also consider the work of audiovisual media as a somatechnic process shaping the literal and figurative embodiment of the Sámi. Recent television shows like the Swedish-French noir *Midnattssol* (*Midnight Sun*, 2015-), which is also set in Kiruna, leans heavily on exotic depictions of the Sámi, where contemporary Sámi bodies are reduced to essentialized symbols through traditional forms of clothing and ways of life. At the same time, Sámi-led productions like Amanda Kernell’s *Sameblod* (*Sámi Blood*, 2016) prompt questions over the historical position and cultural role of the Sámi body by contextualising the role of Sweden’s Racial Biology Institute in controlling and managing the Sámi body. If we are to understand the connection between somatechnics and *Sámi Daughter Yoik* as an experimental documentary about displaced Sámi identity, we must briefly look at how cinema, as a somatechnic process, has depicted the Sámi in both fiction and documentary.

### **Reconstituting the Sámi Body in Sámi cinema**

When we consider somatechnics as a form of constituted belonging, as Osuri claims, by using the camera to reconcile connections between the Sámi body and the land Sámi filmmakers

engage in a somatechnic practice aimed at reclaiming control the natural environment. By strategically reinforcing symbolic connections between the landscape and the Sámi body, Sámi filmmakers continue to challenge the Racial Biological Institute's constitution of the Sámi body as an artefact. As a source of economic history, political negotiation, and sovereignty, the landscape is a critical part of Sámi cultural identity. In Sámi cinema, landscapes and locations are often used symbolically as a marker of belonging in the face of colonial repression, especially as Sámi culture is not 'protected by strong and clear borders' (Lehtola 2005: 9). In some films, spiritual and physical connections to the landscape occur *through* the Sámi body. For example, the body and the landscape are both literally and figuratively intertwined in Siljá Somby's short film *Áile ja Áhkku (Áile And Her Grandmother, 2015)*<sup>4</sup>, which explores the subject of menstruation. Here, a teenage girl's transition to womanhood is spiritually personified by her wise Sámi grandmother, who uses water from the river and plants from the forest to remedy her discomfort. Simultaneously, however, she also passes on a legacy of divine knowledge about the connection between the Sámi and the power of the natural environment.

In addition to examples representing a mystical constitution of the Sámi body through the land, other films have explored historical connections. Two notable resistance movements in Norway, a revolt against Sámi oppression in the Norwegian municipality of Kautokeino in 1952, and a protest over the construction of the Alta Dam in Finnmark in the 1980s, appear in the work of Sámi filmmakers like Paul-Anders Simma and Nils Gaup. Both directors use these historical events to reconcile the Sámi body with the landscape, drawing parallels between the violation of the land and the dismemberment of the Sámi body. The Alta Dam confrontation ignited a wave of Sámi activism, placing sovereignty at the heart of the agenda. Following Alta, key milestones like the establishment of a Sámi Parliament in Norway,

increased legal awareness of resource exploitation in Sápmi, and funding for organisations like the ISFI have helped to promote and enshrine Sámi self-determination in law.

Simma's *Give Us Back Our Skeletons!* (1999) and Gaup's *The Kautokeino Rebellion* (2008) dramatize a much earlier Sámi revolt in Kautokeino in 1852, and the public execution of two of the resistance fighters, Mons Aslaksen Somby and Aslak Jakobsen Hætta. The Sámi body as a physical object plays an integral role in Simma's documentary as he explores the ancestral roots of contemporary Sámi rights activist Niilas Somby, who is both a direct descendant of Mons Somby and participant in the Alta confrontation, where he lost a hand and an eye when the struggle turned violent. Simma follows Somby as he attempts to persuade a Norwegian medical institution to release Somby and Hætta's heads, where they were being preserved, and return them to the Sámi people. Feminist scholar Wendy Gay Pearson states how 'the treatment of the beheaded men's heads was also a function of a general European colonial zeitgeist that saw indigenous people as barely human' (Pearson 2016: 378). Here, the Sámi body features prominently from both a corporeal and a figurative perspective, chiefly because the return of the heads is a deeply symbolic act, gesturing towards the sacrifices made in the name of Sámi sovereignty.

The cinematic reconstitution of the body also arises in Sámi fiction cinema. Film scholar Gunnar Iversen (2005: 261-279) observes how Gaup's *Pathfinder (Ofelas, 1987)* successfully combines internationally recognisable genre conventions from the western film with Sámi legend by drawing on perceived physical and spiritual connections between the Sámi and nature. Gaup emphasises a timeless sense of communal closeness between body and land. However, media scholar Pietari Kääpä (2014) questions the phantasmatic qualities of the film's narrative premise and the visual representation of Sápmi as a home to eternal mythology and wisdom. Kääpä discusses the pitfalls of such an approach, stating how 'the



emphasis on exoticism and myth plays into the politics of othering, enabling the construction of the Sámi as different from the hegemonic norm' (Kääpä 2014: 166).

### **Somatechnics and Representational Sovereignty in *Sámi Daughter Yoik***

How, then, does somatechnics contribute to our understanding of Wajstedt's documentary? *Sámi Daughter Yoik* is an important case for a somatechnic exploration because the film involves ways of being, where Wajstedt's sense of belonging is constituted through abstracted and distorted audio-visuals, and where Sápmi landscapes are presented in distinctly unromanticised ways. While Wajstedt emphasises the physical and metaphorical idea of the Sámi body, she takes this ownership of Sáminess in a different, more open-ended way than many of her contemporaries. Her work is not simply about reclaiming specific images once used to deride the Sámi; it is about re-imagining what Sáminess can represent altogether. Through its use of experimental techniques, I understand the somatechnics of Wajstedt's work as positive cinematic play with the form and representation of the body using both her own physical form and symbolically through the landscapes. This playful experimentation is significant precisely because it does not conform to iconic Sámi imagery evident in both Nordic and Sámi cinema, but rather re-imagines and re-interprets the fixed core of these representations.

Wajstedt's somatechnic intervention moves away from both the kind of somatechnic approaches evident in mainstream culture and from the work of Sámi filmmakers like Gaup, where elements of Sámi exotica continue to pervade visual and political representation. Her work also differs from the more conventional documentaries about Sámi life and politics like Katja Gauriloff's *Huuto tuuleen (A Shout into the Wind, 2007)*, which explores the effect of local bureaucracy on Sámi rights activism and Hannu Hyvönen's *Viimeinen joiku*

*Saamenmaan metsissä?* (*Last Yoik in Sámiland?*, 2006), documenting the encroachment of Finnish paper pulp manufacturer Stora Enso on Sámi conservation efforts.

In contrast, Wajstedt animates family photographs using basic stop-start animation techniques, particularly ones of her Sámi mother as an adolescent in the 1960s. These images appear to come alive through the pages of the photo album. Here, the animation is used playfully to fill in the gaps of her family's story, particularly her mother's Sámi past, which is shrouded in mystery for Wajstedt. These formally experimental glimpses into her family folklore evoke her desire to experience Sáminess through her mother, who, when interviewed by Wajstedt, expresses concern with her daughter's burgeoning interest in Sámi culture because of the discrimination she faced as a teenager. Alongside these sequences, there is raw, handheld video footage, which is often jarring. The unpredictable movement at times creates a kind of motion sickness.

Although rare, animation has appeared elsewhere in Sámi cinema, particularly as an alternative way of representing historical events. Pietari Kääpä argues that the rudimentary animation techniques in *Give Us Back Our Skeletons!* 'provide an exemplary case of visual sovereignty, a notion based entirely on its heightened difference to conventionalised norms' (2015:53). Similarly, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, a Blackfoot/Sámi filmmaker,<sup>5</sup> also uses experimental documentary techniques to challenge conventionalised norms and explore gaps in her family's history in her short film *Bihittoš* (*Rebel*, 2014). Norwegian filmmaker and journalist Ellen Astri-Lundby likewise uses animation and vintage photographs to explore her mother's Sámi past in her 2009 documentary *Min Mors Hemmelighet* (*Suddenly Sámi*).

However, I argue that Wajstedt goes further in challenging conventionalised norms. Wajstedt's collage effects, first-person narrative structure, and strategic use of transitional locations like train stations and bus depots contribute to our understanding of her excluded position in both Swedish and Sámi society. Her editing techniques often leave images

incomplete and undefined and work to distort and disrupt any sense of linear narrative. Cheryl Fish argues that in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, Wajstedt is ‘both participant and observer, questioning her role as a storyteller too, creating an epistemology of uncertainty with which a viewer may engage. Identity can never be taken for granted or easily assumed and is partial or ambivalent’ (Fish 2017: 239).

Ambivalence and uncertainty are also evident on a narrative level. Wajstedt incorporates iconic themes connected to Sámi identity into her film but edits them in ways that disrupt and distort both the audiences’ and her own identification with such themes. For example, during her visit to Kiruna, Wajstedt films members of her extended family engaging in traditional reindeer herding. Although only ten percent of the Sámi economy is based the practice today (Scheffy 2004: 43), reindeer herding is frequently used in cinematic representations of the Sámi, where it is often romanticised. However, Wajstedt does not shoot the herding scenes from a romanticising point of view. Instead, she cuts and edits the shots to emphasise the panicked animals running *en masse* at high speed. The sequence is repetitive and disorientating and accompanied by non-diegetic, high-pitched, screeching noises. A reindeer is then caught and slaughtered. Wajstedt emphasises the visceral aftermath of the skinned and dismembered carcass as it is hoisted and suspended in the air. Wajstedt’s father then dries the reindeer meat—a traditional delicacy that she once enjoyed. As she films these scenes, we learn that Wajstedt is now a committed vegetarian, another fact that further emphasises her cultural distance from her childhood in Sápmi.

Given the marginal politics evident on both narrative and stylistic levels, it is worth considering how Wajstedt contributes to Sámi sovereignty. Indigenous scholar Michelle Raheja has developed the concept of ‘visual sovereignty’ to describe one way that Indigenous peoples have sought to assert control over images of indigeneity perpetuated in mainstream popular culture (Raheja 2010: 194). Visual sovereignty is thus an ‘act of controlling the

camera' and 'where there is evidence of 'cinematic styles that privilege Native heritage, voice, aesthetics, and audience' (Marubbio and Buffalohead 2013:18). Indigenous media scholar Pamela Wilson extends Raheja's concept, claiming that the focus on the visual neglects other elements like sound and narrative structure (2016: 87-105). Instead, she uses the term 'representational sovereignty.'

Representational sovereignty allows us to account for the other elements of Wajstedt's film, particularly the audio qualities. As Fish notes (2017: 247), Wajstedt herself refers to her film as a form of joik. Joiking is described by music scholar Thomas Hilder as 'a distinct unaccompanied [Sámi] vocal tradition formally linked to shamanistic rituals' (2017: 178). Joiking as an art form has contributed to the adaptation and revitalisation of oral traditions in Sámi culture. It also serves a political purpose tied to Indigenous identities in transition. According to Hilder, the adaptability of joiking allows for the continuous reinterpretation of Sámi identities in the face of colonial oppression. It also helps to bridge gaps between historical events and the present (2017:178). Joiks are thus associated with the creation of something new (2017: 187). In Wajstedt's film, joiking is heard during scenes where she visits pilgrim sites and locations associated with Sámi legend. She treats these sites with the same reverence as her mother and, in keeping with respect for tradition, Wajstedt chooses not to film some of the locations. In interpreting her film as a joik and symbolically adopting the identity of the joiker, Wajstedt continues to push the boundaries of perception and genre.

### **Memory Mapping and Textured Bodies**

In *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, Wajstedt maps and superimposes images of her own body over various rural and urban landscapes, which are rendered through collage and other forms of mixed media. The film's abstract imagery manifests in extreme close-ups, framing and

isolating the edges of buildings or other structures. These images are edited together like a moving scrapbook. There are sudden cuts between different mediums where images of the landscapes fade away only to be replaced by charcoal impressions of the open countryside. Sometimes images are unclear or appear too quickly to identify properly. These textures are most evident in scenes where Wajstedt explores various representations of the landscape and her body. Wajstedt superimposes images of her own body over images of different landscapes, including the still images of Stockholm's skyscrapers and tower blocks where she begins her journey. These images are slanted, off-kilter, or are only partially visible. In an example of her multiple overlaying techniques, hand-drawn images of two birds appear on her chest and proceed to fly away. The film exploits the metaphorical migratory connotations of these animals, and they continue to appear intermittently throughout, superimposed over various rural landscapes and other animated sequences. These formal techniques create what media scholar Laura U. Marks has called a 'haptic visuality' (2000: 191). In cinema, haptic visuality deliberately distorts the field of vision, often leaving the viewer more open to interpret images for themselves. For Marks, haptic visuality is more about what is not seen.

Wajstedt also uses rudimentary, childlike drawings of maps superimposed onto other images. These images literally and figuratively map out her various destinations across Sápmi.<sup>6</sup> For literature and film theorist Tom Conley (2007), mapping turns locations and places into 'critical spaces' (212) where maps 'destabilize the field of their images' (209). Wajstedt's body of work is all about mapping, which allows her to explore her own subject position geographically and to transplant memories from her mother's childhood into her work. Re-mapping real and imagined places allows Wajstedt to effectively challenge conventional conceptualisations of space and her relationship with it. Through animation, these memories cross over generations and resonate with a new significance in the present. Film scholars Anna Westerståhl Stenport and Scott Mackenzie highlight the significance of

this transcultural memory work across Wajstedt's wide-ranging portfolio. For them, *Sámi Daughter Yoik*'s dramatic aesthetic shift away from other Sámi-focused documentaries builds 'the tension necessary for complex and heterogeneous historiography and memory work' (Mackenzie and Stenport 2016: 177). The memory work in *Sámi Daughter Yoik* suggests that individual life stories rarely coincide with normative attempts to capture or position memories in a hegemonic framework.

### **Towards a Nomadic Cinema**

Cheryl Fish has described Wajstedt's fluid relationship to space and place as a form of 'mobile subjectivity':

Wajstedt's subjectivity depends on geopolitical location, state of mind, and sense of abjection. In this film, the protagonist's perspective is relative to insider/outsider status, location within/without Sami territory, and the set of beliefs that indicate a Sami or Swedish woman's ways of being (Fish 2017: 240)

Wajstedt's mobility reflects her position as a liminal being, someone essentially excluded from two cultures. However, she also uses this liminality to construct a sense of hybridity, an emergent identity not confined to expected notions of Otherness or conversion to hegemonic structures. This emergent identity is created through somatechnic processes that position her cinematic body as neither part of a self-essentializing Sámi representation nor a subordinate Other imagined by the Nordic states. Her approach moves away from conventional ideas of "authentic" Sámi identity, fixed and immortalised by certain traditions, that appear in both Nordic and Sámi cinema. Rather than adhering to the fidelity of romantic Sámi imagery evident in Gaup's work, Wajstedt's use of experimental adaptation allows *Sámi Daughter*

*Yoik* to contribute to the resilience of indigenous audiovisual culture as a malleable art form resistant to the imposition of fixed or reductive cultural ideas and stereotypes.

We can extend Fish's notion of mobile subjectivity by examining how Wajstedt's somatechnically constituted ways of being manifest through what feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti calls a 'nomadic gaze.' Braidotti argues that the nomadic gaze 'expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity' (1994: 22). Film scholar Phil Powrie claims that the films of Belgium-French director Agnès Varda manifest this nomadic gaze through a road movie format and strategic use of 'travelling shots' (2011: 68). According to Powrie, Varda's technique of 'bringing together travel, painting, the artistic recycling of objects, the past, autobiography and the body' (2011:68-82) allows the filmmaker's 'nomadic gaze' to centralise transformation rather than the literal or figurative idea of a journey.

The nomadic gaze takes on another significance in the context of Indigenous politics where the fight for representational sovereignty continues. The liminal spaces of Wajstedt's disjointed imagery, cut and edited like a scrapbook, displace landscapes and bodies. These technés contribute to a sense of nomadism where there is no singular place of identification, and where large parts of the film play out on the road. Therefore, while Wajstedt's film may struggle to offer artistically "sovereign" content and aesthetics, it is not tied so tightly to land claims in the ways other Indigenous cinema sometimes is.

French anthropologist Marc Augé's concept of 'non-place' helps explain the significance of Wajstedt's nomadic gaze in this film. Augé describes the generic locations that bridge the gaps between our everyday lives and activities, particularly those utilitarian spaces without distinguishing features such as train stations and airports (1995). However, these spaces also speak of transition and change. According to Augé, the generic-ness of these locations and their general lack of character mean that we largely cannot identify with them as 'places.' As

a road movie, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* repeatedly represents these transitional, in-between spaces. Although the film captures a journey from Stockholm to Kiruna, large parts of *Sámi Daughter Yoik* are edited together using raw hand-held camerawork from inside trains, buses, and other forms of transport. She captures the anonymity of the open roads that evoke the generic conditions of non-place. The shots of the underwhelming and everyday landscapes are stripped of the romantic qualities typical of the sweeping landscapes of Gaup's pioneering Sámi films. *Sámi Daughter Yoik* shares this de-romanticizing approach with *Bázo* (Lars-Göran Pettersson, 2003), a fictional Sámi road movie. Like *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, *Bázo* fragments and distorts images of the landscape shot from car windows and on the open road.

In Wajstedt's film, these types of transitional landscapes are where the director's sense of Sáminess develops. The moving journal effect of Wajstedt's animated collages and playful reimagining of her family history contribute to a sense of non-place. Wandering nomadically between these real and imagined spaces and non-places, Wajstedt creates a world we can identify with without having to assimilate. There are no definitive characteristics of a spiritual or physical Sámi identity, each marker she plays with—the costume, the language—fail to live up to her expectations. Instead, Wajstedt uses non-places to represent and come to terms with her position trapped in-between both Sámi and Swedish culture.

## Conclusion

As a somatechnic process, cinema plays a key role in shaping the Sámi body onscreen. *Sámi Daughter Yoik* is a somatechnic process that devises and sews patchworked images, part real, part imagined, together through a range of experimental technés. As well as intersplicing her body into the film, where it becomes one of the many textures and forms of representation, Wajstedt positions herself in various transitional spaces and non-places. She rejects the



politics of strategic essentialism, where minority groups play up their own brand of essentialism to create an imagined and homogenised sense of identity. Wajstedt's experimental audio-visual techniques create a form of representational sovereignty that refuses the normative incorporation of Sámi bodies into the 'body' of the nation as an external Other. Wajstedt's wandering camera creates a sense of nomadism shaped by her alienation from representations of "authentic" Sáminess commonplace in Sámi films and by the anti-Sámi prejudice evident among Swedes. This nomadic gaze contrasts with the romanticised vision of traditional Sámi nomadism tied to reindeer herding. Wajstedt's claim to representational sovereignty is thus based on a conceptually nomadic approach to Sámi culture where her identity is becoming, unfixed, and in transition.

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<sup>1</sup> More recently, these conflicts have centred on Sápmi's rich natural resource base, which has attracted national and international interest from parties looking to exploit such means (Abram 2016: 70)

<sup>2</sup> The ISFI funding policies have generated controversy based on their restrictive language requirements. Films produced in the Sámi languages take priority, and critics have emphasised the exclusionary effects on Sámi filmmakers who don't have the necessary language skills (see Mecsei 2015 and Moffat 2017).

<sup>3</sup> ImagineNATIVE is the world's largest indigenous film and arts festival held annually in Toronto. More information on *Sámi Daughter Yoik*'s premiere can be found at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5711573b044262398e3acb85/t/58dd795829687f5a850efe43/1490909538732/2007+iN+Catalogue.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Áile ja Áhkku* is part of an anthology of short Sámi films titled the *7 Sámi Stories* (2014-2015) produced by the ISFI. Information on this film series can be found at: <http://www.isfi.no/eng/films/7samistories/>

<sup>5</sup> The Blackfoot Confederacy is a league of aboriginal tribes located in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. For more information see: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/blackfoot-nation/>

<sup>6</sup> Wajstedt's website includes detailed information on exhibited works as well as forthcoming projects: <http://www.liselottewajstedt.com/>

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