

The book cover features a complex, abstract pattern of light blue, white, and orange-brown shapes, resembling a marbled or topographical design. A large, curved black shape, possibly representing a shadow or a stylized element, is positioned in the lower-left and bottom-center areas. The author's name is printed in a black serif font at the top, and the title is in a white italicized serif font at the bottom.

Marie Kølback
Iversen

Rovhistorier



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RERGADEN

ISBN: 978-87-94311-06-9
EAN: 9788794311069

Marie Kølbaek Iversen
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Udstillingsperiode: 27.08.2022 – 23.10.2022

O – OVERGADEN
overgaden.org
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Rovhistorier

FORORD

Over de seneste år har O – Overgaden fokuseret på at præsentere nye, kunstneriske stemmer – yngre som ældre – med det tilfælles, at de ikke har haft deres institutionelle gennembrud endnu. Som billedkunstner er Marie Kølbaek Iversen langt fra et ubeskrevet blad. Hun tilhører skaren af anerkendte og etablerede danske samtidskunstnere med en tydelig stemme og en aktiv international karriere allerede. Så hvorfor viser vi Kølbaek Iversen på O – Overgaden nu?

Det gør vi, fordi Marie Kølbaek Iversen er en af de få kunstnere i Danmark, der i øjeblikket er i færd med at tage en ph.d. i kunstnerisk forskning. Et projekt hun har afholdt i regi af både Aarhus Universitet og Oslo Kunstakademi, og som hun afslutter senere i efteråret. Kunstnerisk eller praksisbaseret forskning, som det også kaldes, er en forholdsvis ny disciplin herhjemme, og begrebet dækker over en videreuddannelse af kunstneren, hvor der fokuseres på kunstpraksis som vidensproducerende handling. Det er en helt særlig mulighed for kunstneren at få den nødvendige tid til at gå i dybden med sin praksis – og at gøre dette i sparring med forskere og fagfolk fra andre discipliner og fagligheder. For O – Overgaden er det interessant at præsentere vores publikum for samtidskunst, der er et produkt af en dybere kunstnerisk forskning, og som reflekterer nuancerede dialoger på tværs af videnskaber. Fordi forskning er så fundamental for udviklingen af vores samfund, er det spændende at få indsigt i de forskningsbidrag, der udspringer af kunst, men omvendt også interessant at se nærmere på, hvordan kunstværkets tilblivelse formes af forskningens rammesætning.

Med udstillingen præsenterer Marie Kølbaek Iversen en dyb og minimalistisk kondensering af sit femårige forskningsprojekt. *Rovhistorier* krydser tid, grænser og kulturer, når kunstneren rejser ind i øjet på havkalen; en dybhavsfisk, der også er kendt som grønlandshajen. Nyere forskning har vist, at dyret kan blive mellem 272 og 512 år gammel, hvilket gør det til det længstlevende kendte hvirveldyr i verden.

Historier om havkalens færden og rolle i Atlanterhavet afspejles på tværs af de nordisk-germanske sprog, hvor dyret er blevet kaldt havkal eller havkælling. Dermed spejler den sig i gamle havfolkeviser og -sagn fra Kølbaek Iversens vestjyske hjemegn, som kunstneren ved flere tilfælde vil synge højt på den lokale dialekt for at give udstillingen et musikalsk lag.

Rovhistorier udgøres af et enkeltstående, stort værk; en tre-kanals lydløs videoinstallation, hvori mikroskopiske optagelser af havkalens øjelinsekerne toner frem i form af farvestrålende billeder i pink og grøn, der langsomt glider ned over skærmene som retsmedicinske scanninger. Værket tager os med på en visuelt smuk og filmisk tidsrejse gennem havkalens 'historiske' blik. Med afsæt i denne kropsligt-imaginære indlevelse i rovdryrets perspektiv bringer *Rovhistorier* kunst, folkeminder og moderne videnskab sammen, hvorved Kølbaek Iversen reflekterer over 500 års koloniale, imperiale og miljørelaterede kampe i den nordlige atlantehavsregion, hvor den danske indflydelse har været og fortsat er central.

Nærværende udgivelse er del af en publikationsrække, som O – Overgaden, siden foråret 2021, har produceret som et selvstændigt supplement til kunstnerens udstillinger. Udgivelserne er muliggjort gennem støtte fra Augustinus Fonden, der skal have en hjertelig tak. Jeg vil gerne takke Statens Kunstfond, Novo Nordisk Fonden og HK-dir (Direktoratet for høgare uddannelse og kompetanse, Norge) for støtte udstillingen og vores dygtige grafiske designere fra fanfare, for deres altid flotte arbejde. En stor tak til O – Overgadens in-house redaktør Nanna Friis, der har redigeret denne temmelig udvidede publikation, og O – Overgadens øvrige team, der sammen med Marie har muliggjort udstillingen, skal også takkes varmt; Vera Østrup, Toke Martins, Owen Armour, Malte Linnebjerg, Line Brædder og Maria Kamilla Larsen. Den dybeste tak og de varmeste lykønskninger til Marie Kølbaek Iversen for det fortrinlige samarbejde og for så nænsomt at mangfoldiggøre sit intellektuelle tankegods i sin smukke, mangefacetterede og tankevækkende udstilling.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
konstitueret leder, O – Overgaden, august 2022

ADELUDS I Æ BJÆÆ'R

Det war æ kånng hans orlowsmæn'
- Æ dans dæn æ lirren. -
Å di kam sajleñ hær te æ lan'.
- Lyyr dero, hwo æ jåmfru te æ bjæær ble dåår(n)! -

Da di nu kam nææer te lan',
Di hoor æ frøkn Adeluds i æ bjæær, dæ sång.

Æ skipper han taaler te lirren smodræng:
"Å do ska go mæ mæ te stålten Adeluds i løn'."

Han pe'ket o æ daår med hans skin':
"Vaagn åp, stålt' Adeluds, du låå'ker mæ in'!"

Hæær æ bue'r fra di fæsteman',
I ska komm nier te ham ve a stran'."

"Håår du bue'r fra mi fæsteman' kjæær',
Da søj mæ, hwa naw'n han monne mo bæær!"

"Niels Me'kelsen hi'er di fæsteman',
Å do ska føol(le) mæ mæ fra lan'."

En selk'(c)særk hon føst drow' o',
En gullblø'met kjør'tel hon derøwwer slow'.

Hon drow Gul' al' øwer Gul',
Brøst å Fen'ger dem såt' hon ful'.

Frøken Adeluds tuk æ smådreg' ve æ hää'n,
Å så gik di dær nier te æ stran'.

Hon læær ham æ væjle å steel o æ wan',
Hon læær ham rowner å skryw mæ æ hää'n.

Hon læær ham æ ven' å wrii å vææn,
Å hon læær ham åw å stæll'et igjæn.

Hon læær ham æ væ å rejs så stue'r,
Så all æ Skiw di sänk nie'r for æ fjue'r.

Stålt' Adeluds u(h)e i æ skiw da språng',
Æ skipper hin i æ arm da nam'.

"Ja, skam faa do, do skippertyw'!
Vill du så forråå mi ånng lyw'?"

"No ska do æ't komm o di faår hans lan',
For te du får en søn, dæ ka ta æ ruer i hans hää'n.

No ska do æ't komm o di mue'r hinne øø',
For te du får en Dæ'ter, dæ ka skjæær å søj'."

Frøkn Adeluds u(h)e i æ haw' da språng',
Så svømme hun a hinne faår hans lan'.

Æ skipper han sejlld, å æ jåmfru hon svømme,
Dog kam hon te lan' en stun' føø' end ham.

"Når æ a ko'men o mi faår hans lan':
Mi søn ka hwærken sejll hæller ta æ ruc'r i hans hää'n.

No æ a o mi mue'r hinne øø':
Mi dæt'er hon ka hwærken skjæær heller søj'.

Men hāj'et æ't wærn for di lirren smådræng',
- Æ dans dæn æ lirren. -

A sku ha drownet all æ kånng hans howmæn'."
- Ly'er dero, hwo æ jåmfru te æ bjæær ble dåårn! -

Folkeviser indsamlet af Evald Tang Kristensen i 1872.
Tilbageoversat til Ørre-jysk fra rigsdansk af Michael Ejstrup.

EN VERDEN MAN VIL BO I?

ADAM KHALIL I SAMTALE
MED MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN

Marie Kølbæk Iversen

Først og fremmest tusind tak, Adam, for at indvillige i at have denne samtale med mig. Jeg har været meget inspireret af vores forskellige udvekslinger indtil videre, ikke mindst i forbindelse med *TEDtalks on Acid*, som I organiserede i forbindelse med jeres udstilling *One if by Land, Two if by Sea* på Kunsthall Charlottenborg tidligere i år. Jeg er nysgerrig efter at dele nogle af de tanker, der har ledt op til min udstilling på O – Overgaden med dig, fordi mit projekt – ligesom meget af dit arbejde – engagerer minoritære vidensformer i krydsfeltet mellem modernitet og videnskab i et forsøg på at formulere alternative fremtidsperspektiver hinsides den kapitalistiske modernitets voldgreb. I mit videoværk *Rovhistorier* laver jeg en spekulativ appropriation af det historiske blik hos en specifik haj; den store Atlanterhavs-haj, som på tværs af de nordisk-germanske sprog historisk er blevet benævnt som enten havkal eller havkælling. Ny marinbiologisk forskning viser, at havkalen – som hajen blandt andet kaldes på dansk – kan blive mellem 272 og 512 år gammel. Derudover svømmer den i hele det Nordatlantiske Hav, hvilket gør den til en interessant imaginær samtalepartner eller 'øjenvidne', som vi kan reflektere over regionens historiske udvikling med – og overveje alternative syn på fremtiden. Som dansker repræsenterer jeg kolonial tilstedeværelse i Grønland, hvor den haj, jeg har arbejdet med, blev fanget som bifangst. Men projektet forsøger også at forholde sig til, hvordan jeg overhovedet i første omgang blev dansker.

Adam Khalil

Havkalens tidsperspektiv er en ret juicy krog, som virkelig fik min hjerne til at summe! Jeg er ikke sikker på, at det er 100 % på linje, men jeg har læst et essay af Lou Cornum om Indigenous Futurism, som føles ret relevant i forhold til den her ide om at bygge verdener:

'Indigenous Futurism' is part of a tradition that represents an alternative to Western sci-fi which tends to be structured by the tension between utopia and dystopia. The temporality of Indigenous existence exceeds these terms: there is no pre-apocalypse or post-apocalypse, only perpetual revelation. Indigenous Futurism then, is about the struggle for a different future as well as a distinctly different idea of 'future' – one that goes beyond the conflict between tradition and progress, and asks us to inhabit the present.¹

I den forbindelse – og måske er det lidt stenet – kom jeg til at tænke på havfolk og drager; altså drager opstod i Europa og Asien, men på samme tid. Så de må findes, ikke?

(MKI)

Det er en god pointe. Generelt er det interessant at overveje, hvordan der historisk har været – og fortsat er – minoritærere snarere end majoritære udvekslinger mellem forskellige kulturer og kulturelle narrativer. I udformningen af projektet var Peter Linebaugh og Marcus Redikers bog *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) et vigtigt referencepunkt. Bogen præsenterer en historisk redegørelse for de såkaldte *Atlantic under-commons*, et spraglet multietnisk proletariats med rødder i både Europa, Afrika og Amerika:

It included clowns, or cloons (i.e., country people). It was without genealogical unity. It was vulgar. It spoke its own speech, with a distinctive pronunciation, lexicon, and grammar made up of slang, cant, jargon, and pidgin – talk from work, the street, the prison, the gang, and the dock. It was planetary, in its origins, its motions, and its consciousness. Finally, the proletariat was self-active, creative; it was – and is – alive; it is onamove. What does the experience of this proletariat have to offer us today?²

Dette afpejler på mange måder mit projekts andet udgangspunkt: den midtvestjyske hede, hvor min familie kommer fra, hvor jeg er vokset op, og hvor min tip-tipoldemor Johanne Thygesdatter var en af Evald Tang Kristensens informanter i 1873. Ved at forsøge at tænke fra et 1800-tals hede perspektiv, eksperimenterer jeg med mine formodre og -fædres bastardgørende sprogløge og kulturelle udsyn, der var præcis lige så proletarisk og hybridiserende, som Linebaugh og Rediker beskriver – inklusiv den vestjyske dialekt, som blander engelsk, tysk, dansk, svensk og norsk. Oversøiske indflydelser, med andre ord.

Hvis vi læser de viser, som Johanne sang for Tang Kristensen, som troværdige vidnesbyrd fra den kultur de stammer fra, sporer man en tydelig modstand mod myndighedernes udviklings-, nationaliserings- og homogeniseringsindsats men også mod koncepter såsom den private ejendomsret og det, at nogle mennesker kan have autoritet til at bestemme over andre. Det giver mening, eftersom livet på heden var forankret i fælledbaserede samfund, hvilket må have betydet, at det kun kan have følt som et tab, da heden i løbet af det 19. århundrede gradvist blev udstykket, og den lokale befolkning dermed mistede adgang til de jorder, der var deres livsgrundlag. Som en reaktion på disse udviklinger lader mange af viserne til at forholde sig etisk til de tilgrundliggende vilkår for tværkulturelle alliancer og udvekslinger gennem mytologiserede fortællinger om havfolk. Dette kan måske også være interessant for os at tænke med i dag, netop fordi havfolket bebor de flydende zoner mellem nationalstater og ikke tilhører noget specifikt land eller folk. Du har også arbejdet med havfolk i kontekst af New Red Order, ikke? Var det i relation til Lemurien?

(AK)

Vi undersøgte Lemurien med et lidt kritisk blik, fordi det er en del af en New Age-bevægelse, hvor folk tror, at der findes de her to meter høje, vikingelignende mennesker under vulkantunneler. Jeg tænker, at der var Atlantis og så var der Lemurien – og de konkurrerede på en måde. Atlantis forsvandt, men Lemurien blev fastholdt som fantasi på grund af vulkantunnelerne. Og der er et sted i det nordlige Californien, Mount Shasta, hvor folk siger, at de ser lemurianere – altså folk fra Lemurien – hele tiden.

Vi har arbejdet med dem som en måde at afsøge ideen om at 'være der først', eller en eller anden sær New Age-påstand om at være en del af landskabet – i forhold til oprindelige folks problemstillinger. Da vi var på Hawaii, fandt vi ud af, at der også er en hel del oprindelig hawaiiansk mytologi, som centrerer sig om lemurianere. Ikke noget jeg ved nok om til at gå ind i, men det er interessant, hvordan en sådan figur kan rejse.

(MKI)

Så lemurianere er ikke havfolk?

(AK)

Der er forskellige udlægninger, og det er svært at danne sig et entydigt billede. Nogle gange bliver de betegnet som havfolk. Andre gange bliver de betegnet som stråler af lys, der eksisterer på en eller anden måde. Sidstnævnte er måske mere New Age-versionen, som er den, der gør sig mest gældende i dag.

Sean Connolly – en hawaiiansk kunstner og arkitekt, der også var med på udstillingen på Charlottenborg – har undersøgt, hvordan kontinenter og vandmasser bevæger sig, og hvordan det før i tiden var meget lettere at bevæge sig fra et sted som Oceanien til Afrika. Eller hvordan andre former for migrationer kunne finde sted, hvis man bevægede sig over eller under jorden i stedet for rundt om den. At tænke på, hvordan der findes alle de her mærkelige former for konvergens og sammensmeltning over hele kloden som et resultat af, at folk rent faktisk mødte hinanden, længe før vi overhovedet kunne tro det muligt. Dét taler ind i ideen om mennesker, der pludselig dukker op alle mulige steder, ligesom i den lemurianske mytologis forestilling om lavatunneler eller underjordiske gange, der forbinder verden. Der, hvor jeg voksede op, hævder mange mennesker at have set tegn på Bigfoot. Sasquatch. Og der, hvor jeg kommer fra, bliver de kaldt rodrejsende.

1. Lou Cornum: "Who Belongs to the Land" on *Triple Canopy*, March 17, 2022 (canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/who-belongs-to-the-land – last accessed August 7, 2022), pp. 31-32

2. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "Tyger! Tyger!" in *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. 353

Rodrejsende?

(MKD)

(AK)

Ja. Og en del af forklaringen på, hvorfor de ikke opdages, er, at hver gang nogen lægger mærke til dem, så hopper de ind i et hult træ, hvorfra de kan rejse gennem rodsystemet, som om det var et metronet. Så dukker de op 600 kilometer væk i løbet af få sekunder på grund af dette underjordiske rodsystem. Jeg tror, jeg kom i tanke om det, fordi jeg snorklede for første gang sidste år, og bare det at se under vand fik

mig til at tænke "Du godeste!". Jeg føler, jeg har rejst verden rundt og kender min geografi, og det pludselig at erkende, at 70 % af den her planet er vand, var noget, jeg aldrig rigtig havde tænkt på. Det gjorde mig meget ydmyg. Især med forestillingen om havfolk, der udforsker alle disse dybder; selvfølgelig ved vi ikke noget om dem, vel? De har ingen interesse i at vise sig for os.

(MKD)

For noget tid siden læste jeg en tekst af arkæologen Neil Price, hvor han trækker på ideer fra de hawaiianske historikere Sir Peter Buck/Te Rangi Hiroa og Herb Kawainui Kāne i et forsøg på at forstå vikinge- og oceaniske søfarer kulturer gennem hinanden for at

udfylde hullerne i deres respektive historier. Det er interessant, hvordan disse to kulturer fra radikalt forskellige egne på kloden, måske alligevel har noget tilfælles, og hvordan de kan informere en mere grundlæggende forståelse af havkulturer i modsætning til landkulturer.

(AK)

At møde eller at opleve havet? For altså, det er jo noget, de aldrig rigtig kan gøre. De lever *på* havet, ikke *i* det. Det her er grundlæggende at leve *på*.

(MKD)

Det er rigtigt. Men det kunne måske opfattes som endnu et aspekt af samfundsskabelse muliggjort af havet – selvom det ikke er *i* havet – der taler ind i potentialet for interkulturel udveksling og tilblivelse netop ved at være et slags mellemstede. Over hele verden findes der beretninger om folk, der lever ombord på skibe, og hvordan de grupper, vi er blevet lært at opfatte som pirater, faktisk var – er? – fælledbaserede samfund. Linebaugh og Rediker kalder dem "hydrachies".

(AK)

Men bagsiden af den tankegang er sådan en som Ayn Rand, en konservativ ideolog fra 1960'erne og 70'erne. Hun skrev bogen *Atlas Shrugged*, der dannede grundlag for nyliberale nulstats-filosofier. Hendes bog er virkelig stor i Silicon Valley lige nu. I *Atlas Shrugged* siger hun på en måde, at mennesker,

der er kloge og dygtige nok, og som er gode nok til kapitalismen, burde lave deres egen ø ud for fastlandet, så de ikke behøver at forholde sig til myndighedernes reguleringer. Men hvis vi nu tænker, at det også er en slags kolonisering af havet, er det så stadig på folkets præmisser?

Uanset hvad er det også interessant at se denne bog i forhold til idéer om fælledbaserede samfund og deres indbyggere, fordi det peger på en mistillid til staten eller samfundet som sådan, når man, så snart man er underlagt en nation, beslutter sig for at rive sig løs og etablere sin egen. Det har et anarko-liberalt drømmeskær over sig, der på en måde er ret tiltalende, selvom det også er totalt gak. Som en slags Atlantis, ikke? Jeg har arbejdet på en film, som hedder *Nosferata*, der afsøger Christopher Columbus og 1492 som større end interplanetarisk rumrejse, eller i alt fald lige så vigtigt. Samtidig reflekterer værket også over, hvordan havet og det ydre rum før 1492 på en måde var det samme. Men så igen: måske er det ikke sandt, for nu har vi jo lige talt om oceaniske vikinger, og om forhistorien i relation til, hvad vi lærer i skolen om folks rejsemønstre og -måder. Men det bliver hurtigt ret trippet.

(MKD)

Det bliver trippet. Dog tror jeg også, at det er dér, hvor det bliver trippet, at nye ting kan opstå. Jeg læste om et slag, der fandt sted i Alken Enge omkring år 0, hvor de faldnes knogler blev indsamlet og nedsænket i en sø i nærheden. Man kan kun prøve at forestille sig stanken fra denne sø, og hvor giftig den må være blevet af alle de rådende lig, og hvordan dette i kombination med selve den traumatiske historie om slaget gjorde stedet til et farligt men også helligt terræn. Arkæologiske fund peger på, at det rent faktisk blev en offerplads, eftersom folk blev ved med at vende tilbage gennem flere århundreder efter slaget – helt op til 500 år – for at ofre.

Jeg tror, det har at gøre med troen på, at de faldnes ånder stadig bor i og omkring søen – som nu er udtørret – hvilket gør den rituelt og magisk potent, men også meget farlig, fordi ånderne er lige så fjendtlige i døden, som de var, da de var i live.

Og hvis man følger denne tankerække – at de dødes ånder stadig er i søen, misundelige på og modvillige mod den slags menneskeligt liv, der opstod rundt om den – så ændrer det fuldstændig den agens, vi forestiller os havfolk og vandånder kan have: at de er tidlige forlængelser af kulturer og mennesker, der blev udryddet (af os), og at de bliver ved med at hjemsege de levende i deres begær efter liv og hævn.

(AK)

Ja, ja, ja! Det er også interessant at overveje det mærkelige skred mellem historie, narrativ og spiritualitet, og hvordan disse ting er blevet isoleret og separeret. At tænke kreativt eller finde på ting, eller bare den her forestilling om bringe umiddelbart væsensforskellige ting sammen.

Det er et tabu, nu hvor alting skal have et logisk, rationelt svar. Men igen, noget jeg altid har med mig, er idéen om, at historien skal være et narrativ i nutidens tjeneste: at disse mytologiske væsner i virkeligheden er noget spirituelt, der løber sammen med historien på en næsten sømløs måde. Så sømløst, at det virker helt utroligt. Ligesom Drexciya.

(MKD)

Drexciya?

(AK)

Drexciya var en gruppe, der var en del af Detroit's technobevægelse, og jeg tænker, at man kan sige, at de arbejdede ud fra et Afro-pessimistisk, futuristisk perspektiv. De var en meget hemmelighedsfuld technogruppe, og de opstår ud af en mytologisering af de gravide mødre, der ikke overlevede overfarten fra Afrika til USA. Deres ufødte børn blev derfor født under vandet, hvor de startede en slags sort Atlantis, der hed Drexciya. Og det er dér, deres musik er fra, og det er dér, de er fra. Og jeg var bare sådan "wow!". På en lignende måde peger det på, hvordan ufattelig smerte og lidelse – eller oplevelsen af så meget traume – også kan bane vejen for andre narrativer til at forstå eller skabe en verden, man kan forestille sig at bo i.

(MKD)

Det er et meget potent udgangspunkt og virkelig hjerteskerende. En total ombrydning af enhver opfattelse af havfolk som sådan nogen ahistoriske fantasivæsner.

I de vestjyske havfolkesagn har havfolk faktisk ikke haler. De har bare ben, så når man fandt et lig på stranden, kunne man ikke vide, om det var et menneske eller en havperson. Den eneste måde man kunne finde ud af det på, var, hvis en forfærdelig larm og storm fulgte begravelsen, og hvis liget suttede på sin tommelfinger, når man gravede ham eller hende op. I så fald var det en havperson, og man var nødt til at føre dem tilbage til havet hurtigst muligt. Sådan siger sagnet.

Fiskere kunne også møde en havmand eller -frue ude på havet, hvor de sad på en bølgetop og skiftede en sok fra den ene fod til den anden. Hvis man så gav ham eller hende endnu en sok eller et nyt par, ville de spå eller hjælpe på forskellige måder. Man kunne også give dem et par vanter. Jeg tror, at de – ved at være forbundne med de dødes sjæle i vandet – var beslægtede med elverfolk, der lever i gravhøjene på heden. Fordi vandet løber under grunden, mellem havet og forskellige kilder og åer, er vandet og undergrunden forbundet, og det samme er de væsner, som bor der. Der findes adskillige beretninger om folk, der har set en kvinde – en elver eller havfrue – sidde i en høj, hvor hun reder sit hår og flasher sit guld.

Og for mig har det været inspirerende at tænke på elverfolk og havfolk som grænsegængere mellem vandet og kysten, mennesket og naturen. Og på havfolket som menneskets ontologiske 'andre', der er flydende på samme måde, som grunden under os er flydende, bare i et meget dybere tidsperspektiv. At al essentialisme og fastlåsthed på et tidspunkt kan forandres.

(AK)

På det seneste er jeg stødt på alt muligt skrivi om troens kraft, om hvordan venstrefløjen har opgivet åndelig tro og nu kun tror på rationalisme, videnskab og demokrati. Det er selvfølgelig at bevæge sig ind på mineret terræn – især 'post-truth' – og derfor tøver jeg altid med overhovedet at bringe det på bane, men jeg synes også, det er virkelig spændende, hvis vi kan prøve at se det hele lidt fra oven. Ikke for at sætte spørgsmålstegn ved det vestlige demokratis grundpiller, for bare at foreslå et eller andet gakket alternativ i stedet, men fordi det er vigtigt, at vi heller ikke bliver for stålsatte i vores egne overbevisninger eller fastholder tanken om, at videnskab for 50 år siden var helt anderledes, end videnskab er nu, og at det vil fortsætte med at være tilfældet. Hvis vi gør det, ender vi med at privilegere vores egen position i nutiden som alvidende eller mest sand.

Grunden til, at jeg bringer dette op, er, fordi folk spørger, hvorfor Standing Rock, Black Lives Matter – ja, endda højrefløjen – har sådan en gennemslagskraft. Og det er fordi, de alle stadig benytter sig af den kraft, som tro kan have.

Det fik mig til at tænke på det radikale potentiale, der kan ligge i at generobre troens kraft, selv hvis det er sekulær tro, for at finde ud af, hvordan det kunne se ud. Og jeg tænker, at det måske fører os tilbage til vores snak om havfolk og forskellige former for historieforståelse i forhold til sted og mytologi. Hvordan historien kan fungere som en fortælling og tjeneste i forhold til nutiden – selv hvis det er lidt urealistisk eller uventet. Og hvordan det måske kan ændre den måde, vi forstår historien generelt.

(MKD)

Ja. Og hvis kunst kan være et sted, hvor venstrefløjen kan eksperimentere med det åndeliges potentiale som fortælling i forhold til forskellige politiske kampe; ikke for at forlade virkeligheden, men for at finde måder at forstyrre den måde, vi fortæller den på, og åbne op for alternative indfaldsvinkler til fremtiden?

(AK)

Det er noget, jeg har tænkt en del over på det seneste, og det knytter an til noget, jeg hørte, da jeg var på Hawaii og lærte om Mauna Kea-protesterne, hvor forskere forsøger at bygge et 30 meter bredt teleskop på toppen af en hellig vulkan på Big Island. Jeg mødtes med nogle aktivister, der er involveret i kampen mod det projekt, og de har det her slogan: "Pro Science. Pro Sacred." Det er så enkelt, men så effektivt og alligevel radikalt – og det fik mig til at tænke på muligheden for at forholde sig til begge ting på samme tid, frem for at gøre dem til modsætninger og sætte dem op mod hinanden og skabe en falsk dialektik, hvor man skal vælge det ene eller det andet.

(MKD)

Lige præcis!

(AK)

Jeg har stadig ikke helt fundet ud af, hvad det betyder. Men det har virkelig været nyttigt.

(MKD)

Da jeg undersøgte forholdet mellem myte og ritual i forbindelse med min ph.d., stødte jeg på Victor Turners beretning om jorddragningsritualitet i det nordvestlige Zambia, hvor han beskriver, hvordan en Ndembu-læge ordinerer kvinder eller par en tur gennem en jordtunnel som kur mod eksempelvis barnløshed. Både Turner og hans informanter opfatter umiddelbart en sådan praksis som noget, der står i modsætning til vestlig medicin. Men da jeg læste den vestjyske historiker H.P. Hansens beretning om præindustriel medicin og rituelle praksisser i Midtvestjylland, fandt jeg ud af, at et lignende rituel motiv optræder her: man laver et hul gennem jorden eller en grøstørv, som de syge trækkes igennem for at blive helbredt eller lindret. Det er påfaldende, hvordan udbredelsen af Ndembu-eksemplet gennem akademisk etnografi, og den tilsyneladende overlagte glemsel af lignende nordeuropæiske eksempler, har medført, at visse grupper eller etniciteter bliver forbundet med "det irrationelle", og andre med "det rationelle" – selvom alle samfund i virkeligheden altid har været, og fortsat er, præget af både rationelle og irrationelle træk.

(AK)

Jeg kan godt lide idéen om etnografi som en slags psykoanalyse for det europæiske oplysningssamfund, som i "Åh ja, vi gør ikke den slags her, men tjek hvad de folk derovre laver...!" eller "Nå ja, vi plejede at gøre sådan". At producere den racialiserede Anden som Europas Id.

(MKD)

Jal Det moderne Europa virker gennemsyret af en idé om, at i det omfang vi nogensinde har engageret os i såkaldt "irrationelle" rituelle eller spirituelle praksisser, så var det i forhistorisk tid. Men hvis man ser på H.P. Hansens eksempler (hvoraf mange stammer fra begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede), var folk engagerede i ret elaborerede rituelle og magiske aktiviteter indtil for ganske nylig. Og det tror jeg ikke kun er et midt- og vestjysk træk, hvor man udover Ndembu-lignende jorddragningsritualer også for eksempel brændte og pulveriserede kropsdele fra afdøde personer, for derefter at blande asken med et ekstrakt som kunne indtages eller smøres på huden. Set udefra ligger sådanne praksisser ikke langt fra det, man kender som "kannibalisme".

(AK)

Det er endnu et eksempel på, hvordan en observation, der ikke tager højde for den bagvedliggende epistemologi, overser pointen. Kender du kunstneren Juan Downey? Nej? Han er vild. Han var en chilensk kunstner, der boede i New York, og som var aktiv i 1970'erne. Han lavede filmen *The Laughing Alligator*, som var en fuckfinger til etnografi og antropologi. Han og hans kone og deres to børn flyttede til Brasilien for at bo hos Yanomami-stammen i ni måneder,

og de lavede en slags familiefilm, hvori han veksler mellem sådan en slags officiel, antropologisk stemme og noget meget mere latterligt, og man kan aldrig helt få hold på det. Det er virkelig en af mine yndlingsfilm.

I filmen taler han også om at pulverisere asken fra ens nære afdøde og blande den i banansuppe som det ultimative begravelsesritual, og han præsenterer disse ting som meget saglige og måske endda forbundne. Hans ophav tæller både indfødte og hvide chilenerne, og han har det lidt sådan "dette ligger ikke langt fra nogen dele af min herkomst, men alligevel er jeg blevet billedt ind, at det kun stammer fra ét aspekt af den" – og den slags sammenfald.

(MKD)

Det går hånd i hånd med andet-gørende adfærd. Altså: kan der være en måde at omtale potentialerne i minoritære, rituelle praksisser uden at forfalde til splitting – "de gør det her, men det gør vi ikke" – at anerkende kraften i forskellige rituelle kulturer uden at fremmedgøre eller karikere hinanden?

(AK)

Ja, for fanden. Det er jo også et spørgsmål om perspektiv. Det er som om, man kan lægge hvad som helst over i den Anden, hvis man taler fra det perspektiv, at man selv har autoriteten. Så det er også et spørgsmål om at destabilisere dén autoritet for at kunne blive en del af alt eller sådan noget.

(MKD)

Okay, så føler du, at der på trods af de mange essentialiserede og essentialiserende dynamikker, som knytter sig til denne diskussion, stadig kan være en form for sted, hvor det at komme fra en baggrund som din også kan være et aktiv? At det giver dig adgang til at projicere eller forestille dig selv i fremtiden på andre måder end den vestlige majoritære kultur?

(AK)

Ja, jeg tror, at jeg fra mit Ojibway-perspektiv – og på grund af den måde, jeg tænker og føler generelt – altid forsøger at anlægge et fremtidsperspektiv, fordi man så ofte bliver indplaceret i fortiden. Men det er interessant, for når folk spørger ind til for eksempel indfødte amerikaneres spiritualitet, så opfordrer jeg dem altid til at udforske deres egne etniske identiteters fortid. Og det er hér, det bliver spændende eller vanskeligt med hensyn til projektion, fordi folk ofte vender sig mod indfødte kulturers fortid i en søgen efter deres egen.

(MKD)

Ja, præcis.

(AK)

Selvom der, som din forskning så tydeligt viser, egentlig findes en rig kultur med skikke og modstand og sagn i jeres egen historiske baggrund, som man kan afsøge og belyse.

(MKD)

Men en åbenlys hindring for dét arbejde er naturligvis nationalsocialismens historie, og hvordan nazisterne



aktivt approprierede hedensk, nordisk og germansk arv til egne raceideologiske formål.

Jeg tror, at det er én af grundene til, at så mange venstreorienterede

nordeuropæere viger udenom at beskæftige sig med historiske minoritære kulturer fra vores egen kulturkreds: fordi de stadig bliver set i lyset af nationalsocialismens historie.

Det har også spøgt i min egen forskning, men den måde jeg har tacklet det på, har været at forsøge at anlægge et meget nøgternt blik og holde fast i de faktiske formuleringer og beretninger fra min egen familie og andre virkelige mennesker i folkemindesamlingen. For netop ikke at fremelske en slags uvirkelig vikingeutopi, hvilket er lidt ligesom Atlantis eller Lemurien; det har aldrig eksisteret, men er en stærk og potent fantasi, der kan få folk til at forfalde til ufattelige grader af vold og fremmedgørelse.

Så jeg prøver at angribe det nedefra og op; fra de arkivrester, jeg finder, som jeg kan sætte sammen i kraft af min egen opvækst i Midtvestjylland med alle de uudtalte forventninger, der er dér. Gennem kunsten eller fantasien – eller hvad det nu er – kan jeg så forsøge at fremelske et spirituelt eller kulturelt kritisk kontinuum mod nutidens nationalistiske, nationaliserende kræfter. Derudover var mine forfædre, ud fra hvad jeg kan læse af i deres beretninger og sange, ikke særlig interesserede i det danske projekt – for nu at udtrykke mig med en jysk underdrivelse. Derfor ville det være meget uetisk at indlemme deres mytiske og spirituelle arv ind i det danske, eller hvilket som helst andet nationalstatsprojekt, der bød dem fuldstændig imod. I forsøget på at række tilbage efter alternative værktøjer til at drive os fremad, har jeg valgt at kigge mod folkemind i stedet for post-producerede mytiske gengivelser af for eksempel det nordiske panteon.

Men i min formors viser er der alligevel mange temaer, der knytter an til figurerer fra det nordiske panteon, for eksempel trolddomskyndige kvinder klædt i blå kapper, som var i stand til at forvandle sig til ulve og falke. Sidstnævnte vækker associationer til Vane-gudinden Freja, som var den første Sejd-mester, og som rejste på tværs af verdener og tider i sin falkeham. Den forestillingsverden, som sangene fremkaldte, er altså ikke helt forskellig fra nutidige forestillinger om vikingemytologi og nordisk hedenskab, men den sætter det sammen på en anden måde og til helt andre formål end fx den nyhedenske højrenationalisme. Eksempelvis er hovedmotivet i sangen om heltinden i falkeham hendes forsøg på at dræbe den danske konge, fordi han har undervundet hendes bror og forsøgt at formilde hende med guld. For mig at se stikker det en stor fed kæp i hjulet på ethvert projekt, der forsøger at identificere danskhed som en homogen etnisk kategori, der kan nære en nationalistisk og racistisk dagsorden.

(AK)

Jeg er fuldstændig enig med dig. I forlængelse deraf tror jeg, at det også er grunden til, at jeg altid forsøger at orientere enhver form for baggrund mod fremtiden; fordi jeg føler at ved at fokusere på fortiden, er det ikke kun det tveæggede sværd med at skulle være autentisk i forhold til en uigenkaldelig fortid. Den anden ting, relateret til det du taler om, er, at overidentifikation med sådan en fortid i mit tilfælde bare ville føre til idéer om "rødt overherredømme", og så er vi ikke nået videre.

(MKD)

Helt sikkert. Det er vel også derfor, jeg har undveget det så længe. Men min formors viser går slet ikke i den retning, og hun var heller ikke viking - hun var en kvinde, der levede på heden i 1800-tallet, og som havde kendskab til hedenske videns- og praksisformer. Og det er endnu et eksempel på, hvordan hendes viser afviger fra en højreorienteret nyhedensk genfortolkning af nordisk mytologi: kvindernes placering i samfundet. Hvor jeg kommer fra, var der ingen kønnet arbejdsdeling eller statusforskel mellem mænd og kvinder. Alle deltog i alle former for arbejde – at skaffe mad, hyrde, slagte, strikke, synge – og det var lige så ofte kvinder som mænd, der var omdrejningspunkt for myternes narrative og transformative handlinger. Så for mig består arbejdet også i at bruge min egen konkrete andel i, hvad man kunne kalde en indfødt nordisk mytisk og kulturel arv til at undergrave den måde, fantasier om det nordiske er blevet approprieret til nationalistiske og ekskluderende formål på tværs af Vesten.

Som en del af dette arbejde er jeg også interesseret i at undersøge, om det er muligt at forestille sig en position, hvor forskellige former for indfødt viden kan nærme sig og krydsbestøve hinanden. Jeg mener, du og jeg er begge moderne subjekter, der lever moderne liv i en moderne verden. Men de liv er så ekstremt overkodede af kapitalistisk ideologi, og jeg spekulerer på, om der findes punkter, hvor vi kan mødes og forene kræfterne gennem arven fra vores respektive minoritære ophav i stedet? Altså lige nu synger jeg bare min tip-tip-tip-oldemors viser, og hvad nytter det...?

(AK)

Ja, men du synger sange, der næsten er blevet glemt!

(MKD)

Selvfølge, men hvis jeg nu skulle være lidt selvkritisk, kunne man spørge, hvordan det ikke bare er endnu et tilfælde af nostalgisk overengagement i fortiden? Kulturer ændrer sig hele tiden; nogle ting vil nødvendigvis gå tabt, og burde måske gå tabt...

(AK)

Jeg talte med en, der kommer fra det samme sted som mig, som mente, at man – i stedet for at forsøge at genoplive ting, eller bevare dem som de var – burde arbejde ud fra en idé om, at det, der i virkeligheden er brug for, er en fortløbende åbenbaring af kulturen, og at ting skal have lov til at forandre sig.

Det behøver ikke at handle om tradition. Tradition og kultur er to væsensforskellige ting, og så længe kulturen bevares, er det noget andet end at holde traditionen i hævd. Jeg tænker, at disse sange, som er traditionelle, men som bliver fremført og indspillet ved hjælp af moderne teknologier, er en slags rekapitulering af kulturen i stedet for at forsøge at reproducere den. Og jeg føler, at dét kontinuum – den kæde af generationer, der er indbyrdes forbundet, og som berører hinanden på et bestemt tidspunkt – at det er dér, det vigtige opstår.

Men der er også den der mærkelige dobbeltbinding – især når en kultur er truet eller ved at forsvinde – at folk kan blive utroligt opsat på, hvordan den bliver revitaliseret, og at det skal foregå på én bestemt måde. Og det er vel også hér, glidebanen til noget mere skræmmende kan opstå. Hitler var optaget af Karl Mays romaner om Winnetou – en fiktiv Apache-høvding – fordi de var hans yndlingsbøger. Det siges, at han læste de bøger, og andre ville læse Bibelen i krisestunder, og ifølge Gøber uddelte han dem endda til sine soldater, fordi han mente de præsenterede oprindelige folks tapperhed og krigerprincipper.

(MKI)

Ja, de faldgruber er nok altid til stede, uanset om vi taler om rødt eller hvidt eller andre former for idéer om overherredømme. Sådanne fantasier gør megen skade, og de slører de aktuelle problemer og relevante kampe, som prekariserede mennesker står med.

(AK)

Igen, det er det farlige ved at fokusere for meget på fortiden eller på traditionen, fordi det fører til, at indfødte folk begynder at sige "lad os komme af med alle immigranterne", hvilket er den mest brutale og konservative højreorienterede gestus, man kan forestille sig.

(MKI)

Meget sandt. En af mine venner arbejder som antropolog i Amazonas med en stamme, som han siger sikrer sin kulturelle overlevelse gennem evig transformation; transformationer, der transformerer transformationer. Jeg spurgte, om de også kunne transformere sig til at blive moderne, og han svarede "ja, selvfølgelig, men de transformerer sig altid tilbage igen", hvilket fik mig til at tænke, om en sådan transformativ evne også gælder for mig som europæisk efterkommer af en undertrykt fællekultur, eller om det udelukkende er en kapacitet, som mennesker fra Amazonas besidder? Jeg mener, jeg vil gerne transformere...

(AK)

Det får mig til at tænke på idéen med "de syv generationer". Der, hvor jeg kommer fra, er der en idé om, at du med dine handlinger skal komme syv generationer tilbage i fortiden og syv generationer ind i fremtiden i hu. Dét er den tidsmæssige rammesætning for enhver form for handling eller tanke, selv med henblik på at bevare en kultur eller et samfund fremadrettet.

Det har været virkelig brugbart og hjulpet mig til at holde fokus, ikke mindst i forhold til politiske bevægelser og ting, der går ud over vores livstid. Disse syv generationer frem og syv tilbage – som, når man regner på det, afhængigt af forventet levetid, nærmer sig mellem 150 og 200 år i én retning – åbner et kontinuum af 350 år fra fortid til fremtid.

(MKI)

Jeg tror, Johanne er syv generationer fra mig... Min mor Margits mor Majas far Johannes' far Niels Kristians far Niels' mor Johanne. Ja. Når jeg tæller mig selv med, er Johanne og jeg syv generationer fra hinanden. Fordobles det ind i fremtiden, har vi den gennemsnitlige levetid for hajen, havkalen.

(AK)

Syv generationer af havkalen. Nu snakker vi! Det svarer til 1500 år.

(MKI)

Lige præcis. Syv generationer af hajen. Dét er et perspektiv at overveje. Måske er det et godt sted at slutte vores samtale?

(AK)

Ja.

ULM OG DEM DER VANDRER

EMMY LAURA PÉREZ FJALLAND

Solen havde lunet fra morgenstunden. En kølig vind rejste sig af og til. I klitternes lune læ gav en dampet, kold og krydret lugt sig til kende. Enekrat kradsede, og buskene var gamle og lidt forpjuskede. De stod på de bugtende forhøjninger med lyng og andre dværgbuske omkring sig.

Sandjorden lå grå-beige og tung efter natten. Nogle steder helt fast og mørkegrå med et farverigt væv af lav og mosser. Gennem disse forhøjninger og lavninger gik en lille undersøger, en lille mor. Vi kalder hende Ulm.

Hun var snublet og gledet nogle meter ned. Det var ikke almindeligt, at voksne mennesker faldt, og hun virkede lidt forskrækket. Alligevel var der noget lyksaligt forvildet i hendes blik. Hun satte sig på en kant for at drikke lidt af det vand, hun havde med, og kiggede frem for sig.

Klitterne løftede sig. Nærmest endeløst, nærmest som et hav. Uoverskuelige bølger, der havde gjort holdt.

Et krøllet hav. Silke i brede striber.

Smeltevandet fra den sidste iskappe havde flydt og fossat gennem dette sted. Ud mod havet. Atlanterhavets østkyst fandtes ikke. Eller den var meget langt væk. Kom nærmere.

"Weichsel," hviskede hun. "Eem."

Navngivninger af tid.

Birke-fyrretiden – da Nordsøen var tørlagt og skovjægerkulturen gik i land.

Hassel-fyrretiden – da Østersøen var ferskvandssøen *Ancylussøen*, og Atlanterhavet udvidede sin grænse mod øst. Nordsøen flød over Doggerland.

Uroksetiden fandtes. Med vildheste og elge, bjørne og vildkatter. Jægere og samlere med menneskekroppe ledsaget af hunde.

Kronhjortetiden fandtes.

Kulturstepper og bøgetid.

Det blev mennesketid.

Ulm spiste en figen fra sin madpakke. Buskenes og planternes levende rødder holdt på bankernes sand og grus. Sænkede deres bevægelser, deres flugt. "De vandrer langsomt," mumlede hun for sig selv. "Jeg rider...". Det var vindene og vandet fra himlen, som drev dem. De var deres energi. Mellem bankerne så Ulm små cyanblå vandhuller omkranset af stedsegrønne, gulgrønne og grågrønne græsser. Uldne lyngbuske og guldkronede bær. Sandede baner med fodspor og riller.

Krøllet silkestof spundet af tusindtråd.

Engang var landjorden fuld af sådanne finmaskede fletværk. En enorm silkekjole.

Engang begyndte havet at stige. Tog landjord og bopladser i sin mund. Efterlod sig kyster, fjorde og bugter ujævne og fligede. Fordøjede kultur og samfund i sin mave, mens landjorden ledsagede dem, der måtte vandre.

Ulm drak mere vand og spiste lidt knækbrød. Havets læber bevæger sig stadig, tungen ruller. Fyldes med ismasser. Nogen siger: "Træerne kommer." Og fyrretræerne rejser sig i horisonten. Tømmer i lyngtæppet bag klitterne. Står samlet som opmærksomt spidsede ører.

Ulm rejste sig også. Hun havde ikke overblik over sin vandring, men lod sig føre som af havets strømme, bevægede sig op over de sovende bølger, og tiden gik. Lyset viste formiddag. Hun nåede en slugt, hvor sandet lå bart og vindblæst med en skorpe formet af nattens dug.

Her var spor fra krondyr. Fugles mærkninger. Måske en hare, måske en hund?

Ulm havde hørt dem fortælle om ulve. Den sidste, en ensomt vandrende ulv, der havde mistet sin mave. Det var hemmeligt, og de var stille. Alligevel stak blikkene mod hinanden. De havde hørt ulven kalde. De sørgede. De havde set døde afgnavede kroppe af får og krondyr. De havde set døde ulve. De ville fortælle, og de ville ikke fortælle. Det vilde kød. Hundenatur. Ulvetime. Hyrdetime.

I græsset lå en rad af knogler. Ulm havde hørt, at ulven lå godt dér. Med rygstøtte og udkig. Hun spiste endnu en figen, noget brød og ost, og tog en kop te. Knoglerne lignede rester af et bækket og et stykke af en rygrad. Hvirveldyr. "Knogler beskytter de sårbare organer." De er samlinger af mineraler, som også jord og mus har brug for.

Hun kiggede på et lille vandhul; et blankt vandspejl. Sad hun mon i et ædespor? Hun så sig selv tage rygraden, sætte delene på en guldtråd, binde dem om sin hals. En kæde af skeletperler hang på hendes bryst.

Fra klitheden bevægede Ulm sig gennem fyrreskoven mod vest. Gik med harpiks og mosset fugtluft. Gik til lyset viste eftermiddag. Hun trak på det ene ben. Det var bækket, der værkede. En forskubning under en graviditet. Hun krydsede flade hedesletter, kunne lugte den svedne lyng, se hvor plejerne havde brændt af. Hun gik langs de ørkenlignende pengemarkere og villaveje. Adgang forbudt alle vegne. De skubbede til grænserne.

Og mens hun travede ad grusstierne, tog fuldmånen til. Græslandet bredte sig ud foran hende. Havet nærmede sig, og hun ankom til de grågrønne, vindblæste klitter. "Marint forland med voldsletter," mumlede hun.

Ulm fandt ly for natten i et stråetækt hvidkalket hus, nedsænket i en gryde bag klitterne. Her fandtes varm suppe, en seng og en brændeovn. Uldsokker og lammeskind.

Husets ejer spillede tværfløjte, og mens Ulm lyttede, lod hun skeletperlerne løbe mellem fingrene. Solen sænkede sig, og månen rejste sig. Funklende stor, først farvet som fersken, siden som honning. Sol og Måne stod ved hver af hendes sider. Skumringens skjul gav hende mod.

I natten skiftede månen atter farve, nu til perlemor.

Klitterne lå forsøvede, og da morgengryet kom, var himlen syntetisk lyserød.

Månen sank. Solen steg.

Ulm småløb mod klitterne. Opmuntret af den rosenfingrede dronning. Strøg duggen med sine fingerspidser. Marchalmen stak hendes venstre hånd. Det var koldt. Hun svøbte sit hoved i skind. Bækkenet skar i benet. Børnene var her ikke. Dæmringens lysning gav hende mod.

På sandet ved havets mund, kystens kant, gik hun uden at efterlade sig spor. Skeletperlerne raslede. Fugle skreg i gryet. Hornfisk sprang fra det salte hav. Som nåle på tråd gennem havsilke. Havet lå nærmest endeløst. Nærmest som klitterne, nærmest som uoverskuelige bølger, der havde gjort holdt.

En krøllet kappe. De brede midnatsblå silkebånd nærmede sig kysten, brød og slyngede sig mod sandet. Krusninger af hvidt skum over sten og grus. "Og havets bund står åben for mig."

Langt ude i horisonten rejste havkalen sig et langsomt øjeblik. Ulm kaldte, men han sank igen. Bag hende rejste de græsklædte klitter sig. Hun lænede sig mod dem, samlede skaller og småsten med huller i. Sten til børnene. Børnene var der ikke. Ulm var tung som vådt sand, og saltvand løb over hendes kinder. Hun løb sine fingre gennem sandet. Kiggede op, ud over havfladen. Han dukkede op igen, denne gang tættere på. Betragtede hende.

Marchalmen stod modig, og sandet lå sindigt. Med dem rejste Ulm sig og gik mod vandkanten.

Med det våde sand kiggede hun tungt på ham.

De betragtede hinanden. Vi kalder ham Há.

Ulm tog sine uldsokker af og løsnede skindet om sit hoved. Gav dem til ham.

Há gav hende guld, og Ulm fyldte bryster og fingre fuld.

"Dronning," hviskede Há, og ud af havsilken steg gusen. Den fyldte hendes lunger og øjne.

Strømmen omfavne hendes underben.

"Havets bund står åben for mig," hviskede hun igen.

Hun gik ud i vandet til Há. Vandet sluttede sig om hendes hofter. Så hendes liv, så hendes bryster, hals og kæbe. Trængte ind i næse og mund. Vandet var salt. De sank og vandrede langsomt over den sandede bund. Hun rev sig på hans hudtænder, han slikkede hendes blod. De var langsomme jægere. Passerede dybe rander gennem algebælter og stenrev, sild og makrel. Nåede en vidstrakt sandbanke. Flød over vragods og død kultur, mammut og næsehorn. Svømmede blandt marsvin og slangestjerner. Gods og muslinger i massevis.

"Hvordan kan du se i mørket?," spurgte hun. "Hvad ser du bag dine åbne øjne?"

Há svarede ikke, men ned langs hver side mærkede Ulm nu bølger fra havdyr og planter. Varme strømme mod panden; strøg hende over issen og bagom hendes nakke, ned langs rygsojlen og ud i bækkenet.

Ørernes snegle spidse som fyrretræer.

"Hvert vandsted har sine folk, sine lugte, sine gennemrejsende. Sit tidevand, sine fødesteder. Yngel. Sine temperaturer, sine lyde, sine samfund. Arvemasse," hviskede han.

Havets arkiv. Havets hukommelse.

Ulm vandrede gennem det land, hvor luften er saltvand.

Guldbelagt fra finger til bryst.

Med skeletperler og i havsilkekjole. Há var hendes kavalier. Hun var hans dronning. Hun fandt bjørne formet i rav, og Há lærte hende at rejse vejret så stort. Siden lå de stille og betragtede de vuggende bunde af skibe. Han var blød og fortalte historier. Hun lyttede og var elektrisk.

Han fortalte om bombebølger, der endnu vuggede gennem dybet.

Skibstrafik og færagesang, olietræk og vindfang.

Gammel legesyge. Vuggeviser.

De så lysende ismasser som prismer til dybet.

De gemte sig mellem dem. De mødte sæler og isbjørne. De spiste. De søgte mørket. De vandrede.

Strømme gennem hendes rygsojle og ud i hendes bækken.

Há fulgte Ulm til sin mødrende ø, en højderyg. Her mødte hun de andre.

De drak vin med stor lyst. Hun dannede 649 æg.

Rede, hule, vugge. Hun vævede og spandt med tangplanternes tråde.

Så drog de videre. Smurte sig i mudder, rejste langs strømme, gennem rander, over banker. Lyset blev stærkere. En dag stod de, hvor de mødtes. Skumringens mod lå stadig i Ulm. Há gav hende en fløjte af perlemor, så hun kunne spille, når hun var sorgfuld. Han gav hende en harpe af guld, så hun kunne spille, når hun var sindig. Han gav hende en guldblomme skjorte at svøbe sig i, når hun var modig.

Ulm gav Há bjørnen i rav og skeletperlerne.

Hun rejste sig og gik i land. Kastede ingen skygge og efterlod ingen spor.

På de græsklædte klitter ventede marchalmen og fårene. De drak hendes mælk, og hun fulgte dem. Hver skumring spiller hun fløjte af perlemor. Hvert nat vandrer hun i guldblomme skjorte med Há. Hvert gry løber hendes fingre over guldharpens strenge. Hver middag hviler hun i lyng blandt blåmunke og sandhjelme.

Ulm med guldbelagt bryst og glødende fingre.

Ulm i havets silke.

Ulm med hede, hav og klit.

"Hvad ser du bag dine åbne øjne?"

Der citeres frit fra følgende folkeviser og -sagn: *Brudens kirkefærd*, *Hustru og Mands Moder*, *Agenetaa i Bjærget*, *Havfruen danser o Tilli*, og *Adeluds i Bjærget*, samt *Danske sagn. Som de har lydt i folkemunde*, bind 2, del d. *Vandånder*, indsamlet af Evald Tang Kristensen imellem 1875 og 1895.

Dertil citeret frit fra og henvises til: *Filtret høst* (1957) af Marie Bregendahl, *Bitch* (2002) af Lucy Cooke, *Floating Coasts* (2019) af Bathsheba Demuth, *Dark Trails* (2022) af Andy Flack, *Hyrdeliv på Heden* (1941) af H. P. Hansen, *Beastly Belonging in the Premodern North* (2018) af Dolly Jørgensen, *The Darkness box* (1975) af Ursula K. Le Guin, *Grønlandshajen – gammel og frugtbar* (2020) af Julius Nielsen, *Idybet med Grønlandshajen* (2018) af Julius Nielsen, *Hedens natur* (1986) af Kenneth Olwig, *The ocean is losing its memory* (2022) af Hui Shi, m.fl. (Nature), og *The Waves* (1951) af Virginia Wolf. Denne historie er samtidig udarbejdet på grundlag af feltarbejde i Midtvestjylland (området omkring Ulfborg, Vosborg og ud mod Husby) i marts 2021 og 2022.

HAVKAL. GRØNLANDS- HAJ. NORD- ATLANTISK DYBHAVSHAJ

JULIUS NIELSEN I SAMTALE
MED MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN



Marie Kølbæk Iversen

Først skal du have mange tak for at have denne samtale med mig. Det har været en spændende rejse, fra den første kontakt og overdragelse af hajøjne via din mor i 2020, til vi mødtes i Nuuk i december 2021 for at dissekere en haj, der var blevet fanget som bifangst i det kommercielle fiskeri.

Vi har tidligere talt om, at det umiddelbart virker som helligbrøde at fange så gammelt og stort et dyr. Under hvilke omstændigheder fanger man grønlandshajen, og hvorfor er det vigtigt og meningsfuldt at forske i den? Hvad er det for interesser og udfordringer, der gør forskning i grønlandshajen relevant?

Julius Nielsen

Der er forskellige ting, som er væsentlige at undersøge, og som vi har undersøgt gennem tiden. Da jeg startede med min hajinteresse – først som speciale og siden ph.d. – var der et kæmpe videnshul omkring grønlandshajen. Man vidste, at den fandtes, men der var mange helt fundamentale biologiske spørgsmål, man ikke havde styr på.

Så ud over at jeg personligt synes, det er interessant at bidrage til at øge forståelsen for et dyr, der – jo dybere vi graver – kun bliver mere fascinerende, er der også en række ting, der gør det vigtigt at forske i hajen. Ikke mindst spørgsmål knyttet til det kommercielle fiskeri, som er den primære indtægtskilde i Grønland, hvor den fanges i kæmpestort antal som bifangst, lige som det sker i Norge, Island, arktisk Canada og i fiskeriet omkring Svalbard. På nogle punkter kan man sige, at grønlandshajen er en almindelig fisk; på andre er den helt utrolig speciel og fantastisk. Historisk set har man fanget den målrettet for at udvinde forbrændings- og lampeolie fra dens lever. Nu er der ikke længere nogen målrettet fangst af grønlandshajen – i stedet er den bare en irriterende og hyppig bifangst, som specielt bliver taget på langliner og i trawl. Og når man fanger meget af et dyr – ikke mindst som bifangst – vil man gerne vide, hvad det er for et dyr: Hvordan bliver det påvirket? Hvad er dets biologi?

Så for at kunne besvare nogle af de spørgsmål, har vi gennem årene lavet forskellige undersøgelser. Blandt andet har vi undersøgt, hvor gamle de bliver, og hvornår de bliver kønsmodne, fordi det kan sige noget om artens og bestandens sårbarhed.

(MKI)

Ja, for spørgsmålet er vel, om man via bifangst kan komme til at overfiske den til et punkt, hvor den bliver decideret truet?

(JN)

Det et åbent spørgsmål, om det er et truet dyr, men der er helt klart nogle alarmklokker, der ringer, fordi de kan blive så gamle og først bliver sent kønsmodne. I vores undersøgelser har vi primært haft det med alderen i fokus, hvilket har betydet, at vi har skullet tage prøver fra øjnene på døde dyr.

Og når man har en kæmpestor død haj på typisk tre-fire meter, bør man undersøge så mange forskellige ting som muligt. For eksempel har vi kigget i maverne for at undersøge, hvad de har spist, og taget vævsprøver af lever, hjerte, hjerne, parasitter, osv. Mange af prøverne har vi allerede brugt, men der er endnu flere, som venter på at indgå i studier ledet af andre forskere.

(MKI)

Når du siger, at hajen på nogle måder er meget almindelig, og på andre helt særlig, hvad mener du så?

(JN)

Det gælder eksempelvis i forhold til deres reproduktionsbiologi – altså den måde de formerer sig på. Nogle af de grønlandshajer, jeg har dissekeret, har haft ekstremt mange æg. Særligt var der én haj på 4,7 meter, som havde 649 appelsinstore æg inden i sig.

(MKI)

Wow.

(JN)

Det er usædvanligt for en haj at have så mange store æg i samme størrelse. Og det åbner for spørgsmålet om, hvor mange af dem, der bliver til unger.

(MKI)

Har du nogle teorier?

(JN)

Jeg har i dén grad nogle teorier, og de er også bakket godt op af videnskaben. Men det er svært at besvare med en one-liner. Min teori er nemlig, at på lige præcis dét punkt er grønlandshajen ikke så usædvanlig i forhold til andre hajer, men generelt ved man ikke særlig meget om grønlandshajens reproduktionsbiologi. Jeg har selv været med til at finde en haj, der havde æg i sig, og så har jeg nogle kollegaer, der i rammerne af mit projekt også har fundet én. Derudover er der en tredje 50 år gammel beskrivelse af en haj med æg. I de tre tilfælde er der blevet talt henholdsvis 649, 455 og 400 æg på seks-syv centimeter i diameter.

I tillæg hertil findes der én artikel, der rapporterer, at en gravid hun med ti fuldvoksne unger på cirka 37 centimeter var blevet fanget af nogle fiskere engang i 50'erne ved Færøerne. På baggrund af denne ene observation har man sidenhen antaget, at grønlandshajen får op til ti unger.

Men når jeg så ser 649 æg, kan jeg ikke lade være med at spørge mig selv, hvorfor i alverden den skulle lave så mange æg i samme størrelse, hvis den kun skal bruge ti af dem? Netop det, at de er (næsten) lige store er en vigtig detalje. Man kan nemlig dykke ned i den videnskabelige litteratur og undersøge information om andre hajer i den familie, grønlandshajen tilhører, som er Squaliformes. Og for alle andre Squaliformes-hajer, der er grundigt undersøgt, gælder det, at antallet af modne æg i samme størrelse afspejler det antal unger, som moderen er i stand til at producere.

(MKI)

Betyder det, at den får 600 unger i løbet af sit liv, eller i løbet af et år eller cyklus? Laver den nye æg?

(JN)

Hos Squaliformes-hajer – hvor æggene har samme størrelse – udvikler æggene sig samtidigt: De befrugtes samtidig, for dernæst at komme over i livmoderen, hvor de udvikler sig til fostre for siden at blive født. Jeg er helt overbevist om, at dette også er tilfældet for grønlandshajen. Hvis man skulle tro, at grønlandshajen kun får ti unger trods hundredevis af æg, ville den være enormt usædvanlig i forhold til alle sine nærmeste slægtninge.

(MKI)

Men kan det være, at ungerne spiser af hinanden inde i livmoderen?

(JN)

Det kan jeg godt forstå, du spørger om, for det er lidt en myte for hajer, men det er meget usandsynligt i grønlandshajens tilfælde. Der findes cirka 500 forskellige slags hajer, som grupperer sig i forskellige ordener, familier, slægter, og så videre. Og det er udelukkende hos sandtigerhajen, at ungerne spiser hinanden, sådan at der fra hver livmoder bliver født én stor kannibalistisk unge per graviditet.

Sandtigerhajen tilhører en helt anden gruppe af hajer (Lamniformes) end grønlandshajen (Squaliformes), og ungerne adfærd med at spise af hinanden og af ubefrugtede æg i livmoderen er ikke påvist hos nogen Squaliformes-arter. Den simpleste forklaring i grønlandshajens tilfælde er altså den mest utrolige, nemlig at den med stor sandsynlighed får hundredevis af unger per graviditet.

(MKI)

Men fanger man også ungerne som bifangst?

(JN)

Nej, det er altid de store hajer, man fanger. De begynder at dukke op i de kommercielle prøver og i vores surveys, når de cirka én meter lange. Vi tror, at de bliver født, når de er omkring 40-50 centimeter – det er størrelsen på de mindste fritsvømmende grønlandshajer, man kender til. Derudover ved man, at de her ti unger, som man fandt i livmoderen på den gravide haj for 50 år siden, var 37 centimeter lange.

I forhold til sidstnævnte og til spørgsmålet om forholdet mellem antallet af æg og unger, så tror jeg i øvrigt godt, at jeg kan forklare, hvorfor den haj, man fangede dengang, kun havde ti unger inden i sig: Læser man den videnskabelige artikel, der kom ud af dét fund, får man at vide, at der var nogle fiskere, der fangede en haj og opdagede, at den havde ti unger inde i sig. Fiskerne tog ungerne med hjem og gav dem til en biolog, som siden gav dem videre til de forskere, der skrev artiklen. Forskerne gemte én hajunge på et museum, men den er desværre forsvundet i en flytning. Dog blev den fotograferet, så man ved med sikkerhed, at det var en grønlandshaj. Siden har jeg imidlertid fundet en bog, som blev skrevet af den biolog, der i første omgang fik ungerne fra fiskerne. Han skriver, at de fiskere, der fangede den gravide haj, var ude for målrettet at fange grønlandshajer. Og dér var der så en alarmklokke, der ringede hos mig, for det betyder de har sat en langline, og at hajen ikke er taget i et trawl eller garn.

(MKI)

Okay?

(JN)

Da jeg læste, at de havde fanget hende på en langline, tænkte jeg: "Dét var lige præcis også vigtigt!" For hvis en gravid haj er i en livstruende situation – sidder på en krog, bliver fanget i et garn, er ved at dø af whatever – så laver hun en evakuering af sin livmoder for at redde ungerne. Det er generelt for alle hajer og rokker. Hun spytter simpelthen bare ungerne ud, fordi hun er ved at dø.

Når jeg derfor læser denne information, som ligger til grund for det resultatet, der har etableret hele antagelsen om, at grønlandshajen kun får omkring ti unger per graviditet, så tænker jeg, at hun med stor sandsynlighed har evakueret langt de fleste unger, mens hun sad på krogen. Der har hun sikkert siddet i flere timer, inden de skar hende op.

Så om der har været 600, 500, 400 eller 300 unger oprindeligt, det siger observationen ingenting om. Der er jo altid én, der skal være den sidste til at blive født.

Hvis man skulle publicere den observation i dag, ville man aldrig acceptere at tage afsæt i et individ, der var fanget på en langline, fordi man ikke har noget repræsentativt tal for, hvad der var derinde, før hun bed på krogen. I et trawl eller garn derimod havde man kunnet tælle de evakuerede unger bagefter.

(MKI)

Klart. Men masser, masser af unger.

(JN)

Nemlig. Hundredevis af unger. Det er i alt fald det, grønlandshajen som art har potentiale til. Men det bliver svært at bevise endeligt, for der er aldrig nogensinde fanget en gravid grønlandshaj ved Grønland på trods af, at der bliver fanget rigtig mange hajer. For mig tyder det på, at grønlandshajen ikke føder der, hvor man fisker efter kommercielle arter. For hvis de gjorde det, ville vi i tillæg til de store hajer have mere information om de små, som stort set aldrig bliver fanget. Jeg tror derfor, at grønlandshajen føder derude – eller dernede – hvor der ikke er noget kommercielt fiskeri. For eksempel ved undersøiske bjerge på fire-fem kilometers dybde. Der er store dele af havet, vi ingenting ved om, og der kan være masser af liv omkring sådan nogle bjergtoppe. De mindste grønlandshajer, som man har fanget på 40-50 centimeter, er udelukkende fanget fra den Midtatlantiske Ryg syd for Island, der netop er sådan en undersøisk, abyssal bjergkæde.

(MKI)

Okay, vildt nok.

(JN)

Det skal selvfølgelig siges, at det jo kun er en ekstremt lille del af de grønlandshajer, der er blevet fanget i Grønland, som er blevet dissekeret og undersøgt. Fiskerne står jo ikke i deres fritid og dissekerer hajer for at se, hvor mange unger, de har. Det er kun super-nørder som mig og enkelte andre, der kigger efter den slags, fordi de er ude i et specifikt ærinde. Er man ikke det, har det altid været kutyme på Grønlands Naturinstitut – som er min arbejdsplads – at man sætter hajerne levende ud igen, i stedet for at skære dem op for at se, hvad der er i dem.

(MKI)

Hvor store og gamle er de, når de bliver kønsmodne? Den, vi kiggede på, var omkring 90 år og stadig en teenager, ikke?

(JN)

Den var ikke kønsmoden i hvert fald. Det havde jeg heller ikke forventet ud fra den størrelse på 3,22 meter. Hunnerne bliver tidligst kønsmodne fra fire meter og op.

(MKI)

Okay. Jeg kunne godt tænke mig at høre, hvordan du har fundet ud af at aldersbestemme grønlandshajen, og hvad der inspirerede det arbejde? Hvordan fik man mistanke om, at den kan blive så gammel?

(JN)

Aldersundersøgelsen har jeg udviklet i samarbejde med forskere fra Danmark, Norge, Grønland, USA og England. Der er rigtig mange, der har fået forskellige gode ideer undervejs i processen, og i min ph.d. forsøgte jeg at samle disse forskellige idéer og komme med et bud på, hvor gammel grønlandshajen kan blive. For mig personligt startede det hele med, at jeg i regi af et studenterjob på et forskningsskib i Grønland i 2010 var med til at fange to-tre kæmpestore hajer som bifangst. Den ene vejede 1.045 kilo og var 4,5 meter lang – et stykke fra maksimal størrelse, men ikke desto mindre en rigtig stor haj. På mit studie et år senere var jeg til en forelæsning med en professor på Københavns Universitet, der hedder John Fleng Steffensen, som fortalte om grønlandshajen; blandt andet om et 50 år gammelt studie udført af den danske biolog Poul Marinus Hansen, som også var interesseret i grønlandshajer. Han havde mærket og genudsat hajer i håb om, at han senere kunne fange dem og se, hvor meget de var vokset i den mellemliggende periode. Men Marinus Hansen fangede aldrig sine egne hajer igen. Han fangede hele tiden bare nye hajer, samtidig med at hans hajer blev fanget alle mulige andre steder i Grønland af kommercielle fiskere, som ikke kunne lave ordentlige målinger af dyrene. Så Marinus Hansen fik ikke rigtig noget data, han kunne bruge, med undtagelse af én haj, som blev fanget af en nær bekendt af ham. Han målte den fuldstændig præcist, og det viste sig, at den kun var vokset otte centimeter – nemlig fra 262 cm til 270 centimeter – i løbet af 16 år.

(MKI)

Hold da op.

(JN)

Det fik Marinus Hansen til at konkludere, at selvom hans studie overordnet set var en fiasko, så gav det indikationer på, at grønlandshajen vokser ekstremt langsomt. En haj på 270 centimeter er stadigvæk bare en teenagehaj, som formodentlig ikke engang er kønsmoden endnu. Derfra fortsatte John Fleng Steffensen sin forelæsning med at fortælle, at han var i kontakt med en dateringsekspert fra Aarhus Universitet – Jan Heinemeier – som havde en idé til, hvordan man kunne undersøge grønlandshajens alder, selvom den ikke har øresten, hvori man kan tælle vækstlag, hvilket er den normale metode til at aldersbestemme fisk. Jan havde foreslået, at man tog hajens øjelinser, hvor man finder nogle proteiner, som ikke er blevet fornyet siden hajens fosterstadie. Dem mente han, at man ville kunne aldersestimere ved hjælp af kulstof-14-datering, og så havde Jan sagt til John: "Hvis du kommer med nogle højøjne, så skal jeg prøve at aldersdatere hajen." Derfor var John i gang med at indsamle højøjne. Han havde allerede fanget nogle hajer i Vestgrønland på to-tre meter, og de foreløbige resultater tydede på, at hajerne var meget gamle. Og så sagde han: "Den største haj, man kender til, og som jeg rigtig godt kunne tænke mig at undersøge..." – fordi når man laver sådan en undersøgelse, vil man gerne have dem store –

"er en haj på 1.005 kilo, der blev fanget for hundrede år siden." Og så rakte jeg hånden op og sagde: "Jeg har selv været med til at fange en på 1.045 kilo sidste år." Så sagde John: "Vi to skal vist lige have en snak."

Så det har aldrig været mig, der fik idéen til metoden, men jeg vidste fra mit studiejob, hvor man kunne få fat i hajerne, og det var dét, der satte gang i både mit speciale- og ph.d.-projekt med at aldersbestemme grønlandshajen ved hjælp af kemiske metoder.

(MKI)

Og det har så givet jer et grundlag for at undersøge dens alder ved første kønsmodenhed, så I bedre kan tegne et generelt trusselsbillede for arten? Men den haj, vi kiggede på i Nuuk i 2021, gav også anledning til en ny observation, ikke? Der var sådan nogle slidser langs siden på hajen (som jeg i øvrigt skylder dig en tegning af)?

(JN)

Ja. Det var mega underligt. Jeg har endnu ikke fundet ud af, hvad det er. Hajer har jo forskellige sanser; synssans, lugtesans, høresans, følesans, smagssans, samt en elektrisk sans, som er lokaliseret i de såkaldte 'lorenziniske ampuller,' der er centreret omkring munden, og som gør dem i stand til at mærke hjerteslag og andre elektriske impulser fra byttedyr, der for eksempel ligger gemt på bunden.

Derudover har hajer også en sidelinjesans, hvormed de kan mærke trykændringer i vandet. Alt dette har grønlandshajen også. Men, da vi for en gangs skyld havde den i god belysning inde i et laboratorium, så vi, at der ned langs siden løb nogle vertikale slidser på en centimeters højde i tillæg til de normale porer, som er en del af sidelinje-sansen.

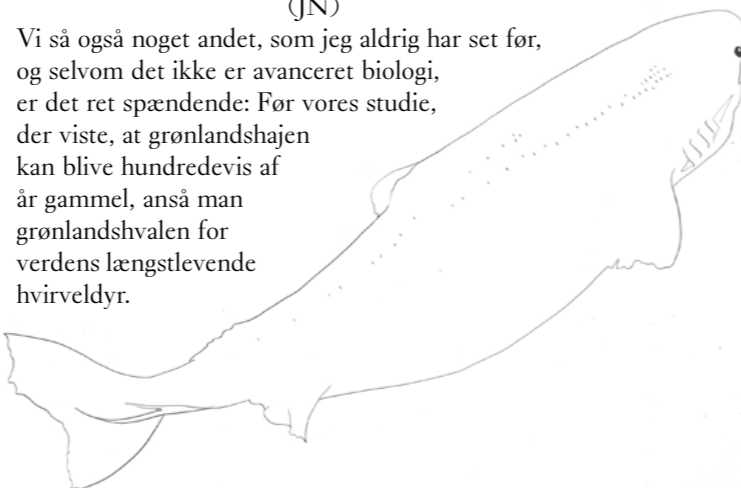
Jeg har skrevet til nogle forskere, som ved en del om hajer og rokker, men de havde aldrig hørt om slidserne. Så jeg har endnu ikke fundet ud af, om det er en slags åbning til en del af dens sidelinjesystem, der ser anderledes ud, end man ville forvente – dét er muligt – eller om det er noget helt andet.

(MKI)

Jeg er i alt fald vidne på, at de slidser var der. Og at de løb hele vejen ned langs hajens side.

(JN)

Vi så også noget andet, som jeg aldrig har set før, og selvom det ikke er avanceret biologi, er det ret spændende: Før vores studie, der viste, at grønlandshajen kan blive hundredevis af år gammel, anså man grønlandshvalen for verdens længstlevende hvirveldyr.



Og det sjove var, at den haj, vi dissekerede i december 2021, havde et stykke grønlandshval i maven. Grønlandshajer er altædende, og de spiser også gerne ådsler, når de har muligheden for det, og det vil jeg tro er tilfældet her.

(MKI)

Men hajen er ikke kun ådselsæder, vel?

(JN)

Når man ser eller fanger en grønlandshaj, så virker de bare så dovne og langsomme og trætte i alt, hvad de laver. Så det ligner ikke et dyr, der er i stand til at fange noget som helst levende. Men jeg tror, at man i virkeligheden ser et træt og udmattet dyr, der har siddet på en langline eller i et trawl i lang tid. Jeg tror, de er i stand til at gøre mere, end man tror, om end i kort tid ad gangen.

I maven på den haj, vi dissekerede, fandt vi ud over det her hvalspæk nogle forskellige små krebsdyr, som grønlandshajen med garanti ikke aktivt selv har opsøgt og spist. Den gider ikke spise sådan nogle små dyr, men de har siddet og spist noget dødt, og så er hajen kommet og har slugt det hele, inklusive de små krebsdyr, som er det, man kalder 'scavenging fauna.' Men jeg har også flere gange set helt frisk bytte i maverne på grønlandshajer – friske sæler og fisk uden scavenging fauna – og derfor tror jeg, at grønlandshajerne er i stand til at fange levende bytte, selvom de virker så langsomme. Vi har dog kun 'circumstantial evidence' – der er ingen, der har set eller filmet en grønlandshaj, der lige kom op og tog en sæl i overfladen.

(MKI)

Og hvad så med grønlandshvalen? Hvad er dens overordnede karakteristika?

(JN)

Grønlandshvalen er helt speciel. I gamle dage hed den simpelthen 'rethval' – eller på engelsk 'right whale.' Når de engelske både kom til Arktis for at fange hvaler i 1600-1700-tallet, var det grønlandshvalen, der var 'the right whale to catch,' fordi den var så langsom. Og de er gigantiske. Ikke helt så lange som blåhvalen, men nærmest bare sådan helt runde, og så bliver de rigtig gamle. Kemiske undersøgelser af øjet og øjelinsen har vist, at hvalerne også kan blive over 200 år gamle. Det er ikke helt så højt som grønlandshajen, som vi i 2016 estimerede til at kunne blive et sted mellem 272 og 512 år gammel baseret på kulstof-14-datering af proteiner i øjelinsen.

(MKI)

Nu kom du selv ind på det med navnene: At de nu til dags bliver kaldt henholdsvis 'grønlandshval' og 'grønlandshaj,' men at hvalen tidligere blev kaldt 'rethval.' Ligeledes er hajen på tværs af de nordisk-germanske sprog gået under navne som 'havkal,' 'hákarl' og 'håkjerringa' – altså variationer over havmand og -frue. Hvad tror du, at der ligger i de navne, og i skiftet fra det ene til det andet?

(JN)

Det skal jeg ikke kunne sige. Men på norsk kalder man hajen 'håkjerring,' som betyder noget i retning af 'hajens kone,' 'håjkone' eller 'håjkælling.'

(MKI)

Jeg mener, at 'kælling' oprindeligt bare femininum for 'karl.'

(JN)

Jeg troede, at det bare var sådan en lidt kærlig version af 'kælling'?

(MKI)

ja, men i bund og grund mener jeg, at 'kælling' – og 'kjerringa'/'kjäring' – bare er gamle nordiske ord for 'kvinde.'

(JN)

Uanset hvad, så har man på norsk et relateret navn for sildehajen: 'håbrann.' I forbindelse med, at jeg var ude og fange grønlandshajer til mit ph.d.-arbejde i Norge, oplevede jeg folk, der sagde: "Hvis du fanger en han, så vil jeg gerne have noget af kødet." Og så var jeg sådan: "Hvorfor vil du kun have kødet fra grønlandshaj-hannerne?" "Jo, for hannerne er supergode spise-fisk." Og så var jeg sådan "What? Der er sgu da ikke nogen forskel på hannerne og hunnerne?" Men så gik det op for mig, at ham her fiskeren – for det var en fisker – troede, at 'håbrann,' altså sildehaj, var en grønlandshaj-han.

(MKI)

Nå! Hvor sjovt!

(JN)

Og så er der det danske navn – 'havkal' – som er forbundet med det islandske 'hákarl.' Men på Island er 'hákarl' fællesbetegnelse for både grønlandshaj og brugde, hvilket formentlig er grunden til, at der kan være forvirring omkring grønlandshajens størrelse. Der er for eksempel mange fiskere, der siger, at de engang har fanget en grønlandshaj på syv-otte meter. Men nu er det bare sådan, at den største grønlandshaj, der er blevet målt af nogen, der vidste, hvad de havde med at gøre, var 5,5 meter. Brugden derimod kan blive meget større. Den kan blive op til 12 meter lang.

For en biolog er det svært at forestille sig, hvordan man kan blande de to dyr sammen. Men for lægmænd kan det sagtens ske, for lige som grønlandshajen er brugden en stor grå haj, som lever i Nordatlanten, og som også bliver fanget en gang imellem.

Jeg har set masser af overskrifter fra lokalaviser – også i nyere tid – som kommer op på Facebook, hvor der for eksempel står: "Otte meter lang grønlandshaj fanget." Men så er der lynhurtigt nogen i kommentarsporet, der er kvikke nok til at identificere det som en brugde. Og så bliver det rettet. Men det gør det jo ikke i hundrede år gammel litteratur.

(MKI)

Nej, selvfølgelig ikke.

(JN)

Og det er tilfældigvis i den gamle litteratur, at man finder beskrivelser af de virkelige store grønlandshajer. Det er derfor, man kan være nødt til at stille spørgsmål ved selv verificerede kilder, hvis der er udsagn, man ikke kan få til at stemme med sin egen empiri. For selvom noget er blevet sagt eller citeret så mange gange, at det er blevet en sandhed, kan det i virkeligheden godt bygge på en fejlobservation.

For at vende tilbage til det med, om grønlandshajen er truet eller ej, så ja: Hvis du er over hundrede år gammel, når du bliver kønsmoden, så er der helt klart nogle advarselslamper, der begynder at blinke. Men tilsvarende: Hvis du får hundredevis af unger, når først du er blevet kønsmoden, og gør det flere gange i løbet af dit liv, så er det noget, der opvejer trusselsbilledet. Derfor er det vigtigt at danne sig et samlet overblik over de forskellige faktorer. Ikke kun alderen.

(MKI)

Ved du hvor lang, hajens cyklus er?

(JN)

No one knows. Det eneste, vi ved, er, at de kan blive gravide og føde flere gange i deres liv. Man kan se, at når de har født en gang, så bliver deres livmoder udvidet. Efter de så har født, trækker den sig sammen igen, men den er stadig udvidet. Det er lige som en ballon; når først den har været pustet op, så er det nemt at skelne den fra en ny ballon. Vi har også set eksempler på en livmoder, der havde været i brug, og hvor hajen var ved at danne nye æg igen. Derfor ved vi, at de i alt fald kan føde unger to gange, og sikkert også mange flere. Man skal huske på, at når du kommer op på de 4,5 meter, så har du jo stadig et langt liv foran dig og kan leve mindst hundrede år endnu.

(MKI)

Ja, så er det da bare med at lave en masse unger!

(JN)

Ja, for hvorfor skulle grønlandshajen bruge hundrede år på at blive kønsmoden, for så bare at få unger én eller to gange, og derefter leve som sådan en, en...

(MKI)

En gerontofisk.

(JN)

Ja. Den ville være helt unik, hvis den bare sagde: "That was it. Nu svømmer jeg bare rundt i hundrede år og venter på, at jeg falder død ned til havbunden." Det ville være biologisk idioti, ikke? Generelt er det sådan for fisk, at de får flere unger, jo større de bliver, samt bedre og bedre afkom med alderen.

(MKI)

Er det rigtigt? Okay.

(JN)

Fordi alarmklokkerne ringer på grund af dens høje alder og dens hyppighed som bifangst, er der en masse

interesseorganisationer, der vil overvåge grønlandshajen og have forskellige 'conditions,' som det hedder. Men jeg prøver at trænge igennem med et budskab om, at der også er rigtig meget, der tyder på, at grønlandshajen ikke er truet, fordi de har så høj fekunditet. Men dermed ikke sagt, at det ikke er et problem med bifangst, for det er det, og det er super vigtigt, at der fortsat er fokus på det.

(MKI)

Hvordan skal fiskerne gebærde sig, når de får den ind? Hvis hajen går i trawlet, er det vel ødelagt?

(JN)

Trawlet kan godt repareres. Men derimod er det et problem, at den knuser fangsten. Og så synes fiskerne generelt bare, at det er et kæmpe besvær: At få den ud på dækket, for derefter at skulle manøvrere den ud i havet igen.

Så for at kunne beskytte grønlandshajen bedst muligt, har vi iværksat overvågning med satellitsendere for at finde ud af, hvor de befinder sig, når de bliver kønsmodne: opholder de store kønsmodne hunner sig dér, hvor der er meget fiskeri, eller er det bare juvenile teenagere? Ikke fordi teenagerne ikke er vigtige, men man vil altid primært gå efter at beskytte en arts yngelområde. Dog kræver det store mængder data at identificere, hvordan de svømmer, og hvor. Vi har nogle bud, men det arbejde er stadig on-going.

(MKI)

Kan du løfte lidt af sløret?

(JN)

Normalt gælder det for mindre grønlandshajer, at de kan være i al slags vand – både koldt (< 0° Celsius) og varmt (> 4° Celsius) – mens de store kønsmodne hunner opsøger områder med varmere vand, hvor de opholder sig i lange tidsperioder. Det kunne skyldes, at de skal lave så mange æg og unger og derfor skal have en masse energi – mad – for at sætte gang i deres metabolisme. Det er typisk i de sydlige dele af Grønland, hvor de klumper sig sammen bestemte steder. Så hvis jeg skulle pege på ét område i Grønland, man med fordel kunne frede for at beskytte grønlandshajen, ville det være området ud for Paamiut. Her kommer indlandsisen helt ned til havet, og når man sejler forbi, kan man se, at vandet er helt turkis på grund af udvaskning af bl.a. silt fra indlandsisen. Man kan også se store ujævnheder i bunden på soklen, der formentlig gør, at vandet hvirvles op og skaber stor produktion med mange sæler og hvaler. Den slags er guf for grønlandshajer, og så er der tilmed den rette varme temperatur.

(MKI)

Så er det sikkert også et godt sted at fiske.

(JN)

Fiskerne skal hvert fald ikke fiske dér, hvis man ønsker at beskytte grønlandshajer i Grønland.



(MKI)

Men hvilken rolle spiller fiskeriet i grønlandsk kontekst?

(JN)

Fiskeriet er den primære indtægtskilde i grønlandsk økonomi. Så det er vigtigt at finde en måde, hvorpå man kan sikre fiskerierhvervet, samtidig med at man beskytter de forskellige dyrestande, herunder grønlandshajen. For eksempel var bifangst af grønlandshaj tidligere et stort problem i rejefiskeriet, fordi de kvaste fangsten.

(MKI)

Ja, det er jo nemt at forestille sig.

(JN)

Men nu har man i rejefiskeriet fundet ud af at sætte nogle gitre ned, sådan at store fisk bare bliver vappet ud igen uden at lave problemer i trawlet. Derimod er bifangst af grønlandshaj fortsat et stort problem i hellefisk-fiskeriet, hvilket har bragt deres MSC-certificering som bæredygtigt fiskeri i fare. Derfor er det blevet indskærpet, at der skal findes en løsning på problemet inden for to til fire år, og at man skal afdække dets omfang. Men det er ikke altid, at erhvervet troværdigt kan lave uvildige undersøgelser.

(MKI)

Altså undersøge sig selv?

(JN)

Nej, der er det bedre, at de får nogle forskere som os på banen. Der er pt. nogle canadiere, der er i gang med at undersøge, om hajerne kan overleve at blive fanget i fiskeriet. For det ser desværre ud som om, der er en ret stor dødelighed blandt de hajer, der kommer ind som bifangst, selvom de bliver sat levende ud bagefter. Et igangværende arbejde er derfor at udforske metoder til at mindske dødeligheden relateret til bifangst. Og i den forbindelse foreslog jeg, at man kunne montere en metalplade på bådene, som hajen trækkes tilbage i vandet med. På den måde ville den ryge ned i havet, uden at man skulle hive og slide i selve dyret. Men det kræver, at fiskeriet indvilliger i at betale for satellitmærker,

der kan undersøge om hajerne overlever, og de koster cirka 15.000 kroner per mærke. Og der skal mærkes mange hajer, hvis man skal kunne bruge undersøgelsen til noget, så det er et dyrt projekt, og de skal selv betale for det.

Da projektet for nylig blev præsenteret for industrien, var der da også en, der sagde: "Ja, ja, men nu stopper Julius jo på Naturinstituttet, fordi han flytter til Danmark, og så vil der nok ikke være så meget fokus på det fremadrettet. Så skal vi ikke lige vente og se, om problemerne fortsætter, når han ikke længere er her til at pippe op til alle de her forskellige udvalg." Og det er jo desværre sådan, den barske virkelighed er.

(MKI)

Av. Men er det fordi, der er så forskellige interesser og hensyn på spil: Fiskernes økonomi, politiske hensyn og dyrenes trivsel?

(JN)

Ja, nemlig. Men uanset hvad, kan det kun være i fiskeriets interesse at bevare deres MSC-certificering, fordi de dermed kan få en højere pris for deres fangst, og selvstyret kan sikre sine skatteindtægter. Men grønlandshajen er også vigtig for Grønland på andre måder: Selvom man lokalt synes, at den er irriterende, grim, og stjæler fangsten fra langlinerne, er det vigtigt at kunne vise, at man ikke slår alt for mange ihjel. I den globale verden er hajer og andre dybhavsfisk nemlig super karismatiske og virkelig noget, folk bryder sig om. Men jeg tror desværre først, der kommer til at ske noget, når fiskerne har en direkte økonomisk interesse i det.

(MKI)

Hvordan er grønlandshajen distribueret i det nordlige Atlanterhav? Nu kalder vi den jo 'grønlandshaj,' men den bliver også fanget i både Island og Norge, ligesom der er flere eksempler på, at de er skyllet op på stranden langs den jyske vestkyst.

(JN)

Hvis den skulle have et navn, der angav dens udbredelse, så ville jeg kalde den 'nordatlantisk dybhavshaj.'

(MKI)
Nordatlantisk dybhavshaj?

(JN)
Ja.

(MKI)
Og så tænke 'Nordatlanten' som 'det nordlige Atlanterhav'? For umiddelbart tænker jeg, at når man siger 'Nordatlanten,' så mener man Grønland, Færøerne og Island?

(JN)
Ja og nej. Jeg mener 'det nordlige Nordatlantehav,' for 'Nordatlantehavet' er jo bare Atlanterhavet fra Ækvator og op. Men nu sagde jeg jo 'nordatlantisk,' og det er fordi, den også er observeret i England og så langt mod syd som De Kanariske Øer og Azorerne. Ligeledes bliver den fanget hyppigt i Skagerrak, hvor den på 400-500 meters dybde er en almindeligt forekommende fisk.

(MKI)
Men de bliver ikke fanget lige så hyppigt i det kommercielle fiskeri i Skagerrak som i Grønland?

(JN)
Både og. Jeg tror, at fiskerne i Skagerrak er klar over, at det i Danmark giver flere problemer end likes, hvis de lægger et billede op af en grønlandshaj, der er roget ind som bifangst. Så jeg tror bare, at man ikke taler om det, selvom det sker. Når jeg har skullet indkredse dens udbredelse i kontekst af min forskning, har jeg altid skrevet 'the Northern North Atlantic.'

(MKI)
Ja. Nemlig.
(JN)
Så føler jeg i alt fald, at jeg ved, hvad jeg mener.

(MKI)
Ha ha ha.
(JN)
Men jeg ved jo ikke, om andre gør det...

(MKI)
Så vi foreslår 'nordatlantisk dybhavshaj'; eller 'nordlig...'

(JN)
'Nordlig nordatlantisk dybhavshaj.'

(MKI)
'Nordlig atlantehavs-dybhavshaj,' eller 'nordlig dybhavs-atlantehavshaj'...

(JN)
Du får lov til at rode med, hvad den skal hedde. Det kan du lige tænke lidt over.

(MKI)
Okay.

ODE TIL DANAIDERNE

AQQALUK LYNGE

Forbandede bæster
nu ved jeg det med sikkerhed
– fortidens fejl
effektiv eksportproduktion
moderne samfund i Grønland
alle disse officielle Grønlandsoptimister
som privat er kyniske
og ikke tror en døjt på det hele
statstilskud er det samme som et erhvervsliv
realisme realisme
sådan et mummiespil –

Nu ved jeg det.
Jeg ved at dansk kolonialisme skjuler sig i
ministerier (hverken under krigs eller justits)
men under Grønlands
Inhuman human imperialisme
kold krig mod kulden
– når man erhverver områder i et land
med fremmed sprog, sæder og forfatning
så begynder vanskelighederne
og der skal stor lykke og store evner til at bevare dem
Det bedste og virksomste middel vil være at erobreren
personligt bosætter sig i det nye land –

Apostel Hans Egede sagde: BIBLEN er mit våben
Kongen af Danmark sagde: PENGE er mit våben
– enten må man vinde menneskene for sig
eller også må man udrydde dem –

Grønland
danaidernes kar
ganske umætteligt af
udsendte svin
udsendte kræ
udsendte kloakrør
udsendt kolonialisme
– udsendtisme

Grønland –
vi er afladskræmmerens kiste
– når pengene i Grønland klinger
langsomt min sjæl ud af Grønland punger –

Jeg ved det
Thulefolket forjaget
strategisk

Qutdligssat
kasseret
uøkonomisk

Den grønlandske torsk
kasseret
urentabel

Den grønlandske grønlander
kasseret
ukvalificeret

grønlandsk sjæl
grønlandsk kultur
mangler

ny sjæl
ny kultur
kasseret
urbaniseret

Grønland du er bundløs
grønlander du falder bundløst
– skader man nogen
skal man gøre det så grundigt
at man ikke behøver at frygte hævn –

Dansk version fra Litteratur & Samfund:
Grønland – Imperialisme med Dansk Ansigt
(Temnummer af: Litteratur & Samfund, nr. 19-21, 1977)

O – OVERGADEN
Overgaden neden vandet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org

Marie Kolbæk Iversen
Rovhistorier
Udstillingsperiode: 27.08.2022 – 23.10.2022

ISBN: 978-87-94311-06-9
EAN: 9788794311069

Redaktør: Nanna Friis
Oversættelse: Nanna Friis, Martin Rehof
Korrektur: Nanna Friis, Rhea Dall
Tekst- og samtalebidrag: Adam Khalil, Emmy Laura Pérez Fjalland, Julius Nielsen, Aqqaluk Lynge,
Evald Tang Kristensen/folkeminde,
Marie Kolbæk Iversen
Fotos og billedmateriale: Laura Stamer,
Christian Brems,
Marie Kolbæk Iversen
Udstillingen er støttet af: Statens Kunstfond,
Novo Nordisk Fondens Mads Øvlisen-stipendier,
Norges Program for Kunstnerisk Forskning

Grafisk design: fanfare
Typography: Glossy Magazine, Bold Decisions
Trykt hos: Raddraier, Amsterdam
Publikationen er støttet af: Augustinus Fonden

Trykt i 150 eksemplarer

NAALAGAFFIK PISSAANERLU

AQQALUK LYNGE

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qallunaat nunasiaqartut
sakkut toqutsisinnaasut atornagit
inuppalaartumilli naqisimannineq
ministeriaqarfimmit aqunneqarluni –
"nunamik tigusaanni immikkut oqaasilimmik,
pissusilimmik
immikkullu inuusaaseqartunik inulimmik
aatsaat ajornartorsiutit takkussulertarput
annertuumillu iluatsitaarisariaqarpoq
pigiinnaassuseqartariaqarlunilu
nunasiaq pigiinnassagaanni
aqqutissaq pitsaanerpaaq tassa nammineq
nunasiami najugaqarnissaq"
– aallartitatigut

apustili Hans Egede oqarpoq: BIIBLI sakkugaara
Danmarkip kunngia oqarpoq: ANINGAASAQ sakkugaara
"nunasiarisap inuui iluarusutsittariaqarput
taamaangippat nungusapallaannartariaqarput"

Kalaallit Nunaat
qattaavoq
ulikkaarinnaangitsoq
puulukinik, kukkukuut perlukinik iteqqumillu
tikisitat juulaarfiat

Kalaallit nunaata taalliareqqinneqarnera Aqqaluk Lyngemii
"The Veins of the Heart to the Pinnacle of the Mind"
(Montreal: International Polar Institute Press, 2008)

Kalaallit Nunaat –
ajortuliat isumakkeerfigineqarfiat
– mittatigaatsit nunasiatut

paasivara
Avanersuarmit nutersitaapput
– sakkutuut inissaqarnissaat
inuit pilluarnerannit pingaarnerummat

kalaaleq kalavik
– kaseerpaat
atorfissaqanngimmangoq

kalaallit tarningat
kultooriat
amigarporooq
– nutaamik nassaarput
naammaginaguli

Nunarput-aa
nataatsuuvutit
kalaaleq-aa nakkaaffit nateqanngilaq
"ajortumeerigaanni ajortumiigaq suujunnaarsittariaqarpoq
akiniartinninnissaq qularnaarlugu"

Kalaallit Nunaat
atsersimavaatsilliaasiit – Gronland
aapakorlutik
– tulugaq qaqortaq
qaani qarrakoq
itsineqanngitsoq –
akiitsukkaminik isumakkeerfigeqqusut unnaviat
aallartitat sukisaarsaarfiat

Nunanguara
qattaavarsuuvutit ulikkaarfeqanngitsoq
nuannaralugu immisavaatsit
– suerullutit

naalagaaffik pissaanerlu naalannassuserlu
allat pigiinnassavaat
naassaangitsumik?

ODE TO THE DANNAIDES

AQQUALUK LYNGE

The Greenlandic people
– unqualified

The Greenlandic culture
– urbanized

Greenland, you are bottomless
Greenland, you fall endlessly

*If you harm someone
do it so thoroughly
that you do not fear revenge*

Kalaallit Nuna, the land of the skatings
you with your enchanting, untrue name – *Greenland*

Sheep in wolves' clothing
completely frozen at the top

at the bottom, emptiness
the indulgence vendors' Klondike

– the Danaides' hobby

Must they have the pleasure
– of the power and the glory
for ever and ever?

(with thanks to Machiavelli)

New amended version in English by Aqqualuk Lyngé from
The Veins of the Heart to the Pinnacle of the Mind

(Montreal: International Polar Institute Press, 2008)

O—OVERGADEN

Overgaden neden vandet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org

Marie Kolbæk Iversen

Koovhistorer

Exhibition period: 27.08.2022 – 23.10.2022

ISBN: 978-87-9431-06-9

EAN: 9788794311069

Editor & Translation: Nanna Friis

Copy Editing: Susannah Worth

Text and conversation contributions: Adam Khalil, Emmy

Laura Pérez Fjalland, Julius Nielsen, Aqqualuk

Lyngé, Evald Tang Kristensen/traditional,

Marie Kolbæk Iversen

Photos and imagery: Laura Stamer, Christian Brems,

Marie Kolbæk Iversen

The exhibition is supported by: The Danish Arts Foundation,

the Novo Nordisk Foundation's Mads Øvlisen sti-

(NARP)

pend, the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

Graphic design: fanfare

Typography: Glossy Magazine, Bold Decisions

Printed at: Raddraier, Amsterdam

The publication is supported by: Augustinus Fonden

Printed in edition of 150 copies

(Danish colonialism in Greenland)

Contemptible beasts

now I know

the mistakes of the past:

effective export production

modern society in Greenland

all the official optimists

who are cynical in private

and don't believe in the whole thing one bit

Government grants are business propositions

realism, realism

a real mummer's play

Now I know

that Danish colonialism hides itself in ministries

(not in defence or in justice

but in Northern Affairs)

Inhuman humanistic imperialism

cold war against the cold

– when you find areas in a country

with foreign languages, habits and laws

A great deal of luck is needed to preserve them

then the problems start!

especially when the conqueror lives in his new territory

The evangelist Hans Egede said: THE BIBLE is my weapon

– either you have to win the people over

or else you have to destroy them –

Greenland

– the Danaides' tough

completely glutinous

they scent pigs

scent beasis

scent sewerpipes

scent colonialism

"scentsme"

Greenland

– we are the indulgence vendor's coffee

– as the money of Greenland jumps

out of Greenland

my soul slowly departs

The Thule people pushed out

– strategically

The coalminers of Qullissat relocated

– uneconomic

The Greenlandic cod production

– unprofitable

But they are not caught as bycatch in the
commercial fisheries in Skagerrak as in Greenland?

(MKI)

Yes and no. I think that the fishermen in Skagerrak

are aware that in Denmark it likely generates more

problems than likes if they post a picture of

a Greenland shark that has been caught

as bycatch. So I just think that they don't

talk about it even if it happens. When in

the context of my research, I have had to identify

its distribution, I have always written "the northern

North Atlantic".

(MKI)

Yes. Exactly.

(JN)

Then at least I feel that I know what I mean.

(MKI)

Ha ha ha.

(MKI)

But I don't know if others do...

(JN)

So we suggest North Atlantic deep-sea shark,

or northern..

(JN)

Northern North Atlantic deep-sea shark.

(MKI)

Northern Atlantic deep-sea shark, or northern deep-

sea Atlantic shark...

(JN)

That will be your task then: to figure out what it

should be called. You can go and give it a think.

Okay.

I have come across lots of headlines from local newspapers, including recent ones that come up on Facebook, where it says, for example: "Eight-meter long Greenland shark caught." But then someone in the comment section is bright enough to identify it as a basking shark. And then it gets fixed. But that doesn't happen in hundred-year-old literature.

(MKD)

No, of course not.

(JN)

And it just so happens to be in the old literature that you find descriptions of the really big Greenland sharks. This is why you may have to question even verified sources, if there are findings that do not match your own empirical data. Because even if something has been said or quoted so many times that it appears beyond questioning, it may in fact be based on a mistaken observation. Returning to the question whether or not the Greenland shark is an endangered species, then yes, if you're over 100 years old when you become fertile, there are definitely some warning lights that start flashing. But equally, if you give birth to hundreds of pups once you become sexually mature, and do so several times in your life, then that is something that muddies the threat assessment. It is therefore important to get an overview of the various factors, not just age and longevity.

(MKD)

Do you know how long the shark's cycle is?

(JN)

No one knows. All we know is that they can get pregnant and give birth several times in their life. You can see that when they have given birth once, their uterus is enlarged. Then after they give birth, it contracts again, but it is still somewhat dilated. It's just like a balloon: once it has been inflated, it is easy to distinguish from a new balloon. We have also seen examples of uteri that had been in use and where new eggs were forming. This is how we know that they can give birth to pups at least twice and probably many more times. You have to remember that when you are 4.5 meters, you still have a long life ahead of you and can live at least another 100 years.

(MKD)

Yes, then it's just about making a lot of pups!

(JN)

Yes, because why would the Greenland shark take 100 years to become sexually mature, only to have pups once or twice, and then live as a, a...

(MKD)

A gerontofish.

(JN)

Yes. It would be completely unique if it just said: "That was it. Now I'll just swim around for 100 years and wait until I drop dead to the bottom of the sea."

That would be biological idiosyncrasy, wouldn't it? As a general rule, fish have more pups the bigger they get, and their offspring improve with age.

(MKD)

Is that right? Okay.

(JN)

Because of its longevity and its frequency as bycatch, NGOs that want to monitor the Greenland shark and all these alarm bells are ringing among different

(MKD)

No, of course not.

(JN)

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How should the fishermen react when they catch it? If the shark gets into the trawl, it's broken, right?

(JN)

The trawl can be repaired. But it is a problem that the shark crushes the catch. And then the fishermen generally just think it's a huge hassle, getting it out on deck and then having to maneuver it back into the sea. So in order to protect the Greenland shark, we have started monitoring them with satellite transmitters to find out where they are when they become sexually mature. Do the large sexually mature females frequent waters where there is also a lot of fishing activity taking place, or is it just juvenile teenagers there? Not that the teenagers are not important, but one will always aim to primarily protect a species' breeding area. However, it requires large amounts of data to identify their swimming patterns. We have some hypotheses, but that work is still ongoing.

(MKD)

Can you lift the veil a bit?

(JN)

Generally the smaller Greenland sharks are able to adapt to all kinds of water – cold (< 0° Celsius) and warm (> 4° Celsius) – while the large sexually mature females seek out areas with warmer water and stay there for longer periods of time. This could be because they have to make so many eggs and pups and therefore have to get a lot of energy (food) to boost their metabolism. This is typically in the southern parts of Greenland, where they gather in certain places. So if I were to point out one area in Greenland worth listing with a view to protecting the Greenland shark, it would be the area around Paamut. Here, the ice cap reaches all the way down to the sea, and when you sail past you can see how the water is completely turquoise due to the leaching of, among other things, silt from the inland ice. You can also see large uneven patches at the base, probably causing the water to swirl upwards, generating a large production with many seals and whales.

This is a real treat for Greenland sharks, and in addition the water has the right warm temperature.

(MKD)

Then it's probably also a good place to fish.

(JN)

The fishermen should not fish there if we want to protect Greenland sharks in Greenland, that's for sure!

(MKD)

Tell me, what role does fishery play in a Greenlandic context?

(JN)

Fishery is the primary source of income in Greenland's economy. So it is important to find a way to secure the industry, while at the same time protecting the various animal populations, including the Greenland shark. For example, Greenland shark bycatch used to be a big problem in shrimp fishery because they would crush the catch.

(MKD)

Well, that's easy to imagine.

(JN)

But now the shrimp-fishermen have installed these grids that keep large fish out of the trawl. By contrast, bycatch of Greenland shark remains a major problem in halibut fishery to the extent of jeopardizing their MSC certification as sustainable fishery. As a consequence, they have been told to find a solution within two to four years as well as identifying the scope of the problem. But the industry is not always capable of reliably carrying out impartial investigations.

(MKD)

You mean investigating itself?

(JN)

No, then it's better to get researchers like us on board. There are currently some Canadian researchers who are investigating whether the sharks may survive being caught by the commercial boats. Because, unfortunately, it seems that there is a fairly high mortality rate among the sharks that come in as bycatch, even if they are released alive afterwards. It is therefore an ongoing obligation to explore methods to reduce shark mortality in connection with bycatch. To this end, I suggested that a metal plate be mounted on the boats, with which the shark could be pulled back into the water. In that way, it would be manoeuvred the animal itself. But it requires that they agree to pay for satellite tags to check whether the sharks survive, and the price is approximately 15,000 Danish kroner per tag. And many sharks have to be tagged for the study to be of any use, so it is an expensive project and the fishermen have to pay for it themselves. When the project was recently presented to the industry, there was therefore someone saying: "Well, well, but now Julius will stop working at the

Greenland Institute of Natural Resources because he is moving to Denmark, meaning that there is probably not going to be as much focus on it in the future. Why don't we just wait a bit and see if the problems continue when he is no longer here to alert all these different committees." Such is the harsh reality, unfortunately.

(MKD)

Such. But is that because there are so many different interests that have to be taken into consideration: the fishermen's economy, political considerations, as well as the wellbeing of the animals?

(JN)

Yes, exactly. But no matter what, it can only be in the interest of the fishermen to maintain their MSC certification, which increases the price and value of their catch, while also securing the country's tax revenues. But the Greenland shark is also important to Greenland in other ways: even if it is locally considered to be annoying and ugly, and is resented for stealing longlines, it is important for Greenland to be able to show that not too many sharks are killed. Because in the global world, sharks and other deep-sea fish are super charismatic and something people really care about. Unfortunately, I doubt anything will happen before the industry has a direct financial interest in it.

(MKD)

How is the Greenland shark distributed across the northern North Atlantic? Now we call it the Greenland shark, but it is also caught in both Iceland and Norway, just as there are several examples of beached Greenland sharks along the west coast of Jutland.

(JN)

If we were to give it a name that would indicate the scope of its distribution, I would call it the North Atlantic deep-sea shark.

(MKD)

(JN)

Yes.

(MKD)

And then think of the "North Atlantic" as the whole of the northern North Atlantic? Because when I hear "the North Atlantic," I immediately think of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland?

(JN)

Yes and no. I mean the northern North Atlantic Ocean, because the North Atlantic Ocean is just the Atlantic Ocean from the Equator upwards. But now I said "North Atlantic", and that is because it has also been observed in England and as far south as frequently in Skagerrak, where it is a commonly found fish at depths of 400 to 500 meters.

If this is not the case, it has always been the custom at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, which is where I work, to put the sharks back out alive, instead of cutting them open to see what is inside them.

How big and old are they when they become sexually mature? The one we were looking at was about 90 years old and still a teenager, right?

(JN)

It wasn't sexually mature at any rate. I didn't expect that from its size of 3.22 meters either. Females become sexually mature at the earliest from four meters and up.

(MKD)

Okay. I'd like to hear how you conceived of the technique to age-determine the Greenland shark and what inspired that work? How did one come to suspect that they could live to be so very old?

(JN)

I developed the age-determination technique in collaboration with researchers from Denmark, Norway, Greenland, the USA, and England. There are many people who have had various good ideas throughout the process, and in my PhD I tried to combine these different ideas and make an estimate of the Greenland shark's longevity. For me personally, it all started when, undertaking a student job on a research vessel in Greenland in 2010, we caught two or three huge sharks as bycatch. One weighed 1,045 kilograms and was 4.5 meters long – not maximum size, but a really big shark nonetheless.

During my studies a year later, I attended a lecture by a professor at the University of Copenhagen, John Fleng Steffensen, who talked about the Greenland shark; among other things about a 50-year-old study carried out by Poul Martinus Hansen, who was a Danish biologist and who was also interested in Greenland sharks. He had tagged and released sharks in the hope that he could later recapture them and see how much they had grown in the intervening period. But Martinus Hansen never caught his own sharks again. He was just catching new sharks all the time, at the same time as his sharks were being caught all over Greenland by commercial fishermen who couldn't measure the animals properly. So Martinus Hansen didn't really get any data he could use, with the exception of one shark that was caught by a close acquaintance of his.

He measured it with absolute precision, and it turned out that it had grown only eight centimeters – from 262 cm to 270 centimeters – over the course of 16 years.

Wow.

(MKD)

This led Martinus Hansen to conclude that, although the Greenland shark grows extremely slowly. A 270-centimeter shark is still just a teenage shark.

Probably not even sexually mature yet. From there, John Fleng Steffensen continued his lecture by saying that he was in contact with a dating expert from Aarhus University, Jan Heinemeyer, who had an idea for how to investigate the Greenland shark's age, even though it does not have calcified otoliths in which you can count yearly growth layers.

(MKD)

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I, at least, witnessed that the slits were there. And that they ran all the way down the side of the shark.

(MKD)

We also saw something else that I've never seen before, and while it's not advanced biology, it's pretty exciting. Before our study, which showed that the Greenland shark can live for hundreds of years, the bowhead whale was considered the world's longest-living vertebrate. And the funny thing was that the shark we dissected in December 2021 had a piece of bowhead whale in its stomach. Greenland sharks are omnivores and they also like to eat carrion when they have the opportunity, and I would think that is the case here.

(JN)

But the shark isn't just a scavenger, is it?

(MKD)

When you see or catch a Greenland shark, they just seem so lazy and slow and tired in everything they do. So it doesn't look like an animal capable of catching anything that is alive. But I think that in reality what you see is a tired and exhausted animal that has been sitting on a longline or in a trawl for a long time. I think they are capable of doing more than you think, even if only for a limited time. Inside the stomach of the shark that we dissected, in addition to this whale blubber, we also found various small crustaceans, which the Greenland shark has certainly not actively sought out and eaten itself. It doesn't bother to eat small animals like that, but they have been eating something dead, and then the shark has come along and swallowed it all, including the small crustaceans, which are what you call "scavenging fauna". However, I have often observed completely fresh prey in the stomachs of Greenland sharks – fresh seals and fish without scavenging fauna – and I therefore believe that the Greenland shark is capable of catching live prey, even though it seems so slow. However, we only have circumstantial evidence; no one has ever seen or filmed a Greenland shark break the water surface to catch a seal.

(MKD)

And what about the bowhead whale? What are its overall characteristics?

(JN)

The bowhead whale is quite special. In the old days it was simply called "right whale" because when the English fishermen came to the Arctic to catch whales in the 1600s and 1700s, it was the bowhead whale that was "the right whale to catch" because it was so slow. And they are gigantic. Not quite as long as the blue whale, in fact almost completely round, and then they get really old too. Chemical studies of the eye and the eye lens have shown that the whales can also live to become more than 200 years old. It is not quite as old as the Greenland shark, which we estimated in 2016 could live to be somewhere between 272 and 512 years old based on carbon-14 dating of proteins in the eye lens.

(MKD)

And then there's the Danish name, "havkal", which is connected to the Icelandic "hakarl". But in Iceland, "hakarl" denotes both the Greenland shark and the basking shark, which is probably the reason why there is some confusion about the size of the Greenland shark. There are many fishermen who will say that they once caught a seven- or eight-meters long Greenland shark. Now it just so happens that the largest Greenland shark that has been measured by someone who knew what they were dealing with was 5.5 meters.

(JN)

The basking shark, on the other hand, can grow to be much larger. It can be up to 12 meters long. For a biologist, it is difficult to imagine how one can confuse those two animals, but for laymen it can easily happen because just like the Greenland shark, the basking shark is a large gray shark that lives in the North Atlantic and which is also caught from time to time.

(MKD)

Oh, I see! How funny!

(JN)

– the porbeagle shark – was a male Greenland shark. But then it dawned on me that this fisherman, because he was a fisherman, thought that "habrann" difference between males and females, is there?" And then I was like, "What? There is no fish to eat." And then I was like, "Because the males are excellent from the male Greenland sharks?" to which they responded: "Why do you only want the meat like some of the meat." And then I was like: "If you catch a male, I would me and say: "If you catch a male, I would project in Norway, some people would come up to I was out catching Greenland sharks for my PhD name for the porbeagle shark: "habrann". When No matter what, in Norwegian you have a related

(MKD)

Speaking of names. Nowadays these two animals are called bowhead whale and Greenland shark respectively, but the whale was previously called "right whale". Likewise, across the Nordic-Germanic languages the shark has passed under names such as "havkal", "hakarl" and "håkjertinga" – that is, variations on merman and mermaid. What do you think lies in those names, and in the change from one to the other?

(JN)

I think that "kælling" – and "kjertinga"/"kjarting" – was originally just the feminine version of "kart", i.e. "man".

(JN)

I thought it was just some kind of affectionate version of "kælling", i.e. bitch?

(MKD)

Yes, but basically I think that "kælling", "kjertinga" and "kjarting" are just old Nordic words for "woman".

(JN)

No matter what, in Norwegian you have a related name for the porbeagle shark: "habrann". When I was out catching Greenland sharks for my PhD project in Norway, some people would come up to me and say: "If you catch a male, I would like some of the meat." And then I was like: "Why do you only want the meat from the male Greenland sharks?" to which they responded: "Because the males are excellent fish to eat." And then I was like, "What? There is no difference between males and females, is there?" But then it dawned on me that this fisherman, because he was a fisherman, thought that "habrann" – the porbeagle shark – was a male Greenland shark.

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(JN)

This led Martinus Hansen to conclude that, although the Greenland shark grows extremely slowly. A 270-centimeter shark is still just a teenage shark.

So, in addition to the fact that I personally think it is interesting to contribute to the understanding of an animal that, the deeper one digs, only becomes more fascinating, there are also a number of things that make it important to research it. Not least, questions linked to commercial fishing, which is the most important industry in Greenland, and where sharks are caught in huge numbers as bycatch, just as happens in Norway, Iceland, arctic Canada, and in the fisheries around Svalbard. In some respects the Greenland shark is an ordinary fish; in other respects it is incredibly special and fantastic. Historically, it has been heavily fished for its liver oil, which was used for lighting and industrial purposes. Now there is no longer any targeted fishing for the Greenland shark; instead it is just an annoying and frequent bycatch, which is especially caught on longlines and in trawls. And when an animal is caught frequently, not least as bycatch, you want to know what kind of animal it is. How is it affected? What is its biology? So in order to become capable of answering some of those questions, we have carried out various studies over the years. Among other things, we have investigated how old they get and when they become sexually mature, because this can say something about the vulnerability of the species and of the population. Yes, because the question is, I guess, whether it – even as bycatch – can be overfished to a point of becoming endangered?

(MKI)

When you say that the shark is in some ways very ordinary, and in others quite special, what do you mean?
 (JN)
 This applies, for example, in relation to their reproductive biology, that is, their breeding pattern. Some of the Greenland sharks I have dissected have had extremely large numbers of eggs. In particular, there was one 4.7-meter shark that had 649 orange-sized eggs inside it.
 (MKI)
 Wow.

It is unusual for a shark to have so many large eggs of the same size. And that opens up the question of how many of them become actual pups.
 (JN)
 I certainly have some theories, and they are also well supported by science. But it's hard to answer with a one-liner. My theory is that on exactly this point the Greenland shark is not so unusual compared to other sharks, but in general not much is known about its reproductive biology. I myself have helped find a shark that had eggs in it, and then I have some colleagues who, in the context of my project, have also found one. In addition, there is a 50-year-old description of a female Greenland shark with eggs inside of her. In these three cases, 649, 455 and 400 eggs of six to seven centimeters' diameter have been counted, respectively. In addition to this, there is one article that reports of a pregnant female with ten full-grown pups of approximately 37 centimeters' length that had been caught by some fishermen sometime in the 1950s in the Faroe Islands. Based on this one observation, it has since been assumed that the Greenland shark gives birth to up to ten pups. But then when I see 649 eggs, I can't help but ask myself, why on earth would it make so many eggs of the same size if it only needs ten of them? Precisely the fact that they are (almost) the same size is an important detail. You can explore the scientific literature and research information about other sharks belonging to the same family as the Greenland shark, namely Squaliformes. And for all other Squaliformes sharks that have been thoroughly studied, the number of mature eggs of the same size reflects the number of pups that the mother is capable of producing.
 (MKI)
 Does that mean it gives birth to 600 pups in its lifetime, or in a year or cycle? Does it make new eggs?

(JN)

I read that they had caught her on a longline, I thought: "That was also important!" Because if a pregnant shark is in a life-threatening situation – caught on a hook or in a net, about to die from whatever – she evacuates her uterus to save the pups. This is the case for all sharks and rays.
 (MKI)
 I understand why you ask that question, because it's a bit of a myth concerning sharks, but it's very unlikely inside the womb?
 (JN)
 But could it be that the pups predate on each other of its closest relatives.
 (MKI)
 In Squaliformes sharks, where the eggs are the same size, the eggs develop simultaneously. They are fertilized at the same time, then move into the uterus, where they develop into fetuses that are born. I am absolutely convinced that this is also the case for the Greenland shark. If you were to believe that the Greenland shark gives birth to only ten pups despite hundreds of eggs, it would be extremely unusual compared to all

(JN)

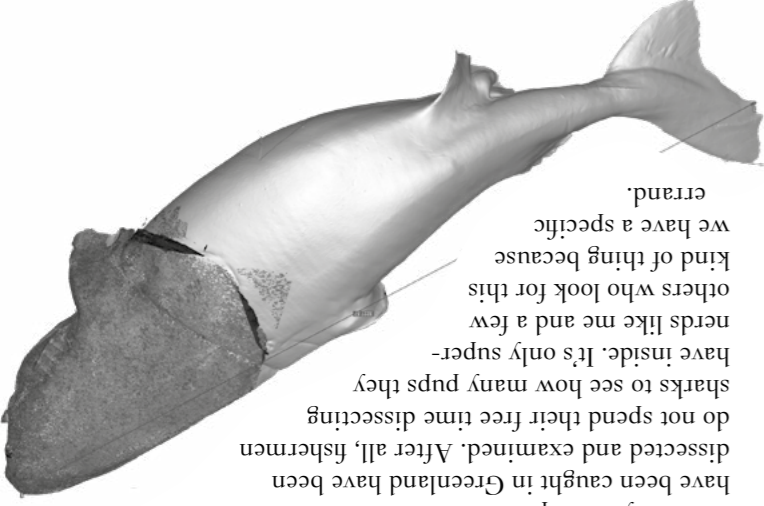
Of course, it should be mentioned that only an extremely small part of the Greenland sharks that have been caught in Greenland have been dissected and examined. After all, fishermen do not spend their free time dissecting sharks to see how many pups they have inside. It's only super-nets like me and a few others who look for this kind of thing because we have a specific errand.
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(JN)

Now I'll tell you why. There are approximately 500 different kinds of sharks, grouped into different orders, families, genera, and so on. And it is exclusively in the case of the sand tiger shark that the pups eat each other, so that from each uterus one large cannibalistic pup is born per pregnancy. The sand tiger shark belongs to a completely different group of sharks (Lamiformes) than the Greenland shark (Squaliformes), and the behavior of the pups to feed on each other and on unfertilized eggs in the womb has not been observed in any Squaliformes species. The simplest explanation in the Greenland shark's case is therefore the most incredible, namely that it very likely gives birth to hundreds of pups per pregnancy.
 (MKI)
 But are the pups also caught as bycatch?
 (JN)
 No, it's always the big sharks that you catch. They begin to appear in the commercial samples and in our surveys when they reach approximately one meter in length. We think they are born when they are around 40 to 50 centimeters; that's the size of the smallest known free-swimming Greenland sharks. In addition, it is known that these ten pups, which were found in the womb of the pregnant shark 50 years ago, were 37 centimeters long.
 (MKI)
 Regarding the later and to the question of the relationship between the number of eggs and pups, I believe that I can explain why the shark that was caught back then only had ten pups inside it. If you read the scientific article that was released on the basis of that finding, you are told that there were these fishermen who caught a shark and discovered that it had ten pups inside it. The fishermen took the pups home and gave them to a biologist, who then passed them on to the researchers who wrote the article. The researchers donated one shark pup to a museum, but it has unfortunately disappeared during a relocation. However, it was photographed, so we know for sure that it was a Greenland shark. However, I have since found a book which was written by the biologist who initially got the pups from the fishermen. He writes that the fishermen who caught the pregnant shark were out to specifically catch Greenland sharks. And then there was an alarm bell that rang for me, because that means that they have been using a longline and that the shark has not been caught in a trawl or net.
 (MKI)
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MERMAN. GREENLAND. SHARK. NORTH ATLANTIC DEEP-SEA SHARK

WITH MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN
JULIUS NIELSEN IN CONVERSATION

Marie Kolbæk Iversen

First of all, thank you very much for having this conversation with me. It has been an exciting journey, from the first contact and transfer of shark eyes via your mother in 2020, up to the time we met in Nuuk in December 2021 to study a shark that had been caught as bycatch in the commercial fishery. We have previously talked about how it immediately seems like sacrilege to dissect such an old and large animal. Under what circumstances is the Greenland shark caught, and why is it important and meaningful to research it? What are the interests and challenges that make research into the Greenland shark relevant?

Julius Nielsen

There are various things that are important to investigate and that we have investigated over time. When I first started out with my shark interest – initially for my thesis and then as a PhD – there was a huge knowledge gap regarding the Greenland shark. We knew that it existed, but there were many completely fundamental biological questions that no one had sorted out.

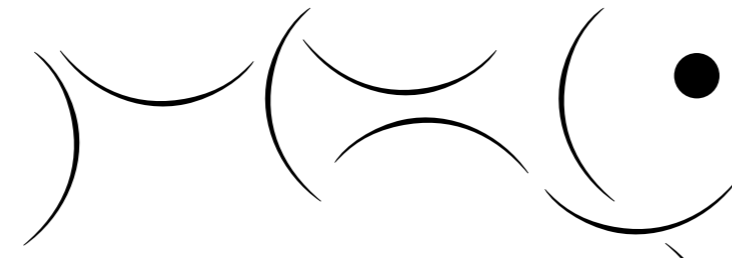
the deep. Ship traffic and ferry songs, oil-drilling

and windbreaks. Old playfulness and lullabies. They watched luminous ice masses glistening like prisms of the depths. They hid between them. They met seals and polar bears. They ate. They searched for darkness. They wandered. Streams through her spine, into her pelvis. Ha accompanied Ulim to his mothering island, a ridge. Here she met the others. They drank wine with great desire. She formed 649 eggs. Nest, cave, cradle. With threads of seaweed plants, she wove and spun.

They moved on. Smearing themselves in mud. Travelled along streams, through deep furrows, over banks. The light increased. And one day they stood where they had first met. The courage of dusk still in Ulim. Ha gave her a flute made of mother-of-pearl to play when she was mournful. He gave her a golden harp to play when she was calm. He gave her a gold-blossomed dress to wear when she was brave. Ulim gave Ha the amber bear and skeleton pearls. She got up and went ashore. Cast no shadow and left no trace.

By the dunes, the sheep were waiting in the lyme grass. They drank her milk and she followed them. At dusk she plays her peary flute. At night she wanders in her gold-blossomed dress with Ha. At dawn she runs her fingers over the strings of the harp. At noon she lies resting in the heather among sheep bits and martram grass. Ulim in ocean silk. Ulim with heath, ocean and dune.

“What do you see behind your closed eyes?”



These Danish folk tales are quoted freely: *Brudens kirkegård*, *Hustru og Mand's Moder*, *Agnetaa i Bjergel*, *Havfruen danser o Tull*, and *Adeluds i Bjergel*, with *Danske sagn. Som de har lydt i folkenunde* Volume 2, Part D, *Vandander*, collected by Evald Tang Kristensen between 1873 and 1893.

Furthermore the following texts are quoted freely and referred to: *Flitter høst* (1937) by Marie Brøgdahl; *Bitch* (2002) by Lucy Cooke; *Floating Coasts* (2019) by Bathsheba Demuth; *Dark Trails* (2022) by Andy Flack; *Hyrdele på Heden* (1941) by H.P. Hansen; *Basilly Belonging in the Premodern North* (2018) by Dolly Jørgensen; *The Darkness Box* (1975) by Ursula K. Le Guin; *Grønlandshagen* – *gammel og frugtbar* (2020) by Julius Nielsen; *Ldybet ned* *Grønlandshagen* (2018) by Julius Nielsen; *Hedens natur* (1986) by Kenneth Olwig; “The ocean is losing its memory” (2022) by Hui Shi (*Nature*); and *The Waves* (1931) by Virginia Wolf. This story is written on the basis of field work in the Midwestern Jutland, the area around Ulfborg, Vosborg, toward Husby, in March 2021 and 2022.

and hurtled toward the shore, ripples of white foam hovering over rocks and gravel. “And the depths of the sea are open for me.”

In the distant horizon, the merman slowly broke the ocean’s surface. She called for him, but he sank again. Behind her, the grass-clad dunes rose. She cleaned toward them, collected shells and small pebbles with holes in them. Pebbles for the children. The children were not there. Ulim was heavy like wet sand, and saltwater ran down her cheeks. She ran her fingers through the sand. Looked up, toward the ocean. He appeared again, closer this time. Looked at her. Behind her, the lyme grass stood courageously; below her the sand lay calmly. Ulim got up and walked toward the shore.

She gave him a look as heavy as the moistened sand. They observed each other. We will call him Ha. Ulim took off her woolen socks and loosened the cover around her head. Gave them to him. Ha gave her gold and Ulim adorned every inch of her chest and fingers. “Queen,” Ha whispered, and from the ocean silk, the sea fog rose, filling her lungs and eyes, the stream embracing her lower legs.

“The depths of the sea are open for me,” she whispered.

She followed Ha into the water. Water surrounding her hips. Then her waist, then her breasts, neck, jaw. Filling her nose and mouth. It was salty. And they dove and wandered across the sandy seabed. His dermal denticles scratched her skin, he licked her blood. They were slow hunters. Passing deep grooves, through belts of algae, stone reefs, herring and mackerel. Arriving at a vast sandbar. Floating above over wreckage of dead culture, mammoth and rhino. Swimming among harbor porpoises and brittle stars. Cargo and clams in abundance.

“How do you see in the dark?” she asked. “What do you see with your open eyes?” Ha did not answer, but then, along each of her sides, Ulim sensed the movements of sea creatures and plants inhabiting the dark. Warm streams toward her forehead, stroking the top of her head and her neck, running down along the spine and into her pelvis. Ears as pointy as pine trees. “All bodies of water have their people, their smells, their travelers. Their tides, their places of birth. Spain. Their temperatures, their sounds, their societies. Heritage.” The archive of the ocean. The memory of the sea.

Ulim wandered through a land whose air is saltwater. Covered in gold from finger to chest. With skeleton pearls and an ocean silk dress. Ha was her escort. She was his queen. She found amber shaped like bears and Ha taught her to raise and stir the weather forcefully. Later they would lay quietly together and observe the bottoms of rocking ships. He was soft and told her stories. She was listening and electric. He told about bomb waves still moving through

A row of bones lay exposed in the grass.

Ulim was told that the wolf would be comfortable in a place like this, with backrest and a good view. She sat down and ate another fig, some bread and cheese, and had a cup of tea. The bones looked like the remains of a pelvis and a piece of the spine. Vertebrates. “Bones protect the vulnerable organs.” They are compilations of minerals, which soil and mice need too. She looked at a small waterhole, a mirror-shining surface. Was she sitting in an eating trail? She saw herself taking the spine, putting the parts on a golden thread, tying them around her neck. A chain of skeleton pearls hung on her chest.

From the inland dunes covered in heather and shrubs, Ulim moved westward through the pine forests. Walked with the smell of resin and humid mosses. Walked until the light was afternoon. She has a slight limp. Her pelvis ached. A pregnancy injury. She crossed grasslands, flat plains and heathlands. drew in the smell of scorched heather, saw where the caretakers had burnt it. She walked along the desert-like fields of money and suburban streets, everything fenced-off, pushing the borders. While trotting along the gravel paths, the full moon waxed above her. The grassland spread out. The ocean drew closer and she arrived at the gray-green, windswept dunes, the wall-like mounds. “Marine marshland,” she mumbled.

Ulim found shelter in a thatched, whitewashed house in a hollow behind the dunes. Warm soup, a bed and a burning stove. Woolen socks and lambskin. The owner of the house played the transverse flute, and while Ulim was listening to her play, she fingered the skeleton pearls on her chest. The sun descended and the moon rose, sparkling and large, peach-colored at first, then the color of honey. Sun and moon on opposite sides. The shelter of dusk encouraging her.

In the night the moon changed color anew, this time into mother-of-pearl. The dunes lay as if silver-plated and as morning broke the sky was synthetic pink. The moon sank. The sun rose.

Ulim ran toward the dunes, egged-on by the rose-fingered queen. Stroked her fingertips against the dew. The lyme grass cut her left hand. It was cold. She covered her head. Pains from the pelvis radiating through her legs. The children were not here. The courage of dawn.

She walked on the sand by the ocean’s mouth, the shore’s edge, without leaving any trace. Ratling skeleton pearls. Birds shrieking through the sunrise. Garfish jumping from the salty sea, as threaded needles through ocean silk. The sea seemed endless, almost like the dunes, almost like immeasurable waves that had been halted. Elongated as a creased cloak. Wide, midnight-blue bands of silk drew closer to the shore, broke off

(AK) Yes, but you're singing songs that were almost forgotten!

(MKI)

they always change back again", which left me a bit puzzled, thinking whether such transformative agency might also apply to me as a European descendent of an oppressed commons-based culture, or if it's an exclusionary Amazonian capacity? I mean, I would like to transform...

Of course, but if I were to be self-critical, then how is that not just another instance of nostalgically over-engaging with the past? Cultures change all the time; some things are bound to be lost, and maybe should be lost...

(AK)

That makes me think about the concept of "the seven generations". Where I'm from, there's this thinking that with your actions you're supposed to be keeping in mind seven generations into the past and seven generations into the future. And that's the temporal thinking for any kind of action or thought, even in order to perpetuate a culture or community forward. It's been really helpful and helped keep me sane in terms of political movements and thinking about things past our lifetime. This continuum of seven generations forward and seven backwards – which, when you do the math, depending on life expectancy, gets pretty big, like 150 to 200 years or so in one direction – opens a continuum of 350 years from the past to the future.

(AK)

I think Johanne is seven generations from me... My mother Margit's mother Maja's father Johannes' father Niels Kristian's father Niels' mother Johanne. Yes. Counting me in, Johanne and I are seven generations apart. Doubling that into the future, we have the average lifespan of the shark, the hawkal.

(MKI)

Well, seven generations of the hawkal. Now we're talking. That's like 1,500 years. Exactly. Seven generations of the shark. That's a perspective to consider. Maybe that's a good place to end this conversation?

(AK)

Yeah. But there's also the double weird bind – especially when a culture is threatened or disappearing – that people get very uptight about how it's revitalized in terms of it having to be a certain way, and I guess that is where it gets slippery and scary too. You know, Hitler would consult Karl May's novels about Winnetou – a fictional Apache chief – because they were his favorite books. It's said that he would read those books like one would read the Bible in a moment of crisis, and according to Goben, he even assigned it to a lot of the soldiers to read because it showed the valor and warrior principles of Indigenous people.

(MKI)

Yes, I guess these pitfalls are ever-present, regardless of whether we talk about red or white or other kinds of Nativist supremacies. Such fantasies do a lot of damage and obscure the actual problems and pertinent struggles of precaritized peoples today.

(AK)

Yes, again, that's the slippery thing about focusing too much on the past or on tradition, because that leads to Native people starting to say "get rid of all the immigrants", which is the most headline conservative far-right gesture possible.

(MKI)

True. A friend of mine is working as an anthropologist in the Amazon with this tribe that he says ensures its cultural continuity through perceptual transformations; I asked whether they might also transform to become moderns and he responded that "yes, of course, but

ULM AND THOSE WHO WANDER

EMMY LAURA PÉREZ FJALLAND

Creased silk spun by thousands of threads. Once, the now dry land was full of such fine-meshed weavings. An enormous silk gown. Once, the ocean began to rise, swallowed dry land and settlements. Coasts, fjords and bays were left uneven and scrapped. Digested cultures and societies, while the land was accompanying those who wandered.

Ulm drank more water and ate a bit of crispbread. The lips of the ocean are still moving, the tongue is rolling. Filling up with masses of ice. Then someone says: "The trees are coming." And pine trees rise on the horizon. Timber in the heather behind the dunes, reaching upward like attentively pricked-up ears.

Ulm got up too. She didn't have her trajectory outlined, but allowed herself to be carried like the streams of the ocean, moving over the sleeping waves, and time went by. The light of late morning. She reached a ravine where the sand lay bare and wind-swept with a crust shaped by the night's dew. There were stag footprints. Bird marks. Perhaps a hare, perhaps a dog.

The sun had been warming since early morning. A chilly breeze came and went. In the warm shelter of the dunes a steamy, cold and spicy smell arose. Scratchy thickers of juniper stood among old and slightly ruffled bushes on the meandering mounds surrounded by heather and other small shrubs. The sandy soil appeared heavy and gray-beige after the dark gray with a colorful tissue of lichen and mosses. Night. In some places its surface was earthy, firm and made her way, a little mother. We will call her Ulm. Through these mounds and hollows a little investigator made her way, a little mother. We will call her Ulm.

She had stumbled and slid a few meters down.

It was not common for adults to fall in this way and she seemed a bit startled. Yet there was a tinge of something blissfully astray in her eyes. She sat herself down on an edge to drink a bit of water and looked straight ahead. The dunes ascended, almost endlessly, almost like an ocean. Immense waves that had been paused. A creased ocean. Silk in wide trails. The melting water from the last ice cap had flown and cascaded through this place. Toward the ocean. The east coast of the Atlantic Ocean did not exist. Or it was very far away. Came closer.

"Weichsel," she whispered. "Eemian." Naming time. The birch-pine age – when the North Sea dried out and the forest hunter culture went ashore. The hazel-pine age – when the Baltic Sea was a freshwater lake named Anghus and the Atlantic Sea expanded its border toward the east. The North Sea flooded Doggerland. The age of the aurochs existed, with wild horses and moose, bears and wild cats. Human-bodied hunters and gatherers accompanied by dogs. The age of the stags existed. They wove cultural landscapes, and the age of beech began.

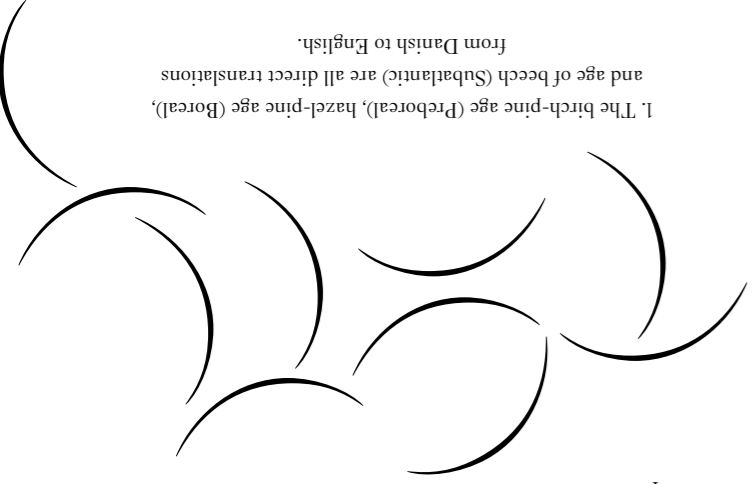
Then, the age of humans.

Ulm ate a fig from her packed lunch. The living roots of shrubs and plants held the banks' sand and gravel in place. Lowered the pace of their movements, of their escape. "They are slowly wandering," she whispered. "I ride...". It was the winds and the sky's water that drove them onward. They were their energy. Between the banks Ulm saw small cyan-colored water holes encircled by evergreen, yellow-green and gray-green grasses. Woolen whorls of heather and gold-crowned berries. Sandy lanes of footsteps and furrows.

2. This is a direct translation of the Danish term 'ulvetime', which describes the time around dusk, its mythic light and the sense of unrest that might come in late afternoon.

1. The birch-pine age (Freboreal), hazel-pine age (Boreal), and age of beech (Subatlantic) are all direct translations from Danish to English.

3. This is a direct translation of the Danish term 'hyrde-time', which describes an intimate or erotic relation. A so-called genre, shepherd poetry or pastoral poetry has flourished several times in European literature. It is often set in idyllic and highly stylized rural scenes, and as a kind of role play between shepherds and shepherdesses. In Danish literature, Hans Christian Andersen and Thomas Kingo are known for their shepherd poems and fairy tales. Jeppe Aakjær, Johan Skjoldborg and Martin Andersen Nexø wrote more realistically about shepherds and shepherd life in their homelands.



Yes. And if art may be a place for the left to experiment with the potential of spiritual beliefs or narratives in relation to political struggle; not to exit reality, but to find ways of upsetting the way it's narrated to open up alternative perspectives on the future?

(MKD)

I guess that's something I've been struggling with a lot recently – and it relates to something I heard when I was in Hawaii learning about the Mauna Kea protests, where scientists are basically trying to build a huge 30-meter telescope on a sacred volcano on the Big Island. I met with some activists who are involved in the struggle against that project, and they have this slogan: "Pro Science, Pro Sacred." It's so simple but so effective and yet radical, and it opened my mind to the possibilities of being able to hold both things at the same time, as opposed to making them adversarial or pit them against each other to make this kind of false dialectic where you have to pick one or the other.

(MKD)

Exactly!

(AK)

I still haven't figured out where that goes or how. But it's been really helpful.

(MKD)

When I was researching the relation between myth and ritual for my PhD, I came across Victor Turner's account of Ndembu-rituality in Northwestern Zambia, where he describes how the passing of a woman or couple through an earth tunnel is prescribed by the Ndembu doctor as a cure against e.g. infertility. Both Turner and his informants counter such practices to Western medicine. But then, reading West Hansen's account of pre-industrial medicine and ritual practices in Midwestern Jutland, I found a similar ritual motif appearing: the digging of a tunnel in the ground or through a sod for the sick to pass through for healing or relief. I feel that the effect of the wide dissemination of the Ndembu example through academic ethnography, and what seems to be the willful forgetting of North European examples such as the latter, is that certain groups or ethnicities become wholesale associated with "the irrational", and others with "the rational", when in reality all societies have always been, and continue to be, characterized by both rational and irrational features.

(AK)

I like this idea of ethnography as a kind of psychoanalysis for a European Enlightenment society, like "Oh yeah, we don't do that stuff over here, but check out what these folks are doing..." "Oh yeah. We did use to do that though." To produce the racialized Other as Europe's Id.

Ha ha. Yes. Indeed modern Europe seems permeated by this idea that to the extent we have ever engaged in so-called "irrational" ritual or spiritual practices, it was in prehistoric time. Yet, looking at H.P. Hansen's examples – many of which date from the early 20th century – people were engaged in quite elaborate ritual and magical activity up until very recently. And I don't think that is only a feature of Mid- and Western Jutland, where, in addition to earth rituality reminiscent of the Ndembu's, they would also, for example, burn and pulverize remains from a dead person and dissolve the ashes into potions to consume or apply to one's skin. From an outside view, such practices are not far from what may be described as "cannibalism":

(MKD)

Well, that's another example of how an observation without understanding the epistemology kind of misses the point. You know this artist, Juan Downey? No? He's wild. He was a New York-Chilean artist working in the seventies. He made this film called *The Laughing Alligator*, which was kind of a "fuck you" to ethnography and anthropology. He and his wife and their two kids moved down to Brazil to live with the Yanomami for nine months, and they made a sort of family home movie all together, in which he oscillates between this official anthropological voice and something much more ridiculous, and you can never really get a handle on it. It's really one of my favorite films.

(AK)

In the film, he talks about pulverizing the ashes of deceased loved ones and blending them into banana soup as the ultimate funerary architecture and kind of presenting these things as very matter of fact and maybe actually connected. His background is Indigenous and white Chilean and he's kind of like "that isn't too far removed from either part of my ancestry, yet I'm made to believe it's only from one aspect of it", and that kind of confluence.

(MKD)

It goes hand in hand with the whole practice of "they-ing". I mean, is there a way to talk about the potentials of minoritarian ritual practices without succumbing to divisive speech – – – "They do this, but we don't" – to acknowledge the potentiality and force of different ritual cultures without othering or caricaturing each other? Yeah, oh damn. Because it's also a question of perspective. It's like you can lay whatever onto the other if you're speaking from the perspective that you have the authority. So it's also a question of destabilizing that authority to become a part of all or something.

(MKD)

Okay, so acknowledging the many essentialized and essentializing dynamics related to this discussion, do you still feel like there may be a kind of place where coming from the background that you do is also an asset that allows you to imagine or project yourself into the future differently, against the present and Western majoritarian culture?

Yeah, I think, from my Ojibway perspective and because of how I think and feel about things, I'm always trying to imply things in a future perspective women dressed in blue capes, capable of transforming themselves into wolves and falcons, the latter evocative of the Vanir goddess Frja, who was the first master of Sejd magic and who traveled across worlds and time in the guise of a falcon. So the imaginary realm evoked by the songs is not unrelated to present-day conceptions of Viking mythology and Norse paganism, but it puts it together in a different way and for completely different ends than neo-pagan far-right nationalism. For example, the main motif of the song that mentions the heroine dressed as a falcon, is the heroine's confrontation and attempt to kill the Danish king, because he had subjugated her brother and tried to appease her with gold. To me this seems to thrust a big fat stick in the wheel of any project that seeks to identify Danishness as a homogeneous ethnic category to fuel a nationalist and racially exclusionary agenda.

(AK)

Well, I totally agree with you. By extension, I think that's why I'm always trying to orientate any kind of background towards the future; because I feel that by focusing on the past, not only is it like that double-dogged sword of having to be authentic against an irretrievable past, but the other thing, related to what you're talking about, is that the over-identification with such pasts could in my case just lead to "red supremacy", and then we haven't gotten any further.

(MKD)

Right. I guess that's why I have stayed clear of this for so long. But my grandmother's songs don't at all go in that direction, and also not Viking – she was a woman living on the heath in the 19th century who held pagan knowledge. And that's another example of where her songs depart from a right-wing neo-pagan rendition of Norse mythology: the location of women in society. Where I come from, there was no division of labor or status between men and women. Everyone partook in all kinds of work – foraging, herding, butchering, knitting, singing – and equally it was as often women as men who were the focus of mythic narrative and transformative action. So, to me, it is also a work of employing my own concrete subset of what could be called an Indigenous Nordic mythic and cultural heritage to subvert the way that the Norse imaginary has been appropriated for nationalist and exclusionary purposes across the West.

(MKD)

As part of this work, I'm trying to think about whether it's possible to conceive of a position where different Indigenous heritages may converge and crosspollinate. I mean, you and I are both moderns, living modern lives in a modern world. But that life is so heavily circumscribed by capitalist ideologies, and I wonder whether there exist alternative points at which we might converge or join forces through our respective minoritarian heritages instead? I mean, right now I'm just singing the songs of my great-great-great-grandmother, and what good does that do...?

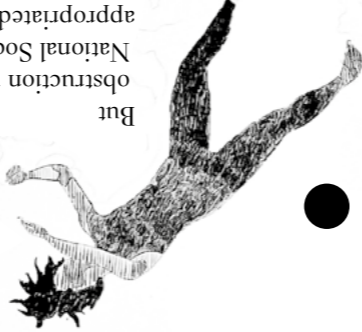
Yeah, exactly. Even though, especially from your research and work, there's such a rich wealth of culture and customs and resistance and histories within your own historical background to be looking towards and bringing to the fore.

(MKD)

But of course, one obvious obstruction to that work is the history of National Socialism and how the Nazis actively appropriated heathen Nordic and Germanic heritages for their own ideological and eugenic purposes. I think that might be a reason why many Left-leaning Northern Europeans feel wary of approaching the minoritarian customs and cultures of our own ethnic pasts, because they have been so heavily tainted by that history. This has also been a ghost in my own research, but the way I have been tackling it has been to try to stay really clear-eyed and stick to the actual wordings and accounts of my own family and other real people in the folklore archives. Not to dream of some kind of fantastical Viking utopia, which is a bit like thinking about Atlantis or Lemuria; it never did exist but is a strong and potent fantasy capable of making people succumb to unimaginable degrees of violence and othering in its name.

(MKD)

So I try to go about it from the bottom up: from the archival scraps that I find, which I may fit together through my own embodied knowledge of growing up in Midwestern Jutland with all its unspoken codices – and then through art or imagination, or whatever, to dream of how they may form a spiritual or culturally dissident continuum against the nationalist or nationalizing forces of the present. For one thing, from what I read in the accounts and songs of my forebears, they did not feel particularly keen on the Danish project, to express myself with a Jutlandic understatement. And so it would be very unethical to appropriate their mythic and spiritual heritages into the Danish or any kind of nation-building project, which was completely against them. So that's where, in trying to reach back for alternative tools to propel us forward, I tend to go to folklore rather than these reverse-engineered mythic renditions of, say, the Norse pantheon.



Sean Connolly – a Hawaiian artist-architect who was

also in the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg – has been researching how continents and bodies of water have shifted, and how back in the days traveling from a place like Oceania to Africa was much easier. Or how thinking about different migrations that could happen if you go up and over the world or down under, as opposed to around. To think about how there exists all of these weird confluences and convergences of different cultures around the globe as a result of them actually meeting much before what we think of as being possible. That dives into ideas of people popping up in multiple places, like this idea underlying tunnels or Lemurian mythology of the lava underground tubes that connect the world.

Where I grew up, there's a lot of Bigfoot sightings. Sasquatch. And where I'm from, they're called root travelers.

(MKI)

Root travelers?

(AK)

Yes. And part of the idea behind why they can't be seen or known about is because every time someone notices them, they jump into the hole of a tree and then they can travel the root system like a subway system. So they'll show up 600 kilometers away in a matter of seconds through this root system underneath. I guess I'm thinking about it because I went snorkeling for the first time last year and just seeing underwater, I was like, "Oh, my God". You know, I feel like I've traveled around the world and know my geography, and then seeing that 70% of this Earth is something I'd never encountered before. So humbling. Especially with merpeople exploring around all of those depths; of course we don't know about them, you know? They have no particular interest in exposing themselves to us.

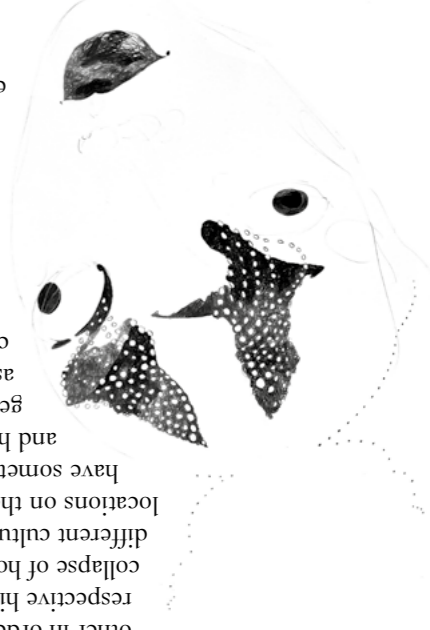
(MKI)

I remember reading this text by archaeologist Neil Price where he draws on the ideas of Hawaiian historians Sir Peter Buck/Te Rangī Hīroa and Herb Kawainui Kane to attempt reading and understanding historical Oceanic and Viking seafaring cultures through each other in order to fill the gaps of their respective histories. It's an interesting collapse of how these two seemingly different cultures from radically distant locations on the Earth may be thought to have something in common anyhow, and how they may inform a general understanding of sea-

as opposed to earth-based cultures.

(AK)

Meeting or encountering the sea? Because it's something that they can never do, you know. They're actually living on the sea, not *in* it. This is essentially living on.



Right. But perhaps it could still be seen as yet another facet of community-building enabled by the sea –

even if not *in* the sea – that speaks to the potential of trans-cultural exchange and becoming through it in-between-ness. Across the world there are so many accounts of people living commons-based lives on ships, and how been taught to perceive as pirates were – are? call them "hydrarchies".

(MKI)

Although the flipside of that is someone like Ayn Rand, who is a conservative ideologue from the sixties and seventies. She wrote this book called *Atlas Shrugged* that became foundational to anti-government libertarian philosophies. Her book is really big in Silicon Valley right now. In *Atlas Shrugged*, she kind of says that people smart and skilled enough, and good enough for capitalism, should form their own island off the coast of the country so they don't have to deal with government regulation. But if we think that that's also a kind of colonization of the sea, is it still on the people's premises then?

(AK)

Anyway, it's interesting to think about that book in relation to ideas of commons and commoners, too, because it's like this distrust of government or national commons, that once you're under a nation to then go forge one on your own. I mean, there's this kind of anarcho-libertarian dream to it that's kind of appealing, even though it's also so demented. Or like an Atlantis, worked on this film, *Nosferatu*, which is thinking about Christopher Columbus and 1492 as bigger than interplanetary space travel or maybe equivalent to. But also thinking about the conflation of the ocean and outer space, and how before that moment, they were kind of the same thing. And again, maybe that's not true, because we've just been talking about Oceanic Vikings and of prehistory in terms of our own understanding of what we're taught in school about where those people travel to and how. But it gets trippy.

(MKI)

It gets trippy. Still, I think that maybe that place where it gets trippy is also where new things become possible. I read about this battle taking place in Alken Engc around year 0, after which the bones of the slain were collected and submerged into the water of a nearby lake. One can only try to imagine the stench rising from this lake and how poisonous it would become with all these bodies decomposing, and how, combined with the traumatic history of the battle, this turned it into a dangerous, but it did in fact become a site of sacrifice, since people would return for several hundred years after the battle – up until 500 years – to make offerings.

I think it must have to do with some belief that the spirits of the slain still reside in and around the lake –

which is now dried out – and this makes it ritually and magically potent, but also very dangerous, because they are just as adversarial in death as they were in life.

If you follow this line of thought – that the spirits of the dead are still in that lake, envious and antagonistic of the type of human life that emerged around it – it completely changes the imagined agency of merpeople and water spirits: that they are extensions in time of cultures and people that were annihilated (by us), and that they continue to haunt the living in their desire for life and revenge.

(AK)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, it's also interesting to think about the weird slippage between history, narrative, and spirituality, and how those things have been isolated or separated. Thinking creatively or making stuff up, or just this idea of conflating things. It's taboo now where there has to be a rational, logical answer to everything. But then again, something that I carry with me is the idea that history should be a narrative at the service of the present: that these mythological beings or creatures are actually some kind of conflation of a spiritual belief that merges with history in a pretty seamless way, maybe so seamlessly that it's unbelievable. Like Drexciya.

(MKI)

Drexciya?

(AK)

Drexciya was a group that was part of the Detroit techno movement operating from the perspective of an Afro-possimistic futurism, I guess you could say. They were a very secretive techno group, and the mythology that they kind of arose out of is that pregnant mothers who didn't survive during the Middle Passage, their unborn babies were born under the water and started a kind of Black Atlantis called Drexciya. And that's where their music comes from and that's where they're from. And I was like, "Whoa!" In a similar way, it suggests how terrible pain or suffering, or the sight of so much trauma, can also bring about the birth of an alternate narrative in order to understand or create a world that you'd want to live in.

(MKI)

That's a very potent vantage point, and heart-breaking. A complete subversion of the rendition of merpeople as these ahistorical fantastical creatures. In fact, some of the merpeople tales from..

(AK)

No pun intended?

(MKI)

What?

(AK)

No pun intended? Merpeople tales...

(MKI)

Oh, no. No pun intended at all, actually, because in West Jutland merpeople didn't have tails. They just had legs, so you didn't know when you found a dead body on the shore whether it was human or a merperson.

The only way you could know was if a terrible noise

you had to deliver them back to the sea as soon as possible. So the story goes. Fishermen might also encounter merpeople on the sea, where they were sitting high atop a wave, shifting a sock from one foot to the other. If you gave them another sock or a new pair, they would tell your fortune or help you in different ways. You could also give them a pair of gloves. I think that they – by being associated with the souls of the dead in the water – were related to the elffolk, who live in burial mounds on the heath. Because water runs underground between the sea and different springs and rivers, the water and the underground are connected, and so are the beings that reside there. There are several accounts of people who have seen a woman – an elfer or a mermaid – sitting in one of these mounds, combing her hair and flashing her gold.

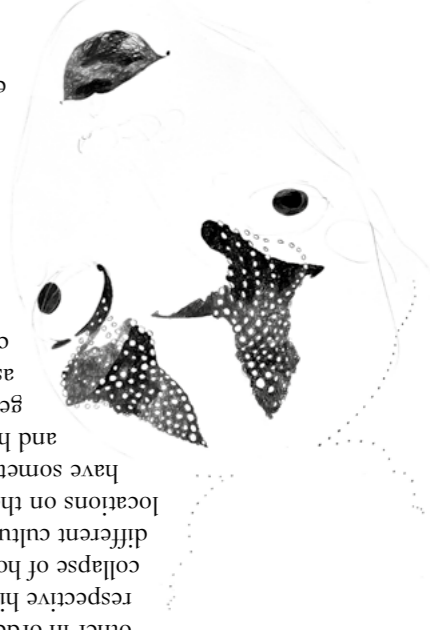
(AK)

I've been coming across all of this writing recently about the power of belief and how the Left has abandoned spiritual belief and now only believes in rationalism, science and democracy. Of course, it gets into this sticky territory – especially post-truth – and therefore I always feel a little hesitant to even bring up this stuff, but I also think it's really juicy if we can step back from it a bit. Not to question the fundamental pillars of Western democracy to propose something whack-doodle instead, but in our own beliefs either, or sustain the idea that science 50 years ago was totally different to science now, and that that will continue to be the case. If we do that, we end up privileging our position in the present as some kind of all-knowing or most right.

The reason I'm bringing this up is because people are asking why Standing Rock was effective. Why Black Lives Matter is effective. Or even why the "Right" is effective. And it's because they're all still utilizing that power of belief.

This made me think about the radical potential to reclaim belief, even if it's secular belief, to know what that looks like. And I think that maybe it gets back into our talk about merpeople and different kinds of understanding

can be a narrative and service to the present – even if it is a little fantastical or a little unexpected. How those things could maybe shift the way we look at history in general.



ADELUDS IN THE MOUND

The king's men of war,
- The dance is slight -
Came sailing to this land.
- Listen to this, how the maiden of the mound was deceived! -

When they now approached the coast,
They heard Miss Adeldus in the mound singing.

The skipper spoke to the ship's boy
"You will come with me to proud Adeldus' chamber."

He knocked on the door with his skin:
"Wake up, proud Adeldus, and let me in!"

I bring word from your husband,
You must meet him on the beach."

"Do you have word from my dear husband,
Then tell me what name he goes by."

"Your husband's name is Nidel Mikkelson,
And you will follow me from this land."

She dressed herself in a silk gown,
And thereover she wore a kirtle with gilded flowers.

She put gold on top of gold,
Breast and fingers were covered in full.

Miss Adeldus took the ship's boy by his hand,
And then they walked to the beach.

She taught him to calm the weather on the sea
And to write runes with his hand.

She taught him to twist and turn the wind,
And to scutle it again.

She taught him to conjure a weather so mighty
That all ships would sink before the fjord.

Then proud Adeldus jumped aboard the ship,
Where the captain grabbed her by her arm.

"Shame on you, you skipper-thief!
Would you betray my young life like this?"

"You will not return to your father's land,
Before you have birthed a son who can steer the rudder.

You will not return to your mother's island,
Before you have birthed a daughter who can cut and sow."

Miss Adeldus jumped into the sea,
Then she swam to her father's land.

The skipper sailed, and the maiden swam,
Still she reached the shore far ahead of him.

"Now I'm on my father's land:
My son knows neither to sail nor steer the rudder.

Now I'm on my mother's island:
My daughter knows neither to cut nor sow.

And hadn't it been for your little ship's boy,
- The dance is slight -
I would have drowned all the king's men."

- Listen to this, how the maiden of the mound was deceived! -
Folksong recorded by Evald Tang Kristensen in 1872. Reinterpreted
into Øre-Jutlandic from the Standard Danish by Michael Ejstrup.

A WORLD YOU WOULD WANT TO LIVE IN?

ADAM KHALIL IN CONVERSATION
WITH MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN

Marie Kolbæk Iversen

First of all, thank you so much, Adam, for agreeing
to having this conversation with me. I have been really

inspired by our exchanges so far, not least on the
occasion of *TEd Talks on Acid*, which you organized

as part of New Red Order's (NRO) show *One if by
Land, Two if by Sea* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg earlier

this year. I am curious to share with you some of my
thoughts leading up to this exhibition at O - Overgaden

and science to attempt to
formulate

alternative perspectives of
futility beyond

the gridlock of capitalist
modernity.

In my video-work *Histories of Predation* I am
speculatively appropriating the historical gaze of a

specific type of shark, the Greenland shark or gurry
shark, which is called either merman or mermaid across

the Nordic Germanic languages - i.e. the old Danish
name for the shark is "havkal", that is "merman". New

marine biological research shows that this "merman"
- the shark - may live to be as old as 272 to 512 years.

Additionally, it traverses the whole of the northern
North Atlantic Sea, which makes it an interesting

imaginary interlocutor or "eye witness" with whom to
reflect on the historical developments across the region,

and to consider alternative views into the future.

As a Dane, I represent a colonial presence in Greenland,
where the shark I have been working with was caught

as by-catch. But the project also seeks to reflect on how
I came to become a Dane in the first place, as it were.

Adam Khalil

The temporal scope of the gurry shark is a pretty
juicy hook, and it got my brain buzzing! I'm not

sure it's a 100% line-up, but I have been
reading this essay by Lou Cornum

about Indigenous futurism, which feels kind
of relevant in terms of world-building:

"Indigenous Futurism" is part of a tradition that represents
an alternative to Western sci-fi which tends to be structured
by the tension between utopia and dystopia. The temporality
of Indigenous existence exceeds these terms: there is no pre-
apocalypse or post-apocalypse, only perpetual revelation.

Indigenous Futurism then, is about the struggle for a
different future as well as a distinctly different idea of
future" - one that goes beyond the conflict between tradition
and progress, and asks us to inhabit the present.

On that note - and maybe it is a little stoney baloney
- I was thinking about merpocopic and dragons;

like, dragons emerged in Europe and Asia, but
simultaneously. So they must be real, right?

(MKI)

That's a good point. Generally it's interesting to
consider how cultures and cultural narratives have

exchanged historically, and continue to exchange,
converging at minoritarian rather than majoritarian

levels. In the conception of this project, an important
point of reference was Peter Linebaugh and Marcus

Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra* from 2000. In the
book, they unfold a historical account of the Atlantic

under-commons, which took the shape of a multi-
ethnic motley crew proletariat originating in Europe,

Africa and America:

*It included clowns, or clowns (i.e., country people).
It was without genealogical unity. It was vulgar.
It spoke its own speech, with a distinctive pronunciation,
lexicon, and grammar made up of slang, jargon,
and pidgin - in talk from work, the street, the prison, the gang,
and the dock. It was planetary, in its origins, its motions,
and its consciousness. Finally, the proletariat was self-active,
creative, it was - and is - alive: it is on amore.*

*What does the experience of this proletariat
have to offer us today?*

In many ways this reflects the second vantage point for
my project: the Midwest Jutlandic heathlands, which is

where my family originates and where I grew up, and
where my great-great-great-great-grandmother Johanne

Thygesdatter was one of folklore collector Evald Tang
Kristensen's informants in 1873. Trying to think from

the perspective of the 19th-century heathlands,
I attempt to pick up the bastardizing linguistic logic

and cultural outlook of my forebears, which was
precisely as proletarian and hybridizing as

Linebaugh and Rediker describe, including
the different Jutlandic dialects mixing

English, German, Danish, Swedish and
Norwegian - influences from overseas.

If we are to trust the songs that Johanne sang to Tang
Kristensen as valid testimony of their originating

culture, they questioned governmental efforts
of agricultural development, nationalization and

homogenization, as well as concepts of land-ownership
and the authority of some people over others. Which

makes sense, because life on the heath was largely
commons-based, meaning that it couldn't have felt as

anything but a loss during the 19th century to see the

heath being enclosed, and for the Native people to lose
access to the land they had relied on for their living.

In response to these developments, many of the songs
seem to reflect on the ethics and premises of cross-

cultural alliance and exchange through the mythologized
figure of the merperson - maid or man - which may

also be interesting for us to think with today, since
merpeople reside in the fluid spaces between national

demarcations and specifically do not belong to any state
or people. You have also worked with merpocopic in the

context of NRO, right? In relation to Lemuria, was it?

(AK)

Well, we were kind of investigating Lemuria with
a little bit of a critical eye, because it is part of this

New Age movement where people believe that there
are these seven-foot-tall Viking-looking people who

live underneath volcano tunnels. I guess that there is
Atlantis and Lemuria, and they were kind of competing.

Atlantis disappeared, but Lemuria persisted as a fantasy
because of the volcano tunnels. And there's this place in

Northern California, Mount Shasta, where people say
they see Lemurians all the time.

We have been working with them as
of "being

a way to explore the idea
of some kind of
strange New

Age claim to being part of the
land in relation

to Indigenous concerns. When we were in Hawaii we
learned that there's a lot of Native Hawaiian mythology

around Lemurians too. Not enough that I know about
to go into, but it's interesting how such a figure travels.

(MKI)

So Lemurians are not merpocopic?

There are different reports. It's tough to get a full
composite sketch of them. Sometimes they're referred

to as merpocopic. Sometimes they're referred to as beams
of light that exist somehow. That's maybe the more

New Age version, which is the most prevalent today.

1. Lou Cornum: "Who Belongs to the Land" on *Triple Canopy*,
March 17, 2022 (canopycanopy.com/contents/)
pp. 51-52 - last accessed August 7, 2022,

2. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "Tyger! Tyger!" in *The
Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commons, and the Hidden History
of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. 333

OVER(O-O)



FOREWORD

'hakart', 'hakjarting', or 'hakjerting' – that is: merman or mermaid variants. As such the shark's agency is coincidentally reflected in the manifold myths, songs and tales concerning merpeople from across the North Atlantic region. Not least in songs obtained from Kolbæk Iversen's native region in Midwestern Jutland, which she will perform in local dialect on a number of occasions, adding a musical layer to the exhibition.

Histoires of Predation consists of one large-scale work: a three-channel soundless video installation in which microscopic recordings of the shark's eye lens appear in colorful pink and green images that slowly glide across the screens as forensic scans. The piece takes us on a visually beautiful and filmic time travel through the "historic" gaze of the gurry shark. Originating from this bodily imaginary insight into the perspective of *Predation* brings together art, folklore and modern science, allowing Kolbæk Iversen to reflect on 500 years of colonial, imperial and environmental battles in the northern Atlantic region, where Danish influence was and is significant.

This publication is part of a series that O—Overgaden has produced since 2021 as an independent and customized supplement for artist's solo shows. The publications are made possible through generous support from the Augustinus Foundation for which we are extremely grateful. I wish to thank the Danish Arts Foundation, Novo Nordisk Fonden, and HK-dir (Direktoratet for høgere uddanning og kompetanse, Norge) for supporting the exhibition and thanks to our talented graphic designers from fanfare, César Rogers and Miguel Hervas Gómez, for their always beautiful work. Also a warm thank you to O—Overgaden's in-house editor Nanna Frits who edited this quite extensive publication and to the rest of the O—Overgaden team who made this exhibition possible in collaboration with Marie: Vera Østrup, Toké Martins, Owen Armour, Malte Linnebjerg, Line Brædder, and Maria Kamilla Larsen. The deapest and warmest thanks and congratulations to Marie Kolbæk Iversen for the excellent collaboration and for carefully unfolding this intellectual body of thought in her beautiful, multifaceted and thought-provoking exhibition.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
Interim Director, O—Overgaden, August 2022

In recent years O—Overgaden has focused on presenting new, artistic voices – younger as well as more mature – all prior to their institutional breakthrough. As an artist, Marie Kolbæk Iversen is hardly a blank page. She belongs to a crowd of recognized and established Danish contemporary artists, and has a distinct voice and an active, international career. So why do we show Kolbæk Iversen at O—Overgaden now?

We do so because Marie Kolbæk Iversen is one of the few artists in Denmark currently doing a PhD in artistic research. Her project, conducted in collaboration with Aarhus University and the Oslo Academy of Fine Art, will be finalized later this fall. Artistic or practice-based research, as it is called, is a relatively new discipline in Denmark, consisting of further training of artists, where the focus lies on the art practice as a form of knowledge creation. It is a unique possibility for artists to get the necessary time to experiment and dive into new layers of their practice – and to do this alongside scientists and researchers from other fields and disciplines. For O—Overgaden, it is interesting to present our audience with contemporary art that is a product of more thorough, artistic research and that reflects nuanced dialogues across different scientific fields. Since research is a fundamental part of our society's development, it is exciting to gain an insight into how science can originate in art; and on the other hand, it is also interesting to see how the creation of an artwork can be shaped by scientific frameworks.

With the exhibition *Histoires of Predation*, Marie Kolbæk Iversen presents a deep and minimalist summary of her five-year research project. *Histoires of Predation* moves across time, borders and cultures as the artist journeys into the eye of the gurry shark, a deep sea fish also known as the Greenland shark. Recent research has proven that they can live to become 272 to 512 years old, making it one of the longest living known vertebrates in the world. Across the Nordic-Germanic languages the shark has historically been referred to as a merperson – 'havkal',

ISBN: 978-87-94311-06-9
EAN: 9788794311069

Marie Kolbæk Iversen
Rovhistorier
Exhibition period: 27.08.2022 – 23.10.2022

O – OVERGADEN
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overgaden.org

