

The book cover features a complex, abstract pattern of light blue, white, and orange-brown shapes, resembling a marbled or topographical design. A large, dark silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, partially overlapping the pattern. The text is arranged in two main sections: the author's name at the top and the title at the bottom.

Marie Kølbæk
Iversen

Rovhistorier

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Marie Kølback Iversen
Rovhistorier
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O – OVERGADEN
Overgaden neden vandet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org

Rovhistorier

FOREWORD

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 Kølback 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 Kølback Iversen at O—Overgaden now?

We do so because Marie Kølback 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 also 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 *Histories of Predation*, Marie Kølback Iversen presents a deep and minimalist summary of her five-year research project. *Histories 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',

'håkarl', 'håkjäring', or 'håkjerringa' – 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 Kølback 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.

Histories 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 the predator, *Histories of Predation* brings together art, folklore and modern science, allowing Kølback 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 høgare utdanning og kompetanse, Norge) for supporting the exhibition and thanks to our talented graphic designers from fanfare, César Rogers and Miquel Hervás Gómez, for their always beautiful work. Also a warm thank you to O—Overgaden's in-house editor Nanna Friis 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, Toke Martins, Owen Armour, Malte Linnebjerg, Line Brædder, and Maria Kamilla Larsen. The deepest and warmest thanks and congratulations to Marie Kølback 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

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 Adeluds in the mound singing.

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

He knocked on the door with his skin:
"Wake up, proud Adeluds, 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 Niels Mikkelsen,
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 Adeluds 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 settle it again.

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

Then proud Adeluds 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 Adeluds 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 Ørre-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 Kølbæk 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 *TEDtalks 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 since, like in many of your projects, my project engages Indigenous knowledges at the intersection of modernity and science to attempt to formulate alternative perspectives of futurity 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.¹

On that note – and maybe it is a little stoney baloney – I was thinking about merpeople 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 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

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-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 merpeople 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 a way to explore the idea of "being there first", or some kind of strange New Age claim to being part of the land in relation to Indigenous concerns. When we were in Hawaii we learnt 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 merpeople?

(AK)

There are different reports. It's tough to get a full composite sketch of them. Sometimes they're referred to as merpeople. 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 (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. 333

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 Lemurian mythology of the lava tunnels or 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.

(MKD)

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 water 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.

(MKD)

I remember reading this text by archeologist Neil Price where he draws on the ideas of Hawaiian historians Sir Peter Buck/Te Rangi Hīroa and Herb Kawainui Kāne 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*.

(MKD)

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 transcultural exchange and becoming through its in-between-ness. Across the world there are so many accounts of people living commons-based lives on ships, and how people that we have been taught to perceive as pirates were – are? – in fact commoners. Linebaugh and Rediker call them "hydrarchies".

(AK)

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?

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, you know?

I worked on this film, *Nosferasta*, 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.

(MKD)

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 Enge 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 also sacred, territory. Archeological findings suggest that 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.

(MKD)

Drexciya?

(AK)

Drexciya was a group that was part of the Detroit techno movement operating from the perspective of an Afro-pessimistic 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.

(MKD)

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?

(MKD)

What?

(AK)

No pun intended? Merpeople tales – Merpeople tails...

(MKD)

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 and weather followed the burial of such a person, and if they were sucking their thumb when you dug them from their grave. In that case it was a merperson and 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 elverfolk, 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 elver or a mermaid – sitting in one of these mounds, combing her hair and flashing her gold.

And to me it's been inspiring to think of elverfolk and merpeople as representing the relations between the water and the shore, humans and nature. And of merpeople as humans' ontological others that are at the same time fluid, in the same way that the ground beneath us is also fluid, just on a much longer timescale. That all essentialisms and fixities are eventually up for change.

(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-a-doodle instead, but because it's important that we don't get too foolhardy 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 history in relation to place and mythology. How history 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.

(MKI)

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?

(AK)

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.

(MKI)

Exactly!

(AK)

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

(MKI)

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 Jutlandic historian H.P. 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.

(MKI)

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”.

(AK)

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.

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.

(MKI)

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?

(AK)

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.

(MKI)

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?

(AK)

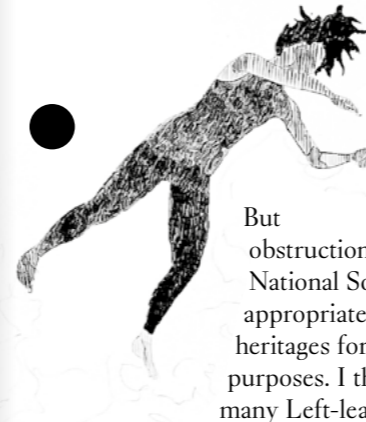
Yeah, I think, from my Ojibway perspective and because of how I think and feel about things, I'm always trying to imply things in a future perspective because there is so much emphasis on being placed in the past. But then it's interesting when people approach me about stuff like Native spirituality, I'm always encouraging them to explore their own ethnic identities' past. You know, and that's where it gets interesting or tricky in terms of the projection because people are looking towards Native cultures' past for their own.

(MKI)

Yeah, exactly.

(AK)

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.



(MKI)

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.

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.

However, in the mythic narratives of my foremother's songs there are many recurring themes related to figures from the Norse pantheon, for example magically potent women dressed in blue capes, capable of transforming themselves into wolves and falcons, the latter evocative of the Vanir goddess Freja, 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 homogenous 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-edged 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.

(MKI)

Right. I guess that's why I have stayed clear of this for so long. But my foremother's songs don't at all go in that direction, and also she was 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 locus 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.

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-great grandmother, and what good does that do...?

(AK)

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

(MKD)

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)

Someone I was talking to, from where I'm from, was talking about instead of seeking to revive things or resurrecting them or keeping them the way they were, to work from the idea that perpetual revelation of the culture is actually what's necessary and that things should be allowed to change. That it doesn't have to be this grapple with tradition. Tradition and culture have different qualities to them, and as long as the culture is being maintained, it's different than the tradition being followed. So I think having these songs, that are traditional but being performed and recorded using contemporary technologies, is the perpetuation and recapitulation of the culture as opposed to trying to reproduce the facsimile of it. And I feel like that continuum – that chain of generations interconnected and touching at a certain moment – is where the heat is at.

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 Gøber, he even assigned it to a lot of the soldiers to read because it showed the valor and warrior principles of Indigenous people.

(MKD)

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 hardline conservative far-right gesture possible.

(MKD)

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

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...

(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.

(MKD)

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 havkal.

(AK)

Well, seven generations of the havkal. Now we're talking. That's like 1,500 years.

(MKD)

Exactly. Seven generations of the shark. That's a perspective to consider. Maybe that's a good place to end this conversation?

(AK)

Yeah.

ULM AND THOSE WHO WANDER

EMMY LAURA PÉREZ FJALLAND

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 thickets 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 night. In some places its surface was earthy, firm and dark gray with a colorful tissue of lichen and mosses. 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.¹ The hazel-pine age – when the Baltic Sea was a freshwater lake named Ancylus 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.

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.

Ulm had heard them tell tales of wolves. The last one, a lonely wandering wolf who had lost its mate. It was secret and they were silent, yet their gazes bit against each other. They had heard the call of the wolf. They were mourning. They had seen dead, gnawed bodies, sheep and stags. They had seen dead wolves. They wanted to tell and they did not want to tell. The feral bodies. Dog-nature. Wolf-hour.² Shepherds' hour.³

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

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.

3. This is a direct translation of the Danish term 'hyrdetime', 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.

A row of bones lay exposed in the grass. Ulm 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, Ulm moved westwards 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.

Ulm 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 Ulm 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.

Ulm 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. Rattling 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

and hurled 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 leaned toward them, collected shells and small pebbles with holes in them. Pebbles for the children. The children were not there. Ulm 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. Ulm 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 Há. Ulm took off her woolen socks and loosened the cover around her head. Gave them to him. Há gave her gold and Ulm adorned every inch of her chest and fingers. "Queen," Há 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 Há 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 wreckages 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?" Há did not answer, but then, along each of her sides, Ulm 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. Spawn. Their temperatures, their sounds, their societies. Heritage." The archive of the ocean. The memory of the sea.

Ulm wandered through a land whose air is saltwater. Covered in gold from finger to chest. With skeleton pearls and an ocean silk dress. Há was her escort. She was his queen. She found amber shaped like bears and Há 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

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. Há accompanied Ulm 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. Smears 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 Ulm. Há 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. Ulm gave Há 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 pearly flute. At night she wanders in her gold-blossomed dress with Há. At dawn she runs her fingers over the strings of the harp. At noon she lies resting in the heather among sheep bits and marram grass. Ulm with her gilded chest and glowing fingers. Ulm in ocean silk. Ulm with heath, ocean and dune.

"What do you see behind your closed eyes?"

These Danish folk tales are quoted freely: *Brudens kirkefærd*, *Hustru og Mands Moder*, *Agenetaa i Bjærgen*, *Havfruen danser o Tilli*, and *Adeluds i Bjærgen*, with *Danske sagn. Som de har lydt i folkemunde*, Volume 2, Part D, *Vandånder*, collected by Evald Tang Kristensen between 1875 and 1895.

Furthermore the following texts are quoted freely and referred to: *Filtret host* (1937) by Marie Bregendahl; *Bitch* (2002) by Lucy Cooke; *Floating Coasts* (2019) by Bathsheba Demuth; *Dark Trails* (2022) by Andy Flack; *Hyrdeliv på Heden* (1941) by H.P. Hansen; *Beastly Belonging in the Premodern North* (2018) by Dolly Jørgensen; *The Darkness Box* (1975) by Ursula K. Le Guin; *Grønlandshajen – gammel og frugtbar* (2020) by Julius Nielsen; *I dybet med Grønlandshajen* (2018) by Julius Nielsen; *Hedens natur* (1986) by Kenneth Olwig; "The ocean is losing its memory" (2022) by Hui Shi (*Nature*); and *The Waves* (1951) 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.

MERMAN. GREENLAND SHARK. NORTH ATLANTIC DEEP-SEA SHARK

JULIUS NIELSEN IN CONVERSATION
WITH MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN

Marie Kølbæk 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.



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.

(MKD)

Yes, because the question is, I guess, whether it – even as bycatch – can be overfished to a point of becoming endangered?

(JN)

It's an open question whether or not it's an endangered species, but there are definitely some alarm bells ringing because they get so old and only become sexually mature rather late. In our studies, we have primarily focused on age, which has meant that we have had to take samples from the eyes of dead animals. And when you have a huge dead shark of typically three to four meters, you should investigate as many different things as possible. For example, we have looked into their stomachs to investigate what they have eaten, and taken tissue samples of liver, heart, brain, parasites, etc. We have already used many of these samples, but there are even more that are waiting to be used in studies led by other researchers.

(MKD)

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.

(MKD)

Wow.

(JN)

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.

(MKD)

Do you have any theories?

(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.

(MKD)

Does that mean it gives birth to 600 pups in its lifetime, or in a year or cycle? Does it make new eggs?

(JN)

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 of its closest relatives.

(MKD)

But could it be that the pups predate on each other inside the womb?

(JN)

I understand why you ask that question, because it's a bit of a myth concerning sharks, but it's very unlikely in the case of the Greenland shark.

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 (Lamniformes) 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.

(MKD)

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.

Regarding the latter 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.

(MKD)

Okay?

(JN)

When 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.

She's simply spitting out the babies because she's dying. Therefore, when I read this information, which has formed the basis for the finding that has established the entire assumption that the Greenland shark only gives birth to about ten pups per pregnancy, I think that she has very likely evacuated the vast majority of pups while caught on the hook. She probably sat there for several hours before they cut her open. So whether there had originally been 600, 500, 400 or 300 pups, the observation does not say. After all, there is always someone who has to be the last to be born. If you were to publish that observation today, you would never accept that it was based on an individual caught on a longline, because you have no representative figure of what was in there before she bit the hook. In a trawl or net, on the other hand, it would have been possible to count the evacuated pups afterwards.

(MKD)

Of course. I see. But still lots and lots of pups.

(JN)

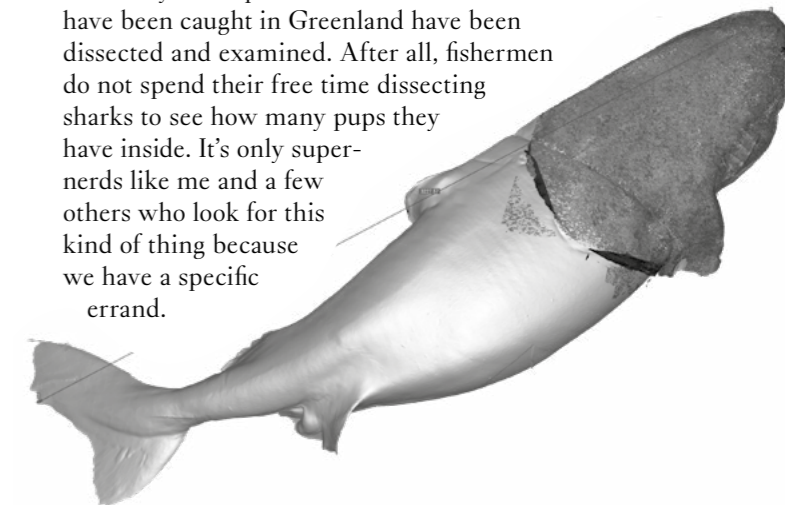
Exactly. Hundreds of pups. At least that is what the Greenland shark as a species has the potential for. But it will be difficult to prove definitively, since no one has ever caught a pregnant Greenland shark in Greenland, despite the fact that a great many sharks are caught. To me, this suggests that the Greenland shark does not give birth where commercial species are fished. Because if they did, we would, in addition to the big sharks, have more information about the small ones, which are virtually never caught. I therefore believe that the Greenland shark gives birth out there, or down there, where there is no commercial fishing, for example at underwater mountains at a depth of four to five kilometers. There are large parts of the ocean that we know nothing about, and there can be plenty of life around such mountain peaks. The smallest Greenland sharks that have been caught, measuring 40 to 50 centimeters, are exclusively caught from the Mid-Atlantic Ridge south of Iceland, which is precisely such an underwater abyssal mountain range.

(MKD)

Okay, that is wild.

(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-nerds like me and a few others who look for this kind of thing because we have a specific errand.



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.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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 Marinus 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 Marinus 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 Marinus 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.

(MKI)

Wow.

(JN)

This led Marinus Hansen to conclude that, although his study was overall a failure, it indicated that 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 Heinemeier, 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, which is the normal age-determination method for fish. Jan had suggested that they take the shark's eye lenses, wherein one finds some proteins that have not been renewed since the shark's embryonic stage. He believed that one would be able to estimate their age using carbon-14 dating, and then Jan had said to John: "If you bring some shark eyes, I will try determine the age of the shark." That's why John was collecting shark eyes. He had already caught some sharks in West Greenland of two or three meters, and the preliminary results indicated that the sharks were indeed very old. And then he said: "The largest shark known, and which I would really like to examine..." – because when you are carrying out such a survey, you want them big – "is a shark of 1,005 kilos, which was captured a hundred years ago." And then I raised my hand and said: "I myself helped catch a one weighing 1,045 kilos last year." Then John said: "I think the two of us should have a chat." So it was never me who got the idea for the method, but I knew from my student job where you could get hold of the sharks, and that was what started both my thesis and PhD project to determine the longevity of the Greenland shark using chemical methods.

(MKI)

And that has given you a basis for investigating its age at sexual maturity, so that you can better make a general threat assessment for the species? But the shark we looked at in Nuuk in 2021 also prompted a new observation, right? There were these little slits down along the side of the shark (of which I owe you a drawing, by the way).

(JN)

Yes. That was very strange. I have yet to figure out what that is. After all, sharks have different senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, as well as an electrical sense located in the so-called "ampullae of Lorenzini", centered around the mouth, which enables them to sense the heartbeats and other electrical impulses from prey that, for example, lie hidden in the deep. In addition, sharks also have a sixth sense – the lateral line – with which they can feel pressure changes in the water. The Greenland shark has all of this too. But, once we had it under a good light inside a laboratory, we saw that there were vertical slits running down the side about a centimeter high in addition to the normal sensory pores that are part of the lateral line system. I have written to some scientists who know a lot about sharks and rays, but they had never heard of these slits. So I haven't yet figured out if it's some sort of opening to part of the lateral line system that looks different than you'd expect – it's possible – or if it's something else entirely.

(MKI)

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

(JN)

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.

(MKI)

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

(JN)

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.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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", "hákarl" and "hákjerringa" – 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 have no idea, but in Norwegian they call the shark "hákjerringa", which means something like "the shark's wife", "shark wife", or "shark bitch".

(MKI)

I think that "kælling" – and "kjerringa"/"kjäring" – was originally just the feminine version of "karl," i.e. "man".

(JN)

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

(MKI)

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

(JN)

No matter what, in Norwegian you have a related name for the porbeagle shark: "håbrann". 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 "håbrann" – the porbeagle shark – was a male Greenland shark.

(MKI)

Oh, I see! How funny!

(JN)

And then there's the Danish name, "havkal", which is connected to the Icelandic "hákarl". But in Iceland, "hákarl" 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.

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.

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.

(MKI)

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 mildens the threat assessment. It is therefore important to get an overview of the various factors, not just age and longevity.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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...

(MKI)

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

(MKI)

Is that right? Okay.

(JN)

Because of its longevity and its frequency as bycatch, all these alarm bells are ringing among different NGOs that want to monitor the Greenland shark and have different "conditions", as they call it. But I am trying to get through with a message saying that there are also many things that indicate that the Greenland shark is not endangered, because of its high fecundity. That is not to say, however, that bycatch is not a problem, because it is, and it is super important with a continued focus on it.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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 Paamiut. 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.

(MKI)

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!

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

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 released into the sea without the fishermen having to manoeuvre 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.

(MKI)

Ouch. 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 fisheries 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 the catch from the 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.

(MKI)

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.

(MKI)

North Atlantic deep-sea shark?

(JN)

Yes.

(MKI)

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 the Canary Islands and the Azores. It is also caught frequently in Skagerrak, where it is a commonly found fish at depths of 400 to 500 meters.

(MKD)
But they are not caught as frequently as bycatch in the commercial fisheries in Skagerrak as in Greenland?

(JN)
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".

(MKD)
Yes. Exactly.
(JN)
Then at least I feel that I know what I mean.

(MKD)
Ha ha ha.
(JN)
But I don't know if others do...

(MKD)
So we suggest North Atlantic deep-sea shark, or northern...
(JN)
Northern North Atlantic deep-sea shark.

(MKD)
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.

(MKD)
Okay.

ODE TO THE DANAIDES

AQQALUK LYNGE

(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 ministeries
(not in defense 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
then the problems start!
A great deal of luck is needed to preserve them
especially when the conqueror lives in his new territory

The evangelist Hans Egede said: THE BIBLE is my weapon
the king of Denmark said: MONEY is my weapon
- either you have to win the people over
or else you have to destroy them -

Greenland
- the Danaides' trough
Completely gluttonous
they sent pigs
sent beasts
sent sewerpipes
sent colonialism
"sentisme"

Greenland
- we are the indulgence vendor's coffer
- 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

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 Nunat, the land of the skaclings
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 Aqqaluk Lyngé from
The Veins of the Heart to the Pinnacle of the Mind
(Montreal: International Polar Institute Press, 2008)

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AQQALUK LYNGE

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– aallartitatigut

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

Kalaallit Nunaat
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tikisitat juulaarfiat

Kalaallit nunaata taalliareqqinneqarnera Aqqaluk Lyngemiiit
"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 nusersitaapput
– sakkutuut inissaqarnissaat
inuit pilluarnerannit pingaarnerummat

kalaaleq kalavik
– kaseerpaat
atorfissaqanngimmangoq

kalaallit tarningat
kultooriat
amigarporooq
– nutaamik nassaarput
naammaginaguli

Nunarput-aa
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akiniartinninnissaq qularnaarlugu"

Kalaallit Nunaat
atsersimavaatsilliaasiit – Gronland
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– tulugaq qaqortaq
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akiitsukkaminik isumakkeerfigeqqusut unnaviat
aallartitat sukisaarsaarfiat

Nunanguara
qattaavarsuuvutit ulikkaarfeqanngitsoq
nuannaralugu immisavaatsit
– suerullutit

naalagaaffik pissaanerlu naalannassuserlu
allat pigiinnassavaat
naassaangitsumik?

ODE TIL DANNAIDERNENE

AQQUALUK LYNNGE

Den grønlandske grønlander
kasseret
ukvalificeret

grønlandsk sjæl
grønlandsk kultur
mangler

ny sjæl
ny kultur
kasseret
urbaniseret

Grønland du er bundløs
grønlander du falder bundløs

– skader man nogen
skal man gøre det så grundigt
at man ikke behøver at frygte hævn –

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O – OVERGADEN

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(MKI)

Nordatlantisk dybhavshaj?

(JN)

Ja.

(MKI)

Øg så tænke 'Nordanten' som 'det nordlige

Atlantehav'? For umiddelbart tænker jeg, at når

man siger 'Nordanten'; så mener man Grønland,

Færøerne og Island?

(JN)

Ja og nej. Jeg mener 'det nordlige Nordatlantehav';

for 'Nordatlantehavet' er jo bare Atlantehavet

fra /Ekvator

og op. Men nu sagde jeg jo

'nordatlantisk';

og det er fordi, den også er

observeret

syd som De

Kanariske Øer og Azorerne.

Ligeledes bliver den fanger hyppigt i Skagerrak, hvor

den på 400-500 meters dybde er en almindeligt

forekommende fisk.

(MKI)

Men de bliver ikke fanger lige så hyppigt i det

kommercielle fiskeri i Skagerrak som i Grønland?

(JN)

Både øg. 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 røget

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. Nærlig.

(JN)

Så følger 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.

(MKI)

Det kan du lige tænke lidt over.

Okay.

Og det er tilfældigt i den gamle litteratur, at man finder beskrivelser af de virkelige store grønlandshajer. Det er derfor, man kan være nødt til at stille spørgsmålstejn ved selv verificerede kilder, hvis der er at stemme med sin egen empiri. For selv om noget 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 det helt klart nogle advarselsslamper, der begynder at blink. 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.

(JN)

(MKD)

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 normalt 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.

(MKD)

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...

(MKD)

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.

(JN)

Er det rigtigt? Okay.

For di 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.

(MKD)

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

(JN)

Trawler kan godt repareres. Men det er 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 der, hvor der er meget fiskeri, eller er det bare juvenille teenagere? Ikke fordi teenagerne ikke er vigtige, men man vil altid primært gå efter at beskytte en arts ynglcområde. Dog kræver det store mængder data at identificere, hvordan de svømmer, og hvor. Vi har nogle bud, men det arbejder er stadig on-going.

(MKD)

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 et 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 gulf for grønlandshajer, og så er der tilmed den rette varme temperatur.

(MKD)

Så er det sikkert også et godt sted at fiske.

(JN)

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

Men hvilken rolle spiller fiskeriet i grønlandsk kontekst?

(MKD)

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 dyrebestande, herunder grønlandshajen. For eksempel var bifangst af grønlandshaj tidligere et stort problem i rejfiskeriet, fordi de kvaste fangsten.

(MKD)

Ja, det er jo nemt at forestille sig.

(JN)

Men nu har man i rejfiskeriet fundet ud af at sætte nogle gitter ned, sådan at store fisk bare bliver vappet er bifangst af grønlandshaj fortsat et stort problem i hellefsk-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 adække det omfang. Men det er ikke altid, at erhvervet troværdigt kan lave uvildige undersøgelser.

(MKD)

Altså undersøge sig selv?

(JN)

Nej, det er det bedre, at de får nogle forskere som os på banen. Der er pt. nogle canadere, der er i gang med fiskeriet. For det ser desværre ud som om, der er en ret stor dødelighed blandt de hajer, der kommer ind som bifangst, selv om de bliver sat i 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 bådens, 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 længet er her til at pippe op til alle de her forskellige udvalg." Og det er jo desværre sådan, den barske virkelighed er.

(MKD)

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 støjler fangsten fra langlinerne, er det vigtigt at kunne vise, at man ikke slår alt for mange ihjel. I den globale 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.

(MKD)

Hvordan er grønlandshajen distribueret i det nordlige Atlanterhav? Nu kalder vi den jo grønlandshaj, men den bliver også fangst 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 'ordatlantisk dybhavshaj'.



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 studentjob på et forskningskib 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 forelæsnings 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 gennudsat 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 fangt 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 en haj, som blev faldstændigt præcist, og det viste sig, at den kun var vokset otte centimeter – nemlig fra 262 cm til 270 centimeter – i løbet af 16 år.

(JN) Der er en haj på 1.005 kilo, der blev fangt 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."

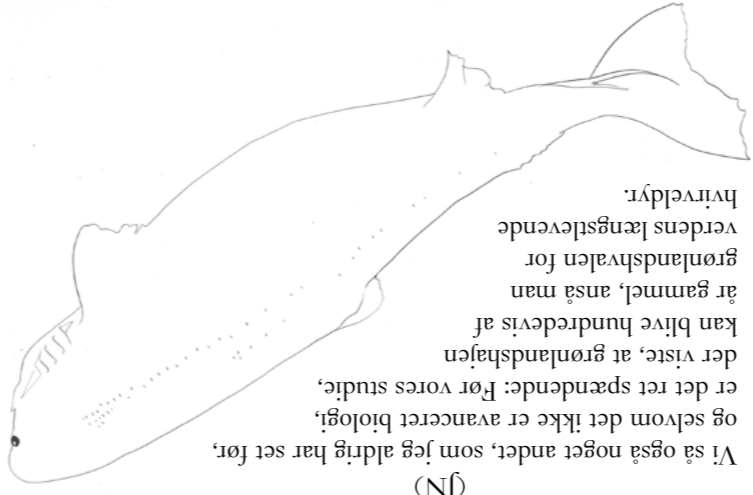
(MKI) Så det har aldrig været mig, der fik idéen til metoden, men jeg vidste fra mit studiejob, hvor man kunne få fat i hajerne, og det var det, der satte gang i både mit special- og ph.d.-projekt med at aldersbestemme grønlandshajen ved hjælp af kemiske metoder.

(JN) Ja. Det var mega underligt. Jeg har endnu ikke fundet ud af, hvad det er. Hajer har jo forskellige sanser; synsans, lugtsans, hørsans, følsans, smagsans, samt en elektrisk sans, som er lokalseret i de såkaldte 'lorenzinske ampuller', der er centrum 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.

(MKI) Derudover har hajer også en sidelinjesans, hvormed de kan mærke trykændringer i vandet. Alt dette har 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.

(MKI) Jeg har skrevet til nogle forskere, som ved en del om hajer og røkker, 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 – det er muligt – eller om det er noget helt andet.

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



(JN) Og det sjove var, at den haj, vi disсекterede i december 2021, havde et stykke grønlandshval i maven. Grønlandshajer er altædende, og de spiser også gerne ådler, når de har mulighed 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 dovre 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 træ og udmærket dyr, der har siddet på en langline eller i et trævi i lang tid. Jeg tror, de er i stand til at gøre mere, end man tror, om end i kort tid ad gangen.

(JN) I maven på den haj, vi disсекterede, 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 død, og så er hagen 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 overlåden.

(MKI) Og hvad så med grønlandshvalen? Hvad er dens overordnede karakteristika? (JN) Grønlandshvalen er helt special. 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 øjelinjen har vist, at hvalerne også kan blive over 200 år gamle. Der er ikke helt så høj 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 øjelinjen.

(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 hagen på værts af de nordisk-germanske sprog gået under navne som 'havkal', 'hakar' og 'håkjertinga' – 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 hagen 'håkjerting', som betyder noget i retning af 'hajens kone', 'håjkone' eller 'håjkælling'.

(MKI) Jeg mener, at 'kælling' oprindeligt bare femininum for 'kari'. (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 'kjertinga'/'kjätting' – bare er gamle nordiske ord for 'kvinde'.

(MKI) Uanset hvad, så har man på norsk et relateret navn for slidehagen: '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 spisesk." 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 han her fiskeren – for det var en fisker – troede, at 'håbrann', altså slidehaj, var en grønlandshaj-han.

(MKI) Nå! Hvor sjovt! (JN) Og så er det det danske navn – 'havkal' – som er forbundet med det islandske 'hakar'. Men på Island er 'hakar' fællesbetegnelse for både grønlandshaj og brugde, hvilket grundet til, at der kan være forvirring omkring grønlandshajens størrelse. Der er for eksempel mange fiskere, der siger, at de engang har fangt 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 fangt en gang imellem.

(MKI) Jeg har set masser af overskrifter fra lokalavis – også i nyere tid – som kommer op på Facebook, hvor der for eksempel står: "Otte meter lang grønlandshaj fanger." Men så er der lynhurtigt nogen i kommentarportet, 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.

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 hagen.

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 lampolie 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?

Det er 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 sen kønsmodne.

I vores undersøgelser har vi primært haft

det med alderen i fokus, hvilket har betydning

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 hagen 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 disseceret, har haft ekstremt mange æg. Særligt var der én haj på 4,7

meter, som havde 649 appelsinstore æg inden i sig. Det er usædvanligt for en haj at have så mange store

(JN)

æg i samme størrelse. Og det åbner for spørgsmålet

Wow.

Har du nogle teorier?

(MKI)

Jeg har i den grad nogle teorier, og de er også bakkert

godt op af videnskaben. Men det er svært at besvare

med en one-liner. Min teori er nemlig, at på lige præcis

det 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

observeret har man sidenhen antaget,

at grønlandshajen får op til ti unger.

(MKI)

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 Squalliformes. Og for alle andre Squalliformes-hajer,

(JN)

Hos Squalliformes-hajer – hvor æggene har samme

størrelse – udvikler æggene sig samtidigt: De befruges

samtidigt, for dernæst at komme over i livmoderen,

hvor de udvikler sig til foster 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

(JN)

Der 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 en stor kannibalistisk unge per graviditet.

Sandtigerhajen tilhører en helt anden gruppe af hajer

(Lamniiformes) end grønlandshajen (Squalliformes), og

ungernes adfærd med at spise af hinanden og

af ubefrugtede æg i livmoderen er ikke påvist

hos nogen Squalliformes-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 en 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.

forhold til sidstævnte 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

det 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 en 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,

eller i løbet af et år eller cyklus? Laver den nye æg?

(JN)

Jeg har i den grad nogle teorier, og de er også bakkert

godt op af videnskaben. Men det er svært at besvare

med en one-liner. Min teori er nemlig, at på lige præcis

det 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

observeret har man sidenhen antaget,

at grønlandshajen får op til ti unger.

(MKI)

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 Squalliformes. Og for alle andre Squalliformes-hajer,

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 hagen 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 disseceret, har

haft ekstremt mange æg. Særligt var der én haj på 4,7

meter, som havde 649 appelsinstore æg inden i sig. Det er usædvanligt for en haj at have så mange store

(JN)

æg i samme størrelse. Og det åbner for spørgsmålet

Så om der har været 600, 500, 400 eller 300 unger

opindeligt, 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, for hun

bed på krogen. I et trawl eller garn derimod havde

man kunnet tælle de evakuerede unger bagfter.

Klart. Men masser, masser af unger.

(MKI)

Okay, vilde nok.

abysal bjergkæde.

Ryg syd for Island, der netop er sådan en undersøisk,

centimeter, er udelukkende fanger fra den Midatlantiske

mindste grønlandshajer, som man har fangst på 40-50

være masser af liv omkring sådan nogle bjergtoppe. De

er store dele af havet, vi ingenting ved om, og der kan

undersøiske bjerge på fire-ten kilometeres dybde. Der

der ikke er noget kommercielt fiskeri. For eksempel ved

at grønlandshajen føder derude – eller dernede – hvor

små, som stort set aldrig bliver fanger. Jeg tror derfor,

i tillæg til de store hajer have mere information om de

efters kommercielle arter. For hvis de gjorde det, ville vi

grønlandshajen ikke føder der, hvor man fisker

grønlandshaj ved Grønland

fangst en gravid grønlandshaj ved Grønland

på trods af, at der bliver fanger rigtig

mange hajer. For mig tyder det på, at

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HAVKAL. GRØNLANDS- HJ. NORD- ATLANTISK DYBHAVSHAJ

JULIUS NIELSEN I SAMTALE
MED 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 højnen 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 højneresse – 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.

Der citeres frit fra følgende folkeviser og -sagn: *Brudens kirkegård*, og *Adeluds i Bjærgel*, samt *Danske sagn. Som de har lydt i folkesunde*, bind 2, del d. *Vandunder*, indsamlet af Ewald Tang Kristensen mellem 1875 og 1893.

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“Hvordan kan du se i mørket?,” spurgte hun.

Hå svarede ikke, men ned langs hver side mærkede Ulm nu bølgere 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 fyrtårer:

“Hvert vandsted har sine folk, sine lugte, sine gennemtrængende. 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.

Guldbløget fra finger til bryst.

Med skelpterler og i havsilkekjole. Hå var hendes kavalier. Hun var hans dronning. Hun fandt bjørne

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.

Skibstræk og færgegang, oliekræk og vindfang.

Gammel legesyge. Vuggevise.

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.

Hå fulgte Ulm til sin mødrende ø, en højderyg.

Her mødte hun de andre.

De drak vin med stor lyst. Hun dannede 649 æg. Røde, hule, vuggede. 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. Hå gav hende en

fløjt af perlemor, så hun kunne spille, når hun var

sorgfuld. Han gav hende en harpe af guld, så hun

guldblommene skjorte at svøbe sig i, når hun var modig.

Ulm gav Hå bjørnen i rav og skelpterlerne.

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

På de græsklædte klitter ventede marchalmen og

færene. De drak hendes mælk, og hun fulgte dem.

Hver skumring spiller hun fløjt af perlemor. Hver nat

vandrer hun i guldblommene skjorte med Hå. Hvert gry

løber hendes fingre

over guldharpens

strenge. Hver middag

bløder blamunke og

Ulm i havets silke.

Ulm med hede, hav og klit.

“Hvad ser du bag dine åbne øjne?”

Husets ejer spillede tværfløjt, og mens Ulm lyttede,

lod hun skelpterlerne 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 arter farve, nu

til perlemor.

Klitterne lå forsvulvede, og da morgengryet

kom, var himlen syntetisk lysrød.

Månen sank. Solen steg.

Ulm smålob mod klitterne. Opnuvret af den

rosenfingerede dronning. Strøg duggen med sine

fingerspidser. Marchalmen stak hendes venstre hånd.

Der 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. Skelpterlerne

raslede. Fugle skreg i gryet. Hornfisk sprang fra det

salte hav. Som nåle på tråd gennem havsilke. Haver

lå nærmest endløst. Nærmest som klitterne, nærmest

som uoverskuelige bølger, der havde gjort holdt.

En krøllet kappe. De brede midnatsblå

silkébånd 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 havkallen 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

tung som vådt sand, og

hendes kind. Hun løb

saltvand løb over

Med dem rejste Ulm sig og gik mod vandkanalen.

Med det våde sand kiggede hun tungt på ham.

De betragtede hinanden. Vi kalder ham Hå.

Ulm tog sine udsøkkere af og løsnede skindet

om sit hoved. Gav dem til ham.

Hå gav hende guld, og Ulm fyldte bryster

og fingre fuld.

“Dronning,” hviskede Hå, og ud af havsilken

steg gusken. Den fyldte hendes lunger og øjne.

Strømmen omflavnede hendes underben.

“Havets bund står åben for mig,” hviskede

hun igen.

Hun gik ud i vandet til Hå. 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

en vidstrakt sandbanke. Flød over vtaggods og død

kultur, marmor og næsehorn. Svømmede

blandt marvin og slangeslytner. Gods og

muslinger i massevis.

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 følger det kontinuum – den kæde af generationer, der er indbyrdes forbundet, og som berører hinanden på et bestemt tidspunkt – at det er det, det vigtige opstår.

Men der er også den der mærkelige dobbeltbinding – især når en kultur er truet eller ved at forvinde – at folk kan blive utroligt opsat på, hvordan den bliver reetableret, og at det skal foregå på en bestemt måde. Og det er vel også her, 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, som andre ville læse Bibelen i kristesunder, og ifølge Gobet uddelte han dem endda til sine soldater, fordi han mente de præsenterede den gennemsnitlige levetid for hajen, havkalan.

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

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

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

Ja.

Det svarer til 1500 år.

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Det har været virkelig brugbart og hjælper 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 en retning – åbner et kontinuum af 500 år fra fortid til fremtid.

Ja.

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ULM OG DEM DER VANDRER

EMMY LAURA PÉREZ FJALLAND

Krøllet silkestof spundet af tusindtråd. Engang var landjorden fuld af sådanne finmaskede flerværk. En enorm silkekøle. Engang begyndte havet at stige. Tog landjorden og bopladser i sin mund. Efterlod sig kyster, fjorde og bugter ujevne og fligede. Fordøjede kultur og samfund i sin mave, mens landjorden ledsgede dem, der måtte vandt.

Ulm drak mere vand og spiste lidt knækbrød. Havets læber bevæger sig stadig, tungen ruller. Fyldes med ismasser. Nogen siger: "Træerne kommer" Og fyrtræerne rejser sig i horisonten. Tømmer i lyngræppet 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 nattes 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 mæge. Det var hemmeligt, og de var stille. Alligevel stak blikkene mod hinanden. De havde hørt ulven kalde. De sørgede. De havde set døde ulve. Kroppene af far og krondyr. De havde set døde ulve. De ville fortælle, og de ville ikke fortælle. Det vilde kød. Hundenaure. Ulvetime. Hyrdetime.

I græsset lå en rad af knogler. Ulm havde hørt, at ulven lå godt der. Med rygstrøte og udkig. Hun spiste endnu en figen, noget brød og ost, og tog en kop te. Knoglerne lignede rester af et bækken og et stykke af en rygpad. Hviteldyr. "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 vandspj. Sad hun mon i et acdespor? Hun så sig selv tage ryggraden, sætte delene på en guldråd, binde dem om sin hals. En kæde af skelertperler hang på hendes bryst.

Fra klitheden bevægede Ulm sig gennem fyrreskoven mod vest. Gik med harpiks og mosset fugtugt. Gik til lysset viste eftermiddag. Hun trak på det ene ben. Det var var bækkenet, der værkede. En forskubning under en gravdirtet. Hun krydsede flade hedestetter, kunne lugte den svedne lynn, se hvor pløjeme havde brændt af. Hun gik langs de ørkenliggende pengemarket og villaveje. Adgang forbudt alle vegne. De skubbede til græsnerne.

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 voldstetter," mumlede hun.

Ulm fandt ly for natten i et stråretet hvidkalket hus, nedskænket i en gryde bag klitterne. Her fandtes varm suppe, en seng og en brændevov. Ulsokker og lammeskind.

Et krøllet hav. Silke i brede striber. Smeltvandet fra den sidste iskappe havde flydt og fossset gennem dette sted. Ud mod havet. Atlantehavets 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 skovjæggerkulturen gik i land. Hassel-fyrretiden – da Østersøen var ferskvandssøen *Ancylussee*, og Atlanterhavet uddivede sin grænse mod øst. Nordsøen flød over Doggerland. Uroksentiden fandtes. Med vildeste og elg, bjørne og vildkatte. Jægere og samlere med menneskekropper ledsaget af hunde. Kronhjørretiden fandtes. Kulturstipper og bøgetid. Det blev mennesketid.

Ulm spiste en figen fra sin madpakke. Buskernes 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. Melllem bankerne så vandhuller omkranset af stedsseggrønne, gulgrønne og grågrønne græsser. Uldne lynnbuske og guldkrøgede bær. Sandede baner med fodspor og riller.

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

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

(MKI)

Da jeg undersøgte forholdet mellem myte og ritual i forbindelse med min ph.d., stødt jeg på Victor

Turners beretning om jorddragningssituationer i det nordvestlige Zambia, hvor han beskriver, hvordan

en Ndembu-læge ordinerer kvinder eller par

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 vestlyske historiker H.P. Hansens beretning

om præindustriel medicin og rituelle praksisser

i Midvestsylland, fandt jeg ud af, at et lignende rituel

motiv optæder 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 glæmsel af

lignende nordeuropæiske eksempler, har medført, at

visse grupper eller emittenter bliver forbundet med

”der irrationelle”, og andre med ”der rationelle” – selvom

alle samfund i virkeligheden altid har været, og fortsat

er, præget af både rationelle og irrationelle træk.

Jeg kan godt lide ideen om etnografi som en slags

psykanalyse for det europæiske oplysningsamfund,

som i ”Åh ja, vi gør ikke den slags her, men tjek hvad

sådan”. At producere den racialiserede Anden som

Europas Id.

(MKI)

Jal Det moderne Europa virker gennemsvret af en ide

om, at i det omfang vi nogensinde har engageret

os i såkaldt ”irrationelle” rituelle eller spirituelle

(AK)

og de havde en slags familiefilm, hvori han veksler

mellem sådan en slags official, antropologisk scenme

og noget meget mere latterligt, og man kan aldrig helt

fa hold på det. Det er virkelig en af mine yndlingsfilm.

I filmen taler han også om at pulverisere asken fra

ens nære arføde og blande den i bananauppe som det

ultimate begravelsesritual, og han præsenterer disse

Hans ophav tæller både indfødte og hvide chilencer,

og han har det lidt sådan ”dette ligger ikke langt fra

noget dele af min herkomst, men alligevel er jeg

blevet bildt ind, at det kun stammer fra et aspekt

af den” – og den slags sammenfald.

(MKI)

Det går hånd i hånd med andet-gørende adfærd.

Altså: kan der være en måde at omtale potentialerne

i minoriteter, 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 de-stabilisere den autoritet

for at kunne blive en del af alt eller sådan noget.

(MKI)

Okay, så følger du, at der på trods af de mange

essentiaiserede og essentiaiserende dynamikker,

som knytter sig til denne

diskussion, stadig

kan være en form for sted, hvor det at

komme fra en baggrund som

(MKI)

Ja, jeg tror, at jeg fra mit Ojibway-perspektiv – og

på grund af den måde, jeg tænker og følger generelt –

altid forsøger at anlægge et fremtidsperspektiv, fordi

man så ofte bliver indplacert i fortiden. Men det er

interessant, for når folk spørger ind til for eksempel

indfødte amerikaneres situationer, så opfordrer jeg

dem altid til at udforske deres egne etniske identiteters

fortid. Og det er her, der bliver spændende eller

vanskeligt med hensyn til projektion, fordi folk ofte

vender sig mod indfødte kulturers fortid i en søgen

efter deres egen.

(MKI)

Ja, præcis.

Selvom det, som din forskning så tydeligt viser,

egenlig findes en rig kultur med skikke og modstand

og sagn i jeres egen historiske baggrund, som man kan

(MKI)

Men en abenlyst hindring for det arbejde er naturligvis

nationalsocialismens historie, og hvordan nazisterne

afsøge og belyse.

(MKI)

Men en abenlyst hindring for det arbejde er naturligvis

racistisk dagsorden.

etnisk kategori, der kan nære en nationalistisk og

der forsøger at identificere danskhed som en homogen

sikker det en stor fed kæp i hjulet på ethvert projekt,

og forsøgt at formidle hende med guld. For mig at se

danske konger, fordi han har undertrykket hendes bro

i falkenham hendes

hovedmotiv i

sangen om helinden

højrenationalisme.

Eksempelvis er

(AK)

aktivt approprierede hedensk,

nordisk og germansk arv til

egne racetideologiske formal.

Jeg tror, at det er en af

grundene til, at så mange

venstreorienterede

nordeuropæere viger udenom at beskæftige

sig med historiske minoriteter 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

nøgetrnt blik og holde

fast i de faktiske

formuleringer og betæninger

fra min egen familie

og andre virkelige mennesker i folkeindsamlingen.

For netop ikke at fremelske en slags virkkelig

vikingeuropi, 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 nedfra og op; fra de

arkivretser, jeg finder, som jeg kan sætte sammen i

mænd og kvinder.

Allé deltog i alle former

for arbejde – at

strikke, syng – og

det var lige så ofte kvinder

som mænd, der var omdrejningspunkt for myternes

(MKI)

Helt sikkert. Det er vel også derfor, jeg har undvæget

der 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

statusforskél mellem

mænd og kvinder.

Alle deltog i alle former

for arbejde – at

skaffe mad, hyrde, slåge,

arbejde – og

det var lige så ofte kvinder

som mænd, der var omdrejningspunkt for myternes

narrative og transformave handlinger. Så for mig

består arbejdet også i at bruge min egen konkrete andel

i, hvad man kunne kalde en indfodt nordisk mytisk og

bege 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 det

findes punkter, hvor vi kan mødes og forene kræfterne

gennem arven fra vores respektive minoriteter 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!

(MKI)

Selvfolgelig, men hvis jeg nu skulle være lidt

selvkritisk, kunne man spørge, hvordan det ikke bare

(AK)

Jeg er fuldstændig enig med dig. I fortægnelse deraf

tror jeg, at det også er grunden til, at jeg altid forsøger

at orientere enhver form for baggrund mod fremtiden;

fordi jeg følger at ved at fokusere på

fortiden,

er det ikke kun det tværgående svar

med

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 ider om

”rødt overherredømmme”, og så er vi ikke nået videre.

(MKI)

Helt sikkert. Det er vel også derfor, jeg har undvæget

der så længe. Men min formors viser går slet ikke i

den retning, og hun var heller ikke viking – hun var

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arbejde – og

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som mænd, der var omdrejningspunkt for myternes

narrative og transformave handlinger. Så for mig

(MKI)

Selvfolgelig, 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 taler 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 ide om, at det, der i virkeligheden

er brugt for, er en fortløbende åbenbaring af kulturen,

og at ting skal have lov til at forandre sig.

ADELUDS I ÆBJÆFR

Det var æ kæng hans orlovsman
– Æ dans den æ hren.
A di kam stjæln hæ re æ lan;
– Lyyt dero, hwo æ jåmfru re æ bjæfr ble dårn!) –

Da di nu kam nææret re lan;
Di høor æ frøkn Adluds i æ bjæfr, dæ sæng.

Æ skipper han taaler re hren smodræng;
"A do ska go mæ mæ re stælen Adluds i løn."

Han p'ket o æ daa'r med hans skin;
"Vaagn åp, stål' Adluds, du læa'ker mæ in'!

Hæret æ buet fra di fæsteman,
I ska komm njer re ham ve æ stran."

"Hæar du buet fra mi fæsteman' kjæfr;
Da søj mæ, hwa naw'n han monne mo bææfr!"

"Niels McKelsen hjer di fæsteman,
A do ska føøll(e) mæ mæ fra lan."

En selk(c)særk hon føst drow' o;
En gullb'io met kjør tel hon derowwer slow."

Hon drow Gul' al' øwer Gul',
Brost æ Fen ger dem sæt hon ful'.

Frøken Adluds tuk æ smadræng' ve æ haa'n,
A så gik di dær njer re æ stran'.

Hon lææret ham æ væjle æ stæl o æ wan';
Hon lææret ham rowner æ skryw mæ æ haa'n.

Hon lææret ham æ ven' æ wri' æ vææen,
A hon lææret ham åw æ stæll'et igæen.

Hon lææret ham æ væ æ rjæ så stuefr,
Sa all æ Skiw di sæk njer for æ fjuefr.

Stål' Adluds u(h)c i æ skiw da spræng,
Æ skipper hin i æ arm da nam'.

"Ja, skam faa do, do skipperw'!
Vill du så forrå mi ång jw'?"

"No ska do æ'r komm o di fæa'r hans lan;
For re du far en søn, dæ ka ra æ ruet i hans haa'n.

No ska do æ'r komm o di muet' hime øø;
For re du far en Dæter, dæ ka skjæret æ søj."

Frøkn Adluds u(h)c i æ haw' da spræng;
Sa swømme hun æ hime fæa'r hans lan'.

Æ skipper han sejllid æ jåmfru hon swømme,
Dog kam hon re lan' en stun' føøt end ham.

"Nær æ æ k'omen o mi fæa'r hans lan';
Mi søn ka hwarcken sejll' hæller ra æ ruet i hans haa'n.

No æ æ o mi muet' hime øø;
Mi dæter hon ka hwarcken skjæret heller søj'.

Men hæjer æ'r væærn for di hren smadræng,
– Æ dans den æ hren. –

A sku ha darowet all æ kæng hans howeren;
– Ly'r dero, hwo æ jåmfru re æ bjæfr ble dårn! –

Folketvise indsamlet af Ewald Tang Kristensen i 1872.
Tilbageoversat til Ørre-tjysk fra rigsdansk af Michael Ejstrup.

EN VERDEN MAN VIL BO I?

ADAM KHALIL I SAMTALE
MED MARIE KØLBÆK IVERSEN

Marie Kolbæk 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 *TEDalks*

on Acid, som I organiserede i forbindelse med jeres

udstilling *One if by Land, Two if by Sea* på Kunsthø

Charlottenborg tidligere i år. Jeg er nysgerrig efter

at dele nogle af de tanker, der har ledt op til min

udstilling på Ø – Overgaden med dig, fordi mit projekt

– ligesom meget af dit arbejde – engagerer minortære

vidensformer i krydsfeltet mellem modernitet og

videnskab i et forsøg på at formulere alternative

fremtidsperspektiver hinsides den kapitalistiske

modernitets voldgræb. I mit videoværk *Kobhyster*

laver jeg en spekulativ appropriation af det historiske

som på tværs af de nordisk-germanske sprog/historisk

er blevet bearbejdet som enten havkælling.

Ny marinbiologiske forskning viser, at havkalen – som

højn blandt andet kaldes på dansk – kan blive

mellem 272 og 512 år gammel.

Nordatlantiske

svømmer den i hele det

interessant

Hav, hvilket gør den til en

Havkalens tidsperspektiv er en ret juicy krog, som

virkelig fik min hjærne til at summe! Jeg er ikke sikker på,

at der er 100% på linje, men jeg har læst et essay af Lou

Cornum om Indigenous Futurism, som følges 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 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!

I den forbindelse – og måske er det lidt stenet –

kom jeg til at tænke på havfolk og drager; altså drager

opsod i Europa og Asien, men på samme tid. Så de

ma findes, ikke?

Der er en god pointe. Generelt er det interessant at

overveje, hvordan der historisk har været – og fortsat

er – minoritæters snarere end majoritæters udvekslinger

mellem forskellige kulturer og kulturelle narrativer.

I udformningen af projektet var Peter Lindebaugh og

Marcus Redikers bog *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000)

et vigtigt referencpunkt.

Bogen præsenterer

en historisk reddegørelse

for de såkaldte

multietnisk proletariat med

rødder i både

Europa, Afrika og Amerika:

It included cloaks, 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 onmore. What does

the experience of this proletariat have to offer us today?

Dette arbejder på mange måder mit projekts andet

udgangspunkt: den midtvestjyske hede, hvor min familie

kommer fra, hvor jeg er vokset op, og hvor min tip-tip-

tipoldemor Johanne Thygesdatter var en af Ewald Tang

Kristensens, som trøværtdige vidensbyrd fra den kultur

Hvis vi læser de viser, som Johanne sang for Tang

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

menesker kan have autoritet til at bestemme over

andre. Det giver mening, eftersom livet på heden

var forankret i fælledbaserede samfund, hvilket må

have betydning, at det kun kan have følelse som et tab,

da heden i løbet af det 19. århundrede gradvist blev

udstyrket, 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 tilgængelige 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 bebod de flydende zoner mellem

nationaliteter 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

der er en del af en New Age-bevægelse, hvor folk tror,

at der findes de her to metere høje, vikingeligende

menesker under vulkanuener.

Jeg tænker,

at der var Atlantis og så var der

– og de konkurrerede på en måde.

Atlantis

fastholdt som

fantasi på grund af vulkanuenerne. 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

iden 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 centerer sig om

betegnet som havfolk. Andre gange bliver de betegnet

som stråler af lys, der eksisterer på en eller anden

måde. Sidstævnte er måske mere New Age-versionen,

som er den, der gør

sig mest gældende i dag.

hawaiiansk kunstner

Sean Connolly – en

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

der muligt. Det taler ind i ideen om mennesker, der

pludselig dukker op alle mulige steder, ligesom i den

lemurianiske mytologis forestilling om lavatunneler eller

underjordiske gange, der forbindes verden. Det, hvor

jeg voksede op, hævder mange mennesker at have set

tegn på Bigfoot, Sasquatch. Og der, hvor jeg kommer

fra, bliver de kaldt rodretjende.

(AK)

(MKI)

(MKI)

(MKI)

(MKI)

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(MKI)

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OVERGADEN



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Marie Kølbæk Iversen
Rovhistorier
Udstillingsperiode: 27.08.2022 – 23.10.2022

O – OVERGADEN
Overgaden nedden vandet 17, 144 København K,
overgaden.org

FORORD

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

Det gør vi, fordi Marie Kølbæk Iversen er en af de 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 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 kunstnere, hvor der fokuseres på kunstpraksis som vidensproducerende handling. Det er en helt særlig mulighed for kunstnere 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.

Rovhistorier

Med udstillingen Kølbæk Iversen en præsenreter Marie Kølbæk Iversen en dyb og minimalistisk kondensering af sit femårige forskningsprojekt, *Rovhistorier* krydser ind i øjet på havkaleen; en dybhavsfisk, der også er kendt som grænser og kultur, når kunstnere rejser ind i øjet på havkaleen; en dybhavsfisk, der også er kendt som grønlandsråben. Nye forskning har vist, at dyret kan blive mellem 272 og 512 år gammel, hvilket gør det til det længstlevende kendte hvitvellyt i verden.

Historier om havkalens færd 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 havfolkviser og -sagn fra Kølbæk 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 lydøs videoinstallation, hvori mikroskopiske optagelser af havkalens øjlmønstre 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 rovdyrets perspektiv bringer *Rovhistorier* kunst, folkeminder og moderne videnskabelig sammen, hvorved Kølbæk Iversen reflekterer over 500 års koloniale, imperiale og miljørelaterede kampe i den nordlige atlantehavsergion, 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 kunstneres udstillinger. Udgivelserne er muliggjort gennem støtte fra Augustinus Fonden, der skal have en hjertelig tak. Jeg vil gerne takke Starens Kunstfond, Novo Nordisk Fonden og HK-dir (Direktoratet for høgare udannning og kompetanse, Norge) for at støtte udstillingen og vores dygtige grafiske designere fra fanfare, for deres altid flotte arbejde. En stor tak til O – Overgaden in-house redaktør Nanna Friis, der har redigeret denne temmelig uvidede publikation, og O – Overgaden 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 Kølbæk Iversen for det fortrinlige samarbejde og tankegods i sin smukke, mangefacetterede og tankevækkende udstilling.

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

