Our language is our *búnað*

Language and identity in the Faroe Islands

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Abstract

The language of the Faroe Islands survived as a spoken language for centuries under foreign rule and the imposition of a foreign language. In 1948 they became self-governed, spurred by an inside movement reclaiming Faroese as the national language and the right to use it in schools, church and office. This was followed with the creation of the written language. Since then, the Faroese language has become a national symbol and entered the political arena through a puristic language policy.

In this thesis, I explore the relationship Faroe Islanders have with their language, with a more nuanced view of the linguistic protectionism on the islands, as defying traditional conceptions of a language in stasis. Language protectionism has undergone a shift from the political arena to the social arena, which has lead to increasing agency and an internal development of the language according to what Faroe Islanders themselves consider most valuable.

To understand the relationship Faroe Islanders have with their language; why they search for lost words, sayings and meanings, or why they discuss language amongst each other, I situate language and identity within the interplay of larger contexts such as Faroe Islands' cultural memory and their place in space and time. With an idea of change around the corner, Faroe Islanders inhabit a space between habituation and representation when it comes to many aspects of living life on the islands, underscored by a desire for duration. Language becomes a living thread and connection to that which Faroe Islanders don't want to lose, a vessel for Faroese values and way of life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

> "The Faroese know their tiny archipelago with a vocabulary so large and elaborate and pervasive that the islands come to feel like a continent" (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.13)

The Faroe Islands are a in fact a tiny archipelago, that at times feel as all encapsulating as a continent. The words they know to describe each geographical direction, each moody weather, the colours that adorn each sheep on the hill, give the islands a living quality in the language, especially when heard from outside. Faroe Islanders themselves usually agree to the notion that their language is "beautiful". What makes a word or language seem beautiful?
The answer to that question is not really knowable or universally definable, but the question in itself opens up for other explorations on language in the Faroe Islands. The context for these explorations lie in the historical interplay of language in politics and in the process of self-determination as a nation. Because of this, language has had a central role in the Faroe Islands, and is part of the reason I chose to do my fieldwork in the Faroe Islands. I was intrigued by the linguistic policy of purism, and the sociality of not only the language in itself, but also how they talk about language, what lies in it, the reasons they think of it as beautiful.

With these ideas, I set out to explore language in the Faroe Islands; at first looking at puristic tendencies in the language, in the political arena and in the social arena. This is a topic that has been partially explored by linguists and sociolinguists in the Islands, as well as a couple of anthropologists in the 80's and 90's. What has gone somewhat unnoticed is recent rapid change in the islands. Globalisation has been reaching every nook of the world at different paces, and in the Faroe Islands it has been both fast and slow, a society with room for complexities and contradictions when it comes to temporality and modernity. The topic of change is not only in relation to factual change but also to the projection of change, at times an idea of change as threat.

This in mind, my overarching research question is quite simply: Why does language hold such an important place in the Faroe Islands? And from this question, further; What underlying processes and contexts inform the relationship between Faroe Islanders and their language? How does this relationship blend with aspects of Faroese life to inform also a relationship with space and time?

Research on Faroe Islanders relationship with language at this point in time has been little explored anthropologically, if at all. This is meant as a more nuanced approach, looking at the language tradition and protectionist tendencies through a different lens, as not necessarily static but as an opportunity for a lot of agency.

A relationship between language and time became apparent during my fieldwork. A rendering of the passage of time through history, memory, storytelling. The language is a conduit but also a vessel or container, in the sense that language is used to communicate something, but also capable of

containing symbolically Faroese values, as well as its history, memory, and way of life. “Language as a microcosm of everything Faroese” (Stephen Pax Leonard, 2016, p.62).

2. THE PLACE: FAROE ISLANDS

The Faroe Islands is an archipelago of 18 islands in the Atlantic ocean, of high green cliffs, that are often nestled in fog. They are usually too small to have their name written on world maps, but are identifiable as the small dots with a “T” form between Iceland and Norway. It is home to 50 000 people, as well as some diaspora in Denmark and Norway who would mostly still refer to it as home. The capital city is Tórshavn, where I stayed during my fieldwork. It has some other small cities such as Klaksvík, but mostly it’s comprised of small villages scattered around the green hills and valleys in the 17 relatively small islands that are inhabited. Connections between the islands vary from ferries, underwater tunnels and, in at least one case, by a government subsidised helicopter. They have an airport on the island of Vágar, which is the main way people travel to and from the Islands.
Politically they are a self-governing or autonomous territory under the Kingdom of Denmark. They have their own democratic and parliamentary political system, and an economic system with their own trade agreements. They are not a member of the European Union, but have a Fisheries Agreement and Free Trade Agreement with EU.

In describing the Faroe Islands, past writing well known facts, I find it difficult to find a balance between describing very real aspects and running into anthropological tropes. The Faroe Islands are in the middle of the ocean, and have survived centuries when communication and trade wasn’t as easy as it is today. This means that they have developed, as many islands do, a very self-sufficient way of life. This way of life ranges from what is most controversial and internationally known, whale “hunting”, to the keeping of sheep and catching of seabirds. There are more sheep on the islands than people, and it is very common to own sheep.
The Faroe Islands are also a modern capitalist and industrial society, with an advanced fishing economy and naval industry. They have a developed education and healthcare system, as well as a social welfare system, as the other Nordic countries have.

Although fishing is the basis of the economic system, the economy of living the land in the Faroe Islands is largely a sheep economy. The concept of economy I use in regards to sheep is more related to its definition in terms of production, consumption and management of resources, as there is actually relatively little profit.

Sheep are a very big part of life in the Faroe Islands, as well as they have become emblematic of the Faroe Islands. The sheep is the coat of arms, it is the logo for Faroese beer, it’s the origin of the traditional Faroese jumper, and the meat in itself is the thing that most islanders treasure most (food

wise). Sheep care, herding, slaughter and meat preparation are also deeply inherent national skillsets.
The importance of sheep is easily visible, even outwards it is a marketable aspect when it comes to tourism. On the other hand, the islands are also a popular destination amongst ornithologists and enthusiasts, as there are many species of Atlantic seabirds.
In the Faroe Islands every ferry is named after a bird, and I found that birds could often be a topic of conversation, they are often given symbolic value, at the same time they are also a very important food source.

The natural life and the natural surroundings of the islands are rich, as well as harsh. Nature can be seen everywhere, green steep hills and grey cliffs, strong winds, and the light that shines between the clouds is sharp. The sea feels vast and rough. The climate is sub-polar oceanic, so not that much grows naturally, but Faroese people plant a lot of potatoes and root vegetables, as well as rhubarb and radishes.

These descriptions of Faroese nature and how it ties in with subsistence and self-sufficiency practices tend to remind of older traditions and a feeling of being in a place where time moved differently than in the rest of Europe. But I want to avoid the trope of "people close to nature", or run the risk of romanticising their relationship with nature, while at the same time be able to appreciate its importance in social life and in Faroese identity. In the Faroe Islands, what reminds of old ways of life coexists with a modern society and a well built welfare system. It is not one or the other, it is mostly coexistence in a way specific to the Faroe Islands.

This coexistence is embedded in the fabric of what makes up life on the islands, where the different threads intertwine with one another. An example that comes to mind, is *bindiklubb*, which translates to knitting club. One of my informants explained how *bindiklubb* is one of the social networks that is most ingrained in the social fabric and dynamics of the islands. It is formed by women, sometimes friends, family or women that somehow have ended up together in a *bindiklubb*. As she explained it, it's for life, it is a serious thing to drop out of one. You seldom actually knit, but have established get-togethers once every two weeks or monthly, where what actually transpires is eating cake and chatting. It is a major part of social networking on the islands, the husbands become friends, job opportunities are shared through these networks, vacations are planned, kid birthdays are attended. It unites everyone in a big web that forms a very intertwined social fabric. This is one way of many, that connects the people on the islands and end up making the Faroe Islands a very socially transparent society. Everyone knows, or knows of everyone.

The fact that so many of the women on the islands belong to a large web of *bindiklubb*s, can be seen as a "traditional" aspect of a small scale society, but what these women do, where they meet, on the other hand is modern and large-scale. They meet at cafés and go out dancing, or as my informant told me, they travel together on vacation to Mallorca.

Another example is the possibility of paying for services like the dentist with meat and potatoes, as one of my informants has the habit of.
We tend to think in binaries, and in bounded categories, and a capitalist economy and gift economy do not usually go hand in hand, but aren't mutually exclusive. There are of course unsaid rules, and in this case a value system which at times places higher value on meat or natural resources than money. So paying for the dentist with some other gift would probably be futile, but meat or potatoes are valuable resources. Which further showcases a particular relationship with Faroese nature. One could think that money is just as good if you can buy meat and potatoes in the store with that money. But potatoes in the store might be imported and "not as good", and Faroese meat is definitely more valuable than imported meat. You could buy Faroese meat at the store or if you have a supplier, but receiving the meat as payment for your services would just save you a step.

Faroese familiarity

A rainy day in April I was on my way to my first interview and I was a little nervous. When I got there and the person I was interviewing heard that I spoke Faroese, he immediately asked "Hvør eigur teg?". It means "who owns you?". It is the question young (or not that young) people get asked in order to place them, who their parents and grandparents are, before the conversation can start.
This man is a well known Faroese sociolinguist, who I was interviewing at *Fróðskaparsetur Føroya*, the University of the Faroe Islands. At the question, I told him who my mother was and that my grandparents live on Sandoy. He knew their names, and told me that we were actually family. His name and my name don't match, so I hadn't thought of it, but it turns out his father and my grandmother's father are cousins, so he and my grandmother are third cousins. I asked him if he had ever met her, which he hadn't because his father had moved away from Runavík, where my grandmother grew up. He still knew who she was and who my grandfather and mother were, where they lived. I noticed that his initial formal composure had relaxed, not because we were distantly related, but because now that he had "placed" me, we were free to talk more openly. This also calmed my nerves, which is something I would keep experiencing in the Faroe Islands, a particular relaxed sociality.

This was my first interview on the Faroe Islands, and although I had heard the "Hvør eigur teg" question many times and knew what they were asking, I was still surprised to find someone related to me. Other people weren't as surprised when I told them. The question is as common as it is, because in a place like the Faroe Islands, it is usual to find common ground with most people. Not necessarily everyone being related, but related to someone you know. This is part of what makes up the particular social transparency I mentioned earlier, and what comes with it, for better or for worse, some form of social control.

When speaking with one of my informants who had lived in Denmark, she told me she used to hate that there was no anonymity in the Faroe Islands, but now that she has moved back, she loves it. I have often wondered how it is different than the little anonymity one experiences in small towns, like the one I grew up in. It feels in a way alike, but on a larger scale that somehow is infused with a national feeling, not just a local one. People from another island might be related or connected to you somehow, or you may know of them because you hear them on the radio, or they married your best friend's sister. It's a national locality that is infused with familiarity which strengthens a feeling of togetherness.

This particular familiarity or locality, was something I experienced more than once during my fieldwork. Not only not being anonymous, but also the feeling that somehow everyone knew I was an outsider. Which seems contradictory, and in a way it represented the feeling of the insider/ outsider divide very well.
I was once at a bar watching a live band and when I approached the bar to buy a drink, the man standing there recognised me. I didn't know who he was but he knew my whole family. He asked if I was going to "reka" at my grandparent's the next day (sheep herding), because it turns out, he was also going!
Similarly, at one point, an older man came to renovate the bathroom in the house I was living at. He took a good look at me and asked if my grandfather still had the green bathroom floor and shower. I just laughed and said yes, this man had of course remodelled their bathroom too, 15 years ago. This kind of thing happened from time to time. On the other hand, I once ventured up to *Rúsdrekkasølan*, which is the Faroese alcohol monopoly. I just wanted to buy a couple of beers for a gathering I had been invited to. I had never been there before and as I entered I looked around, which is not a particularly strange thing to do. I then got approached by someone who introduced themselves as the manager and he immediately asked me if I was lost, and I told him in Faroese that I hadn't been here before. He laughed and said he already knew that, and asked where I was from. This was funny to me, I should maybe include here that I look just like any other Faroese person, and I am still surprised by the intuition Faroese people seem to have at spotting a foreigner. I suspect the criteria ranges from body language to clothing, but it seems almost instinctual. I got a little tour from the manager and some Faroese beer recommendations, it was a good day.

3. METHOD

When I first moved to Tórshavn, I rented the first floor of a house. The next morning I was invited upstairs to drink tea with the woman upstairs. She and I were chatting, and I told her that I was in the Faroe Islands to look at language and identity. She then told me the story of her nieces. Her sister moved to Copenhagen and her children had grown up in Denmark. Her daughters were both trying to learn Faroese, even though they were all grown up now. One of them had told her that she felt she was robbed of something, by not having grown up with the Faroese language.

It is common in the Faroe Islands to talk of cases like these, where even though the parents might have tried to speak Faroese in the home, the children hadn't been able to learn it, or speak it. Perceived at times as being stripped of an important connection to the islands.
My mother is Faroese and my father is Norwegian. When I was 3 years old, I would sometimes speak Norwegian to my mother, because we often spoke it when we were all together. She always replied "á føroyskum, góða" which means "in Faroese, darling". I would immediately switch. This memory is etched in my mind even though I was very young. Today I would never speak Norwegian with her, it would feel unnatural. The interesting part is that since then I have always felt a sense of belonging in the Faroe Islands because everyone would praise my language. They would not only praise me, but also make me aware of how many other "Faroese children" not grown up in the Faroe Islands hadn't been able to learn the language like I did, which was "such a shame".

This example reflects my position as being half Faroese, and what in some ways has made me very conscious of the importance of language in identity, at least in the Faroese case. It is not only a matter of having language or not having it, but of having to position oneself in relation to language and identity, especially for outsiders but at times also for insiders.
The issue is seldom simple communication, this is rarely the issue in the Faroe Islands, as they are fluent in English and Danish, often also Norwegian. It's perhaps more about a different kind of communication that relies on more than getting a message across. The language signifies roots, and symbolically holds a whole set of ideas, I would say it is part of a Faroese ontology that is communicated in different ways. This is part of why I chose to take a closer look at the relationship Faroe Islanders have with their language, and the position of language in Faroese society.

Emotions in the field

The Faroe Islands are not that big, so doing fieldwork on the islands also meant being close by to family. Ethically, this can become a conflict of interest if familial relationships influence your reasonings as an anthropologist. In my case, spending some time with family while I was starting my fieldwork helped me get closer and understand important elements of Faroese life and identity that would have been hard to glimpse otherwise, in such a short time.
Familial relations also have an emotional component. Emotions in the field traditionally underpin the subjective/objective divide; with an aim to remain objective, emotions have traditionally had no place in anthropology's methodology. This has been changing, with a more nuanced understanding of the undertaking of fieldwork, the anthropologist's positionality and reflexivity.
As Davies et al. have shown in *Emotions in the Field* (2010), participant observation and the experience of fieldwork is often very immersive, which of course gives rise to different emotions and states (Davies et al., 2010, p.1). Their aim is to:

> "Show how certain emotions, reactions, and experiences that are consistently evoked in fieldworkers, when treated with the same intellectual vigour as our empirical work

> demands, can more assist than impede our understanding of the lifeworlds in which we set ourselves down" . (Davies et. al., 2010, p.1)

In my case, it is not really about particular emotions, but rather the emotional arena. Many aspects of my fieldwork had an emotional component, not only because of the presence of family, but because topics surrounding identity can be emotional. My own positionality between insider and outsider, also means that some of these topics also evoked feelings that rather than inhibit my research, made me understand and relate.

For example, the emotional component of language and elements of Faroese cultural memory would have been more difficult to grasp if they weren't also somehow part of something I could deeply relate to. This is what we try to do as anthropologists. Some of these elements are also easier to grasp because I am both an insider and an outsider.
It was never hard for me to understand why a sixteen year old girl moved to the Faroe Islands to go to school for a year. She had a Faroese mother but had grown up in Norway and never learned to speak the language, even though her mother had tried. Then her mother died, and she decided to move to the Faroe Islands and finally try to speak the language. It wasn't hard for me to understand why my own little sister, who has grown up in Spain and speaks less Faroese than I do, switches from Spanish to Faroese when she wants to tell me she loves me, or misses me. It's part of what Pax Leonard has described as a "high intimacy language" (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 62) and it allows me to understand how we switch to the language that represents intimacy, closeness, or familial connection in certain situations. Reality is not always neat and organised, and the personal sometimes mixes with the impersonal, the subjective and the objective. As long as there is openness and transparency about the ways that these mix in an academic context, I think it can be a strength rather than a weakness of our discipline.

The field and fieldwork

Choosing the Faroe Islands as the "field" for my fieldwork, was a combination of the things already mentioned and also some degree of practicality. During the time I was deciding where to go, Covid-19 was spiking in Norway and the possibilities for travel were slimmer. However I felt that travelling to the Faroe Islands was a good choice, in regards to access and speaking the language. The choice of field is seldom completely at random, even if you can never be sure of what to expect, that's of course the point.

I left for the Faroe Islands the 13th of April, and returned to Norway the 4th of August. In between I took some time off for a vacation. This time a year, spring and summer, turned out to be a very nice time for doing fieldwork. When I arrived, it felt like winter, every mountain top was covered with snow and storms were still raging, but slowly spring arrived and with it lambing season. The hares shed their winter coats and the Faroe Islands sort of came alive with new life and sunnier days. I

spent the first days going on long walks, trying to immerse myself in just “being there” physically, acquaint myself with the particular space.

Because of my partial insider position, I had some contacts, as well as family members who granted me access with countless recommendations on who to contact, literature I could read, information. Gaining connections in the Faroe Islands, was not particularly difficult, especially because there is a social easiness, relaxedness. People are easy-going when it comes to social situations, there is always a feeling of locality or nearness. I was often pushed in the “anthropologist role” by people in the Faroe Islands. Once, I was interviewing someone and we started talking about a Faroese couple, the woman is a painter and the man is a famous Faroese writer. I expressed some interest in talking to them, and she just smiled and told me that we should just go say hi to them now, they lived right around the corner. I had to struggle a bit with myself, because I had an idea of not being prepared, of not knowing what to say or to ask. I realised that this kind of spontaneity is part of participant observation, ethnography and fieldwork, but it was the locality and familiarity of Faroese people that helped me be in that role, and made it feel so comfortable.

The field in itself was mostly around Tórshavn and the island of Sandoy. It took some getting used to, getting to know my surroundings, but also my own space in the little town of Tórshavn. I often felt that everyone knew or could see I was an outsider. The islands are often described as a place with no anonymity, which is true, but it is also a place that can offer a lot of quiet and solitude. Wherever you are, you don’t have to walk for long to find a spot where you won’t run into anyone. The long walks I took, made me feel rooted in this place. I often felt that the nature and the environment was a secondary, always present participant in my fieldwork.

Even though I didn’t experience access as an issue, I did struggle at times with self-consciousness surrounding my own language. Even though I was raised speaking Faroese, I did not grow up there or go to school there. My own way of speaking stood in stark contrast at times, when I was trying to understand some of the puristic elements of the language, which I will later discuss. I was aware that I did not speak perfectly while I was asking about language. This did not particularly matter to my research question, wether I could speak perfectly or not, but at times I would realise people I was talking to were not as familiar with anthropology, and expected that my interest in language came from a linguistic standpoint, and following that reasoning, I would speak the language perfectly (as an expert would). Explaining my role as an anthropologist, and what I was there to do, was at times met with a mix of curiosity and some mild joking: that I should study the beer drinking habits of Faroe Islanders instead. In the end, everyone was always very helpful.

Data

The method I used is participant observation together with semi-structured interviews. Most of my understanding of the Faroese society came largely from just participating, being there, attending

birthday parties, visiting friends I made or family members. I gathered more explicit data through semi-structured interviews and conversations that I recorded. More often than not, these interviews quickly became very informal. At my first interview I discovered that we were actually related, far removed but related. At the second interview, my informant suggested we do it at her place. When I arrived she had bought cookies and chocolate, and was making tea. Then it become more of a long chat, this particular time I did not record and rather took notes. Another interview I had was over breakfast, also eating and talking. Even though I set up meetings as interviews, Faroese people were experts in turning it into a relaxed social situation. Depending on the context and who the informant was, the interviews ranged from a more formal academic setting to a relaxed conversation, often while drinking tea (something Faroe Islanders adopted from the British during WWII).

The ethnographic gaze

The ethnographic gaze, representation, the authority of writing and knowledge production has been much discussed and debated in the discipline of anthropology. Hastrup writes of her own fears: "fear of objectifying a social space which before anything else is constructed in practice by people who are subjects" (Hastrup, 1998, p.10). During my fieldwork I was very aware of the ethnographic gaze, especially because some elements of a small island society reminisce of earlier anthropological work, which run the risk of constructing an "exotic other". I have tried to treat with care what can be perceived as a certain representation of Faroese people, rather what I want to communicate is not one stable truth, but the fluidity of interactions and of life, that at times offer us glimpses into a specific lifeworld. Acknowledging that "ethnographic encounter may yield reflective potential that cannot be "written up" in the traditional ethnographic mode" (Hastrup, 1998, p. 10) and as ethnographers we don't actually capture the whole reality of people we are working with, but may become captured ourselves in a lifeworld (Hastrup, 1998, p.7).
In this thesis I am not analysing very specific phenomena, some specific power imbalance or social dynamic within a limited group, as an example. I am looking largely at the whole of the Faroe Islands, of course my analysis is still limited to a certain topic, but it can at times resemble some of the traditional ethnography that describe a whole "culture" or society. While I am describing the parts of Faroe Islands I have seen through my own analytical gaze, I in no means am saying that in the four months I was there, that I discovered everything or every side of the issue, though I tried. Nancy Scheper-Hughes writes:

> "anthropology is by nature intrusive and it entails a certain amount of symbolic and interpretive violence to the "native" people's own intuitive, though still partial, understanding of their part of the world" (Scheper-Hughes, 2001).

Although I don't think anthropology has to be intrusive, there is always the possibility that the view of the anthropologist is not shared by any of the people you shared that time with during fieldwork.

That is the risk or danger of the anthropological analysis, and conducive to the responsibility that should be inherent to the ethnographic gaze and production of knowledge.

Ethical considerations

There are some ethical considerations to discuss other than the ones mentioned above, like involving family members in my fieldwork, anonymity and personal bias. My fieldwork involves many experiences and informants that have nothing to do with my family, but there are some instances that were extremely helpful to understand Faroese society that happened around family. This is not really surprising as the Faroe Islands is a very family oriented place, so I chose to see this as an opportunity for insight rather than a limitation, of course always being extremely aware of familial and social dynamics I was being involved in. When it comes to anonymity, I have chosen to change the names of the informants. Even though everyone knew I was doing research and consented to be a part of it, the Faroe Islands is such a small place that I have decided to keep everything anonymous.
Although I have discussed some of the issues of subjectivity and bias when discussing my role as an insider and emotions in the field, here I want to reiterate the ethical considerations of a bias. Trying to do fieldwork "at home" always comes with a certain bias, either one way or the other. Arguably it is difficult to get away from any sort of subjectivity as that might be impossible. Although the Faroe Islands is not my home, there are many elements that are very familiar to me. This is something I also tried to be aware of, to try to reach a middle point where my role as insider served as a door opener to understanding rather than limiting my objectivity or my role as anthropologist.

4. LANGUAGE IN THE FAROE ISLANDS

Historical background

The history of the Faroese language, up until this day is very intertwined with Faroese nation building in politics, cultural self-image and identity. A large part of this history is one of oral transmission, myths, legends and ballads, and towards the end of the 19th century the creation of a Faroese grammar and a written form. In this part, I will mostly focus on the creation of the written language and how this sparked a political movement because it is important to understand the process that brought together language and politics, that eventually led to self-governance. Moreover, the process was significant in creating a collective identity, "who are we as Faroese and what is important to us?".

Under the colonial rule of Denmark, the Faroese language managed to survive alongside Danish, which was imposed as the official language of trade, church and state. It became the more

“cultured” form of speech. The languages in themselves are quite distinct, which eventually led to the necessity of switching to Faroese in schools for practical reasons as the smallest children could not understand Danish. This would be the first step of a discussion of language in politics, which would continue as an important trademark in a fight for self-governance. The struggle against what can be termed Danish colonialism (in the early 1800’s) started with pride in the Faroese language as distinct, in opposition to the general Danish view that Faroese was just a “debased, mixed dialect of Danish and Icelandic” (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.82).

Under the perceived threat of extinction, several academics started collecting Faroese words for posterity as they prophesied that the language would not survive, and was not fit to be a “high” language anyway (Nauerby, 1996, p.37). In the decade of 1890, things began stirring with the creation of the *Føringafelag*, the association that first brought up the preservation of the language.
The legendary “Christmas meeting” the 26th of December 1888, where poets, farmers and politicians gathered at the parliament to discuss the preservation of the language and of Faroese customs, in the vein of the budding national romanticism movement. This meeting would also become emblematic of the Faroese separatist movement. At this meeting a poem written by Jóanes Patursson was recited called “Nú er tann stundin” which urged to honour the language as a legacy from their viking forefathers, which was also interpreted as a stance against Danish rule. (Wylie, 1987). The use of recited poetry, as in this instance, is reflective of an oral tradition very ingrained in Faroese identity which still continues to be prevalent in different ways.

V.U Hammerschaimb created the written language, he wrote a full Faroese grammar with help from Jakob Jakobsen, who was the first Faroese linguist. Both are now recognised as two of the most important (if not the most important) national heroes. Hammerschaimb went for an etymological grammar based on the language’s Norse origins. There was a lot of debate around this, as Jakobsen wanted a more phonetical approach which made the language closer to the spoken form and also easier (Wylie, 1987), but they settled for an etymological “archaic” Faroese approach. Even today the notion that Faroese is difficult is part of people’s relationship with their language, and a common saying.

The language in itself is similar to Icelandic and Old Norse, and is an inflected language with four *casus* or cases: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. These can be applied to articles, adjectives, nouns and even personal names.

Føringafelag wanted to establish Faroese as the language spoken in school, in church and wherever people wanted to speak it, as Danish started to be seen and redefined as a colonial language (Nash et. al. 2020, p. 90). Although they would eventually dissolve, many of its members would go on to form the first political party that stood for the separation from Denmark (Wylie, 1987). From this point onwards and to this day, the political parties lie on a double axis of left to right as well as

union to separation. This means that there is a leftist union and a leftist separatist party, and the same on the right side.

Many of the farmers, poets (who were often also farmers) and politicians who were engaged in language reforms furthered this nationalist sentiment towards the political goal of self-governance, which was achieved in 1948. The creation of the written Faroese and the establishment of Faroese as an administrative language, in school and in the church culminated in the language becoming a powerful symbol of struggle, independence, national identity and nation building (Nauerby, 1996, p. 68, 69). This process also meant that the language had to be rehabilitated, replacing Danish words (danisms) that had naturally crept into the language with Faroese words, this was done through recollecting "lost" words, largely through communal effort.
Strong feelings towards the Faroese language continue to this day, and although all languages are a powerful national symbol, in these pages I will try to illuminate a very unique, heartfelt, passionate relationship of people and language in these particular islands.

The language situation today

Having discussed the history of the language, it is easier to understand the complex and rich relationship Faroe Islanders have with the Faroese language from after World War II, and until today.

It is recognised that the linguistic policy in the Faroe Islands is puristic or protectionist. It is to some degree in most languages, in the sense that it is common to protect language and be wary of too many loan words. In the Faroe Islands they are extremely wary and aware of loan words, specially from Danish and English, but puristic policy also extends to the creation of new words, neologisms, for developments that don't have a preexisting word (Jacobsen, 2021, p. 36). Not only developments that are technological, but also in academia, technical language related to different workplaces, or words for international foods. This protectionism can be done either by assimilating a foreign word by giving it a Faroese spelling, or by creating a word that keeps the etymological integrity of Faroese (Jacobsen, 2021). Faroe Islanders mostly regard this second type as Faroese purism, the creation of words; this uncovers a general stance that it is only the "faroese" words that determine what Faroese is (Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen, 2021, p.36). An example of this is the word *kollvelting* meaning revolution, crafted by Jakob Jakobsen, or *telda* which means computer, crafted by J.H Winther Poulsen. This is called *orðasmið,* word smithing (Jakobsen, 2021, p.37).
So, whereas other languages have adapted or accepted a word like "revolution", like the Norwegian "revolusjon", in the Faroe Islands they created the word *Kollvelting.*

The linguistic debate, of whether one should be protective and keep the purism trend, or let go and let the language evolve whatever way it wants, has been politically heated, as I understand it, but has cooled down in the political arena. During my fieldwork, the political aspect of language was

seldom discussed, but what was very often discussed was how people actually talk, which words they use, if they have *góðamálið*, the "good language". The focus has shifted toward the public, social arena.

Bourdieu recognises language as something that is determined by social relationships, that has symbolic power in itself, but is also given a normative power due to the power dynamics of social relationships that assign value to ways of speaking (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu largely focuses on the normative aspects of language due to social stratification, and although social stratification in the Faroe Islands is very low, the dynamics behind are the same.
Historical context has infused a strong degree of normativity in the language which today is maintained by social interactions and relationships in the public arena rather than the political, which is not to say that there are no political undertones within.

Jogvan, one of my informants who is a sociolinguist, confirms that there is a very normative aspect to how people think of the Faroese language, specially concerning which words one should use. The normative aspect is part of the reason why the language continues to have a very prevalent place in society and amongst social relations. People in the Faroe islands love talking about Faroese around the dinner table, they sometimes correct each other, and they very often debate what the correct word for something is or the correct usage.
Jogvan credited much of this concern with language to it having a weak or low standard, it hasn't been around forever, at least written and conforming to grammatical rules. I told him a little story of the time I was invited to dinner at my aunt and uncle's, and we were talking about the Faroese national clothing. My uncle called the clothing "búnað", and my aunt immediately corrected him by saying it was called "førøysk klæðir". They couldn't really agree so my aunt said, challenging him, "sprota tað", which means to look it up in the Faroese web dictionary (Sprotin.fo). Jogvan laughed and told me that it couldn't get more Faroese than that.

This example is to illustrate what is actually pretty common, a habit of correcting each other and discussing the correct term. This is of course done in different ways, it is not done as something rude (though some might experience it as rude) and it varies through social settings and contexts. Often it is also part of correcting oneself, searching for a word to replace a danism. This has been done to the extent that the act of looking something up on Sprotin has been made into a verb, *at sprota*, which was at first used as a colloquialism but now has become very standard.

When I brought up this habit of correcting, Jogvan lit up, and clearly wanted to talk more about this. He told me how some people become insecure in his presence because he is a linguist and they expect him to be "the best" at speaking, to have *góðamálið*, and are unsure themselves how good their own way of speaking is. This is the epitome of the normative language, *góðamálið;* it is the archetypal Faroese and it also gives language a propriety of possession. It is something you not only speak, but you have, and you can have it to various degrees.

At a dinner with some people my own age and a couple years younger, I stumbled over a word that I didn't know the correct conjugation to, and asked them what the correct way to say it was. Two of them looked to the third girl, and said that she was the best at *bendingar*, which are conjugations or *casus*. People are acutely aware of who speaks a good language, and at the same time conscious of their own "abilities".

Another one of my informants, Rannva, is in her early thirties and has studied Faroese language and literature, but she often felt nervous writing texts on Facebook, because she often got corrected in the comment section if she got a word or conjugation wrong, or if she hadn't used the most proper Faroese term. She emphasised that she herself thought that her Faroese was pretty good, having also studied it. When I asked her opinion on linguistic purism having experienced this kind of scrutiny, she told me she still thought it was important, that Faroese was worth protecting.

If the casual cases of correcting I witnessed here and there weren't enough to convince me that this was something worth taking a closer look at, there is a facebook group called *Førøysk rættstaving* dedicated to it. This group has 16K members, and considering the total population of the islands, it makes it one of the largest Faroese groups on Facebook with roughly 32 per cent of the population as members. In this group people correct radio hosts, tv hosts, journalists that have spoken or written something wrong. There is a lot of correcting, and it is certainly what many people joke about regarding this group, but in reality the corrections just serve as a gateway to discussing doubts, meanings, and *bendingar.*

Bourdieu writes about the self-corrections we resort to in certain situations as in "aimed at ensuring the revaluing of the linguistic product by a particularly intense mobilisation of linguistic resources" (Bourdieu, 1977). In the Faroe Islands one could see this not only as context specific, like if we were speaking publicly at a function and elevating our "linguistic product", but brought up to a higher systemic level where society is involved in revaluing their common linguistic product in a very dynamic and fluid way that also requires intensive mobilisation of linguistic resources.

This process of revaluing their common language dates back to the Second World War. There is a word bank in the Faroe Islands that was started at that time, called *boksin*. A room behind a steel door with around 800 000 Faroese words that have been collected on tapes and cards; "these words have been written down by individuals from all walks of life: farmers, mechanics, fishermen, housewives, scholars, and so on. They are personalised, handwritten, and signed." (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 64).

Førøysk rættstaving

Taking a closer look at this group, it seems like the purpose is not really correcting just for the sake of correcting, or scrutinising the Faroese media's choice of words. Rather it has created a large

community where people can discuss words and meanings, as well as ask about correct spelling, wording or conjugation. People often discuss what people say in different parts of the nation, ranging from dialectical variation to the common sayings people have in different villages.

The unique aspect of this is that it is not just people with a special interest in language, or linguists. This group and the discussions that are had, are engaged in by a lot of people on the islands, it is a collective project of continuously bettering Faroese, and keeping language in an important place socially. Gaining more precise knowledge about the meaning of words, and about different sayings across the islands.
Linguistic researchers on the islands have been surprised at the level of language variation throughout these small islands (Nash et. al, 2020, p.90). This is not only dialectically or phonetically, but also in the different uses of words. Common entries in the facebook group revolve around this variation, where someone might ask if people use a given word where they come from, and there is usually a long thread in the comment section where people share their local uses of different words.

This group is not without humour, someone once posted a picture of the popular spelling game Hangman, where it says "Hangman teaches kids that public execution is the only appropriate response to spelling words wrong". This is obviously a joke, but to some extent it illustrates an integral part of Faroese society. It is what Herzfeld has called cultural intimacy;

> "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (Michael Herzfeld, 1997, p.3)

Joking or being mildly embarrassed about the extent that correct spelling and word use is important, also gives insight into the general consciousness of it being a very particular Faroese habit, one that creates a common sociality bounded by language. This binding is more than speaking the same language, rather caring about it, being invested in it and communicating about it. It also differentiates the Faroe Islands and creates an external boundary.

The particularities of discussing language, correcting, recalling "lost words" are part of a tradition of active participation and exerting agency when it comes to the Faroese language. Before the age of Facebook this was done mainly through the radio. The spread of the medium from only radio to radio and facebook is a testament to the resilience of a practice that dates way back.

Málteigurin

The companion in spirit to this facebook group, is the radio program that runs each Monday (and reruns on Saturdays) called *Málteigurin*. This program, which can also be listened to in podcast

format, is about language. It is hosted by Elin Henriksen and together with a guest she discusses words and meanings. Typically people send in words that they have heard somewhere, or they send in words in particular sentences where they are unsure about the conjugation (casus). People have told me that they couldn't count all the times at the office they were discussing some word and thought about sending it in to the program.

Málteigurin is a reincarnation or continuation of many linguistic programs that ran before it and established language on the radio as a cherished tradition. It started with *Orðabókin*, hosted by Faroese linguistic hero Jóhan Hendrik Winther Poulsen in the sixties (Pax Leonard, 2016, p.68). People sent in letters with words they used, at this point, meant as a recollective effort for "lost" Faroese words, as well as questions about etymology. Winther Poulsen is one of the figures that created many neologisms, for which he is highly respected and remembered.

This tradition tells a story of a language that is not finished. None are finished in reality, but in the Faroe Islands unfinished means an agency that society as a whole is acutely aware of. Linguists will tells us how language is living, evolving and changing with us. In the Faroe Islands, people are more self-consciously involved in making it living and breathing, lighting its fire in a collective project of protection that doesn't necessarily make it static (as puristic tendencies would otherwise suggest). Searching for specificity in meaning, sharing and building language through a very active process.

Rehabilitering* or *endurvenning

Listening to the news on the radio one day, I heard the radio host say the word rehabilitation as *rehabilitering* and then quickly say "or *endurvenning*". *Rehabilitering* is a loan word probably from Danish, or even English. Etymologically it comes from latin. *Endurvenning* would be the Faroese word. Wether this word is a new word created for a purpose, or an old one I don't know, but that isn't really the point. The point is the correction, autocorrection, or even clarification. The Faroese word is a looming shadow over adopted words. Maybe it is the other way around, too.

Listening to Málteigurin, Elin Henriksen was discussing the word "trouble" and the Faroese usage of "at trupla" which means to trouble. This particular wording has been adopted more recently. She then argues that the Faroese word for trouble which is *trupulleiki* is something much more serious than *trupla* and she is worried that the english adaptation will water down the original meaning of *trupulleiki* and it will then be lost. Here the saying adopted from English is seen as a shadow over an older Faroese meaning.

Once I was playing with my little cousins by the sea, they are 7 and 10, and we saw a jellyfish. The little one said "hygg, ein vandman" which translates to "look, a jellyfish". The older one corrected

him and said “hatta eitur hvalspyggja” which means “that’s called *hvalspyggja*”. The youngest had used the danish word for jellyfish *vandman* and not the Faroese which is *hvalspyggja*.

It seems like even some of the younger ones have caught on to the rehabilitation of the language, and are doing it very unconsciously. The word in itself is composed of two words, *hval* which means whale, and *spyggja* which means vomit. Jellyfish is whalevomit.

Whether Faroese words cast shadows over Danish words, or the other way around, is a matter of perception. The Faroese language is seen as cultural heritage, tying their words and meanings to collective memory. The archaic Faroese words that are reintroduced tie Faroe Islanders to hundreds of years of Faroese history, it is perceived by many as a type of legacy. Marianne Lien and Aidan Davison (2010) show how the Australian indigenous ecosystem is seen as the legacy they have to protect against other “invasive” species, such as the Monterey Pine tree. These exotic trees are removed, as “small acts of purification” (Lien & Davison, 2010, p. 243). Similarly, danisms are removed from the Faroese language and hence, this linguistic tendency is often called puristic. Additionally Lien & Davison raise some interesting questions; whose memories and whose heritage get to be inscribed in the landscape? They discuss the motivations behind those who want to cut down the Monterey Pine in Tasmania and those who don’t. Some people have good memories of sitting under the trees and bringing their children, or even grandchildren (Lien & Davison, 2010, p. 245) yet it is the other side who appeal to some kind of morality in the cutting of trees.

Rannva told me nostalgically that she used to spend a lot of time after school at her grandparents’ house when she was little. She had very fond memories tied to them, and she recalled how they used to speak, their language filled with danisms. Thinking back on it, she told me it was charming. She herself used a lot of the words her grandparents used, for example *paraply* which is a danism (umbrella), but then had to rewire her brain to use the Faroese word *regnskjól*.
The earlier questions apply here as well, whose memory and whose cultural heritage? Which words have a legitimate place in heritage and which don’t? Is *regnskjól* more legitimate than *paraply,* and if so, why? Still, even if the questions are valid, what matters more is what people in the Faroe Islands value when it comes to heritage, legacy and the meanings inherent when it comes to identity. Even though Rannva appreciated her grandparents words, she studied the language at the Faroese university and thought it important to protect it for the future generations.
Another one of my informants also recalled belly laughing the day her kids came home from school and called a helicopter *tyrla* and a CD *fløva* (both neologisms), but then these words just naturally became a part of her language as well.

Language and status

As mentioned earlier Bourdieu analysed language and power in the context of social classes (Bourdieu, 1977), and while social classes are not very defined in the Faroe Islands, the power dynamics of language hold true when it comes to status.

Having the correct language, or being perceived as being good at it, having *Góðamálið,* is a very clear sign of status. In the case of people that are ethnically Faroese but haven't grown up in the islands, or have lived part of their lives somewhere else, which is very common as many islanders live at some point of their lives in Denmark, can feel very self-conscious about their language skills and struggle with feelings of identity and belonging. It is also known that Faroe Islanders who move abroad run the risk of losing some of their language.

For foreigners it is a different case since they are not expected to have *Góðamálið.* I witnessed two women, who were not ethnically Faroese, enter a shop and engage in small talk with the woman at the checkout counter. The woman at the checkout counter was quite older and she complimented them both on their Faroese. The same thing happened with a woman talking on the radio who had a foreign accent, she was also complimented by people I was sitting with as having good Faroese.
On the other hand, the scrutiny is much more directed towards "their own". This scrutiny is not done with directly bad intentions, but it seems to at times result in struggles with insecurity in those who feel their language isn't good enough.
This was the case of one of my informants who had lived in the Faroe Islands since she was 8 years old, but had lived in Denmark before that. She had absolutely no accent, but she sometimes conjugates wrong. She tells me how annoyed she gets every time someone asks where she grew up, which incidentally was very often. In her mind she grew up mostly in the Faroe Islands and is just as Faroese as everyone else.

Siri Ranva Hjelm Jacobsen reflects on being in that middle ground, of being in the Faroe Islands as a Faroe Islander grown up in Denmark, in her book *Island:*

> "The third generation is a size too small, it's utterly cool and culture-free, or it's half home, half poorly spoken, making an identity for itself in the furrow ploughed from the stone, bearing the moment of its blood's arrival like a tattoo on its forehead, but in pen, self-drawn, and speaking its name proudly among foreigners, low-voiced among countrymen" (Jacobsen, 2021, p.55, 56)

She continues referring to the crossing as the migration of her parents to Denmark, the third generation "carries the crossing within it like a loss" (Jacobsen, 2021, p. 56), this passage reminds me of people I met in the Faroe Islands that inhabit this middle-ground, they expressed longing for discovering their "roots" like they had lost something they had always had a right to. Like the girl I mentioned who moved back to learn the language, or the niece who felt she had been robbed by not

being taught Faroese. Another one of my informants, a young girl of my own age, she had grown up in Denmark but had always spoken Faroese, she decided to move to the Faroe Islands when she turned 19, she felt a kind of longing.
At a bar once, I met a girl who looked a little out of place, just as I did, she spoke Danish to me and told me she had moved to the Faroe Islands to learn the language better and to go to nursing school. After talking for a while we switched to Faroese, she spoke it with a Danish accent and told me she felt self-conscious about it but was determined to learn to speak it properly.
Many young Faroe Islanders move out to study in Denmark, but for Faroe Islanders grown elsewhere there seems to be a reversal and for many this longing seems to be expressed in terms of language.

Outside influence

The context of this linguistic "project" I have mentioned, is both historical and related to cultural memory (as I will look into later), but also very current and affected by the context of recent globalisation trends.

Increasing globalisation has made the world more aware of one's own peculiarities, identity, minority languages and language rights, which also applies to the Faroese case (Knudsen, 2010). While many of us may think of globalisation as something that has been discussed up and down and is not so new, people on the Faroe Islands often tell me how slowly everything reaches them, or at least it used to be this way.
Globalisation is felt as something more recent in the islands, especially because of recent tourism. This went from a few backpackers and nature enthusiast to big nordic cruises, and people becoming increasingly interested in northern landscapes. It is the topic of political debates, especially surrounding sustainable and regulated tourism, and the prospects of having to develop infrastructure such as hotels.

The effect of globalisation is also double, at the same time that it increases focus on our own cultures, it also infuses a more global, often Anglo-American influence. The concern of many on the Faroe Islands is no longer that Danish will take over, as it was when language concern and policy started, but rather that English will take over.

In a language where loan words are often policed and discussed, it becomes extra noticeable when kids start adding english words to their vocabulary. People often told me that younger people and kids are increasingly speaking English instead of Faroese. Wether this is true or an exaggeration, it is still what is perceived by many.
Rannva, my informant, is a young mother and she told me how her three year old had sort of invented her own kind of language trying to keep up with some of her friends who used English words that she didn't understand. Rannva almost only put on Faroese cartoons for her, so her

daughter wasn't as used to hearing a lot of English. Rannva herself has also researched the use of english amongst kids in the Faroe Islands, and saw it as a form of code switching.
It is a common saying amongst older people on the islands, that the younger people speak english, and they often say it as if they speak a mixture of English and Faroese in their daily language. Not only referring to the usage of loan words. From what I have observed it seems likely to be a rhetoric, not necessarily lacking truth, but one that keeps the presence of the threat to the language relevant, which seems to serve a purpose.

Islands as small as the Faroe Islands, are naturally weary of outside influences. These islands live with an underlying perceived threat, and the scary bed time story has always been the case of Shetland.
Everyone knows what happened to Shetland; one of the biggest Faroese heroes is Jakob Jakobsen, who collected Norn words in Shetland before the language ceased to exist as a spoken language. Norn and Faroese were very similar, both with Norse origin, and it is said that people could communicate fine between Shetland and Faroe Islands. Now it is a dead language. (Sigurðardóttir & Brian Smith, 2010). When I asked one of my informants about the Shetland-story, she said "I think people are very aware that our language is not going to be just our language if we don't take care of it".
This is a commonly used example, maybe no longer by linguists who recognise the contextual differences between the two countries, but it is still a part of the collective memory as something that could've happened, and almost happened to the Faroe Islands.
One of my informants, who I will call Janus, put it this way: "The warning lamps are always shining, like dark prophets professing the Faroe Islands' doom, and they're not the stupidest". He also told me that "it lies in the back of people's minds, to conserve the language, but that does not mean you have to be the strictest purist. If it's too clean it's inhuman, uninteresting."

This is the linguistic purism of today on the islands. It has a political aspect indeed, but what stands out is the social aspect of something that might need a different term than linguistic purism. It is protectionist and there is a perceived threat from outside, but more than this, it has become part of a communication pattern and socialisation as a nation, finding common ground and interest in how we speak. From Facebook, to the radio, to the dinner table debates. Keeping language relevant is a way to keep a long struggle and fight against outside forces alive, and this is part of what makes the Faroese people as proud as they are.

Language and cultural memory

I have described the language situation today in the Faroe Islands, as rooted in the historical context mentioned, as well as affected and, in some ways, perpetuated by the contemporary context of globalisation and outside influences.

What follows is, what underlying processes made language important then and make it important now, through the contexts discussed?

Tim Ingold has some interesting reflections on language in his book *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000) which I choose to bring into the discussion of language on the Faroe Islands because he grounds language processes as integrated with surroundings, in movement, and in the sociality of words.

Ingold sees language or speech not necessarily as an innate capability, or acquired, but as a skill or an art that is practiced due to our surroundings and is continuously generated through involvement in worlds of speech (Ingold, 2000, p. 398). Speech is also bodily and fluid made up of how we communicate in specific contexts, and not coincidental with a specific "origin" of the language. Ingold goes as far as to question if there is such a thing as language, as speech is something integrated with everything else, with our bodies, our surroundings, generated and regenerated and is never "finished", even in the concept of what language is (Ingold, 2000, p. 405).

According to Ingold it is because of the reification of speech through the creation of the written word that we have the idea of language as a thing, with rules, with an origin, as something we can have and use. Units of linguistic analysis, rather than intrinsic to speech are imposed on it, so he asks "How can we have a theory of language origins whose very notion of what language is presupposes print literacy?" (Ingold, 2000, p. 400)

All of this is interesting to me, because of the Faroe Islands' particular relationship to language, speech and the written word. We all know that what we commonly understand as language doesn't depend on having a written form, yet it was the creation of a written form that solidified Faroese as a proper language in the political minds of the time. Language as something definite that exists or not, can be debated, but all the notions we understand as language can be mobilised either way.
It is not language as speech in itself that is mobilised, but everything that lies in it. If language is not a "thing" and speech is bodily, and made up of interaction, expressions, intentions, and in tune with our senses and surroundings, as Ingold suggests, then language contains multitudes if we see it as a summation of all these things. All that it contains is what matters to people, it is not the word in itself, but what it represents and how they came to know it. It is what makes it worth mobilising.

In Ingold's analysis of the word, they are historical and have a certain sociability, they are not attached to a mental concept a priori, rather through our use of words we give them meaning, thus they have a social component through the interactions that defines their meaning (Ingold, 2000, p. 409). This also means that we have agency and somewhat a choice, and this is what Faroe Islanders are enacting, understanding this also holds a key to understanding why these motivations, fears and hopes that I have previously described, are enacted or mobilised through language. The power

words have is not underestimated, the cultural memories they evoke and bring forth, and the agency this might motivate.

Cultural memory can be theorised in different ways, it connects people to history, experience and land. If this is a form of knowledge that connects us in a certain way to our surroundings and to the people around us, this cultural knowledge lies in the world that is pointed out to us through the spoken word, because speech also embodies feeling and words gain meaning also in the contexts they are spoken (Ingold, 2000, p. 146,147).

This is what happens when I walk through the land with my grandfather and he points out to me a big boulder by the side of the road, and he tells me that this rock is a "kyrjustein" and before, hundreds of years ago, travellers or people walking by would know there was a prayer house in direct eyesight of this rock, and would say "Kýrieléis" which is an old medieval poetic of Kyrie Eleison. This is knowledge that I can't find on google, but is now somehow part of a cultural memory or knowledge that I now share. This rock that I walk by is not just a random geological formation anymore, and Kyrie Eleison is not just "god have mercy" but also tells me that wanderers nearly a thousand years ago walked this same path, and saw a prayer house where I now see a church. It somehow connects us to a shared past, and it must somehow be shared because it is rooted in the land we have a connection to.
This example shows how language and the way we speak is essential in causing this kind of binding between people, of a shared thread of knowledge between the past and the present, which is a large part of the Faroese shared identity. Cultural memory is strong because remembering is strong, and often practiced. Faroese shared identity is connected to the past because living the same relatively unchanged land leads to the act of remembering as they walk the same paths and keep many of the same skillsets that are still very valuable.

As I mentioned earlier, it is not the word in itself but what it represents and how we came to know it, that makes language powerful enough to be a catalyst or be mobilised. Like "Kyrjustein", it represents knowledge that I can't just google, and I came to know it because I walked that path with my grandfather. All of these words are a representation of living in the land, and as such can be a powerful catalyst, unifier and something worth remembering for Faroe Islanders.

I believe this is part of why in the Faroe Islands people talk about words, discuss sayings people have in different parts of the islands, have one of the largest facebook groups dedicated to this, and radio programs about it that are really beloved. It is also part of the reason why storytelling is a big part of living in the islands, and the connection to the land has an element of continuity.

5. LAND

The Faroe Islands are, as mentioned, 18 islands that rise up from the sea like big green blocks. It is not surprising that nature is a big part of Faroese livelihood, and a big part of Faroese identity. When I ask people who lived abroad many years, why they returned or what they missed, I get many answers but most say something of missing the green and the space to breathe.

When I started my fieldwork much of it revolved around me trying to keep up with what most Faroese people would call part of their daily life. This involved a lot of sheep, chickens, manure and planting potatoes. It is very common for people on the islands to keep sheep, and it's part of the reason why there are more sheep than people, and lamb is the main part of the Faroese diet. They roam around freely on large plots of land. They resemble wild sheep, with many different colour combinations, slight in size with delicate features and wild looking wool.

Sheep are not only an important resource, the importance of this particular animal extends to many areas and is integral to understanding the Faroe Islands. As sheep are kept, the activities related to it are markers in Faroese life and the passing of time. In May the lambs are born, in late spring and in the summer they are gathered in order to give them medicine and to cut their wool. This is an arduous and often day long activity of walking and running in the mountains, shepherding them to the sheep house. This is done again in autumn in order to slaughter some of them, which will be the primary food base for most of the year. Many men who work on ships abroad, return home on these occasions either because they are a paid helping hand or to help their own family.

It is not only a valuable food source for an island nation with rough conditions and limited options other than to import, it is also a skillset that is a big part of Faroese identity because of it. The running in the hills in order to steer the sheep one way or another has more strategy to it and practice than one would think. The cutting of wool, the usual proceedings in administering medicine, how to handle the sheep and keep a hold on them. The slaughtering and the hanging up in order to make *skjerpikjøt,* the use of every part of the sheep for food. It is a usual skillset in other countries for people who own farms and are in the agricultural industry, but on the Faroe Islands it's part of a generational knowledge that is often passed down from father to son or daughter, and it keeps the economy of sheep alive. Most people don't earn much from it, but keep sheep for their own subsistence and enjoyment. Self-reliance has always been vital.
Now that big ships and planes bring in import from other countries, it may seem less important, but that has not yet reached the Faroese mindset, and most people prefer Faroese lamb rather than frozen pizza or chicken from the supermarket.

The Faroe Islands are also, as mentioned, a capitalist and industrialised society, with highly developed machinery, boats, fishing technology and modernised fishing farms. This highly efficient and profitable industrial society coexists with a relationship to the environment that is deeply rooted

in experience from living the land, and the skill and knowledge that go hand in hand with it. This is important to remember, in an effort to not essentialize in any way a very complex society.
Treating these topics in this chapter, I want to avoid anthropological tropes and invoking imagery of "people close to nature" or romanticising Faroese life and people. At the same time I want to describe different aspects of people's relationship to the nature that is all around them and is such a big part of their economy, subsistence, and a worldview that at the same time isn't limited by it.

The importance of the animal world of the islands and the surroundings; the green, the vast ocean, the space to breathe, all make the environmental aspect of the Faroese identity worth exploring. Not only because it is crucial to an understanding of living the land on the islands, but also because of the ways it connects to people's relationship to language and to cultural memory.

The relationships I want to describe and that I simplistically call relationships with nature or the surroundings, are not meant to be discussed as part of a divide (society and nature), they are seamlessly integrated into one another. As Kirsten Hastrup expresses, the physicality of the land is not just a backdrop to social life (Hastrup, 2010, p. 192).

Nuances and meaning

One day I was visiting my grandparents and we were all on our way outside to collect the eggs from the chickens. It had snowed, and in the snow there were small footprints of an animal, three lines in the shape of a triangle. My grandfather immediately stopped to assess, interested, and my grandmother asked what we thought it was and I immediately answered "oh, a bird" and was ready to move on. My grandfather looked very pensive, but answered "yes" and then he and my grandmother proceeded to reflect on different kinds of birds, trying to figure out which one it could be. We finally started walking towards the chicken house, and my grandmother said to my grandfather something along the lines of her not being that good at knowing birds. I had just listened to them name quite a few together. To me, the thought was just "a bird", as that's what I thought we were looking at. This was one case that eventually lead me to realising some of the specificity that Faroe Islanders infuse to their language and the words they use. They often search for specific meanings less than generalising ones, this became at first apparent when it came to the natural surroundings and the environment.

Different countries have a different vernacular and vocabulary when it comes to different things. Like the infamous example of snow-related words in Greenland. This is also the case in the Faroe Islands. Every colour combination of sheep has a different name, as well as where these colours are placed on their bodies. There are countless combinations; some designating the area that is coloured such as *høvuðlittur*, *baklittur*, *eyglittur*, *múllittur,* but then you also have the colour and placement combinations like *høvuhvítur*, *skallahvitur*, *múlahvitur*, *miðjuhvítur*, *framhvítur*, *fóthvítur*, *lærhvítur*, *hvítholsutur* etc. For example to identify one of them you could say *framhvítur, eyg- og*

múllittur og fóthvítur which would identify a sheep with a white front, black around the eyes and black muzzle, white feet. There are many more combinations as Faroese sheep have multicoloured wool, and to get a sense of which of the hundred sheep you are referring to you would have to be somewhat specific in the colouring and where those colours are placed on the sheep.

There are approximately 30 words for fog, which I know because of a lively discussion in the *Førøysk Rættstaving* facebook group. For example g*rindamjørki* which means "fog that can makes whales appear". In this particular Facebook thread someone asked which words people use meaning fog and what people say in different villages around the Islands. This was just one of many instances I observed where people seemed to be "collecting" words.
It is important to remember that this group is not just a group of language enthusiasts but is actually widely followed, checking the list of members I see many people of my own age that I know. This kind of linguistic information becomes diffused across a significant part of the population.
This can be analysed in different ways, but the interest in this kind of specificity in meaning comes up again and again. The specificity in everything that is the natural world seems quite natural as there is an abundance of words, but this extends also to other words.

Listening to *Málteigurin*, they often discussed words taken in from English or Danish that had been adopted and given Faroese spelling. What they often focused on was the small nuances in meaning that the Faroese word counterpart had. These nuances where often minimal, and one could argue that since Elin Henriksen deemed there was a difference in significance between the adopted word and the Faroese word, the adoptive word would also have something to contribute meaning-wise. Mainly the focus was the other way around, which of course also makes sense, not wanting to lose that specificity that is not translatable and might be lost if the adopted word replaces the Faroese word.

When it comes to animals and the natural surroundings, I found myself wanting to learn every word and to be able to name every bird. Not just because my research treated these topics, but because these words seem to unlock a way of seeing and a way of living in the land.
Different theories may be sceptical to the romanticism latent in these kinds of proclamations, but there is something to be said about places like the Faroe Islands. In a similar way, Kirsten Hastrup discusses emotive responses arising from what she calls the "poetics of space", facing the nature of Iceland and Greenland in her fieldwork (Hastrup, 2010, p.196).

My grandfather would often come home and start by naming and rounding up the sightings of the day just as one keeps up with daily news. He would tell us if he had seen any new lambs, a white or a brown hare, which bird he had seen. When meeting upon neighbours they would talk about the population of different birds, if there were more of them or less than other years, and so on. They would share anecdotes of bird catching adventures. My grandfather recalled a spellbinding moment

with a *músabróður*, the smallest bird, sitting on his large catching net, as he became paralysed in a staring contest with this little bird at the edge of the cliffs.

Subsistence and survival

To try to paint a picture of all the trends that move through the islands is difficult. The economy is largely a fishing economy, with the makings similar to most economies, import and export. But the economy of living in the land is their own.

I was sitting at the dinner table one evening when my mother was visiting the islands, and she and my grandfather were talking about Moby Dick, from there the conversation flowed over to pilot whales, which are very familiar to every Faroe Islander. Suddenly my mother was recalling how when she was a child, she and other kids would take the whale foetuses that were fully formed from the dead mothers' womb and take them to the river and hope that they would live. She told us it never worked, they never survived, they were probably already dead. My grandfather hadn't known they used to do this. The image of kids gathered around a baby whale and willing it to live stuck with me. This is of course the way of life everywhere, but there is a harshness to the Faroe Islands, from the physicality of the environment to the willing force with which they make things live and grow in it. Hunting whales has been a part of a force to live in these harsh conditions, and it still is to some extent even if the premises have changed.

The hunting of whales is very controversial and widely condemned, and although people discuss it in the Faroe Islands in general, mostly they refuse to be ashamed of something that they feel is misunderstood and often sensationalised by the media. They can't help notice many opinions thrown at them carry double standards.
In short, some of these double standards are in regards to most countries' practices when it comes to meat production, which is often just as "inhumane" or more so, and is often less sustainable (Ecott, 2020).

I once commented, without thinking too much, on the fact that eating less meat was more sustainable. I quickly got put in my place, because that is not really the case in the Faroe Islands. The meat that is eaten in the islands is in large part Faroese meat, often from people you know. People hunt their own hares, men gather together to catch birds, and of course a lot of lamb and meat from the sheep is eaten. The meat is extremely short travelled. A sudden move to not eating meat would cost a great deal and would entail more imports, which would not be the sustainable choice. That does not mean that people are not vegetarian on the islands, or that the future of meat production and new alternatives aren't discussed. The willingness to survive in these islands has made self-sufficiency the only ever choice had, and the modus operandi.

Civilisation and human evolution has for centuries been conceived as the conquering and domination of nature (Ingold, 2000, p.11). When the pilot whales appear, they swim in and approach the islands, a fisherman usually spots them and rings it in.
Faroe Islanders are not conquering the whale necessarily, the whale is never domesticated or bred for food. They are living alongside it, and they take the opportunity that is presented to them. Just as they do when they spot a hare, shoot it and eat it.
Every year men fall off the islands to their deaths, often in relation to activities such as catching the birds that nest in the cliffs. Many have died in the cold waters of the sea.
During my fieldwork a friend of a friend drowned, he just went for a swim and never came back. People get stranded for days if the weather conditions don't let the ferries run. Strong tides and strong winds, harsh weather conditions, hard soil and steep cliffs. Nature is never entirely dominated in the Faroe Islands, if anywhere. For the individual person the relationship with animals and nature, is at times more akin to living alongside one another, as every being is just as much at mercy of the surroundings and at times harsh conditions. An informant recalled how she and her family got stuck on the island of Mykines for days because of the weather, and said "the weather has more power here than you".

This individual relationship with the surroundings also lives alongside a capitalist and industrialised society. Nature is dominated, for example in the fishing industry, where the most modern technologies are paving the way for more and more salmon farms. The boundaries become blurred, as the people who work in these farms can relate to what is essentially the same environment in different ways in practice, as can politicians who argue for more industry.

Wisdom sits in places (Basso, 1996), and in the Faroe Islands, that place happens to be 360 degrees of ocean surroundings, visible almost at any moment. It is hard not to be humbled by the knowledge of your place in the world. On an island, in the middle of a huge and at times unrelenting ocean, even if you are living in a industrialised society.

Some people, faced with the criticism of whale hunting, argue that the Faroe Islands don't need whale meat anymore. But when asked if they would vote for its abolition in a referendum, they express the value in the skillset it requires. This skillset is valuable knowledge and important to the Faroese identity. Several people expressed to me "who knows what will happen", "what if we need this skill in the future?".
As Kirsten Hastrup writes of Greenland and Iceland, "social life -such as it is, deeply embedded in a landscape inhabited by both humans and their prey. In this world, skills and knowledge are two sides of the same coin" (Hastrup, 2010, p. 202).

Poetics of space

I have described different aspects of the relationship with the land in the Faroe Islands, from the nuances of the language when it comes to nature, to subsistence and whaling. Here I want to discuss the "poetics of space" (Hastrup, 2010, p. 196) as an aspect of living in these islands, that connects experience and sensory perception to invoked imagery and poetics.
Kirsten Hastrup writes:

> On a larger scale, we have to move bodily within a particular landscape to sense it properly. In Iceland, that was how I learnt the power and poetics of the landscape; by rounding up stray sheep in the mountains, by gathering berries on the slopes, and by participating in various other activities alongside my Icelandic hosts, I became aware of the hidden histories and portents of places and names. (Hastrup, 2010, p. 198)

In the Faroe Islands space and landscape was at times presented to me in poetical and narrative forms by people I would talk to. The visual imagery of the Faroe Islands is paired with imaginations of the landscape that conform with our poetical understandings of the world. The high cliffs shrouded in mist, the intensity of the sun, the mysteriousness of creatures lurking in the ocean and in the hills. Hidden stories, as Hastrup writes, were everywhere.

In the Faroe Islands, there is an old myth about the stone people, they are called *huldurfolk.* They lived in the stones and came out when they thought they were unseen, they are not really thought of as having ill intent, but are rather eery and scary. These myths are mostly no longer believed, but it is not long ago that people discussed them as matter of fact. People saw them and were sure of their existence alongside them, not having to go further back than two generations to find this belief.
The Faroe Islands' landscape is one that vividly invokes imagery of tales, myths and creatures. I have heard tales of how an informant's parents believed *huldurfolk* lived in the stones surrounding their house, and the strange noises she often heard as a child was them. Her grandfather had known when not to go fishing because he would see them walking up from the sea empty handed, not a good day for fishing then.
My mother recalls how a man from the village, who helped her family in collecting the sheep every year, always saw them. He knew that the figure or shadow amidst the fog was a *huldurseyður*, one of their sheep.

This particular history with *huldurfolk* has made certain stones "lived in", known to be their home, and it signifies particularly bad luck if destroyed. This has caused debates when building infrastructure, specially roads. At times Faroese roads circle around particularly big boulders and rocks that are known to be lived in. This has been part of a Faroese ontology that is very rooted in the particular Nordic Sub-Atlantic landscape. The landscape evokes imagery, at the same time that they become narrated in myths and tales, through these kinds of poetics of space. Kirsten Hastrup writes of the poetics of space as not only an allegory, but "the space itself being akin to a poetical

image" that when lived causes constant emergence, and "narration makes the subject emerge and underscores a particular topophilia" (Hastrup, 2010, p. 195). Hastrup further tells us how people in the Arctic areas she visited often recounted myths and legends, old sagas and adventures, people falling to their deaths or getting lost into oblivion.

Similarly, in the narrations and stories that I was told in the Faroe Islands, landscapes and the elements were often a central part. My informant once told a story of how he was out on a boat, and a group of pilot whales were spotted. As usual, boats rally to meet them in order to herd them ashore. But this time it was late, and they had decided to keep them in the spot, in order to bring them in in the morning. He recounted how they waited all night surrounded by the whales. The night was calm, and the whales had fallen asleep. While sleeping or resting they lie vertically, their bodies and fins floated and came up towards one another making a haunting sound in the calm and silent night. He couldn't sleep, so he was accompanied by the whales and their sounds, all night.

Apart from the evocative imagery of the natural world at 62° North, Pax Leonard (2016) also shows how the phonetics of the language lend themselves to poetry or lyricism;

> "The very distinctive, but omnipresent, clusters include word-final distinctive palatal fricative sounds (such as -*leiki*), diphthongs, and a plethora of nominal and verbal homonymic endings that distinguish it from the other Scandinavian languages, and which lend themselves to poetry: for example, *sannleiki* (truth), *vakurleiki* (beauty), *kringleiki* (competence), *veruleiki* (reality), *byggja* (to build), *kríggja* (to implore), *fríggja* (to flirt, to have sex), *goyggja* (to bark), *skríggja* (to scream). As noted above, the preponderance of these sounds endow the language with a natural internal rhyme that is fully exploited in lyrical poetry. " (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 63)

Alternative perspectives

The natural aspects that seep into the Faroese cultural and social world, are at times more than implicit. One look at the National Museum and it's exhibitions will give you an idea. But there are some perspectives as well that take a different approach.

Janus is a Faroese writer, and in the early years of his career he started opposing the dominance nature had in Faroese literature. He mockingly gives me an impression of how Faroese literature used to be, all about the delightful mountains, the blue of the Faroese sky. The person was missing. So he started writing with people in focus. At the same time, he can't seem to deny the emotional, expressionistic lure of Faroese nature. He tells me how he spent some time at school in Sweden, and all the trees there were uninteresting to him. He missed *klettalandi*, the land of cliffs, and in his words the "erosion that had killed all hope". When he writes, he searches for something unique, he says, and then he might turn to the Faroese sea as "shattered glass".

Kim Simonsen has researched Faroese romantic imagery and cultural memory, and showcases how Faroese nature has been romanticised and allowed for a kind of "viking exoticism", and how this runs the risk of limiting the Faroe Islands as "stuck in time", when in reality it is the opposite. (Simonsen, 2014,p.37)
I will return to Simonsen's argument at a later point when discussing Faroese cultural memory in depth, but here it serves to illuminate the discussions that are had in Faroese academia about topics such as nature and its portrayal or imagery.
That there are discussions about topics such as these, further shows how the Faroe Islands are affected one way or the other, by their particular nature and place in the world.

6. TELLING AND SINGING STORIES

Having been only a spoken language and becoming written not that long ago, Faroese is a language still rich with orality, or language tradition. The art and affinity of reciting, of listening to the spoken word out loud, even in the form of song, is still going strong.

A century ago, Faroese people would gather in places together to listen to stories. This is no longer the format or the organisation of storytelling today, but I will argue that just because the medium has changed and the skill in itself is different, does not mean that it has died or that parts of it don't remain in society.
Ingold writes that to keep a skill going requires improvisation and is never a replica of past processes, "A skill well remembered is one that is flexibly responsive to ever-variable environmental conditions" (Ingold, 2000, p.147). While storytelling, ballads and folk songs are not uncommon in most countries, it is the casual, familiar and at times political character they have in the Faroe Islands that I will try to show.

The Faroese Radio

The way I noticed an affinity for stories, was through observing Faroe Islanders radio listening habits. If you walk into a Faroese home, it is very likely that the Faroese radio *Útvarp Føroya* is on. The radio has a very central place in the Faroese home and in aspects of social life in the home arena.

It is common to listen to the news on the radio, which often coincides with Faroese dinnertime. When I was a kid, and visited my grandparents I used to get annoyed because I wanted to be able to talk, but they would always silence me while we were eating dinner, in order to listen.

I had thought this was a particularity of my own family, but during my fieldwork, I discovered it was actually not just my experience as a kid. At one point during my fieldwork, the neighbour's kids were eating dinner with us. The radio was turned up, and the little girl who was about ten years old imitated her parents with a finger on her mouth saying "shhh" and acting annoyed, just as I was. I asked her if her parents told her to hush during dinner, and she replied "always, and it's so irritating". I imagine that not every parent does this, and mine didn't do this at home where I grew up, but my mother would immediately shift when visiting the Faroe Islands. When sitting down to eat dinner and listen to the radio at her own parents' house, she seemed to enter an old, well known "habitus".

Being a small island nation where news of the outside world can be limited or easily shut out, and being for centuries used to the disconnect, the radio became an important resource. Not only for outside news, but local and national news. The radio was also used for communication with many of the fishermen out at sea, with casual correspondence between the fishermen and their wives at times being broadcast on air, for the amusement of many. (Pax Leonard, 2016, p.66).

After this little interaction with the neighbour's kid, I started to ask other informants about their radio listening habits. Most of them were aware of this particularity and although they admitted the radio was on more often than not, they also recalled how much "worse" their own parents had been. Pax Leonard writes of this particular relationship of Faroe Islanders and the radio; "the familiarity of known voices on the radio is a positive source of linguistic intimacy" and he follows:

> By law, Útvarp Føroya has to devote at least half an hour each week to the reading of Faroese literature on air. Right from the beginning, Faroese public radio has been closely involved in the "language question." Still today, programs on language (*Orð um orð*) often deal with quite complex syntactic, lexical, and grammatical issues. (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 66)

Pax Leonard continues to write how this intimacy on the radio is made, through a Faroese voice that speaks or tells a story on air, because often it might be a distant relative or an old high school friend. While I was visiting my grandparents for the weekend, my grandmother had been telling me all day we had to listen to something on the radio later on, and she was often reminding my grandfather at what time we had to turn it up. It seemed important. This time it was because *the brother of the grandfather of my uncle's wife* was going to talk on the radio about his youth and past days.
The radio in the Faroe Islands is not just news or music, it has many segments like these, people tellings stories, narrating their youth, or reading Faroese literature, short stories and children's books.

The intimacy of the Faroese radio, is in part because of the small scale society and the social transparency that give it an aspect of being both local and national. Every frame of reference is

recognisable, the people that are talked about are known of, even deaths are announced on the radio every week. It also has a familiarity to it, as they easily track Faroe Islanders abroad (even if just on vacation) to call in for a report on something happening. This was the case this summer when the European Football Cup was held, and they tracked someone down who was there to watch a particular game and called him up. Society becomes a metaphoric family (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 26).

The ties to language are not hard to find, just by the number of programs that have run on the radio about language, which are many. In the beginning they were about collecting Faroese "lost" words. These programs also give language an informal and personal character. "People participated from all over the islands and spoke about their language not only as a national treasure, but as a family jewel that had been passed down through the generations" (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 68). It is also through the radio that neologisms become disseminated. Recalling the example about my informant laughing when her kids came home using words such as *tyrla* (helicopter), she told me that these words became naturalised and integrated to her own language by hearing them on the radio.

Listening to the radio is not only about language explicitly, on another level the radio has allowed for storytelling to continue through a different and more with "the times" medium than traditional oral storytelling. It is a form of communicating as a nation, surrounding the things that are important collectively; Whose voices are important? Faroese voices. The radio does not really tell stories of other worlds, rather it reproduces locality through familiar images and sounds (Pax Leonard, 2016, p.70)
The other side of the storytelling coin is listening, there is no telling without listening, and the affinity in the Faroe Islands towards listening to stories and to the "Faroese voice" is deeply rooted in this kind of linguistic intimacy.

The stories

The stories and myths of the Faroe Islands are many. The earliest Faroese historical accounts, from the Viking age, are from *Føroyinga saga* (saga of the Faroese). Even though its historical accuracy is disputed, it has gained the population's respect, and is now part of a particular Faroese historicity. This saga is not the only one that has become part of a way to see and imagine the Faroe Islands.
I will go more in depth on *Føroyinga saga* in my next chapter, but here I will mention the two main figures of this saga, Tróndur and Sigmundur. These two are the oldest national heroes of the Faroe Islands, even though they were on opposing sides of a struggle. It is a story that every Faroe Islander knows.

While the story of Tróndur and Sigmundur is a historical way of imagining the Faroe Islands' past, there are many other commonly told stories that together make up a "mythscape" fabric of the

islands. Such are for example the stories of *huldurfolk*, the stories of giants and witches, or the seal woman.

Risin and *Kellingin* are two rock formations in the ocean near the coast of Eysturoy. *Risin* means "the giant" and *kellingin* means "the witch". It is said that the giants of Iceland once were jealous of the Faroe Islands and wanted to have them for themselves, so they sent the giant and the witch to retrieve them. Once there, the witch tried to tie a rope around the islands for the giant to drag on his back, but they failed numerous times during the night. They worked so hard all night, that they forgot the passage of time, and it soon became day. As the sun came up, they turned to stone and have been there ever since, looking back at the ocean towards Iceland.

Another commonly told story is that of the seal woman; *Kópakonan*. The seals on the Faroe Islands were said to be sad souls who had taken their own lives at sea. Once a year these seals were allowed to come up from the sea and shed their seal skin, to sing and dance, but only until morning.
The legend goes that a farmer from Mikladalur on the island of Kalsoy, went down to a nearby seal cave, to see if this was true. There he saw the most beautiful woman he had ever seen and decided he wanted her, so he took her seal skin, forcing her to follow him into the village. He kept her seal skin locked in a chest and always carried the key with him. They eventually married and had two children. The woman would often go down to the shore, where a male seal always came up to greet her.
One day the farmer had gone out fishing and had forgotten his key, when he returned his wife was no longer there. The seal woman had returned to the sea together with the male seal that had always loved her. They eventually had two cubs together. The farmer in a rage set out to hunt seals with some other men from the village and killed her mate and her two cubs.
The seal woman enraged, appeared at the village feast where she saw the seal's head and her cubs' fins, prepared to be eaten. She cursed the the whole village, the farmer and his descendants.
She cursed the people from Mikladalur to drown at sea, until the number of dead becomes so great that they can join hands beneath the sea and form a circle around the island of Kalsoy. To this day Faroe Islanders like to point out that suspiciously many people die at sea around Kalsoy, or falling from its cliffs into the sea.
The seal woman is also known as a *selkie*, and stories like this one are known across Celtic and Norse regions, such as Ireland and the Orkney Islands, as well as Iceland. The Faroese story is well known amongst these stories, and *Kópakonan* has now been immortalised by the raising of a beautiful statue of her by the sea on Kalsoy. The spot is now also a very popular tourist site.

Epic ballads and song

People in the Faroe Islands sing long ballads, often from memory, that tell different stories; heroic adventures and misadventures, humorous and tragic. These orally transmitted songs depend on presence and memory for survival. Not only are they an integral part of Faroese history, as they

largely treat events of the *Føroyinga saga*, but they are also integral to social life in the Faroe Islands.

The ballads are divided into two different genres, *Kvæðir* and *Tættir*. *Kvæðir* can be defined as epic or heroic ballads, telling the legends of kings and national heroes of the old saga. *Tættir* are also epic ballads but are often more satirical and sometimes tell the story of regular people. (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.68). These ballads are meant to be accompanied by chain dance, or *Føroyskum dansi* as it is called in the Faroe Islands. They are often very long, sometimes over a hundred verses long, because of this they normally have a leader who sings the verses and then people join in on the chorus that alternates between the verses.

The chain dance is in itself a big part of the song. While people sing they step in tact to the song, two to the left and one to the right, which gives the song a rhythmic quality. They dance arm in arm and in a circle, and if many people join they let the circle swing and open up, looking more like a winding snake. The singing is structured with a small chorus alternating constantly between the verses, and together with the stepping it gives the sound a trance-like quality. Even when experienced second hand it is powerful, in the sense that it is very evocative.
The Faroese chain dance is essentially a medieval ring dance, and while originally practiced all across Europe, chain dance only survived in the Faroe Islands, as they were banned by the church elsewhere. It has been revived many places in cultural reenactments and remembering, but only in the Faroe Islands has it been uninterruptedly practiced until this day. It is often referred to as a "living tradition" (https://www.faroeislands.fo/arts-culture/customs/chain-dance/, 2022).

These ballads reflect the history of the Faroe Islands, as there are few Faroese historical accounts of the medieval Viking period. The ballads that survived are historical tellings and retellings, even though their factualness might be dubious. Centuries of retellings, paired with an absence of other historical documents, has given them authority as historical accounts, especially since the veracity of some events has been proven (Marnersdottir, 2018, p.790).
As mentioned earlier, not only are they a part of Faroese historicity, but they are important to the social life on the islands, as well as national sentiment.

The ballads are at present regularly sung and danced "professionally" or formally by approximately 1% of the population, that belong to a dance association and dance them in traditional clothing.
Otherwise, the ballad and songs are still practiced at weddings and celebrations, national events or big gatherings. Traditionally, the dance is coupled with the ballad, but it is very common to informally ring dance to other well known and loved Faroese songs at for example parties. The dance is face to face, arm in arm, and anyone can join in. It is a symbol of community and solidarity (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.69).
The dance and the song is to many an integral part of being Faroese. An informant told me it was the embodiment of being Faroese. She lives abroad, and told me about this years annual meeting

with her Faroese friends in Norway. They went to Emanuel Vigeland's Museum. A church-like museum that is completely dark, no windows. Finding themselves alone in the space, they ring danced and sang. Gregory Bateson quotes Isadora Duncan's famous remark "If I could say it, I wouldn't have to dance it" as something that can't quite be communicated with words, or as a message in "the interface between conscious and unconscious" (Bateson, 1972 p. 147). When they danced together upon meeting, they celebrated and embodied their shared Faroeseness, in a realm of the symbolic between the conscious and unconscious.

These songs also have historical importance when it comes to the Faroese language. They caught some interest from Danish intellectuals like H.C Lyngbye and Svend Grundtvig, who both travelled to the Faroe Islands in the eighteen hundreds to collect folk tales and ballads (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.82). H.C Lyngbye went on to publish a group of ballads together with a Danish translation, which technically became the first time Faroese was ever published in a book. The written Faroese orthography was J.C Svabo's interpretation as there wasn't yet a written language. J.C Svabo had at the same time, been collecting stories and ballads for posterity, because he thought spoken Faroese would very soon die out. This spurred outside interest in the Faroese ballads and language, and prompted Faroese students in Copenhagen to start thinking on how to create a written Faroese standard (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.83), which then would culminate with Hammerchaimb and Jakobsen creating it, as mentioned earlier.

While the historical, folkloric and social aspects of Faroese ballads have been discussed, the most common or informal format that storytelling through song takes place in today is not in ballads, but rather in Faroese songs that have taken on the storytelling qualities of ballads.
I once witnessed a spur of the moment burst into song, while eating dinner. I sat there, surprised, halfway laughing and halfway trying to concentrate on understanding what was being sung. It was *Í Góðum Veðrið Hann Dyrgdi,* it is 48 verses long and tells a story of a boy who has to turn out to sea, his mishaps and his way back home. I can recall similar stories sung to me when I was a child. The format that many of these well known songs take on is similar to the ballads in their storytelling quality, and their living presence in people's memory speaks to remnants of an orality that is not buried yet. This, I witnessed several times during my fieldwork, from spontaneous singing at the dinner table, or masses singing together in unison without any music, to narrations of outlandish and strange stories that people apparently still remember and on occasion tell.

Wylie and Margolin (1981) describe this orality as becoming an important symbol, and in the act of making something symbolic, they also welcome a modernity, "the official symbolization of the past has allowed Faroese culture to modernize without radical discontinuity". They describe this tradition as becoming a token of distinctiveness from outside and from a Europe which they resemble more and more. (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.72)

In this vein, the tradition may have become a token of what many people imagine as a Faroese timelessness, not because they imagine the Faroe Islands really are timeless, but because there is a almost palpable continuity. The stories that are told and sung are often incredibly grounded and near. There is a "gravestone" where Sigmundur lived in Skúvoy, an island with a population of about 40 people. Tróndur on the other hand is from a village called Gøta. *Kópakonan* (the seal woman) lived on Kalsoy, in Mikladalur.

7. CULTURAL MEMORY

Faroese cultural memory is important to discuss, as a way of linking the different aspects of language, identity and politics on the Faroe Islands, and at times giving them a more concrete outlet in society. From the importance of remembering *Føroyinga Saga* and the political and cultural importance of its characters, the expression of this cultural memory in modern music and art representations, to the particular tourism springing from it.

Defining cultural memory can be difficult, cultural memory as a form of collective memory has been studied in many disciplines, including psychology, history, sociology and anthropology. Different concepts have emerged from different bodies of work on memory, such as for example social memory and bodily memory, or historical consciousness (Boyer & Wertsch, 2009, p. 117). Although establishing one universal definition might be overly simplistic, in order to work with the concept, one could agree that by definition cultural or collective memory is inherently social. It is a body of knowledge that links the past and the present, like a memory community that is built by varying factors like narratives, alternative historical remembering, or embodied knowledge and ritual (Boyer & Wertsch, 2009, p.132).

Paul Connerton argues in *How Societies Remember* (1989) against the linguistic bias in memory studies, as he sees memory not only through what is "inscribed" but instead as what is bodily, habits and automatisms, like the embodiment of commemorative practices (Connerton, 1989, p. 4). Memory scholar James V. Wertsch, on the other hand, agrees with Connerton, but also makes the case for the linguistic presence in collective memory, pointing out that linguistic mediation such as "narrative" is a common tool in representing the past (Boyer & Wertsch, 2009, p. 120). While there is much focus on the linguistic aspect as "inscribed" and in text, language is not only what is inscribed, neither is narration. For example, in the Faroe Islands, history is remembered both through dancing and singing ballads. This is clearly in line with Connerton's analysis of recalling, as it is embodied and rooted in practice and commemoration, but oral linguistic resources are also heavily involved. In the following chapter I will show how embodied practices merge with language and narration, which eventually lead to inscription and a wider dissemination. The term of memory I will be using is in line with theories of collective memory and remembrance, as memory

that spans over hundreds of years, kept through oral continuity. It is not one actual memory, but the memory of the people.

Føroyinga Saga

The Faroe saga is the earliest documented or written history of the Faroe Islands. It was written in Iceland in the early 12000 about the events that transpired in the Faroe Islands in the period between year 825 to 950, largely transmitted by word of mouth. The original manuscript no longer exist, but excerpts of it survived within other sagas. The saga wasn't published as a written narrative in the Faroe Islands until the seventeenth century, but contents of it were known due to the oral tradition and the ballads (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p.789). The events of the saga are seen as recounting the christianisation of the Faroe Islands and their annexation to Norway. Although symbolically the saga has come to represent Faroese national identity and Faroese collective memory (Marnersdóttir, 2018).
Here I will shortly explain how the events of the saga transpire, because it is important to understand the Faroe Island's relationship to the past to understand Faroese nationalism, but also to understand an integral part of their collective identity that informs their relationship with the future as well. The story goes as follows:

Havgrímur of Hov was in Suðuroy eating sheep's head with his bondsmen, Einar and Eldjarn and they get into a discussion of who the bravest men on the Faroe Islands are. Einar says the bravest men are the brothers Brestir and Beinir, the farmers of Stóra Dímun and Skúvoy. Eldjarn says it's Havgrímur. They can't agree and Eldjarn ends up striking Einar, to which he retaliates with an axe-blow to the head, killing him.
Havgrímur takes Einar to the Ting (free men assembly) to receive compensation for the lost labour of Eldjarn. Einar is supported by his relatives Brestir and Beinir, and Havgrímur loses the case, as in fact Eldjarn had delivered the first blow.

Havgrímur is angry and goes to the viking chief Tróndur of Gøta, who agrees to help seek revenge on Brestir and Beinir, even though they are his own cousins. He also enlists Bjarni of Svínoy. Thus, Havgrímur, Tróndur, Bjarni and their men sail towards Stóra Dímun to attack. Meanwhile, Brestir and Beinir are out sailing with their sons Sigmundur and Thorir, and upon their return are outnumbered by their enemies.
Brestir and Beinir quickly urge their sons, about 12 and 9 years old, to run/climb up the steep cliffs of the island to safety. They watch from above as their fathers fight to the death, and are eventually outnumbered and killed. Tróndur then suggests the execution of the two boys, but is persuaded by Bjarni to take them with him to Gøta. He then sells them to a merchant who takes them with him to Norway. Tróndur seizes the lands and farms of their fathers, Brestir and Beinir.

The saga follows the two boys in Norway, Sigmundur and Thorir, as they are accepted into the court of Earl Haakon, the last pagan king (937-995), and they both impress with their bravery and skill. Sigmundur turns out to be the better warrior and proves himself several times to the Earl.
In the Faroe Islands, Tróndur has taken the son of Havgrímur, Øssur, under his wing as his own, and given him Brestir's land.
Sigmundur having gained the Earl's respect, tells him he would like to return to the Faroe Islands and avenge his father. King Haakon agrees, but first bestows on him a magical gold arm ring and warns him not to remove it ever.

When Sigmundur returns to the Faroe Islands, he immediately kills Øssur on the island of Skúvoy. When Tróndur hears of it, he agrees to meet Sigmundur at the Ting in Tórshavn. They find it hard to agree on ruling the island of Skúvoy, eventually Sigmundur gets Tróndur to agree to travel to Norway and submit to the King. Tróndur never sets sail. King Haakon decides that Sigmundur and Thorir should rule half the Faroe Islands, to compensate for their loss, and should decide amongst themselves how much land to leave for Tróndur.

Some years later, the King is killed and Olaf Tryggvason becomes the new ruler of Norway. One of the first Christian rulers, he decides he wants to Christianise the Faroe Islands. Thus, he summons Sigmundur and asks him to go back and convert the Faroe Islands. When Sigmundur brings this news to the Ting, Tróndur and many others refuse to convert. Sigmundur retreats to Skúvoy, but the next spring he leads a raid to Gøta and forces Tróndur to convert at knifepoint. At this point, Tróndur tries to appease Sigmundur, though Thorir warns him that he is not to be trusted.
Sigmundur returns to Norway with this news, and while there, Olaf Tryggvason asks him for the arm ring and Sigmundur refuses. Olaf warns him that the ring will be the death of him.

Years pass, and Sigmundur marries and has children. Tróndur is still angry, and asks for compensation for the death of Øssur, which Sigmundur refuses.
The story gets to a highpoint when there is an attack on Sigmundur and Thorir by Tróndur and his men. Sigmundur who is often described as smart, managed to leave Tróndur and his men stranded on Lítla Dímun and escape. Tróndur does not give up, and with his men he attacks his farmhouse on Skúvoy. Sigmundur must escape on the run together with Thorir and Einar of Skúvoy, and get chased up until the cliffs where they are surrounded and forced to jump into the sea. They make for Suðuroy, which is about 15 km, but the sea is harsh and merciless. Sigmundur carries Einar on his back while he swims, until he realises he is carrying a dead man. He also tries to keep a hold on Thorir against the currents, but he too is eventually swept away. Sigmundur makes it ashore and collapses. He is found by Thorgrím and two of his men, he is beheaded, according to other interpretations Thorgrím tears his throat out with his teeth, and they steal his gold arm ring.

Tróndur proceeds to ask Sigmundur's daughter Thora to marry Leifur, Øssur's son (Tróndur's adoptive son) and she agrees on the condition that Tróndur finds out who killed her father. With

pagan sorcery Tróndur sees who killed Sigmundur, and has Thorgrím and his men executed at the Ting.

The saga goes on a little longer, but the main point of interest is the relationship between Tróndur í Gøta and Sigmundur, who have both become national heroes although they were enemies. Separately they represent different sides of the independence debate politically, but together they are deeply involved in Faroese nation building and collective identity (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 789; Kim Simonsen, 2013 p.194). The saga is a central point that links Faroese cultural memory, the political nationalist movement of the Faroe Islands, and the emergence of a Faroese "high culture" of poetry and literature (in Faroese and not in Danish). As I will show, these are all interconnected and integral to representations of Faroeseness and national identity.

Collective memory, identity and nationalism

Benedict Anderson famously wrote about the emergence of nations and nationalisms in Europe, through a perspective on what he calls "imagined communities". A large factor in this process, is "print capitalism" and the standardisation of languages that made these imagined communities possible. The commodification of print together with the rise of print in different languages, not only latin, helped pave the way for national languages as well as national sentiment, and made it possible for the nation-state to take form (Anderson, 1983).

Arguably what Anderson describes is a good formula to understand ways that Faroese nationalism unfolded, although the process developed later than the events he describes in continental Europe. Anderson also showcases how Finland's national movement was lead primarily by "persons whose profession largely consisted of the handling of language" and an awakening interest in Finnish folklore, and the publication of older epic poetry (Anderson, 1983, p. 74). Similarly to the Finnish example, an interest from outside in Faroese folklore brought about the first time Faroese appeared in a printed book. At this point it wasn't the official written language. All the national heroes of this time, whether they were farmers or "intellectuals", have later been identified as great figures within Faroese language, not only because language reform was the first step, but also because they were skilled at it, they were poets and writers.
Faroese elements of collective memory, could be described more generally as "folklore", especially from outside. The Faroese translation of the word folklore is "tjóminni", with the literal translation being "national memories", which showcases the relationship between memory and folklore. According to the Faroese memory academic Kim Simonsen, recollection has been a big part of the creation of an imagined community and a national identity, which is especially a trait of the early stages of nations. Recollection creates a common historical narrative and legitimates Faroe Islands as a distinct nation (Simonsen, 2010, p. 76, 79).

Literature and poetry is one of the highest prides in the Faroe Islands. Although Faroe Islands had some great writers before the nationalist movement took off, they all wrote in Danish. With the creation of written Faroese, an explicit Faroese literature started emerging, with writers largely using elements of the Faroe Saga as inspiration (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 791). Many started using the character of Sigmundur and they created both poems and ballads surrounding his life. He became an icon for the Church and the religious tradition on the islands, and as such he was usually seen as the noble and moral hero of the story. Tróndur also became increasingly featured in poems and ballads and he was characterised as a hero for the first time by Jens Hendrik Djurhuus in the late 19th century (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 789).
The emerging Faroese "higher culture" of literature, poetry and art largely focused on very Faroese elements such as Faroese nature, the idea of the islands as a motherland, and the characters of the Saga that gave Faroe Islands history. These elements all maintained and developed Faroese identity as rooted in Old Norse (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 789), giving legitimacy to the Faroese way of life, language and culture as distinct from the metropolitan Denmark.

The creation of the language, finally gave the islands the opportunity to develop all their cultural products in Faroese. The nation building process has seen the publication of nine editions of the saga in Faroese and its customary teaching in school (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 790).

As literature surrounding the saga proliferated, Tróndur also grew as the nationalist hero of the saga. Typically Sigmundur had been seen as the noble one, keeping his word and acting justly, while Tróndur was the more mischievous one, manipulating and lying at times. Still, as my informant told me "when I went to school, we would proudly say that we were actually on Tróndur's side". This, she told me imitating her younger self, with her nose pointed up towards the sky and a childish air, proud of the small rebellion in her statement and proud of the Faroese struggle.
Tróndur became a symbol of Faroese pride and independence because he stood up against the subjugation of the Islands under Norway (Marnersdóttir, 2018, p. 789). The christianisation of the Faroe Islands is seen as the origin of the islands becoming dependent on another country. While Tróndur was opposed to this and was baptised by force, he still continued to defy Sigmundur.

Just as Anderson's perspective on nations, the Faroe Islands became a skilfully imagined community, through many complex processes, but it is undeniable that the creation of the language allowed for the saga to become written, rewritten, and propagated as a unifying national narrative/ history.

Nationhood and identity

Etymologically, the word nation comes from the latin of "birth", and the Faroe Islands seemed to have been reborn as a nation through these processes. The saga is an important reminder that Faroe Islands at one point existed outside and separate of Norway and Denmark. Just as Jóanes Patursson

reminded at the important “Christmas meeting” when he recited a poem and called on Faroe Islanders to make their forefathers and their past heroes proud again.

Commonly, literature on Faroese nationalism frame Faroese identity as being born, made or constructed through these processes described, as an aftermath of the nationalist movement and the establishment of Faroe Islands as a nation (Kim Simonsen, 2010, 2013; Marnersdóttir, 2018; Nauerby, 1996). They point to these events as constructing a common identity. There is little acknowledgement of a concept of identity outside of the nation, or before it.

The events described as integral to the making of a nation propelled each other, one after another: The “discovery” of Faroese folklore and the possibility of making Faroese an official language. The emergence of Faroese print literature in the form of poems, ballads and books, that were largely inspired by the Faroe Saga as well as Faroe Islands as a motherland.
Something was stirred and set in motion with written Faroese, with print and with the idea of nationhood as a political concept, but I would argue that it doesn’t necessarily mean that there could be no identity before this point, or that these events only exist in the light of a political ideology. The sentiment is not coterminous with an ideology.

Although these processes in the light of a political movement certainly cemented a national identity in relationship with the concept and awareness of “nation”, it doesn’t mean that no common identity might have existed before. Love for one’s country or community, place or land might have still been there. People would still gather to sing and dance, then. They told stories. They would participate in *grindadráp* (whale slaughter). These practices are the same ones that are now used to talk about national symbols and identity. I would argue that these elements become more visible after they have been mobilised, and when they become a factor in a cause and effect relationship. The construction of nationhood and nationalism as a before and after, which might be more analytically and conceptually useful, instead of a more organic approach of the continuity of events.
I include this remark, as I think it important when discussing identity, and especially national identity as something existing in a vacuum. I would like to acknowledge that identity and collective identity is nuanced and exists in many small ways, even though we use it academically sometimes in a more narrow conceptualisation in order to illustrate social processes and make a point.

Similarly, Duncan Bell argues that memory (and also identity) is overused in the academic field, especially in political science, as coterminous with a narrative that is projected from a nationalist standpoint through and within dynamics of power. Conflating memory with the interpretations of history that become emblematic of the nation and is taught in schools, written in print and represented in art. Bell argues that memory on the other hand can be alternative or against the dominant narrative (Bell, 2003, p. 74, 75).

This is an important observation, especially when it comes to discussing identity and memory outside of a political framework, although in the case of Faroe Islands aspects of cultural memory were already present before the national movement took use of it, as it was already embodied through song and dance. While parts of the saga serve to remind of a free Faroe Islands and have been utilised politically, the events are complex and are not only compatible with one ideology in society. As mentioned earlier, both Sigmundur and Tróndur are national heroes even though they were on opposing sides, with each their own statues, both protected and beloved in each their own way.

The construction of Faroese memory and identity as an aftermath of a nationalist movement and some political minds in power, would be too simple. Rather, collective memory and identity was allowed to blossom through reclaiming language, the national movement and through sovereignty.
I have found this distinction to be important, because a theme that goes through my fieldwork and analysis is the relationship with time and with the land, which underscores an element of continuity which I think is important to illustrate even in a small way, when discussing the nationalist movement of the 19th century.

Expressions

In the discussion of cultural memory, storytelling and nationalism, the Faroe Saga has been the most important narrative, although other stories and myths of the islands have also survived as integral to cultural expression. For example *kópakonan*, the seal woman, has now a statue erected in her honour.

Statues have also been erected of both Sigmundur and Tróndur. Sigmundur's statue was raised in front of Tórshavn's biggest church. He stands tall, bare-chested, with shoulder length hair and a beard, arms spread out and legs together, like a cross. A comparison to Jesus doesn't seem too far of a stretch. Sigmundur is of course the hero of the Church as he christianised the islands. Tróndur also has his statue, and in 2008 a festival was held in his name in Gøta, where he is from. Kim Simonsen analyses how the past in the Faroe Islands' has been sacralised relatively recently (Simonsen, 2010, p. 94).

The saga and the ballads or *kvæðir* served as inspiration for the Faroese band Týr. A heavy metal band with heavy inspiration from Norse mythology and the viking age, they have interpreted the Faroese ballads and adopted them into their genre. It is one of Faroe Islands' most internationally known bands, especially in the heavy metal genre. Another one of Faroe Island's most famous singers is Eivør, who in her earlier albums used inspiration from a couple of old Faroese tales and folk songs. More recently, she scores the soundtrack of Netflix's series "The Last Kingdom" which is set in the viking period. Eivør is known for her haunting vocals that reminisce of a past Viking

era. Similarly, each year there is a viking festival in Tórshavn. Keeping with this "viking" theme, the official banner of Tórshavn is Thor's hammer.
The ballads are often taught to children, together with the chain dance. They have also been recorded in tact with the dance and been recorded on several CDs.

From the influence and inspiration that is present in Faroese literature, music, art and cultural events, it is clear that in many ways this connection to a past era, to an old language they want to save, is part of a cultural memory that is kept alive through these "cultural tools".

Wertsch (2008) argues collective memory is closely tied to narrative, and proposes that narratives can become schematic or patterned, memory doesn't necessarily concern one episode, but several that often adhere to a schema or pattern. Some of these patterns are very visible in the Faroe Islands, as collective memory is not one episode, but a relationship to a past that wasn't written until recently. What today is written, is also largely memory. Wertsch shows how instruments of memory are involved, such as the cultural tools that are employed, and he uses the examples of calendars, the internet or narratives (Wertsch, 2008, p.121). In this subsection I have showed some of the cultural tools used for the representation of a collective memory that is in many ways patterned. These patterns also showcase that the elements of collective memory in the Faroe Islands are not arbitrary, and can be seen as an organic whole, almost as a part of a Faroese ontology.

While some authors, such as Simonsen, see the Faroe Islands and some of the elements described, as too immersed or anchored in the past, I would argue there seems to be a lot of agency and meaning in these Faroese efforts of reclaiming the past and giving it new life in the present.

History and memory

The Faroe Islands have made a great effort in retrieving their history, with few accounts to work with. When I interviewed H.A Sølvará, a well known historian, he told me there is generally a lot of interest in history, it is a common "hobby", and people are interested in listening and reading about the history of the islands in particular, local and national history. This interest, as mentioned earlier, also extends not just to history with capital H, but what is past, like memories, personal accounts and stories. Like the story of the brother of the grandfather of my uncle's wife, that we listened to.

The Faroe Islands have been in a process of rediscovering their own history since the late 1800's. First, trying to establish who settled the islands and when they settled, basing theories on the very few accounts that exist from outside. The account of the Irish monk Dicuil described a group of islands in the Atlantic, that may fit the description of Faroe Islands. Much of this work also involved language and was carried out by philologists, as a way to determine the roots of place-names. The debate here is between Norse settlements and Celtic settlements, and who settled first (Arge, 1991, p.102). It is widely accepted that Irish monks or hermits arrived on the islands before

the Norse settlers did (even though this has also been contested), but there is also a major narrative that it was Grímur Kamban, a viking, who settled the islands (according to the Faroe Saga).

Memory and history blur as there are still few ways to know for sure what happened in the early days of the Faroe Islands. Archeological evidence is mostly from year 1000 A.D and onward (from the Viking age), while evidence has been found in crops and sedimentary DNA that Faroe Islands settled much before Kamban (Arge, 1991, p.105). Though it is believed that the settlers were Irish monks, it is impossible to know who these first settlers were, although they probably died out before the Norse settlement (Curtin et al. 2021, p.5). Faroese anthropologist Firouz Gaini mentions Faroe Islanders are very interested in genealogical research trying to "reconstruct a forgotten past" (Gaini, 2013, p. 46).

The Islands have undergone a rediscovering of their history and ancestry, and the interest in mapping out the past is very reflected in Faroese society still. There is no proof of who the first settlers were, and the theory of the Irish monks is accepted. Still, this theory competes with the notion of Kamban as the first settler, being a very well known figure from the saga and the ballads. These theories aren't necessarily mutually exclusive in the Faroe Islands, and both the scientific theory and the theory originating from cultural memory live parallel lives on the Islands. The level of accuracy of the Saga is not as contested as it cannot be subjected to the scientific rigour of proof that other theories can. The rest is a mixture of having faith and maybe what Roediger et al. (2009) define as collective remembering rather than memory, which is a more dynamic approach that understands remembering the past as tied to the present, and manifesting a preferred group identity (Roediger et al., 2009, p. 140).

The general population's interest and regard when it comes to history became apparent when at birthday parties, dinners or passing conversations with different people, I mentioned I was going to talk to Sølvará. People would nod approvingly and tell me this man was very knowledgeable. Some told me he was one of Faroe finest. He is indeed very respected, and an historian who seemed to be known by everyone. There is of course less of a divide between the academic minds of the country and the people, as the scale of the islands are so small. Historians in the Faroe Islands, just as linguists, are the ones who are pulling forth many of these unifiers and identity markers. Whether it is language and words, or what national figures were up to in the past, they matter to the Faroese people.

The memory in language

During my fieldwork I often heard how beautiful Faroese words were, and also that Faroese is a beautiful language. Someone once told me, talking about language:

> "It's such a national symbol that is worth protecting, when we are in the middle with Danish, Norwegian, English coming at us from every angle. And we have so many beautiful words, it is such a beautiful language, our language is like our *búnað*".

Búnað is the Faroese traditional clothing. It is very reminiscent of the Norwegian *bunad*, but based on the clothing made in the Faroe Islands before foreign clothing became the norm in the 18th century. The garments are made of wool. The traditional clothing is an emblem of the Faroe Islands, and worn on the national holiday Ólavsøka, as well as other formal events.

"Our language is like our *búnað"* can be interpreted in many different ways. For one the traditional or national clothing is a point of pride, and wearing it is almost like embodying everything this chapter has focused on. The history, the memory, the identity. The parallelism can imply that language functions in the same way, as the same embodiment of all these things. We speak our language like we wear our *búnað,* speaking is an active force in remembrance, it encapsulates symbolically Faroe Islands before they were a nation and when they became one.

Language is evocative in general, as we associate imagery to words. In the Faroe Islands language functions as it does everywhere else, sometimes in a pragmatic and a communicative capacity, other times it is elevated as a cultural product. Yet, what is it about Faroese that makes it poetic, or beautiful in the minds of Faroe Islanders? There is probably more than one reason.
One theory is that the language is so intertwined with traditions of storytelling, of spoken poetry, of long poetic ballads, still lingering in the language as all these creative practices are relatively still practiced. These elements have blended into an ontology, a subconscious knowledge of the land, the stories, the songs, that is not explicit but lies inherent in the language. Some words convey beautiful meanings that are tied to this ontology of myths, dramatic nature and dramatic stories tied to their land.
This is not saying that no one swears or speaks undramatically. Rather that there is a common understanding that Faroese is a beautiful language, and that may be because of all it represents, but there are also words that have specific meanings that are regarded as beautiful. The composition of words, that have been composed to reflect and mirror the life and world unto which they were born, and vice versa. This is true everywhere, but as Faroe Islanders have become more a part of Europe, many can appreciate on another level the Faroeseness of words. Faroe Islands is also a highly bilingual society, with Danish is a second language, yet far enough removed that the contrasts can become apparent.

Faroe Islands is a small society with a rich oral tradition, oral poetry and ballads, that has become as modernised as the rest of Scandinavia, but has retained a "present" continuity with a past Faroe Islands. There is a clash of awareness that comes with modernity at the contrast between the elements that have now become open to be regarded as traditional. There is sensitivity around these elements, and how parts of the language contains traditional elements that are now regarded as

beautiful in a nostalgic kind of way. For example, *grindamjørki* the word for "whale fog" is a reminder that even though whaling might be controversial or might cease to be practiced one day, it has been a way of life and a beloved custom that is linguistically weaved into their natural world through the word for a specific kind of weather.

Cultural remembering on Ólavsøka

On the 28th and 29th of July people in the Faroe Islands celebrate Ólavsøka, the Faroese national holiday. My fieldwork on the islands coincided with these dates, so I was able to experience the holiday while juggling an analytical outsider perspective and being embraced fully into the festivities.

The morning of the 28th I put on my own *búnað*, being careful with all the small hooks and the silver bindings on my chest, because I am the third generation using this *búnað*. At this point a friend was visiting me on the Islands, so I was mentally prepared to spend the day outside walking around with him and assuming the position of an outsider.
When both of us were done dressing, we walked out into the hallway which was already full with people. They were all going up to the family that lived upstairs of my little apartment. It is customary to spend this day walking from house to house and in each one there are cold servings, beer and *brennevín.*
A family member of mine spotted us, and not only did she drag us up with her (thankfully), she also reprimanded us for trying to scurry out unnoticed. As we joined the gathering upstairs we were immediately handed a shot of something strong, which is a good way to start the morning they say. Faroe Islanders have a notorious reputation when it comes to drinking. Like Norway and Sweden, there is a state monopoly on alcohol, which in the Faroe Islands also includes beer. But, when the drinks are flowing, Faroe Islanders can get a little crazy.

The drinks went down easily, when faced with a room full of small-talking Faroese people, but the ambience was also so lively and happy that there wasn't much space for anxiousness.
After a while, when it was time to move on, we got swept away up to the national museum. For some, it is a tradition to swing by the museum, where there is a curated Ólavsøka art exposition each year. Here we found more free beer and food, and we walked around meeting people, and even more distant family members. I found one of the friends I'd made during my stay and we joined her and her group of friends.

We walked down to the city centre where all the activity was happening, music and games. Almost everyone was dressed in the traditional clothing. It reminded me of the Norwegian 17th of May celebration, but even more crammed and personal. The celebration is only in Tórshavn so people gather from all over the islands in a pretty small city.

I assumed I would put on my researcher's anonymity-cloak, but it's safe to say that that wasn't an option, and I gained much more from it. I was often stopped, sometimes because someone recognised me or knew my mother, as someone told me: "my mother and your mother are good friends" and that would suddenly be enough for us to feel as old buddies and have a "skál" together. We met some Norwegians as well, standing out with their own Norwegian traditional clothing.
Coincidentally I also met my grandmother's cousin and her husband and they invited us to sit and have a beer with them. I never imagined I would feel such a part of it, on this day overflowing with people I thought I wouldn't know. It was an overwhelming feeling of belonging after all the times feeling like a little bit of an outsider. I was invited into more houses, small wooden houses with low ceilings where more cold *grind* (whale meat) and dried fish was to be found.

Each year everyone ends the festivities by gathering at the main square at midnight for the "midnight song", which normally is a well organised event where the choir sings traditional Faroese songs as well as old popular songs, and everyone sings along. This year was another story. During my stay in the Faroe Islands, Covid-19 was still raging in Norway and most of Europe, but not in the Faroe Islands. When I arrived, they tested us all at the airport, but there had only been one isolated case of infection in the last month. While there were strong socialising restrictions in Norway, there were none in the Islands, which was a welcome break from it all. Experiencing Ólavsøka this particular year, was even more surreal.

Although the festivities were allowed to go on, there would be no organised singing event at midnight, which I was disappointed about because it was something I really wanted to witness. Still, everyone crammed in the square at midnight. It was a strange vision, haven gotten used to (at this point) social distance, to suddenly be in this square surrounded by thousands of people.
At exactly midnight, there was a palpable air of expectation, but everyone knew there was no event, it's as if people gathered out of habit, like there could be no other fitting way to end the festivities than to sing. The first ten minutes nothing happened, but then, a couple of meters from where I was standing, a group of girls started singing a song, and then the people close by started to join in. In a couple of minutes thousands of people were singing, it was so loud, as if everyone was hurling their voices as loudly as possible at the sky. It didn't stop after one song, it went on and on for a long time. People would start singing a new song and somehow group dynamics would make coordination possible, and thousands of people would be singing in unison again. Many small circles of Faroese chain dance also broke out in the crowd. Closing my eyes, I could hear the singing but I could also almost feel the rhythmic thumping on the ground of the dancers.

Connerton argues recollection is present in at least two areas of social activity, in commemorative ceremonies and in bodily practices (Connerton, 1989, p.7). Although Connerton refers to bodily practices conceptually as bodily automatisms and habit (Connerton, 1989, p.5), it applies very well to what Faroe Islanders undertake each year on Ólavsøka. As in all else that can be called a "ritual", big or small, there is a shared habitus on this day. Moreover, this day is a recollection and

veneration of the past in a very embodied way. The traditional clothing that are worn are to a degree an embodiment of the past, while the singing and the dancing are embodiments of Faroese tradition. The whole day is an embodiment of national identity, it is a feeling, while it is also something you wear openly on your sleeve. This is of course nothing particular to the Faroe Islands. This type of ceremony, ritual or commemoration exists for a reason in all societies and communities and anthropologists are often the ones to showcase it. But it is not always shown in the light of memory, more often in terms of ritual and the group dynamics or purposes of it in a community.
The reason I frame it in memory, is because it seems to be an important driving factor in the Faroe Islands behind group identity and belonging. That is not because of memory alone, of course, but because memory has given the Faroe Islands a way to articulate distinctiveness in a context of political struggle. Memory and recollection have in some ways become habitus in itself.

8. RELATIONSHIP TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Neo-Romanticism

In her book about Iceland: *A Place Apart* (1998) Kirsten Hastrup writes about Icelanders relationship with the past, and she calls it "uchronic", a conception of their own time separate from the rest (Hastrup, 1998, p.178). Similarly, the Faroe Islands are often referred to with reference to time, as a "time-bubble".

The "romantic time-bubble" is part of Kim Simonsen's critique of the relationship Faroe Islands have with the past. Only in his argument this stems not from a relationship with the past, but from an image that has been projected onto the Faroe Islands from outside. Images that were disseminated by outsiders about people high in the North as vikings, "living fossils" and as living authentically and close to nature. This set of ideas and imagery then became part of Faroe Islanders own self-image (Simonsen, 2014, p. 32, 35). Kim Simonsen refers to a viking exoticism that became popularised in the 19th century across Europe and that brought travellers to the Faroe Islands with pre-made images and ideals of pre-modern times. According to Simonsen this exoticism developed into "self-exoticism" and self definition according to an Eurocentric romanticisation of a "time pocket" in an increasingly modern context (Simonsen, 2014, p. 35, 37).
Simonsen's argument is that this self-image might seem innocent, but can also be damaging, because it places the Faroe Islands discursively in a backwards position, while this is a clear misrepresentation (Simonsen, 2014, p. 37).

The stereotyping of cultural elements of different countries is common, while it can sometimes be seen as harmful, it is difficult to avoid in its entirety, and many of those stereotypes become accepted and incorporated. Take the example of Norway, from the outside Norwegians can be seen to be reserved or very respecting of personal space. This is of course a stereotype, but one that many

Norwegians have come to accept and include into their own narratives. An example of this is the popular book *Nordmenn: En Illustrert Innføring* by Julien S. Bourelle. This book is about typical Norwegian behaviour and it is conceptualised as a guidebook to having Norwegians in your life. While the description of the Norwegian character is a stereotype from outside, I have seen Norwegians mostly find it funny and not at all lacking in truth at times. Like the criticisms about Norwegians taking the bus and being unable to sit beside one another or talk to each other. My point here, is not to defend stereotypes, because many are indeed harmful, but rather to illustrate that much of what Simonsen is referring to is a stereotype of Faroe Islands, one that might to some degree have been accepted as a narrative, but is not necessarily as all encapsulating as Simonsen makes it seem like.

The idea of Faroe Islands as untouched nature, unexplored and unspoiled is indeed also a strategy used especially in the tourism branch (Simonsen, 2014, p.37). A time bubble. This is how marketing a whole country works. Spain is marketed as rich culture, flamenco dancing, good weather, tapas and beer. But Spanish women don't walk around in flamenco dresses. Similarly, the Faroe Islands are often marketed towards the outside as a place where you can "transcend" modern life and get back to "roots" and rich traditions, living authentically. There is a reason why these elements are marketed as existing in the islands, but that is of course not all Faroe Islands is, or an accurate representation of what most Faroe Islanders themselves think about their identity.

While I would like to point out that most Faroe Islanders I met did not seem to identify with what Simonsen calls "self-exoticism", there are elements of Faroese culture that seem to be romanticised at different points. This is especially when in connection to the outside world or in line with a desire towards duration.

A desire towards duration

Hastrup writes of Iceland (1998, p. 183):

> "The reference to pastness, and the sonorous repetition of traditional words and tales in Iceland point to the same feature, and show us what repetition really is: continuousness."

When I joined the shepherding in the summer, I would witness a small part of this continuousness but also what for many has come to represent a desire for duration.
This started just with an invitation, which seems small but for me, it meant that I was allowed to join something very Faroese with my questionable skills and questionable Faroeseness. There is a lot of skill and structure to this process. The group is divided tactically and spread out to cover ground. I thought I would just shadow someone and try to keep up, but being thrown into this also means you have a part to play. Things went wrong, the sheep that have gone through this process many years were of their own mind this time and had absolutely no intention of making it easy.

They ran for the hills. The person I was shadowing told me that in many years he had not seen them take this route. Because of the rogue sheep, the leader of our little group had to climb steeper and steeper in order to get above the group of sheep and herd them down again. He was accompanied by a sweet border collie puppy, and we watched from below how they worked masterfully to get the sheep down again. After this it went smoother and I started following someone my own age, who told me about his life working at sea and taking breaks in order to do this when it was the season. At one point we were so high up that we had an overlook of the whole island, its sloping form below us. The circuit to getting the sheep to where they are supposed to go, is long and at times steep. I thought I was doing okay, following the shouted orders as best as possible and walking in a parallel line along with everyone else on the mountain. Then suddenly there was a whole group of sheep running directly towards me, it felt like a mayhem of shouting, of people running and of me falling to the ground and feeling really awkward.
Finally, the first group of sheep had been successfully rounded up at the sheep house, we took a break in the sun and ate some food. Then it was time to give medicine to the sheep. I don't really think anyone needed my help, but they made me feel useful and included every time, and gave me tasks here and there. One of them told me about his daughters who were always willing to join and help. He told me his eldest wanted to move back to the Faroe Islands (she was currently living in Denmark).

After experiencing this, I noticed a difference in the awareness of this practice as of cultural and social importance amongst different demographics. While the adults and older generations had an approach to it as part of the normal trajectory of the year, of lif, several younger people I spoke to and befriended saw the maintenance of the keeping of sheep as very important. "The desire for duration is what motivates history in its suspended, lived form, between habituation and representation" (Hastrup, 1998, p.184). This balance between habituation and representation seemed to be very present amongst many of the younger Faroe Islanders. The desire to make these Faroese practices durable and lasting, was seen in their mediation of it as something that they were used to growing up with, something habitual, and being aware of the elements of it that are up for representation and symbolisation.

My friend's older brother had actually turned what before had just been the normal keeping of sheep, sometimes chickens and some cattle, into a business. Framing it within more modern concepts such as sustainability and short travelled meat. This is nothing new in the islands, as all meat has typically been extremely short travelled and animals have always lived in nature, but framing it this way has been especially lucrative when it comes to tourism, sustainable tourism, and offering "authentic Faroese experiences" all in one package. This, has become increasingly popular and a selling point travel agencies often use to market the "Faroese experience". The durability of practices that are essential to Faroese living have become infused with a new awareness of their uniqueness in the more globalised present, which to some is an excellent strategy to also make them last.

The desire towards duration is an element that goes through so many aspects of Faroese society. The language in itself is a testament to this. So is the commitment Faroe Islanders have to the motherland. The desire to return. An argument I often heard was that people always returned to bring up their children in the Islands. If they lived abroad and had children, they would eventually return so that their children could experience growing up in the Islands. My good friend, who is my own age, expressed her relief that while studying in Copenhagen she had found a Faroese boyfriend, because she could not imagine a Danish boyfriend would want to move back with her to the Islands. Similarly, the eldest daughter of my sheep herding friend, had just gotten engaged and with her fiancé they had just bought a plot of land in Tórshavn in order to eventually move back. She is now pregnant, so I imagine it's a matter of time.

There is a desire to move back to the motherland, but there is also a duty, a willingness to never let the Faroe Islands die. A desire for children to experience the same "continuousness" of the Faroe Islands and to make Faroe Islands way of life durable by also introducing them to their own kids.

There is an anecdote, about this particular phenomenon. There is a Faroese architect, who works for one of the biggest architecture firms in Denmark, Henning Larsen Architects, he was part of designing the Icelandic opera house "Harpa". According to his wife, they wanted to move back to the Faroe Islands, in large part because of the kids. The architect then expressed the desire to leave the firm in order to move back to his hometown Gøta. The firm really wanted him to stay but he could not be persuaded. They eventually had to open up an office in the Faroe Islands, in the little town of Gøta, which has approximately 500 inhabitants. "For many people life abroad is, even after years on foreign soil, an interim before the ultimate return to the archipelago" (Gaini, 2013, p.29

Grindadráp

The relationship Faroe Islanders have towards their past, present and future is complex. The relationship towards *grindadráp* or whale slaughter, lies somehow allegorically in the middle of it, and represents many of the ideological struggles and contradictions of the relationship.

The relationship with the past, as we have seen, is underscored by particular narratives, practices and a lifeworld ontology springing from it. The symbolisation of Grindadráp also underscores this relationship with the past, with continuity and with the Faroese way of life.

Whale slaughter was just a way of surviving, that was turned into a symbolisation of the Faroese nation and identity.

Grind is the Faroese name for the pilot whale that is killed. This particular species is not endangered, and Faroese slaughter of whales is not enough to endanger them either. There is significant research and data that proves that overhunting is not occurring. (Singleton, 2016, p. 36)

Still, the optics are not great, and the practice has been condemned internationally in different waves. There has been an ongoing conflict with the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS), together with several misrepresentations in media and boycotting.

It is argued that whale slaughter went through somewhat of the same process as Faroese "folklore" did in the 19th century, and gained attention from outside as a "barbaric" yet "authentic" practice. From the outside it was seen as the Viking spirit incarnate. On the inside, it was yet another quality that distinguished Faroe Islands from Denmark, at a time when Danish authorities sought to underplay differences and even defined Faroese as just a Danish dialect. Thus, language and hunting whales became the most prominent national symbols (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p. 131). Both fit into the equation of a Faroese archaic origin, in which the national narratives at the time thrived. While hunting whales was common amongst other people in the North Atlantic, it has remained a largely unchanged practice in the Faroe Islands. Early records show the practice was common in the Viking age, and became an important food source and a more organised activity in the 16th century. (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.106).

It is important to note that whaling in the Faroe Islands is one of the few modern instances of non-commercial whaling. The pods of pilot whales that approach the shores are herded to a beach by small fishing boats, after a sighting has been made. On the shore they are then systematically slaughtered. Special weaponry called *mønustingarar* are used to ensure the process is as humane as possible. A license is required for the kill, but it is normal for people to join the process and help in different ways. It is a largely communal activity, both in the slaughter itself but also in the allocation of resources. The whale meat is divided between participants and the local community where the whale drive takes place. (Singleton, 2016, p. 29)

The image of the bloody waters and beaches has circulated international media, with hate letters following, calls for boycotts and persecution by the eco-activist group, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS). Public enemy number one was often identified as Paul Watson, leader of the Sea Shepherd group. SSCS members would often appear at a grindadráp and disrupt the process which is illegal, and which most Faroe Islanders experienced as very disrespectful. Ironically having a shared enemy seems to have cemented the activity even more. From a Faroese perspective, whale drives are legal and sustainable. The numbers of whales slaughtered varies from year to year, because only the pods of whales who approach the shores are taken, it is not really a "hunt", and some years none are slaughtered. The SSCS campaigns against *grindadráp* have at times been so radical, disruptive and experienced as disrespectful, that it has had a widely counterproductive effect. This reached a high in 2014 with SSSC campaign Grindstop, where Faroe Islanders were portrayed as a sadistic people who "enjoyed" the kill (Singleton, 2016, p. 37). It was experienced as an attack upon Faroeseness by many, and support for grindadráp was increasingly vocalised, even by people who normally weren't involved in the activity. (Singleton, 2016, p. 42).

Alternatively to SSCS's campaigns that have promoted a negative image of the Faroe Islands as barbaric, sadistic and uncivilised (Bogadóttir & Olsen, 2017, p. 505). The Faroe Islands have at times shown the hypocrisy of some of the international outcry, their argument being that the whales

themselves live good and free lives, in stark contrast to most animals of the meat industry elsewhere (Singleton, 2016, p.35,36). SSCS were perceived by many as bullying a small community, rather than tackling larger animal rights issues in meat production. At the same time, they were also seen as intentionally hiding facts and misrepresenting the Faroese practice, in order to gain donations. (Singleton, 2016, p. 40).

While the significance of the practice is very rooted in Faroese independence, nationhood, self-reliability and identity, the pressures from outside can be difficult to ignore at times. Bogadóttir and Olsen show how the percentage of Faroe Islanders that have expressed feelings against *grindadráp* have framed it within regret of the outside perception of Faroe Islanders as bloodthirsty savages, and not within animal rights or health concerns (Bogadóttir & Olsen, 2017, p. 511).
From what I have gathered from my own fieldwork, the Faroese population are extremely conscious of the responsibility they have to ensure the process is done correctly and fairly, so as to avoid further bad press and misrepresentation.

After I had finished my fieldwork and I was back in Norway, I woke up one day to find the Faroe Islands on the front page of The Guardian. It was a case of *Grindadráp* where actually *springarar*, a type of dolphins had been killed. It is fairly normal for some dolphins to have joined a group of pilot whales, and to be killed (and eaten) alongside them. This particular day a very large group of dolphins and no whales had neared the shore, which normally would have been ignored, but this time the decision was made and they were herded in to be killed. This caused international outrage as over a thousand dolphins were killed. News articles about *grindadráp* show up from time to time, and is nothing new for Faroe Islanders, but this time the situation was different. There was a large amount of dissent amongst Faroe Islanders, disagreement with how the situation was handled and with the decision to bring them in in the first place. There was some debate in the Faroese media outlets as well, and several spokespersons for the protection of *grindadráp* condemned how it was handled. One of the main concerns is that this particular happening misrepresents the integrity of the practice, and that it can become damaging for the continuation of it. I called my grandmother and she, who has always defended whale slaughter, told me she saw this instance as an unnecessary killing.

Presently, the situation seems to be a united front of integrity and pride (at least outwardly), but as the pressures from outside increase and the world becomes more ecologically conscious, the practice might be more questioned and discussed. During my fieldwork I asked what people on the islands thought of *grindadráp* today, and most of the answers I got was that there was even more engagement amongst younger people. I believe that just as younger people seemed to be interested in the duration of Faroese practices, like the keeping of sheep, this is just as important or even more for the survival of an image of Faroe Islands that has become such a strong identity marker.
A survey was made in 2013 of youth values and consumption of whale meat in the Faroe Islands and in the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Fielding, 2013). In the case of the Faroe

Islands the survey addresses the, at this point, well known concern of levels of mercury in whale meat and blubber, and if younger people's consumption habits and values in regards of *grindadráp* has changed. The survey concludes that mostly the health recommendations have not made a significant impact, as people continue to consume the meat (Fielding, 2013, p. 820). A majority of people try to attend grindadráp whenever possible, and the meat in itself has transcended just being a food resource, but has become a symbol of Faroese solidarity (Fielding, 2013, p. 821).

While the people of the Faroe Islands don't belong to a so-called indigenous ethnic group, there are elements in Faroese society that speak of a reach towards aboriginality. Similarly, in Iceland a claim to aboriginality relies on nature and nation (Hastrup, 1998, p.188). In the Faroe Islands many justifications of the practice of whale slaughter in the present, rely on similar approaches where the practice is identified as something Faroe Islanders have been doing for centuries and that is integral to their way of living in the land and their identity. There is a relative contradiction present, where there is increasing support for claims made on behalf of land, the rights to the land and its resources. On the other hand, there is a discussion of wether humankind should continue to exploit certain resources if they can be deemed as "unnecessary".
The comparison of *grindadráp* with indigenous practices can also be seen in a framing of the debate within anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial perspectives. SSCS and the anti-*grind* debate has been perceived by many as imperialistic and as bullying a small community, rather than tackling larger animal rights issues (Singleton, 2016, p. 40), as mentioned earlier.

The aboriginal or indigenous aspect is also one that has been imposed on the Faroe Islands, much like the viking exoticism that outsiders experienced in contact with the islands. The number one complaint I heard when it comes to tourism on the islands, is that herds of people come off big travel cruises and proceed to walk around and look into people's windows with fascination. People told me they feel like they are on exposition, for all to see the "authentic" and "close to nature" people that live far off in the middle of the Atlantic.

Faced with changing ecological consciousness, the *grind* debate becomes also framed in different lights. While some acknowledge that there is decreasing necessity for whale meat, others refer to an increasingly unstable future where the practice and the skillset it requires could be extremely valuable. Furthermore, the self-reliant Faroese spirit seems to value the independence this practice represents, with the alternative being increasing imports of packaged "supermarket meat". The debate has also been contextualised within concepts such as modernity and capitalism, and according to Singleton (2016, p.38):

> "practices like grindadráp allow the Faroese to mitigate the consequences of globalised modernity; notably maintaining a connection to their landscape and processes of food production, something that has been said to be lost in some other modern societies"

Similarly, grindadráp represents a Faroese will against further dependence on a global food system. As it is increasingly justified by Faroe Islanders as a sustainable and non-capitalistic practice, it is argued that it further encourages a mindset of de-growth and reducing commodification and consumerism (Bogadóttir & Olsen, 2017, p. 507), although this is just one perspective on the issue.

Grindadráp could be an allegory of the struggles island societies such as Faroe Islands grapple with, as the world becomes increasingly globalised under one global economy and under the umbrella of one moral economy, as well. The Faroe Islands have increasingly been subjected to change, when it comes to globalisation, trade and increasing imports, tourism and the building of more infrastructure to meet new needs. A global ideology of modernisation seems to be at times clashing with a desire for duration and continuity. I would argue that this desire is expressed in different ways, for example by focusing on the protection and internal development of the language, by rediscovering Faroese history, or by wanting to keep alive skillsets that modernisation seems to have deemed redundant, such as *grindadráp*.

Tourism

Tourism has largely consisted of a couple of backpackers here and there, but in the past 10 years tourism has grown consistently, to the point where it has become a lively political as well as public debate.
Krabbagággur is a term I often heard referred to tourists then vs. now. The literal translation is "hermit crab" and it refers to the foreigners that used to be seen in the 80's and 90's. They were backpackers who walked around carrying their large backpacks and resembled hermit crabs (the backpacks being the shells) not only visibly but also in the way that backpackers had been conceptualised as carrying "their house" along with them while travelling. Today, the tourism scene is largely different with large Nordic cruises depositing groups of tourists in flashy clothes. People told me tourists could always be identified by their flashy wind-breaking jackets in different neon colours. And of course, they walk around in packs.

Since 2013 the tourism sector has experienced continued growth, and the government has invested in several facilities and infrastructures. Along with the growth in the sector, there has also been increasing debate on the consequences of tourism when it comes to not only nature and wildlife, but to small village communities and Faroese values (Plieninger et. al., 2018, p. 167, 168).

While Faroese people recognise the revenue and the economic growth of the tourism sector, according to a survey published in 2018 (Plieninger et. al., 2018), there is generally a level of conflict between Faroese "landscape values" and increasing development. This development comes in the form of tourism, but also in increasing fish farming that although it represents Faroe Island's biggest industry and export, is seen as disrupting Faroese landscape. The survey also recognised Faroese "landscape values" as divided into different categories from the main responses. There is a

strong protectiveness for a Faroese nature which is seen as largely untouched and wild, as well as a resource that Faroe Islanders have a right to, it is accessible to anyone and is associated with a sense of freedom (Plieninger et. al., 2018, p.166). Most Faroe Islanders also showed scepticism towards their government's capabilities of managing the rising tourism growth, as well as other kinds of development. There are calls towards more sustainable tourism, as well as planned strategies and a higher level of organisation, they want a higher degree of control. Concern for small village communities also revolved around their inability to choose wether to have tourist flooding in or not. The majority of respondents had a negative view on the developments discussed (Plieninger et al., 2018, p. 171). This coincides with the usual responses I got during my fieldwork if I asked people about tourism.

One of my informants had worked a couple of years in the tourism branch as a guide, and we had a discussion on how Faroe Islands could move forward in terms of tourism. She wanted more control in terms of how many tourists should be allowed to enter each period. She envisioned stricter border policies when it came to tourism, but recognised that it could be difficult in practice. In her experience as a guide, she had come to see a very unequal distribution of wealth and profit from tourism. While most the tours she guided were to very small and picturesque village communities, she saw none of the revenue going to these small communities that in reality experience the brunt of tourism the hardest.

In an article called "Faroe, Orkney, Gran Canaria: Case Studies in the Geography of Marginal Europe" (Bailey, 1998), Patrick Bailey writes in 1998 that although the Faroe Islands would like to enter the profitable tourism industry, "there is little to see in Faroe apart from spectacular scenery, which may or may not be shrouded in fog" and "any substantial development of a tourist industry unlikely" (Bailey, 1998, p. 312). Bailey might at this point not have realised the rising commodification of culture in tourism and increasing travellers in search for "authentic experiences". MacCarthy has written about cultural tourism in her monograph *Making the Modern Primitive: Cultural Tourism in the Trobriand Islands* (2016). Authenticity is an important aspect of this type of tourism, and it is largely a part of the allure of Faroe Islands, not only the rugged nature. The concept of authenticity itself is questionable, but in this context it is referred to something that is constructed, it is a projection. "Things appear authentic because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, discourses, perspectives, or powers; authenticity is relative, negotiable, contextual, symbolic, and ideological" (MacCarthy, 2016, p. 42). She also distinguishes "existential authenticity" as a related concept, in which tourists themselves experience authenticity of the self (MacCarthy, 2016, p. 43).
The tourist experience in the Faroe Islands is marketed within these terms, not only as a perfect destination for nature and wildlife lovers, but also as a unique experience of authenticity, wether it is within the self or outwards. An example of this is not hard to find. The official site for Faroese tourism is *www.visitfaroeislands.com*, and on the first page it announces "The Faroe Islands on Lonely Planet's Best in Travel list: The Faroe Islands have been listed in the 'community

connection' category which celebrates destinations offering authentic and unforgettable experiences that give back to local communities" (*https://visitfaroeislands.com/*, 07.04.2022).

Tourism is booming, but it has largely negative connotations amongst Faroe Islanders themselves. MacCarthy uses Goffman's backstage analogy to discuss tourist's desire for the "backstage experience", to see something authentic and not for show (MacCarthy, 2016, p. 46). I believe that tourism hasn't yet reached a stage in the Faroe Islands, where there is a distinction between front and back, because culture has not withstood this kind of attention and commodification for long, but it might be on its way. That which can be generalised as Faroese culture or way of living is not for show, but this in itself may be a perceived threat.
I was often told that changes took so long to arrive in the islands, some new development or technology would arrive ten years later than the rest of Europe. I believe this is less and less the case, and the accelerated change (together with tourism) is felt somehow as a threat that needs to be regulated and controlled. An aspect of the commodification of culture is that it can be believed to loose its meaning if it becomes just for show, staged or a performance for others. This might not necessarily be true, but it can still be perceived as a threat.
Part of the allure of authenticity for outsiders is this idea of the unselfconscious, but in the Faroe Islands there isn't necessarily a lack of consciousness, but the ways of living life on the islands that outsiders might see as exotic, make sense for life on the islands, at least at the moment.
I found it sort of funny that while on the islands I was a potato, dried fish and meat supplier for people my grandfather was close with who lived in Tórshavn. Each time I took the ferry back from Sandoy, where they live, I was armed with sacks of potatoes, smelly meat, or dried fish. This level of reciprocity and remnants of a gift economy that anthropologists have cared to explore in small societies, is very endearing as an outsider. Faroe Islanders are not necessarily unselfconscious about the appeal of some aspects of Faroese society, they just keep on making sense for surviving in such a vulnerable and isolated place. Even if isolation is in reality a fallacy, when you are on the island, as my informants often pointed out and I experienced myself, wherever you look there is just a big ocean.

This relates also to Faroe Islanders relationship with the land. Even though I would say that Faroe Islanders have a meaningful relationship with the land and their surroundings, this relationship is very pragmatic. It can be defined as "deep", but not because the landscape is necessarily seen as aesthetic or recreational, but because it is so extensively used, lived in. The land and wildlife is a necessary resource, and some feel that it is not for others to trample all over (Plieninger et al., 2018, p.171). Tourists walking in the hills should not be an impediment for the hunting season of birds and hares, for example.

MacCarthy also writes of the "intrepid" independent traveller who gains an "existential" or experiential authenticity from their travels. She writes of this type of traveller in the Trobriand islands; "Those who spend several days, a week, or even more with a family in a bush materials hut,

eating mostly local food" and experience a "meaningful exchange with cultural Others" (MacCarthy, 2016, p. 124). Similarly, the Faroe Islands are marketing this type of experience and again emphasising that what you get in a Faroese home is different somehow and unique. There is an option for tourists to book dining experiences in Faroese homes, they have called this experience *heimablídni*, the experience is described on Visit Faroe Islands as:

> "The Faroese phrase "heimablídni" translates directly as "home hospitality", and all across the islands you can enjoy authentic and intimate dining experiences in people's homes. In addition to being served traditional homemade Faroese food, you will also hear interesting stories that relate to that particular part of the country or village" (*https://visitfaroeislands.com/see-do/dining/heimablidni/*, 13.05.22)

This is at the heart of cultural tourism. It also shows how in an European context, the Faroe Islands is sometimes marketed as an "other" using words that we have come to associate with it, such as "traditional" and "authentic".

Past, present and future in the Faroe Islands

There is a famous spot on the Faroe Islands, because it is the only place where you cannot see the ocean from any angle. Excluding this particular spot, the sea really is omnipresent. The islands have never been isolated, but whether or not they are in fact reachable doesn't always compute with the feeling when you're actually there. Survival and self-reliance has been key. This survivalism is defined as such from the outside, because on the Faroe Islands there is nothing unusual or "survivalist" about the fact that a high percentage of the population would know how to slaughter sheep, hunt hares, or catch birds. It just is. This is only one part of the equation, the food that you could buy at the store, most know how to prepare and make from scratch. They generally have a very wide skillset from beginning to end, from securing a food source to the preparation of diverse foodstuff.

The previous example of me supplying potatoes and meat to family members or family friends, is about more than the joys of organic produce. Wherever you look on the islands, community is paramount. Community is important in small places, especially small places that can be vulnerable or especially exposed to harsh weather, a year of bad crops, or economic fluctuations, and add a wall of sea.

There is a sometimes visible, other times more invisible, backdrop of a relationship between threat and survival on the islands. This is one way how the past, present and future interconnect in this analysis. If one were to ask what the particular threat was, I would suggest that it is not really about one threat, but rather the idea of threat. It is not just pride, nationalism or romanticism that make Faroese people care so much for the continuation of their language, the continuation of practices that are little profitable, like keeping sheep, or other practices that have started to make less sense,

like eating whale meat. Even if these are strong facets of Faroese identity, I believe the strong desire for duration and continuation is part of this backdrop of threat and survival.
A perceived "threat" could be many things, it could be, as many anthropologists and thinkers have suggested, that increasing modernity can in some ways leave us feeling alienated, conflicted or uprooted. This is one option. As I have mentioned earlier, the Faroe Islands are absolutely "modern". But modernity in the Faroe Islands is its own, and many metropolitan values associated with modernity seem to be antithetical to core Faroese values. This became very apparent in several instances during my fieldwork, for example:
One Sunday morning I was having breakfast with several people. Someone I will call Rúna, was telling us that her grandmother was going to celebrate her 80th birthday with the family, that they were all going to spend a weekend celebrating. Then, she said that sadly her brother couldn't make it to the Faroe Islands for the birthday, he had to stay in Copenhagen for some reason. This statement made a small uproar at the breakfast table. There was some agreement that this brother had become too Danish, which was not meant in the best way. Being too Danish, specially from living in Copenhagen, was also associated with never having time for anything, with being always too "busy" for this and that. Several other times during my stay I heard similar examples, people would talk about Faroe Islanders living in Copenhagen having to schedule play dates for their kids, and everything revolving around their apparently very busy lives. This was also mentioned as a reason why some decided to move back and raise their kids in the Faroe Islands.
While these examples may also bring forth a relationship with Denmark, as a common case of "neighbour rivalry" and also as former colonisers/oppressors, but it is also setting a clear boundary and contrast between what is seen as too metropolitan values and Faroese core values.

The threat might be becoming too modern, like other countries in the region, and loosing some of those core Faroese values, that Faroese nature and resources become increasingly commodified for economic purposes, or that the language will disappear under the threat of globalisation. There can be many threats and it is difficult to establish what the "truth" of the matter is, but I believe that that is not really the point. The point is rather the idea of threat, against which one has to defend oneself, even multiple threats. The relationship between threat and survival.
A backdrop of survival as deeply rooted and to some degree also the raison d'être of life on these islands for centuries. In this context of resilience as habitus, the changes that come with the future can always initially be perceived as a threat. This in no way means that Faroe Islanders are just always wary of the future. The passage of time is as organic as anywhere else, it is rather a reflection of the care with which they treat the relationship between past and present.

Situating language within this relationship between past and present, Judith T. Irvine writes:

> "an ideology of language, with its entailed temporalities, can invoke an image of a nation- or rather, to be more precise, how discourses about language can be mobilised to address problematic aspects of the nation's place in history" (Irvine, 2004, p.99)

While Faroe Island's place in history isn't necessarily problematic, it is something that we might try to "solve". Irvine discusses language within temporalities, which can be defined as existing within or having some relationship with time. She discusses how temporalities can be perceived via contrasts, linear time is linked with progress, but can only be known by also knowing the pre-modern. People within local language ideologies at times contrast change with statis, not change with change, and that stasis is often in relation to the past as "the imagined world of tradition, familiarity, and authenticity" (Irvine, 2004, p.101-102). Within this context progress an modernity are seen as having little claim to the past. Irvine shows how a local language ideology has grown in Bergamo, Italy, where the local language Bergamasco stands in opposition to Italian (standard) when it comes to values and what each of them represent (Irvine, 2004, p.101). While language in the Faroe Islands is valued because of its implications of nationhood and how that came to be, I would argue language is also valued because it has a claim to the past, just as Bergamasco is perceived to have in contrast with standard Italian. In the Faroe Islands the same contrast can be made between Faroese and Danish. Not because one language in reality is older than the other, but because Faroese has a claim to the Faroese past, to ideas of continuity.

Memory and history are highly valued by many in this small place on earth, and I would argue that language has the capacity to ground these Faroese values in the day to day. Language is a living relationship to the past, not because the actual language has been in stasis but because of what it represents.
On his last address after 25 years running a beloved radio program about language, Jóhan Hendrik Winther Poulsen said; *Hvørt orðið er ein vitnisburður um fólks okkara andliga og verkliga viðføri um aldanna hav*. (Pax Leonard, 2016, p. 73). Every word bears witness to our people's spiritual/ intellectual and practical carryon over the sea of ages.

While the relationship between language and past times might be clearer, its relationship with the future might be less clear. While the Faroe Islands embrace "modernity", they keep their relationship with the past and with a certain identity derived from it, in part through language. No one knows what the future holds, but there is agency in the efforts Faroe Islanders make to keep a part of their common identity intact. They create radio shows, they promote Faroese literature, most notably, they discuss words and energise each other with the different ways of saying something on Facebook, or around the dinner table.

9. CONCLUSION

> "In a sense, the ballads are more resonant now than when they were still being composed, the *grindadráp* more typifying than when it meant a full drying shed all winter, the language more telling than when it was only spoken." (Wylie & Margolin, 1981, p.131)

Even though this was written in 1981, it still rings true today. The language is more telling today than when it was only spoken. It tells us of a relationship between people and their surroundings, between people and memory, and Faroe Islands' place in time and history. It tells us how some of these relationships have become mobilised in order to maintain a particular Faroese identity.

Today an article was posted on the Facebook group *føroysk rættstaving* that the dialect of Suðuroy is disappearing, because people too often get corrected and this is cause for worry. This example illustrates very well the contradictions within Faroe Islanders' relationship with language and how it moves from purism to another kind of protectionism. Corrections were more common in the past, with the aim to keep Faroese as pure as possible. While the habit of correcting can still be found and is perhaps a peculiarity, there is now another approach to the relationship with language that I have tried to show.
It is no longer as political as it once was, rather it is more grounded in the social arena. Today's protectionism is largely in the hands of the people, where agency is shown through interest in local dialects, recalling lost words, or showing the diversity of the Faroese language, rather than keeping everything "clean". There is of course still an ideal of the archaic Faroese as the most pure, which at times becomes a sign of status. But, ultimately I would say linguistic purism has evolved into something more grounded and collective, and far from static.

This particular Facebook post also showcases the element of survival, and the relationship between land, language and memory. The dialect is the nexus between language and a particular place, one that is smaller than the nation and thus tied to memory on a smaller scale or on an individual level. On a larger scale, some of the same dynamics apply.
It is not language in itself that matters, but what lies in a language, what it represents to people, the context in which words are spoken to us and the contexts in which we speak growing up. These contexts vary from the individual to the national. To understand what language symbolically holds and makes it mobilisable, I would say you also have to understand some of these contexts and their interplay. History, place in space and time, and cultural memory. These contexts are explored in relation to language, nationality, and identity. While all these concepts might sound neatly separate, which is useful analytically, in reality language is not really separate from identity or nationality, and vice versa. These are all abstract concepts that contain each other to various degrees, but are subjected to the boundaries of the anthropologist.

There is a balance between habituation and representation, something that is usual takes on a dimension of symbolism and representation if needed. A normal date becomes an anniversary, an ordinary happening becomes a tradition. A language becomes an emblem. So, why is it "needed" in the Faroe Islands?
Faroe Islanders keep sheep even if it is not specially profitable. They keep on eating whale meat even if it is not specially good for one's health and they face international outcry. They return even

though they made a career somewhere else. They keep recalling words, they keep asking how to correctly *benda* words, they increasingly want to protect small dialects.
It is no longer just about a purist archaic language, it is about preservation of every Faroese word, like these other Faroese elements, because it has increasing value in a point in time where change can become loss, the new looming shadow over Faroese life.

Each word has value because it oftentimes is part of a specific cultural memory, that recalls and reinforces not only a preferred group identity, but also words that tell a story. Just like my grandfather told me about *Kyrjustein*, he also told me stories of little birds, and my informant referred to language is his *búnað.* In a way we embody language because of all that it contains, or language wouldn't be such a part of our identity*,* just as we wear a *búnað* on our bodies to say something *more*, about nation or about identity even.

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