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THE EYE OF THE GUEST: ICELANDIC NATIONALIST
DISCOURSE AND THE WHALING ISSUE

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The Icelandic government continues to campaign for regulated commercial whaling in its territorial waters, and advocates the maintenance of this practice as part of what it terms the "rational management of the ocean ecosystem," despite international pressure for a termination of whale hunting. Support in Iceland for a pro-whaling policy is extremely high, and the debate about whaling has over the last twelve years become increasingly nationalistic in focus.

This dissertation examines the whaling issue in the context of Icelandic nationalism and the rise of the Icelandic nation-state during the 19th century. It argues that the national self is constructed through discourses which articulate space and construct it as the locus for social action. Three spatial discourses relevant to the nation-state--as territory, property, and nature--are discussed in terms of their emergence in Europe during the 17th century, and their relation to the "institutional clusters" of capitalism, industrialism, surveillance, and control of the means of violence.

Icelandic nationalist discourse celebrates three key symbols: a pure and ancient language, a pure and beautiful land, and the sagas, a body of medieval historical and heroic literature. The idea of independence is pivotal to political action, as well as a moral imperative for guiding

individual behaviour and attitudes toward the survival of the nation. For Icelanders, all are forms of knowledge about the world which situate their identity in relation to other nations, and to their own past. The whaling issue and associated events arouse nationalist sentiments because they are seen to threaten the independence of the nation.

RESUME

Le gouvernement islandais persiste à soutenir la chasse commerciale à la baleine dans ses eaux territoriales et prône la poursuite de cette pratique dans le cadre de ce qu'il appelle la "gestion rationnelle de l'écosystème de l'océan," et ceci, malgré des interventions internationales qui visent à éliminer la chasse à la baleine.

Cette thèse examine la question de la chasse à la baleine à la lumière du nationalisme islandais et la montée de l'état-nation islandais au cours du 19ème siècle. L'argument arrive à la conclusion que le concept du "soi national" se construit à travers trois discours qui articulent l'espace et le constituent comme le lieu de l'action sociale. Les trois discours relatifs à l'état-nation--en tant que territoire, propriété et nature--sont traités sous l'angle de leur émergence historique en Europe au 17ème siècle et leur rapport aux "noyaux institutionnels" du capitalisme: l'industrialisme, la surveillance et le contrôle du dispositif de violence.

Le discours nationaliste islandais exalte trois symboles clés: la langue pure et ancienne, le pays pur et beau, et les sagas, un corpus littéraire historique et héroïque du Moyen-Age. L'idée d'indépendance est fondamentale pour l'action politique et constitue un mandat moral qui oriente le comportement individuel et les attitudes en fonction de la survie de la nation. Pour les

Islandais, ce sont toutes des formes de la connaissance du monde qui situent leur identité nationale parmi les autres nations et la relie à leur propre histoire. La chasse à la baleine et les événements qui y sont liés, éveillent le sentiment nationaliste car on les perçoit comme une mise en question l'indépendance nationale.

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KEY TO PRONUNCIATION

- á "ou" as in ours.
é "ye" as in yes.
í "ea" as in clean.
ó the long "o" as in toe.
ú "oo" as in doom.
ý "ee" as in free.
æ the sound of the English word "eye."
ö "u" as in pure.
au an Icelandic ö followed by an í.
ei "a" as in fame.
þ "th" as in theirs.
ð "th" as in other.

Dedicated to

my mother,

Mary Winnifred Bertram Brydon

and

the memory of my father,

Thomas Dale Brydon

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an examination of the whaling issue in the light of Icelandic nationalism and the discourses about territory, property, and nature which inform it. It describes the nexus of historical and social forces in Iceland which come together in the expression of nationalism, and reveals how these are articulated in attitudes towards, amongst other concerns, foreign policy, fishing and farming production, politics, and contemporary social issues. It is argued that the national self is constructed through discourses which articulate space and construct it as the locus for social action. The three, above-mentioned discourses which are relevant to the formation of the nation-state, are discussed in terms of their emergence in Europe during the 17th century, and their relation to the "institutional clusters" of capitalism, industrialism, surveillance, and control over the means of violence.

In 1978, not long after the final Cod War with Great Britain, Greenpeace made their first visit to the Icelandic whaling grounds in order to disrupt that season's hunt. The following year they returned, and a coalition of students along with a small group of ecologists staged a march through the streets of Reykjavik to protest against the whaling industry in their country. For the most part, although there was some sympathy for the protesters' cause,

the Icelandic public regarded these events with a mix of dispassion, indifference, and dismissiveness.

In 1982, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), whose mandate it is to regulate the whaling industry, declared a moratorium (more accurately, a zero catch quota) on all commercial whaling to begin in 1986, as a strategy to curtail whaling. By this time, the Commission was dominated by non-whaling states, a situation encouraged by environmentalists and an anti-whaling American government. The whaling states of Iceland, Japan, Norway, and South Korea viewed the moratorium as an assault on their national sovereignty and their right to "rationally utilize" the resources of the oceans. Arguing that no scientific basis existed for the moratorium since it did not acknowledge differences in whale species and populations, these nations sought ways to circumvent the strategies of the IWC.

In 1983 the Icelandic parliament (Alþingi) voted narrowly to abide by the IWC's moratorium, but two years later the Ministry of Fisheries instituted a four-year research whaling programme, which would allow the killing of a specified number of whales. The research followed the letter of the Whaling Commission's regulations, but opponents of whaling both within Iceland and abroad were enraged by what they saw as the deceitful manoeuvres of government-backed industry. Support for the government's position was always high in Iceland, but as events took their course over the next years, more and more Icelanders

came to believe that their small nation was threatened by powerful and misguided foreign forces. They accepted as true that environmentalists were ignoring the realities of food production and were taking an irrational stand against a vulnerable nation which survives by rationally harvesting the sea.

The whaling issue touched on many sensitive topics in Icelandic society, and it is the task of this dissertation to provide sufficient historical and socio-cultural background to contextualize an understanding of the (self-described) nationalist reaction on the part of Icelanders. This involves recognizing the interplay of historical forces and their various interpretations in contemporary discourse.

Iceland has rapidly transformed itself from an impoverished pastoralist Danish colony with a subsidiary reliance on fishing, to an independent nation-state with an industrialized fishing sector and one of the highest per capita standards of living in the world. The impact of this transformation on conceptions of the self and the nation is examined within their contemporary context throughout this text.

The title of this dissertation is derived from an Icelandic saying, glögggt er gests augað: "the eye of the guest sees more clearly." A friend once quoted it to reassure me, when I was despairing of ever understanding how Icelanders frame knowledge about themselves and their world. I was occasionally told by Icelanders that their fellow

countrymen were incapable of seeing their nation for what it was, but instead imagined it much grander, or much worse, than was the case.

These perspectives arise from the heightened awareness amongst Icelanders since the gaining of national independence in 1944, of the marginal place their nation holds in the modern world. No longer isolated by colonialism, constraints on communication, and technological limits, the events which affect Icelanders' lives appear to issue increasingly from beyond their shores. The abstract ideological and productive systems of modernity are brought to bear on local knowledge and social practice, a situation which present-day Icelanders continue to define for themselves.

My interest in Iceland and nationalism evolved from my Master's research (Brydon 1987), which examined the creation and recreation of ethnic identity amongst descendants of Icelandic settlers in Manitoba. As I was to learn during the course of my doctoral research, many of the images "West Icelanders" hold of their ancestors' homeland are derived from nationalist discourses which flourished in Iceland between World Wars I and II. I soon recognized during my preliminary research the power that nationalism exerts over social thought and action in Iceland. When eventually I arrived there, and told those I met about my interest in the study of nationalism, I was informed with a self-deprecating laugh that I had, indeed, come to the right place.

Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted in Iceland between July 1988 and July 1990. Prior to my departure, I had decided that in order to best grasp the distinctions between different sectors of Icelandic society, I would need to work on a farm and in a fishing village, as well as live in Reykjavík. To this end, upon my arrival I found work on a farm specializing in carrot production, located near the south-central town of Vík. It was hardly an introduction to "traditional" Icelandic farming and its emphasis on sheep- and cattle-raising. Yet the steadfast determination of that young farmer and his wife to show their countrymen how Icelandic farming could be productive provided me with an interesting perspective on the debate, detailed in Chapter Four, regarding the viability of a highly-subsidized agricultural sector. I did not formally interview any of the people I met that summer; it was enough to observe, listen, ask questions, and participate in the running of the farm.

I remained in the countryside for two months before returning to Reykjavík, where I shared a flat with two young Icelandic women. That autumn, while attending language classes at the University of Iceland, I taught a course on ethnicity and nationalism in the Department of Anthropology. During lectures and discussions, my students directed me toward certain aspects of 19th-century nationalist discourse, and introduced me to some popular notions of Icelandic "character" and distinctiveness.

Although I had arrived in Iceland with the goal of examining the formation of the national self and its maintenance in the context of profound social change, it took me several months to choose a focus for this analysis. The international boycott against Icelandic seafood products had been well under way when I arrived, yet I shied away from the whaling issue until early March 1989.

My initial concern was with the appropriate strategy for analyzing the whaling issue within Iceland. I was not interested in being an advocate of either the pro- or anti-whaling position, and it took months of living with the effects of the boycott on people's attitudes toward foreign environmentalists before I realised how the issue fit with many of the questions I wished to address.

Until this time, I worked to establish a general description of Icelandic social formations, through reading newspapers and watching television (over 50% of broadcasts are of national origin), talking casually with those I met, and becoming familiar with the habits of daily life. Research in the university and national libraries augmented knowledge of the historical context.

Once having settled upon the whaling debate as an instance of nationalist sentiment, I sought out those who were most directly involved in its production. Through interviews with some of the actors in the debate, beginning with those who had taken a stand against the scientific research whaling programme, I started to understand the

structure of the debate. At the end of June I spent two days at the whaling platform watching the processing of a portion of that season's catch and talking with the scientists involved with measuring and sampling the carcasses, and with the manager of the whaling company Hvalur hf..

Media coverage of the issue forms an important source of data for this project. The conservation organisation Landvernd has retained since its founding in 1969 a newspaper-clipping archive covering all environmental topics. This proved to be a valuable source of information, and saved considerable research time. In addition, a private company Miðlun supplies photocopies of newspaper articles dealing with specific topics on a month-by-month basis. Their files on whaling begin in 1987 when the company received its first order, from an official in the Ministry of Fisheries, to provide specific documentation. Prior to that, whaling articles were classified together with articles on the fisheries. Given the cost of this service I ordered documentation only for those months which were significant within the debate.

Following two months' holiday in Canada, I returned to Iceland to find work in a freezing plant. Through a friend I obtained a job on Hrísey, a small island village located in the north-central fiord of Eyjafjörður. I spent three months standing at a light table--a cutting table lit from beneath on which fish fillets are laid for trimming and de-

boning--working alongside women who would spend much of their lives on that island working "in fish." The company supplied housing free of charge, and I shared living quarters (verþúð) with two men and a woman in their early twenties, who were from other towns in Iceland. The two fellows had made friends with some other males, and our house became one of their hangouts, where they spent considerable time discussing cars and rock music. Fortunately, the electric guitar was, soon after my arrival, removed to another house.

Friends in Reykjavik joked that residents on Hrisey believed that a foreigner was anyone from off the island, and I certainly felt the stigma of exclusion from many with whom I worked, although others, generally the older women, extended themselves toward me. During coffee breaks, it was normal practice to sit in the same chair at the same table day after day, with men and women on opposite sides of the room. Through this practice it was possible for me to listen in on the daily conversation of the women, which mostly dealt with the lives of local people and the routines of household life. My interviews were limited to a very few people: a former pastor, the manager of the freezing plant, and an individual from Reykjavik who worked occasionally in the freezing plant office. Historical records and national statistics augmented knowledge gained through participant-observation.

Early in December, I returned to Reykjavik where I remained until the end of my fieldwork. Christmas was spent in Canada (although in 1988 I celebrated that holiday with a friend's family outside Reykjavik) and I made two journeys to Europe to attend conferences and interview participants in the international anti-whaling campaign. In Iceland I continued to collect information and conduct interviews on the topic of whaling. In addition, I conducted interviews with individuals involved with the arts and literature, and with historians.

The historical background of this dissertation is derived primarily from secondary sources, based on the texts of anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and historians. Interviews and conversations with their authors supplemented these texts. These works are treated in several ways: as scholarly sources for specific information, as persuasive arguments regarding the interpretation of past and present Icelandic society, and as expressions of an Icelandic intellectual practice situated in contemporary social practice (and therefore open to anthropological examination).

In this dissertation I have re-worked the above material into a novel presentation of Icelandic society and history, which seeks to decentre the notion of an "Icelandic nation-state" as an already-constituted object of analysis, through placing the act of its construction within the play

of historically-contingent discourses which systematically form the nation-state in the modern world.

Chapter One is divided into three sections. Part One provides background information on Iceland and Icelandic society, including brief descriptions of climate and geology, demographics, production, and the political system. Part Two outlines the history of the past 100 years, a transitional period which saw the rise of capitalism, a reordering of social relations, and the gaining of political independence. Part Three reviews the major themes of Icelandic nationalist discourse. The latter two sections are elaborated upon in later chapters.

The theoretical argument informing this dissertation is elaborated in Chapter Two. Attention is directed to those factors or circumstances which make possible the nation as a form of social ordering, and a means of structuring human identity. Analysis focuses on common features of Western nationalism, and seeks to remove its discussion from a pejorative evaluation as false consciousness or masking ideology. The central argument is that nationalism is a means of discursively ordering knowledge about the world. The nation itself is systematically formed in discourses of territory, property, and nature, which situate social action in a discontinuous space. The chapter is organised as a series of suggested answers to questions that revolve around the terms nation, state, nationalism, discourse, identity, self, and culture.

The first spatial discourse, that of territory, is the focus of Chapter Three. The concept of territory situates the experience of nationalist sentiment within geographically-drawn boundaries. It is argued that the modern understanding of territories as enclosed by borders rather than circumscribed by frontiers, is characteristic of absolutist and nation-states. The rise of the Icelandic nation-state is discussed in relation to the discursive means by which territories are defined and maintained in the modern world. The 19th-century Icelandic nationalist movement introduced the idea of "independence" into popular discourse as a means of imagining not only the nation's position in regards to other nations, but also the self's relationship to the world of which it is part. Sovereignty and independence are discussed in light of contemporary events in Iceland such as the series of Cod Wars with Great Britain over the extension of territorial waters, and the building of an American-manned NATO base on the island.

Property and production are examined in Chapter Four, insofar as they shape how the self is situated within the discontinuous social space of the nation-state. Juridical discourses of property are fundamental to capitalism and industrialism, two forces which have re-shaped the modern world, and radically altered understanding and uses of the natural world. Capitalist societies are nation-states, and property relations are a means of legitimating their division into discontinuous realms of experience and action.

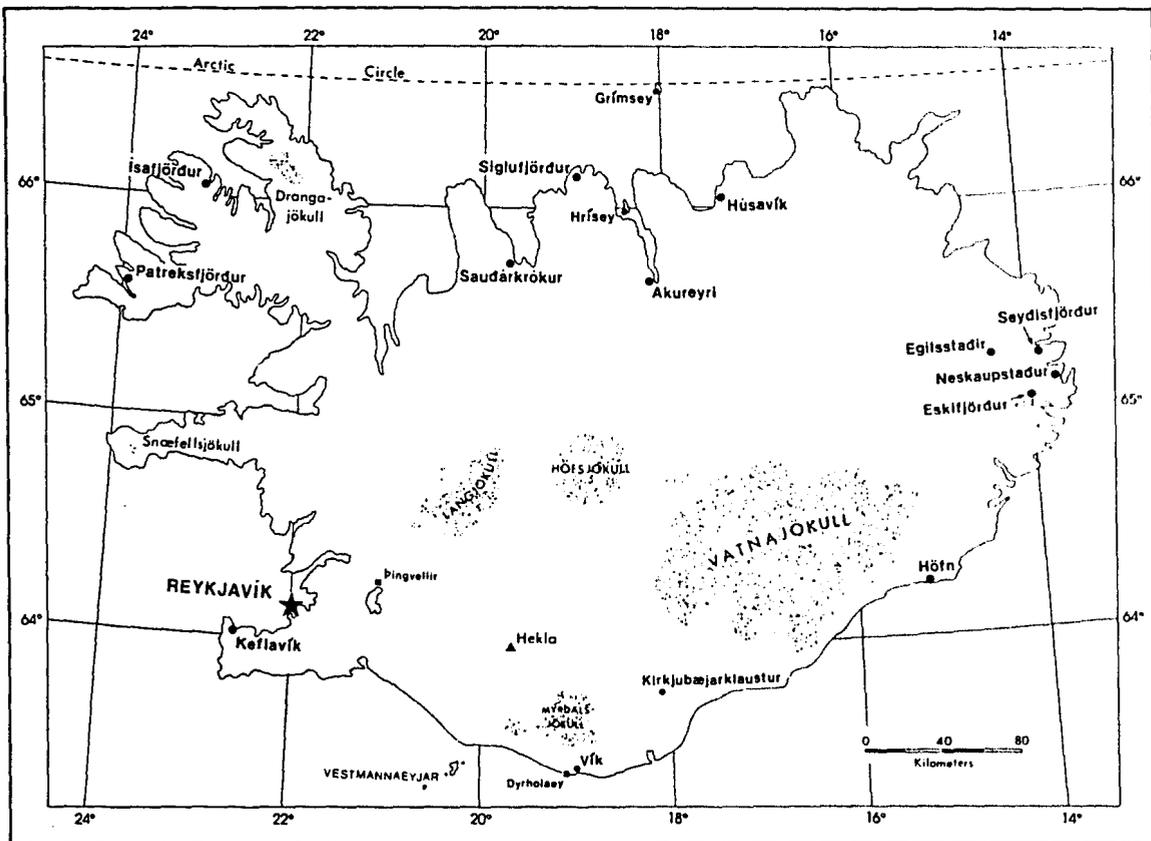
Through a historical analysis of changing forms of ownership and systems of production in Iceland, it is shown how the battle for independence was expressed through control over capital and production. In a discussion of contemporary Iceland, industrialized capitalist production is shown to have created divisions according to class, place of residence, gender, and productive sectors.

In Chapter Five, nature as the third spatial discourse is analyzed in terms of how its use in nationalist discourse in Iceland relies on various discursive constructions of the natural world. The space and place of the nation are framed through various apprehensions of nature, in which "nature" signifies specific, socially-constructed ways of speaking about the world. The ways in which national identity is naturalised are discussed, including biological notions of race, geographical determinism, and the demarcation of certain locales (e.g. national parks) significant to the nation. It is argued that 19th-century Romanticism as expressed through the nationalist movement has shaped modern understandings of nature, insofar as it is venerated as an object of beauty, a means of spiritual renewal, as well as a harsh and unforgiving foe in the battle for survival.

In the final chapter, an ethnography of the whaling issue details the interplay of national and international forces engaged in the political, economic, scientific, and moral battle to determine the future of the whale and whaling. Emphasis is placed on showing how the different

ways in which knowledge of the issue is discursively carried shapes various understandings. The nationalist reaction of Icelanders to the question of whaling is explained through its construction in discourses of territory, property, and nature.

ICELAND



1/ SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

I was told the following anecdote about Haraldur Bessason, former chair of the Icelandic Department, University of Manitoba, and now Rector at the University of Akureyri: If you were to tell Haraldur that you had had a conversation with so-and-so recently, he would ask, "And how was the weather where (so-and-so) was?". If you said that you did not know, Haraldur would reply, then you didn't have a conversation.

Climate

Since all conversation, then, should involve a discussion of the weather (indeed, I noticed when living in the Icelandic countryside, conversations could consist of nothing but discussions of the weather: past, present, and future) it is as good a place as any to begin a description of Iceland, its geology, flora, fauna, and climate, as well as its political, economic, and social institutions.¹

Occasionally during my field-stay in Iceland I would be asked about the weather back home in Canada; but even telling stories of -40°C temperatures could not displace my interlocutors' pride in having the world's worst weather. The climate, however, is not as bad as the island's northerly location would indicate, although the twenty-hour days of darkness during January can make the winters feel interminable. Conditions are modified by three factors:

Iceland's location straddling two air masses, one tropical, the other arctic in origin; the Gulf Stream which flows clockwise along the south and west coasts and part of which branches off along the north coast to encounter the colder East Greenland polar current; and finally, Arctic drift ice carried by the East Greenland current north of the island.

Of more immediate impact on fluctuations in temperature and precipitation are the movements of atmospheric depressions eastward across the North Atlantic. If a depression moves along the south of the country, it brings cold weather, particularly in the north. But if it moves northeast between Greenland and Iceland, rain ensues and temperatures are warmer.

Seasonal variations in temperature are not as wide as in Canada. In Reykjavik, the average² January temperature is -0.4°C , in the north at Akureyri -1.5°C , and in the south at Kirkjubæjarklaustur -0.2°C . Averages for July are 11.2°C , 10.9°C , and 11.6°C , respectively. Rates of precipitation vary greatly across the country, the southwest receiving the greater amount before the masses of air move across the highlands and into the north and northeast regions. For Reykjavik, Akureyri, and Kirkjubæjarklaustur the annual rates of precipitation are 805 mm, 474 mm, and 1,725 mm, respectively, with rates somewhat higher during the winter than the summer. Vík í Mýrdal, located on the south central coast, tops the chart with an astonishing 2,256 mm of precipitation yearly.

Scientific American³ cited Iceland as an example of a water-rich country: it has enough excess precipitation to supply 68,500 m³ of water per person per year. A consequence of Iceland's plentiful water supply is a lack of a concept of water conservation. And although residents are billed for hot water usage, cold water is not treated as a commodity with a direct cash value. Gas stations, for example, provide without cost unlimited cold water along with the use of hoses and brushes for car-washing.

If the rain and changeableness of the weather is not enough for adequate conversation, there is always the wind to discuss. The constant traffic of air masses across the North Atlantic results in frequent strong winds. I experienced many a day when I could hardly keep my feet beneath me as I walked along the street. I heard stories of children clinging to signposts during particularly strong gales, waiting for an adult to carry them indoors. Once every ten years or so, a storm of such magnitude occurs with winds that toss cars in the air like toys.

On average, Reykjavik receives winds at an annual average rate of 6.0 metres/second (4 Beaufort), and Akureyri 4.5 (3 Beaufort). I and many others who have flown into the Vestmannaeyjar (Vestmann Islands), have been grounded there by strong winds which average 11.6 m/s per year (6 Beaufort).

Geography

Iceland is considered to be geographically part of Europe. The total land area is 103,000 sq. km, with about 1,000 sq. km under cultivation and another 20,000 sq. km used for grazing. With the exception of the south coast, the country's perimeter is indented with fjords, giving the island a total of 4,970 km of coastline. Three-quarters of the country is above 200 m, the highest point being Hvannadalshnjúkur (2,119 m) located in the largest glacier, Vatnajökull. The uninhabited central portion of the country is a highland, and is defined as wasteland. By far the greatest portion of the island's surface (63%) is categorized as wasteland, lacking in vegetation but made up of sands and rock. Lakes constitute a little under 3% of the total surface area, and 12% is glacier-covered. Large, fast-flowing rivers descend to the ocean from the central highlands. The rivers are not navigable.

Iceland proper lies just below the Arctic Circle, but the northern isle of Grimsey is intersected by it. The closest land mass to Iceland is Greenland, located 280 km away. It is 420 km from the Danish-governed Faeroe Islands, 550 km from the northerly Norwegian island Jan Mayen, 798 km from Scotland, and 970 km from Norway.

Geology

As a tourist, it is impossible to escape the characterization of Iceland as the "land of fire and ice."

A foreign journalist interested in the country's economy told me how at the beginning of an interview with an Icelandic businessman, the man warily (or was it wearily?) asked, you're not going to write that fire and ice stuff, are you?

The fire and ice are the volcanoes and glaciers which make Iceland a favourite research locale for geoscientists. Iceland is situated on the intersection of the Mid Atlantic Ridge, a volcanic rift system running north-south along the ocean's floor, and the aseismic Greenland-Scotland ridge running west to east. Iceland is, geologically speaking, quite young and still visibly being formed: for example, the two plates on which it sits are spreading apart at a rate of 2 cm per year.

Volcanic eruptions frequently occur in Iceland, about once every five years. Whereas they were once life-threatening events, eruptions can now take on the quality of tourist spectacles. Hekla, known in medieval times as one of the entrances to Hell, has recently taken to going off every ten years, the latest eruption occurring on the first day of the Gulf War. More famous were the eruption which created the island of Surtsey in 1963, and the eruption in 1973 on the island of Heimaey which blanketed one-third of the town in lava and tephra, forced its evacuation, and led to a drawn-out battle to save the harbour from the advancing lava.⁴ Sub-glacial eruptions such as of Grímsvötn beneath Vatnajökull (the latest was in 1983), or Katla beneath

Mýrdalsjökull (the next eruption is imminent), are particularly devastating because of torrential flooding triggered as the ice melts.

The geothermal activity beneath the land's surface has been successfully exploited to produce some electricity, although most electricity is hydroelectric. Subterranean hot water is used to heat about 80% of homes, and, as is the case in Reykjavík, is pumped from a distant central station, cooled, then distributed via underground pipes.

Iceland also experiences frequent earthquakes, the largest occurring along a fracture zone located in the southern lowlands. The worst earthquakes occurred in 1784, with an estimated strength of 7.5 Richter, and in 1896. The San Francisco earthquake of 1989 was a reminder to Icelanders that the south, including Reykjavík, will experience within the next twenty years a quake equal to or stronger than the American one.

The rocks are primarily volcanic in origin, being basaltic, silicic, and intermediate forms. There are virtually no granites to form clay, and the cool temperatures slow the biological and chemical processes which form soil. Icelandic loessial and peat soils are high in minerals, but are quite loose and liable to blow away. To make them suitable for cultivation, considerable quantities of fertilizer are necessary. Iceland has the world's highest rate of fertilizer use in the world: in

1987, 2,917 kg/hectare were used, compared to the second highest user rate held in Singapore, of 1,833 kg/hectare.

The most immediate environmental problem facing Iceland today is the massive erosion which threatens desertification of the island, erosion due largely to centuries of over-grazing, particularly along the margins of the highlands. During the 1,100 years between the time of settlement and the mid-1970s, woodlands and coppices decreased from 25,000 sq. km to 1,250 sq. km, grazing lands shrank from 40,000 sq. km to 23,000 sq. km, while wasteland mushroomed from 18,000 sq. km to 58,000 sq. km. Even though the media increasingly pay attention to this problem, there is still not a widespread public sense of how precarious is the situation, and according to Icelandic environmentalists, the government does not direct adequate funds into reseeding and replanting programmes.

Flora

As the above figures indicate, trees do not form a large percentage of the vegetation. A large birch forest is found in the east at Hallormsstaðir, and in the same area there has been experimentation with other species of trees, testing them for their suitability to Icelandic conditions. Trees are also to be found in towns and villages, in areas where they have recently been planted.

During the summer months, the lowlands are lush and green with grasses and flowers. The majority of Icelandic

plants are angiosperms, of which there are two classes: Dicotyledons comprise 287 species, and Monocotyledons comprise 145 species. Of the latter class, sedges and grasses constitute 53 and 46 species, respectively. Most of the plants are North European in character. A wide variety of lichens and mosses, and flowering plants such as daisies, pinks, and arctic fireweed, also characterize the vegetation.

Fauna

The crossing of the two sub-ocean ridges out of which Iceland emerges has formed a large shelf on which the main fishing grounds are found. The mix of different currents flowing around Iceland bearing a variety of plants and animals, combined with the effect produced by the shelf, make the waters surrounding Iceland a rich habitat for marine life. The best locations for fishing are found primarily where the warmer Irminger Current flows, along the south and west coasts, and to a lesser extent along the north coast.

Cod has been the basis of the Icelandic fisheries for many centuries. At the beginning of this century, herring fisheries boomed, and were a major part of the country's wealth. Herring stocks collapsed late in the 1960s, due to changes in water temperatures and stock over-exploitation, forcing diversification of the fisheries. Presently, the demersal fisheries is based on cod, haddock, saithe, ling,

tusk, catfish, ocean perch, skate, halibut, plaice, and lemon sole. The pelagic fisheries consist of capelin, shrimp, Norway lobster, Icelandic scallop, and mackerel. Licensed, recreational angling for salmon on inland rivers and lakes is a profitable tourist industry. Whaling is classified as part of the fisheries.

The only indigenous mammal prior to settlement was the Arctic fox. The long-tailed field-mouse, the brown and black rats, and the house-mouse were accidental introductions by man. Reindeer from Norway were introduced to the northeast during the 18th century in an attempt to establish a new form of pastoralism. Remnants of that herd still run wild, and they are subject of a limited hunting season. One other now-wild mammal introduced to Iceland is the mink. Brought to Iceland during the early 1930s for the purpose of fur-ranching, many escaped from captivity. They are considered a dangerous pest since they feed on wild birds' eggs, and are also hunted.

Other mammals are domesticated: horses, cows, sheep, dogs, chickens, and cats are all descendants from the animals brought by the original settlers. The sheep possess distinctive long, shaggy coats with variegated colouring. The horses and cows are likewise marked, and are smaller in stature than their foreign counterparts. For nationalist reasons, as well as to prevent disease (a virulent sheep epidemic in 1933 after the introduction of Karakula sheep led to the destruction of about two-thirds of all sheep

stocks) foreign stock animals cannot be brought into the country. Further, once an Icelandic horse leaves the country, it cannot be returned.

Since the 1970s, a small breeding herd of Galloway cattle have been kept quarantined on the island of Hrisey. Their sperm are used to impregnate Icelandic cows, with the intention of improving the amount of flesh on each animal. The Galloway was selected because it could survive on Icelandic grasses rather than corn, and because its offspring would not be too large for an Icelandic cow to bear.

By far the most prolific wildlife are the 300 or so species of birds which have at some time lived on Iceland. Most are wetlands species such as the golden plover, whimbrel, snipe, redshank, oyster-catcher, and red-necked phalarope, waterfowl such as ducks, swans, gulls, and fulmars. More rare are the gyrfalcon which was once exported to the courts of Europe, white-tailed eagle, merlin, and snowy and short-eared owls. Ptarmigan is hunted during the late autumn; its meat when smoked is a Christmas delicacy. Puffins which are prolific on the Vestmannaeyjar are also hunted. For centuries, the gathering of down from the eider duck has been a traditional activity.

Geopolitical position

In a 1920 speech to the International Communist Congress, Lenin spoke of the "strategic position of Iceland in all future wars, particularly on the sea and in the air"

(Giniewski 1986: 346). Other strategists prior to World War II made the same observation, and during this period several states attempted to gain landing rights for their postal aircraft in Iceland. Hitler sent an envoy to do preliminary surveillance in the 1930s, although it is now debated whether he actually intended to invade it as the British, who occupied the island in 1940, claimed.

A foreign military presence has not been absent from Iceland's shores since that time. The American-run NATO base at Keflavik, known as the Iceland Defence Force and located near the tip of the Reykjanes peninsula in the southwest, is built on land leased to the US military by the Icelandic government. Iceland has no armed forces of its own; in 1980, 1,039 Icelanders were employed by the Defence Force. Military personnel manning the base in 1989 were about 3,000, with equipment including jet fighters, anti-submarine aircraft, AWACs (airborne warning and control aircraft) and a tanker aircraft. The Dutch maintain one aircraft with a crew of twenty-five people. This is its peace-time status, but in the event of a "critical situation," e.g. the threat of war, troops and weapon capabilities would be significantly increased. According to an agreement between the two countries, no nuclear weapons are stationed on Iceland. Anti-NATO activists do not accept American assurances of their compliance with this agreement.

The importance of Iceland as a base for the protection of the North Atlantic during wartime is brought to life in

Tom Clancy's action novel, Red Storm Rising. It, and the attitudes of Icelanders toward the base, is also the topic for considerable domestic and foreign political analyses (cf. Bjarnason 1972; de Lee 1986; Gröndal 1971; Gunnarsson 1982; Harðarson 1985). During peace-time, the role of American NATO forces in Iceland is to monitor Soviet air and submarine traffic from the large military installation on the Kola Peninsula, through the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) Gap.

Population

Iceland is one of about 35 states with a population of less than 1 million. At present, there are about 255,000 inhabitants of Iceland, with over one-half living in the capital city area. About 227,000 people live in urban areas, urban being defined as anything over 200 inhabitants. All settlements are located around the coast or slightly inland, but not in the uninhabitable highlands.

Over the last decades there has been an increasing and dramatic shift of population from rural areas into the urban southwest. This shift away from agriculture has largely been toward work in construction, services, and industry, while the percentage of people working in the fisheries has remained steady throughout this century.

Residents of Iceland with foreign citizenship numbered about 3,240 in 1980. This figure has increased since then such that foreign-born individuals--half of whom are from

Nordic countries--comprise 1.5-2.0% of the total population. There are no defined ethnic groups, and many of the foreigners are part of Icelandic families. People who have emigrated as families are rare, the most visible example being about 70 Vietnamese relocated to Iceland by the Icelandic Red Cross.

Fewer people are over the age of 65 in comparison to other Nordic countries: 10% vs. 12.3 to 16.8% in the latter. Life expectancy for women is 79.5 years for women, 73.9 years for men.

About 90% of the entire population are members of the state Evangelical Lutheran Church, with Catholics, Free Lutherans, and several small Christian congregations comprising most of the remainder. In 1980, there were 67 members of a revived Nordic religion. Some 2,700 people register themselves as outside any religious community.

Twenty-five per cent of the working population is engaged in the service sector, including government and community services (1980 figures). Employees in manufacturing total 17.2% of the working population; 25.2% are in commerce--banks, insurance and real estate companies, retail outlets; 14.9% in fishing and fish processing; 10.1% in construction; and 7.8% in agriculture.

Labour conditions

There is a high proportion of adult participation in the work force, including after the age of 65. In 1983, the

proportion of working people was 87.9% for men, and 69.3% for women. For men and women between the ages of 65 and 74, the rate of employment in 1982 was 49%, a rate vastly higher than other Nordic countries. The rate of female participation has increased markedly over the last three decades: in 1963, 37% of married women were wage earners, and by 1970, 52%.

By law, wages are the same for men and women performing the same work, yet women earn on average only 60% of what a man earns. The inequity between male and female earnings is largely due to job ghettoization and a subsequent devaluing of female labour. On a per capita basis, however, Icelanders have one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Unemployment has been virtually non-existent since the mid-seventies, the average annual rate being 0.6%. The rate is lower in Reykjavik and environs, and there are rural areas around the country where rates are higher. Temporary unemployment is usually due to fluctuations in the fishing industry. During the winter of 1989, the rate of unemployment rose to about 2.0%, and reports in the media were calling for controls on the number of foreigners being allowed to work in the country, since they were thought to be taking work from Icelanders.

Work in fish processing is the lowest paid and least socially valued form of work (despite rhetoric to the contrary), and is liable to lay-offs without remuneration

(Skaftadóttir 1990). Under law, it is possible for an employer to stop work and suspend pay when there is a shortage of raw material--e.g. fish. In certain cases, remuneration is available under the terms of a fixed employment agreement, available to those who have worked steadily for three months or longer for the same employer. During my three months in the freezing plant, we occasionally ended work early. Other times we were moved to the salthouse when no fresh fish was available to trim dried and salted cod fillets. Several factors influence the steady availability of fish, including management of the plant, weather and fishing conditions, and size of quotas attached to boats which sell their catch to the plant.

On the other hand, overtime work is periodically available in many trades, including fish processing. On average, Icelanders work more hours per week than any European country, and, world-wide, are second only to Japan. This is sometimes interpreted as a sign that Icelanders are hard-working, although critics of this view point out that productivity within Icelandic industries is low. They argue further that overtime work has become a means for people to increase their earnings in the face of low wages, or that people take on two or three separate jobs in order to cope with the high rate of inflation.

An economic recession in the late sixties and early seventies, triggered by the collapse of herring stocks and a drop in world fish prices, led to a period of unemployment

(it peaked at 7.1% in January 1970) and higher than normal inflation (inflation has been a problem since WW II, but during this period, rates reached 100% and, briefly, higher). Throughout the 1970s and into the eighties, the economic situation has been negatively affected by several factors, including the oil crisis, rates of external trade, and domestic over-expansion. The smallness of the economy makes it highly susceptible to external trade fluctuations, and government economic planning has attempted to deal with this through industrial diversification to diminish its singular dependency on fish. Yet high production costs in areas such as dairy farming and sheep raising make it difficult or impossible to compete for markets abroad. Also, profits earned in the fisheries are not always put back into the economy but are used instead to finance imports, since wholesaling and importing have proven to be of more immediate profit.

Unemployment insurance is available to members of trade unions who have worked a minimum of 425 regular hours (i.e. overtime does not count) during the previous year, and is calculated according to number of hours worked.

Unemployment insurance is financed by the national treasury (50%), municipalities (25%), and employers (25%). Union participation is high, making up about 90% of the labour force. Virtually all occupations have unions, which join to form larger bargaining collectives. For example, during my stay in the spring of 1989, BHMR, the union for university-

educated state employees, staged a lengthy strike over wage demands and economic policy. Amongst the groups on strike were biologists, meteorologists, librarians, medical workers, and teachers. The largest union, the Federation of Labour (ASÍ) includes about one-half of all wage-earners. Employers have also formed associations, such as that founded in 1916 by trawler owners. The largest of these, founded in 1934, is VSÍ, the Federation of Icelandic Employers.

An agreement which came into force in 1983 made Iceland part of a joint labour market along with Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. Foreign nationals wanting to work in Iceland--chronic shortages of domestic labour appear in the fish processing industries and hospitals--are required by law to have concluded a contract with an employer before entering the country, and must also obtain a residence permit. This rule is unequally applied. I was able to get a work permit once I started employment on the farm although I had not found this job until after my arrival; other foreigners of my acquaintance encountered considerable difficulty and frustration in obtaining a permit. Work permits are granted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, whereas residence permits are issued by the Ministry of Justice.

Industry

Iceland supplies about 6% of the world market for fish. Currently, fishing and fish processing account for about 75% of Iceland's export earnings, and 17% of the gross national product. Iceland's GNP is somewhat below that of Coca-Cola, but above that of Time Inc. Between 1950 and 1975, the Icelandic krona lost over 90% of its spending power. In comparison, the Canadian dollar lost between 61 and 70% of its power (Kidron and Segal 1981).

The bulk of foreign trade is with other European countries, with the United Kingdom and (West) Germany forming the two largest national markets. Based on figures from 1987, trade with EC countries totalled 57.4%, with EFTA⁶ countries 8.2%, the US 18.3%, Japan 7.8%, and Eastern Europe 4.7%. When compared to earlier numbers, these figures show a decline in trade with the US, in favour of increases with European countries and Japan.

The development of industrialized fishing rapidly transformed the country and laid the economic basis for national independence. Fishing effort increased first when decked vessels replaced the open rowing boats, and again when motorized trawlers were introduced. Increased harvesting, however, led to periodic declines in catches, such as occurred between 1933 and WW II. Stocks recovered during the war, but after 1945, Iceland's fishing fleet increased in size, and foreign fleets returned to the waters around the island. Despite a doubling of fishing effort

between 1955 and 1975, Icelandic catches of cod dropped from 306,000 to 266,000 tons per year.

The government responded to lower catches with a series of expansions of territorial waters; it shortened fishing seasons, and closed certain fishing grounds. But by 1983, it became obvious that another system was needed, since cod catches were even below the amount recommended by fisheries biologists. The government instituted a boat-quota system, based on each boat's previous three-year catches. The impact of this system on both fish stocks and the labour force are still being felt and hotly debated.

Iceland's second largest industry is aluminium smelting, made economically feasible by low-priced hydroelectric power--some would argue too low-priced. The Icelandic State Aluminium Company (ÍSAL) plant located outside of Reykjavík was built in the 1960s as a move to decrease dependence on the fisheries. Plans to build a second smelter in the north are currently being finalized. As of 1988, the exploited capacity of water power is 4,200 GWh per annum. The technically-exploitable capacity is about 64,000 GWh, while the economically-exploitable capacity is a bit lower at 45,000 GWh. Geothermal power production is now 5,000 GWh, but there are no figures on its future potential. This potential is significant for future development in Iceland, since the government wishes to attract high-energy-consuming industries. Further, it will

soon become economically feasible to run undersea cables to Scotland, allowing the export of electric power.

Farming in Iceland is traditionally associated with raising sheep, cows, and horses. Until the end of the last century the farming household constituted the primary productive unit. Figures from 1987 show that agriculture now accounts for only 1.9% of merchandise exports, as opposed to 76.0% for fish products, 9.6% for aluminium, and 10.5% for other manufacturing products. In part because of the political power of the Progressive (a.k.a. Farmers' Party), the state has invested profits from the fisheries into maintenance of the agricultural sector. Most foodstuffs are imported; however meat and dairy production are protected by import barriers. Greenhouses are not able to fill demand for vegetables throughout the year. Despite the continually decreasing number of workers engaged in farming, mechanization, drainage of low-lying areas, and use of fertilizers have permitted an increase in production. Technical intervention along with subsidization of milk and sheep production have contributed to massive over-production.

The co-operative movement which began with the founding of the first co-operative consumers' society in 1882, is still a significant part of the Icelandic economy. It grew from a move by Icelanders to take control of commercial activities then in the hands of foreign merchants and investors. For example, farmers, through formation of an

agricultural co-operative, established an alternative system of buying and selling to compete with the hitherto monopolistic trade of the Danish merchants.

At present, co-operatives operate in several different sectors: thus, there is an Icelandic Co-operative Bank (Samvinnubanki; est. 1963), and co-operative building societies which build blocks of flats for members of the societies (i.e. not for renting). When I worked at fish processing, I was employed by a regionally-based co-operative which owned several freezing plants, trawlers (including one freezer trawler), a paint factory, a slaughterhouse, and a hotel; it also operated retail outlets.

There is an Association of Co-operative Employers (VMS). The various co-operatives form a larger organisation known as SÍS, the Federation of Icelandic Co-operative Societies, which is now the largest enterprise in the country. SÍS has been experiencing financial difficulties over the last years, and the issue of the appropriateness of government assistance is a subject of debate.

Political System

The Republic of Iceland is based on a written constitution, with a parliament known as Alþingi. The Head of State is a President elected by universal suffrage. Since the constitution was amended in 1984, 63 members are elected to Alþingi for a period of four years. At any time

during the four-year period, Alþingi can be dissolved by presidential decree and new elections held. The President issues such a decree only on the advice of the Prime Minister.

During my field stay six political parties were represented in Alþingi:

Independence--Sjálfstæðisflokkur

Progressive--Framsóknarflokkur

Social Democratic--Alþýðuflokkur

People's Alliance--Alþýðubandalag

Women's List--Kvennalistinn

Civic--Borgaraflokkur

Union of Liberals and Leftists--Samtök frjálslyndra og
vinstri manna

The first four parties on the above list have dominated Icelandic politics since 1930 (the People's Alliance having grown out of the Socialist and National Preservation Parties, which in 1938 grew out of the Communist Party founded in 1930)⁷, and have collaborated in varying coalitions which are the typical form of government. Not since 1917 has there been a majority government, and coalition or minority governments rarely last a full four years.

The Independence Party is the furthest to the right, favouring laissez-faire economic policies, individualism, and increased foreign investment. In every election since 1930, it has received a higher number of votes than any

other party, but never enough to form a majority. In many ways it is similar to the Christian Democrats of Germany and the Conservatives of Great Britain (S. Kristjánsson 1978; 1979). Their philosophy holds that success is based on individual willingness to work hard, and that opportunities are equal for all. Needless to say, it is very much the party of business; it is also the party for much of the state media, particularly the television news department.

The Progressive Party is a farmers' party, and receives the majority of its support from the rural areas and the cooperative movement. Farmers' parties rose in popularity in Iceland, Sweden, and Norway immediately following World War I, reflecting a broader social trend to promote agrarian values in reaction to the devastation of Europe during the war. In Iceland, the Progressive Party emerged from the conflicts engendered by the hardships imposed by the war, in particular conflicts between rural and urban interests (Kristinsson 1989). This party has been part of ruling coalitions more frequently than all other parties. Its policies tend to be centrist in orientation, and protective of national interests. During most of my stay, the Prime Minister and Fisheries Minister, Steingrímur Hermannsson and Halldór Ásgrímsson, respectively, were from the Progressive Party. They lost these positions after the 1991 national elections.

The Social Democrats share the concerns of other Social Democratic Parties, particularly those in Scandinavia, with

whose help the Icelandic party was established. Originally known as the Labour Party, it was connected to the labour movement during the First World War. From 1959 to 1971 it formed a lasting coalition government in partnership with the Independence Party, a party it had previously opposed. It maintains an internationalist outlook, and separates itself from the rest of the left by its support of NATO membership.

The People's Alliance is the furthest left-wing of the major parties. It maintains a nationalist stand, promotes the protection of Icelandic culture, is against membership in NATO and instead favours neutrality. Like all of the other parties, it does promote greater linkages with other Nordic countries.

Many smaller political parties appear and as quickly dissolve once their impetus has waned. To name a few, the National Socialist Party, founded in 1933 and modelled after the German party of the same name, disbanded in 1940 after having received little support. Splinter groups from the right-wing Independence Party--the Commonwealth and Republican Parties--appeared briefly when some members felt the former party was straying too far toward socialism. The National Preservation Party appeared in 1953 when members from the Labour, Progressive, and Socialist Parties combined to oppose Icelandic membership in NATO and to demand a return to neutrality. It eventually was absorbed into the People's Alliance.

The Women's List has achieved recognition outside of the country, since it is the first all-women political party, based on a feminist platform, to win seats in a parliament. It draws part of its inspiration from 1970s liberal feminism, and from the Green Party movement, notably of Germany. Their philosophy is premised on the idea of women's cultural separateness, and their values of equality, nurturance, consensus decision-making, and non-destructive approach to nature. They attempt to bring these values to all levels of political action, including maintaining a leaderless party structure which seeks to make all policy and strategy decisions based on discussion amongst all party members (Kristmundsdóttir 1989). Although they have yet to serve in a government coalition (they declined this opportunity in 1987 after being unable to agree to conditions) the Women's List argues that it has had an impact on Icelandic politics, particularly by forcing the other parties to add women to their own lists and to promote women's issues.

Each party presents a ranked list of candidates to the electorate, and representation in Alþingi is based on the proportion of votes received. Distribution of the seats is a complicated process, recently revised in 1984, which bears witness to conflicts between rural and urban interests. Whereas some want greater representation of the densely populated southwest (Reykjavík and Reykjanes) which would be

favourable to the Independence Party, others wish to maintain rural influence and thus favour the Progressives.

The country is divided into eight constituencies which were delineated in 1959: Reykjavik, Reykjanes (the southwestern peninsula excluding Reykjavik), Suðurland, Austurland, Norðurland eystra, Norðurland vestra, Vestfirðir, and Vesturland. Reykjavik receives 14 seats, 8 go to Reykjanes, and five or six seats each to the other constituencies. Eight of the remaining seats are distributed amongst constituencies according to numbers of registered voters in the previous elections, and one final seat is given as compensation to the party receiving the fewest seats in comparison to number of votes. Further calculations in each constituency determine the distribution of seats amongst parties following the election, in order to ensure equitable representation of all parties in Alþingi.

Media

Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and journals are the dominant media in Iceland.

The state has operated one television station in the country since the late 1960s. In the mid-sixties, a television signal from the NATO base became available in the Reykjavik area. Although the purchase of television sets sky-rocketed, a nationalist reaction led to restrictions placed on these broadcasts, and the foundation of a state system. Until 1986, television viewing was possible six

days a week, from approximately 6 p.m. until 11 p.m. (later on weekends). Thursday evenings were kept free to encourage people to leave their homes and visit friends and family. With the Reagan-Gorbachev summit of that year, this practice was dropped, and broadcasts now occur every evening.

Further, a privately-owned channel Stöð 2 began operations in 1987. This signal is available only in major centres, to subscribers with de-scramblers. Whereas state television programming is comprised of over 50% Icelandic material, Stöð 2 relies more on imported shows, primarily American. On both channels, foreign programming is subtitled in Icelandic.

The state retained a monopoly on radio broadcasting until 1987, and operated one commercial-free station nationally. At present, there are five privately-owned radio stations broadcasting pop and/or country-and-western music, of Icelandic and international derivation. Most of these signals are only receivable in the Reykjavik area. The state broadcasting company established a second station in 1987, to compete more directly with the public stations. Both state stations place more emphasis on interviews and information than the commercial stations.

Six newspapers are published daily, with two of those papers as well issuing separate weekend editions. One of these six publications, Dagur, covers regional news in the north, and is published in Akureyri. The remainder are based in Reykjavik. All but one of these papers are owned

by the major political parties. Morgunblaðið has the widest circulation, and is published by the Independence Party. In the last few years the editor has attempted to operate the publication with an arm's-length relationship to its owner, in an effort to "professionalize" its content. Of all the newspapers, it includes the most foreign coverage, much of which comes via international wire services, although correspondents in key American and European locales are retained.

Three of the other papers share press facilities in an attempt to remain financially solvent with more restricted circulations. Þjóðviljinn is the paper of the People's Alliance, Alþýðublaðið of the Social Democrats, and Tíminn of the Progressive Party. The remaining newspaper, Dagblaðið-Visir (DV), has the second-largest circulation, and although not politically affiliated, tends to orient itself toward business interests.

Educational system

The educational system as it exists today is based on reforms made in 1973 and 1974 intended to liberalize and at the same time simplify the previous system. There are three general levels of education, primary, secondary and higher education. Children start attending regular school (pre-school is optional) at the age of seven, and must complete a compulsory nine years of primary education. After this stage, three alternatives are available. Grammar school

(menntaskóli) lasts four years, and provides arts and sciences training enabling the student to obtain a certificate of matriculation (stúdentsspróf) and continue into university. Comprehensive schooling has been introduced more recently, which provides vocational and technical training in addition to the same programme as the grammar school. The third alternative is vocational schools, of which there are several, including commercial, hotel and catering, nautical, nursing, aviation, midwifery, and pharmacy.

The University of Iceland in Reykjavik has eight faculties of several departments each, including medicine, law, physical and social sciences, arts, music, theology, and engineering. All students holding a stúdentsspróf are eligible to enter university, and tuition is free. Graduate degrees exist in a few disciplines, but for the most part students wishing to pursue graduate work must go abroad.

A second, small university in Akureyri was established in 1987, to provide training primarily in nursing and marine topics.

The social sciences have a very recent history in Iceland, the Faculty of Social Science having only been founded in 1970. Previous to then, only a few attempts to communicate sociological thought to the public had been made (cf. I. Einarsson (1987) and Thorlindsson (1982)). Given the task of establishing a body of knowledge, social science scholarship has tended in either one of two directions: the

detailed documentation of political history, or empirical/statistical analyses of social trends. The Social Science Institute associated with the Faculty specializes in survey methods, and a considerable body of data on voter behaviour and attitudes has been gathered. Anthropology has had less opportunity to develop, what with being a smaller department, and many of its practitioners are only now completing doctoral research (most Icelandic anthropologists do research in their own country; cf. Durrenberger and Pálsson eds. 1989).

For most of this century, historical studies have focussed on the saga period. Recently, however, younger historians are taking up research on the 19th and early 20th centuries and exhibiting a certain degree of critical stance toward nationalist influences. For example, more attention is paid to the systemic nature of social inequality amongst Icelanders while under colonial rule, thus questioning the accepted view that the harshness of life was experienced equally by all.⁸

Historical background: pre-modern period

The population of Iceland at the end of the eleventh century was approximately 70,000. By the time of the first census in 1703, this number had declined to 50,358. During the 18th century, the island experienced a number of natural disasters which caused a further decline in population to 47,186 by 1800. The population gradually increased over the

next century such that by 1860 there were 66,987 people in the country.

Icelandic society was based on pastoralist farming with a subsidiary reliance on part-time, seasonal fishing from open rowing boats. Land ownership and control was the basis for socio-economic status, and landowners were second in power only to the few Danish representatives of the Crown.⁹ Prior to the Reformation (1550), 45% of arable land was controlled by the Church, 53% was private property, and 2% was owned by the Crown. By 1560, the Crown had increased its control to 19% of the farmland, while the Church held 31%, and 50% was privately owned. During the latter part of the 18th century, all but 15% of church land was sold, and private ownership increased to 74%, although it was concentrated within a few families.

Since a farmer's wealth was dependent on his ability to mobilize a large work force during the hay harvest, he had an interest in maintaining control over these labourers, who otherwise might have moved to the coasts and developed some form of export-oriented fishery. A Danish monopoly prevented foreign ships from doing trade directly with Icelanders. When British and French ships began to land on Iceland in order to process their catches, they attracted the landless workers who sought to escape the paternalism of the farming household. The elite class appealed to the Danish crown to block such landings. They were stopped, and

legally-enforced labour contracts required the landless to be attached to a farming household one year at a time.

Further to these moves to maintain the status quo, the development of a commercial sector was suppressed. Danish merchants were restricted to circulating trade goods, and were unable to begin any form of manufacture until the 19th century (M. Magnússon 1985). For these reasons, Icelandic society remained, prior to the development of an industrialised export fisheries, cut off from the kinds of developments happening elsewhere in Europe. There was no middle class to push society toward a market economy, or to act as cultural brokers between Iceland and the outside. Iceland was almost entirely isolated from the outside.

Political independence became more feasible with investment in a fisheries sector in which Icelanders were active. Though this was not at first in the interests of the large landowners, changes in the conditions of farming made the idea of fishing villages and an export fisheries more appealing. Mass emigration to North America, cold weather and arctic ice conditions, and sheep pestilence were making conditions in farming more difficult.

The establishment and expansion of a capitalist fisheries sector did bring independence to the landless workers. Political mobilisation, increasing national self-determination, capital investment, wage labour, and the possibility of a more prosperous future developed virtually simultaneously, though over several decades. In this way,

fishing, the sea, prosperity, and independence are inseparable elements of how many Icelanders understand both their immediate past and the present.

Prior to the transitional period, life was a matter of struggle against a harsh and unforgiving nature, and this is the collective memory for Icelanders today. They were vulnerable to ecological fluctuations. A failure of the grass crops, whether due to volcanic eruption or adverse weather, meant deaths from starvation or disease during the winter. Infant mortality was high. Up until 1910, Iceland had a rate of accidental death almost three times greater than other European countries at that time. These deaths were primarily by drowning, as safety and work conditions on the fishing boats were inadequate (M. Magnússon 1985). Beyond the boundaries of the farm, nature was dangerous and mysterious. People could encounter misfortune--or good fortune, for that matter--at the hands of the hidden people (huldufólk) who lived in the rocks.

The nationalist movement

During the 1830s, a small group of Icelanders studying in Copenhagen brought back to their land nationalist ideas then circulating in Europe. In brief, their argument was that the route toward prosperity for their impoverished society was through independence from colonial authority. This was the beginning of a long, peaceful, political battle to gain independence and establish an Icelandic nation.

This battle peaked in 1918 when Home Rule was achieved, and ended when full independence was gained in 1944.

In Iceland, politics was practiced by a small elite, and the majority had to be educated in political practice and persuaded to support independence--virtually the only political issue of the time. Political leaders argued that the Danish colonial rule was primarily responsible for society's poverty, and that all Icelanders together would benefit equally by the creation of a nation-state.

Nationalist ideas were not only promoted by political leaders, but as well by poets, writers, and many of the clergy. They were influenced by the ideals of Romantic nationalism, and used the sagas as historical evidence of a past golden age of independence.

Jón Sigurðsson (1811-1879) is known as the "father" of Icelandic independence, and he is considered to have been one of the nation's finest politicians. The Icelandic National Day is celebrated on the anniversary of his birth, 17 June. Most of his career was spent in Copenhagen, where he employed considerable legal and political skill in putting forth the case for Icelandic independence (Karlsson 1980). Although he was in contact with the Romantic nationalists, he was more strongly influenced by utilitarianism, to the extent that he translated the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin into Icelandic. He promoted the role of the secular press in communicating to a

passive people the importance and uniqueness of Icelandic culture. In so doing, he helped to create it.

Nationalist discourse

Snorri Hjartarson (1906-1986), poet and one-time expressionist painter, wrote in praise of Iceland in his war-time collection of poetry (Kvæða 1944):

Land þjóð og tunga/brenning sönn og ein...

Country, nation and language/Trinity true and without equal...

The strong contrasts of the land, the singularity and poetic beauty of the language, and the dramatic events of the settlement of Iceland as set down in the medieval sagas: these are said to shape the Icelandic character. These ideas were developed during the 19th century, elaborated upon by many writers and artists since, used as rhetoric in political discourse, and both reproduced and criticised in scholarly discourses. Other themes--of equality, purity, and independence--are also used to articulate what are felt to be essential elements of Icelandic character.

Iceland was settled towards the end of the 9th century by Norsemen primarily from Norway, who brought with them their families and households as well as slaves taken from the British Isles. Prior to their arrival, the only residents of the island were a few Irish monks who soon left, presumably not keen on sharing their abode with Vikings. By 930, all of the land suitable for habitation

and grazing had been claimed. The settlers had brought with them cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs, and they carried on the pastoralist farming which had been their practice in Norway.

The leaders, or chieftains, established a legal code derived from Norse practice, and a hierarchic judicial system based on regional divisions, with an annual meeting for the handling of disputes known as Alþingi held at the plain of Þingvellir. Until the year 1000, nearly all Icelanders followed the Norse religion (Ásatrú), and the chieftains took over the role of priests in the new country. Pressure exerted from the king of Norway led to the decision at Alþingi to accept Christianity.

Icelanders maintained trade and other connections with the rest of Europe over the next three centuries. But for several reasons--chronic internal strife being the major one--they were unable to sustain an independent society. Between 1262 and 1264, therefore, they came under the power of the Norwegian king. Not long after, the Christian Church gained more power--until then, the old chieftain/priests had managed to hold onto their power through manipulation of church tithes. In 1380, the Norwegian and Danish monarchies were united, and Iceland came under the control of Denmark.

The arrival of Latin script soon after the adoption of Christianity in 1000 A.D. led to the creation of a vast literary edifice which had its roots in a long, oral tradition of poetry-making, (hi)story-telling, and law-

making. The final two centuries of the Icelandic Commonwealth saw the production of a vast number of manuscripts, a small portion of which are extant today.

Landnámabók (Book of Settlements) and Íslendingabók (Book of the Icelanders) are historical works on the earliest period of Icelandic society. In the 12th century, several writers (many of the sagas are anonymous) began to write the stories of the Norse Kings. The most famous extant work of this genre, Heimskringla, was by the 13th century writer Snorri Sturluson. Snorri also wrote a treatise on mythology and poetry known as Snorra-Edda.

The sagas themselves vary in style and subject matter. The works of Snorri are known for their literary quality; others are less well-written. Some works are simple narratives, while others involve complex details of dream portents, witchcraft, supernatural beings, and magic. Works such as Egil's saga, Gísli's saga, and Njál's saga, relate the tragic lives of historical figures caught up in ever-increasing cycles of blood vengeance driven by an inescapable fate. These men are heroes, and their stories focus on their demeanour in the face of their circumstances.

The settlers of Iceland spoke the common language of Scandinavia, dönsk tunga (Danish tongue), also known as Old Norse. It cannot be ascertained exactly when Icelandic diverged from the other Norse languages--or rather, they diverged from it, since Icelandic has been far more conservative than the others due to literary practice and

the island's isolated history. The writing of The First Grammatical Treatise on Icelandic in the middle of the 12th century, and the writing down of the Icelandic laws slightly earlier, are often used as markers of a separate Icelandic language. Norwegian remained closely related to it until the Reformation, when the Danish Bible used in Norway significantly altered that language. Faeroese remains the closest contemporary language to Icelandic.

Language purity became a key symbol to 19th century Romantic nationalists, who began a campaign to rid the language of foreign borrowings and make it more closely adhere to the language of the sagas. Today, the language is kept "pure" through the coining of new words, or the redefinition of old words, for foreign terms. Personal names must be Icelandic, and new citizens have, until very recently, been required to adopt Icelandic names (their children must receive Icelandic names).

Despite this revision of the language, nationalist rhetoric--spoken by natives and foreigners alike--holds that the language has been preserved throughout the centuries as a curator might preserve a precious vase, and that present-day Icelanders can read the sagas in their original form with little difficulty. Admittedly, Icelandic has changed less than other European languages in the same period, but policy and nationalism have influenced this outcome. During my field stay, there was a renewed campaign against the use of English slang in everyday speech. At one school,

students had to pay a fine if heard using foreign words. Pálsson (1989; discussed further in Chapter Five) has taken issue with the notion of linguistic "purity," and emphasized how language attitudes and policy mask class differences.

The period following the collapse of the Icelandic Commonwealth (1262) up until the beginnings of the nationalist movement is described in terms of the miserable conditions under which people lived. This was the period of Iceland's "humiliation." These conditions are thought to have been more or less uniform across the population (i.e. no one flourished while others starved; Icelanders were "in it" together). In this characterisation of the past, no attempt is made to compare conditions to other impoverished regions on the margins of Europe.

Nature in Icelandic nationalist imagining brings together notions of place and history on the one hand, and blood and kinship on the other. There is also a great deal of emphasis placed on purity: of blood, language, nature, and food. The purity of Iceland is also symbolized by the health-giving properties assigned to milk and milk products, fish, and lamb. An emphasis on kinship and the links between people is tied in with notions of racial purity. A small number of Vietnamese and Thais, as well as other visible minorities who have so recently arrived in Iceland have prompted a public protest against this imagined "threat" to national culture.

Two other themes which crop up in nationalist discourse are equality and independence. Broddason and Webb (1975) argue in an article intent on unmasking the Icelandic ideology of equality, that belief in the equality of individuals and individual opportunity is stronger and more prevalent in Iceland than in most other countries. Whereas there is an impulse to follow strong leaders, there is an equally strong impulse to punish through gossip and ostracism those who appear to place themselves above others. Many commentators, both foreign and native, have noted the quickness to offence of an Icelander to a slight to his or her honour and standing.

These elements are persistent themes in the discussion of Icelandic national culture, whether the work is scholarly or a simple summary on a tourist brochure. It should be noted that it is nationalist discourse which is discussed here, and that in any given text it is not necessarily the only discourse operating. Thus, a sound scholarly work can still contain nationalist rhetoric.

Further, the way in which people treat nationalist discourse--whether it is unquestioned fact, discounted fiction, or something in between--depends not just on the individual, but also the circumstance in which the discourse is being used or discussed. For example, a number of Icelanders told me that, when describing their country to foreigners while they lived or travelled abroad, they

reverted--to their own surprise--to nationalist ideas which they had discounted while at home.

The literary scholar Sigurður Nordal, in his landmark study of Icelandic culture from the original settlement until the end of the 13th century used the landscape as a metaphor for the nation's history, a history which is apparently transparent and available for all to see:

The Icelanders are the only European people who remember their beginnings. Other nations possess a prehistory which fades into the silence of wordless generations. By contrast, the earliest history of the Icelanders resembles the Icelandic landscape. True, it may be difficult to make out the details of the most remote background, but the panorama does not harbor such secrets as in more temperate climates, where even nearby hills and woods tend to be veiled by haze and more distant views to be completely blotted out. The Icelandic nation did not spring from a seed long hidden in the dark bosom of the earth before sending a shoot into the light. It is a cutting detached from a stem and planted, for all to see, in new soil where it was to strike root. (1942: 1)

Former Minister of Education Gylfi Gíslason translated this discourse into an explanation for Iceland's prosperity: The preservation of these ancient cultural traditions was the Icelanders' most forceful argument in their struggle for independence. Their loyalty to these

cultural traditions throughout the long dark ages, moreover, meant that, in spite of poverty, nearly all Icelanders were literate. Thus the new skills of the technological age could be learned quickly: a poor fisherman easily mastered the work on a trawler; a struggling farmer became a good factory worker.

Icelanders can thank their ancient cultural traditions not only for their independence, but also their present prosperity. (1984: 206)

The President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir,¹⁰ also speaks of the elements of the Icelandic nation: the language, literature, history, and land. As President, it is her task to define the nation and remind Icelanders how they must understand and act to preserve their culture together in the face of change.

Despite the poverty in which Icelanders lived throughout the centuries, she says, they could still express themselves creatively, because words were, and are, free. Because speakers of Icelandic are so few in the world, the language binds Icelanders together. As well, their existence on an island--the island which Icelanders alone own--has a distinctive impact on how they understand themselves and the world surrounding them. She speaks of how Icelanders living abroad (an increasingly common experience) usually long for the same things: the language, landscape, and security of their family. She likens the experience of living abroad to having a contradiction in

one's soul, because what surrounds one is not the same as what is integral to one's primary experience.

Icelanders are not the only articulators of Icelandic nationalist discourse. Foreign scholars have been known to base their arguments on the unbroken continuity of an essential Icelandic character since the saga period (cf. Hastrup 1985; Tomasson 1980). Journalists and others interested in Iceland are also prone to accept without question nationalist discourse as historical reality:

Iceland is a land of extremes, a forlorn frontier warmed just enough to be habitable by volcanic activity under the earth and the temperate effect of the Oceanic Gulf Stream.

The Icelandic people lead a life that is a far cry from their primitive surroundings. They are often referred to as the most Scandinavian of all Scandinavian peoples. They are the direct descendants of 10th century Norse Viking aristocrats who sailed to Iceland bringing with them fair Irish and Scottish maidens as concubines, and then were largely ignored and forgotten for almost 900 years. When the remote island was "rediscovered" in the middle of the 19th century, explorers found a perfectly preserved, living national park of ancient Viking culture, attitude and language.¹¹

In later chapters, these themes of nationalist discourse will be placed into the context of Icelanders'

understanding of themselves, their relations with the outside, and transformations of their society.

ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise stated, data is taken from fieldnotes, Iceland (1984), and Nordal and Kristinsson (1975).
2. Averages are calculated from data collected between 1931-1960. All statistics are from Iceland (1984).
3. September 1989: 48ff.
4. See McPhee (1989) for a gripping telling of this epic battle. Over the several months of this eruption, fire hoses and earth movers were used to redirect the lava flow away from the harbour, the finest harbour in Iceland. The dramatic events now serve as grist for the tourist mill in the Vestmannaeyjar.
5. For the preceding 25 years Alþingi contained 60 members.
6. European Free Trade Association, founded in 1960; Iceland joined in 1970. Member states are: Austria, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland. Denmark and Great Britain were amongst its founders, but quit the association in 1973 to join the European Community.
7. The Independence and Progressive Parties can also trace their histories back to parties which flourished in the early history of Icelandic independence politics. To go into the details of descent patterns would be unnecessary for the purposes in this dissertation, and would only start

to resemble the complicated saga genealogies I did my best to avoid.

8. See in particular: Ásgeirsson 1988; Björnsson 1971; Björnsson and Edelstein 1977; Broddason and Webb 1975; Grímsson 1977, n.d.; Gunnarsson 1980b, 1983a, 1983b; Gunnlaugsson 1988; Jensdóttir 1974, 1986; Karlsson 1980, 1987; F. Magnússon 1990; M. Magnússon 1985; Pálsson 1989; Pétursson 1983.

9. Religious leaders and local sheriffs were, of course, powerful; however, they were also part of the landowning class.

10. From an interview I conducted with the President, 25 May 1990.

11. This text is quoted from cover notes to a video by an American travelogue producer Rick Ray.

2/ IMAGINING THE NATIONAL SELF

This chapter lays out the framework for the analysis of nationalism and the formation of the self. Attention is directed primarily at those factors or circumstances which make possible the nation as a form of social ordering, and a means of structuring human identity. The common features of Western nationalism are discussed; in following chapters these features are taken up as themes for elaborating on Icelandic nationalism and the emergence of the Icelandic nation-state. Every expression of nationalism--including the Icelandic case--relies on the idea of uniqueness; yet every such expression promotes the same ideals of ancestral and territorial integrity. This is one of several paradoxes of nationalism which this chapter will address.

To begin, I reject out of hand the idea that nationalism is simply a means of legitimating or masking the self-interested operations of state power. Whereas it is obvious that nationalism plays this role, it is neither a property of nor a prerequisite for the operation of nationalist sentiment. Labelling nationalism as false consciousness effectively robs its experience of authenticity and emotional profundity.

A broader conceptualization of nationalism is required, which draws on anthropological awareness of the continuities and contingencies of human identity. The need for such an approach has led me to consider how particular kinds of

demarcated space establish the conditions for the generation of national identity, insofar as they are the locus for social action. Such consideration has revealed the role of discourses we term territory, property, and nature in the construction of the national self.

Nationalism is here defined as a discourse, or more accurately a collection of discourses that takes as its object "the nation." Such a definition is intended to remove discussion of nationalism from an evaluative context, in which nationalism is viewed as positive or negative: either a justifiable pride in, or an intolerant partiality for, one's nation. Nationalism is one of a variety of ways humans organise knowledge about the world in an attempt to establish an identity. The question of identity plays a central role in many circumstances, such as the whaling issue, which will be analysed in Chapter Six. How people understand themselves in relation to the world around them is a matter of knowledge, that shapes decisions and actions.

Nationalism and its counterpart, the nation-state, are unique to modernity, to what Giddens (1990: 1) provisionally defines as the "modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less world-wide in their influence." The nation-state arose in conjunction with, but not as a direct consequence of, capitalism and industrialism, ideas of the autonomous individual, and a rationalized, mechanistic world view.

Dumont (1986) identifies a configuration of five factors which characterize modernity. They are: primacy of the individual over the collective; primacy of relations between people and things, over relations between people; separation of values from facts and ideas; division of knowledge and know-how into disciplinary practices; and, separation of subject and object.

The idea of the nation straddles the history of place and tradition on the one hand, and the progressive project of modernity on the other. The nation is an abstract system which situates individuals in the disembodied dimensions of modern time and space, dimensions which have become detached from local traditions and religious cosmology.

This chapter is organised as a series of suggested answers to questions that revolve around the terms nation, state, nationalism, discourse, identity, self, and culture. What do we mean by nation, state, and nationalism? If nationalism is carried in discourse, then what is discourse and how does it operate in social interaction? How is the individual interpolated in discourses and his or her identity formed through them? What is human identity, and what is its relationship to "culture"? Finally, how does this relate to notions of national culture?

Nationalism as false consciousness

Because it is a term often encountered in everyday talk, there is a general sense that we know what we mean

when we speak of "nationalism." Often, when discussing a nationalism which is not our own, the tendency is to explain it away as uninformed passion or prejudice: whereas my nationalism is genuine and justifiable, yours is blind to its own narrow conceits and underlying ambitions. Such an attitude reveals nothing of the operations of nationalism as part of people's understanding of the world. To be sure, it is possible for nationalist sentiment to be co-opted into ideological formations with the intention of masking the operations of power and authority. Yet nationalism makes this possible in ways that, say, communism or social democracy cannot. What gives nationalism this tremendous force in the modern world?

The beginning of an answer lies in the fact that nationalism is a means through which people establish their own identity in the world and define their relationships to others (as members or outsiders). Socio-political movements, on the other hand, do not presume to define people beyond the realm of relevant public action, nor define their interactions with, say, family members, or those outside the political arena. Nationalism is a political principle--in Gellner's words (1983: 1), it holds that "the political and the national unit should be congruent," but it is, significantly, more.

It is necessary to shift the focus of attention to an area where anthropology has developed an expertise over the last decades, to the realm of the cultural generation of

meaning. To speak of nationalism as a kind of masking irrationalism, or a function to achieve social solidarity, is to fall back on the analyses early anthropologists made of "primitive" religions.

The comparison to the study of religion is not a spurious one since several writers--B. Anderson (1983) and Kapferer (1988), to name two--have noted the similarities between its operation and that of nationalism. Anderson (1983) labels this process "imagining," and defines the nation as an imagined political community. By "imagining" he is not implying that it is in opposition to reality, nor that we can speak of genuine versus false nations. Rather, it speaks to the anthropological truism that we invent ourselves, our definitions of who or what we are. By saying "imagining" Anderson is suggesting that there is always another possible way things could have turned out, or might still come to pass. Admittedly, the term "imagining" is problematic, particularly if its exact meaning here is not fully considered, because there is the danger of slipping once again into the belief that nationalism is somehow a less "real" understanding of the world than any other.

The question for analysis then is, what are the styles of nationalist imagining? Anderson suggests that we should not treat nationalism as an ideology along the lines of, say, fascism or liberalism. Rather, he insists that parallels are to be found in the operations of kinship and religion. David Schneider (1969) has hypothesized something

similar, that at a "pure" level, kinship, religion, and nationality are "all the same thing," and the separation of these domains in language and practice masks their similarities.

The power that these forms of social knowledge have cannot be underestimated, because here we have bound up together notions of blood and belonging, of death and immortality. In short, the nation is understood through the metaphors of life, and in this way is equated to the immediacy of human existence.

Given that humans are (more or less) intelligent performers in the world, how is it that nationalism can have the profound effect it has, that people can embody the nation, find it a natural and self-evident manner of understanding themselves? To answer this, we must begin with the realization that an understanding of the operations of ideology can only partially meet our needs, that we must also speak of more fundamental notions of the processes of human identification.

Understanding nationalism and the self

How we conceive of the nation has a profound impact on our understanding of social conflicts and the strategies we choose to manage them. Like so many other terms social scientists use, its meanings are myriad in everyday discourse, and shifts in its usage can signify underlying social processes. Multiple definitions are possible also

because nation and nationalism become fuzzy categories in practice. Groups hitherto known as tribes (e.g. the Kayapo of Brazil) or ethnics (e.g. French Canadians) assert themselves as nations in order to gain civil and sovereign rights. Even within one nation, nationalism can take on different faces in different circumstances.

The meanings of nationalism are myriad. It is a psychical state and a form of knowledge. It is a political principle, "a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan 1990: 19), an ideology, and a consciousness of belonging. National identity does not preclude other sorts of identities, but it does assert itself in certain, predictable circumstances. Nationalism builds on an innate human capacity to distinguish between in group and out group ("us" and "them"), although its figuring in social organization is recent and contested. The nation is separate from the state, yet the existence of the first without the second is unimaginable. Finally, nationalism is a rhetoric which can take on vastly different meanings in different social settings.

Nationalist sentiment is evoked during specific events or experiences. People do not spend their day-to-day lives feeling nationalistic, and nationalism does not involve a prescribed set of activities. For nationalism to gain its obvious emotional effect, it must rely on its linkages to daily practices. Nationalism involves various cognitive processes shared in common with other means of human

identification, but which are directed toward situating the individual as an equal member of a historically-oriented collective.

Nationalism is a form of knowledge, one amongst many, which people use when constructing and interpreting events. Often, it operates in a realm of experience where the truth or falsity of its tenets are irrelevant or of minimal importance. The rejection of nationalism rarely divests itself fully of the naturalness of the nation-state's existence.

Nationalism as knowledge about the world is embedded in discursive practice. Through discursive means of organising knowledge, humans work out their identities--and by working them out, I don't mean some idle speculation engaged in when not involved in the "real" tasks of daily survival. Rather, the mind's attempts to place itself within its experience generates activities we define as public, private, political, legal, social, moral, or economic (Drummond 1980). Whether at a conscious or unconscious, individual or collective level, humans are attempting to answer the fundamental question of their identity.

Our identity--whether this is national, professional, familial--is built of what the political philosopher Charles Taylor terms "descriptions." According to him, "humans devise, or accept, or have thrust upon them descriptions of themselves, and these descriptions help to make them what they are" (Taylor 1989; see also, Taylor 1988). These

descriptions, which are carried in discourses, situate us in a space relative to notions of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, obligations and standards of excellence.

According to Taylor, "a human being exists inescapably in a space of ethical questions." One's identity is partially defined "by some identification of what are important issues, or standards." This we could say is a human universal. What changes from society to society, era to era or from discourse to discourse are the notions of excellence, the definition of what is ethical.

Discourse

Discourse analysis is the study of language "in use," providing insight into the forms and mechanisms of human communication and interaction. Analysis can be done at several levels of description, ranging from an intimate conversation between two people, to the most widespread national and international debates. Not all human interactions are discursive, but discourse can nonetheless shape their ideological formation, their reproduction and interpretation, and their management within institutional settings (Van Dijk 1985: 1).

Discourses can be spoken or written, and, especially when written, they have the power to extend their effect beyond the place and time of their creation. Discourse analysis is not limited to semiotics, to the study of the signs which make up a sentence. A sentence is more than the

words within it, a speech act or text more than its component parts. Discourses acquire meanings in social practice, and have the capacity for reference beyond themselves. Discourse analysis begins at the point where "language transcends itself, taking hold of the world, of the self and of others and expressing this hold in language" (Thompson 1984: 176-77).

The power of language to construct our lives has become an increasingly important component of social analysis. For example, Giddens refers to the impact of writing on the formation of the state, since literacy has been the means for extending its power over people's lives:

Written texts...no longer just sort events, objects or people but make descriptions of them possible...[which] can endure across generations. Given the importance of tradition in class-divided societies, texts tend to become "classical," demanding and receiving continued interpretation by literate specialists, often priests. But the existence of "classical texts" is also directly involved in the invention of "history"...In so far as texts describe "what went on" plus "what should go on" in a range of social situations, the "history" that is written can form a consolidated part of the apparatus of power. (1985: 45)

According to Derrida (1978), any discourse is a system in which the central signified--that to which the discourse refers--has no absolute presence beyond or outside a system

of differences. In this sense, the idea of a "nation," carried as it is in discourse, seeks to create a centre, something which exists "in reality," outside the discourse as an essence. Such a notion becomes a structure imposed from above, a frame for experience that can never fully satisfy or contain the on-going play of human interaction.

Foucault also takes up this idea, when he states that "the pursuit of the origin is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities and their carefully protected identities, because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession..." (Foucault 1977: 142). What the historian, or the anthropologist, discovers is that behind it all there is no essence, but rather that the essence was put together piecemeal, from alien elements.

Foucault (1972) provides a model which can be used to understand how discourses are controlled and manipulated. For Foucault, discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." Implied in this definition is a refutation of knowledge as built upon one fundamental, external truth, uncoverable through scientific procedures. Over the past decades, the notion of knowledge as having objective and subjective realms--wherein the latter is reduced to mere feeling and the former, through positivist science, is validated as pertaining to the real--has been gradually chipped away in the realm of social

theory. In its place has arisen a concern for how our experienced realities are constructed through language, and how these multiple, incomplete realities interact in social practice.

Discourses impose a regularity on the world, create an order out of disorder, and provide a coherent explanation for what would otherwise be a confusion of disconnected events. In practice, the production of discourses is "controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures" (ibid. 216). Discourses do not just naturally happen, but rather are generated by and through human action, and are shaped or edited by a diversity of forces. These forces decide, for example, who has the right to speak, and what is permitted to be spoken. People exist within and define themselves through many discourses.

The culture of nationalism

Gellner (1983: 43) argues that nationalism "has been defined...as the striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof...[but] culture, an elusive concept, was deliberately left undefined." The state has become, by default, the protector of a culture. It must maintain "the inescapably homogeneous and standardizing" educational system, necessary to turn out "personnel capable of switching from one job to another within a growing economy and a mobile society, and

indeed of performing jobs which involve manipulating meanings and people rather than things" (ibid. 110).

There is, in Gellner's formulation, a "garden culture," a high culture generated and imposed from above. It fixes the definition of the national identity, an essence that is frequently held to have existed since time immemorial. And it is laid upon a wild culture--one that produces and reproduces itself spontaneously--that is heterodox, indiscriminate, and paying only partial heed to national borders. Thus there is the "perniciousness" of American pop culture, wherein the characters of "Dallas" supersede the characters of Njál's saga in Iceland's popular imagination. But the high culture of national discourse lurks there, ready to be invoked in crisis, to deal with the unknown threat from outside.

Part of the process of defining the nation is not only spotting the differences amongst nations, but also generating or creating them, no matter how artificially. Nations exist in a discontinuous, comparative field. The process of inventing the nation is on-going, and though we remember the successful formulations, we tend to forget the failures. To return to the words of Gellner, "nationalism is not what it seems, and above all it is not what it seems to itself. The cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition" (ibid. 56).

Recent reexaminations of the culture concept in anthropological theory have provided new insights into the relationship between the rise of nationalism and anthropological practice. The idea of culture is itself being analysed as a product of discourses linked to nationalist rhetoric of the 19th century. The nation-state has provided the social and historical context of anthropology's intellectual practice, and anthropology has been enmeshed with the spread of European nation-state formations and the administration of colonial empires. Appearing at the same time, and from the same roots, as anthropological investigations of "primitive" peoples, the systematic investigation of national character received exemplary treatment by the likes of Alfred Fouillée (a colleague of Durkheim), Otto Bauer, and Ernest Barker (P. Anderson 1991).

The early definitions of the nation of which the Icelandic independence movement was a direct product, arose as part of the German Romantic movement of the early 19th century. A nation was described as a collective unity, made up of people who, by virtue of a distinct language, shared origins, and an innate attachment to a mother earth or homeland, are distinct and separate from other nations.

That difference came to be labelled "culture." Each nation was said to be identifiable by unique cultural characteristics which its members embodied in equal measure. The state then assumed the role as protector of national

cultures--cultures which, as Hobsbawm (1983) and Handler and Linnekin (1984) have demonstrated, were highly selective inventions.

The idea of culture--Gellner's heterodox culture--that nationalists stumble up against and seem unable to finally pin down as truly national, is the same one that continues to trouble those anthropologists who attempt to extract some usefulness from it. The irony is that anthropologists have become implicated in this definition of culture as possession, as some metaphysical force within us which somehow makes us what we are. Culture provides an easy explanation for those accumulations of artefacts languishing in museums, and the otherwise inexplicable behaviours of our "Others." National Geographic and professors of introductory anthropology have made a public amenable to the notion "a people and its culture," and "the importance of preserving traditional cultures."

Part of this problem with culture stems precisely from equating it with the nation. As Drummond (1986: 218) points out, "while anthropologists argue about culture, anthropological popularizers and non-anthropologists routinely speak of 'cultures'. Their effortless shift from singular to plural introduces many difficulties. The easy assumption is that if the 'culture' concept has any validity, there must be groups of people out there--societies--that possess individual cultures the way they speak individual languages." The problem is not the culture

concept, but the idea that there are separate, bounded cultures which require interpreting."

Particularly in a discussion of nationalism, it is more appropriate to use "culture" when describing the particular processes involved in the generation of human identity, to view culture as processual and humanity as emergent. The cultural continuum described by Drummond (1980) extends Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth, arguing that the latter's concern with human identity and creation is not limited to "primitive" peoples, but is universal. For Drummond, "the relentless classificatory force that is the human mind is such only because it is forever trying to place itself as subject within its framework of experience" (1984: 15). If identity and creation were self-evident facts, he argues, then there would have been no need for the development of classificatory thought. However, the question of identity is not, cannot, be settled once and for all, but instead identity must continually be generated as a series of creative acts.

In Drummond's model, human identification is encompassed by the generative processes of animals and machines: other entities which act in the world and have the characteristics of generativity, i.e. are brought into the world, transform that world, and then are themselves destroyed. Animals and machines become the self's "tools" for working out identity, by providing characteristics which establish similarity and difference. Similarly, a second

dimension of the cultural continuum is the We/Other distinction. The kinds of markers used to establish group uniqueness are not inherent. Instead, the criteria by which to make the distinction must be continually invented, using markers of blood and kinship.

The cultural continuum will, in Chapter Six, be particularly useful to point at parallels between the national identity of the Icelanders on the one hand, and the identifications of the environmentalists. The concern with defining whales as resources or sentient beings, about appropriate ways of living and dying, of determining who are the good guys ("us") and the bad guys ("them") all come into play within the whaling issue.

The "parcelling out of extension"¹

It is not enough to leave the question of identity there, concluding that nations exist due simply to a human capacity to differentiate or categorize. The process of identification is located, that is, it occurs in a particular space. This space is not an already constituted object which analysis can describe or chart, but rather is an object systematically produced in discourse, a category itself without geographical location which is constructed in our interactions. The discourses of space which structure the nation-state, which have shaped its emergence over the last centuries, are those of territory, property, and nature.

There has been, over time, an extension of the boundaries of imagined community: the farm, the region, the nation, national waters, the earth. It is not all that long ago that the idea of a global community began to be spoken of. And the idea of a nation of equal citizens is not that much older. Definitions of what constitute human communities have shifted to coincide with our spatially-expanding experience of others far removed.

International law governing the oceans, laws transforming use rights to property rights, conflicts over national jurisdiction and sovereignty--these are all extensions of the rationalizing and ordering within the nation-state negotiated through political and social discourses. Each determines the socio-geographical location of territory, a bounded concept, and socio-technological means by which the enclosed territory may be interacted with (and by whom).

In the discourse of nature, certain sites, monuments, and landscapes become symbols of the nation, museumized in the form of national parks or protected areas. Nature, history, and nation call forth strong feelings of attachment. This trinity has a particular force in Iceland, where so much of history and imagining are not linked to buildings or artefacts, but to landmarks, farms--in short, to place.

The depth of human attachment to constructed space--more specifically, to territory, landscape, and sense of

place and home--is not an exclusive feature of nationalism; it is, however, integral to the legitimization of the division of social space into discontinuous realms of experience and action.

Foucault (cf.1980), who deliberately uses a spatial metaphor--that of domain--to describe how discourses operate to circumscribe appropriate and inappropriate knowledge, states that the division of social space is necessarily strategic. The spatiality, if I can use such a word, of property, territory, and nature is not simply metaphorical: it is actual. These discourses situate the subject in historical time and socio-geographical space, define and delimit the locus of social action, and circumscribe appropriate individual and collective behaviour.

At the same time, Foucault insists that knowledge cannot be separated from power, but rather "circulates and functions" through the mechanisms of power. In other words, discourses are domains of power/knowledge, and are levels of discontinuity which disseminate the effects of power in the relations between people. The discursive practices which I will be elaborating in the following chapters--property, territory and nature--interpolate individuals as national citizens ("national prisoners" in Foucault's words) by categorizing them, attaching them to their identities, imposing a "law of truth" on them, and creating them as subjects (1982: 12).

What I am suggesting here, then, is that the formation of discourses fundamental to the existence of the nation-state are analyzable as tactics and strategies of power. In this way, the whaling issue as it is played out within Iceland, the International Whaling Commission, and the environmentalist movement is at one level an instance in the continuing battle to define the frontiers and sovereignty of the nation-state.

Nationalist discourse reembeds the subject in place, by rearticulating its relationship to the experienced world using the symbolic landscape of the past. The experience of tradition-governed, pre-modern states has been irrevocably transformed in modernity: the transformation of the world by industrialization has desacralized nature and turned it into potential wealth in the form of resources. The discourses of the natural sciences have rationalized the operations of nature so that the forces of the earth appear law-governed rather than Deity-shaped. In this context, nationalist discourse about nature resacralizes nature by renaming the bond between people and their land as "homeland," "mother-" or "fatherland." The nation does not erase preexisting notions of place. Instead, it overlays them, posits itself as a larger context into which local attachments to place are assembled and defined in relation to each other.

Emergence of the modern nation-state

Elie Kedourie (1960: 9) defines nationalism as "the doctrine [which] holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government." As doctrine, nationalism emerged late in the 18th century, given credence by contemporary philosophical debate and the conjunction--at that time--of a series of unconnected events which made those debates of immediate relevance.

Writers and philosophers argued about the virtues of this type of society called "the nation," and the forms it should take. For writers such as Bolingbroke, Herder, and Rousseau, nationalism was a liberating force, a means to free people from superstition and to organise society according to the enlightened principles of reason. Once this could be accomplished, the progress and perfectibility of the human race would naturally follow.

In particular, the French Revolution had introduced to the rest of Europe a new kind of politics based on the idea of the people's will, which "overrode treaties and compacts, dissolved allegiances, and, by mere declaration, made lawful any act whatever" (ibid. 18). Legitimate political authority came to rest on the notion of the nation-state rather than the monarchy or absolute state. In its most extreme expressions, nationalist ideology defines politics as a struggle to uphold principles.

These ideas were new, and fought over at the time: that a nation consists of individuals sharing equally in its citizenship; that a nation has the right to self-determination; that a people are a nation by virtue of sharing a common origin and history. The "life" of the nation was projected into the future, that is, the achievement of nationhood was conceived of as a struggle, and present-day sacrifices were for the sake of the nation, for the good of future generations. As Renan (1882: 19) remarked, "where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."

The nation is a historical creation, as is the state. Giddens' (1985) version of the rise of the nation-state is relevant to my analysis since it takes account of the discursive and spatial aspects of power and state formation. According to Giddens, "the development of states is necessarily convergent with the formation of modes of discourse which constitutively shape what state power is" (1985: 209).

In general, the operation of the state requires a hierarchic administrative apparatus employing specialists in a variety of tasks. This apparatus disseminates its power through regulating and coordinating human activities. The effectiveness of its power is dependent on wide-spread literacy and the dispersal of information through print media beyond the local settings available to purely oral

cultures. In point of fact, it must be able to gain authority over local sanction in order to break the hold of tradition.

The agrarian state, however, differed from the modern state in that most of the former's population remained beyond the reach of the "discursive articulation of administrative power" (ibid. 209-10). Day-to-day life would have been little affected by an administration, and membership in a state would have been of little practical concern to peasants. Local power was wielded by the landowning class according to traditional practice.

The modern state, for its part, requires "a very considerable expansion of the reflexive monitoring of state activity" (ibid.), thereby incorporating the population as a "public," and as "citizens" of the state. Universal literacy and a secular press allowed for this development. It could be argued that in some cases, such as in Iceland, literacy considerably preceded the rise of the nation-state. However, nearly all printed documents available to the masses--which were not all that many--were religious: sermons and homilies to be read aloud on winter nights.

A secular press extended the reading materials available to mass audiences in the form of newspapers, gazettes, novels, journals, and pamphlets. At the same time as new kinds of information and knowledge were available on a broad scale, the state became involved with the collection

of official statistics and the investigation of social conditions.

Sovereignty, the principle developed since the 16th century justifying independent rule by the state apparatus, can only be effective if most of the population have incorporated as part of their person the concepts connected with sovereignty:

Now such mastery need not be wholly discursive, especially among those who are subject to the administration of the state rather than directly involved in that administration. But when Machiavelli, Bodin and others began writing about 'politics', they were not only describing a series of changes, nor even only making policy recommendations; they were helping to constitute what the modern state is as a novel ordering of administrative power....The expansion of state sovereignty means that those subject to it are in some sense--initially vague, but growing more and more definite and precise--aware of their membership in a political community and of the rights and obligations such membership confers. (ibid. 210)

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the expansion of available information was not in some manner controlled and directed. It is precisely in the kinds of information available in a society that we are able to see its ideological formation. In modern states, it is imperative that different groups representing different

interests or objectives discursively plot their policies in order to promote them in the public domain. That domain then becomes the arena for determining what can be spoken of, by whom, and in what manner.

The state maintains the preeminent ability to define what is "political" and therefore subject to its control. Giddens argues that there is a direct link between "the state and the class system in capitalist societies since the 'depoliticizing' of economic relations is basic to class domination" (ibid. 211). Other examples exist of state-promoted policies which purport to be in the public interest when, in fact, they favour the (usually economic) interests of a sector of society.

Competing discourses must establish their authority to speak--and to be heard--against those of the state. Often, however, the language of expression, i.e. the rhetoric used, must conform to an already-established agenda of what is acceptably spoken. To foreshadow what will be discussed in Chapter Six, Icelandic anti-whalers spoke of the "national good"--mimicking the language of government pro-whalers--as a means of carrying their more universalist message of environmental protection.

Modernity and tradition

A further characteristic of modern states, according to Giddens, is the shift from "history" to "historicity." Paralleling similar observations by authors such as Hobsbawm

(1983), Giddens suggests that the invention of history or tradition stabilizes the impact of social change--an image constructed in terms of, or in relation to, the present. Any state engages in the documenting of its past, "but only in the modern West does 'history' become 'historicity'--the controlled use of reflection upon history as a means of changing history" (212).

Modernity constructs tradition as its "opposite." Such a notion is linked in part to the rationalization of time, the transition from cyclical to linear time. Constructing categories of past and future in conjunction with the morality of progress creates separate domains of tradition and modernity: "tradition seems centered on the past, modernity on the future, but, in fact, only modernity projects a past (time gone by), at the same time that it projects a future" (Baudrillard 1987: 67). Lived or experienced time does not necessarily move in a lineal fashion, however; rather, constructed past and fantasized future merge with present experience. The significance of this will become more apparent in the discussion of how memory shapes knowledge and understanding.

National identity is constructed in a discourse about an imagined past. Renan (1882: 11) remarked that "forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation...." The interplay between present and past, modern and traditional that is manifest in nationalism prompted one

observer to describe the nation as "one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representation of 'modernity'" (Bhabha 1990: 4).

In the discourse of progress where the modern always seeks to pull away from the outdated, that which is marginalized--what "obstinately resists"--has become defined in the dominant ideology as residual, anachronisms which people have not yet dispensed with. Such marginalized practices can vary from non-mechanized or labour-intensive forms of production, to ideas about appropriate forms of social behaviour. These social practices, which are seen as out of place in a technical and rational society, are labelled as "traditional."

The "traditional" can be invoked as a defence against sudden or unwanted change. Tradition becomes the authentic on the verge of being lost, and change represents that which is dangerously artificial. Anthropology has made a practice of accepting this view of tradition and gone about the business of documenting its disappearance around the margins of the "modern" world. Implicitly, such anthropology treats tradition as an analytical category rather than as an ideology arising from a complex of practices associated with Western thought. The resulting image is of difference which "remains tied to traditional pasts, inherited structures that either resist or yield to the new but cannot produce it" (Clifford 1988: 5).

Like Clifford, I do not see the world as populated by "endangered authenticities," but rather with endangered peoples whose attempts to invent their own local paths through modernity are continually thwarted by those who would exploit their resources and/or labour. Nationalism is one such path through modernity: paradoxical, ambivalent, Janus-faced. It engages in subtle play the discrepancies between the rational, lineal time of progress on the one hand, and the present-day invocation of past and memory on the other hand. For example, First Nations nationalism in Canada is a means for aboriginal groups to maintain difference while allowing for their, ideally, self-governed charting through the contingencies of the modern.

Nation and nature

Sacredness is not embedded in objects, but is rather a property of statements made about those objects (Rappaport 1971; Rousseau 1987). Yet, to be sure, this is not how sacredness is experienced in the religious or national community. The truth or authority which bestows sacredness is not thought of as situated in language, but rather as located Out There. Situating authority for our knowledge in a fixed, unchanging, separate realm, effectively places that authority outside of history and human action.

I would argue that, if the authority was once thought to lay in God, then it is now thought to be found in a particular perception of Nature. What has occurred over the

last two centuries is a shift in the location of authority. And what is entailed in that shift is a transformation of what Foucault calls the politics of truth. To be sure, this was not a simple transformation, but was a contested and protracted battle between Church and secular powers. It is necessary then to ask, that if the Church was the locus for statements about God, then what are the domains of statements about Nature?

The most obvious is that of natural science, which purports to establish truth (by opposing itself to superstition) and provide knowledge which is an accurate representation of the world. But there is another discourse of Nature which is, in the West at any rate, bound up with the nation. There is no easy label for it and it is a discourse which appears in many forms: in nationalism, but also in ecology and environmentalism. And its unboundedness makes it both powerful and susceptible to power. It fits well with Gellner's distinction between garden and wild cultures, insofar as Nature can become a discourse used by the state, and be used against the state. If this is somewhat unclear, a digression tracing this definition of nature into the Romantic movement of the early 19th century may clarify the direction I am indicating.

Romanticism was ostensibly a movement against traditional authority, although by 1850 it had become the new orthodoxy. Romantic poetry was not, according to the contemporary German writer Friedrich Schlegel, just a purely

personal vision, as it is now conventionally perceived. Rather, "it [stood] midway between a personal vision and the objective world" (Rosen and Zerner 1984: 18). During this time, the landscape became the supreme genre both in poetry and painting. This was not merely a change of style or content, but was an intentional, ideological strategy. The Romantic painters wanted to replace the large, highly formalized depictions of historical or religious scenes which then dominated art production, with landscape. They desired to paint pure landscapes without any figures to carry the weight, and to have these paintings achieve the same heroic and epic significance. The elements of Nature would be made to carry the full symbolic meaning of the work.

The artists were acutely aware of their position in an era of the destruction of traditional religious and political values. "[A] great deal of the best literature and art of the early 19th century [was] a prolongation of the revolutionary polemics of the 1790s, a transformation of politics into aesthetics" (ibid.). The handful of students who brought the nationalist movement to Iceland's shores from Copenhagen back in the 1830s had found the agenda for their country's renewal in the German Romantic nationalism which was then circulating in Denmark.

At the same time, therefore, as the natural sciences were making the world more amenable to technological exploitation, and transformations of property relations were

reordering the means of production, a new form of social organisation--the nation--was being naturalised. Biology and notions of racial differences in physiology and intelligence, although coming somewhat later, further enhanced the belief in the given aspect, the naturalness of the nation. Indeed, the basis for such notions were already laid out in treatises on national character and the hierarchy of social forms. Also, ideas of how landscape and climate shape character became attached to nationalist rhetoric.

Beyond this, the landscape came to symbolize the nation, to be a source of inspiration and spirituality. I say landscape, but for some nations this mapping of the nation onto the world also includes the seas and oceans. In the sanctity of Nature, then, is found the unchanging expression of the nation, the ground to which it is essentially attached.

Construction of the self

How the nation-state emerged in the West, and how it structures daily experience have been outlined. In order to understand how an idea of the nation is integrated into the sense of self, we must establish how the individual is socially constructed. There are two aspects to this. First, common sense understanding of the relationship between the individual and society must be deconstructed, to show how this polarization is a product of modernity.

Second, it must be recognized that although the idea of the autonomous individual is historically located, it nonetheless shapes how people understand and act within their world.

Writers such as Dumont, Rorty, Foucault, and Derrida have built upon the critiques of epistemology by Hegel, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein in order to analyse various systems of power in contemporary social practice. One crucial focus of this critique is the notion of the autonomous individual. Entrenched as the dominant view during the Enlightenment, the individual is seen as a monad possessing a separated mind and body, and possessing knowledge as inner representation of an outer reality.

Such a conception of the individual fits well with attitudes about technology, the polity, the market economy, and the nature of language which permeate modern consciousness. Primacy is given to the rational, to objectivity and the mechanical construal of the functioning (a loaded term) of society. Studying a European society which shares in this Enlightenment legacy of the autonomous individual does not preclude recognition of the arbitrary nature of this construction.

As Dumont (1986) points out, Western society has never been entirely individualistic. Rather, the inventions of the Enlightenment overlaid a traditional social practice which continues to exist. Individualism began as a utopian theory, selectively applied (men were individuals, women

were incomplete). Collective institutions persist, however, such as the family and the Church.

Yet the goal of achieving a society based on the principles of individualism has been conceived of differently in different locations. Dumont distinguishes between the universalist ideology of the French Revolution, and the German reaction against it, as expressed by Herder. In Dumont's reading of Herder, the Germanic holism which the latter purports--"I am what my community makes me"--is nonetheless infused with Enlightenment individualism. Herder presents an alternate history of human existence, which lies at the heart of nationalist thought, in which the world is divided into distinct cultures giving expression to humanity in a unique manner. Herder argues in favour of the diversity of cultures, of an "ethnic" rather than "elective" form of nationalism. But all cultures--herein lies the legacy from enlightened individualism--are to be seen as equal, thus not succumbing to ethno- (or, in Dumont's vocabulary, socio-) centrism.

Lutheranism, with its ideal of direct connection between worshipper and God, and its emphasis on internal meditation, produced individualism at the religious level, and made German and Nordic societies receptive to modern individualism. We can extrapolate from the German experience to that of Iceland, since German Romantic nationalism shaped the nationalist movement there. A tension exists in Germanic nationalism, wherein the

experience of the collective, the holistic community, is a reaction to modernity.

Here we can again see the connection between religion and nationalist thought. Following Mauss' (1938) formative essay on the categories of thought humans use to think about "the self," we can see how the development of the modern notion of self relied on the internalization of morality and conscience--on self-reflexivity and self-monitoring--which was (is) part of Christian practice. Christian doctrine, and later, other social doctrines attached to the state, required not just the fulfilling of particular statuses and roles, but the embodiment of descriptions of idealized behaviour. Thus, social discourses become the internalized language which individuals use to construct themselves as subjects.

Nationalist discourse inserts the individual into a collectivity; it defines the sphere of appropriate action. The power of a discourse which links the nation to ideas of kinship and blood, death and immortality makes itself felt in this process. Abandoning one's nation is experienced as loss of a portion of the self--loss of family, language, roots, meaning, authenticity. Although new ways of acting can be learned, they can rarely become more than habit (or, in its radical opposite, can only be fervently clung to) nor take on the resonance and profundity of what is "bred in the bone."

At one level, we can see this in the metaphors used to refer to the nation: nations "awaken" or are born, nations have a will, a soul, a life, and that life can be threatened, indeed, nations can be mortal. Nations have personalities, and they can have inferiority complexes. The nation, it seems, is a living entity apart from the individuals who happen to live and die within it.

The social ties that link people used to be imagined through kinship. This practice has not lost its importance, but rather another practice, involving notions of citizenship, has been superimposed upon it. Put in historical perspective we can observe the gradual incorporation of persons into civil society. We are now witnessing campaigns for the civil, versus moral, rights of children, fetuses, and animals.

Rousseau (1987) proposes that instead of talking of the individual, it is more appropriate in analysis to speak of the "subject" who is the locus for various ideas, beliefs and actions. The subject participates in various activities, all of which involve "the sharing and common construction of meaning." The "self" refers to the personal experience of existence and is a historically situated social construct. Whereas the term "subject" implies the context for experiencing selfhood, it is only an outline, a way of articulating how social discourse sets the conditions for and constrains the construction of "social persons,

economic agents, juridical identities and social bodies" (Turner 1986: 6).

The autonomous individual is a social construct of what can be more usefully conceived of in analysis as a fragmented subject. The subject is composed of various ways of thinking in which there is no controlling or transcendental self. Rather than being a pathological symptom of the postmodern malaise, the fragmented subject is a necessary pre-condition for social action. It allows for a continually shifting apprehension of the self in relation to the world. Identities are structured in interaction with the world and with others, be they plant, animal, or machine. Identities are not objects but rather are particular manners of conceiving of the self. Historical conditions shape the experience of the self; whether it is actually experienced as fragmented or not is dependent on various empirical factors.

Cartesian dualism proposes that a correlation exists between the oppositional pairs of things and ideas, and outside and inside. That is, objects exist in the world exterior to the individual, and are apprehensible by the mind (inside) through the intermediary of ideas. Knowledge therefore is the inner representation of an outer reality. As part of the critique of this Enlightenment legacy, Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues against such a model of perception since it renders problematic how we know the world. We know the world because we are part of it and not

in some separate reality observing it, the latter being a perceptual stance which has the effect of objectifying reality. We know the world because it is what we perceive. Sensation is not separate from perception and there is no external reality separate from internal realities. Rather, experience is self-authenticating: knowing comes from "being there," by being in contact with the object of knowledge. Further, what we perceive is done so in relation, and the kinds of contrasts made are both culturally and experientially learned.

It follows from this construal of perception that, as Ryle (1949) argues, mental processes are available to observation. Thoughts which are made public and those which remain private to the individual do not imply a distinction between what is knowable and what is unknowable. How we come to know these thoughts is not a problem of epistemology but rather one of experience and familiarity. Because we think with language thought is social as opposed to individual. Vygotsky (1966; also Wertsch and Stone 1985, Lee and Hickman 1983) provides a crucial link between the social nature of language and individual experience. His model of language acquisition and the development of inner speech is consistent with a historical materialist understanding of social production.

Vygotsky argues that (what he terms) the higher psychological functions--human personality and human consciousness--derive from social interaction. These

individual processes emerge through the internalization of the structures and patterns which are found in human interaction. Further, these higher functions are mediated in the same manner as is human social activity, through systems of signs. Thus the study of the sign provides the most productive approach to the study of human consciousness. If, following Goldmann (1976), it is true that we cannot interpret meaning apart from its production, then it becomes necessary to understand human thought and human consciousness as human action: as processes rather than objects. The implication for analysis of the self then, is that the individual (as pre-existing object) cannot be its starting point. Rather the individual and notions of the self are actions, and the actions must be the focus of study.

To summarize thus far: the self is not a given. The Western representation of the self, the legacy of Cartesian dualism, posits the autonomous individual separate from society. This separation is ideological rather than actual. Further, the Cartesian assumption that there is an inner and an outer reality--the inner realm of thought made up of representations of the world--is ideological. Thought and language are interrelated to the extent that one cannot occur without the other. And since language is a social production, the separation of the inner world of thought from the outer world of experience and perception is false. Not all forms of thought are linguistic; non-linguistic

thought is also "of the world" (i.e. not "inner"), as it is a component of action. The implication of this for the study of the self is as follows: it has been assumed in the past that the self is an inner reality inaccessible to observation. But since (a) the self and language are interrelated, and language is social, and (b) the self comes into existence through action, it follows that access to understanding the self is available to observation through speech and through social action.

Memory and the known world

Nationalism is a context for symbolically-held knowledge, as defined by Sperber (1975). It can serve as a vehicle for communicating (or obscuring) more complex messages regarding social, political, or economic issues. According to Sperber, symbolic knowledge is "neither about words nor about things, but about the memory of words and things. It is a knowledge about knowledge, a meta-encyclopaedia in the encyclopaedia" (1975: 108).

Symbolic knowledge is a way of holding knowledge in such a manner that it is virtually impervious to logical refutation, since it is not in propositional form. In this sense it relates to what in the study of religion is referred to as sacred knowledge (Rappaport 1971; Rousseau 1987).

What Sperber terms the "symbolic mechanism" is triggered in those instances when new information can only

partially be conceptualized. This failure prompts the individual's attention to be displaced, the new information to be "put in quotation marks" and treated symbolically. Instead of invoking an appropriate conceptual representation of the new information, this new symbolic representation determines an evocational field. Within the limits of this field, various memories may be brought forward to identify the new information which could not be adequately conceptualized. The process of evocation is broad; it can revive memories which are more interesting, more intense and immediate than the information under consideration, and can therefore displace attention away from it towards the evocation.

Nationalist discourse provides knowledge for evaluating new information thought to pertain to the nation, but which cannot be fully conceptualized. Nationalist discourse is rich with many compelling associations which describe the self's relationship to the world. Under certain conditions, it can be used to reconstruct "by recollection or by imagination the background of information which...would have allowed the analysis to be completed and the relevance of the defective conceptual representation to be established" (ibid. 127). Background information can be unavailable if, for example, two interlocutors do not share the same knowledge. The significance of this last observation will become clearer in Chapter Six when the whaling issue is discussed.

Nationalism and the act of memory are linked in what Hobsbawm (1983) refers to as invented tradition. Traditions are created in the context of the nation-state. It is characteristic to conceive of traditions as having primordial origins: Scottish tartans, Celtic harps, Icelandic independence are the symbols of the primordial ties which link the nation's citizens together, symbols of the shared history, shared blood, a mythic level of kinship. In this way a nation is conceived of as having an identity, a particular personality in which all members of the nation share equally. A nation, even if recently constituted as such both politically and ideologically, often defines the bonds amongst its members as primordial. History is a mythic charter at one level, a way of understanding the past as it relates to the formation of the national self.

In summary, anthropological analysis of nationalism cannot treat nationalism as false consciousness, as a form of obfuscation which political leaders invoke to justify the operations of state power. Although nationalism can be seen to operate in this manner, such a view ignores the powerful means by which individuals come to embody the nation in their sense of self. Nationalism is a discursive strategy with which people strive to know their world and interact within it. The existence of the nation as a political formation is contingent upon the apparatuses of the state, in particular, literacy, mass media, universal education,

and the rational individual. The state becomes the protector of the national "culture" which is conceived of as containing sets of defining practices unique to the nation. The power of nationalism transcends its role as political justification for state boundaries, however, through its linkages with notions of kinship, blood, biological metaphors, and its linkages with the land as territory. The operations of nationalism parallel those of religion, in how they link the individual to the collective, and through the latter give the promise of immortality.

In the following chapters I will take up individually the discourses of territory, property, and nature, to elaborate how the context of the Icelandic nation-state shapes the perception and experience of social events and their consequences.

ENDNOTES

1. Mauss (1938) uses this phrase to describe the work on categories of space undertaken, but never completed, by his colleague Czarnowki.

3/ TERRITORY, INDEPENDENCE, AND STRATEGIC SPACE

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the spatial dimension of identity formation was described as "the parcelling out of extension." All social interactions, it was argued, are in some manner located in space, but in space which is not already constituted outside of those interactions. Rather, any space is an object which is systematically constructed through discourse and discursively-premised activities.

In this chapter, the idea of territory is situated within an account of the rise of the modern state and that of Iceland in particular, insofar as territory acts to locate the experience of nationalist sentiment within defined boundaries. The modern definition of territory is an attribute of absolutist states and nation-states alone, and is constructed in relation to other territorial states. Modern territories have specific locations demarcated by boundary lines, although, to be sure, states can and do come into conflict over the exact placement of these imagined lines. Nationalism provides the juridical and moral justification for the existence of territorial boundaries, and the discourse of territory creates a collective as a nation attached to its prescribed homeland.

According to the argument given in Chapter Two, territorial boundaries have been, and continue to be,

strategically defined. In the useful formulation of Giddens (1985), the territories of traditional and modern states can be distinguished according to how their limits are imagined, whether as "frontiers" or "borders." Only the latter are characteristic of modern states, since they are a geographically drawn line delimiting state sovereignty. Frontiers, on the other hand, are peripheral areas which are sparsely inhabited (or inhabited by "tribal" peoples who are subsequently encroached upon) and where political authority is less well established. Frontiers have more of a militaristic aspect, are more likely to pay heed to defensive aspects of the terrain, and do not necessarily correspond to the limits of central political authority. Common to traditional and modern state formations is the fact that the limits of territory are dynamic features, and states typically attempt to expand their boundaries.

The rise of the European state was contingent upon external and internal factors. Externally, its rise was attributable to the strategic activities between centres of power, activities which depended on agreement amongst states regarding the placement of borders. The need for agreement led to the development and institutionalization of the practices of diplomacy and treaty-signing, and to the concept of "the balance of power" (discussed below). Sovereignty became a way of imagining first the monarch's, and then the people's, relationship to the territory. Ironically, recognition of the sovereignty of all states

gave rise to the need for their reflexive monitoring. Intelligence of the economic and military resources of a potential enemy has become integral to the maintenance of territorial integrity.

Internally, the making of a region into a bounded territory involved establishment of overarching means of juridical, legislative, and military control. Local, traditional practices which had previously been carried out more or less autonomously had to be subsumed or replaced by systems which established a single, centralizing authority. This process occurred throughout Europe during the period of the absolutist state, and its ultimate success marks the beginning of the modern period. Fights for local autonomy, of course, were ubiquitous, but generally failed.

The significance of independence

Independence is a pivotal concept in various Icelandic discourses about the nation and the self. As an organizing principle of political action, independence is, according to Seton-Watson, one of three possible motivations for nationalist movements--the others being the seeking of unity or "nation-building" (in Smith 1983). For Icelanders today, however, independence is more than a political creed. It is also a moral imperative for guiding individual behaviour and attitudes toward the survival of the nation.

Nationalism justified the striving for an independent Icelandic state during the 19th and early 20th centuries,

and continues to provide support for any policy which claims to enhance that independence. The fact that policy recommendations to preserve independence might encourage or discourage foreign investment, encourage or discourage state intervention or subsidization, renders the concept no less powerful. On the contrary, its contradictions and manifold applications make the invocation of independence all the more captivating and inspiring.

Independence is a means of imagining the relationship of the Icelandic state and its territory to other states and territories. The relationship is exclusionary, and assumes the discontinuity of both: two states cannot occupy the same space, nor can two territories overlap in the same manner that frontiers blur one into another.

The right of small nation-states to independence and self-determination is endorsed in Icelandic foreign policy. Iceland, along with Denmark, formally recognized Lithuanian independence when it was first declared in 1921. Recent demands by the Baltic republics for recognition of their independence from the USSR gained immediate and unequivocal support from the Icelandic government. In 1990, this policy prompted Moscow first to recall its ambassador from Iceland, and eventually to accept Iceland's offer to act as mediator in negotiations between the Soviets and Baltic states.

In the nationalist movement, independence also became a cue for understanding the motivations and attitudes of the original settlers. As was described in Chapter One, written

accounts from the 12th and 13th centuries were taken more or less as fact within nationalist discourse. To be sure, educated Icelanders today are aware that Norse settlement in Iceland had less to do with avoiding submission to a Norwegian king or the expression of an inherent spirit of independence than it did with population pressures, warfare, and other socio-economic factors. Yet scholars a generation ago, Icelandic and foreign alike, and the general public today, accepted the idea of an Icelandic nation peopled by independent-minded nobles and their followers, which was then quashed by foreign rulers in 1262-64, and which did not again shine forth until 1944.¹

Projecting onto the past the myriad of associations connected with present-day "independence," has led to the imagining of an independent territorial state during the Commonwealth period. In nationalist discourse, the linkage of territorial integrity and independence is considered inherent and natural, although, as will become clear in the following section, the two do not form a necessary pair. Yet this imagining of the past through present categories is characteristic of, though not limited to, nationalist thought.

Texts such as Landnámabók--the Book of Settlements which gives an account of about 400 of the perhaps 50,000 - 80,000 original settlers, their origins, reasons for leaving Norway, their families and land claims--are interpreted unsceptically in nationalist thought as both factual

productions and benign expressions of a nascent national pride:

William the Conqueror had his Doomsday Book compiled for the advanced political purpose of pressing the last penny in taxation from his subjects. But even if Landnámabók was connected indirectly with the organization of the early Church, it is impossible to discover behind it any motives except great family pride and avid interest in knowledge. It is, indeed, a unique work and a fitting monument for the nation that produced it. (S. Einarsson 1957: 108)

More recently, however, scholars at least accept that a measure of self-justification was involved in blaming a foreign king for their ancestors' forced departure, and other motives less noble than a desire for independence might equally have precipitated their migration. However, these same scholars would likely not go so far as to agree with Naylor's (1985) blunt words, that Iceland was Europe's first colony, founded on brigandage and extortion.

Nation-states and the concept of territory

The modern nation-state is both a legal idea and a composite legal entity which exists under international law. A state cannot exist except in a system of states acknowledging each other's existence. A defined territory is fundamental to the modern state; in fact, the origins of the European state lay in the growth of the concept of

territoriality under absolutist rule. Boundaries and territories are relational, and require agreement for them to exist.

The origin of the European nation-state is conventionally traced to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which formally ended the Thirty Years War and the battles between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire, by recognizing the division of Europe into hundreds of dynastic territorial states. The Peace legally recognized state sovereignty and the state system, conditions which were, in fact, already prevailing in practice outside of the Empire. Traditional, feudal states, characterized by their segmental structure and low level of administration, had already largely given way to the more centralized absolutist states such as in France.

Under absolutist rule as it developed in the 16th and 17th centuries, significant changes in the means of governance set the conditions for the emergence of the nation-state in the late 18th century. The concept of sovereignty was linked to the increased coherence of the state as an administrative unity. Frontiers were replaced by borders which emphasized the integral character of statehood. Later, as a peculiar component of the nation-state, this internal unity extended to include the notion of linguistic or cultural homogeneity of the subject people within the European state.

The 16th-century French political philosopher Jean Bodin asserted that a well-ordered state must have, in conjunction with religious tolerance, only one sovereign monarch. Giddens (1985: 94) comments that "Bodin was not simply asserting the transcendent authority of the individual monarch, he was describing and advocating a coordinated system of administrative rule." In the context of the absolutist state, power became generalized, and the role of the monarch was superseded:

Once the idea of sovereignty had effectively been turned into a principle of government, the way was open for it to become connected to that of 'citizenship'--no longer applied within the confined reach of the urban commune but having as its reference the political 'community' of the state as a whole. (ibid.)

Sovereignty justified the centralization of political and military control in the hands of the monarch. At the same time, it generated awareness that political power depended more upon collective abilities than the individual person of the monarch.

Chapter Two listed the four institutional clusterings of modernity, two of which pertain to the establishment of an integrated state territory. Increased surveillance and the centralized control of the means of violence are two irreducible forces operating in the nation-state. Whereas traditional states did claim the monopoly over violence in a given territory, Giddens argues that, first, it was often

difficult to distinguish between internal and external violence, and second, much warfare was undertaken so that states could centralize military control and extend their power. Periodic violence substituted for integrative governance through institutional and administrative means.

The methods of surveillance in the nation-state are several, policing and intelligence gathering being the most obvious. But state administrations also gather statistical data on their populace, conduct Royal Commissions or Senate hearings, manage production, maintain institutions which socialize self-monitoring citizens (schools), or which inquire into the social body (medicine and psychiatry). They gather information and control its dissemination. The extensive reach of the apparatuses of surveillance emerged under absolutism.

In nation-states, the state maintains a monopoly over the means of violence and coercive power. Characteristic of traditional European states was the control of military power by the aristocracy who operated separately from the political centre which then needed to obtain its support. There were no guarantees that the holders of military power would not realign themselves with enemies of the political centre. Thus, in traditional states, military power was not bound by the limits of state territory.

The accumulation of administrative power in the nation-state led to internal pacification. According to Giddens, nation-states exist in a system of states, and their

militarism, their control of the means of violence, is directed outwards, at other states. This situation emerged along with the modern state, and led to a novel means of imagining the relations of power during the 18th century. The idea of a "balance of power" prevailing amongst states was first given recognition in the treaties of Utrecht which ended the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713, and it immediately became a theoretical apparatus for organizing international relations.

A balance of power is not necessarily striven for by the amassing of equal military forces by each nation-state. The systemic aspect of state relations allows for this to be shared out amongst allies, such as pertains in NATO, or, until recently, in the Warsaw Pact. Power does not require its exercise through violence in order to be effective; its threat may be enough. The balance of power is significant because it places the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of other states at the forefront; it prevents--or at least, seeks to control--any state from universalizing its own juridical or political systems to the detriment of others.

Surveillance and violence, then, are a contrasting pair in the modern state, the first leading to internal pacification, and the second to a strengthening through international relations, of the territorial borders of the nation-state. Both are strategic means of exercising power.

The rise of the Icelandic state

I have already described the nationalist interpretation of the beginnings of an Icelandic territory. The 19th-century independence movement put considerable weight on the autonomy of Iceland and Icelanders prior to 1262-64, in order to furnish both justification and inducement for contemporary political aspirations. More recent scholarly arguments have sought to situate the beginning of a sense of Icelandic separateness with inventions such as Alþingi, a legal code applicable throughout the island, or The First Grammatical Treatise (Hastrup 1982).

Whereas there may indeed be evidence for a sense of group distinctiveness, or a united political will opposed to the Norwegian King, there is no reason to assume that distinctiveness and temporary alliance imply the presence of concepts such as sovereignty or bounded territory, with which they would be later associated in the formation of the nation-state. As Rousseau (1990) has pointed out in the context of central Borneo, ethnic differences, even when believed to exist, do not necessarily dictate forms of social, political, or economic interaction. The linkage between ethnic category and forms of exclusion or boundary-making is contingent and not a necessary basis for political practice.

Further to this, an Icelandic territory per se could not have existed during the Commonwealth period since there was no Icelandic state which could define its borders

(Durrenberger 1989). Iceland's geographical formation, an isolated island, makes this point less obvious, until it is fully realized that territory is not a natural condition of the environment, but is, rather, built discursively within a particular institutional framework.

What existed around Iceland during the Commonwealth-- what defined the space in which society imagined itself-- were what Giddens refers to as frontiers. Norse society extended itself outwards from Norway: to Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland, Great Britain, and elsewhere in Europe. In every one of these locations, with the exception of Iceland, the Norse met with resistance from local inhabitants. The colonies in Greenland and Newfoundland failed in part because of this resistance, but more importantly because it was impossible for Norse societies to survive when linked only tenuously by ship to the resources of Europe. Iceland proved to be the limit of successful expansion, but it too suffered when markets for wool cloth collapsed in Europe, making Norwegian trade expeditions unprofitable and less frequent.

With the collapse of the Commonwealth in 1262-64, Iceland became part of the Norwegian state (Norway had consolidated under one king during the 12th century). During this period, too, Iceland cannot be considered as a distinct territory, since the Catholic Church maintained the greatest power in the land, and the monarchy did not

establish a coherent administrative structure until into the 16th century.

The Icelandic legal code of Grágás was replaced by the Norwegian Jónsbók in 1281, which placed the administrative power of the old chieftains (goðar) in the hands of representatives of the King. The judicial structure of local assemblies (þing) was maintained, and these were presided over by the King's representatives and Alþingi while jointly administered by two judges. After 1294, final appeal to the King became possible. Thus, a hierarchical system was instituted which culminated in the person of a distant king.

Alþingi continued as an assembly until 1800, although its power decreased markedly over time. Legislative power was never clearly delineated, but in practice its exercise resided jointly with the King and Alþingi. Prior to the Reformation, the assembly was made up of the King's representatives, the bishops and clergy, and 84 owner-farmers who were appointed for life. Despite this seemingly centralized structure, legal administration was de facto primarily carried out in the local assemblies.

Norwegians occupied the two bishoprics until the end of the 15th century, and increasingly over the next three centuries accrued power and wealth to their sees and monasteries. Given their power, they were able to act with relative autonomy from the monarchy. Much of their wealth made its way back to the ecclesiastical centre in Norway.

For example, Þorlákur, bishop at Skálholt at the turn of the 13th century, was not made patron saint of Iceland until the 20th century, in part because the archbishop at Trondheim did not wish to lose revenues from votive offerings sent from Iceland to the shrine of St. Olaf.²

Not all power resided in the Church. It did not control foreign trade, nor the means of violence. Surveillance we know less about; presumably it extended only insofar as to ensure the regular payment of church tithes.

Given the early destruction of the island's woods, the Icelanders had no materials with which to repair their ships and thereby maintain control of their trade. It therefore passed into the hands of Norwegians at the end of the 13th century. Soon after, however, the Hanseatic League of North German towns made incursions into Norway and dominated all its trade activities, including those with Iceland. The Hanse merchants, in fact, took control of the Baltic, and trade with Poland and Russia, as well as with Scandinavia. Until this takeover, Icelandic economic activity had centred around the production of vaðmál, homespun woollen cloth. As mentioned above, the collapse of this trade had a negative impact on the stability of Icelandic society during the 13th century.

The Hanseatic trade shifted the emphasis from woollen cloth to stockfish and fish-oil, which resulted in an overall social reorganization from pastoralism to an incorporation of fishing into the organisation of farm

production. Farmers sent their labourers to the west and southwest to work on the rowing boats during spring and autumn fishing seasons, and claimed a large portion of their wages as their own share.

Throughout the 15th century, and until 1540, Icelanders traded directly or through Norwegian intermediaries with English and German merchants who landed on sections of the coast. English fishermen, squeezed out of Norwegian waters because of Hanseatic domination, turned to Icelandic waters in 1412. Merchants followed soon after, and they established trade in cloth, timber, food, iron, salt, and other commodities. The tightening of control over the Danish King by the Hanseatic League led to the levying of large tolls on the English. As merchants from Hamburg and Danzig visited Iceland with increasing frequency, armed conflicts between the English and Germans became common in Icelandic waters. The political machinations behind the issuing of licenses amongst rival baronial parties in England triggered a decline in English trade with Iceland after 1450, though it was to persist into the following century.

A few individuals and families in Iceland profited in this arrangement and were able to amass considerable wealth. The majority of the population were subject to violent repression from Crown officials and Icelandic landowners. Violence also erupted amongst the merchants, as mentioned above, and between merchants and Crown officials.

Skirmishes between Icelanders and foreigners occurred, such as happened in Skagafjörður in 1431 when British privateers came to shore. A power vacuum in the North Atlantic during the 15th and 16th centuries left Iceland vulnerable to attack, and the lack of an organized military--Icelandic or Danish--emphasized this vulnerability.

Because of the limited administrative reach of the state, the threat of the use of violence was ever-present. The means by which the Danish Crown (Norway having joined with Denmark in 1380) exercised the threat of violence in Iceland were not necessarily direct. The means of coercion rested in the hands of local authorities, in the absence of an army. Punishment for crimes, which often related to property, could entail capital punishment. To prevent skirmishes between Icelanders and Crown officials--there were some, but violence committed by Icelanders has not as yet been a direct focus for historical study--Danish authorities disarmed all Icelanders during the 16th century. Most Icelandic historians argue that this action was to quell rebellion against the Crown; a minority have suggested that internal collapse of social order was a more likely factor, citing that no evidence exists to indicate any attempt to rebel against the monarchy.

Ironically, the imposition of the trade monopoly in 1602 set the conditions for the establishment of an Icelandic territory. In existence until 1787, the monopoly was part and parcel of the Danish Crown's increasing

administrative and economic interests in its colony. Control by the Hanse merchants over Scandinavian economic affairs had weakened--the Hanseatic League ceased existing in the 17th century--and alliances between the Crown and the merchant class in Copenhagen increasingly wielded economic power. Combined with its control over the Lutheran Church, the absolutist state insinuated itself more directly into the lives of the Icelandic populace.

Under the monopoly, trade with Iceland could only be conducted by Copenhagen merchants licensed by the Crown. The monopoly effectively placed a cordon around the island, fifty-two years after the Reformation initiated the King's confiscation of church-held lands.³ The supervision of the monopoly lay in the hands of Danish aristocrats given positions as governors and other officials. Whereas terms of trade had been relatively good when German and English merchants were buying Icelandic fish, the Danish merchants sought higher profits to offset the exorbitant costs of the licences. Already too dependent on foreign commerce for survival, the monopoly exacerbated problems inherent in production.

Trade favoured fish over agricultural products, and tension between the landowners and a burgeoning number of cottars engaged in fishing increased. Attempts by the Crown or merchants to reorganize production met with opposition from the landowning class, since in the latter's view

development of permanent fishing villages undermined their own interests.

Gunnarsson (1983b) has completed a definitive study on the era of monopoly trade which contradicts the nationalist view that all Icelanders suffered equally during its imposition. Denmark's policy of regulating prices acted as an institutional barrier to economic development. This was not always to the disadvantage of Icelandic producers, since it protected them from declines in market values of fish and agricultural products. However, protection had the long-term detrimental impact of discouraging innovation.

Gunnarsson argues that a small upper class, maintained by privately-owned lands and fief-held⁴ church and crown lands, profited well by the monopoly. They were able to tie landless labourers to agricultural production and prevent large-scale development of the fisheries. Danish merchants could not legally organize the fishing operations, nor live in Iceland. Such restrictions allowed Icelandic landowners the opportunity to form partnerships with merchants. This practice persisted until into the second half of the 18th century when it met with criticism from liberals in Denmark and Iceland, who began to petition the King to implement reforms.

Until the establishment of the Danish absolutist state, Crown rule of its holdings varied considerably from place to place. Early in the 16th century, and until 1814, the Danish crown controlled Schleswig and Holstein (as far south

as Hamburg), Greenland, the Faeroe Islands, Norway, and Iceland (until 1658 it had also controlled southern Sweden). No administrative structure centralized control over these lands, although Copenhagen was the centre of the kingdom and merchant activity flowed from its harbour. Its university was the cultural centre for Icelanders and Norwegians. For Iceland in particular, Copenhagen was the centre for communications: as Iceland lacked its own means of transporting cargo from one side of the island to the other, it was more expedient to ship goods via Copenhagen merchant ships.

The maintenance of the monopoly required a greater degree of administrative supervision. By the 16th century, division of the country into sýslar (counties)--more clearly demarcated than the medieval hreppar (parishes) which nonetheless remained in use for administering parish relief to the destitute and as a lower level of supervision by the hreppstjóri (constable)--strengthened the hold of the Crown. In 1662, Alþingi acknowledged the absolute power of the King, thereby severely curtailing its own power. Shortly thereafter, the country came under the control of newly established ministries in Copenhagen. By 1700 Alþingi had lost the last of its legislative powers.

The trade monopoly remained in place until 1787, but even then trade was only opened to subjects of the Danish Crown. In effect, then, Copenhagen remained the commercial centre for Iceland, and Danish merchants controlled all

Icelandic foreign trade. Whereas the trade monopoly was a means of establishing an exclusive economic territory, the forms of legislative authority were also significant in structuring the relationship between Iceland and Denmark.

During the Post-Reformation period, the Danish Crown became more interested in the internal matters of Iceland, and the beginnings of systematic enquiry were linked to its attempts to administer its territory. The major examples of these, by Bishop Árngrímur Jónsson, and later by Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. Intelligence derived from Icelandic sources was used for administrative purposes.

The language of the Church after the Reformation was Icelandic, and the officers of the Church were themselves Icelandic. The Icelandic church was a separate ecclesiastical unit from that of Denmark, and was headed by native Icelandic bishops. This contrasts to the experience of the Faeroe Islands, where the language and officials of the Church were Danish; this affected social organisation, notions of identity and the Faeroese language (Wylie 1987).

The Lutheran church maintained a monopoly over religion in the Nordic countries, such that the Danish prince also played the role of chief protector and upholder of the Lutheran doctrine. Following Max Weber, Pétursson (1983) argues that the overlap of, and at certain levels fusion between, church and state encouraged the processes of standardization which fed into the building of the nation-

state. The clergy was given an integral place in the administration. As the sole controllers of print media, they exercised a centralising power over the populace. Well into the 19th century, the only printing press in the land operated at the bishopric of Hólar, and it was the purpose of the bishop there to provide church and households with religious texts.

Towards the end of the 17th century, the rule of Jónsbók in legal practice was increasingly displaced by Danish and Norwegian codes. In 1732, the King eliminated Jónsbók altogether.⁵ Still, Icelandic law was recognized, and Iceland was defined as a separate juridical unit. Norwegian and Danish laws were used only when there was a lack of appropriate Icelandic rules.

The transitional era

The possibility of Icelanders achieving control over their own territory arose with events happening elsewhere in the Danish realm. In 1814, Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden after the Napoleonic Wars, an act which triggered the beginnings of nationalist resistance in Norway to foreign rule. Norwegians began to fight for their own parliamentary rule, eventually gaining it in 1884. Denmark was also engaged in conflicts with the German Confederation from 1849 until 1920 over its possessions of Schleswig and Holstein. German nationalism arose in the two provinces, and Denmark ceded them to Prussia after suffering defeat in the War of

1864. Although military force was invoked in this conflict, a legal debate also took place in which arguments from constitutional history were put forth.

In Iceland, legal history provided the primary arguments for independence. Politics was the preserve of a small elite, and the majority had to be educated in political practice and persuaded to support independence--virtually the only political issue of the time. Political leaders argued that primary responsibility for society's poverty lay in Danish colonial rule, and that all Icelanders together would benefit equally by the creation of a nation-state.

The majority of the population had heretofore not been involved in the discursive sphere of politics. Until the advent of the nationalist movement, no social space existed in which a practice of opposition or resistance could develop. As will be discussed further in Chapter Five, peasants could resist only locally through improvisatory, satirical poetry and gossip. Nationalism provided a new discourse through which they could learn to define themselves as a separate group capable of laying claim to independent statehood. Eventually, an idea of rights was established in Iceland even though at the time political theories of self-determination were recent (i.e. the American and French Declarations of 1776 and 1793 respectively). Legal recognition of basic civil rights came with the granting of an Icelandic constitution in 1874,

modelled on Danish civil rights granted in that country in 1849.

After the 1830s, the political body of Iceland became more inclusive. A significant element of the establishment of the Icelandic nation-state was the secularization and centralization of communications and information. These began to develop with greater consistency in the final quarter of the 19th century. The process was aided by the building of roads and bridges undertaken during this period. International telegraph and telephone communications were established in 1904 and 1906.

Internal delivery of post had always been irregular at best, to the point that it was sometimes more expedient to send a letter across the country via the yearly boat to and from Copenhagen. This came to be more of a problem with the advent of newspaper publishing, and the need to have more regular deliveries prompted some improvements in the 1870s. But it was only after Reykjavík had become the new centre, displacing Copenhagen in the beginning of the 20th century, that this service became efficient and regular.

Still, the mobilization of the populace and the establishment of political practice proved slow in coming. In Grimsson's (n.d.: 200) words,

The bulk of the population was either without the right to vote or generally disinterested in politics, elections being generally non-competitive and with extremely low participation. The Icelandic political

system operated only intermittently with long intervals between events of a political nature.

Icelanders in Copenhagen intent on gaining reforms for their homeland lobbied Danish Ministers and members of the Rigsdag, published articles in Danish newspapers, and sent delegations to the King, in the hope of generating interest and knowledge of conditions prevailing in Iceland.

In 1845, Icelandic political leaders reestablished Alþingi, not as a legal court as it had been before its dissolution, but as a consultative assembly. With the decline of absolutist rule in Denmark--the King renounced his absolute powers in 1848--many reforms were undertaken which were to transform the impoverished peasantry of that country into successful small farmholders. A few reforms were also undertaken in Iceland, including the establishment of a special Icelandic Department to serve as an advisory body to the Rigsdag.

However, the Danish government prevented moves that might have led to enhanced Icelandic autonomy. They at first refused the founding of an Icelandic bank, in order to keep financial activity centred in Copenhagen, as well as prevented the creation of a law school in Iceland, since they would then lose control of the training of Icelandic administrators.

Three Danish bodies maintained authority over Iceland: the King, his ministers (referred to in present-day historical accounts as "the Authorities"), and the Rigsdag.

Three Icelandic, or mostly Icelandic institutions were able to have an effect on Danish control: Alþingi, the Icelandic Department in Copenhagen, and the highest administrative levels in Iceland.

Alþingi instituted some economic reforms, establish several schools, create a local governmental organization, and improve medical services, and blocked attempted moves by Danish Authorities to recruit Icelanders into the Danish military.

Independence leader Jón Sigurðsson put forth a historical argument supporting Icelandic independence which, despite its quick refutation by the Danes on several reasonable grounds, had popular appeal in Iceland. He argued that what prevailed between Norway and Iceland in 1262-64 was a "covenant of union" (Gamli sáttmáli, or "Old Pact") which placed Iceland in union with the Norwegian King, and not the Norwegian state. When, in 1380, the Danish and Norwegian crowns were united, the terms of the pact passed to the Danish King. The Icelanders reaffirmed this relationship when they acknowledged absolute rule in 1662. When the Danish King relinquished this rule in 1848, he could only legitimately hand it over to the Icelandic people, and not to the Danes.

Grimsson points out that political activity was limited during this time to self-appointed representatives or those supported by a handful of district leaders:

This lack of interest on the part of the electorate, together with the almost automatic support of the views of the Alþingi's majority, excluded any general pluralistic electoral pressures on the M.A.s [Members of Alþingi].... It was for the national leaders to mobilise the people into political action and then the maximum result was only a few thousand signatures to petitions, the content of which was entirely decided by the parliamentary group. (n.d.: 218)

In 1871, the King issued the so-called Status Law, which

defined Iceland as an inseparable part of the Danish realm with special national rights. Certain affairs were designated as domestic Icelandic affairs, including civil law, court jurisdiction (excepting the Supreme Court of Denmark, to which Icelandic cases could be submitted), police, church, education, public finances and national properties. (Karlsson 1980: 78-9)

In 1874 the King granted Iceland a constitution, which gave legislative power over domestic affairs to Alþingi, although the King maintained the right of veto. The impact of this reform, therefore, was not great. Executive power still remained in Danish hands, and the only benefit the constitution yielded was to prevent the Danes from enforcing legislation in Iceland without Alþingi's approval.

The politics of the late 19th century centred on the constitutional relationship with Denmark, wherein most

politicians opposed any Danish power or control. Political parties had yet to be established, but increased competition amongst interest groups during the 1890s led to their emergence (Kristinsson 1989).

In 1904, Home Rule established a parliamentary government with a Danish minister, selected from the Danish cabinet, who would reside in Iceland and be responsible to Alþingi.

More importantly, the Act of Union of 1918 established the conditions which would eventually lead to the declaration of the Republic of Iceland in 1944. Under the Act, Iceland was a sovereign state in personal union with Denmark and honoured the same King. The citizens of both states shared equal rights. Denmark would conduct Iceland's foreign affairs and guard its waters, although Iceland could share in the commission of these responsibilities.

The Act also provided for the dissolution of this arrangement by either party after twenty-five years had elapsed. Accordingly, three years before the end of the period, negotiations were to be entered into between the two signatories. This clause effectively ended the era of independence politics, since Icelandic politicians agreed that the best policy required waiting out the period. This Act came to figure in the relations between Iceland, Great Britain, and the United States during World War II.

One grievance between Iceland and Denmark concerned the ability of Denmark to act fully in Iceland's interests in

its defence of its territorial waters. Since the beginning of the 19th century, Denmark had been susceptible to pressures in various forms from Great Britain. In 1807, the British navy set up a blockade in Copenhagen harbour, fearful that the Danish navy might assist Napoleon. The blockade prevented the sailing of trade ships to Iceland, and led to dire circumstances amongst the latter's populace.

The blockade set the conditions for events in 1809, when Jørgen Jörgensen, a Danish adventurer aboard a British ship attempting to do what essentially was illegal trade with island residents, declared himself Protector of Iceland and Representative of the British King. The affair was over in fifty-eight days, when the British themselves deposed Jörgensen, but not before the Danish governor had been imprisoned, Danish authority dissolved and its property confiscated, and Iceland declared an independent republic. The Icelanders themselves seemed rather taken aback by all the activity, although Jörgensen was able to muster from their ranks an army of eight men.

The story of the "Dog Day King" is now little more than an eccentric footnote to Icelandic history. It did, however, produce a declaration from the British that Iceland, Greenland, and the Faeroe Islands were immune from British attack, although some voiced the opinion that it was in its and Iceland's interests that the latter be taken over by the former.

At the close of the 19th century, foreign trawlers, mostly British, increased in number on the fishing grounds around Iceland. The territorial limit ended three nautical miles from the coast, reduced from 16 miles since the beginning of the century, most likely due to British pressure on Denmark (Karlsson 1980). With the growth of an Icelandic fishing sector, competition inevitably developed. At first complaints about the damage that the foreign trawlers exacted on the gear of Icelanders' small boats circulated. Protests to the Danes had no results: those in charge failed to promote Icelandic interests, or adequately protect the three-mile limit. However, the question of access to the fishing grounds around Iceland did not become an important issue until after World War II.

We have surveyed the conditions prevailing during the Danish trade monopoly period which fostered the development of an Icelandic territory under the sovereignty of the Danish Crown. The nationalist movement sought to remove the exercise of centralized power over that territory from the hands of the Danish state, and place it under the purview of an Icelandic state. Icelandic political leaders gained all of their goals step by step through juridical means. Following the Act of Union in 1918, the Icelandic government participated in its own foreign policy decisions, although Denmark maintained responsibility for protecting its territorial waters.

Since 1940, two major events have defined Icelandic foreign policy, and have each set their stamp on public perceptions of sovereignty, territory, and international relations. These are, first, the continuing foreign military presence in Iceland since the British first invaded in 1940, and second, the series of conflicts with Britain over fishing limits known collectively as the Cod Wars.

The British and American occupations

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, British leaders became increasingly concerned about the vulnerability of Iceland in the event of war, and the detrimental impact on cross-Atlantic traffic should the Nazis establish air and submarine bases there. In 1939, Lufthansa had applied to the Icelandic government for landing rights, which were refused. The British Consul General to Iceland reported to his own government of the increasing presence of German observers in the country and naval patrols in Icelandic waters. The British made repeated offers to the Icelanders to protect their country from possible German invasion. Although supportive of the allied cause, the government declined these offers. In 1918, Iceland had declared itself perpetually neutral, a policy unchallenged by any political party. Accepting British offers would, it was generally felt, undermine this neutrality and open Iceland to German aggression.

Neutrality was at this time conceived of as a defence, a means of avoiding being brought into any conflict. Even the invasion of Denmark on 9 April 1940 did not alter this policy, and the government once again refused Britain's renewed requests for facilities in Iceland. Instead, Alþingi sought to prevent the Nazis from taking over Danish obligations to protect their nation by declaring on 11 April that Iceland was in full control of its foreign policy, and investing Alþingi with the royal power of King Christian X. The Icelanders hoped that the country's isolated position in the North Atlantic would place it safely outside the limits of war.

Great Britain and the United States immediately recognized Iceland's de facto independence: Great Britain and Iceland established diplomatic relations, while the United States' recognition of Iceland took the form of consular relations. Soon after, Sweden and the Norwegian government in exile also established diplomatic relations with Iceland.

The British remained unconvinced of the capacity of these declarations to prevent Nazi aggression, and on 6 May, British troops landed on Iceland without advance warning. The Prime Minister issued a formal protest, but in a national broadcast urged Icelanders to treat the occupying forces as guests.

It proved difficult to persuade Icelanders of the reality of the war, even when fishing boats were sunk by

mines or caught in military action. Icelanders expected to return to their state of unarmed neutrality following the war, and it would appear that its gravity and scope escaped their awareness. The war became known colloquially as "the Blessed War" because it brought in its wake unheard-of consumer goods--radios, vacuum cleaners, Coca-Cola,--regular wage labour, and an increased demand in Britain for Icelandic fish. The effects of combat were distant; the effects of occupation were immediate and dramatic.

The Icelandic government realized that the stipulation of a three-year negotiation period prior to any unilateral abrogation of the Act of Union and declaration of full independence would be delayed by the war, since Denmark could not enter into these negotiations while occupied. It was the unanimous will amongst Icelandic politicians to sever ties with Denmark with finality in 1941, without the negotiation period. However, it was thought that no action could be taken without consultation with Britain.

The British for their part feared the potential damage to their reputation should Iceland break with the Act of Union while under their occupying power. In consultation with the Icelandic prime minister and foreign minister, the British minister to Iceland stated that any unilateral action by Iceland would be immoral, and comparable to Germany's

tearing up, in April 1940, the nonaggression treaty which she had concluded with Denmark in May 1939;

tearing it up because it did not suit her political convenience at the moment, the ordinary technique of totalitarian States. (cited in Jensdóttir 1974: 37)

This consultation had its effect, and politicians began to debate the appropriateness of immediate abrogation. The possibility that other states would not recognize their independence acted as a deterrent. Finally, Alþingi passed resolutions which notified of their future intent to declare full independence should Denmark not fulfil its part in negotiations, which was indeed an impossibility at the time.

The Germans used these resolutions for propaganda purposes in Denmark. While the other Nordic countries accepted the right of Iceland to its independence, criticism was voiced over the timing of its resolutions regarding potential plans, and the lack of consideration they showed toward the Danes. Danish leaders opposed any moves to end the Act. When Iceland did eventually declare itself a Republic, many Danes resented this abandonment by an ally during their time of need.

The American military took over the occupation of Iceland from the British in 1941, months before the attack on Pearl Harbour formally brought the US into the war. Conditions changed such that a declaration of Icelandic independence once again became likely. Since the British were no longer the occupying power, they were less opposed to Iceland's actions, since they thought that engaging with

an independent country in future endeavours would benefit their own interests.

However, the United States, expressing the same fears regarding the effects of anti-American propaganda in Denmark as the British earlier had, opposed Iceland's manoeuvrings. Further, the Americans had signed an agreement with the Danish representative to the US allowing for the establishment of military bases on Greenland, an act which led to the dismissal of the Danish representative by his government. The Americans continued to recognize his authority, but wished to avoid further conflict with the Danes. American opposition became public in Iceland, and drew some criticism, although some prominent members of Icelandic society agreed that independence should be postponed on moral grounds, until both Denmark and Iceland were free (Jensdóttir 1974).

The US, however, did not oppose the declaration of an Icelandic Republic in 1944, since in their view the Act of Union expired in that year. Thus, Alþingi postponed plans until that spring, when a national referendum dealt with the question of independence. In a national broadcast, the King sent word to Iceland announcing his opposition to Iceland's actions while Denmark remained occupied. This did not deter the voters, 97.35% of whom declared themselves in favour of independence, which was inaugurated on 17 June, the anniversary of the birth of Jón Sigurðsson.

The Republic of Iceland thus came into existence in the context of the strategic positioning of Great Britain and the United States during wartime. Although both countries had recognized Iceland's de facto independence in 1940, they were unwilling to support its abrogation of the Act of Union since the ambiguity of the legality of this step might negatively affect their own state interests. Britain's deliberate withdrawal from the issue once it was no longer in charge of the occupation is evidence of this strategic thinking. Icelandic independence was then thought of in terms of the benefits which might accrue to future relations between the two states.

Iceland was no longer an isolated island on the edge of the known world of Europe, as it had been during the middle ages. Nor was it a territorial appendage to an absolutist Danish state. Militarily, Iceland had been brought directly into the world system, and its interdependence with other states, and its susceptibility to their interests, was thrown into dramatic relief. Thus, the idea of independence--so bounded and contained in the imagination--was to be constantly undermined by the realities of its indirect reliance on the force of larger powers. Recognition of this contradiction was not lost on the Icelandic public, but many debated the necessity of compromising the principle of independence, and saw it as evidence of the corruptibility of political power.

The NATO presence

At the end of the war, the Icelandic government granted to the Americans the right to land aircraft on its territory so long as the US was responsible for the rebuilding of Germany. Initially, America's requests to establish permanent military installations on the island were denied, and all military personnel were eventually withdrawn by 1947. However, communist aggression in Korea became a means to persuade the Icelandic government that the UN alone could not ensure Iceland's security. In 1949, under Nordic pressure, Iceland joined the North Atlantic Alliance, albeit unwillingly. Under its conditions of joining, Iceland would not be required to accept foreign troops or provide military bases during peacetime.

Two years later, Iceland and the US signed the Defence Agreement which has, with subsequent amendments, governed the American forces stationed in Iceland. It granted the US military bases on Icelandic territory, with the proviso that the "Icelandic Defence Force" would defend Iceland and ensure the security of the surrounding seas.

The reaction in Iceland was profound; the outrage over this selling out of Icelandic independence is dramatized in Atom Station, a novel by Halldór Laxness. A film clip, occasionally broadcast on television in the context of discussions about Iceland's initial membership in NATO--an anniversary celebrated and mourned in 1989--showed scenes of the riot which took place outside Alþingi. The image is in

sharp contrast to the quiet normalcy of Reykjavik: rocks smashed through windows, clouds of tear gas drifting across the square, police pursuing shadowy figures. Opposition to the base became the defining feature of Icelandic politics for the next three decades.

In response to the American military presence, the USSR maintains a disproportionately large embassy in Reykjavik. Exact numbers of personnel are not known, but most estimates place the figure at 35-40 staff, along with their families.⁶

In 1956, the Icelandic government considered evicting the American military. The Progressive and Social Democratic parties, as well as the predecessor of the Peoples' Alliance, supported the move; however it came to nothing because of the Hungarian crisis.

As will be discussed in the following section, the question of the base and Iceland's continued participation in NATO has been used as a strategic threat against other states, notably Britain and the US. Membership in NATO guarantees for every state a right to be consulted in decisions affecting its fate. The advantage Iceland has been able to draw from its membership is its ability to situate its relations with the United States in a multilateral context, a factor which, as will become clearer in Chapter Six, came into play in the whaling issue.

Given the uncertain future of the international role of NATO after the collapse of Soviet power, the importance of maintaining surveillance over northern waters remains to be

reevaluated. Although Iceland will always have geopolitical importance, a reduction in its importance as a surveillance facility could have an impact on its range of play in foreign relations.

The Cod Wars

The series of conflicts between Iceland and Great Britain known collectively as the "Cod Wars" is the clearest example of the way in which Icelandic territorial borders have been fixed through strategic interaction amongst states. The Cod Wars centred around Iceland's step-by-step expansions of its territorial waters. Since independence in 1944, the Icelandic government has sought to affirm its sovereignty over the waters surrounding it. Following developments in the negotiations over the Law of the Sea, Iceland unilaterally declared on four occasions the extension of its territorial waters and its exclusive economic zone.⁷

Every extension was contested by those states directly affected, and the three most recent extensions resulted in physical confrontations between Icelandic gunboats and British navy frigates, tug-boats, supply vessels, and trawlers. These conflicts at sea and the surrounding diplomatic haggling constitute the Cod Wars.

During these conflicts, Icelandic leaders refined the techniques of brinkmanship. They had more at stake than the British, and they did not have as many conflicting

interests to balance. In this and other cases fishing policy has been and is integrally linked to foreign policy.

The significant aspect of the Cod Wars is how, once the Icelandic government gained the legal right to administer its own foreign policy, it soon was engaged in legal altercations with other states of Northern Europe regarding the limits of its sovereignty. Given the economic importance of the fisheries, government policy was based on the idea that sovereign control of the waters surrounding Iceland was essential to the nation's survival and the conservation of fish stocks. Interestingly, the notion of what constituted acceptable limits of sovereignty was extended over a 30-year period.

Each expansion provoked a remarkable degree of hostility between the two conflicting parties. The reaction amongst Icelanders was close to unanimous: the waters to which their government lay claim were already, by national consensus, part of the territory of the nation. Thus, Icelanders overwhelmingly felt they had justice on their side, and British belligerence was taken as unjust.

The Cod Wars have been subject to several political and legal analyses and are cited as landmark instances of where violence has resulted from a failure of negotiated agreement between states. The work of Jónsson (1982) is of particular interest on two accounts. First, it is a detailed and tightly argued treatment of the Icelandic government's understanding of the Cod Wars. Second, it is a clear

example of a nationalist interpretation of those events. The author was Secretary for Press and Information to the Icelandic Prime Minister during the 1972-73 conflict.

Jónsson clearly accepts Iceland's position as just, and portrays Britain as a belligerent law-breaker. For example, in appendices, the author lists the number of Icelandic vessels and aircraft used in comparison to the British forces mustered off the Icelandic coast. The message is clear in such a lay-out: a small, defenceless nation was being bullied by a great military power. He also enumerates cases of British rammings of Icelandic coast-guard vessels. He underplays or ignores altogether the British claims that the Icelandic vessels were operating in dangerous manners and precipitating the rammings. Nor does he draw attention to the fact that, during the 1972-73 conflict, the manner in which Iceland declared expansion of its waters was ruled illegal in international court. But, as in any good story, there is a happy ending: good triumphs over bad, and justice prevails. At least, this is the summary narrative which most Icelanders accept as true.

During the 1972-3 conflict, the Icelandic government linked the fisheries dispute to the NATO base, in an attempt to put pressure on Britain. At the end of May 1973, the Icelandic government requested that the NATO Security Council ensure the departure of British frigates from the 50-mile zone. British military aircraft were banned from landing at Keflavik airport; the Icelandic government

asserted that the aircraft overstepped their NATO duties and engaged in surveillance of the Icelandic coastguard.

Despite its efforts, the government failed to turn NATO to its advantage. Years later, opponents of the base pointed to the failure of this attempt as a proof that the Icelandic Defence Force was, in fact, not at all concerned with Iceland's welfare.

Iceland and the European Community

More recently, the context for the Icelandic state to assert its territorial integrity has shifted to forms of economic cooperation amongst nation-states.

As a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Iceland is involved in negotiations between that organisation and the European Community (EC) to determine a future basis for trade agreements.⁸ With the closing of the European Community in 1992 or shortly thereafter, Iceland will lose its preferential markets. At present, EC countries account for just under 60% of Iceland's exports. The current free trade agreement with the EC applies to 60% of Iceland's fish exports to the bloc, the remainder being liable to import duties.

The European Community conducts 23% of its trade with EFTA countries, an amount greater than its trade with either the US or Japan. The EC wishes to establish the free flow of goods, capital, services, and people between the two organisations, as well as to open access to education and

research establishments. Since each EFTA nation is expected to make individual provisos against complete reciprocity, Iceland will ask for special consideration based on its small size and dependence on a single industry.⁹ Iceland wants to establish a tariff-free arrangement, and has moved toward this with a recent agreement recognizing free trade on fish and other marine products. There is, however, the possibility that this will lead to foreign investment in the fishing industry, thus leaving open the possibility of foreign access to the fishing grounds.

Iceland has few alternatives for trade arrangements, since it is dependent particularly on the other Nordic countries for the management of its foreign policy and foreign trade. It relies on the intelligence-gathering functions and administrative networks of these countries, as well as those of international organisations. With the free trade agreement between Canada and the US, Iceland's share of the American market will likely decline, since Canadian fish will be cheaper. If Iceland were to remain outside of the EC, it would lose access to a significant market. Yet the conditions for entering the EC are seen as a threat to Icelandic independence.

In March 1990, the then Foreign Minister Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson (Social Democrat) toured the constituencies to inform people of the talks between EFTA and EC, and to talk about the economic changes taking place in Europe. He then spoke to Icelanders living in Copenhagen on the same topic.

At one point he said that Icelanders should not take for granted that their country was a European nation: "We are in fact refugees from Europe, and the question is whether we want to return."

Most recently, EFTA and EC have discussed the possibility of creating a European Economic Area, although talks broke down in the summer 1991. The major stumbling block appears to be EC access to Norwegian and Icelandic fishing grounds, a goal especially desired by Britain, Eire, and France.

Independent people

Independence was, from some Icelanders' point of view, short-lived. The British and American occupations during World War II, followed by the establishment of the American NATO base at Keflavik, were a provocation and a threat to the nation and its autonomy. The debate over the NATO base defined Icelandic politics well into the 1970s, and can still raise angry reactions. Anti-Americanism is a part of many Europeans' thinking, but I would argue that the presence of the base makes this feeling even stronger in Iceland. The base was and is a symbol of a foreign power against which Icelanders can in a sense continue their battle for independence. Until 1987, when Leifur Eiriksson Airport--its costs underwritten by the American government--first opened, this point was brought home to Icelanders returning by air from trips abroad. The international

airport was located on the American base, and Icelanders arriving in their own country had to pass through both American and Icelandic checkpoints.

"Inside and outside" is a theme Durrenberger and Pálsson (1989) emphasize in their introductory remarks to The Anthropology of Iceland. Icelanders describe themselves as an insular people, as self-contained individuals in a self-contained world. Eggertson (1975) provides an example of this attitude in his description of Icelandic foreign relations. He characterized the situation facing Iceland as the need to balance isolationism and internationalism. Icelandic society, according to him, needs to be protected from the overwhelming impact of outside labour and foreign investment, while it must at the same time develop its international markets and remain in NATO to protect it from Russian occupation.

The leap between speaking of national and personal independence is not as large as it may at first appear, if it is kept in mind that both the nation and the self are discursive constructs using similar metaphors and summarizing symbols. Scholarly literature dealing with nationalism and modernity characterizes the self within these formations as atomized and self-willed. Similarly, the nation is, discursively speaking, an individual actor--Iceland does this, Britain does that--thus, the nation is at the same time a collection of individuals and a collective individual. In Iceland, both these senses of autonomy and

bounded individualism are expressed through the notion of independence.

Independence intersects with notions of the self and appropriate conduct. A tension is experienced between self and society--a tension between maintaining privacy and a measure of self-determination in the context of a close circle of family, friends, and obligations. It is not possible for an Icelander to be anonymous in his or her own land: privacy must instead be ensured behaviourally. Ideally, friends and confidants are chosen with care, and trust is selectively placed. Boundaries around the private self, or the private realm of the family, are used to filter information, because þjóð veit, ef þrír vita ("what three know, all the world soon knows").

In general, independence is linked with notions of privacy and autonomy. Emphasis is placed on early self-sufficiency in child-rearing, and the overt expression of personal feeling is discouraged. A separation is made between the inner and outer selves, in which the inner self is kept hidden and protected behind a public façade. This manner of conceiving of the self is not unique to Iceland, but rather is a characteristic construction of many Western societies. But it takes on a separate quality in Nordic (i.e. not just Icelandic) discourse, which imagines the private self in terms of self-containment and inward reflection. The films of Ingmar Bergman are reflective of this construction of privacy.

The language of psychology is only beginning to penetrate the nation, through foreign media and a few Icelanders trained abroad in psychology. For the most part, greater value is placed upon keeping quiet about one's feelings. This attitude comes through particularly in criticisms of American behaviour as it is known through tourists and television. The emphasis on personal confession and immediate intimacy which is a common means in America of overcoming the anonymity of many social interactions, is seen to be too forward, and rather vulgar.

This is not to say that Icelanders do not have inner feelings; the difference lies in the appropriate means of expressing them. Without a discourse of psychology, inner insecurity is not directly expressed, and emotional states must be inferred from behavioural cues. An inhibiting force on the explicit expression of emotional states is the security of surrounding social relations. In a society of 250,000 people, it is obvious that one will most likely be born into, grow up in, and die within the same nexus of kin and close friends. A friend once commented to me, in reference to the "search for one's real self" seemingly ubiquitous in America, that Icelanders had no such insecurities: they knew who they were. This knowledge, in my observation, was premised on this security of social relations, and relied on the consistency of feedback the person received from those around him or her. Being a

stranger was not a situation with which they had to contend, unless they were abroad.

With such a small social circle, it is important to maintain respect and the privacy of others. Gossip is inevitable, and together with ostracism it is a means of exerting pressure on others to conform to particular expectations. Yet to be seen to be a gossip is a negative identification. Statements made about others are ideally phrased so that they are more descriptive than overtly judgemental. As well, more emphasis is placed on descriptions of behaviour which the listener is to evaluate, rather than statements about motivations.

Knowing others relies upon being able to situate them into a larger nexus of locale and family. When I first arrived and was still little-known to my acquaintances, they were quite unwilling to tell me stories of other people I did not know. I was told that the reason for this reluctance was that they did not wish to interfere with my forming my own opinion. As few clues are given explicitly--at least, explicit to me--it took some time before I had acquired enough contextualizing knowledge to form my own preliminary opinions.

Humour revolves around the specifics of person, place, thing, and time. Anecdotes are a particular favourite, and are supposed to fit with previously-held knowledge about the individual at the centre of the story. Friends would say, it doesn't matter if the story is true or not, so long as it

is entertaining. This "obsession with detail and reality," as one person described it, is difficult for some foreigners to overcome. Lacking the detailed knowledge of individuals and their kinship, they find themselves unable to participate in seemingly endless conversations about individuals known in common by the others. Interest in individuals also finds expression through the writing of biographies and autobiographies, 30 to 40 of which are published each year.

Independence, then, is not an accurate description of the experience of the self in social relations, but is rather more descriptive of how those social relations are managed. The disembeddedness of social relations, discussed in Chapter Two as a characteristic of modernity, is not present in Iceland. This is not to deny the dramatic disruption of the form of social relations wrought by urbanization and industrialization, which has led to certain redefinitions of social roles and statuses.

In such a small state, it is possible to know members of the government, the President, workers, heads of banks, if not directly, then through closely-linked social networks. Governmental and economic structures do not have the depersonalizing aspect they take on in larger states, and society is still thought of in terms of individuals rather than abstract systems. Given the emphasis in daily life and media news on local knowledge, it is hardly surprising that foreign events are understood in fairly

stereotypical manners, and events in Iceland are understood as occurring for separate and unique reasons.

Summary

Territory situates the experience of nationalist sentiment within geographically-defined boundaries, in relation to other territorially-defined nation-states. Territories are characteristic of absolutist and nation-states, in that they are negotiated in the strategic activities between these states.

Modern states require a high degree of internal coherence, which is achieved through extensive administrative systems, techniques and institutions of surveillance, and control of the means of violence all centred in the state.

In Iceland, independence is a pivotal concept for the imagining of the nation and the self. It is used to construct notions of appropriate relations between states, govern individual behaviour towards others, and structure historical knowledge about the nation.

The conditions for the possibility of an Icelandic state were established in the post-Reformation period, with the establishment of the Danish trade monopoly in 1602. Two events since 1944 have profoundly marked public perceptions of sovereignty, territory, and international relations: the continuing foreign military presence since the British

wartime occupation of 1940, and the Cod Wars with Britain over extensions of territorial waters.

ENDNOTES

1. Although Iceland became a sovereign state in personal union with Denmark on 1 December 1918, the anniversary of this date does not have the same significance as that of the declaration of the Republic on 17 June 1944. The former date is a holiday for university students, who supposedly attend a commemorative ceremony, whereas the latter is a national holiday.
2. After the Reformation, there was no reason to petition the pope for a patron saint of Iceland. Once Catholicism was legalized at the end of the last century, interest in the promotion of Þorlákur was renewed.
3. Occasionally, there were breaches of the territorial boundary: for instance, in 1627, Algerian pirates landed on Heimaey, one of the Vestmann Islands, where they ransacked, killed forty people, and kidnapped almost four hundred islanders for sale in slave markets. Danish authorities negotiated the release of some, who then brought back to Iceland tales of exotic people and places, and introduced the word barbari into the language. A few survivors built an earthwork on Heimaey to defend themselves from the next attack which never came.

4. Fiefs were bestowed on a temporary basis, and were tied to offices rather than to persons.

5. Interestingly, there was a revival of Icelandic law in the wake of the formal abolition of the Alþingi in 1800 and the establishment of a new High Court. The president of this new court, Magnús Stephensen, completed studies of legal history which then formed a new understanding of the identity of Icelandic law, which was then used by the new court. It was a nationalization of a legal discourse. His work has yet to be examined as a potential instance of "invented tradition." In France, the rediscovery of Roman law also reformulated it, particularly with regards to issues of property (Giddens 1985).

6. Hart (1976) reports there may be upwards of 100 staff at the embassy.

7. The draft convention on the Law of the Sea, finalized in 1982, gives the following definition: "the sovereignty of a coastal state extends 12 miles beyond its land territory and internal waters over an adjacent belt of sea described as the territorial sea. This sovereignty also extends to the air space over the territorial sea as well as its bed and subsoil (Jónsson 1982: 2). The "exclusive economic zone" extends for 200 miles beyond land territory. "In it the coastal state has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, living or non-living, of the sea-bed and subsoil and the superadjacent waters, and with regard to

other activities for the economic exploitation or exploration of the zone" (ibid.).

8. Currently, EFTA and EC are negotiating the parameters of a cooperative arrangement between their respective organisations, to be known as the "European Economic Space." In addition, EFTA is seeking to increase its own infrastructure with the establishment of a surveillance institute and judicial body.

9. This is popularly known as the "poor, little nation" defence.

4/ PROPERTY, PRODUCTION, AND SOCIETAL SPACE

Capitalism, industrialism, and property relations

Juridical discourses about property are fundamental to the character of nation-states. Capitalist societies are nation-states, and although capitalist production is international in scope and in theory does not demand any specific socio-political formation for its operation, the state has proven to be the most efficient means of regulating power amongst competing centres, turning out skilled personnel capable of sustaining production, and guaranteeing the preeminence of law.

Property relations in capitalist societies legitimate the division of social space into discontinuous realms of experience and action. In point of fact, property is highly divisive of social relations. Those instances when it provides the conditions for the experience and expression of nationalist sentiment must therefore be explained according to their various circumstances.

Although analysts have argued about the primacy of one over the other in terms of their transformative power, it is more reasonable to treat them as irreducible but interdependent loci for the production and reproduction of social relations.

Capitalism and industrialism fundamentally reorganised demographic distribution, redefined the division of labour,

organisation of the family, and relations to the environment, and created separate realms of private and public action. They permeate every form of social practice including where one lives and buys goods, in what forms of entertainment one engages, the social networks in which one operates, the clothes one wears, and the specific forms of knowledge and expertise one possesses. Capitalism situates the subject in a socio-economic class relative to ownership of property as capital; industrialism situates the subject in a world structured and manipulated according to biotechnological knowledge. Together, they situate human action in a stratified space wherein relations to an externalized world are governed by juridical discourses, and negotiated by means of the transformative power of machines.

Given the all-pervasive effects of property relations on social life, discussion in this chapter will be narrowed to those issues which are relevant to understanding the construction of the national self in Iceland, and the expression of nationalist sentiment in the context of the whaling issue. This entails understanding the significance of debates about rights over ocean resources, the defining of the natural world according to the logic of production, and the imagining of the self through positive valuations of work and identification with the fisheries sector.

Discourses of property, of course, are fundamental to both capitalism and industrialism. Their rise in the context of the rise of the nation-state has led to radical

redefinitions of what constitutes property within state formations. As will be elaborated upon below, property as spatializing discourse is not exclusively bound up with the geographical partitioning of land, over which an individual or society can lay claims of ownership. In contemporary juridical discourse, property refers also to capital, and the ownership of the means of production.

Property is a system of agreed-upon rights and obligations which exist between people, and situates the subject's identity, his or her status and role, within systems of production. Unequal access to property is a means by which individuals and groups are controlled, and their productive power submitted to rules of disparate exchange. What constitutes property and ownership must be determined in their historical and social contexts, since property is not always that which is owned, nor that which is exclusively private.

Segments of the non-human world--whether animal or plant, land or sea--are brought into the logic of property relations in terms of their productive or non-productive value determined by the technical capacity of industry, which categorizes them as "natural resources" and potential capital. For example, wild or domesticated animals may be objects of production, or as predators may interfere with production. Animals which do not fit either of these categories are outside of the logic of production, and their status as property does not require definition, except under

unusual conditions (e.g. a pet dog may attack a stranger, an act for which the dog's owner must bear responsibility). On the other hand, any attempt to recategorize a productive animal in terms antithetical to production confronts an overwhelmingly powerful discourse which seeks to retain the authority to define the world in terms of property and resources.

Tracing the genealogy of any particular contemporary resource would reveal that, at a time when it had no discernible value within a productive system, its status as property excited no concern. Rights of use would not have been considered necessary to negotiate. However, when changes in technology or demand rendered the thing productive--made it a "natural resource"--its status as property then became necessary to ascertain.

Industrial production is responsible for redefining human relations with the environment, insofar as it redefines elements of nature as the material objects of technical manipulation. Relationships between people and the environment are mediated by technology, an effect which carries over into other spheres of social life such as recreation.

The historical transformation of property

Changes in discursive strategies toward property in Iceland have followed the same changes as in the rest of Europe. Those changes which distinguish the modern from the

pre-modern era began while Iceland was still under Danish rule and continued throughout the 19th century (indeed, continue today), occurring at differing rates around the country.

Although the nationalist movement eventually adopted as one of its demands the independence of Icelandic production, the transition from farming--in which land was property--to fishing--in which capital investment in boats, lines, and nets as well as access to loans and shore facilities constituted property--occurred outside the logic of nationalism. This is made clear by the fact that during the 19th century, the Danish Crown was not in principle opposed to changes in production so long as they increased its revenues and did not seek to diminish its power. Resistance to change came primarily from that sector of Icelandic society which stood to lose the most: the landowners. Further, the development of the fishing industry was reliant in its early stages on foreign boats, foreign knowledge, and foreign capital. During the beginning stages, Icelandic entrepreneurs were in partnership with Danish investors, and were more concerned with learning and otherwise benefiting from this foreign presence than they were with national ownership of resources.

Capital investment in the fisheries was made available directly through foreign investors in boats and trawls (made possible with the freeing of trade in 1855), or indirectly through the National Bank of Iceland, founded in 1885, and

the larger Iceland Bank, established in 1904 with Danish and Norwegian funds. The independence movement eventually directed its attention toward the phasing out of foreign ownership, made feasible as more and more Icelanders became involved in the fisheries as boat owners and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The following section provides a general definition of property rights and relations, distinguishing between three categories of property (state, private, and common), and outlines the effects of their historical transformation on the formation of the nation-state. Subsequent to this, historical background to the modern era in Iceland is given, detailing transformations in property relations and the displacement of the farm by the workplace as the locus for the formation of social identity. The concluding section describes contemporary Icelandic forms of production, government policies regarding demographic distribution and foreign investment, and current issues of ownership of the oceans, with an emphasis on how such issues are related to the division of social space and the ideology of work.

Property Relations

C.B. Macpherson (1978) provides a succinct summary of contemporary property issues through selections from classic statements on property. In his introductory and concluding discussions, he spells out three fundamental principles of property. First, in juridical discourse, property is understood to refer to rights, rights in or to things. Property is not, therefore, an object in itself but is a system of rights pertaining to relations between persons. Property differs from temporary possession because it is a claim enforceable by society or the state, through tradition or law. This claim is enforceable only "in so far as the prevailing ethical theory holds that it is a necessary human right" (ibid. 3). Second, the idea of property is one of individual rights, derivable from a supposed essential human nature. The right to benefit from property constitutes the individual as fully human. Third, since property, as an enforceable claim, is socially constructed, it is the product of law.

Although this is apparent when considering property as private--that is, allowing the right of exclusion--Macpherson considers it relevant to the notion of common property, being "the right of each individual not to be excluded from something." This is distinct from state property which consists of rights either retained or taken over from private individuals, collectives or corporations.

Marchak (1988) provides an alternate perspective on common property, noting that Macpherson's definition of it as a set of individual rights is only one of three differing uses of the term. The second use is prevalent in economic theory, and refers to those things to which no one can make a property claim, and therefore from which no one can be excluded. The third use corresponds most closely to historical and non-European practice, and refers to collective rights which can be exercised by the collectivity to exclude others.

In the case of state property, the right to exclude is not individual but rather corporate, and in this sense is managed as private property. Even if, ideally, the state is the community of all citizens, in practice those chosen (by whatever means) to command them control state property.

During the last four centuries in the West a shift in what a person's property rights constitute has occurred. In the seventeenth century, property was primarily land, and uses of it were restricted and ability to dispose of it limited. Use of the land was also dependent upon fulfilment of certain social obligations. According to Macpherson, the spread of the capitalist market economy from this time on led to a shift in the usage of the term "property":

as rights in land became more absolute, and parcels of land became more freely marketable commodities, it became natural to think of the land itself as the property....In fact the difference was not that things

rather than rights in things were exchanged, but that previously unsaleable rights in things were now saleable. (1978: 7).

At the same time, the idea of common property lost its footing, and became progressively anachronistic.

The significance of this shift will become more apparent in Chapter Six when discussing the status of whales as property, since the appropriateness of common property for environmental protection has been debated since the 1968 publication of Garrett Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons" (discussed below). When ecological damage is at issue, it is becoming increasingly difficult to defend property as exclusively private, and the notion of common property is once again gaining salience. Private property rights, in this sense, are not thought to override the right of all individuals, to, say, clean air and water. Anthropologists have been arguing against state encroachment on indigenous peoples' land through analyses which demonstrate how communities have developed social means of regulating access to common lands which prevent, rather than lead to, environmental degradation.

John Locke's discussion Of Property was most influential in formulating a discourse about property that remained, at a certain level, unchallenged well into this century. His was the first justification of the natural right of the individual to unlimited property, irrespective of governments. His arguments were used to critique

established forms of authority (e.g. the Church) in favour of the emerging nation-states. Moral principles and obligations between people, he claimed, preexisted the state as did property (i.e. these were natural rights of man), and people formed societies precisely to protect their property. If society could not defend this right, then by virtue of their humanity, men could change society. Society was granted rights by autonomous individuals.

Despite the power of this formulation on notions of appropriate economic activity, the state during the 20th century has increasingly taken over the function of the market to appropriate labour and resources. That is, society, through the operations of the welfare or regulatory state, is with greater frequency involved in the task of allocation, thereby modifying the notion of property as exclusive and alienable, and individual or corporate rights in things as absolute.

It is possible, therefore, to distinguish between capitalism on the one hand, and the nation-state on the other. The regulatory role of the state requires that it seek to balance multiple interests and goals beyond those of capital. Politics is no longer the domain of the few, but instead is universalized throughout social life. In practice, of course, the revenue-generating power of capital sustains the state, and thus the latter must for its own sustenance attend to the interests of the capitalist class. Yet care must be taken not to reduce government activities

to a direct correspondence with capitalist interests, since state institutions operate by internal logics which act to insulate them from the economy.

Historical conditions of property and production

The following account of pre-modern property relations and the beginnings of the capitalist mode of production in Iceland is based on Björnsson (1971), Durrenberger and Pálsson (1985), Gunnarsson (1980a), Gunnlaugsson (1988), Nordal and Kristinsson (1975), S. Jónsson (1983), F. Magnússon (1989, 1990), M. Magnússon (1985), Ólafsson (1981), Pétursson (1983), and Stefánsson (1983).

Icelandic society, prior to its reorganisation during the late 19th century, was highly stratified, with wealth and power accessible through the ownership of land. The top social stratum in Iceland was made up of Crown officials, administrators, wealthy pastors, and landowners. The Crown officials consisted of a Governor-General (stiftamtmaður) and two or three regional governors (amtmaður). After 1800 and the dissolution of Alþingi, three justices served at the central court in Reykjavík. The system of governance established during absolutist rule created twenty sýslur (sing. sýsla), regions which were each administered by a sheriff (sýslumaður) with a law degree from Copenhagen. The above positions, as well as those of Bishop and teachers at the Theological Seminary, were funded directly by the Danish state. Further, their holders could derive income from land

rents on Crown lands held in fief. That is, attached to the position was a parcel of land from which the official could derive an income so long as he held that position.

Landowners derived their wealth primarily from the payment of land rents by tenant-farmers. Most of the privately-owned land was held by a very few families. In 1695, almost one-quarter of all farms in Iceland, or 45% of privately-held lands, were owned by 1% of household heads. Control of Church and Crown-owned lands was similarly concentrated within a small fraction of the population, usually drawn from the clergy, administrative, or official sectors. Although property could be divided by the laws of inheritance, in practice the upper stratum of society married endogamously to maintain control of land.

Pastors derived their livelihood from Church-owned lands which they held in fief as part of their benefice. They were also farmers themselves, although they varied in their wealth according to the amount of land they controlled. In the 19th century, about 180 benefices existed, each consisting of one or more parishes. Farmers within the parish paid tithes toward the upkeep of the church.

A further regional unit, the commune (hreppur), which numbered around 165-170, closely corresponded to the parish, although its boundaries slightly differed. The hreppur originated during the Commonwealth as a means of organizing cooperation during the autumn sheep round-up in the

highlands, and consisted of at least 20 assessed farms which were required to submit to it a tax. During the pre-modern period, the hreppur, administered by the local pastor and bailiff (hreppstjóri), provided poor relief. Under this traditional system, the destitute were provided with subsistence by the wealthier members of the hreppur. The communal authorities had the power of either supporting the destitute in situ, or dissolving the family and sending its members to different farms.

The number of legally-assessed farms, lögbýli, remained relatively steady over the centuries at about 4,000. Their value was measured according to the number of cattle the land could support, and land rent was paid according to the size of the farm. Farms were not enclosed, and were built at some distance from each other. Rural villages were non-existent until the beginning of a fisheries independent of farm production.

Two types of farms were recognized: the independent farm, heimajörð--in which "independent" does not imply ownership by its occupant, since tenants could farm heimajörð--and the outlying or dependent farm, hjáleigur, which constituted a separate household within the legally-assessed farm. Those who farmed the dependent farm were sub-tenants, paying rent usually to the tenant of the heimajörð who would then use that revenue to pay his own rent to the landowner. Considerable mobility existed

between these two statuses, since two or three years of poor yields could force a tenant onto more marginal lands.

The model household consisted of a husband and wife, their children, foster-children, relatives, and servants or work people (vinnuhjú). The larger farms generally had larger households, since they were able to foster more children and were in need of more servants. Fostering a child to a wealthier farmer was a means for a tenant to create bonds of obligation between himself and the more powerful. Since one in three children died within the first year of life--the highest rate of infant mortality in the Nordic countries at the time--the nuclear family remained small. Fostering compensated for the negative impact this might have had on a family's ability to maintain production. Wealthier pastors tended to have the largest households, since they required more workers to compensate for the time spent at religious duties. Further, pastors often housed theology students whom they were responsible for training.

Two other classes, the cottars and lodgers, were positioned below the tenants and sub-tenants. Cottars were to be found on the coast, and were engaged in seasonal fishing. Some cottars had use of a small piece of land on which they could support a cow. The cottars had families, but no servants.

The lodgers, on the other hand, were single individuals with no access to land. Lodgers lived inland, and often were women. A farmer had to receive permission from the

local commune to allow a lodger on his land, since the lodger could go on poor relief during a bad year, to the detriment of the more wealthy.

At the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy were unemployed labourers (lausafólk) and paupers. Even when these people were living with the family of a farmer, they were not considered legally part of the household, thus relieving the farmer from any obligations beyond providing food and shelter. Their placement in the household was part of the administering of parish relief.

During the pre-modern period, peasants were not autonomous individuals, but were attached by way of contractual obligations to the farming household. Autonomy of individual action was related to status, wherein the household head had greater autonomy than the servant, and the landowner greater than the tenant. The farm and the people attached to it had a developmental cycle in which the size of household would increase and decrease. A person's identity was marked by his or her position within this cycle.

Farming formed the basis for both economic production and social organization. Two general categories of farmers existed, the inland-farmer (sveitarbóndi) and the fishermen-farmer (sjávarbóndi), but there were three categories of farming production. First, the exclusively-farming regions were found along the south coast where no natural harbours occur (excluding the Vestmannaeyjar), and in some parts of

Vesturland and Norðurland. These areas produced woollens, meat, and butter which were bartered for dried fish produced in other regions. During slack seasons of the year, i.e. not during the mid-summer hay-harvests or autumn sheep round-ups, labourers would be sent to the coastal fishing stations, their earnings being in part handed over upon their return to the farmer to whom they were contracted.

Second, certain regions combined farming with fishing during the winter season (February to May) i.e. the period of high labour demand on the farm. Farmers owned the rowing boats. Third, in the north the fishing season which ran from April to September corresponded with the hay harvest, thus requiring a disruption in fishing while labourers returned to the farms. As a whole, fishing was limited by ecological factors such as weather and fish migrations, as well as the availability of suitable landing spots close to fishing grounds, giving rise to regional variations in production.

Agricultural production consisted of the grazing of sheep and cattle, and the harvesting of hay. Grain was not grown in Iceland, and grasses provided the only fodder. The production and harvesting of fodder was the main activity, and one or, in a good year, two periods of intensive labour took place during the summer. About two-thirds of the hay came from uncultivated boglands. Farm buildings were built on rises and were surrounded by a manured field (tún), beyond which stretched undrained marsh. Technology was

limited to a few hand tools; an important technical innovation in the middle of the 19th century was the introduction of the Scottish scythe. Sheep were grazed during the summer months over large areas of the land, often into the highlands. Early in the summer, women would go to huts located closer to the highlands, where they would make soured milk products and butter from sheep's milk.

Until the rise of the fisheries, access to land determined one's place in society as well as one's ability to make a living and have a family. A labourer lived on the margins of society, and without access to land was often confronted with the possibility of starvation. A landless individual could not marry and establish a family. If a farm was lost after a bad year, then the members of that family could be separated and returned to their respective parishes of birth to be put on poor relief. The landless were unable to graze an animal, meaning that their already meagre diet was lacking in the important staple of milk, unless they were able to barter for it. As well, gathering of alternate foodstuffs such as seaweed was prohibited, since usufruct rights to the coasts were attached to farms.

On the other hand, the landowner had control of all resources. Rights to natural resources such as grazing, hayfields, the gathering of seaweed, peat, or driftwood were regulated in detail. All aspects of legislation regarding the land and the living it yielded confirmed the position of the landowner.

Since a farmer's wealth was dependent on his ability to mobilize a large work force during the hay harvest, he had an interest in maintaining control over these labourers, who otherwise might have moved to the coasts and developed some form of export-oriented fishery. Inland-farmers were opposed to the existence of the cottars, whereas fishermen-farmers were caught in an ambivalent position vis-à-vis them. All norms and social values revolved around the agrarian life, and it is apparent that the poor who lived in huts by the sea and made a partial living by it were thought to be lazy and dirty in habit. As a means of control, it was made necessary for individuals to apply for a licence to become a cottar, thus allowing regulation of their numbers.

As a further means of controlling labourers, a 1783 law required labour contracts (the law was finally repealed in 1894) which attached the landless to a farming household on a yearly basis. Until this time, traditional law allowed for the practice of begging. However, during the 18th century, because of various socio-economic and environmental factors, the numbers of beggars increased, putting pressure on farmers through their obligations to the hreppar to supply poor relief. The institution of contracts made this practice illegal. An individual over the age of 16 without land was required to do mandatory service for a farm, on yearly contracts supervised by the parish priest. If a labourer wished to change farms at the end of his or her service, it was necessary to obtain from the local pastor a

certificate of conduct which included a report on the individual's behaviour.

Pétursson (1983) has documented the ways in which the clergy participated in the exercise of social control in favour of the landowning class. The local pastor was responsible for the surveillance of the household through regular visits and interviews. Children were questioned apart from adults to determine the latter's behaviour, e.g. whether there was drunkenness. The behaviour of servants was closely monitored, and arrogance toward the master, cursing, insubordination, and drunkenness could be punished by fines or other means. The implementation of these powers, however, varied according to the pastor. The poorer the pastor, the more his own economic situation corresponded with that of the majority of his flock, a factor which limited his desire to punish their behaviour.

Education was the responsibility of the household, and it was the pastor's task to ensure that every person was literate and knew the Catechism. To this end, Biblical texts, and to a lesser extent, hand-written copies of sagas and folk stories were used for teaching.

Finally, the pastor had control over marriage. Working people generally did not marry. The only access to farmland and upward mobility was through marriage. Legally, a person was not free to marry and have children unless they were free of debt. Informally, the right to marry could be denied on the basis of lack of access to land or negative

personal attributes. Incompetence, laziness and fraudulence were traits that made a person less qualified to be master of a disciplined household. The object of this practice was to keep the labour force within the framework of the farmer's household.

In the pre-modern period, and well into the 19th century, the farm was more than the centre of economic production; it constituted the primary space in which social meaning was created and recreated. Experience was rooted in the local rather than in the national, and it took the massive changes wrought by the development of industrialized fishing to displace the centrality of regionally-based identifications.

The transition to capitalism and industrialism

Transformations of property relations occurred in both the farming and fishing sectors during the 19th century. Late in the 18th century, the Danish Crown introduced land reforms which gradually led to greater owner-occupancy. Attitudes toward governance were changing under the influence of Enlightenment philosophy and the labour theory of value. The impoverished situation of the majority of the population was increasingly being understood as a problem both in Denmark and amongst a handful of Icelanders, and it was no longer credible to think of periodic deaths from starvation as a means of ridding the countryside of indigents. Instead, the short-term lease arrangement

between tenants and landowners which impeded farming success was seen as an obstacle to improvements in agriculture.

Crown lands were offered for sale to tenant-farmers, on the assumption that land would be used with greater efficiency if the farmer had a vested interest in it. This policy continued into the 20th century, when in 1905 and 1907 most Church-owned lands were transferred to the Icelandic National Treasury, and then made available for private sale. Tenants were able to buy their own farms at terms better than those offered to other potential purchasers. The number of tenant-farmers decreased from 78% in 1850 to 40% in 1930.

Despite these early signs of reform, household conditions worsened during the 19th century. A series of natural disasters during the 18th century had temporarily reduced population pressure (although increasing the number of beggars), but during the 19th century, the average household size increased. By the middle of the century, 40% of those over the age of 15 were servants, making it the largest servant ratio in western Europe. Iceland's isolation vis-à-vis the rest of Europe facilitated this exploitative relationship, since those at the bottom of the hierarchy had no alternative.

Population growth increased pressure on the land. Although the legally-assessed farm had fixed property boundaries, it was the practice for a landowner to subdivide it and lease dependent farms. By 1850, no further

subdivisions were possible and more unproductive farms were being occupied on the margins of the wastelands. At the same time, servants accounted for 35-40% of the population over the age of fifteen.

It was a situation on the edge of disaster. Forceful prevention of the establishment of villages and a fishing economy, emigration not yet a possibility (the major wave of emigration occurred between 1870 and 1910, when 15,000 people departed for Canada, the United States, and in much smaller numbers, Brazil), and the land pushed beyond its capacity to provide sustenance--liberalization of socio-economic controls was becoming imperative.

Until the 19th century, there had been no significant capital accumulation in Iceland, and there was only a small commercial sector. The offices of trading companies were in Copenhagen, and only their representatives were in Iceland, forwarding revenues out of the colony rather than investing in any form of manufacture. Their activities were restricted by law to circulating trade goods.

Fishing, however, became a means for capital accumulation. What with greater availability of capital in their home countries, Danes and Norwegians became interested in productive investments in partnership with Icelanders. Free trade was established in 1855, opening up greater markets. With the establishment of Icelandic banks, however, investment capital was more readily available to Icelandic entrepreneurs, and the domestication of business

enterprise began. Whereas in 1870 over one-half of wholesale and retail trade was owned by Danes, ten years later two-thirds of it was in the hands of Icelanders.

The domestication of capital facilitated investment in decked fishing vessels. Decked vessels, powered by sails, made fishing grounds further from shore accessible, since the boats could remain at sea for several days; further, catch sizes per trip could be increased. In 1902, motor-driven boats were introduced. Their effect on fishing success was profound, and investment in them could be paid back in as little as one year.

During the 1890s, Icelanders had seen British fishermen using motorized trawlers off their coast, but it took a bit longer for their use to be adopted. They did not become financially viable until 1907, but their appearance in that year is used to mark the beginning of Iceland's industrial revolution.

Reykjavík experienced the greatest rate of urbanization and mercantile development, and many trawlers were located there. Growth in the fisheries obviously favoured locations with natural harbours, and towns such as Akranes, Neskaupstaðir, Ísafjörður, and Vestmannaeyjar became regional centres. But technology also allowed the building or improving of harbour sites, and major construction was undertaken at Reykjavík harbour in 1914.

After 1915, the expanding fishing industry provided the coastal towns and villages with a stable source of income.

Fish and fish products became the major export, accounting for 55% of total export earnings in 1890, and increasing to 90% by 1930. A new category of workers--fishermen and fish processors--emerged with the arrival of decked fishing vessels. Between 1880 and 1910, the social division of labour indicated the extension of capitalist market relations in society.

Both the men on the boats and the women on shores worked long and hard under difficult and dangerous conditions, although contemporary reminiscences tend to emphasize the communal nature of the work, and the sense of camaraderie that developed amongst fellow workers. Although supposedly working for wages, people did not see their earnings but rather had them applied as credit to the local merchant. The post-World War I labour movement fought for and won improved working conditions and more regular means of payment. Hours were increasingly standardized, allowing for a certain numbers of hours of rest per 24-hour period.

Following the printers' strike of 1899, labour issues moved increasingly to the fore. For skilled craftsmen, early demands were for shared rates of pay, reduced work hours, and limitations on job entry. For unskilled workers and fishermen, the first demands were for the right to be paid in cash rather than in kind. In 1902, Alþingi passed a law requiring cash payments for work, but this did not become regular practice for some time. The Reykjavík

deckhands' strike of 1916 was decisive in the politicization of labour relations.

Processes of urbanization and industrialization of fishing led to a decline in the numbers of people engaged in farming. Yet technological improvements meant that yield per hectare in production increased. Further, a newly established trade with Britain in live animals, mutton, and lamb introduced liquid assets into agricultural production.

Mechanization of farming production followed on that of the fisheries. Between 1900 and 1920, spokesmen for the farmers favoured the idea of progress, and envisioned a modernized agricultural sector, with "large-scale fully mechanised farms supported by large increases in exports" (Ásgeirsson 1988: 149). The 1920s were characterized in the political sector by conflicts between the ascendant farming sector and an embattled urban, small-scale industrial sector. Towards the end of the decade, large-scale projects were undertaken in rural areas as a means of slowing urbanization. The Progressive (Farmers') Party considered this policy to be in the interests of their followers; their ruling coalition partners, the Social Democrats, saw it as a means of slowing urbanisation and thus maintaining higher wages amongst industrial workers.

The Depression of the 1930s brought an end to these aspirations on the part of farm supporters, but not to the ideas of progress and industrial development. Instead, emphasis was placed on the development of domestic markets

which favoured the industrial sector, to the detriment of agriculture. However, the possibility of larger urban markets for farm produce was enticing for many members of the Progressive Party who "seemed to think that farmers should recognize the needs of an urban society and were considerably influenced by Marxist ideas on collective farms and farming" (Ásgeirsson 1988: 151). Despite these intentions, the reality proved to support traditional farm production with little stimulation of urban opportunities.

The lack of attention to urban interests induced labour unrest, unemployment, and disputes between business and unions. The governing coalition government collapsed in 1937 over the issues of nationalizing the largest trawler company and investing large sums of money in industrializing the urban sector, programmes favoured by the Social Democrats. The Progressive and Independence Parties opposed such moves and favoured maintaining the status quo.

Work and identity

In pre-modern European social formations, the individual's ability to labour was not freely marketable but was instead governed by a series of social norms and obligations. Peasant identity was rooted in the land, and the working of the land was interwoven with ideas of appropriate and inappropriate relations to family, state, nature, and God. Work did not constitute a separate sphere of activity, and through their work peasants exercised their

ability to produce their own means of subsistence. Work enabled the peasant to retain his or her position within the social hierarchy, and to receive the protection of the farming household. Capitalism and industrialism fundamentally altered the relationship between the peasant-cum-worker and his or her ability to work. Labour power was transformed into a commodity, freely saleable on the market and disembedded from other forms of social relations.

This transformation occurred gradually in Iceland, in response to the separation of fishing from the logic of agricultural production. It began late in the 19th century and culminated in the establishment of regular wage labour during World War II. The farm had been the locus for the production and reproduction of social life; without the rights and obligations attached to the subject's position in society, new forms of welfare and subsistence had to be struggled for. The state was increasingly petitioned to regulate wage payments, working conditions and length of the work-day.

Today, work forms a major part of Icelanders' self-identity and is the admission ticket to full membership in society. It is not unusual for children of nine or ten to begin work, and it is considered a sign of weakness if a person is not working by the age of sixteen, regardless of family income. It is also not unusual for adults to hold two full-time jobs. This can in part be attributed to the high inflation rate in the country, but this does not fully

account for the centrality work has for self-identity and the emphasis placed on "keeping busy." Rather, work is thought to make life meaningful and to grant the individual greater independence. In order to establish better contact with Icelanders, I had been advised by several Icelandic colleagues to find a job. Otherwise, I was told, people would not have the time to talk with me, and would have difficulty in understanding my purpose in Iceland unless underscored by recognizable employment.

F. Magnússon (1989) argues that the strong work ethic is the result of new class relations arising in the fishing villages. During the early decades of the commercial fisheries, seasonal unemployment was ubiquitous. Landowners and local authorities regarded the landless labourers who congregated in the coastal fishing stations as lazy and immoral drunkards.

When labourers moved to the villages to escape the social control of the farm, they became part of a world still defined by strict class boundaries and inequality. Legally, access to the sea and land was in the hands of local merchants and fishermen-farmers who owned the boats and landing facilities. The identity of the landless poor was thus subject to their subordinate position in regards to the powerful. However, a distinction arose between identity formed at sea and on land, wherein the former contrasted with the negative qualities attached to the latter. Heroes were not made on land, and local stories were filled with

tales of bravery at sea, thus imputing high status to fishing and fishermen. Work became linked with respectability and self-esteem, and the ideology of work gave to the labouring class a sense of power. The ideology of work was, in Magnússon's words, a form of resistance.

The ideology of work was consistent with the Lutheran morality of the time, which portrayed the temporal world as a way-station en route to heaven, and work as a means of enjoining God's help in improving His earthly home.

In nationalist discourse, work-identity is not seen as having a class basis, since the existence of class divisions is overlooked. Employment and wage differences are viewed as individual attributes rather than systemically sustained. But despite the ideology of equality, access to capital, higher wages, and education vary according to class, gender, family, political affiliation, and residency.

Work identity is not necessarily nationalist, although it is used as a description of a "good Icelander." The discourse of work is a means of understanding the self's relation to its place within the system of production. Thus, it is possible to recognize oneself as exploited, as working too many hours for too little pay, and at the same time positively value the state of being employed. In this instance, the reinforcement received from one's social milieu, wherein "being busy" is a state continually monitored by friends and family, is significant.

Nationalist thought does coopt the symbolic value of the fisherman-as-hero into a discourse about the nation. As is discussed further in Chapter Five, nations need heroes as forms of legitimation through which national character is imagined. The centrality of the fisheries to the contemporary economy is thus symbolized, and individualized, in the figure of the fisherman. The fisheries as capitalist production, and the fisheries as definitive of the nation, are not separate spheres for Icelanders. The consolidation of national opinion during the Cod Wars has secured this attitude. It is possible to argue that, while the Cod Wars made the exclusive economic zone into state property with claims supported by international juridical discourse, at the same time they made it national property supported by a moral discourse.

Property is highly divisive and sectoral within the state. When an issue centring on property becomes an instance for national solidarity, as occurred in the Cod Wars and again with the whaling issue, class divisions are subsumed under another discourse which sets up the division between Iceland and the outside. In this discourse, property becomes symbolic rather than juridical, and national rather than private or state-owned.

Contemporary state involvement in production

The state intervenes in market forces in two general ways. First, domestic markets are protected through the use

of tariffs, foreign investment controls, currency devaluations, and control of interest rates. Second, the state attempts to slow migration from the rural areas to the urban southwest through policies intended to stimulate regional economies.

The Icelandic financial system remains isolated from international money markets, and several state policies ensure that domestic capital remains within Iceland. At present, private individuals cannot invest in foreign markets, and it was only in the mid-1980s that foreign currency earnings could be kept in foreign currency accounts at Icelandic banks. Controls on currency exchange are a means of enforcement. A domestic securities market allows investment in stocks, money funds, bank bonds, treasury bills, and treasury bonds.

During my field stay, the Icelandic banking system was under review by government and bankers, because of the potential for foreign competition in the European Economic Space, and because of internal problems of over-expansion and high operating costs within the banks. A merger of four major banks reduced the number of financial institutions from seven to three. Some reforms had already been instituted in 1986, which for the first time allowed the establishment of foreign banks in the country, although none to date have appeared. Foreign banks would be required to operate under certain restrictions, such as not receiving deposits, granting loans, or participating in the bond

market. Further, in 1986 the Central Bank Act gave the banks the right to set their own interest rates, although in practice the Central Bank of Iceland can exert pressure on the banks to conform to its policies.

Because Icelandic ownership of property and capital was central to the independence movement, foreign ownership of productive resources has been severely restricted in Iceland at least since the 1930s. The result has been a high foreign debt, estimated to be at about 150 billion kr, or about CND \$2.9 billion. Foreign borrowings are made by the state and by banks who then re-loan the money to their customers. Further, foreign banks are involved in some of the larger private companies as well as some state institutions. Direct foreign ownership must be approved by Alþingi, and has thus far been limited to the major manufacturing industries such as the Icelandic Aluminium Company as well as some freezing plants. Foreign ownership cannot be greater than 49%.

Iceland's creditors have in general varied according to trade patterns, with the USA's loan share decreasing against a rise in the share of European and Japanese creditors. The World Bank had in the 1960s been a creditor until Iceland's GDP increased beyond the limits set by the institution. The International Monetary Fund has been used on occasion in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Monetary reforms due to take effect over the next two years are intended to deregulate money markets. For

example, restrictions on domestic investment abroad and the use of foreign currency accounts in foreign banks are to be eliminated by 1993. The argument for deregulation comes largely from the political right which represents business interests, and favours the possibility of foreign venture capital used to stimulate domestic economic performance rather than a continuing reliance on foreign borrowing. Deregulation is seen as a step towards the creation of a European Economic Space by the European Community and the European Free Trade Association.

Current disagreements revolve around the ability of Icelandic business to survive competition in a freely operating market, given that it is too small to operate abroad. Further, the political left and the trade unions are concerned that eliminating controls on foreign investment will open the possibility for foreign ownership and control of natural resources, particularly the fisheries.

Since the founding of the Republic in 1944, the state has followed a policy of modernization and development. State policies and legislation, however, are more often drawn up by private institutions than by the ministries, since the latter are small and lacking in money. Further, given the nature of government formations--coalitions, with the attendant negotiation of policy amongst differing political parties--the parties themselves do not have firmly-established platforms or agendas (Grimsson 1977;

also, Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, pers. comm.). Political parties are based more on personality than on the platforms of the parties. The consequence is that there is tremendous discontinuity of policies from government to government.

Gunnarsson¹ argues that social and political divisions follow the specializations of the banks--fishing, farming, industry--which are evident by their names (Fisheries Bank, Industrial Bank, etc.). In his analysis, banks, public institutions, and government ministries are closely connected. Investment policy has varied greatly from government to government, favouring one sector over others, depending on the ruling coalition's focus of economic interest. Between the wars the farmers were the most powerful, but electoral shifts greatly lessened their power. Banks tend to invest according to their speciality rather than the economic feasibility of the project.

The second means by which the state seeks to affect market forces is through its residence policy, byggðastefna. In an attempt to prevent mass movement from the countryside into the urban southwest, the government has underwritten the cost of trawlers, built new harbours or improved old ones, and built freezing plants in several villages around the coast at various times during this century. Further, schools, roads, medical facilities, and communication systems have been built throughout the countryside in order to provide reasonable equality of services amongst the scattered rural population.

The costs of implementing and maintaining the policy have been high, and are politically contentious. Those living in the regions are, by and large, in favour of the policy. Those in the fishing villages as well as those on the farms see themselves as preserving something vital about Iceland by remaining away from the corruption that is Reykjavik. They argue further that the urban southwest is extracting wealth from the regions and is not doing enough to redistribute it fairly to those who originally produced it. On the other hand, urban residents are divided over the wisdom of what they see as the subsidization of an uneconomical form of production and demographic distribution.

An instance of state intervention in market forces in order to implement social policy occurred in Patreksfjörður (pop. 1,032), a fishing town in the northwest. In August 1989, the town's two large fishing vessels along with their attached quotas were sold at auction, following the bankruptcy a few weeks earlier of the town's fish processing plant. The State Television reported that conditions in Patreksfjörður were now like those of "a ghost town."

Overall, the issue triggered debate about the rights of the regions and about the viability of current fisheries' policy. Timinn, the party newspaper of the fisheries minister, published the minister's refutations of those who saw the Patreksfjörður situation as evidence of the failure of the government quota system. Þjóðviljinn, newspaper of

the People's Alliance, editorialized that attaching quotas to ships had driven the cost of boats up. The writer considered this dangerous, since the Marine Research Institute (MRI) had recently released a report calling for a 10% reduction in fish catches. The editorial concluded that it was time for the government to consider the policy of the People's Alliance, which required quotas to be assigned to districts rather than boats. The Social Democratic newspaper was equally critical of "auctioning off people's lives." They saw Patreksfjörður as a harbinger of future regional bankruptcies.

Morgunblaðið, newspaper for the Independence Party, for its part editorialized on the topic of the increasing investment in the Icelandic fleet at a time when the MRI was calling for reduced catches. Their suggestion was that access to the fishing grounds should be sold to the highest bidder. The paper also deplored the Fisheries Minister's suggestion to put money into the town. The editorialist argued that there were other communities like Patreksfjörður, and it would be unrealistic to sink more money which could never be recouped, rather than instituting policies which would ensure continuing work. Individual initiative on the part of the young, unimpeded by government assistance, was a better alternative.

The Prime Minister (from the same party as the Fisheries' Minister) agreed, following a meeting with local town officials, that the town should be supplied by

provisional law with an additional quota. A local labour leader had earlier insisted that such an immediate solution was needed, but added that it should consist of a ship as well as a full quota. The Fisheries' Minister responded that the most appropriate course of action would be to increase state allotments to the Stock Fund, which distributes revenues to regional centres. Such monies, for example, could be used to buy new vessels for Patreksfjörður. In the end, the government did provide financial assistance on an ad hoc basis. Since then, several other fishing villages have confronted similar circumstances, creating a sense of urgency around the question of appropriate forms of fisheries production.

Contemporary production: farming

Despite debates over the "traditional farm" and the importance of maintaining it, tradition in this use does not indicate unchanged means of production and levels of technology. The idea of tradition arises from the seemingly unchanged focus of production--the raising of cows and sheep and the cultivation of fodder--and the unchanged identity of individual farms, wherein smaller holdings have not been merged to produce larger productive units. Mechanization, use of fertilizers, drainage of wetlands, as well as changes in land ownership, marketing and distribution, government subsidies, and protective tariffs have changed the organisation of production from that of the pre-modern farm.

The number of people involved in agriculture has drastically dropped, from 79.1% of the population in 1860, to 30% in 1940 and 11% in 1970. Numbers of farms in operation have dropped as well, from a stable fluctuation between 5,300 and 6,100 over the last centuries,² to about 3,500 in 1983. The constitution of the farm household has changed, with greater use being made of hired labour during peak working seasons. It is still possible, however, for two household production units to occupy the same farm. For example, the wife of the farmer for whom I worked grew up on a farm which was shared between her parents with one herd of sheep, and her aunt and uncle with a separate herd. They shared the same small house, but maintained separate kitchens and sitting rooms.

Production tasks which were once centred in the farm, tasks such as butter- and cheese-making and sheep-slaughtering, are now done by specialized, regionally-located industries. The production of milk and milk products as well as lamb has been protected through import tariffs which prevent foreign competition. The state has during the last twenty years attempted to regulate farm production through use of output quotas, a policy which has resulted in over-capitalisation and production levels too high for domestic markets. Foreign markets have not to any great extent been developed. The price of farm produce in the retail sector is subsidized by the government.

The Icelandic Consumers' Association conducted a poll in September 1989, which indicated that 70% of those asked were against the import of agricultural products, while 30% favoured it. At the same time, 80% were opposed to current agricultural policy. Farming remains heavily conservative, in part because of farmers' attitudes, and in part because government policies have adversely affected their ability to meet market demands without incurring losses.

Types of farming other than the grazing of animals have emerged since the 1930s. In 1931, the first minks were brought to the country for the purpose of fur-farming. The following year some mink escaped, and began to thrive in the wild, building dens close to the sea or sources of fresh water. Today wild mink are to be found throughout Iceland; they are thought to be a nuisance and a threat to wild birds whose eggs they eat, and are thus a target for hunters. Mink breeding was banned in 1951, but reintroduced in 1969, along with the breeding of blue and silver fox. During my field stay, several of these farms went bankrupt or were experiencing serious financial difficulties. Once promoted as a viable alternative for rural enterprise, fur-farming has suffered from poor planning, over-investment, and too many competing farms.

Greenhouse cultivation began in the 1920s, and along with a small number of market gardens, has diversified vegetable production beyond root crops. Greenhouses tend to be family-run enterprises, located in specific areas in the

south and west where hot springs abound. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and flowers are their main crops. All but the latter are seasonal, and thus not able to fulfil completely domestic demand.

Whereas at one time two-thirds of Iceland's hay was grown on uncultivated wetlands, the proportion has shrunk to an insignificant 0.5%. Around the turn of the century, some drainage of wetlands took place when irrigation channels were dug, but systematic, government-subsidized drainage began in 1930, increasing in 1942 with the introduction of mechanical excavators. Originally, drainage was to allow for the planting of alternative, usually imported, grasses thought better than the naturally-occurring sedges, but after 1965 drainage was aimed at creating additional grazing lands (Geirsson, in Garðarsson 1975).

Wetland reclamation has created several ecological problems which are not generally recognized, although over the years some individuals have expressed concern over the loss of marsh birds habitats. Since the 1970s biologists have warned of the dangers from an extremely high rate of chemical fertilizer usage, to compensate for decreased fertility brought on by drainage, as well as the loss of biotic diversity. Farming representatives argue that the impact of farming on the environment, whether due to land reclamation, erosion, or loss of vegetation cover is equal to the impact of other activities, and that agricultural

usage must remain a priority (Guðbjartsson, in Garðarson 1975).

Overall, agriculture has followed the pattern of other economic sectors toward capital investment, namely an orientation toward a largely-domestic market, the rationalization of production through use of technology, and stringent state controls.

Industry

Industrial development has been periodically endorsed as a means to diversify the economy and to reduce dependency on export earnings from fish. Two kinds of industry are represented in Iceland: small-scale, light manufacturing primarily connected to domestic resources and markets, and high-energy-consuming industries which import raw materials and export most of the finished product. The possibility of selling electricity to Great Britain through cables is being discussed with more frequency now that the technology is available. According to the fréttabréf (newsletter) of the French Embassy in Iceland, France is willing to participate in a feasibility study of electric energy export.

During the 1960s, Iceland borrowed money from the World Bank to help finance development of its energy sector. As the statistics in Chapter One show, the potential for the production of geothermal power and hydroelectricity has been the subject of detailed calculation. Electricity now available to industrial users in Iceland is the cheapest of

any industrialized nation, cheaper by half than prices in Canada, and lower rates are offered to industries while they are becoming established.

The Icelandic Aluminium Company (ÍSAL) began production in 1969. A second stage was added to the original smelter in 1972, and this was enlarged in 1980. The state and private interests own the majority of shares, with Alosuisse, a Swiss multinational, owning the rest. Raw materials are imported, and the aluminium is exported to markets in Europe. Together with Icelandic Alloys, a ferrosilicon producer, ÍSAL generates 15% of foreign export earnings. A steel recycling firm has recently been established, and it, too, needs to import raw materials since domestically-available scrap metal is not sufficient for efficient operation of the mill. All of the energy-intensive industries involve foreign ownership and rely on foreign technical knowledge for their start-up.

Hydroelectricity is promoted as a "renewable resource" with the potential for creating "new opportunities" in Iceland. The potential effect on the environment is less discussed, and no established procedures of environmental review exist. One possible development scenario involves the damming and redirection of three northeast rivers into one channel. The possibility of turning the highlands into a reservoir was proposed by one official in the National Power Company (Landsvirkjun), since, as he put it, the land was otherwise useless.

The Fisheries

In Iceland, the fate of the fisheries is used as a measure of the well-being of the nation. Around 75% of foreign export earnings are generated by fish and fish products. Fluctuations in catches or world fish prices are felt throughout the economy. Fishing is the basis for several secondary industries: ocean shipping, shipbuilding, and repair; manufacturing of freezing plant equipment such as conveyors, fish head splitters, gutting machines, and light tables for cutting fish; soaps and detergents for cleaning fish factories; synthetic bait, work clothing, ropes, plastic fish boxes; trawl nets, blocks, and floats; and lifesaving equipment.

Many agencies, institutions, and organisations representing trade interests are involved in administering, regulating, and broking fish and fish products. These include the Export Council of Iceland, the Fish Industries Fund, the Fisheries Association of Iceland, the Fisheries Loan Fund, the Fisheries Price Board, the Fisheries Price Equalization Fund, the Icelandic Fish Quality Institution, the Icelandic Fisheries Laboratories, the Marine Research Institute, the Ministry of Fisheries, the Association of Fish Farmers, the Association of Lumpfish Roe Producers, the Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, the Federation of Seamen's Unions, the Association of Trawler Operators, and the Merchant Navy and Fishing Vessel Officers' Guild.

Thus, while those involved in the fisheries, either on the boats or in the freezing plants, salt houses, or the one canning plant, amount to one out of every ten workers, considerably more are employed in fisheries-related services. It would be impossible for an Icelander to ignore the centrality of the fisheries: catch sizes, foreign markets, clashes between sectors of the fishing industry, conditions in the freezing plants and poaching by foreign trawlers in Icelandic waters are reported at length in the media every day. The state radio regularly interviews fishing boat skippers while they are at sea, cellular telephones having made direct communications possible. Pop songs tell stories of men working on the boats, or the women who await them on shore. Occasionally, the smell of fish drifts from the chimneys of meal plants in Reykjavik harbour and permeates the city's air: this is peningalykt, the smell of money.

The state has been involved in the regulation of the fisheries in two domains: resource management through systems intended to conserve stocks at the same time as balance the interests of all sectors of production, and, secondly, regulation and, when necessary, subsidization of production to benefit regional centres.

The Icelandic state has been involved with the management of the fisheries since 1948. Legislation passed in that year gave power to executive authorities to impose any measures believed necessary to protect the fishing

grounds surrounding the island. At that time, international law asserted that no coastal state could exercise control over adjacent fishing grounds beyond the three-mile territorial limit, except through agreements entered into with other states utilizing the grounds. The Icelandic legislation was not intended to extend the territorial limit, but rather to establish a special resource jurisdiction beyond the limit. The distinction between territorial waters and economic zones was significant; at the same time Central American countries were attempting to implement exclusive 200-mile territorial zones. The Icelandic model eventually prevailed in international practice through the auspices of the United Nations Conferences on the Law of the Sea (see Chapter Three).

The post-war period of international fisheries saw an increased number of trawlers equipped with advanced technical gear for the detection and harvest of ever-larger catches. Until the 1970s, the fishing grounds around Iceland were situated in international waters, and their management was therefore under the auspices of, first, international regulatory bodies which sought to negotiate between various national interests, and, second, bilateral agreements between states. During this period, regulatory bodies were poorly structured, lacking in adequate means to gather information on all aspects of fisheries including biological data, and to analyze and use it to draft appropriate management schemes.

Against these shortcomings, Iceland used developments within the Law of the Sea to assert unilaterally its control over successively expanded exclusive economic zones. It employed the Law of the Sea as a forum to press its case for special treatment of coastal states overwhelmingly dependent on ocean resources, allowing them enhanced powers to protect their national interests. The creation of a vastly expanded exclusive economic zone around Iceland turned what was once the high seas into state-owned property. The 200-mile exclusive economic zone is thus only for the use of Icelandic fishermen, or foreign vessels granted special licences.

Two general categories of fishing vessels operated by Icelanders can be distinguished on the basis of their ownership: small boats operated by independent skipper-owners, and larger vessels owned by vertically-integrated capitalist enterprises. According to Pálsson (n.d.), the former are generally incorporated into household production in which labour power is not viewed as a commodity. Fishing is a way of life, and not just a means of earning a living, and crews tend to be permanent from one year to the next. The firm-owned trawlers, on the other hand, have a high turnover of crews, and are run according to union- and government-defined regulations. One individual disparagingly called the trawlers "machines" which did not reflect what "real" fishing was about. The trawlers are owned in conjunction with freezing plants or other

enterprises, and "when fishing becomes unproductive, the owners have two choices: to transfer their capital to more profitable endeavours, or to lobby for protection from the state" (ibid. 5).

Fisheries production is markedly gender-divided. A female fisherman is exceptional, and jobs on the larger trawlers are almost exclusively held by men, and women on small boats are often there as part of family production. On land, tasks within the freezing plant are also gender-divided. Only women work on the production line cutting fish which has been skinned and gutted by machine, and removing bones and worms from the fillets, since they are thought to be more conscientious at this detailed work. On the other hand, jobs operating and fixing machinery such as forklifts are done by men and are in general higher-paying. Within the freezing plant, all wages are equal according to length of service. In the salt houses, where young men work along with women, wages are uniformly lower. All workers are members of unions, and working conditions adhere to national standards. Earnings are based on both hourly wages and bonuses based on production and quality levels.

While working on the production lines, then, workers are closely monitored, their movements dictated by factory schedules, and their results subject to hourly inspection, to ensure quality control. While I was working in the freezing plant, Marks and Spencer of Britain became a new customer. The firm sent their own inspectors to examine

production conditions, and several changes had to be made to meet their standards, primarily relating to hygiene.

Rationalization of fisheries management increased during the 1970s. Isolated instances of marine research occurred at the turn of the century, and a research laboratory was established in 1934, but full-time research did not begin until the 1940s. The Marine Research Institute, an independent branch of the Ministry of Fisheries, was established in 1965, although it took two events to give it authority in management policy: the collapse of the herring stocks and the Cod Wars.

Since the 1950s, and until 1967, herring was the most economically-important species caught, providing over 40% of total export earnings during the 1960s. In 1967, however, the annual catch fell by one half, from 700,000 tons to 360,000 tons. One year later, in 1968, catches dropped again to 65,000 tons. The collapse of the herring stocks triggered years of massive inflation, unemployment, and a lowering in the standard of living, as well as emigration out of the country.

Three reasons for the collapse are commonly accepted: changes in ocean ecology had adversely affected feeding grounds, takes of immature herring by Norwegian coastal fleets had increased (herring is a highly migratory species), and technological developments had allowed larger catches by foreign and domestic fleets in Icelandic waters. One fisheries biologist just prior to the collapse had

predicted imminent disaster, but no measures were taken to offset its impact. His prescience made him a folk hero, and in his current post as director of the Research Institute, he has been able to use this status to his advantage, in order to mediate conflicts between fishermen and biologists. When he eventually spoke out in favour of the scientific whaling programme--a change of opinion which occurred during a private interview with a Greenpeace leader--his authority convinced many of the appropriateness of the government stand.

The Cod Wars were the second event which tied government policy closer to scientifically-based management strategies: research into fish stocks was used to support political claims. The Icelandic government, during the last Cod War of 1972-73, argued that extension of the fisheries limit was essential in order to preserve fish stocks. Because trawlers from several states were harvesting in the same waters, conservation measures could not properly be instituted and enforced. In this case, British and Icelandic scientists were in agreement over the rate of depletion of the Icelandic stocks, and the scientific discourse itself never came under debate.

Fisheries research has focussed on biotic habitats, population dynamics and historical trends, stock sizes, testing of fishing gear, and, more recently, the interactions between cod and capelin. The MRI makes annual recommendations to the Ministry of Fisheries regarding stock

quotas. The Institute is strictly involved in biological research and does not participate in broader-range research encompassing social and political factors affecting catch sizes.

The state responded to the new reality of fisheries management in three ways: by encouraging catch diversification and the opening of new foreign markets for species hitherto not deemed economical, incorporating biological data into management procedures, and, in 1983, introducing a quota system. The latter innovation has had a significant impact on ownership of boats and access to ocean resources. The structure of the quota system and the debate it has triggered will be described below, following a discussion of issues involved in common resource management.

The Commons: Ownership and management of the oceans

How resources are owned, or thought to be owned, effects the strategies brought to bear on management decisions regarding those resources. The question of "the commons" is a clear illustration of how interpreting the causes of ecological degradation through misunderstood historical situations has led to the strengthening of state control over resources.

In 1968, the biologist Garrett Hardin put forth his controversial theory regarding what he terms "the tragedy of the commons." Put simply, he argues that ecological degradation is the inevitable result of resource

exploitation when no system of property rights exist. He uses the example of a commonly-held English village green on which farmers graze their cattle with the purported intent of maximizing their individual returns, even when confronted with obvious signs of worsening conditions of the pasture. According to Hardin, no motivating force exists to compel the individual farmer to reduce his usage of the pasture, since his competitors would only increase their own herds' use, thus negating the possible benefit of his withdrawal. Resource users, he concludes, are concerned only with short-term gains, and are incapable or unwilling to alter the system themselves.

Economists building on Hardin's theory add that in an open-access system--which common property is thought to be--overcapitalization is bound to result when new entrants into the system are attracted to the possibility of making a return on their investment in equipment. The resource is then exploited faster as producers attempt to maximize, using far greater means than the resource requires for its efficient use (McCay and Acheson 1987).

As McCay and Acheson (1987: 5) point out, the idea that common property is responsible for environmental and economic problems is amenable to the creation of political solutions by both the left and right:

The idea of the tragedy of the commons became an influential way to argue that government must take a stronger role in dealing with problems of population,

society, and the environment. A seemingly contradictory message--that government should leave this role to individuals and the private sector by encouraging privatization--is also carried by the metaphor and the theories that lie behind it.

McCay and Acheson trace the impact of this attitude on resource management strategies. From the economist's point of view, private property promotes responsible and sustainable resource exploitation. The argument is made that, since the owner-user has a long-term interest in ensuring the continuing existence of the resource, increased effort will be made toward rational use. Public policy attempts to manage resources by adopting measures which in effect emulate private property: either instituting ways of restricting or allocating access, or granting exclusive rights to use of the resource.

There are several problems with Hardin's theory, and critics have underlined its shortcomings, including its failure to consider evidence from anthropologists working with people practicing common resource use. The theory proposes universal application, and does not take into consideration the specifics of varying social and historical contexts. It overlooks the social basis of law, by making the same error to which Macpherson (1978) refers, namely presuming that ownership refers to the relationship between people and things, rather than to the sanctioned relations between people pertaining to the rights over things.

Further, it sorely misjudges the capacity of people to arrive at communal solutions to shared dilemmas, and opens the way to control by an external power (e.g. the state or international regulatory agencies).

Other issues arise from the tragedy of the commons theory. Hardin assumes that common property--more properly termed "open access" wherein no social institutions govern use--and not capitalism is responsible for environmental degradation. In fact, capitalism, along with industrialism and colonial exploitation, are complex socioeconomic systems which contribute significantly to resource depletion (McCay and Acheson 1987).

Fishing grounds are most often cited as an example of common property, and decline in fish stocks as a sign of over-exploitation due to open access. Yet within exclusive economic zones, the state exercises custodial rights over the natural resources within its boundaries. It takes over from the community the power to negotiate and balance rights to revenue, but as Marchak (1988) points out, states often have too many interests to balance in order to be fully competent at managing common resources.

She argues further that blaming competition rather than market structure, or form of ownership rather than management, acts to divert attention away from other systemic features affecting conservation. There is no reason to assume that private ownership alone fosters long-term interest in maintaining a resource. Capitalist

enterprises differ from traditional or family enterprises, in that the former are concerned with profit, and engage in production only as long as it remains profitable. Otherwise, enterprises are sold, or are bought out by larger firms interested in creating a monopoly situation: "in none of these actions is there an inherent logic that leads to conservation of the resources" (ibid. 12).

Icelandic fisheries management

Prior to the institution of quotas, the state had managed fish stocks in such a manner that the effects were evenly distributed amongst all fishermen. Methods such as putting limits on the overall catch by regulating the length of season, or periodically closing access to specific fishing grounds, were intended to prevent one group from benefiting at the cost of another (Pálsson n.d.). However, these measures did not prove sufficient to prevent cod stocks from declining further still. The quota system, then, was a further manoeuvre to conserve stocks. Since its introduction in 1983, however, the inequities of its effects have become more and more apparent.

Groups representing the various interests involved in fishing and fish processing came together at the end of that year for their annual conference. Because the annual cod catch was lower even than the austere recommendations of biologists, the Ministry of Fisheries decided to reduce the overall catch size for the following year. Many of those

present at the meeting were willing to cooperate with a quota system which would divide the overall catch amongst all participants. After much debate, a system whereby quotas were allocated according to catch success over the previous three years was devised and accepted by the fishing industry, and its administration was left to the Ministry.

As Pálsson points out, this system deviates from previous practice, in that it favours one group of producers--those who had recently been more successful--over another. The impact of the system has since become the focus of considerable debate, and the discursive construction of events in Patreksfjörður (described above) is one instance in an ongoing contest to determine appropriate systems of production and resource ownership. At present, the quota system places the greatest power to shape production in the hands of boat owners.

The new system allows the selling of boats with their attached quotas, or conversely, the selling of the quota alone for one year at a time, albeit with some restrictions. This has led to a market in which boats are at times selling for amounts two to three times higher than the value of the vessel itself (Árnason 1986). Boats and quotas can be sold away from the villages to which they have been hitherto attached, thus depriving the local freezing plant of its raw materials.³ Private property in tools is linked to unequal access to natural resources which allows for speculation and capital accumulation. The cost of entering the fisheries is

becoming prohibitively high, to the detriment of the independent owner-skipper. Further, the quota system has failed to achieve its ecological goals, since the proportion of young cod in the catch is increasing.

Possible alternatives to the present set-up are the object of debate, as discussed in the case of Patreksfjörður. They vary according to how access to fish is defined as property: whether fish is the private, freely-alienable domain of individual licence-holders, or the common resource of a local commune with boat-owners and freezing plants and their workers considered together.

The advantage that the Icelandic fishing industry has over fisheries elsewhere is the close social network amongst all participants in fisheries production and administration. Given the economic centrality of the fisheries, the political will to take immediate corrective action is in place. Iceland has usually responded quickly to changing ecological and market situations, albeit with high costs in terms of labour disputes. The difficulty with the current situation is the conjunction of the commodification of the fisheries with the deregulation of capital investment and increasing involvement in free trade associations.

Changing perceptions of resources and production

As might be expected, the high degree of change in the organisation of property and production has its counterpart in changing conceptions of the means by which humans acquire their livelihood from nature. Cognition and systems of production are not causally linked in a one-to-one relationship, and it would be reductionist to assume that people's "world-view" is shaped only by technological and economic factors. However, general patterns are discernible.

When fishing was part of the logic of farm production, and the ocean's yield was considered outside the ability of humans to control, fishing success was guðsgjöf (God's gift) which some possessed while others did not (Pálsson 1990). Good or evil could happen, ef guð lofar--if God wills. The future was not changeable by human endeavour. Charms and prayers served not so much to ensure success as to protect fishermen from harm. Fishermen returned to the same grounds time after time, unless a drowning at that location sanctioned its avoidance. While at sea, taboos against naming aloud illhveli ("bad whales") or vatnanykrar ("water horses") were observed. The logic of fishing was more akin to gathering the gifts of the sea, than of the hunt.

Farming, too, involved a great measure of conservatism. Attempts to introduce production reforms in the 18th century were stubbornly resisted. Appropriate relations to

resources were governed by a fixed set of hierarchical social relations.

With the advent of capital investment and the industrialization of the fisheries, the notion of the ocean's inexhaustible wealth became implicit to fishing strategies. The realization that fish are an exhaustible resource and are therefore in need of management, occurred later in Iceland than in more established fisheries in the USA and Britain. Initial state measures of conservation involved attempts at territorial controls. Further, locally-based fishermen collaborated to establish equitable means of controlling access, such as regulating times of departure (so-called rowing time, róðratími) (Durrenberger and Pálsson: 1987).

Giddens (1990) describes this transference of authority from fate to human expertise and control as an aspect of modernity. No single reason can explain this shift: the desacralization of nature, the rise of the natural sciences, increased technical manipulation of the world, urbanization and the breakdown of tradition--all of these factors have contributed to the view that outcomes are directly attributable to human action, and that humans have the legal and moral right to use nature in order to increase wealth.

With an increasing awareness that this use must somehow be tempered so as not to destroy altogether the resources on which capitalist society has come to depend, the right to use nature is juxtaposed to the right to conserve, preserve

or otherwise protect nature. The means by which these rights are to be determined and enacted have more and more come to dominate public discourse in Western nations, but they have more slowly penetrated into Icelandic discourse. As we shall see in the following chapter, concern and reverence for nature are more frequently expressed through nationalist discourse than they are through the disembodied discourse of international environmentalism.

ENDNOTES

1. Personal communication. Gunnar Gunnarsson received his Ph.D. in political science from the London School of Economics. He is not to be confused with Gunnar Gunnarsson, sometime professor of political science at the University of Iceland.
2. Figures include dependent farms. Their disappearance accounts for the decline in number of total farms.
3. Over the last five years or so, boat owners have more frequently taken their catches directly to foreign markets, thereby reducing amounts of fish available for production in domestic freezing plants. The boat owners argue that they can receive a better price abroad for their catch. Not surprisingly, freezing plant owners and unions representing plant workers protest such actions. Given the fact that

many plants operate with slight deficits, it is not possible for rates of catch payments to be raised.

CHAPTER FIVE: NATURE AND NATIONAL TRANSCENDENCE

ísland er hinn besta land sem sólinn skinnar uppa.

Iceland is the best land on which the sun shines.¹

Demarcating space

The space and place of the nation are framed through various apprehensions of nature, in which "nature" signifies specific, socially-constructed ways of speaking about the world. The discursive construction of nature is less apparent than that of property or territory, because, by definition, nature is that which operates and persists outside of culture, beyond that which is humanly made. This understanding of nature makes it difficult to grasp that nature is not, in fact, an already-constructed object of our perception, but is generated through our actions and understandings.

We saw in Chapter Three that the historical production of the nation-state relies on the juxtaposition of territories and the imagining of boundaries. National identity relies, to be sure, on those boundaries, insofar as any definition posits its opposite: if Icelanders are identifiable by their love of literature, then there must be a people who do not love literature. Emphasis on categorical dissimilarity achieves the desired effect of rendering each national identity unique. Recognizing that national identity relies on distinctiveness, however, does

not fully explain the embodiment of that identity and how it imbues the experience of self.

National identity is naturalised, i.e. made common and conventional, by way of particular descriptions which situate the experience of self-in-the-world within nationalist discourse. Such descriptions include: using biological metaphors to explain the nation or features associated with the nation (e.g. language), circumscribing certain landmarks or locales as national symbols, attributing individual and group behaviours to a presumed national character, and representing (in the form of art, music, poetry, etc.) aspirations, emotions, and ideas using images of a nationalized nature--or elevating such states to a commonality of a nation's members.

The following example illustrates my point: a recurring discussion in Iceland pertains to the politeness, or more accurately lack of politeness, of Icelanders, and this serves to identify an assumed national trait.² An occasional letter to the editor voices a complaint about the rudeness of Icelandic shop clerks in comparison to, say, American shop clerks. A question about polite forms of address in Icelandic prompts the laughing response "There is nothing polite in Iceland!". An acquaintance describes a campaign a dozen or so years earlier to teach people how to queue and establish a habit of turn-taking. The campaign was by and large a success.

It happened that on the National Day, 17 June, I was with some friends in search of ice cream. Line-ups at street kiosks were long, and we walked to the small Dairy Queen³ shop on Aðalstræti. Many people were crowded into its small space waiting to be served. One of my friends asked something of a young woman perhaps 20 years of age. The girl responded, you can be like a typical Icелander and push your way to the front. My friend shot back: ég er sigld: I have sailed, meaning, I have lived abroad and know better manners. It was a put-down.

A socio-historical explanation for this lack of politeness was occasionally offered me: it was because Iceland has only recently had a bourgeoisie which would be concerned with the spread of such behaviour. This definition, however relativizing, did not dislodge the everyday understanding of a national characteristic, a means of identifying "our" behaviour in relation to the "other's" behaviour.

In this chapter I am concerned with explanatory discourses which, either explicitly or implicitly, define what nature and the natural are and how they are to be understood, and which are then used in nationalist discourse. Statements from explanatory discourses about nature are particularly potent when treated symbolically in day-to-day contexts. That is to say, when the mind is confronted with information which it is unable to treat rationally, it seeks in memory for a relevant representation

with which to understand that information (Sperber 1975). In this way, those ignorant of appropriate theory use a metaphor of flowing water to imagine the operations of electricity and electrical wires. "Natural" explanations, statements which construct nature through humanly-devised categories, can serve as vehicles to explain more complex social, political, or economic activities.

Drawing on discourses of nature connects the subject of discourse to notions of truth. This is due, I would argue, to nature being removed from history and given the status of foundation or unchangeable reality. For example, during the 19th century, social Darwinism, an implausible (one would hope) explanation for social inequality (but a useful justification for the dominant class), relied on a symbolic interpretation of the far more plausible Darwinian theory of natural selection. Association with a supposed "natural law" renders the explanation more powerful.

Meaning of nature

Usage of the term "nature" is contextual, and has shifted according to historical circumstance. "Nature," as Williams (1976; 1980) has demonstrated, has a complex history in the English language, and its many meanings over the centuries are current still. Náttúra in Icelandic closely corresponds to the English semantic field. Williams (1976: 219) distinguishes between three general uses of the word:

- (i) the essential quality and character of something;
- (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings.

Each definition presupposes a set of practices. For example, if people or things do indeed have essential natures, then it is possible to relate to them in terms of those qualities. If Icelanders are essentially trustworthy, then it is possible to rely on them to follow their word, or behave with honour. Of course, in this sense the essential nature of individuals or collectives need not be moral; it can also be biological (hence, the characteristics thought to adhere to populations according to their biological "race") or psychological (presupposing internal drives or motivations).

In Icelandic, all of these usages are present. Náttúra refers to a person's character (eðli), a distinctive feature (sérkenni), or a person's constitution (eðlisfar). Thus, eðlisfarið reynist sterkara en uppeldið: "character proves stronger than upbringing," where "character" refers to what is passed along through families. Náttúra also refers to the world (heimurinn) and all that belongs to it. This can include humans, or can be the "natural state" of the world before human intervention. Náttúra can also imply creation, maturation of character, or the tendency toward something,

thus indicating process rather than material existence.

Finally, náttúra refers to sexual drive or lust.

Not all discursive uses of nature refer directly to the nation. Rather they can and do operate in separate realms such as the natural sciences, ecology and environmentalism, religion, and the arts. Each discourse constructs nature according to the rules of its particular practice, and, not unusually, in contradiction to other discursive uses of it. The flexibility of the word's use and the multiplicity of its referents makes nature at one and the same time highly evocative and exceedingly ambivalent.

Construction of perception of nature

The act of perception does not, as is commonly thought, report via the senses on an external reality existing outside or apart from the perceiver. Instead, all manner of categories are brought to bear to construct that reality (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Thus, the eroded, uninhabited mountain slopes of Iceland appear as natural, i.e. existing outside of human activity, to anyone who is ignorant of, or momentarily puts aside, historical knowledge of a destructive pastoralist practice. Similarly, the recreation of pre-settlement Icelandic forests can only occur in a fenced space which prevents the incursions of sheep. A seemingly simple distinction between wasteland and productive land presupposes a myriad of assumptions of

value, i.e. value as something calculated in terms of economic profit as opposed to ecological principles.

What we see and understand about the world of which we are part is based on how we come to be placed in it, and the knowledge that placement yields. Perception and experience of a "natural" space brings into play expectations and memories, as the following personal experience illustrates: I had read before I left for Iceland the accounts of several foreign writers, describing what they saw during the hour-long bus trip from the airport into Reykjavik. The landscape, they said, was lunar: no wonder the Americans sent their astronauts here to train before the first moon flights. I read enough of such statements to recognize them as empty clichés. Yet as I gazed out the windows of the same bus, numbed by fourteen hours spent in airports and airplanes, I could not loosen that metaphor from my mind. It was not that it was an adequate description of what I saw, because it was not. Rather, it was the fact that I could not build my own description of a terrain so different from anything I had yet experienced.

Six or seven weeks later, I was resting atop a hill with the wife of the farmer for whom I was then working. We were standing inland on the margins of arable land, overlooking to the north a grey and eroded plain. She remarked that the Swede who had recently begun work on the farm described Iceland as "being like the moon." She found the image strange, unimaginable and, well, foreign. Her

Iceland, or at least that part which that day we waded, climbed, jumped, walked, and ate--the blueberries were in season then--was different, and was filled with the traces of human activity. It consisted of the list of names for plants, rocks, gullies, birds, and much else which she repeated as part of my education in Icelandic. Her perception built on reminiscences of her childhood adventures in this spot, chasing the family's sheep who, fifteen years later, were eyeing us from a safe distance. She pointed at the traces of an old horse track which in the "olden days" had been the route into the village of Vík.

Realms of knowledge about nature

In Chapter Two, I posed the rhetorical question, If the Church was the domain for statements about God, then what now are the domains of statements about Nature? The answer is that there are two general realms, namely the natural sciences and Romantic nature, which resulted from a bifurcation of thought during the 19th century.

In general, the natural sciences have been largely responsible for what Weber calls the disenchantment of the world.⁴ For most people, scientific knowledge is assumed to produce an accurate representation of the natural world, to provide truth, and its methods to yield immutable facts. Yet the nature it examines is made, through the act of examination, into a bio-technical object. Most people have only a fuzzy understanding of how scientifically-derived

knowledge operates, and a major problematic of our times revolves around the socially--and ecologically--appropriate uses of it, and related technologies. Only the practitioners and speakers of the discourses of science are permitted to speak and judge the truth of scientific statements.

The positioning of science in a realm presumed to be truth and rationality thereby situates other discourses about nature in a realm outside of truth. The rules of discourse marginalize the languages of art, religion, or certain forms of "deep" ecology. The margins consist of the realms of feeling, emotion, the irrational, the feminine, and everyday experience which are then minimized, rationalized so that their power is diffused in society.

This chapter is concerned with Romantic nature and its development, but some observations about the practice of natural science in Iceland are relevant to my discussion.

Scientific practice is comparatively recent, given that earlier educational emphasis was on law, medicine, theology, and later, language and history. This is not to deny that a handful of individuals did become conversant during the Enlightenment in the concerns of natural history (see below), but it was not until well into this century that scientific practice was professionalized and institutionalized.

Given the size of population and budgetary limitations, it is not surprising that the natural sciences tend to be

geared toward the immediate economic needs of state and industry. There is an emphasis on marine and freshwater research, geology and geothermal technologies, volcanology and earthquake science, agricultural production, and the engineering requirements of housing and road construction. Research is conducted through three institutional settings: state-run institutes, the university (both amongst faculty and university-based research institutes), and to a lesser extent, private industry.

ROMANTIC NATURE: PRESENT

National nature

Language and the land: in Icelandic nationalist discourse, the sanctity and purity of both are said to be integral to the formation and continuance of the nation and the identity of its people. Both are made natural in nationalist discourse by their removal from human history. That is to say, although language and the land are known to have undergone some changes over the centuries, these are minimized beneath a rhetoric of continuity, and are not understood in terms of their social production.

Pálsson (1989a: 123), in his summary of indigenous scholarly and everyday understandings of the Icelandic language, observes that

Icelanders tend to regard their language not as an extension of their person or a culturally fashioned tool, but rather as an artifact independent of

themselves analogous to their equally celebrated landscape--in other words, an external condition within which they operate. For most of them language seems to have a life of its own....One of the policymakers writes: "Language cultivation is similar to conservation of nature, the protection of plants and the soil".

Pálsson argues that attitudes to syntactic, morphological and phonetic variations amongst Icelandic speakers conform to an ideology of egalitarianism which effectively masks the class basis for speech differences. Because Iceland is thought to be a classless society, linguistic variability is either underplayed, or considered aberrant.

Metaphors of disease are frequently invoked to describe the "pathology" of nonstandard language. Pálsson notes that understanding linguistic groupings by reference to notions of purity (hreinleiki) or disease is an indirect means of sanctioning particular social groupings. He cites the nationalist movement and romanticisation of the "language of the sagas" as decisive in shaping this view.

An American anthropologist recently returned from Iceland, told me that several people with whom she spoke accounted for the contrast between the clearly-enunciated speech of the northern town of Akureyri and the more "mumbled" speech of Keflavik in terms of contamination: the "poorer" language was a result of the latter's proximity to the American NATO base.⁵

While I quite agree with Pálsson's analysis, I would point out that another aspect of the disease metaphor makes it a powerful symbol of the nation. Assuming that a language can become infected presupposes that it is in some sense a living organism. This assumption is part of nationalist discourse, and this attitude to language draws on the foundationalism which nature is thought to represent. In the mechanistic construal of nature as existing beyond human thought and action, an "object" deemed natural is removed from the contingencies of history, and can thus serve as a foundation or principle of reality.

The notion of purity is carried over into images of nature, domesticated animals, and the people themselves. For the most part, Icelanders accept as true that the air, land, and water surrounding them are pure and likely the best in the world. Fish from Icelandic waters are thought to taste better because of the cold purity of the surrounding oceans, and this image figures in marketing strategies directed abroad. Lamb, milk, and cheese are pure because of the quality of the grasses on which the sheep and cows feed. This purity is a property of nature, and threats to it come in the form of ocean and air-borne pollutants brought from abroad. The slogan of Landvernd, the conservation organisation, is hreint land, fagurt land: clean (pure) land, beautiful land.⁶

A pure and unspoiled nature figures in foreign tourist promotions. In ever increasing numbers, tourists primarily

from the rest of Europe but also from the USA, are laying down large sums of money to have their wilderness experience in Iceland. Beginning in May and lasting throughout the summer, these visitors clad in colourful Goretex stormgear make a curious contrast to the natives clothed in their urban acid-wash denim and high-fashion black. Foreign tourists avail themselves of hiking, horseback trekking, bicycling, and coach tours to the designated "points of interest" in a low-tech bid to "get in touch" with nature.

In 1989 the Prime Minister commissioned a British firm to draw up a marketing strategy for Icelandic tourism. The conclusion was that, with increasing international concerns with health and a clean environment, Iceland could be a potential destination for eco-tourism. This report prompted a passing discussion about developing health spas, building on the already-successful hot mineral springs at Bláa lónið (Blue Lagoon) where sufferers of skin disorders travel in search of relief.

Domesticated animals, descendants of the species brought by the first settlers, have taken on their own nationalist persona. This is especially true for sheep and horses, since both are strongly associated with the past and rural values. Unlike their counterparts in other European countries during the 19th century, Icelandic animals did not need (re)construction through selective breeding, since the island's isolation had effectively cut them off from interbreeding, thus making them appropriately unique.

Instead, legislation has ensured that most of the animals are kept "pure." Importation of animals is strictly controlled, although like the fellow who smuggled an alligator inside a cereal box, some transgressors occasionally slip through. Cows are also protected, but an experiment in interbreeding with the Galloway cow in order to increase the amount of meat on each animal, thus making Icelandic milch cows into beef cattle, began in 1976. A station for impregnating Icelandic cows with imported semen was built on the island of Hrísey after all other livestock was cleared away. The station itself is behind two rings of fencing, and the meat from this herd--only purchasable through the station--cannot be taken from the island.

Horses have a special place as an unofficial symbol of Iceland. Once the beast of labour, romanticised as trusted companion and aid to the toiling peasant, it represented male power and prestige. With the advent of mechanized power, the horse was displaced in production. A subsequent rise in popularity of recreational horseback-riding has prevented the horse's disappearance. Concentrated within driving distance of Reykjavík are numerous stables although riding is not only an urban phenomenon. The central-north region of Skagafjörður and Sauðárkrókur, for example, is noted for horse raising. Horses now number about 65,000. They are allowed to graze freely in the highlands for the first two years of their life, when the most promising are selected for breaking. Others may be sold as meat to the

slaughterhouses. Horsemeat is sold through grocery stores; its popularity is not great, but it is an inexpensive alternative.

Horses are protected by law: once they or their gear leave the country they cannot return. Other examples of protection are easily found. For sanitary reasons, dogs were banned from Reykjavik until 1987, at which time the law was quickly changed to protect a prominent, dog-owning politician from prosecution. Fishing gear, referring in particular to angling equipment brought in by foreign sport fishermen, must be disinfected at customs before it is used in Icelandic rivers, to prevent the transmission of any disease-carrying organisms.

The biology of purity

Animals have figured in a continuing debate over the origins of Icelanders, i.e. whether the first settlers were almost entirely Norwegian in origin, or accompanied by a large Celtic contingent of slaves. The debate in terms of biologically-determined origins goes back to at least the turn of the century. To a certain extent, concern with biological origins was linked to arguments promoting Icelandic independence, in an effort to prove Iceland had been, since its initial settlement, a distinct society. One argument held that the introduction of Celtic "blood" into the Nordic "strain" which occurred in Iceland was said to have created a more vigorous and dynamic culture than

existed in Norway, particularly in terms of literary invention.

More recently, Aðalsteinsson⁷ (1989) used serological studies of horses and dogs, colour types and horn shapes amongst sheep and goats, colour gene frequency amongst cats, and tissue types of chickens to build his case for the predominantly Norse origins of the animals, and therefore of humans. Such comparisons, he argues, reveal the close relationship between Icelandic domestic animals and their contemporary Scandinavian counterparts. He argued that ABO blood group gene frequencies point toward the same conclusion in human populations. Although Icelanders are similar to the Irish in their blood group frequencies, and dissimilar to the Norwegians, he hypothesizes that selection by smallpox epidemics altered Icelandic blood group frequencies.

Sigurðsson (1988), in a primarily historical and literary review, argues in favour of greater Celtic (Gaelic, in his terms) presence. In his review of the biological data, which he does not attempt to evaluate, he notes the divergent opinions amongst geneticists, and suggests that there is no firm biological evidence for either view, but that other types of evidence support the Celtic-dominant hypothesis. In brief, Sigurðsson claims that differences in literary forms (i.e. the Eddaic poems, the Family and King sagas, the mythic-heroic sagas, etc.) can be explained through origins in differing traditions, and that certain

names and plot elements exhibit connections with Celtic sources.

Current discussion of contemporary ethnic purity of Icelanders has taken on the tone of turn-of-the-century racial hierarchies. In the spring of 1990, media attention focussed briefly on the issue of racism in Iceland, triggered both by newspaper articles written by the former head of the now-defunct National Socialist Party which flourished before World War II, and a public meeting on the topic of racism organised by several youth groups. The radio phone-in show Þjóðarsál ("soul of the nation") devoted one broadcast entirely to the issue, and several callers voiced opinions about the "four races of the world," and the danger to the nation's well-being if other races were allowed to mix with the Icelanders. Others spoke of the threat to national culture if foreigners were allowed to work and settle in Iceland, and the danger of being overrun within their own country.

There are no hard data to clearly say how widely held such ideas are, and certainly many were quick to dismiss these callers as extremists. An organiser of the youth meeting, a foreigner by birth who had taken Icelandic citizenship, observed that nonetheless there was a threat that extremist talk could pull discussion of race and culture further toward the right. What was needed, he and others argued, was a recognition of the systemic nature of racism in Iceland and its connections with nationalism. Yet

others told me that it was due only to Icelanders' lack of experience of people of colour that caused them to react with such rigidity. Thus, racism was not due to attitudes regarding national boundaries and purity of culture, but merely a matter of adjustment.

Incidents such as the violent beating of Inuit fishermen at dock in Ísafjörður in June 1990, or attacks on individuals with even slightly dark skin (it does not take much pigment for a person to be recognized as non-native), or the several stories of blacks having difficulty gaining entry to the country, are generally glossed over as isolated events. Certainly amongst the left, though, it is a point of irony that, although the government of 1951 allowed the establishment of a foreign military presence on Icelandic territory, it sought to "protect" the nation by requiring the American military to bar black soldiers from the base. This policy ended with the civil rights movement in the USA.

At a more institutional level, several policies make difficult the integration of non-natives into Icelandic society. This issue has become more acute with the arrival of Vietnamese refugee families, and "mail-order" Thai and Philippine brides. The educational system was not prepared to teach Icelandic as a second language to children--and certainly programmes for adults are not geared to practical learning.⁸ The brides in particular were not made fully cognizant of their rights within Iceland (church groups and the Red Cross have worked most directly in helping these

people adjust to the country). Although legislation was currently being drawn up during my field stay, it was still the case that there was no category for landed immigrants, only Icelanders and foreigners.

The perception that to be an Icelander requires the "purity" of Icelandic descent, as well as native fluency in the Icelandic language--this is the "natural" state of being Icelandic--effectively creates institutional and cognitive barriers to outsiders who might wish to participate as full citizens within the country.

Protecting the nation from contamination by foreign "blood" and culture is not the only means of protecting the purity of the nation from dangerous forces. When speaking of a threat to purity, we must not mistake the state boundary for the national boundary. It is not difficult to find examples of how citizens of a nation are defined as dangers to the nation of which they are part. Björnsdóttir (1989) describes the treatment of women who dated or married foreign soldiers during World War II. Their activities were viewed as threatening, not least because their position as "the mothers of Iceland's future," and the women were ostracized by society and family.

It is still possible for women to be singled out as a danger to the health of society. The first woman to test positive for the HIV virus was at first kept under surveillance during the evenings and night by volunteer guardians. Although a few men were already known to be

carriers of the virus, none of them were subject to similar treatment. The reason given by authorities was that she was believed mentally unstable and therefore not reliable enough to refrain from promiscuous behaviour. Her child was taken from her by the state and sent to a foster home; four years later she has had no success in a legal battle to regain custody.

Boundaries that purportedly protect the nation are drawn around legitimate social or verbal behaviour that in effect marginalize certain Icelanders. The question that needs to be asked in each instance is, who has the power to draw that boundary, to speak on behalf of the nation, to proclaim the "truth?" The state figures greatly in this control, using organic and otherwise naturalized rhetoric as a means to exercise its power.

Returning to the natural

As Iceland becomes increasingly urban, the countryside is turning into a place of recreation and retreat from urban stress. Given the small population of Reykjavik (125,000, including suburbs) in contrast to other national capitals, it is easy for an outsider to overlook the opposition between city and country which has grown along with urbanization. Friends of mine in Reykjavik would talk of the need to escape the pressures of the city to maintain their "mental health."

The ambivalence of city-dwellers toward the countryside is expressed in attitudes about farms. Whereas it is common to hear farmers criticized as giving nothing to the "national household" (þjóðarbúið), or as engaging in "non-traditional" pursuits such as driving expensive cars and watching VCRs--all at the expense of the taxpayer--the Icelandic farm is also thought to be the locale of traditional values. To be out in the land, to experience its emptiness, is both romance and religion. Parents try to ensure that their children spend some of their summers working on a farm: if not the farm of a relative, then one which hires itself out as a kind of summer camp. In feminist discourse, farm wives are personifications of the undervalued strength, independence, and proficiency of Icelandic women.

Some farms are famous as the site of past events, or the birthplace of famous individuals. Farm names still serve as social landmarks: it was usual for me to be asked on which farm I worked, in case it was significant. If possible, a person would name the farm, or failing that, the district, from which his or her ancestors came (being able to literally place one's family's history was a matter of social distinction, since many were landless and thus not attached to a particular farm). Names of farms are sometimes used to identify particular individuals: Guðrún Árnadóttir frá (from) Lundi, Stefán frá Hvítadal. Novelist Halldór Laxness took the name of his family's farm as his

surname. Farms are listed in a separate section at the back of the telephone book, and regional histories are compiled which have individual entries according to farm, listing who lived there, to whom they married, and what crops were grown.

The rapid increase in wealth during the last fifteen years, and a consequent increase in consumer spending, has prompted a shift in how nature is approached as a locale for recreation. Small motorized boats have become more numerous in the last decade. This is, to be sure, not strictly a recreational phenomenon. The imposition of fishing quotas has so far exempted small boats, prompting many entrepreneurs to invest in them as a source for a first or second income. Yet I also heard people (usually young men) speak of the pleasure and relaxation of a day spent in a friend's boat.

The hulking presence of American- and Japanese-built four-wheel drive vehicles is a recent addition to the wilderness scene. Camping expeditions into the highlands, off-road and glacier driving, cross-country rallies and moto-cross competitions are now common; regions hitherto accessible only by foot, horse, Land Rover (for the wealthier) or Soviet army van (for the infinitely patient) are now experiencing gluts of visitors.

This trend has upset ecologically-minded observers, and the environmental-protectionist organizations Landvernd and Náttúruvernd, who say that Icelanders remaining behind their

metal shells are untouched and untouchable by nature. The damage to the fragile ground cover is visible where vehicles frequently leave roads or tracks. Regulations against off-road driving exist, but according to wardens who supervise activities within national parks, they have not had a significant impact on people's behaviour. One warden told me that he found foreign tourists more amenable to directives intended to protect the land than are Icelanders.

Nature has never been viewed as benign, but for the first time Icelanders have achieved a measure of control over it through technical means. Use of technology is not viewed by the majority as being in contradiction to an appropriate use of nature. Romanticisation of the land is not the same as the purist ethic of the European or North American wilderness aficionado. When an Icelandic goes out into nature for recreation, it is more likely to be in a four-wheel drive than on a bicycle.

Heroes in a harsh land

Nations raise memorials to their heroes. Kneeling with hands upraised in prayer, a statue in memory of drowned fishermen faces the sea at the east-coast town of Eskifjörður. The statue--and many other like it--is at once a memory of sorrow and the triumph of spirit. It is fitting that the "unknown fisherman" substitutes for the unknown soldier in a country without an army: Icelanders have not

fought wars with other powers, but they have fought, in the name of the nation, against nature.

Whether fighting volcanoes, braving stormy seas, or climbing mountains during the autumn sheep round-up, heroes are made by doing battle with nature. Fishermen and rescue crews--those who perform rescues at sea or in remote highland areas--are contemporary (male) heroes whose physical strength and mastery are actively documented in the media and popular songs. Romantic discourse does not necessarily instill a reverence for the land; it can instead romanticize the actions of those who view nature as a combatant. This contest with nature connects the present with the past, because the past is understood as a fight for survival, and nature the force against which people had to struggle to eke out their meagre existence. Heroes, then, represent the continuity of a persistent Icelandic spirit.

This ought to be put in perspective: there is no denying that the environment of Iceland is harsh and marginal. For centuries it was barely capable of sustaining the pasturage necessary to support the population. Slight shifts in mean temperature as have occurred in the last 1,100 years alter the land's capacity to grow certain crops. The presence close to shore of polar ice continues to affect the weather and fishing success. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and North Atlantic gales all took their toll in lives and in destruction of crops and animals. Starvation and disease

were never far from the peasant's life during the pre-modern era.

Such a description, however, overlooks the social determinants of human misery. Whereas the immediate causes of hardship were obviously climatic and geographic, the social construction of human relations to the land in the form of productive activities needs to be considered. Instead, conventional attitudes to the past naturalize social organisation thereby masking the impact of unequal access to land on chances for survival. Deaths from starvation did not strike all social strata equally: a comment by a 17th-century official to the effect that deaths from starvation were a good way to rid the land of excess labour, is indicative of this fact.

Heroes who risk their lives play a decisive role in imagining the nation. Anderson (1983) suggests that their evocative power arises from nationalism's cultural roots in death and generativity. Memorials transform the contingencies of life and death into religious virtue and inspire them with universal meaning: heroes die so that the nation may live.

Natural character

Nationalist writers such as Guðmundur Finnbogason and Sigurður Nordal, particularly in the early part of this century when such thinking was still prevalent amongst conservative thinkers in Western societies, often invoked

geography as a means of explaining Icelandic national character. Iceland's peripheral location in relation to both Europe and North America was thought to have its impact on character, along with climate and geography. Although more sociological, psychological, and historical forms of explanation are now invoked to describe Icelanders, the earlier notions of an independent and phlegmatic (rólyndur, daufgerður) people shaped by a harsh and unforgiving nature are still to be found in everyday discourse and popular literature.

Finnbogason (1873-1944) had studied philosophy at Copenhagen, and taught psychology at the University of Iceland for eight years before settling in as director of the National Library. His works about Icelanders in Icelandic (Land og þjóð (1921), Íslendingar (1933)) were widely read; he also wrote in Danish and English to dispell any misconceptions foreigners might have about his countrymen. He was a language purist, concerned with promoting ideals of democracy and progress, and in creating an appreciation for Icelandic culture.

In his earlier book, he liberally quotes from Icelandic poets and writers--some foreign--who speak of the beauty of the land and attempt to characterize its people. He celebrates the steadfastness of rural values and the continuity of the literary tradition.

In an English-language pamphlet published during the war by the Anglo-Icelandic Society of Reykjavík (1943: 9-

10), he sets out the Icelandic character as a naturally-formed feature, assuming that "the characteristics of the nation originate in the interaction of land and people":

The clear cut boundaries of the island have from the beginning assisted in developing the national consciousness. On account of the geographical position of the country by the Arctic Circle other nations have imagined that everything must be dark and dreary in the far north and often form lower opinions of the nation than it deserves. The cold-sounding name "Iceland" is also partly responsible for this. This has aroused self-assertion and stimulated the national consciousness.... The isolation caused by the great distance from other countries has tended "to make the people free from the aggressiveness of kings and knaves" as it has been expressed in one of the Icelandic sagas. This has favoured in-breeding and prevented inter-breeding with foreign races.... The scattered nature of the population, where each home is a self-contained world, and must be independent of outside help and be adept at many things, has made individuals versatile and at the same time stimulated their self-reliance, thought and independence, but made them less amenable to co-operation.... The occupations, which are dependent upon the inclement forces of nature, have bred manliness, tenacity, observation and equanimity.... In other words, the influence of the

country seems to be in the direction of stimulating a strong national consciousness and characteristic culture, versatility, self-reliance, independence and an equalitarian turn of mind, manliness, tenacity and equanimity in emergencies, alertness of mind and imaginative power.

The gaps in this proud picture are interesting. Given the emphasis on manliness as national virtue, one wonders how women are to fit into such a society. There is little reassurance to be drawn from a single paragraph included on the third from the last page, to the effect that "in Iceland women have always been held in high esteem and have often played a prominent role," further, "Icelandic literature has always given an honourable place to women," and finally, "as regards relations between men and women Icelanders have always taken a humane view" (ibid. 22).

His portrayal of Iceland as a land of isolated, self-enclosed farms does not fit with the times in which he wrote. Population statistics from 1940 indicate that two-thirds of the 121,474 people lived in urban areas. Although this was a recent phenomenon, and urban dwellers began to outnumber the rural population only during the 1920s, the shifts in population toward Reykjavik and the fishing villages had nonetheless been ongoing since the end of the last century. We can assume a degree of romanticisation, then, on the author's part, a desire to see Iceland in terms of a non-existent rural ideal.

His desire to naturalize Icelandic society prompts him to explain historical development in terms of natural rather than social forces. After referring to the miseries suffered from weather, disease, abuse of authority by king and church, and the trade monopoly, Finnbogason goes on to say that:

They were bound to paralyze [the nation's] enterprise and strength for a time, and in some degree set their mark on its character, and it is not unlikely a certain amount of natural selection has taken place, as in such times a comparatively greater number of those who were worst equipped physically and mentally died. (ibid. 15)

This expression of social Darwinism neatly places the effects of social inequality in the realm of natural law, a force as immutable as God, and beyond the historical contingency of human agency.

Landscape brought into history

Nature and history are intimately linked in Icelandic experience, in part because the latter is not observable through man-made structures and monuments⁹ but is rather known through significant sites and landmarks. Placenames such as Whale Lake, Elf Hill, Thorgeir's Mountain are reminders of stories which effectively link past events and people with the present. If anything, the land is a vessel for history, a "text" to be read, wherein placenames and landmarks are linked with events--either from the saga

period or more recent times--and tell of ghosts, outlaws, and famous individuals and families.

Stories and histories are means by which discourse frames certain surroundings to construct them as landscapes. In this use of the word, borrowing on its second meaning as a genre of painting, a landscape presupposes an observer who establishes a stance directed at the world, and who actively invents an "enclosed" scene as an aesthetic, meaningful sight. The Romantic landscape does not necessarily contain a reference to history; it can be imagined instead through its lack of history, its wildness (but wildness, too, is a discourse about the negation of the human).

Given the continuity of placenames since the time of their writing, the sagas provide ample context for transposing history onto the world and thereby highlighting a portion of the scene presented to the viewer. Places become settings for the recall of past events known nowadays largely through written texts. A landscape of national significance can be framed not only by a discourse which separates it from all else that is seen; it can be bounded as well by attitudes and behaviours toward it which, in essence, render it sacred. The most obvious example of such a landscape is found at Þingvellir.

Þingvellir, located about 50 km east of Reykjavík and easily accessible by a paved highway, represents, more than any other Icelandic landscape, the unity of nature and the nation. In the appropriate light, the extensive plain with

its large lake, stretching eastward from the foot of a sheer cliff, is stunningly beautiful. It was here in the 10th century that chieftains and their followers began to gather annually for what is now referred to in nationalist discourse as Europe's first parliament, the historical referent for the present-day Alþingi. And it was here that Christianity was accepted in 1000 A.D., under threat from the Norwegian king. Since then, a church has always been located not far from the rock on which the Lawspeaker stood to recite the Icelandic legal code during the Commonwealth period. During the post-Reformation era, adulterous women were drowned in a small pool located at the base of the cliff, while men were hanged to death nearby. Until 1799 it was the location for church synods, and was the location favoured by the Romantics for the building of Alþingi during the 19th century (the more practical site of Reykjavik was chosen at the behest of the father of independence, Jón Sigurðsson). The present church was consecrated in 1859, and to be granted its charge is as great an honour for a priest as obtaining that of the national cathedral in Reykjavik.

Þingvellir's historical credentials are impeccable, and its proximity to the city has given it an additional status as the location for the summer houses of the country's wealthier families. Its image is to be found on postcards, Christmas cards, and calendars; it is not unusual to see it rendered on canvas with more or less skill and hanging on

the sitting room walls of city and country homes. Children are taught the significance of the place to their nation, and making a trip to Þingvellir is, for many an Icelander, a secular form of pilgrimage.

It is twice-removed from ordinary land: not only is it a national park and thus protected by fences from sheep and by law from human alteration, it is administered separately from other national parks by a committee of prominent citizens selected by the government.

A visitor rarely leaves the country without having been shown Þingvellir. It is where the black Volvo sedans of Pope John Paul II sped in 1989, and where he spoke to the intrepid crowd shivering on the rocky slope about the importance of healing old wounds--presumably the wounds administered to the last Catholic bishop in Iceland, beheaded in 1550. Queen Elizabeth II also paid her respects during her visit of 1990. I had been in the country barely twenty-four hours when I received an invitation to accompany an acquaintance and some friends of his there for a barbecue.

Discourses of resistance

The use of particular definitions of nature in nationalist discourse does not necessarily imply a general agreement over that use.

In the anti-patriarchal political rhetoric of the Women's List, women are described as more closely bound to

nature--thus more inclined toward environmental protection than male structures of rationality and economic domination would allow--and to the future of the nation--through their (biologically and culturally natural) role as child-rearers. The Women's List is unique amongst Icelandic political parties in its blend of nationalist, feminist, and ecological discourses into a political platform. Understood here as an opposition between the rationalism of modernity and the subordinated voices of emotion, feeling, and experience, nature and nationalism are combined to oppose the dominant discourses of the state which seek to divert the power of these subordinated voices.

By proclaiming themselves a party of both women and children, they seek to express a concern with the future of the nation. To this end, the Women's List campaigns in favour of higher wages, more daycare, and assistance for single mothers. They also publicize the increasing tensions within the home, and the increase of violence in the family which they attribute to the stresses of modern living and the powerlessness of women.

The Women's List, however, also turns to the past and to the rural world in search of models for behaviour and the roots of present experience. The female characters who appear in the sagas--women who display strength, intelligence, and independence--are upheld as positive images for contemporary women. As well, an image taken from a more recent past, of the strong, competent farm wife

living in harmony with nature and running the farm while her husband was away fishing, is championed as an unrecognized heroine of the nation.

The environmentalist movement in Iceland has less frequently used nationalist rhetoric in framing its view of nature, although as we shall see in respect to the whaling issue, it has attempted to equate environmental protection with protection of the nation. Conservationist discourse began to appear in the 1950s, following a talk given by Sigurður Þorarinsson in 1949 to the Natural History Association. Inspiration was largely drawn from foreign ecology movements. In the early years, the major problem facing the movement was a lack of anyone able to take up conservation on other than a part-time basis. This delay is reflected in the fact that it took until 1971 for "pollution" to be translated into Icelandic (mengun).

More concerted effort grew during the 1970s when students of natural sciences were returning from graduate studies abroad. Landvernd ("Land Protection") was established in 1969 as an association of 67 different clubs and unions with interests in conservation (ASÍ, the largest labour union, is amongst this group). Landvernd first took up the issue of soil conservation, and since then it has worked to make the public aware of the significance of erosion, to actually see it as a threat. Conservationists are aware that they are combatting an attitude which has

been engrained in Icelanders' thinking, that their land is clean and pure.

During the late 1980s, the state began to take over some of these issues, at least at a rhetorical level. A campaign to "clothe the land" and to mobilize the "national effort" (þjóðaráttak) attempted to dispell the seemingly anti-farmer bias of earlier moves to control erosion, through reference to the land of the nation.

Nature and independence

I have made only passing reference to Halldór Kiljan Laxness (1902-), Iceland's Nobel Prize-winning novelist. To sum up in a brief space the artistry of this writer would be impossible; his achievement together with that of the saga writers weigh heaviest upon aspiring Icelandic novelists. Other writers, poets, and painters have used nature as a form of expression: in romantic nostalgia for a simplified rural past, monumentalization of the wild landscape, integration of folkloric elements into representations of animals and mythic beings, or the heroic realism of peasant farmers and trawlermen.

Only Laxness evokes all of these elements while at the same time challenging the pull to purify the past or make it beautiful. His unremitting clarity of vision and sense of ironic detachment make his novels the finest ethnographic accounts of Icelandic society, past and present. His nationalism is apparent, yet he does not participate in the

reinvention of the past so prevalent amongst his contemporaries, nor does he gloss over the cruelties Icelanders inflicted on one another. Thus, while other authors were extolling the virtues of the vanishing traditional farmstead, Laxness was portraying the unrelenting hardships of a crofter farmer as he seeks his independence (Independent People), and the activities of the 18th-century manuscript collector, Arni Magnússon, who sought to save the remainder of his country's literary past from an impoverished peasantry more inclined to make the vellum scripts into shoes than an evening's reading enjoyment (Íslandsklukkan: Iceland's Bell).

In Independent People (Sjálfstætt fólk, 1934-35) the hero, Bjartur of Summerhouses has escaped the farm where he has been a servant, having scrimped enough money that he might buy his independence in the form of a small farm located on the margins of arable land. As he stands looking over his new acquisition, Bjartur speaks to his dog:

Size isn't everything by any means.... Take my word for it, freedom is of more account than the height of a roof beam. I ought to know; mine cost me eighteen years' slavery. The man who lives on his own land is an independent man. He is his own master. If I can keep my sheep alive through the winter and can pay what has been stipulated from year to year--then I pay what has been stipulated; and I have kept my sheep alive.

No, it is freedom that we are all after, Titla. He who

pays his way is a king. He who keeps his sheep alive through the winter lives in a palace. (1946: 11)

As proud as the words may be, Bjartur's fate is less noble. Independence proves to be a struggle, not so much against nature as against capricious markets, changing political forces, and a local elite who opportunistically transfers its allegiance with the times and thus maintains its own preeminence. His sovereignty over his own land proves ephemeral: at the end of the novel, he and his family (his small children loaded into saddlebags) depart their failed farm:

They resembled nothing so much as fugitives in a land devastated by year after year of furious warfare; hunted outlaws--in whose land? Not in their own at least. In foreign books there is a holy story that tells of a man who was fulfilled by sowing his enemy's field one night. Bjartur of Summerhouses' story is the story of a man who sowed his enemy's field all his life, day and night. Such is the story of the most independent man in the country. (469)

Laxness' work is informed by socialist and pacifist ideals, which he combines with a spiritual reverence for nature in all its forms. Throughout his writings he expresses concern for the values of humility, honesty, and honour which are challenged by certain tendencies in human society. He uses images of nature to comment on the individual's struggle to overcome its condition, and in this

sense nature becomes a vessel for ideals and longings. For Bjartur, his battle to free himself from the control of fate and worldly powers is enacted against an indomitable nature.

ENCHANTED NATURE: THE PRE-MODERN PAST

In this section I am concerned with the period between the Reformation of 1550 and the early years of the 19th century. The forms of knowledge which are described below, however, are not limited to that time alone. On the one hand, knowledge about the world during those three centuries exhibits continuities with knowledge extant in preceding centuries. Yet too many gaps in the scholarly record of the time following the collapse of the Commonwealth and prior to the 18th century--a time frequently glossed over as if little changed during it--makes the connections of the post-Reformation era to its past uncertain. On the other hand, Enlightenment ideals, Romantic passions, and rationalist thinking did not immediately dislodge the enchanted world in all strata of society, and amongst the oldest living members of Icelandic society today it is possible to find those who grew up in a world alive with hidden beings and "mystical" events.

Although the Reformation prefaced an era of cruel repression by means of witchcraft trials and executions for adultery, it also marked a renewal of interest in learning. Several writers and scholars who flourished between 1550 and 1800--Árngrímur Jónsson, Jón Egilsson, Árni Magnússon, and

Eggert Pálsson, to name a few--are conventionally listed as notable practitioners of an indigenous intellectual tradition.

In a style typical to the presentation of Icelandic literary history, Einarsson (1957) describes these writers as situated in a strictly Icelandic past, rather than in a non-ethnically based, religious or imperial community of Latin and Danish readers. Early scholarship is thus placed within the organic development of the nation, and the question of intended audience left unaddressed. The effect is to posit, in Foucault's words, "a great collective consciousness as the scene of events" (1980: 69)--a consciousness which is, in effect, the persistent "spirit" of the nation. What remains is the impression that these works represent the total of Icelandic discursive knowledge, when in fact they represent only the understandings of a highly-placed, educated minority.

If we ignore, for the moment, the rhetoric regarding the near-universal literacy of Icelanders from the early 18th century on, we can recognize the comparatively small role print media played in everyday life. Except for religious works, books were scarce. They would also have been costly, given the limits of production (one press at Hólar; other books would have been imported). The single printing press was in the hands of the Church, and used strictly for its writings. Novels were unheard of, being a later invention, and the writing down of history limited to

the manuscript copies of the sagas that were undertaken by theology students. Books were restricted, then, and newspapers non-existent well into the 19th century.

It was not the written word which passed along everyday knowledge of the world. Knowledge was based on everyday experience more than on abstract systems, although this experience did not preclude that which was not perceived through the senses. In the enchanted world, the distinction between material and non-material was not necessarily of significance, i.e. not indicative of truth vs. fancy.

Lutheran practice

Prior to the nationalist period, nature was imagined through two discourses, one of Christian practice, and the other of what is here called a folk tradition. After having said that, two qualifications are in order. First, although I use the usual term "folk tradition" (see Wieland 1989), it must be understood with caution. Our impressions of what constitutes a folk tradition are shaped by 18th and 19th century constructions of the imaginative productions of what we would now call popular culture. As Shils (1981) cogently argues, those who during these two centuries sought to study particular elements of folkloric tradition (and thereby construct them as such) saw it as evidence of deeper and more authentic mental processes lost to the forces of rationality and progress. They looked for tradition in that part of society possessing little education and who were

thus thought to be less articulate and less rational. The image this construction generates is not unlike that of a culturally-deterministic model in anthropology: one of people operating unthinkingly according to the dictates of their culture/tradition.

The second qualification pertains to the "multiform reality," to use Erickson's (1976) description, of the medieval world. Pre-Reformation European theology allowed ample scope for enchanted thought, in which the boundaries of imagination and factuality were continually changing. It is difficult, then, to speak of two distinct discourses, and preferable to assume the presence of two interpolated practices in which God appeared side by side with devils, sorcerers, and mythical animals.

It is not my intention to pursue the implications of the above other than to suggest that what is needed is greater socio-historical inquiry into the interplay of knowledge about the world and differing social relations in old Icelandic society. Rather than assuming that folktales are evidence of a systematic ontology disconnected from social life and production, much could be learned if such knowledge were taken as, for example, explanatory narratives used to negotiate the vagaries of an unequal and at times punitive world.¹⁰

Prior to the Reformation the bishops at the sees of Skálholt and Hólar wielded the greatest power within Iceland, having gained authority over the imposition of laws

and the benefit from Church ownership of most land. From 1264 until shortly before 1550, the bishops were Norwegian. As was typical elsewhere in Europe, abuse of power and wealth were common in the Icelandic monasteries and sees. Thus secular leaders were quite willing to support the Reformation and helped the king's men appropriate Church land and plunder the wealth amassed in the religious centres. They destroyed sacred relics, burned manuscripts, and robbed the churches of valuables.

The settlement pattern of Iceland was too scattered to allow for a congregational tradition to become established. Although churches did exist, the home was more significant in the dissemination of religious knowledge. Churches were important for providing safety and security in a world of unseen, malevolent forces and divine punishment. Swatos (1984) has suggested that churches served as "holy shrines" to which Icelanders made pilgrimages in order to receive their protection. In one well-known story from the past, a community was protected from ruin by its church and pastor. A nearby volcano had erupted and the lava threatened to overrun their homes and farms. The congregation took refuge in their church, and as the pastor spoke, the power of his words diverted the flow from the building.

The role of the pastor was to administer education, health care (what there was of it), punishment, and charity. When labour contracts were instituted in 1783, their supervision was the task of the pastor. Pastors were

required to write yearly reports (although in practice they were completed less frequently; see Guttormsson 1987) on the social and spiritual conditions of all "souls" within their parish. Similarly, when the Danish authorities wanted to ensure universal literacy, the pastors were responsible for testing the abilities of those under their purview. Since it was important to the administration of welfare that the place of birth be known (relief for the destitute was given through local authorities), the pastor recorded the births and deaths within his parish.

The pastors themselves were rooted in farming practice. They were from farms and returned to them after receiving their education. Only the higher church officials were educated abroad; most others were trained at the two sees of Hólar and Skálholt, where Latin schools had been established after the Reformation. Once having received their commission, the pastors were provided land with which to support themselves.

The clergy often shared the enchanted perceptions of the world with the average peasant. It fell on the leading churchmen after the Reformation to drive this "superstition" from amongst all Icelanders. During the 17th century, Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson strove to combat belief in the reality of witchcraft, but he had to contend with the vindictiveness of certain other clergy who used witchcraft accusations as a pretext to burn alive men with whom they had had disagreements.

Universal literacy was extremely important to ensure proper religious instruction. The minimum standard was the learning of the Lutheran catechism, however it was necessary for at least one member of the household to read aloud from religious texts. Readings were frequent during the winter months when family, servants, and other members of the household would be gathered in the one main room (baðstofa) of the house. The Bible was quite limited in distribution prior to the 19th century--its cost was equal to two or three cows. Instead, books of sermons and meditations written by Icelandic theologians, either newly composed or borrowing heavily from foreign works, were present in most homes.

The sermons which the pastors read were often similar to the religious texts used in the home. There was little change in the content of these texts until well into the 19th century. Christian practice after the Reformation was shaped thus by the religious writings of a handful of Icelandic scholars. Amongst these, the most notable and widespread, according to contemporary Icelandic sources, were the works of Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614-1674) and Bishop Jón Vídalín (1666-1720).

The themes of religious writings in the post-Reformation era were reflective of the expectations and experience of peasant life. The authors were concerned with interpreting and providing guidance in what they felt to be the essentials of Icelandic experience: the transience of

life and the inevitability of death, the pointlessness of procuring an existence and an overwhelming sense of helplessness. In the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, God is omnipotent over all of creation, but his personal essence is not found in any created thing. God was thus not incorporated in Nature, but was detached from it: He was transcendent.

A distinguishing characteristic of Lutheran practice is the demand for inner thought and meditation. This emphasis on personal reflection favoured an internalization and privatization of feeling, a factor which would have significance later in the nationalist period.

Hallgrímur Pétursson's Hymns of the Passion were a guide for proper meditation. They are concerned with the redemptive and protective power of Jesus in a world of suffering, questions of sin and grace, and with the suffering of the Saviour. Jesus is portrayed as a hero humbled as he struggles between the forces of good and evil. The form of the work is conceived as addressing the soul with a variety of aphorisms, their interpretations, and moral advice.

Through the hymns, Lutheran morality and doctrines of appropriate behaviour are transmitted. The individual must forswear gossiping and complaining about life's hardships. Seeking false knowledge, particularly through the dark skills which would extend one's powers, was forbidden. As

well, one was warned of the sins of pride, vanity, and greed.

The Hymns were first published in 1666, and were reissued several times after. Their poetic language is praised today as a landmark of Icelandic literature. The Hymns are read every Lent on the state radio; many people are buried clasping a copy of them to their breast--and At Death's Uncertain Hour, another hymn by Pétursson, is sung at the funeral.

Fifty-two years later, Jón Vídalín published Húspostilla, the first Icelandic book of sermons (until then a collection translated from the Danish was used), which was to dominate religious reading and the instruction of children for the next 100 years, although it fell from use in the mid-19th century. The sermons are structured around the church year, and use everyday language and humour to communicate directly to the reader and listener. To speak of God, Vídalín uses metaphors from the authoritarian state: God is the judge, general, legislator, father, and master. He also uses metaphors of nature to describe human existence: people are like the steam, water, and smoke which rise up and vanish in the air; they are earth and ash which blow in the wind; they are a fire which glimmers momentarily.

Two points are to be drawn from the above: first, that all the world was perceived as evidence of God's presence and design, and second, that theological discourse was a

means of constructing God-fearing individuals who would passively remain in their life's station. People were to accept that there was a purpose to life, but to gain knowledge of it outside of Biblical teachings was to invite divine retribution.

Halldór Laxness best describes the effects of the pious self-monitoring that was urged upon the peasants. In the novel Atom Station (Atómstöðin), the narrator describes her parents-- farmers who represent a pious past lost when politicians allowed the foreign military to occupy Iceland's sovereign soil--and the strictures they put on their children:

When we children were little we were forbidden to laugh--out loud; that was wicked. It was of course our duty always to be in a good temper, but all cheerfulness that went beyond moderation was of the devil;... One could talk about life in general, and of one's own life so far as it concerned others, at least on the surface. One could talk endlessly about the weather, about the livestock, or about Nature so far as weather conditions were concerned; for instance, one could talk about dry spells, but not about sunshine. Likewise, one could talk about the Sagas, but not criticize them; one could trace ancestors, but never one's own mind: only the mind knows what is next the heart, says the Edda. If the story was no longer a story, but began to concern oneself alone, one's own

self in the deepest sense, then it was wicked to talk;
and even more wicked to write. (1961: 76-77)

Enchanted nature

What is known of everyday knowledge of the world and nature from this period comes from the stories collected by Jón Árnason and published in Leipzig, 1862-4. Inspired by the brothers Grimm, and encouraged by the German scholar Konrad Maurer, Árnason compiled a remarkable assortment of tales about giants, elves, sorcerers, hidden people, giants, ghosts, and outlaws thought to exist in the world. In these stories, seals could become people, humans could be turned into whales, ravens could impart wisdom, foxes could communicate with one another in the manner of humans, priests could be sorcerers who could influence events. Green valleys were thought to exist in the highlands, and outlaws would escape to them to live out their lives in a hidden paradise.

Some stories were recorded in earlier annals which allow dating their origins to as early as the 12th century. Many share themes and plots with Scandinavian, Germanic, and Celtic examples (Simpson 1972). Several elements of relevance to a discussion of nature are evident in these stories: the embodiment of sacred power in the natural world, the mapping of hierarchical social relations onto the animal world and that of hidden people, and the controlling and justifying place of fate in the understanding of events.

The world Icelanders knew was dangerous, and their protection from it was derived from circumspect behaviour meant to offend neither God, non-human beings, nor anyone or anything more powerful than they. Many stories have a local provenience and are a means for explaining placenames. Some of the stories may have been the means of staving off fear of the dangerous world beyond the safety of the farm. But many also have a strong moral component suggesting that stories of interactions between humans and the unseen world were also narratives about appropriate behaviour.

Ghost stories were quite prevalent. Ghosts were invoked to explain continuous bad luck, and were known to pursue particular families through several generations. In some, they appear to be the manifestation of guilt, for instance, over the killing of a child. An individual could be visited by a recently deceased relative or friend bringing news of their death.

Many stories deal with animals and attempt to place them inside (or outside) the Christian or monarchical province. Seals, which could take on human form on land, were given Biblical origins. So, too, were elves traced to Adam and Eve. In the Westmann Islands, puffins were said to have a monarchical social organisation. As well, useful fish were said to come from God, the useless from the Devil. The black stripe on the haddock was apparently made when the Devil attempted unsuccessfully to grab it.

Ravens were capable of knowing things at a great distance, as well as events yet to happen. As Ólafsson and Pálsson (1772: 38) report,

it foreknows when any person in a family is about to die, because it comes and perches on the roof of the house, whence it proceeds to make a tour round the church-yard, uttering a continual cry, with singular and melodious variations in its voice. They have even attributed to one of their learned men the gift of understanding the language of the raven, and thus giving intelligence of the most occult circumstances.

However, despite the good standing of the raven, Icelanders undertook to kill the raven and its eggs whenever possible.

Huldufólk (hidden people) apparently only existed in Iceland, although some did emigrate to Manitoba in the 19th century. Unlike elves, huldufólk are a parallel human race, full sized and resembling us, who remain hidden unless they desire something from humans or have been offended by them. They live in the rocks and hills which can be seen to be beautiful halls by humans granted the sight. Huldufólk are dressed more finely than humans, and possess more beautiful objects. Humans must behave carefully so as not to offend the huldufólk. For example, one must never throw stones for fear of hitting one. Unmarried women could become pregnant by them if they wandered too far from the farmstead.

While I heard of contemporary huldufólk sightings, trolls seem to have left Iceland for good. Trolls were

giants who turn to stone if caught in the sunlight. Often, but not necessarily, they were malevolent. In some stories, clever individuals were able to outsmart man-eating trolls. But there are also stories of trolls who assist men with fishing, and are able to make fabulous catches of all sorts of strange beasts at sea.

Outlaws were said to live in green valleys hidden in the wastelands and glaciers of the central highlands. The most well-known story is that of Fjalla Eyvindur (Mountain Eyvindur), a tale transformed during the nationalist period into a lushly romantic stage play, and which continues to be performed in front of packed houses every other year at the National Theatre. Eyvindur had been born early in the 18th century, and it was not long before his thieving habits forced him into an eventful life of refuge in the highlands, of near-captures and daring escapes.

There were, in reality, outlaws. In S. Magnússon's class-eliding description, outlaws seemed to have "symbolized the predicament of the nation during the dark ages of foreign oppression and to have been a paradigm of endurance and resourcefulness" (1990: 344). More exactly, they were either the destitute forced to crime in order to survive, or those who, shall we say, had little interest in the maintenance of social order. At one time, certainly during the Commonwealth era, hiding in caves or other distant places in the highlands made them literally outside of the law.

Between 1550-1750, secular poetry was frequently concerned with the theme of the Devil, as well as with sorcerers and ghosts who could be raised from the dead to attack enemies. Such apparitions could be combatted by kraftaskáld, lay poets who were also exorcists, able to drive evil out with the power of their words. Nature was populated with beings which could explain the occurrence of events.

A significant element of knowledge during this period concerned fate. A fatalistic attitude towards nature manifested a similar attitude towards one's position in the social order. People did not see themselves as able to control nature but thought themselves more the beneficiaries or victims of it. What people were able to gain from nature in terms of foodstuffs or driftwood was God's gift. Powerful and unyielding, fate could not be evaded even if prescience revealed the future. No offering, prayer, or action could thwart its inevitable outcome, although this did not prevent people from trying.

This passivity can in part explain the resistance to change amongst many farmers and peasants. During the 18th century, attempts were made to improve agriculture, and some foreign farmers were brought in as consultants. In 1749 the Crown passed an ordinance to enjoin all inhabitants to cultivate cabbages to provide them with more sustenance, a ruling which in some parts required the intervention of authorities to ensure compliance. However, certainly in the

case of changes in farming methods, resistance could as well have been due to the nature of risks involved in experimentation. The cost of failure could likely be loss of the farm and all the rights and privileges that entailed.

The Enlightenment and the rationality of natural history

During this period, a new discourse began to make its appearance amongst the elite. Its first expression appears to have been in the work of Bishop Árnrímur Jónsson (1568-1648). In 1596, he was commissioned by the Danish Crown to compile any information or manuscripts which could provide insight into the history of Denmark. The work, written in Latin, was a compilation of stories and observations on natural and supranatural phenomena in Iceland. Ole Worm (1588-1654) was a royal historiographer with an interest in the old Icelandic language, which he called the Old Danish Tongue (the Swedes called Icelandic the lingua Gothica). He began a collection of manuscripts which was pursued later by Árni Magnússon (1663-1730).

Magnússon had been commissioned along with Páll Vídalín to compile an inventory of all real estate in Iceland for the purposes of taxation and future improvements. He took the opportunity to collect manuscripts, and then transported them to Copenhagen where they constituted a research library.¹¹

Another landmark work surveying social conditions and the natural history of Iceland was that undertaken by Eggert

Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson between 1752 and 1757, by order of the Danish king. Both of the authors had been studying in Copenhagen at the time of the commission. Ólafsson has since become known for his patriotic poems, although he seems to have been well-disposed to the Danish monarchy. Soon after completing the manuscript, he was appointed vice-lawman for Iceland, and Pálsson the first director of health.

The book first appeared in Danish in 1772, under the auspices of the Royal Danish Scientific Society. A German edition appeared in 1779, followed by French and English versions in 1802 and 1805. All the translations were at the instigation of the Danish king, and an Icelandic version was not published until 1943. Appearing at a time when the major powers of Europe were becoming interested in the North Atlantic, and when the Danish state was engaged in costly battles with Sweden, it is interesting to speculate about the king's intention in publishing information about the population and natural history of Iceland.

Ólafsson and Pálsson compiled an admirable amount of intelligence pertaining to the habits, characters, and living conditions of the inhabitants, of the beliefs they held about the world around them, and observations about natural phenomena, informed by the latest classifications of Linnaeus. Occasionally they partook in experiments to test the superstitions of local inhabitants--entering caves

thought to be occupied by giants or traversing regions thought haunted--and reported on their observations.

In all, the work displays the intellectual concerns of continental scholars, subjecting the natural and human worlds to the surveillance of the absolutist state. As much as it is a work cited as the beginning of Icelandic scientific enquiry, it more properly fits with the increased monitoring of subject populations for the purposes of rational management. That it was the work of Icelanders who were concerned with the well-being of their countrymen does not change this; it does illustrate how the elite of Iceland at this time did not see being part of the Danish realm as in contradiction to their Icelandic patriotism.

SYMBOLIC NATURE: THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The long duration of the independence battle--from its inception during the 1830s, through stages of increasing national self-government culminating in Home Rule in 1918, to the declaration of the Republic of Iceland in 1944--makes it impossible to summarize this rapidly changing period as a single subject. Instead, we can locate periods of shared emphasis, for the most part by attending to the conventional categorizations of Icelandic literature and poetry. Given the high status accorded to literary activity within Icelandic society, writers have and continue to be the focus for the discursive imagining of the nation itself. This is not to suggest that a direct correlation necessarily exists

between text and social practice--the writings of Halldór Laxness, for instance, went against the grain when they were published--yet the popularity of novels, both Icelandic and translated imports, ensures a considerable dispersal of literary thought within society.

The year 1944 is singularly important as a dividing line between the struggle for independence and subsequent years focussed on promoting and protecting the independence of the national culture. The military occupation during the war years brought a previously unknown wealth to Iceland in the form of consumer goods, wage labour, and an infrastructure of roads and airfields. Nationalist discourse since about that time has dealt more and more with the consequences of modernity, especially the impact of foreign media and information, the relationship between the individual and society, and the modern sense of dislocation in the vast terrain of the earth.

Images of nature have altered throughout the independence period, from the Deity-infused landscape of the early Romantics, the rural nostalgia of the neo-Romantics, to the champions of progress and science amongst the Realists. The following discussion is not a thorough examination of all nationalist discourse which in some manner imagines a relationship to nature, but is instead intended to situate for the reader the major discursive trends which prefigure the present day.

Overall, the period under discussion is characterised by an increasing plurality of voices and discursive realms. Whereas the early nationalists were amongst the few who had been educated in Copenhagen, the extension of print media, the formation of literary and intellectual societies, and increasing contact with other countries (primarily Scandinavia, but later England, Germany and France) loosened the traditional constraints of the Church and patriarchal farm concurrently affected by transformations in production. Significantly, writers were not only more numerous, they were directing their writings to the nation itself, to an imagined Icelandic-reading public, and not, as had hitherto been the case, toward a supra-national community of Latin-reading churchmen or Danish-speaking colonial administrators.

In order to contextualize the following discussion of the beginnings of Romantic nature in Iceland, a digression into its roots in continental practice is necessary.

Romanticism

European Romanticism was ostensibly a movement against traditional authority, although by 1850 it had become the new orthodoxy. It was a discourse carried by a new class of writers, poets, essayists, and artists who were no longer tied to royal patronage, but instead were creating for the educated bourgeoisie. As commentators on a newly-emerging social order, they were acutely aware of their position in

an era of the destruction of traditional religious and political values. Thus, much of the most innovative art and literature of the early 19th century perpetuated the revolutionary rhetoric of the 1790s, transforming, as it were, political events into aesthetic statements (Rosen and Zerner 1984).

Romantic poetry was not, according to the contemporary German writer Friedrich Schlegel, just a purely personal vision, as it is now conventionally perceived. Rather, it sought to incorporate a personal, internalized vision into the objective, rationalized world of Enlightenment thinkers. During this time, the landscape became the major genre both in poetry and painting. This was not merely a change of style or content, but was an intentional, ideological strategy. Romantic painters sought to replace the large, highly formalized depictions of historical or religious scenes which then dominated art production, with the symbolic representation of "natural" (i.e. human-less) surroundings. Although landscape elements had appeared in painting before, most notably in the Dutch school, this was the first time that images of nature alone were made to carry the formal properties and symbolic meanings of the work. Through nature, the artists and poets sought to achieve the same heroic and epic significance of Classical invention.

Using the iconography of landscape, Romantic poetry and art was expressive

of the individual, the national and the historical, against the universal and the timeless; of the exaltation of genius, of the unaccountable, of the leap of the spirit that defies all rules and conventions, of the worship of the individual hero, the giant above and beyond the law, and an assault upon the great impersonal order with its unbreakable laws, and its clear assignment of its own place to every human function and group and class and purpose, which had been characteristic of the classical tradition, and had entered deeply into the texture of the western world, both ecclesiastical and secular. (Berlin 1990: 196-97)

German Romanticism, however, differed from its French counterpart in a manner significant to the direction of Germanic nationalism. According to Berlin, the German Volk movement which arose as a reaction to the domination of many Germans under Richelieu and Louis XIV, flourished in the context of the Napoleonic invasions and a concomitant French fervour aimed at universalizing the revolution and Enlightenment values. Veneration of the soil, language, and cultural (here defined as a spiritualized folk tradition) autonomy became, as it were, a discourse of resistance. German Romantic nationalism was concerned with ultimate human truth, but a truth of the spirit rather than of rationalism. To combat the power of Napoleon, writers searched in the national past to find a heroic model which could empower the people to resistance. Nationalism in this

sense did not start as a universalizing doctrine: rather it was a localized attempt to come to grips with oppression and domination. As Berlin puts it,

those who cannot boast of great political, military or economic achievements, or a magnificent tradition of art or thought, seek comfort and and strength in the notion of the free and creative life of the spirit within them, uncorrupted by the vices of power and sophistication. (Berlin 1990: 246)

Romanticism integrated with nationalism in the work of the influential German literary critic, folklorist, historian, and philosopher J.G. Herder (1744-1803), who, recognizing the social potential of the French Revolution, declared it the most important historical event since the Reformation. His rejoinder to its universalistic bent came in the form of a relativistic and recognizably anthropological conception of culture as the sum of all human activities and ideas. In his view, there was not a single Culture, but a multitude of separate, historically-situated cultures produced by their past and creating their own futures. For this reason, there is built into the culture a tension or dialectic between a desire to preserve and to innovate. Herder's organic formulation of social development has more to do with spiritual rather than material advancement, and is seen as moving toward fulfillment of a latent or germinal principle (Barnard 1969). Herder viewed society in much the same way as

biologically-constituted nature, as consisting of inter-related processes, a diversity of forces which combine into a unitary, dynamic whole.

Although Herder was not specifically speaking of national cultures, his ideas fit readily with the social and political events which were then redefining the basis of social organisation. His blending of historical and biological discourses led to a view of history as a form of organic development, of which nations are the natural expression since they represent living continuities.

Romantic nationalism in Iceland

The handful of students who brought the nationalist movement to Iceland's shores in the 1830s had found the agenda for their country's renewal in the German Romantic nationalism which had by then spread to Copenhagen. Each year, five or six Icelandic students were given a place at the university in Copenhagen, financed by the Danish government. These students were very rarely drawn from amongst the very poor, but they were not necessarily only from the very rich or dominant stratum. Their training--in law and languages--was to prepare them for the positions of sýslumaður (district sheriff) or teacher: to be the Icelandic representatives of the Danish state. The Icelanders tended to remain abroad at least four or five years, and a small group of Icelandic intellectuals could always be found in the city.

From their perspective in a distant land, the students reflected back onto their own country, and learned an "admiration for the old heroic saga age with its manly virtues contrasted with present sloth; love of country, where Iceland was often contrasted with Denmark, and the simple country life with the demoralizing life of Copenhagen" (S. Einarsson 1957: 225).

Thus, as Gunnar Karlsson (1980) points out, nationalist thought did not introduce patriotism and the glorification of the past into Iceland; these elements were already to be found. As well, use of historical knowledge--knowledge of a more flourishing saga-era past--had already been used in discussion of economic policies in the 18th century. What German Romantic nationalism introduced was, first, an explanation for bleak socio-economic conditions in terms of the oppression of the national spirit under foreign rule, and second, a political agenda for the freeing of that spirit.

A group of students upon their return to Iceland published the journal Fjölur (a word that significantly points to medieval poetic practice), and between 1835 and 1847 they translated the writings of the German Romantics. The most talented of this group was Jónas Hallgrímsson, a naturalist, poet, and essayist, whose poetry praised the individuality of Icelandic nature. Further, it linked the possibility of an Icelandic nation together with nature and its ancient past. His poetry was not altogether secular,

however God was made manifest through the beauty of the landscape and was experienced directly and privately. This in itself was a radical departure from the popular conception of nature as being a cruel and haunted enemy. As well, Jónas was a competent naturalist who wrote extensively on his observations of nature.

The poem which stirred (and continues to stir) many Icelanders is Hallgrímsson's island:

Iceland! gracious bride
and hoary magnanimous mother!
Where are thine ancient renown,
freedom and valorous deeds?
All in the world is fleeting;
the time of thy courtliest splendour
Flashes like lightning at night,
afar from a bygone age.

In this prayer to the spirit of Iceland, Hallgrímsson mournfully refers to the forgotten brilliance of a past age:

But high on the lava field, where
still Oxar river is flowing
Down into Almannagorge,
Althing is no longer held.
Now Snorri's booth serves as a sheepfold,
the ling upon Logberg the sacred
Is blue with berries each year
for children's and raven's delight.

Oh ye juvenile host

and full-grown manhood of Iceland!

Thus is our forefathers' fame
forgotten and dormant withal!¹²

The saga literature inspired the nationalist movement. The sagas gave account of what appeared to have been a more prosperous past prior to Danish domination and served as a model for Icelandic independence. Asserting that the sagas were Icelandic history (and not Danish) and symbols of a great, creative literary character, allowed Icelandic nationalists to lay claim to independence. History was the justification for the creation of an Icelandic homeland.

The language was also elevated to a national symbol. Concerns with language purity did not surface with any tenacity until the eighteenth century. Ólafsson and Pálsson reported on the mixture of Danish, German, French, and English words in peasant vocabulary. The Dane Ludvig Harboe, during his mid-18th century survey of Icelandic literacy at the behest of state authorities, reported similar findings.¹³ Purification of the language became an issue for the nationalists, and the establishment of schools allowed the enactment of their policies.

Independent nature: nature made transcendent

The single most important shift in the understanding of nature during the nationalist period was toward an image of it as beautiful, pure, and a personification of the spirit of the nation. This discourse overlapped with Christian

rhetoric, in so far as both God and the nation were situated in the landscape of sunlight, grassy fields, and soaring birds. This aesthetic nature was a contrast to the terrifying and tenuous nature which served as a metaphor for man's temporary existence in Creation.

An invention of Romantic nationalism was the Fjallkona, the Mountain Woman¹⁴, a beautiful female figure who embodied both nature and the nation. Björnsdóttir (1989: 107)¹⁵ describes her as "an almost fairylike being who belonged to the mountains, the most remote part of nature. But she was also part of culture, civilized, tender, good-hearted, firm and determined, encouraging patriotism, courage, peace, and unity."

The personification of Iceland as a woman first appeared in a late 18th-century poem by Eggert Ólafsson, Ísland. Bjarni Thorarensen sang her praises in an early 19th-century poem Eldgamla Ísafold, which later became a favourite national song.

Her first pictorial depiction appeared in 1866, in an English translation of Icelandic folktales by Eiríkur Magnússon and George Powell. Magnússon, who instructed a German artist in her portrayal, describes her thus:

The picture of the woman represents Iceland: she wears a crown of ice on her head through which volcanoes erupt. A raven, Iceland's most remarkable bird, Óðinn's old friend and the poets' favourite, sits on one of her shoulders. A seagull circles over the ocean

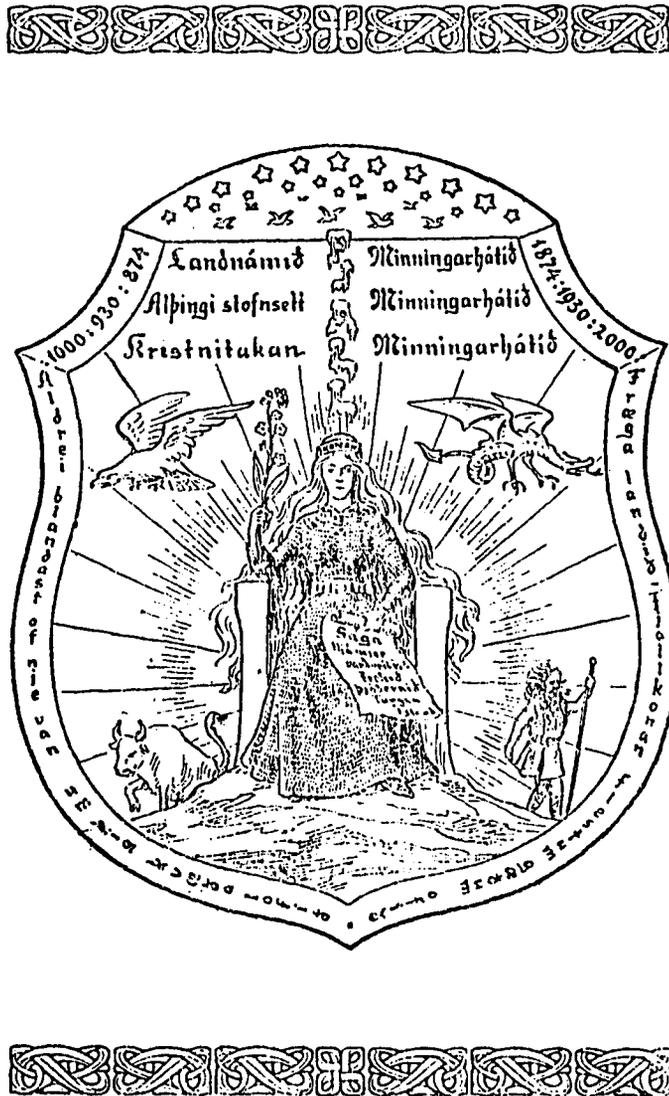
on which wooden posts inscribed with runes float towards the woman who already has grabbed one. These are the symbols of the land of literature. (Þór 1989: 39).

This first depiction can be seen on the cover of Durrenberger and Pálsson (1989). Another, later, version is reproduced in Figure 1, taken from a greeting card published in 1930 to celebrate the millennial anniversary of the founding of Alþingi. The Fjallkona sits on her throne, clutching a scroll which reads "History (Saga): With me Freedom, Nationality, the Language and Iceland are preserved." Surrounding her are the four guardian spirits of Iceland, derived from the 13th century text Heimskringla in which a giant, serpent, falcon, and bull defend the four corners of the land from a whale sent by the King of Norway. The guardian spirits were adapted to the national coat of arms in 1944, and are currently depicted on all coinage.

What is curious about this depiction is that it borrows directly from the image of the Four Evangelists. The only explicit reference on the card to Christianity is to its acceptance in Iceland in the year 1000. Yet the underlying connection is not surprising, given the frequent citation of sacred elements in nationalist discourse.

Nature was used as imagery for the expression of God's transcendence, or the nation's, or frequently, the two

FIGURE 1: Representation of the Fjallkona,
the Woman of the Mountain.



intertwined. The national anthem, composed by theologian and philosopher Matthías Jochumsson, begins Ó guð vors lands, Ó lands vors guð: "Oh land of our God, Oh God of our land." Matthías based the anthem on Psalm 90, "Lord, though hast been our dwelling place." Nature and humanity are blended together throughout the verses: "eitt eilífðar smáblóm með titrandi tár, sem tilbiður Guð sinn og deyr: "one small, eternal flower with quivering tear, that worships its God and dies."

The underlying presence of Christian spirituality and morality in Icelandic nationalism is at first surprising, given how contemporary Icelanders so rarely attend church and claim not to be much influenced by Christianity. Yet the Lutheran Church at various levels was central to the nationalist movement. First, the requirements of literacy for spiritual learning made the spread of nationalist thought relatively easy. Second, the pastors were themselves often spokesmen for nationalist ideas. Third, the Lutheran doctrine which removed God from the everyday workings of the world and set the conditions for inner meditation did not contradict the needs of nationalist discourse. The Church was not directly attacked as being against the interests of the nation, and theologians sought to modernize doctrine to keep pace with the needs of a secularized and modernized society. Now, the clergy are state employees.

The spread of nationalist ideals

Nationalist thinking diversified throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The advent of secular printing presses, newspapers, novels (the first appeared in 1850), literary and intellectual societies, libraries, and other associations gradually politicized the population and generated an interest in the possibility of an Iceland nation.

The collection of folk stories and fantastical tales by Jón Árnason and others were also motivated by nationalist aspirations. They sought to recover and preserve the "people's literature," a literature forced underground, as it were, by Danish oppression.

Nationalism was not only carried in a romanticist vein, and the utilitarianism of Jón Sigurðsson was also important. In fact, romanticism and utilitarianism were not mutually exclusive discourses in how they constructed the appropriate understanding of nature: individuals could, and did, promote the ideals of a beautiful nature at the same time as devise ways of making it profitable--for Icelanders.

The constitution of 1874 contained clauses on human rights, freedom of speech, and the right to form associations, rights already established in Denmark in 1849. Soon, a Free Church was established, and movements from abroad such as the YMCA had a considerable impact on instilling progressive ideals amongst the young.

The depiction of national nature

Until the turn of the century there had not been any practice of painting in Iceland. Indeed, all decorative arts were limited, given the shortage of appropriate raw materials. There was some wood carving to decorate churches and utensils, but no stone carving since basalt was of inferior quality, even for house-building. Tapestry and needlework were used in the decoration of churches, and furnishings and riding gear were also embellished. The Reformation was responsible for the destruction of much medieval craftwork.

The first self-declared artists were conscious of their foundational position as creators of a national tradition. As the critic Gunnar Kvaran pointed out, Iceland was a society without images--barely a few pictures on paper or biscuit tins. The practice of painting actually post-dates the founding of an Icelandic national gallery in 1884. Björn Bjarnarson, its founder, was trained in law and was publisher of an Icelandic monthly, Heimdallur, which was a clearing house for social and political writings influenced by such Scandinavian reformist thinkers as Ibsen and Georg Brandes. Bjarnarson procured gifts of paintings from Scandinavian artists and had them shipped back to Reykjavík.

His idea to build a museum which was "to be the property of the nation" derived from visits to museums in Copenhagen:

The museums are not only for pleasure, but necessary and quite indispensable, if science and the fine arts are to flourish; and besides being essential for artists and scientists, large and good museums have an educational role as regards the general public, for even those who visit them for pleasure learn much from them without effort, and the desire to learn more may awaken in them. (quoted in Jónsdóttir 1982: 56)

Bjarnarson was eager to counter the lack of interest amongst his countrymen in preserving their "heritage." Instead, the latter were finding a ready market amongst foreign folklore collectors for all manner of goods, archaeological finds, and clothing, making the idea of a National Library and National History Museum difficult to put into practice.

Ásgrímur Jónsson (1876-1958) was sponsored by Alþingi to study painting in Italy and Germany, and other artists as well took up studies on the continent. For inspiration, they drew from saga history, folklore tales of mythical beings, and the natural environment. Einar Jónsson used the volcanically-formed columnar basalt as a motif in his sculptures. Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982), also a sculptor, used natural forms in his renderings of mythical beings and peasants and workers. Jóhannes Kjarval (1885-1972), the most celebrated nationalist painter, focus of a city-run museum, combined a fascination with the imaginary and mystical with a detailed examination of the landscape.

He was drawn to rendering the landscape according to the associations it had with old stories and myths.

This early nationalist school of painting was displaced after World War I when artists became involved with the social issues of the time. The history of Icelandic art since then shows that many artists draw on their country's nature as well as its folklore for inspiration.

Healthy body, healthy nation

During the first four decades of this century, political debate concerned the basic development of the country, i.e. whether it should be an urban, industrial society with a mechanised agriculture, or a dispersed settlement of small farms and fishing villages, and handicraft industries (Ásgeirsson 1988). Preservationists, as Ásgeirsson calls the proponents of the latter programme, came from amongst liberals, the co-operative movement, and social democrats. The debate split several parties such as the Progressives, Communists, and Social Democrats, details of which are not necessary for my discussion here (see Ásgeirsson 1988 for elaboration on the tensions between rural and urban demands).

Following World War I, spokesmen for the farmers charged that urbanisation was leading to the moral and physical decay of the nation. The emphasis on rural values had an influence on investment policies, so that profits from the fisheries were redirected toward the farming

sector, albeit a farming sector envisioned as progressive and technologically-intensive.

One notable social movement linked these attitudes about progress and preservation to the nation, nature, and the body. The Icelandic Young People's Association--Ungmennafélag Íslands (UMFÍ)--flourished between the wars, and has continued to the present as a national sporting organisation without political content. UMFÍ in Iceland and the pan-Germanic fresh-air movements of Germany and Scandinavia were interconnected to the extent that Hitler sent representatives to Iceland during the 1930s, in search of a living example of folk ideals amongst a group of "isolated Aryans." They shared in common the ideals of outdoor activities tied to healthy living.

The membership of UMFÍ was largely drawn from the rural areas rather than the fishing villages. The main attraction was the sporting activities, but members also engaged in healthy, socially-beneficial activities such as building roads and swimming pools. The temperance philosophy appears to have been the most difficult for some to follow, and many of the minor scandals within the movement were associated with alcohol (G.H. Kristinsson, pers. comm.). The movement's leadership had links to the Progressive Party.

Summary

This chapter has been concerned with how particular discourses construct perceptions of nature, and how these

differing constructions are used in nationalist discourse. The numerous understandings of how humans are part of or relate to nature are evident in discussions of biological purity and cultural origins, and in practices which circumscribe particular sites and landmarks. Current nationalist conceptions of nature are the product of 19th century discursive inventions which sought to define and fight for a solution to the poverty of Icelanders. Inspired by movements in Europe and the renewals and liberalizations taking place in Denmark, a handful of Icelanders, drawn from the educated elite, were able to construct an image of an Icelandic homeland as vessel for a purely Icelandic history: an image which was used as justification for political and constitutional battles with the Danish government.

ENDNOTES

1. This "old Icelandic saying" was quoted by Ebenezer Henderson, a Scottish missionary who distributed Bibles in Iceland in the early part of the 19th century. Henderson cites it as proof of Icelanders' love for their land. It should read: Ísland er hið besta land sem sólin skín uppá. Hjörleifur Jónsson (pers. comm.) notes that the grammatical structure is Danish rather than Icelandic, and speculates that this might reflect the state of the "impure" language before nationalist purges of foreign elements.

2. "Politeness" refers to behaviours such as saying "Please," "Thank you" or "Excuse me," or holding a chair or a door open for another person, which, as I understood it, Icelanders associate with Anglo-Saxon (particularly British) or French manners. Politeness is not the same as giving hospitality--a marker of "proper" Icelandic behaviour, or showing respect for someone, which, oddly enough, can be shown by being quite rude. Showing respect for another person's autonomy or intellectual capacity to solve a problem may require refraining from interference in an activity which is socially thought to be private.

3. International food chains are the exception in Iceland; a single Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Hafnafjörður outside of Reykjavík is invoked as a symbol of corruption of the nation. The one Dairy Queen outlet is required to use Icelandic milk in all its products.

4. History and the sociology of knowledge have been equally powerful in this disenchantment; the contingency of human existence and understanding which these forms of knowledge yield can be unsettling for those who seek continuity and incontrovertible truth.

5. J. Gurdin, personal communication.

6. Hreinn (neuter form, hreint) means clean, but with the added suggestion of purity and order. Thus, hreindræktaður is the adjectival form of thoroughbred; hreinsunareldur is purgatory; gera hreint fyrir sínum dyrum is to put one's

house in order, or, make a clean breast of something (literally, "to make clean in front of one's door").

7. Aðalsteinsson is Head of Animal Breeding for the Agricultural Research Institute. He has also argued that, contrary to those who say that sheep strip the land of grass and thus promote erosion, sheep in fact are good for the environment, because their droppings act as fertilizer. Erosion, he argued, was due to frost and volcanic activity. His justification of the benignness of sheep led some biology students to dub the animal fjallamaðkar, or "mountain worms."

8. The University of Iceland's language programme for foreign students is intended for scholars interested in language and literature; others wishing to simply learn the language are discouraged from continuing in the programme past the first year.

9. The oldest buildings date from the mid-18th century, their preservation ensured by their official importance and more durable construction from stone. The Danish authorities began to construct stone buildings in Iceland after 1750, including four churches, a house each for the governor and the national physician, and the old Reykjavik jail.

10. A few anthropologists have begun to do just this. F. Magnússon (1990) moves in the direction I am suggesting, when he notes the use of improvisational poetry amongst the working class of Eyrarbakki to denigrate the character of an

authoritative local merchant. Jón Haukur Ingimundarsson (1990), Hjörleifur Jónsson (1990), and Gísli Pálsson (1990) have each examined folktales in light of changing social relations. Jónsson (pers. comm.) notes how the nationalist movement tended to homogenize what were in fact localized stories, thus erasing significant social details.

11. The repatriation of these manuscripts was a long-standing issue between Denmark and Iceland through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1971, when two of the more precious manuscripts were brought by ship to Reykjavík, a national holiday was declared.

12. From the translation by Guðmundur J. Gíslason, reprinted in Gilchrist (1978).

13. The push to achieve universal literacy was a Nordic phenomenon, a product of a centralizing church, and not the love of literature supposedly bred in the bones of all Icelanders.

14. This particular translation follows that used in Björnsdóttir (1989). Earlier translators, exhibiting particular coy ways of referring to women, have said "Maid of the Mountain" or "The Mountain Lady."

15. Björnsdóttir discusses how the image of the Fjallkona was used during World War II against women who dated soldiers. As personifications of the nation, women were supposed to protect it. The worst betrayal a woman could commit was to take a soldier to Þingvellir, the "real" home of the Fjallkona: one woman and her soldier-husband were

pelted with stones by Icelandic men when they went to visit the place.

6/ WHALE WARS

"Nations have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests."

--Viscount Palmerston
(1784-1865)

I

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which the whaling issue has generated nationalist sentiment in Iceland. What I term "the whaling issue" is a diverse and ever-expanding set of events, conflicts, debates, and discourses which centre around the following question: should the various practices of whale-hunting extant in the world today be maintained or prohibited by national and/or international law? The manner in which whaling in Iceland has metamorphosed in the public imagination from a little-known, seasonal fishing activity to a focus for patriotic fervour--all in the space of a decade--is an outstanding illustration of the complex forces which come together under the rubric of nationalism. I am using the whaling issue to illustrate how nationalist sentiment engages the discourses previously discussed--those of territory, property, and nature--in the interpretation of events and their causes.

The following text is, in a sense, an ethnography of the whaling issue. It is concerned with all those aspects--national and international--which have together influenced

its various understandings within Iceland. The background of the whaling issue lies in several domains which I will take up individually before showing how they have interacted in the Icelandic context. I will begin by outlining the character and history of whaling within Iceland. Following this will be a description of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the regulatory body set up in 1946 to manage the whaling industry. The IWC is also the forum for the discussion and evaluation of scientific research on whaling, an aspect which, as will be discussed, is of central importance to the direction of whaling discourse. I will next describe the role of the international environmental movement in the formation of anti-whaling discourse, before elaborating on the Icelandic context. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Icelandic understanding has been shaped by discourses relevant to the nation-state.

An informed reader will recognize that I am giving an abbreviated or partial picture of the international debate over whaling. That there does not exist, and cannot exist, any account of any topic which is other than partial should be obvious on reflection. My intention is only to provide enough detail to illustrate the argument about the operations of nationalism presented in previous chapters. The temptation will no doubt still exist to attempt to place this text and its author within the whaling discourse, that is, to interpret what is written as motivated by a position

either for or against whaling. For example, it might be assumed, incorrectly, that because I am writing about Iceland, what follows must be a defence of Icelandic whaling policy. This is not the case, nor is the opposite true.

Instead, readers are asked to suspend such an evaluative reading, in order to reflect on the discursive strategies which signal "appropriate" interpretation. The desire when reading an account of a conflict is to interpret given descriptions as evidence which is then evaluated against previously-held knowledge. It is typical of any text on whaling to engage the reader in the task of evaluating evidence for either the pro- or anti-whaling position. The degree to which the author goes to direct that evaluation process varies from case to case. This is true whether speaking of scientific or social-scientific writings or popular accounts. Techniques for guiding interpretation range from specific vocabulary choices (e.g. "killing whales" vs. "murdering whales"), documentation which favours one or the other stand, or quoting individuals such as scientists as if they have an omniscient grasp on the "real stuff," the truth of what really goes on within the whaling debate.

A most significant element of the whaling issue internationally is an absence, at either the political or scientific level, of any consensus regarding the justifiability of ending or continuing whaling. Although environmentalists argue that all whales are in danger of

becoming extinct due to commercial exploitation, there is disagreement amongst whale biologists whether this is necessarily the case for every species of whale, or for separate populations within each species. The environmentalists' goal is to end permanently all whaling activities, which suggests that their stance is informed as much by animal-rights morality and protectionism as by conservationism. On the other hand, there are legitimate questions to be raised about the ability, scientific or managerial, to predict accurately population dynamics and reproduction rates, to determine what constitutes a single stock, and to assign appropriate quotas. The Scientific Committee which advises the Whaling Commission is split precisely on these questions. There is throughout the IWC a polarization of opinion, and no mutually accepted grounds by which agreement can be negotiated. This situation is exacerbated by the structure of the Commission which allows for considerable manipulation of its regulations and procedures.

Participants on both sides of the whaling debate will argue, vociferously, that lack of consensus is due to the political machinations, ideological manipulations, or economic self-interests of whosoever their opponents happen to be. Pro-whalers argue that the IWC has abdicated its mandate to manage properly the whaling industry and conserve whale stocks in favour of an irrational and ideologically-premised protectionism. Anti-whalers, on the other hand,

interpret any action taken by a whaling government as further evidence of their immorality and short-sighted greed.

I am not making claims here that in so brief and limited a survey of the whaling issue any new or more workable approach to it will emerge. I do want to suggest that a less pejorative understanding of the nexus of concerns surrounding it is attainable through what Foucault calls an "archaeology" of nationalist and environmentalist knowledge. This has been my goal regarding nationalism, to remove it from a domain which views it as a single irrational emotion, and to place it amongst other means of situating experience. Hopefully, the realization will emerge that what is thought to be in defence of the nation may actually be detrimental, and similarly what is thought to be best for the environment might have the opposite impact. Analyzing the principles of understanding reveals the use of identical discursive strategies by both sides, strategies which seek to maintain control over power/knowledge.

The information provided in this chapter is derived from various sources. I conducted interviews with members of the Icelandic government and whaling industry, Icelandic biologists (both pro- and anti-whaling), and other Icelanders who have taken public stands on the issue. I base my descriptions of public perceptions on conversations with Icelanders either of my acquaintance or casually met,

analysis of textual and broadcast media in Iceland, and a telephone survey conducted by the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Iceland. I also did interviews in Sweden, Holland, and England with past and present leaders of Greenpeace's whaling campaign, with the secretary of the Whaling Commission, and with scientists and observers at the IWC meetings. Other texts consulted were IWC yearly reports, and scientific, social-scientific, and popular writings on whales and whaling. Finally, I participated in an inter-disciplinary conference entitled North Atlantic Whaling Communities held in Århus (Denmark) in January 1990 which, as it turned out, became another skirmish in the on-going confrontation.

Additional background, particularly for the history of whaling in Iceland and the international context of whaling has been drawn from Allen (1980), Cherfas (1989), Einarsson (1987), Hoel (1985), and Kristjánsson (1986).

Early whaling around Iceland

Until the rise of modern whaling which, in the world context, was instigated in the late 16th century by the Basques, Icelandic use of whales was little more than opportunistic. Jónsbók, the late 13th-century law book details how a beached whale should be divided amongst its finders and local inhabitants. Occasionally whales would come close enough to land to allow locals to drive them ashore and harpoon them. This practice was not nearly as

frequent as it was, and is, in the Faeroe Islands, due to the prevailing conditions of land and sea. Thus, whale meat was never a staple, although in a land chronically short of meat it must have been a blessing. Certain colloquialisms reflect this: hvalreki literally means "stranded whale," but in the phrase þetta var mikill hvalreki, it indicates any great windfall. Similarly, hve hvalreki var mikið happ matfangasnauðu heimili, is used as an analogy to describe the experience of something fortuitous: "like a stranded whale was great luck for a poorly-provisioned world."

The Basques hunted in the waters around Iceland until the 19th century, by which time the favoured right whale had all but disappeared. In fact, the Greenland right whale, the northern right whale, and the gray whale have all been exterminated in Icelandic waters. The right whale had been the target during the early period of whaling, since it was slow-moving and did not sink when struck with a harpoon.

The Norwegians were the first successful modern whalers in the waters around Iceland. Modern whaling is characterized by the use of fast steam-driven ships and the use of Svend Foyn's invention, the explosive harpoon. Earlier attempts to whale in Icelandic waters during the 1860s by British, Danish, Dutch, and American enterprises failed after encountering technical problems. The American Thomas Roys, for example, set up an enterprise in Seyðisfjörður, but the harpoon technology of his own invention proved inadequate.

In 1883, the first Norwegian station was built at Álftafjörður in the northwest, as part of an expansion of Norwegian whaling to Newfoundland, the Faeroe Islands, Japan, and the South Atlantic. Svend Foyn figured prominently in this Norwegian initiative. The next station was built a few years later on Önundarfjörður. By the turn of the century seven whaling stations, all in the northwest region, were bringing in massive numbers of fins and blues, as well as fewer humpbacks, sperms, and seis. Numbers caught peaked in 1902 at just over 1,300 whales. When catches began to drop off noticeably in the west of Iceland, some of the operations shifted to the east.

Moves to ban foreign whaling in Icelandic waters began in 1883. A priest and member of Alþingi from Stykkishólmur was amongst those who argued that whaling activities were destroying fish stocks in Icelandic waters, and would soon destroy all the whales as well. It was thought that whales and the success of the herring fisheries were somehow interconnected, in that the whales pursued the herring shoals into the fjords where the nets of the fishermen could gather them. In 1886, legislation banned whaling within territorial waters from 1 May to 31 October. At the same time, dragging a whale on land and killing it with a hand harpoon (handskutla) was deemed permissible, but use of a firing weapon (skot) was forbidden (Einarsson 1987). These regulations were intended to protect the herring stocks, for example, from loud noises which might scare them away.

In 1916, Alþingi banned all whaling. In the current debate, this fact is cited as evidence of incipient conservationist attitudes and responsible state management preventing over-hunting. However, as Einarsson (ibid.) describes in a summary of the decades of debate over the issue, stopping foreigners from conducting an enterprise on Icelandic shores and extracting wealth from an Icelandic resource were also deciding factors. Many Icelanders were appalled at the waste generated by the over-killing of whales. Unable to process all caught whales, the Norwegians left the carcasses to rot on the shore: Icelanders were concerned that their putrid flesh would kill the local sheep. Banning whaling would allow stocks to recover sufficiently for an Icelandic operation to begin. As one member of Alþingi declared, banning whaling would grant what all wanted: ísland fyrir íslendinga ("Iceland for Icelanders").

The ban was renewed in 1924, but was lifted in 1935, enabling an all-Icelandic station to begin a two-boat operation at Tálknafjörður. In 1938, a third boat was added. However, hunting closed down in 1939 when the war interfered with the export market.

Recent Icelandic whaling

There are--or were, until the last whaling season of 1989--two types of whaling carried out in Iceland. In 1948, one coastal station operating four whaling boats began

hunting the larger whales: the fin, sei, sperm, blue, and humpback, although the fin has been its most important species. Hunting of blue whales ceased in 1959, four years after they achieved protected status from the IWC, and humpbacks have not been hunted since their protection in 1955. In 1985, the final year of commercial hunting, whale products accounted for 1.3% of export earnings.

This company, Hvalur hf.¹, has been involved with the workings of the IWC and with protesting the IWC's commercial whaling moratorium (described below). Also, from 1914 until the 1986 moratorium, eight to ten households scattered along the north coast hunted the small minke whale to supplement their income from cod fishing. A fishing boat equipped with a non-explosive harpoon gun was used in this hunt. The average annual catch since 1972 has been around 200 minke.

Hvalur hf. has its main offices and freezing plant in the port town of Hafnafjörður, just west of Reykjavík. The site of the whaling station itself is one hour's drive north of Reykjavík on the north side of Hvalafjörður. The fiord (literally "whale fiord," named for all the whales that once abounded in it) is narrow and deep, with mountains rising steeply to either side, and in World War II it was the strategic base for Allied submarine activity. The camp where the workers live during the summer whaling season is the former American army base. Adjacent to it, a small NATO encampment and dock are maintained by the American military. On the slopes above the station are white storage tanks for

petroleum. "ESSO" is painted on their sides; since the mid-1950s and the first Cod War with Britain, they have been filled with Russian petroleum.

Hvalur hf. was originally limited to whaling. However, around 1984 it purchased the Venus, its first stern fishing trawler. It has also diversified into non-fisheries-related enterprises such as insurance. Hvalur hf. was founded by Loftur Bjarnason (d. 1974), father of its current manager Kristjan Loftsson. While growing up, Loftsson had worked summers as a deckhand, in the station, or at various other jobs. Except for the time he was abroad studying business, he has always been involved with whaling.

From the time the company was founded until the ban, the company operated four catcher boats. As Loftsson describes it, there has never been a desire to expand the limits of present capacity. Given that the whales are towed back to shore for processing, this limits the hunting range to about 230 miles. The time limit for towing is set at 26 hours: if the trip takes any longer, the meat begins to rot and becomes worthless. Each whaling expedition lasts from two to 2½ days. When hunting the large fin whales, a single boat is limited to a capture of about two. On the processing platform, it is possible to handle about 4 or 5 whales per day. The whaling season is about four months long, beginning in June.

Prior to 1983, when the IWC banned the hunting of sperm whales and one of the vessels was taken out of operation,

Hvalur hf. employed about 250 people on the boats, in the station, and at the freezing plant. The commercial whaling moratorium of 1986 caused another vessel to be laid up. In 1989, when only two boats were operating, about 150 people were employed by Hvalur hf. On board each ship are 15 men. When lay-offs began, those who had been employed most recently were laid off first. Most workers find other jobs during the winter. A few people are kept on over the winter, primarily for maintenance, since it is difficult to check the actions of rust. To de-rust boats, it is necessary to continually hammer, scrape, and paint their surfaces. The engines are steam-driven, thus all the water must be cleaned to prevent bursting.

The ships of Hvalur's fleet are now second generation. The four original ships were built ca. 1930. In 1961, two boats built in 1947 were bought from a firm in Great Britain, which had discontinued its Antarctic whaling operations. In 1962, one 1948-built catch boat was bought from Norway, and four years later a 14-year-old boat was also bought from Norway. Norway had also just ended its Antarctic whaling.

The techniques and effort of hunting the large whales have not changed over the past 25 years. The crews are getting older, and Loftsson argues that stopping for ten years (the length of the moratorium proposed in 1972) would cause problems. Hunting and processing whales is a special skill that cannot be learned from a textbook, he says. It

would be difficult to recover this knowledge once it was lost, as it must come from experience. He failed to mention that the whaling industry had ceased operations between 1939 and 1948 without dire consequences.

What has changed over the last forty years is the manner of processing the whales. At first, everything was boiled, since the primary product was oil and meal. In 1952, Hvalur hf. began to freeze the meat, while boiling the residuals. Today everything but the bones is frozen. The industry has always been export-oriented, since Icelanders themselves prefer to eat the minke whale whose meat is darker.

Late in June 1989 I watched eight fin whales being processed at the beginning of that year's season. Processing the whales for market is done out-of-doors on a large concrete and wood platform. The platform is adjacent to the main road which rings the country, and the occasional tourist bus would pull over to let its passengers watch the activity. A viewing deck atop a one-storey building gives full view of the work below. I had been given permission to watch from the platform itself, after Loftsson was able to ascertain I wasn't a "spy for the crazies."

One whale at a time is winched from the catching boat to the platform for processing. As it is dragged up the concrete slipway, a cutter wielding a curved blade at the end of a long handle slits the length of the belly. Before the actual processing takes place, biologists spend about

half an hour taking measurements and samples of organ tissues. Over the next two to three hours, the meat and blubber are cut away from the bones. All the workers on the platform are men, ranging from about 30 to 60 years of age. Two cutters from Japan carve meat and blubber destined for their home market according to the broad diversity of Japanese tastes. Under current Whaling Commission regulations, 49% of whalemeat caught under scientific permit can be sold abroad, while the remainder must be consumed domestically. Prior to the imposition of this regulation, Hvalur hf. sold most of the whalemeat to foreign markets. Meat and blubber for the Icelandic market does not require the same exacting processing techniques as for the Japan-bound product.

The remaining bones are chopped into hunks and dropped through a hole in the platform floor directly above a boiler, which renders them for oil and meal. The meat is loaded onto a truck and delivered to the freezing plant in Hafnafjörður.

The work continued night and day so long as there were whales at hand. Meals were taken in shifts back at the camp, about half a mile down the road. All the while back at the platform, a loudspeaker aired pop music from one of the radio stations. For me, the sound was unremarkable: having worked in enough blue-collar jobs I was not surprised that music accompanied the labour. Yet an earnest young German fellow, observing the proceedings on the platform as

part of a student research project, commented on the inappropriateness of the music. He disagreed with whaling, although he wanted to "objectively evaluate" the evidence before altogether condemning it. The music offended his sense of decorum.

I have no direct confirmation as to ownership of Hvalur hf.. Kristjan Loftsson avoided my question to that effect, and as a privately-owned enterprise this information need not be made public. Official documentation on the ownership of the company has not been transferred to the government's computer database, thus effectively keeping the records private. Several people relying on common knowledge gave me the same information: that Kristjan Loftsson is the main owner, with about 52% of the shares. Members of the Blöndal family, who are well-placed in government and business, own some shares. Samband (SÍS), the large cooperative with interests in fishing and retail, also had shares, but its current financial straits--it was on the verge of bankruptcy during my fieldstay--may have influenced its decision to sell all of its shares. One person thought that Esso had recently bought into the firm, and noted that Loftsson sits on the board of directors for Esso in Iceland.

The second form of whaling, that of the small minke, began in 1914 and continued until its last season in 1985. The minke can be caught from a regular fishing boat, requiring only a harpoon gun. Thus, minke whaling was combined with cod fishing as part of household enterprise.

Prior to 1972, minke catch statistics were not collected, but an estimated 100 people in ten households were engaged in this practice (Vilhjálmsson 1989). These whalers were caught off-guard by the whaling moratorium, and it took until 1989 for them to form a lobby group. They have not had direct representation at Whaling Commission meetings, and none of them speak English, a prerequisite for active participation in the meetings. They have also felt the impact more directly, since, because of their small quota of cod, they cannot make up the loss of revenue through other fishing activities. They have been unable to get an increased quota from the Ministry of Fisheries.

From 1914 until around 1950, minke meat was consumed locally and annual catches remained below 50 animals. From then on, the catches increased gradually to meet increasing national demand; during the 1970s an opening international market created further demand. Norwegians also caught minkes in Icelandic waters, originally in conjunction with shark hunting, but after 1960 they specifically hunted this whale. When the IWC began to set catch quotas of 320 per year in 1977, the Icelanders and Norwegians split the amount so that Icelanders could capture 200 animals. Quotas were reduced after 1982 until the moratorium in 1986.

II

Whale management and the International Whaling Commission

Until the fourth decade of this century, the principle governing whaling and other activities of the high seas was that laid down by the 17th-century Dutch jurist, Hugo de Groot (Grotius). "The freedom of the high seas" was premised on the idea of the oceans' inexhaustibility. As Grotius declared,

The sea can in no way become the private property of any one, because nature not only allows but enjoins in common use... Nature does not give a right to anybody to appropriate such things as may inoffensively be used by everybody and are inexhaustible, and therefore, sufficient for all. (cited in Hoel 1985: 149)

The International Whaling Commission was not the first attempt at regulating the whaling industry. Several national governments enacted legislation to prevent foreigners from hunting whales in their surrounding waters. Cherfas (1988) mentions, for example, how Russia prohibited foreigners in 1821 from whaling in the Bering Sea; how Britain restricted whaling in the waters surrounding it and its dependencies in the Antarctic as a means primarily to prevent Norwegian incursions; and how Norway passed laws in 1903 and 1929 to regulate its whaling and to prevent whaling expertise from being sold abroad. At the request of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES), the 1929 Norwegian Whaling Act established the

International Bureau of Whaling Statistics at Sandefjord, which has since become the principal collector of whaling statistics.

Early in the 1930s, whalers recognized, belatedly, that the steady decline in numbers of whales needed to be addressed if they were not to lose entirely their source of revenue. In 1931, the amount of whale-oil produced threatened to trigger a price collapse on the international market. During the thirties, most whaling activity was focussed in the Antarctic, where, by the end of the decade, about 85% of all whales were caught. Whaling companies first agreed to limit the number of expeditions per year, and soon after also agreed to limit the number of whales killed, the amount of oil produced, and the length of the whaling season. Five protocols were issued by diplomatic conferences during this period, but these failed to establish an over-arching organisation to administer any agreements. Also, newcomers to whaling such as Japan and Germany upset tentative agreements arrived at between established whaling nations.

Significantly, none of these various agreements and controls were based on biological knowledge, since biological research on whales for the purposes of management was not conducted systematically until the 1950s and 60s. They were conditioned instead by the market, and were the domain of the whaling companies and their national governments.

During the 1930s, the Blue Whale Unit (BWU) became the standard measure of whale management until its use was suspended by the Whaling Commission in 1972. The BWU was calculated according to how much oil one blue whale could yield. It was reckoned that one blue whale was equal to 2 fins, 2½ humpbacks, or 6 sei whales. The BWU was in no way a means by which whales could properly be conserved, since it did not take into consideration the important factors of population size, reproduction rates, stock boundaries, and so forth.

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was established under the provisions of Article III of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) which was signed in Washington on 2 December 1946. Two years earlier, the original signatories to the 1937 agreement--minus Japan and Germany--met to chart the direction for whaling once the war ended. Although much of the world's whaling fleets had been destroyed or converted to war-time use, the whaling industry recognized that a demand for edible oils and fat would soon manifest itself, a demand which could pay the costs of rebuilding the fleet. The convention came into force in 1948, and the first meeting was held in 1949. Iceland was amongst the original members. The government sent one Commissioner, the Icelandic Minister in London, who attended without any advisers.

The strongest push to establish the Commission came from the United States. Hoel (1985) speculates that this was likely a manoeuvre on its part to bring Japan into a larger economic system. He notes that General McArthur permitted Japan's re-entry into the whaling industry over the protests of Britain and Norway.

The objective of the Commission as stated in the Preamble to the Convention, is "to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry." Any nation may become a member, whether or not it practices whaling. Within the Convention, what constitutes a whale is not defined, nor is "whaling," an omission which was to prove contentious in later years. For example, should Faeroese pilot whaling or the dolphin by-catch of the American tuna fisheries come under the purview of the IWC? After some conflict, the answer to both questions was negative: although in biological terms dolphins and pilot whales are cetaceans, neither are defined as whales for the purposes of management. A further realm of controversy, that of defining the character of whaling, has yet to be settled. The question remains to be answered whether aboriginal whaling should be classed with whaling from factory ships, or whether a separate category should be recognized for small-type, coastal whaling. Like the boundaries between states, such distinctions are made, not because they already

exist in nature, but as the result of strategic negotiations between competing interests.

The measures which are used to regulate whaling are contained within Article V of the ICRW known as the Schedule. Changes can be made to it at the annual meetings. The Schedule lays out the competency of the Commission as involving

the fixing of (a) protected and unprotected species; (b) open and closed seasons; (c) open and closed waters, including the designation of sanctuary areas; (d) size limits for each species; (e) time, methods and intensity of whaling (including maximum catch of whales to be taken in any one season); (f) types and specifications of gear and apparatus and appliances which may be used; (g) methods of measurement; and (h) catch returns and other statistical records.

The scope of the above duties was modified, in that decisions had to be based on scientific findings, and no moves could be made to restrict the number of factory ships or land-based stations, nor attach quotas to either one. Total quotas alone were set, and the season ended when the number was fulfilled. This structure was established at the behest of the USA, which did not want a quota system to limit entry into the whaling industry, nor interfere with the "free" workings of the market (M'Gonigle 1981). This resulted in overcapitalization and use of more efficient technologies during the 1950s, which created pressures for

higher quotas. An attempt at the end of the 1950s to distribute quotas resulted in a breakdown of the Commission, and the withdrawal of Norway and the Netherlands.

Three committees serve advisory roles to the political body of the Commission: they deal respectively with scientific issues, technical matters, and finance and administration. As well, ad hoc working groups may be convened. The Scientific Committee advises the Technical Committee which handles management issues: the latter is responsible for sending recommendations to the Commission. The Commission operates by consensus. If a member nation does not agree with a particular decision, it has the option of lodging an objection within 90 days, which then releases it from any obligation to follow it. The Commission can make recommendations, but these are not binding and do not have the force of law. Changes to the schedule can be made with a three-quarters majority.

For most of its existence, the following countries have been members: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Panama, South Africa, Sweden, the USSR, the UK, and the USA. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) are also involved in the Commission. As early as 1925, the latter organization had warned of the danger to whale stocks because of over-exploitation. Some nations such as Chile, Peru, Portugal, South Korea, and Spain

practised whaling outside of the control of the IWC until they were persuaded to join in 1979. As of 1978, Australia, Brazil, Denmark (in Greenland and the Faeroe Islands), Iceland, Japan, Norway, the USSR and the USA were still whaling.

The use of science

Although a committee made up of scientists appointed by the various national governments was already advising the Commission, a committee of three scientists was constituted by the Commission in 1960 to study stock sizes and population dynamics of whales in the Antarctic, in conjunction with the permanent Scientific Committee. The Committee of Three became the Committee of Four the following year, when John Gulland joined K. Radway Allen, Doug Chapman, and Sidney Holt.

The Commission proved characteristically slow in responding to the scientists' recommendations, which called for an immediate halt to the use of the meaningless Blue Whale Unit in favour of the management of whales on a stock-by-stock basis. Instead, the Commission was more concerned to ensure that members like Norway and the Netherlands remained within its purview. The sobriquet for the IWC-- "the whalers' club"--was well-earned during this era, a fact which even present defenders of the whaling industry will not deny. It was not until 1963, when catches proved to be quite low, that the whaling industry acknowledged the extent

to which stocks were depleted, and became amenable to negotiating quota restrictions.

Another important factor influenced the attitudes of the whalers. Whale meat began to surpass whale oil in market value, leading to a shift in target species to slightly smaller whales, and a greater emphasis on the North Pacific and North Atlantic. The latter whaling grounds--of which Iceland's are a part--were not regulated by the Whaling Commission until the mid-1970s, even though the relevant countries were members of the IWC.

Species quotas were first adopted for the Pacific fin and sei whales in 1969. In the southern hemisphere, the Blue Whale Unit was still in use until 1972-73, at which time stock quotas were instituted. Complete protection was put in place for blue and humpback whales in the southern hemisphere in 1963, 1965 in the North Atlantic, and in 1966 for North Pacific stocks. Right, gray, and bowhead whales have been protected since 1931. In 1954, blue and humpback whales were protected in the North Atlantic for a period of five years, although Iceland and Denmark objected to the decision, thus making it non-binding on them. In 1960, the blue and humpback whales were fully protected.

From 1964 until 1969, the Food and Agriculture Organisation assessed stock sizes on behalf of the IWC. The Scientific Committee continued to meet, its emphasis shifting more toward population dynamics. Currently, most scientists serve national delegations, although specialists

are occasionally invited to participate, and the FAO continues to participate along with other international environmental and management agencies.

In 1965, the concept of "maximum sustainable yield" (MSY) was adapted from fisheries management in order to incorporate biological data into management procedures. The goal of the MSY approach is to permit the maximum number of whales to be taken from any one stock, without endangering the health of that stock until an "optimum level" (see below) is achieved. As Sidney Holt describes it, "the term 'MSY' describes a property, not of an animal population, but of a mathematical model which is applied to data from a population" (cited in Scarff 1977: 407). In order to calculate the MSY, it is necessary to know the birth rates (known as "recruitment"), mortality rates, the current size of the stock, and the size of the stock prior to exploitation.

Difficulties arose, however, once the MSY approach was first applied to whale populations, in terms of both the quality of existing data, and details of mathematical models used for calculations (see, for example, Allen 1980; Cherfas 1988; Scarff 1977). When it was applied in conjunction with the New Management Procedure (see below), all manner of potential and actual conflicts arose in the Scientific Committee which led to a polarization of opinions over certain key questions.

This split amongst scientists has had a significant impact on the course of the whaling debate, as will become more apparent throughout this discussion. In brief, outside the Scientific Committee, the incommensurability of analytical approaches has prompted a particular discursive convention which bases the reliability of views on the identity of scientists who hold them. Thus, Holt, de la Mare, Chapman, and Payne are understood as representing the interests of protectionists, whereas Japanese, Icelandic, and Norwegian scientists are thought to represent the interests of the whaling industry. Other scientists² may or may not fall into either category.

Meanwhile, at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Environment organized by the United Nations, the whale was adopted as the official symbol of environmental protection. A proposal was tabled by the USA and the UK, and unanimously endorsed by all participating states, which held that a complete, ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling should be instituted. Representatives from whaling nations voted along with other nations to abide by the moratorium (with twelve abstentions).

The IWC met a few weeks later, but the moratorium idea was turned down. The Scientific Committee stated that a blanket moratorium was not scientifically justifiable, and thus they could not endorse it. That season, eight of the fourteen Commission members conducted commercial whaling.

In 1973 and 1974, the USA once again proposed a ten-year moratorium, but both proposals failed.

Some anti-whaling advocates accused whaling states of hypocrisy after hunting failed to stop after the Stockholm vote. Rather than hypocrisy, however, the inconsistency speaks more of the institutional separation and separate domains of power which exist in governmental structures.

Although the moratorium idea was defeated, it may have given impetus to the next innovation in whaling control, the so-called New Management Procedure (NMP). Adopted in 1974 and implemented in 1975, this procedure consisted of a set of rules to be followed by the Commission on the basis of advice from the Scientific Committee. Its implementation led to the protection of certain stocks, and the reduction of quotas on others. Under these rules, stocks are divided into three categories:

1. Initial management stocks, which may be reduced in a controlled manner [from a size larger than] the maximum sustainable yield [would allow, until MSY] level or some other optimum as this is determined:
2. Sustained management stocks, which are to be maintained at or near maximum sustainable yield level (or optimum, as this is defined):
3. Protection stocks, which are below the sustained management level, and should be fully protected.

(Allen 1980: 28)

Whaling could be permitted on the first two categories, but not the third. The difficulty with the procedure, however, was in determining what constituted "optimal." It was decided that the notion of MSY would be used until a better means of calculation was devised. But as Allen points out, the New Management Procedure placed a heavy work load on the Scientific Committee, requiring it "to make definite quantitative statements about stock and yield, when so often only very imprecise data are available" (1980: 29).

At the same time as quotas within the IWC were dropping, an increase in "pirate whaling" took place³-- whaling conducted by ships sailing under flags of convenience, ignoring the bans and quotas instituted by the Commission. Furthermore, what became known as "whaling imperialism" gained momentum. Japan, the largest consumer of whalemeat at this time, financed and provided expertise to countries outside the IWC to carry on whaling. Japan provided a ready market for the products of both forms of unregulated whaling. The practice was made public at the 1979 IWC meeting by two British environmentalists.

In 1977, the Scientific Committee asked that the New Management Procedure be revised, as new calculations led it to conclude it was inadequate for protecting stocks. The Commission turned down this request, although the NMP was responsible for more stringent catch limits in the North Atlantic, and the complete protection of sei whales in the Antarctic. In 1979, Australia, having itself ended whaling

once a Royal Commission showed the degree of anti-whaling sentiment within that country, called for a ten-year moratorium. In the same year, a limited moratorium was instituted on commercial pelagic (i.e. not land-based) whaling in the North Atlantic. This exempted minke whaling, and Iceland's land-based operation.

Strategies of control

Between 1972 and 1984, membership in the Commission rose from fourteen to forty governments. Some of these new members were whaling nations hitherto operating outside the organisation's purview. Many of the new members, about thirty, were non-whaling states, and introduced additional concerns into management procedures, including questions of the ethics of whaling and the competence of the IWC to properly conserve whale stocks. Further, Australia and South Africa became non-whaling nations, thereby creating the potential for anti-whaling strategists to achieve the three-quarters majority necessary to vote in the moratorium.

The vote in favour of a moratorium (more accurately, the implementation of a zero catch quota) succeeded in 1982, and was scheduled to begin in 1986. Japan and Norway objected to the decision within 90 days, thereby exempting themselves from its jurisdiction. Iceland, however, did not object, but in 1985 it made public a four-year programme for scientific whaling.

Article VIII of the Convention governing whaling authorizes any member state to issue a scientific permit within its territory, allowing the kill of an unspecified number of whales for the purposes of science. The regulation does not define what constitutes science, nor how large the "sample size" ought to be. Greenpeace has noted that Article VIII has been invoked several times in the course of the IWC's history. Most frequently, states have engaged in scientific whaling (or, as anti-whalers term it, "scientific whaling") whenever a change in permissible catch created a crisis in the whaling industry. Since numbers taken under permits are not regulated, it is possible for a state to take larger numbers of whales than would otherwise be permissible under regular quotas.

The meetings of the Whaling Commission are held in private, and while in session the deliberations may not be discussed publicly: to do so is to risk expulsion. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs who now number about fifty) attend the meetings, and lobby the Commissioners. During the meetings, the NGOs also publish a newsletter, ECO, which broadcasts information, rumours, and alternative arguments in the hope that Commissioners will be persuaded by knowledge to which they might not otherwise have access.

The Icelandic scientific whaling programme

One of the original Committee of Four scientists, K.R. Allen, commenting on current knowledge of whale stock sizes,

notes that many population estimates are, in fact, only "estimates of some particular component of the population," since they are based only on the animals which are subject to exploitation (1980: 18). An exception is the gray whale of the northeastern Pacific, whose entire population can be reasonably determined from counts made during their migratory passes along the North American coast.

The accuracy of estimated counts depends upon the species and/or local population concerned, and varies according to the rigour of the statistical models used as well as the quality of the original data. Thus "we can simply say that our estimates range from the relatively good, such as those for fin whales and sperm whales in the southern hemisphere, down to extremely poor estimates where we have only small series of numerical data with high variability" (ibid.). He adds that population estimates for whales in the North Atlantic are extremely poor, "where the populations seem to be quite strongly subdivided, and where most whaling operations have had short and sporadic histories, which are usually poorly documented" (ibid. 19).

Whale research has a rather limited history in Iceland, a lacuna which publications in defence of the current programme tend to sidestep (cf. Anonymous 1989; Ásgrímsson 1988; Sigurjónsson 1989). Since whaling was restarted in 1948, yearly catch statistics have been compiled, and some biological measurements taken, although not in a reliable way consistent with current standards. Beginning in 1965-

66, in response to moves within the Whaling Commission, a systematic body of data was gradually assembled. The first Icelandic technical report was submitted to the IWC, concerning "catch per unit effort," an early technique used in the calculation of population sizes, based on the length of time a whaling boat must sail before it captures a whale.

The official reason given for inaugurating the research programme was to improve knowledge of whale species in the waters surrounding Iceland in order to assist the future assessment and management of stocks. The aim was to demonstrate the health of whale stocks surrounding Iceland, which would then provide the basis for renewed quotas.

The 1982 moratorium proposal also called for a comprehensive assessment of the effects of this decision on whale stocks. As the Icelandic Fisheries Minister points out (Asgrimsson 1988), opinions diverged over what was meant by "comprehensive assessment," whether this implied analysis of the impact of the moratorium at the end of 1990, or whether scientific research was to be instituted throughout its duration. That the Scientific Committee itself concluded that member states ought to maintain research programmes throughout the moratorium was grounds enough for the Ministry of Fisheries to undertake its programme. However, given that the Scientific Committee has not been in agreement over the value of the Icelandic research programme--particularly the lethal aspect--it is doubtful if

the Committee had in mind the killing of whales for the purposes of science.

The project was designed to begin in 1986 and to extend over four years. The time span corresponded directly with the four-year pause in commercial whaling called for in the 1982 Whaling Commission decision. It was intended to address the lack of current scientific ability to incorporate the interactions amongst marine species into a model suitable for fisheries management. Ecosystem research, in its early stages of development world-wide, is intended to provide better understanding of how, for example, catches of one species will affect the population dynamics of another species sharing the same or neighbouring econiche. Except perhaps for awareness of the interrelation between cod and capelin stocks, little is known as to how to model and manage a "multispecies" fisheries.

The programme itself consists of thirty-two separate research projects employing lethal and non-lethal methods, which address questions of stock assessment, management, and the ecology of whales. To determine stock identity, catch distribution, photo-identification, biopsy-dart sampling, radio-tagging, and sighting surveys are used. Stock sizes are also calculated through sighting surveys, as well as tags or marks recovered from killed whales. Biological samples are taken from the whale carcass--such as from the ovaries and testes, other organs, and ear plugs--in order to

determine factors such as age, growth rates, age at sexual maturity, and pregnancy rates.

The original research project called for the killing of 80 fin, 40 sei, and 80 minke whales in each season. These numbers represent a decrease from 144 fins, 100 seis, and 200 minkes caught in 1983, and from 245 fins and 138 seis caught in 1975 (181 minkes were caught that year).

In 1986, special permits were issued for 76 fins and 40 seis. The following year, the number of seis was reduced to twenty. In 1988, (because of a late start to the season) 68 fins and 10 seis were killed. In the last year of the programme, 68 fin whales and no seis were killed. According to Sigurjónsson, no permit was issued for minke whales since the minke hunt does not entail the return by the catch boat with the captured animal to a central location. This circumstance was at odds with the demands of sampling and measuring the whales.

Funding for the research project is derived from the revenues generated by the sale of whale meat and other by-products of the catch. Under the structure of the research programme, all profits are placed in a fund which pays the costs incurred by Hvalur hf. when operating the catcher boats and the processing station. Opponents of the research programme cite the exact amount of money which is earned through sales, as evidence that the "real" reason why Iceland continues to whale is strictly commercial.

In response, the Icelandic authorities point out that under Article VIII of the Whaling Convention, whales captured under special permits must be fully utilized. Thus, selling commodities produced from the carcass is not outside the regulations governing scientific investigation, and furthermore is a wiser use of the catch.

III

The environmental movement and international whaling

The International Whaling Commission is a regulatory body established by the whaling industry, and for the first twenty-five years or so of its existence, it operated outside the scrutiny of non-industry and non-governmental specialists. However, the conjunction of several trends at the end of the 1960s altered this situation radically. The fate of whales became a rallying point for a revitalized environmental concern which had been growing throughout the decade. The 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, dealing with the impact of DDT on the environment, brought home the realisation in the West as to the interconnectedness of all elements in the ecosystem.

Shortly after the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the American government passed two highly-significant pieces of legislation which were intended to empower conservationism both domestically and internationally. The Endangered Species Acts of 1966, 1969, and 1973 prohibit the killing of animals classified as endangered, although subsequent

amendments (1982, 1986) modify the Act such that a certain number of endangered animals could be killed if it was demonstrated that this did not put the species in danger. Further, these acts, together with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, prohibit trade in endangered species or their products. The Pelley Amendment to the 1976 Fisheries Conservation and Management Act authorizes the President to block importation of fish products into the United States from any country which operates its fisheries in contravention of international fishery management programmes. Finally, the Packwood-Magnuson Act, aimed directly at international whaling, allows the American Department of Commerce to certify any country which engages "in trade which diminishes the effectiveness of the International Whaling Commission" (cited in Hoel 1985: 135). Certification reduces, then terminates any permits given to a contravening state which allow fishing within American territorial waters.

In addition to the impact of the Stockholm conference, widely-read books such as Paul Ehrlich's The Population Bomb, E.F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful, and the Club of Rome's The Limits to Growth created a general sense in the West of impending ecological crisis. Various explanations were tendered for the dilemma facing humankind: capitalism, industrialism, technology, consumerism, human greed, the Cartesian mind-body split, and ignorance could all be

reasonably advanced as the root for environmental destruction.

At the same time, a broadening awareness about marine mammals created a public more amenable to the significance of saving the whale for environmental protection. J.C. Lilly wrote popular accounts about the intelligence of dolphins. The haunting echoes of underwater whale calls were recorded and incorporated into human-made music. Jacques Cousteau and the National Geographic revealed hitherto unknown aspects of whale behaviour, and introduced to the public unprecedented images of whales moving through their natural habitat. Various anthropomorphised attributes became attached to whales--intelligence, gentleness, peacefulness--which were subsequently used in expressive arts and conservationist rhetoric as a means to celebrate these traits, and to critique the seeming greed and cruelty of humanity. Aquaria provided opportunities for urban-dwellers to see whales and dolphins close at hand, performing tricks and otherwise displaying benign and pet-like behaviours.

All of the above trends in contemporary Western society have been cited by defenders of "the rational management of the whaling industry" (cf. Freeman 1990; Kalland and Moeran 1990; Sigurjónsson 1989) as evidence for the sentimental, and therefore irrational, attitudes of opponents to whaling. Without a doubt, these attitudes do exist and do have an impact on public perceptions of whaling, but they do not

represent the totality of anti-whaling reasoning, nor are they necessarily examples of misplaced emotions or misinformed knowledge.

Environmentalism in general, and the anti-whaling movement in particular, cannot be characterised by one philosophical position--e.g. animal rights, or a concern for the humaneness of killing whales. Rather, what became clear through my interviews with advocates of the end of whaling as well as my reading of literature promoting the protection of whales, is the breadth of understanding of the issues involved, and political approaches to the achievement of protectionist goals.

The issue of whale intelligence is a case in point. The argument supporting whale intelligence is traced back to the books of Lilly on dolphins, who noted the large size of cetacean brains. The notion that brain size reflects intelligence has been refuted in the scientific literature (cf. Klinowska 1988), although these arguments have received lesser public dissemination than the work of Lilly itself. Unfortunately for the detractors of whale intelligence, however, demonstrating that brain size does not indicate intelligence does not refute the possibility of intelligence per se. Instead, it leaves the question unanswered.

Be that as it may, not all anti-whalers advocate whale intelligence as a motive for stopping whaling. Cherfas (1988: 55), for example, notes that intelligence likely varies from species to species, and concludes that "the

whole question of whale intelligence is still rather doubtful." Rather, Cherfas bases his arguments on the historical record of the whaling industry as well as the biological and management models set forth in the various committees of the Whaling Commission.

In brief, three major arguments put forth by environmentalists can be identified. First, current data are not adequate to clearly demonstrate the viability of continued hunting. Although all stocks may not be on the brink of economic extinction, many may be close to economic extinction. Second, following on the first argument, because of gaps in current knowledge, it is best to err on the side of caution. The catch-phrase is, "let's give the benefit of the doubt to the whale." The whaling industry has shown itself incapable of responsibly managing whale stocks without the exertion of pressure from scientists and public opinion. Consistent with the reasoning embodied in Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Report; 1987), it should now be the responsibility of industry to demonstrate that environmental damage will not occur as a result of its production, as well as to pay the costs of any destruction.

Third, it is no longer possible to consider the resources of the high seas as free for the taking. The whaling industry should not be the only group who can determine what becomes of whales. Any state, coastal or landlocked, has the right to determine the fate of whales,

since the high seas are the common property of all the world. Such a shift in the definition of common property follows on the observation of Macpherson (1978) referred to in Chapter Four. Gulland, one of the members of the former Committee of Four set up by the IWC in the 1960s, has proposed the creation of an "International Whaling Authority" which would redefine ownership of whales:

such an authority would buy out existing whaling operations for their present net value.... It would make money in the future by selling rights, possibly to the highest bidder, to catch a part of the allowable catch for some limited period. If those opposed to whaling as a matter of principle were prepared to pay more to see that whales were not caught than any whaler would pay to catch them, they would not be caught-- incidentally increasing the value of potential licences in future years. (1988: 47)

Such an authority would be an alternative to what he and others saw as a distinct possibility in the not-so-distant future: the withdrawal of whaling states from the IWC and the setting up of what would "in truth be a 'whalers' club'."

Greenpeace

In Iceland, Greenpeace is identified as the major protagonist of the anti-whaling movement, although this is not entirely correct. Founded in Vancouver in 1971, its

original mandate focussed on atmospheric nuclear-weapon testing over the Pacific Ocean. In 1975, Greenpeace turned its attention to whaling, first in the Pacific, and soon after in the North Atlantic. The philosophy of Greenpeace promotes "direct intervention" as well as peaceful protest, and under the chairmanship of David McTaggart it has become an international organisation with chapters in twenty-three countries. Particularly since the 1985 sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour--an act of sabotage which earned the organisation \$8 million in reparation from the French government--Greenpeace membership and revenues have burgeoned significantly.

It took several years for McTaggart to establish an overarching structure linking together the various national chapters which had sprung up by 1979. Eventually, he was able to bring North American and European groups together under the Amsterdam-based Greenpeace International. Currently, each chapter sends a representative to an international council where campaigns are discussed. A Board of Directors is responsible for all final decisions regarding international issues.

Despite the international structure, individual chapters still have some flexibility regarding policy within their national context. Thus, in Canada, Greenpeace has softened its stand against sealing in light of the impact on native hunters of the seal-pelt ban, yet in Europe sealing is still firmly opposed. As regards the whaling issue,

different stands are also apparent. The Danish section, for example, is more inclined to take into consideration the "aboriginal" or "traditional" aspects of Greenlandic Inuit or Faeroese whaling than, say, are the Swedish members.

Further, not all chapters agreed with the 1988 boycott against Iceland. One former leader of the Greenpeace anti-whaling campaign described it as a result of American influence, although the Americans were not its only supporters: Danes and Swedes also seemed "eager to punish" the Icelanders and Norwegians. Representatives from the south of Europe were more interested in continuing an education programme, arguing that Icelanders continued to support their government's policies because they had a poor grasp of the international situation.

Eyerman and Jamison (1989) have compiled a detailed profile of the "cognitive praxis" of Greenpeace. The action orientation of Greenpeace, they claim, precludes the development of an explicit, coherent ecological philosophy. Whereas some environmental groups have fostered a "grass-roots epistemology" and a concern with values, Greenpeace has worked toward creating a professional image and an organisational structure which facilitates the direct achievement of its goals.

The aim of Greenpeace is to force governments and business to conform to its environmental goals, and to this end it relies on the size of its membership and the revenues it generates to be an effective lobbying force. The

organisation is driven by a great sense of urgency, arguing that current conditions foreshadow an environmentally-destroyed world within fifty years. As McTaggart puts it, "You've got to be prepared to keep the No. 1 thing in mind: you're fighting to get your children into the 21st century, and to hell with the rules."⁴

This urgency, then, precludes long discussions about appropriate actions and ultimate causes for ecological damage. Indeed, Greenpeace is likely to be cynical about debates over issues which can only detract, in its view, from effectiveness. Whereas they accept that war and environmental destruction derive ultimately from the same source, they are not interested in delving deeper than this general notion. It is more important to achieve goals and to empower people through incremental successes. Further, a hierarchical organisation, with paid professionals in all key positions, is a means to control and direct Greenpeace's activities, activities which would be less effective if left to the devices of volunteers.

This attitude has its negative consequences. Greenpeace as a whole is plagued by a rapid turnover of staff and a lack of consistent records. Since no one is compelled to write reports, there is little continuity and passing on of past lessons. About half a dozen individuals led the anti-whaling campaign against Iceland at different times; their inconsistencies were often based on lack of adequate information.

Issues are selected according to their public visibility, their fit with Greenpeace's profile, and their winnability. Greenpeace is "more interested in disseminating information and publicity, in catching attention, than in producing knowledge" (Eyerman and Jamison 1989: 107), and relies heavily on sophisticated use of advertising and marketing surveys. According to marketing research, their target audience is made up of "relatively young, politically passive semi-professionals who remain largely unmoved by other environmental organizations" (ibid.).

Knowledge is used strategically by Greenpeace. They are careful to select their venue, and also careful about what information they release. It is less concerned with creating a science-literate public than it is with mobilising people. Interestingly, during my interviews I learned that when the organisation hires independent scientists to research specific topics, it is increasingly having these scientists sign contracts which prevent them from publishing the results. The control of knowledge, therefore, is for Greenpeace becoming an institutional weapon.

The manner in which information is gathered is also significant. In the case of Iceland, Greenpeace gathers its intelligence from a handful of sympathizers within the country (I could not determine the exact number involved). Given the turnover in campaign leadership, it was not always

possible for a sustained knowledge of the reliability of these informants to be established. It was not until 1987 that a translator--an Icelander living in Sweden--was hired to monitor the print media regarding whaling as well as disarmament issues.

My own interviews confirm the view of Eyerman and Jamison (1989: 110), that liberalism underlies the politics of Greenpeace. They base their view on

Greenpeace's conception of nature, which we would characterize as a kind of universal free space. Its view of nature is that of a free, unspoiled and unprotected arena in which man can and should be free to move in order to recreate himself. Nature is the last preserve of human freedom and thus must be preserved as such.

Further, the authors note that within Greenpeace there is a split between those who would protect nature and marine mammals "in an instrumental way, as a means to a more political end [and those who] seem genuinely concerned about whales and seals in what can almost be considered a metaphysical way" (ibid. 111). At present, the former group hold sway over the latter.

Because of its interventionist tactics and high public profile, Greenpeace maintains a problematic relationship to other environmental groups. Thus, whereas they attract much of the public attention in regards to the whaling issue, other groups such as Friends of the Earth, and the

Washington-based umbrella organisation Monitor have contributed equally, if not more so, to the direction of anti-whaling discourse.

IV

The nationalization of the whaling issue: early years

Before proceeding with a description of events in Iceland from 1977 until 1990, a clarification is in order. What I term the "nationalization of the whaling issue" refers to the rise of a specific set of circumstances involving the mobilization of public opinion, the conviction amongst the majority of Icelanders that their nation and not simply economic interests were under threat, and the domination of a symbolic understanding of the issue. The latter refers to how information about the whaling issue is held, not in propositions which are open to logical refutation, but as irrefutable knowledge which is then invoked to interpret additional information. Saying that the whaling issue is understood symbolically does not necessarily imply that the understanding is wrong; it only describes the manner in which it is known.

Whereas from 1977 onwards there was opposition to the protests of environmentalists within the state and interest groups involved in the fisheries, this does not constitute a nationalist reaction per se. Rather, it is evidence of the will to defend the economic and territorial boundaries of the state through juridical means.

The first inkling of potential conflict over whaling came in the form of an interview with a Norwegian whale scientist, Aage Jonsgaard, which appeared in the right-wing party's newspaper, Morgunblaðið (29 September 1977). Jonsgaard had in the past done research at the whaling station at Hvalafjörður, and had also taught some Icelandic students. Billed as "one of the world's most knowledgeable whale specialists" (einn kunnasta hvala sérfræðing heims)--a reputation which, in fact, he does not enjoy elsewhere--Jonsgaard warned of the possible visit by Greenpeace to the whaling grounds the following year. He claimed that Greenpeace was driven primarily by Americans who did not know that the USA was responsible for killing the largest number of whales. He further claimed that the blue whale was not brought to extinction as the leaders of Greenpeace have claimed, and that their numbers were increasing such that in 15 or 20 years it would be possible to resume their hunt. Although not mentioned in the article, this statement contradicts reports of the Scientific Committee of the IWC prior to the complete ban on blue whales in 1960, which argued that the blue whale was "gravely depleted."

Greenpeace did indeed send the Rainbow Warrior to the Icelandic whaling grounds in June 1978. A month earlier, two interviews with Greenpeace representatives appeared in Morgunblaðið (7, 9 May). They were quoted as saying that Greenpeace was asking Iceland to stop whaling for the next ten years. If their request was not met, they continued,

they would then send the Rainbow Warrior to interfere with that year's hunt.

The second article included background information on Greenpeace based on statements made by its representatives, describing its efforts to protect animals such as seals, sea lions, as well as whales hunted by Russia, Japan, and Australia. They also explained their stand that the IWC was unable to properly protect the whales around Iceland because of their lack of certain knowledge about whale stocks. They claimed that the fin whale was in danger, citing as evidence the fact that Hvalur hf. had been unable to meet its quota in the previous year. Iceland's whaling was not based on scientific knowledge, and since it employed "only two hundred people" and accounted for only 1% of export earnings, it was reasonable to stop whaling. They also stated that whaling was no longer necessary since other products could be substituted, although they did not specify if they were referring to meat or to by-products.

A report from a press conference organised by the Ministry of Fisheries was printed beneath this article. The head of the Marine Research Institute and the manager of the Ministry of Fisheries stated that the previous year's quota had not been met because of a strike which caused the season to begin late, thus missing the appropriate time to capture fin whales. They added that Greenpeace's claims that the IWC did not regulate (stjórnaði) whaling in the North Atlantic is utter nonsense. Although the Whaling Commission

had been slow to listen to scientists, this state of affairs had changed, and all whale stocks were currently regulated. The article continued with refutations of other statements by Greenpeace, including the latter's belief that fin whales feed on capelin.

The Icelandic government did not stop whaling, and the Rainbow Warrior attempted to chase the whaling ships. Using small rubber boats launched from the Warrior, the protesters attempted to pursue the catcher boats. They did not have enough power, thus allowing the whalers to elude them.

No other discussion of whaling appeared in the press until May 1979, when an extensive interview with a Dane living in Iceland and actively involved with anti-whaling protests was published in the left-wing paper, Þjóðviljinn. The article details background of the IWC, the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Environment, and the recent history of whaling in Iceland. All were given as evidence for the justifiability of ending whaling. He pointed out, for example, that Iceland had voted along with other countries at the Stockholm meeting to abide by a ten-year moratorium on whaling. Its failure to do so was, in his view, a sign of governmental deceit.

Two days later, on 29 May, an article in Morgunblaðið reported that the Rainbow Warrior was once again returning to Icelandic waters, this time accompanied by faster Zodiacs with larger fuel capacities. Protesters were able to place themselves between the catcher boats and the whales. They

attempted to prevent whales from breaking the surface and making themselves targets, by positioning their boats on top of the whale, thus forcing it to dive.

The whalers claimed that Greenpeace was endangering the lives of whales to no purpose, since preventing a whale from blowing as often as needed could cause it to explode. In an interview I conducted, one of the Greenpeace leaders argued that such direct action was a significant part of Greenpeace's strategy, since it forced those immediately involved with environmental destruction--i.e. the crew of the catcher boat--to confront directly the consequences of their actions.

Unlike the previous year, the press was more concerned with covering aspects of the event itself. It reported the Minister of Justice's and the coast guard skipper's strategies for dealing with Greenpeace. Hvalur hf. asked for a court injunction to block the actions of the Rainbow Warrior, and its crew was arrested in Reykjavik harbour and detained overnight. Over the next few days, the press documented statements by lawyers, Greenpeace members, politicians, and fisheries representatives. The emphasis was placed on the parameters of the event, rather than on the question of whaling.

The first public Icelandic protests against whaling occurred in 1979. These came in the form of a small, grassroots movement, originating primarily in Reykjavik. A few newspaper articles appeared, discussing the

international whaling protest, and a march through downtown streets brought together sympathetic students mostly from one high school (Menntaskóli í Hamrahlíð) and members of an Icelandic environmental group, Skuld.

Acceptance of the moratorium

Over the next three years little changed within Iceland, although a small amount of discussion continued to take place within nature protection groups. Circumstances changed, however, when in 1982 the Whaling Commission voted in favour of the commercial-whaling moratorium.

Within the IWC, Iceland was opposed to the imposition of the moratorium. It was the intention of the Ministry of Fisheries to lodge an objection to the decision, and thus render it non-binding on Iceland. The governments of Japan, Norway, the USSR, and Peru had all done so, although the latter country later withdrew its objection. The decision to abide by the moratorium, however, was tabled in Alþingi.

The parliamentary debate did not split along party lines, and no party adopted whaling or anti-whaling as part of its platform. Instead, disagreement arose between those who upheld national interests on the one hand, and those who defended international concerns on the other. The former stance held that it would be a loss of sovereignty if other states were to determine Icelandic fisheries policy. It was felt that the decisions of the IWC were unduly influenced by animal-rights activists and protectionists working through

governments without whaling industries to protect. Opponents to whaling for their part expressed concern over the potential damage to the nation's international image, and the impact on international law which could occur if Iceland failed to uphold its dictates. Iceland, they said, relied on the effectiveness of international law, and it was not in the nation's best interests to undermine it.

The degree of American pressure placed on the members of Alþingi is subject to debate. Some claimed that the pressure was enough to persuade politicians that the threat of trade sanctions, coupled with environmentalist-organised boycotts of Icelandic fish products, outweighed the value of continued whaling. Others said that the American ambassador so angered Icelandic MPs that they voted against accepting the IWC decision in retaliation. Both reactions are indeed likely.

Regardless, the vote was close, and the Whaling Commission's resolution was accepted by a one-vote majority. The decision was a straightforward acknowledgement that Iceland would abide by the IWC's commercial whaling moratorium.⁵

Sometime either in November 1984 or February 1985 (the exact date is not publicly known), the new Fisheries Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson asked the Marine Research Institute to design a scientific research programme. Alþingi was not consulted on this change of policy; instead, the Foreign Relations Committee meeting in camera reviewed

and approved the research proposal. The project was made public on 25 May 1985.

An Icelandic critic of the whaling programme said that, at the time, it was reasonable for Ásgrímsson to decide in favour of continued whaling. As Fisheries Minister, he upheld the notion that Iceland was a small nation which cultivated and used--not over-used--its ocean resources. It would be impossible for the government to accept that one particular aspect of the ocean was not available to any form of economic use.

Ásgrímsson and others involved with the research programme claimed to be following Alþingi's decision. They had redefined that decision to their advantage:

common to all views expressed [in Alþingi] was that the IWC decision calling for intensified research of the whale stocks was very important. That whales constitute an integral part of the marine ecosystem around Iceland that should be conserved and utilized rationally was never an issue of dispute.

The government's policy on the issue was thus clearly outlined by the Alþingi: Iceland would abide by the IWC decision on the temporary ban on commercial whaling, and greatly intensify the research on the whale stocks in order to form a policy by 1990, based on the best scientific knowledge. (Sigurjónsson 1989: 33)

Critics of the research programme saw it as an attempt to keep Hvalur hf. in operation. If whaling operations were closed down for the duration of the ban, it would have been uneconomical and likely impossible to begin again. This is a commonly-held opinion on both sides of the debate which overlooks, as mentioned earlier, the nine-year hiatus in whaling during World War II. The cost of maintaining catcher boats throughout the winter is high even when whaling is occurring. Without the income from yearly hunts, the boats would have been left to rust, and the whalers would have found other jobs. Internationally, supporters of the moratorium were aware of this potentiality, and actively hoped for its realisation.

A handful of more radically-minded Icelandic protesters attempted some disruptive acts, throwing paint bombs at the whaling ships and chaining themselves to one of the boats as it lay at dock. These activities received media attention that nearly all involved felt to be sympathetic. As one individual said, at that time it was possible to be anti-whaling and still thought to be sane.

International protests in Iceland

Greenpeace's vessel the Sirius came to Iceland in 1985 after the announcement of the research programme. Leading the campaign at this time was Michael Nielsson of Denmark, who had little foreknowledge of the Icelandic context. Icelandic opponents to the research whaling programme met

with Greenpeace leaders, to advise them on what they felt to be appropriate strategies. However, from what these individuals told me, it appears that their advice was ignored.

The Icelanders were interested in running the campaign themselves, since they believed that they could communicate more effectively to their countrymen than could foreigners. They requested from Greenpeace supporting funds as well as background information which they could then disseminate. They also requested that Greenpeace make public in Iceland its entire environmental platform, including information on ocean pollution, rather than focus exclusively on the question of whaling. However, acquiescing to the first two requests would have been in contradiction to established Greenpeace policy.

Greenpeace chose to follow their own agenda, and proceeded to make two errors. First, they failed to identify a spokesperson on the Sirius with authority to make public statements on the whole group's behalf. The Icelandic press rapidly discovered this, and had a heyday extracting forty different responses from the forty different crew members. The press was to use this strategy to great advantage later when interviewing anti-whaling protesters abroad. Demonstrating the lack of specific information about the nature of Icelandic whaling became a means of "proving" the irrationality of anti-whalers.

The second error on the part of Nielsson involved his private meeting with the head of the Marine Research Institute, Jakob Jakobsson. Since I was not able to interview either of these men, the following account is based on secondary accounts from three individuals involved in fisheries and whaling issues. Prior to this meeting, Jakobsson had been sympathetic toward the anti-whaling cause. As was described in Chapter Five, he was (and is) accorded considerable respect amongst the Icelandic public because of his prediction regarding herring stocks. During the meeting, Nielsson indicated that Greenpeace was willing to protest any use of marine resources they felt to be detrimental to the environment, including cod fishing.

The possibility of extremist-environmentalists attempting to disrupt the basis of Iceland's economy was too much for Jakobsson. He came out of the meeting opposed to the anti-whaling position, and publicly backed the credibility of the whale research programme. It was his endorsement which more than anything convinced Icelanders of the validity of the research: the whaling scientist Jóhann Sigurjónsson was young, in his mid-thirties, and had yet to establish any public reputation.

Landvernd, the Icelandic nature protection collective, sponsored a conference in Reykjavik on 15 August 1985 to coincide with the Ministry of Fisheries' public meeting on its research programme. While across town the Ministry of Fisheries, assorted foreign observers and scientists, and

Icelandic scientists discussed the details of the research programme, Roger Payne, an American whaling scientist, Arne Schiotz, another scientist and then vice-president of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and Tom Garrett, former American Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission spoke to the media and attending public. At the meeting, Payne suggested switching to a whale-watching industry, similar to that operated in New England. It was possible, he argued, to earn money from non-consumptive uses of whales.

Schiotz defined the agenda of WWF as concerned with the sustainable exploitation of nature, and pointed out that it was not opposed to hunting, fishing, forestry, or any other kind of sustainable use. His argument was structured around the view that too little data were available to allow for continued hunting, and that Iceland's issuance of scientific permits was a misuse, if not an illegal use, of the IWC's regulations. He hinted that continued whaling had little to do with obtaining food, and more to do with profit.

Icelandic-American negotiations

By conducting research whaling during the moratorium and thereby be perceived as "diminishing the effectiveness of the IWC," Iceland was confronted with the possibility of sanctions under the American Pelley Amendment. Sanctioning would lead to the banning of the sale of Icelandic fish on American markets. Ronald Reagan publicly declared his willingness to invoke the Amendment, ironically at the same

time as he refused to sanction boycotts against South Africa's apartheid policy.

The Packwood-Magnuson Act had already been invoked against the USSR in 1985 when it took too many minke whales during the previous year's hunt. Soviet boats were excluded from fishing in Alaskan waters; however, it should be noted that their catch in those waters had always been small. The Japanese who also fish in Alaskan waters, were not penalized by the Department of Commerce in accordance with the legislation. Instead, the USA and Japan entered into negotiations which concluded with a compromise: the Americans would not enforce the Act if Japan promised to withdraw its objection to the moratorium in the IWC.

Conservation groups collaborated in legal actions against the Department of Commerce for its non-imposition of the sanctions. In an initial ruling, the Dept. of Commerce was judged to have acted beyond its authority by entering into an agreement with Japan. Furthermore, the Department was required by law to enforce the Pelley Amendment and the Packwood-Magnuson Act. However, in appeals, this judgment was overturned, although the court was divided over the ruling.

During the 1986 meeting of the IWC, a Resolution on Special Permits for Scientific Research recommended that Iceland suspend research whaling "until the uncertainties identified in the Scientific Committee Report have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Scientific Committee."

At the end of July 1986, whaling was temporarily halted while American and Icelandic officials discussed Iceland's compliance with the moratorium. Iceland was already under pressure from the other members of the Nordic Council, who said that Iceland was endangering the Nordic image and the effectiveness of international cooperation. At that year's Whaling Commission meeting, it had been agreed that the meat from whales caught under special permit would be primarily for local use. However, most of the Icelandic catch was sold to Japan, since consumption of whale meat is not high in Iceland. The Americans agreed not to ban Icelandic fish imports if Iceland agreed to export only 49% of its catch. The rest was to be consumed domestically.

Environmentalists attempted to monitor exports to Japan, and uncovered one case of mislabelling a shipment of whalemeat in order to circumvent the agreement. The Icelandic government blamed the Americans for the situation, since the agreement left no alternative except the destruction of the whalemeat which Icelanders could not hope to consume.

Intensification of protests against Icelandic whaling

In November 1986, two members of the Californian-based Sea Shepherd Conservation Society broke into the whaling station at Hvalafjörður, then closed for the season, in a bid to destroy its fixtures. Following this, they drove south to Reykjavík harbour where the whaling boats were

anchored for the winter. Fourteen bolts were unscrewed from the sea cocks of two of the four boats, allowing them to fill with water and sink in ten metres of water. The two saboteurs hastily drove to Keflavik Airport, slowed only by a police check to determine if their erratic driving was due to drunkenness. They escaped the country before the alarm was raised. Back in Canada, Sea Shepherd leader Paul Watson claimed responsibility for the actions, saying that he was "upholding international law" to stop those who were going against the whaling moratorium.

Foreign press reports varied in their descriptions of the damage. This confusion can also be seen in radical environmentalist books which have come to market since that date. The sinking of the vessels is claimed to have destroyed the Icelandic whaling fleet, while millions of dollars of high-tech equipment are said to have been destroyed at the whaling platform. However, insurance covered the costs of refloating and rewiring the two catcher boats, while damage at the station was negligible, according to those who worked there. The two boats had not been used for whaling since the beginning of the moratorium. Further, damage at the station was minimal: a disused boiler had been damaged, papers strewn about, and glass bottles smashed. The processing of whales, as well as the taking of biological measurements from them, does not require sophisticated equipment.

More than any event before it, the sinking of the whaling boats roused the Icelandic public's attention. Violent protest is not characteristic of politics in Iceland, Cod Wars notwithstanding. People with whom I talked used this event as one of the significant landmarks along the course of the whaling issue, and described it as an "act of terrorism." It was also referred to repeatedly in press reports whenever the anti-whaling movement came under discussion.

Not infrequently in conversation, the names of Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace were confused, and people did not see any important distinction between the two organisations. Paul Watson had once been part of Greenpeace, although he quit it after a dispute in order to form his own organisation dedicated to more direct action. He felt that the peaceful protests of Greenpeace were not sufficient to protect the environment. Greenpeace, although not upset at the loss of two whaling boats, nonetheless condemned the sinkings as counter-productive.

Following the announcement of the scientific programme in 1985, criticism came from a broader spectrum of Icelandic society, and was more organized than the previous spontaneous protests. In general, it appears that these criticisms were more rooted in an Icelandic context than before, when arguments and actions were modelled after groups such as Greenpeace. Also, they were more varied in their premises. Although I categorise them here into four

parts, it must be noted that in practice, support of one argument does not preclude an individual from agreeing with other arguments as well.

One group moved to action was formed by a number of biologists. In 1987 they published a petition--signed by 21 individuals though supported by more--that protested the use of science for political ends. They pointed at flaws in the design of the research programme that were for them evidence of its inability to provide meaningful knowledge and therefore fulfil its mandate to contribute to the scientific management of the fisheries. It seemed clear to him therefore that the primary aim of the programme was to keep the whaling fleet active while political battles raged within the IWC.

A second form of protest arose which saw the whaling issue in terms of national politics, and was a critique of how power operates within Iceland. There are four components to this. First, the Fisheries Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson had, according to polls, become the most popular politician in Iceland, gaining from taking a confrontational position against anti-whalers. A poll taken by the private pollster Skáís in September 1989, showed that Asgrímsson was the most trusted politician in Iceland. Taking a strong stand on any issue is a successful strategy in the politics of Iceland: there is a tendency for people to invest power in the individual rather than in an ideology or social programme. Focussing on the individual, investing trust in

what is hoped to be a heroic character, distracts from a discussion and analysis of issues. In this way, it was thought that whaling was being used as a smokescreen to obscure from the public more essential, domestic issues.

Second, there was also a questioning of the legality of the decision to commence scientific whaling. As mentioned earlier, Alþingi had voted to uphold the commercial whaling ban, but it had not been fully consulted regarding the scientific programme. This was considered significant because of the on-going issue of the exact boundaries of power of Alþingi, its ministers, and civil servants.

Third, the political wisdom of taking a pro-whaling stance in an international forum, given the ill-will it was generating abroad, was criticized as defeating the nation's interests. Opponents felt that it would damage the case that Iceland was making for protection of northern waters, particularly from the dangers of nuclear submarines and nuclear waste issuing from northern Scotland. As well, taking a belligerent stand now, they argued, would only damage the possibilities of beginning whaling again at a later date, if and when whale stocks could be harvested in a sustainable manner.

Fourth, there were suspicions of collusion between government and business in keeping the whaling company Hvalur hf. in operation. These suspicions were based on a perception of power as concentrated in a handful of families involved in government, banking, and major businesses.

Those holding power were seen to operate in their own interests. That Hvalur hf. was managed by a member of the Independence Party, that its ownership involved powerful families and companies, were taken as evidence for a government strategy, using scientific whaling as a pretext, to keep the company solvent.

A third voice of opposition came from business interests, particularly those with direct dealings with foreign markets. Given the small share that whaling generated in foreign export earnings, more cautious people felt to be more in the interests of business to end whaling rather than risk the loss of markets.

A fourth and final form of opposition came from those loosely associated with the group Friends of Whales. Theirs was a moral stance, and was based on an animal welfare philosophy. Increasingly, the Icelandic media identified this group as representative of the anti-whaling stand. An attempt was made to unify all opponents under the auspices of Friends of Whales. However, conflict over leadership and an unwillingness to compromise brought these attempts quickly to an end. There was a polarisation of opinion between the moralists on the one hand, and the biologists on the other.

In February 1988, Greenpeace in collaboration with other environmental groups declared a boycott against Icelandic seafood products. In the autumn of 1988, the boycott campaign succeeded in prompting the West German

supermarket chain Tengelmann to cancel further orders of canned seafood products from the sales and marketing organisation Iceland Waters. At the beginning of 1989, Aldi Sud and Aldi Nord, two German canned goods purchasers, cancelled Icelandic contracts, although trade relations with the latter firm did not entirely break down. All companies cited continuing Icelandic whaling as their reasons for suspending trade with the Icelandic businesses. The canned goods prominently displayed "Iceland" in their packaging, thus making them an easily-identifiable target for boycott action. The boycott also affected segments of the American market, when Burger King, Red Lobster, and Long John Silver stopped buying Icelandic fish.

Disputes arose in Iceland over the precise amount the boycott was costing Icelandic foreign trade, as well as over the truth of the German companies' explanations. For example, in March 1989, the monthly magazine Heimsmynd ran a small article which suggested that Aldi was using the whaling issue as a pretext for switching to a cheaper source of seafood. Further, the article suggested that Aldi was probably giving in under pressure from other European Community members, since the concerns of Iceland, a small nation outside the EC, were easily put aside.

Despite their efforts to make the boycott effective, Greenpeace did not attempt to communicate directly with the Icelandic public. Instead, the media in Iceland was dominated by pro-whaling voices. Typically, spokesmen from

either the Ministry of Fisheries or the Marine Research Institute were approached to comment on the latest occurrence in the international context. Very little investigative reporting was conducted. Most often the media had to rely on foreign wire services for coverage of foreign events. In those cases when reporters were sent abroad to cover anti-Icelandic whaling actions, interviews and coverage tended to focus on the lack of knowledge amongst the protesters, and on the money and power environmentalist groups were thought to control.

The Icelandic reaction

At the 1987 meeting of the IWC at Bournemouth, a new proposal was put forward by the American government concerning scientific permits. By this time, Korea, Japan, and Norway had joined Iceland in putting forward research proposals to allow for the taking of more whales. The Scientific Committee had already been assigned the task of evaluating the scientific worth of special-permit whaling. The American proposal would require that the Commission itself notify those governments whose research programmes did not fulfil the criteria for good science, and to bring a stop to these instances of research whaling. The intention on the part of the Americans was to increase the strength of their own domestic legislation to sanction errant whaling states.

The Icelandic Fisheries Minister protested these moves, and threatened to withdraw Iceland from the IWC, set up a new management organisation, and then place the issue before the International Court of Law and UNESCO. Despite the opposition of whaling states, the resolution passed.

The adoption by the IWC of tougher regulations as regards scientific whaling effectively placed those states engaging in it in the position once again of being open to prosecution under American legislation.

What followed was an exchange of letters between the Icelandic and American governments regarding Iceland's compliance with American pressures. A meeting held in Ottawa between the two governments in the autumn of 1987 resulted in the agreement that Iceland would, in the following year, submit its research proposal to the Scientific Committee and carry out its recommendations. Following the Ottawa meeting, a letter from the Secretary of Commerce confirming the content of the discussions attempted to reformulate the initial agreement.

I was shown this letter by an official in the Foreign Ministry, who added that Icelandic officials were frustrated by the fact that what they believed to be confidential letters between two governments were appearing in photocopied form in the hands of environmentalists a few days after their receipt.

It was rumoured that the behaviour of the Americans during these negotiations altered Fisheries Minister

Asgrímsson's attitude to the question of whaling. It was no longer a question of upholding the sovereign rights of Iceland: now, it was a matter of personal honour. Once again, however, the Americans did not prosecute Iceland under their legislation, but instead negotiated a reduction in Iceland's quotas for the following year.

The suspicion arose amongst Icelandic and foreign opponents to whaling that the Keflavik base and security issues were behind the American unwillingness to press Iceland into line with its conservation policies. It seemed likely to them that the Americans feared a nationalist reaction to overt interference on their part in what was considered in Iceland domestic fisheries policy.

In January 1988, the Ministry of Fisheries sponsored a conference on marine mammal management to promote the "sensible exploitation of ocean mammals." Delegates came from the whaling countries of Norway, the USSR, the Faeroe Islands, and Japan, along with observers from Greenland. Canada, ostensibly a non-whaling nation (although Baffin Island Inuit hunt bowhead whales) was also in attendance.⁶ Fisheries Minister Halldór Asgrímsson argued that the 1987 IWC meeting in Bournemouth indicated to his government that the organisation was no longer capable of rationally managing the whaling industry. The purpose of the meeting, then, was to bring together sympathetic nations in order to lay the basis for a separate management organisation.

The nation roused to anger

Perhaps the single most powerful influence on Icelandic public opinion was a documentary film (others were to call it pro-whaling propaganda) outlining the case for continued North Atlantic whaling. In March 1989, Icelandic state television broadcast journalist Magnús Guðmundsson's film, Survival in the North (Lífsbjörg í norðurhöfum). In the preceding days suspense had been heightened by the scene of Greenpeace's unsuccessful court-room attempts to prevent its showing, on the grounds that the film used Greenpeace's own footage without authorization.⁷ Reaction to the film, as well as to the televised debate that followed, was forceful and swift. Throughout the next days, radio phone-in shows were flooded with calls that were overwhelming in their support of Magnús and condemnation of Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd, and their defenders. Discussions and arguments sprang up at home, work, and school. Newspapers carried readers' reactions, and in certain newspapers Magnús had for the moment become a new Icelandic hero. As one person remarked to me later, though it is slow in building, there eventually comes a point of pain when Icelanders become angry.

Though the majority of Icelanders were supportive of the government's whaling policy prior to the film, there had been a pervasive sense that the propaganda war was being lost. The winners, on the other hand, appeared to be the foreign protesters whose actions in support of the boycott

against Iceland were shown on the evening news, and whose portrayal of whaling radically differed from their own understanding. Though frustrated by their inability to compete with such pervasive media coverage, some Icelanders thought it was no longer beneficial to continue the fight.

Magnús' film was a representation of how many Icelanders have come to understand the question of whaling. Produced as it was for foreign viewing, i.e. with English voice-over, the film filled a felt need to have a persuasive means to speak out for the Icelandic nation. The reaction was built on the anger, frustration, and sense of helplessness brought on by what were interpreted as threats directed at their nation. It was a reaction that had been building particularly since the 1986 sinkings.

As portrayed in "Survival in the North," active opponents of whaling are supporters of an animal-rights as opposed to a conservationist philosophy. Their belief that the killing of whales for any reason is unjustifiable is presented as a morality which can only flourish in those societies where the majority have lost touch with the realities of food production. The very wealth of these nations permits such a morality to exist, they argue, a wealth which is built upon a far more destructive use of nature. That such people should force their morality onto other, less powerful people is in itself immoral. Further, the leaders of environmental groups are portrayed as willing to misrepresent "facts" in the service of fund-raising.

Thus, followers of environmental groups are seen as dupes to a leadership with suspect motives.

Furthermore, misinformed activists were portrayed as the "real" force behind the anti-whaling movement. Issues surrounding the basis for scientific knowledge, appropriate management strategies, and principles of international law were left unaddressed, or glossed over as obfuscating strategies on the part of animal protectionists.

The broadcast of the film came at a time when Alþingi was about to consider a bill designed to end the whaling programme, under domestic pressure in part generated by the boycott. The challenge was based on the legality of the research programme, since it was taken without consultation with Alþingi. The national reaction was astonishing in its ferocity, and it created a degree of resolve that made any compromise on the issue immediately impossible. This film has come to be "the truth" for most Icelanders; when I told people that I was doing research on the whaling issue, their first response would often be, "Did you see Magnús' film?".

Negotiations and appeasement

At the 1989 meeting of the Whaling Commission in San Diego (California), the Icelandic government agreed after negotiations with the Americans not to kill sei whales during the hunting season about to begin. Instead, they caught 68 fin whales, the same number as the previous year.

In the autumn, after the whaling season had closed, Ásgrímsson announced during an official visit to Germany that Iceland would discontinue whaling in 1990. Given that the research programme was scheduled to end with the 1989 season, and that nothing was said regarding future resumption, he was in fact saying little. His statement had the effect of appeasing the Germans, however, and led some environmentalists to conclude that they had been successful in ending Icelandic whaling.

Following Ásgrímsson's statement, Greenpeace announced the end of the boycott, although David McTaggart was in favour of its continuance until it was certain that Iceland would not resume whaling. Instead, the organisation warned that the boycott would be reinstated if Iceland were to begin whaling again. With the end of the boycott, foreign companies reestablished trade in Icelandic fish. A rumour making the rounds in Iceland claimed that trade had not really been fully suspended, and that unlabelled Icelandic frozen fish was still sold by ostensibly anti-whaling firms.

For their part, whaling states continued to prepare the ground for a new management organisation to administer marine mammals. On 19 April 1990, Iceland, Norway, the Faeroe Islands, and Greenland--Canada maintained observer status--signed a "Memorandum of Understanding" regarding "cooperation between countries bordering the North Atlantic Ocean in research, conservation and management of marine mammals." "Multispecies management" was enshrined in its

principles, which recognized "the need to develop management procedures which take into account the relationship between marine mammals and other fisheries resources," and the need to conduct "research on marine mammals and their role in the ecosystem, including, where appropriate, multi-species approaches."

The groundwork for this agreement had been laid at the 1988 Reykjavik meeting. Although only stipulating the formation of an "informal committee," the memorandum easily allowed for an alternate management organisation to be quickly established. Further, the organisation would control membership, and allow other states not bordering on the North Atlantic to apply for observer status only "when such admission is consistent with the aims of the activities under this Memorandum of Understanding."

The foundation of an alternate forum for whale management is legally feasible, since the legislation behind American powers of sanction does not specify in which organisation a whaling state must participate, only so long as it is international.

V

The Clash of Discourses

An Icelandic friend commented to me that the nationalist reaction to the anti-whaling movement amongst his countrymen was a case of svo má ből bæta að benda á annað verra: of making an evil better than it is by

comparing it to something worse. The "evil" is the continuation of Icelandic whaling, made to look justifiable, in his view, through the extremes of anti-whaler behaviour and their inaccurate knowledge of Iceland.

The tactic of assailing the opposition's credibility as a means of asserting one's own authority to speak the truth, however, is not a product of Icelandic character or opinion, but rather is one of several discursive strategies invoked by all sides in the course of the whaling debate. Many of the statements put forth in defence of a particular position are not proofs of its truth per se, although the speaker may think of them as such. Instead, they persuade through the appearance of truth, by virtue of their fit with previously-held knowledge about the world. Truth, however, can only exist when and where it is agreed upon, in contexts of shared understanding, or where voices which contradict it are silenced.

Undermining the authority of the opposing side by suggesting hidden motivations or conspiratorial intentions is a means of establishing what Giddens terms "ontological security," or what Derrida and Foucault term the essence or immobile form assumed to lie outside the play of discourses. Thus, in order to restore the sense of security and order which a challenge to accepted truth disrupts, it becomes necessary to defuse the power of competing discourses. This is accomplished by circumscribing the limits of what can be spoken and by whom. For example, opponents of whaling

attempt to limit the power of the state to speak with authority about appropriate strategies of whale management, by portraying it as operating in the interests of a "profit-hungry" whaling industry. For their part, supporters of whaling portray anti-whalers as emotional and irrational, and therefore incapable of adjudicating whaling policy.

As stated earlier, my concern in this chapter is to point at the discursive strategies used to establish authority and define the parameters of legitimate knowledge about whales and whaling, and discuss how these are framed within nationalist discourse. Truth is understood here not as an unchanging fundament pursued through the performance of specific procedures, but rather an object systematically formed through the discursive operations of power/knowledge.

In Iceland, the whaling issue has come to be understood largely in nationalist terms because, I argue, opposition to whaling contradicts the manner in which notions of property, territory, and nature are understood. The whaling issue in and of itself is not an Icelandic phenomenon, nor is it rooted or situated in any one place. What makes the whaling issue so challenging for analysis is the manner in which it articulates with several separate discourses, operating in separate national contexts, pertaining to scientific, economic, political (at national and international levels), moral, and ecological knowledge. These discourses become strategic weapons for negotiating the parameters of

power/knowledge, insofar as they seek to define the "truth" about whales and whaling.

In the following text, I will situate those discourses which surround the whaling issue in Iceland in terms of the rhetorical techniques employed to establish and control authority, and the structuring of official positions within the debate. Public discourse about whaling, in Iceland and elsewhere, whether carried in the media, fund-raising literature, or government publications, attempts to establish authority through such techniques as generating a sense of crisis, constructing particular categories of actors, making certain vocabulary choices, portraying spokespeople as "experts," or portraying the opposition through selective interpretations.

Controlling the discourse involves a selective mobilization of numbers intended to convince through their magnitude rather than through their place within a system of calculation. For example, opponents of whaling will cite in their fund-raising literature the total number of whales killed world-wide since the foundation of the IWC, or the number of whales killed in any given year, in order to create a sense of crisis. These numbers are not given in terms of whale stocks or populations, nor are they placed in relation to total populations. Further, they do not distinguish between who is hunting the whales and how, so that the dolphin by-catch of the eastern Pacific tuna industry is lumped together with the take of minke whales in

the North Atlantic. The implication is that whales are under immediate threat of extinction by a rapacious industry.

This technique has its counterpart in pro-whaling rhetoric. The Icelandic press quotes the whaling scientist Sigurjónsson giving absolute numbers of whale stocks of different species surrounding Iceland. These numbers are presented raw, without inclusion of the margin of error. Further, in the press the stock size is not correlated with the numbers necessary for the population to reproduce itself. That is to say, 10,000 whales may seem large, but it may not be large enough for the population to survive.

The question is not the "truth" of the numbers, since in and of themselves they are generally accurate. However, within a public context where the audience for these numbers likely lacks the expertise or background knowledge to evaluate their significance, their use is rhetorical rather than informative. Surrounding text is used to guide their interpretation. If that text speaks of the "on-going massacre" or "the slaughter of innocent whales," then the reader is led to assume that the number of whales killed is too high. Conversely, if the text speaks of "certainty" and "rational harvest," the reader is to assume sensible and orderly hunting is feasible.

"Authoritative voices," whether of government officials, scientists, or environmentalist spokesmen, are used in public discourse to explain what is "really going

on." In discourse, "authoritative voices" are not linked to particular interests which could undermine their credibility, although they are usually positioned as speakers in favour of the stand which the reader is being persuaded to accept as true. For example, in anti-whaling literature (cf. Cherfas 1988), Sidney Holt, billed as "one of the world's leading authorities," is consulted regarding appropriate scientific understanding, and to explain away the knowledge claims advanced by the scientists from whaling states. Conversely, within the Icelandic context, Sigurjónsson is given the role of scientific authority, who is able to portray deliberations within the Scientific Committee in terms favourable to the Icelandic position.

The corollary of "authoritative voices," then, is the attempt by their opponents to undermine their credibility not so much via direct rebuttal as through the assigning of hidden motives. For example, defenders of whaling claim that Sidney Holt's objectivity is compromised by his close association with Greenpeace. Because he has worked for them in the past, and continues to advise them on scientific arguments, he is seen as sharing their ideological motives. For their part, opponents to Icelandic research whaling claim that Sigurjónsson's credibility is weakened by his employment by the government, and by his receipt of sizable research funds.

A final rhetorical technique in public discourse about whaling is to identify categories of actors based on

specific criteria which are then used to evaluate their motivations and authority. In environmentalist discourse, whalers are portrayed as indistinguishable one from the other. Thus, participants in the Faeroese pilot whale drive are linked to the operations of Japanese factory ships and the coastal whaling of Iceland, by virtue of their common motivation toward profit. On the one hand, the possibility that different methods of whaling--i.e. techniques and ownership of resources and means of production--could significantly affect the overall capacity of a single industry is not considered significant. On the other hand, whaling states have been critical of the IWC's distinction between aboriginal/subsistence whaling and commercial whaling, arguing that it was prejudicial and not based on the biology of stocks. They would rather that one category was recognized without differentiation based on socio-economic factors.

While whalers are labelled by environmentalists as greedy and therefore unreliable custodians of the world's whales, defenders of whaling categorize environmentalists as emotional, irrational, sentimental "animal friends" who are naive about the necessity to kill animals for food. This denies the existence of a variety of reasons for opposition to whaling which are not based on any of the above reasons. Thus, when any foreign protester is cited in the Icelandic media, it is to emphasize the individual's credulous opinions. Further, if the opponents of whaling are

Icelandic then they are viewed, either in the media or in everyday discourse, as dupes of the misinformation put forth by foreign protectionists.

The categorical separation between "protectionist" and "conservationist" is becoming more significant in the debate, as its focus shifts away from the biology of whale conservation to management strategies (see below).

The difficulty in talking of whaling in the manner which this dissertation attempts, is that it becomes necessary to use these categories while at the same time seeking to relativize their meaning. For example, although at times there is a pull in the text toward constructing opposing actors--"anti-whalers" versus "pro-whalers"--this is less a description of the actual dynamics surrounding the debate than it is a repetition of how its dynamics are understood by its participants. Labelling an actor within the context of whaling as either for or against it--when neither label may be accurate--is a means to evaluate the statements and actions of that individual or group.

Further, the limitations of textual presentation require excluding discussion of certain events or debates in favour of others. Within the whaling debate, such choices are not without import. Certain key scenarios are used as evidence of the justifiability of a particular stand: thus, secret shipments of whalemeat from Iceland to Japan are taken as evidence, not merely of the two countries' attempts to circumvent regulations with which they disagree, but also

of the immorality of their desire to continue whaling. Such accounts, needless to say, do not figure in the official Icelandic description of the whaling issue.

Thus, the exclusion of such descriptions in and of itself can appear to be a deliberate strategy to ignore evidence. As previously stated, however, such scenarios are less evidence proving the truth or falsity of a given proposition, than they are strategies to legitimate discourses of power/knowledge.

Defending sovereignty

Two of the strongest and most resolutely pursued arguments put forth by the Icelandic government concern the sovereign rights of the Icelandic state to govern resources within its territorial waters, and the right of Icelandic citizens to define for themselves what does or does not constitute an exploitable natural resource.

From the point of view of the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it became necessary at a political level to continue whaling and to persevere with its arguments inside the International Whaling Commission. The government perceived that it was being pressured into stopping an activity which they believed to be right. They accepted that whales and humans were in competition for the same food source and in order to establish an adequate management of resources, it was therefore essential to balance the needs of both.

Pursuing at all costs a pro-whaling position became a matter of the proper conduct of an independent foreign policy. The Icelandic government held the view that it was inappropriate to succumb to what it saw as unfair pressure, issuing only from the United States. It would have been injudicious to buckle under the inflexible weight of NATO's largest member. An official in the Ministry commented to me that if it had been anyone else but the Americans, the government could possibly have given in. Compromising on an issue unimportant to the USA, however, would have set a terrible precedent for any future issue which that country might deem more critical. It is particularly necessary, he argued, for a small nation-state to take a strong stand and not to appear easily manipulable.

The question of sovereignty was taken up in Icelandic argumentation during the 1987 Commission meeting when measures were taken to restrict the criteria for research whaling. This motion, put forth by the Americans, was seen as a strategic attempt to limit the opportunities of whaling states to circumvent Commission regulations; the Icelanders considered it legitimate to circumvent these regulations, which they considered to be a consequence of protectionist thinking. The Icelandic lawyer spoke vehemently in defence of sovereignty:

as long history has shown, Iceland will not yield to any threat of political compulsion or economic coercion. Rather than subject itself to enforcement of

an illegal resolution by unilateral certification or sanctions.... Iceland would exercise its sovereign right with respect to the conservation and management of whales within its exclusive economic zone. Iceland will then explore whether international co-operation regarding whales can be restored through the establishment of a new and more appropriate organisation of governments which share the same principles and interests as originally intended by the IWC.

It is reasonable and just in the present circumstances that the Government of Iceland should invoke the first principle of friendly relations among states, the sovereign equality of all nations and the solemnity of all international rights and obligations.⁸

Although the whaling states operate in the IWC in terms of national economic interests, it would be a mistake to assume that the non-whaling states are motivated primarily by environmentalist concern, as protectionists claim. As Hoel (1985) and others point out, the IWC provides an international forum for generating precedents in common resource management. Many of the non-whaling members of the Commission are coastal states, and many--such as Antigua, Belize, the Seychelle and Solomon Islands--are small, third-world states, which are able to use the IWC as a means of advancing their own interests.

Hoel describes some of the motivations underlying the membership of non-whaling states. First, for poorer countries in particular, it is an opportunity to promote the "common heritage of mankind" principle in order to challenge the belief that since no one owns the resources of the high seas, they are therefore free for the taking--largely by wealthier states. Second, the Commission meetings are a venue in which smaller, weaker countries have the opportunity to be heard by more powerful states in Europe and North America. Third, participation in an international organisation is a means for a state to assert and reinforce its existence as an independent territorial entity. Fourth, most of the non-whaling members are coastal states, and many of these have fisheries which their governments wish to protect. Thus, particularly amongst Latin American countries, the IWC is a forum to assert sovereign rights over the Exclusive Economic Zone.

This latter concern does not align with an anti-whaling perspective, since assertion of sovereign rights precludes IWC competency over small cetaceans found within territorial waters. Challenges to IWC control over certain small cetaceans have been raised by, amongst others, Canada, Brazil, Peru, and the USSR.

Finally, the Seychelles have an interest in limiting the amount of sperm oil on the market, since it has similar properties and uses as copra, one of the islands' major export products. It therefore has a direct economic

interest in limiting whaling. Conservationists cite the existence of the Indian Ocean whale sanctuary off the coast of the Seychelles as the explanation for that country's membership and concern in whale conservation.

Given the above conditions, conservation should not be assumed to be the paramount motivation for these states, even though it is not absent from their agendas. All member states of the IWC seek to advance through its structures their own interests beyond those of whales and whaling. These interests pertain to the nature of territorial boundaries and state sovereignty, and the Commission is an arena for their strategic negotiation. Although conservation, or conversely the whaling industry, figure in these negotiations, they are understood through their formation in the discourse of territory.

Environmentalists within non-governmental organisations seek to direct state power towards the achievements of its goals. Thus, while holding a globalized notion of the environment and its protection, they must earn their victories territory by territory, operating through the logic of the nation-state.

Defending resources and rationality

Of central concern in the whaling issue is the status of marine mammals as economic resources and property. In environmental discourses three differing understandings of whales as resources can be found. According to the first

understanding, it would be possible to continue limited whaling once it has been determined that stocks are not endangered. This would require the establishment of procedures for determining the status of stocks, an act which has proven deeply contentious, but this does not contradict the potentiality of cetaceans as exploitable resources.

The second understanding denies the appropriateness of treating marine mammals as natural resources regardless of circumstances. Rather, whales should be classified--because of their intelligence, grace, mystery, and complex social life--outside the realm of economic calculation. The third understanding is an elaboration on the second, but does not disagree with treating whales as the object of economic calculation, but only insofar as they are not killed. Thus, profits can be earned through non-lethal uses such as whale-watching tours, through which whales are "consumed" as spectacle.

In Iceland, whaling is classified as part of the fisheries, and is thus bound up with notions of property and resources. Not only are marine mammals considered an appropriate source for protein, they are seen as competitors for resources and/or as hazards to boats and equipment engaged in fishing. Because of the small population and the centrality of the fisheries in everyday knowledge, when a whale becomes entangled in a purse-seine net, this becomes national news. Because of the increased attention drawn to

whales in the past decade, some Icelanders are blaming the decline in the whale hunt for the prevalence of damaged trawls, as well as the number of humpback whales which are thought to eat tons of herring and capelin.

In the film Survival in the North, a parallel is drawn between the impact of the end of the seal hunt on demersal fisheries, and the potential impact of whale protection on herring and capelin stocks. This was, and is, a popular idea. Seal populations have boomed in the North Atlantic. Seals are carriers of parasitic ringworms which accumulate in the flesh of the cod. The worms must be removed during processing of the cod to prevent discolouration of frozen fillets; the extra time involved in processing adds to production costs. Seals are also accused of "poaching" ocean-going salmon, which puts them in competition with fishermen.

Foreign environmentalists are blamed for this state of affairs. Whereas Icelanders know the pragmatics of food production, and the need to struggle for existence against a harsh, competitive nature--so the argument goes--foreigners have become so removed from the realities of life and death that they unwittingly allow the powerful forces of nature to assume mastery over the actions of fishermen.

The conviction that campaigns by animal-rights activists (which opponents to whaling are assumed to be) would not end with whales was already prevalent in Iceland before the head of the environmental lobby Monitor

Consortium was interviewed on state television in June 1990. Craig van Note indicated that his organisation would consider it appropriate, if such a scenario were to develop, to demand cuts in the fisheries' quotas if fishing were to deprive the whales of adequate food. The interviewer then noted that "Save the Whale" campaigns generate large revenues from public donations, thereby suggesting the "real" motive for the continuance of these campaigns.

As mentioned earlier, the distinction between "protectionists" and "conservationists" is increasingly becoming a focus for defining actors within the debate. Aron (1988), Cherfas (1988), and Gulland (1988), for example, address the issue now confronting those involved in the whaling debate. They agree that the major conservation battles have now been won, although they diverge in their descriptions of how that victory was achieved, and how we should understand the next stage in the debate.

Aron, former United States Commissioner to the IWC, argues that the key issue is "whether mammals are managed to achieve a goal built around nonconsumptive values which may be primarily moral or ethical, or if they are managed for purposes of extractive conservation" (1988: 99). He assumes that whaling governments are now capable of and amenable to the conservation of whale stocks, so long as they are not coerced by American domestic policy (i.e. the Pelley Amendment and the Packwood-Magnuson Act). Whereas Americans democratically chose to protect whales stocks, he notes the

difficulty involved in assessing the American public's understanding of the issues involved. The problem, then, as he sees it, is to communicate to the public that the whale stocks are now capable of being exploited rationally, and to counter the campaigns of opponents to whaling who claim that whales are still endangered. Once Americans know the "facts" involved, they will be capable of making a "rational" choice as to which policies their government should pursue.

Gulland emphasizes the need to balance the interests of "whales and whalers." The net effect of the moratorium, he argues, was to convince whaling states that science had little to do with decision-making inside the IWC. The blanket moratorium, like the early use of the Blue Whale Unit, was not based on scientific advice, nor was it sanctioned by the Scientific Committee. The moratorium was thus political, and therefore not justifiable in the eyes of the whalers. The issue, according to Gulland, is to distinguish emotional or moral arguments against whaling from scientifically-based arguments, which will then be amenable to rational decision-making:

so long as most catches were continuing to deplete the stocks concerned, the difference between protection and rational management was unimportant. All those in favour of "conservation" could press for lower catches without worrying about what they and others mean by conservation. If, as is probable, the comprehensive assessment called for at the time of the moratorium

shows that some stocks can sustain catches on a commercially attractive scale, and some country expresses a wish to take those catches, then this issue must be faced.... The trial now may be between those who are prepared to exercise restraint but wish to catch whales within that constraint and those who insist that nothing should be taken (1988: 47).

Cherfas, while agreeing that whale stocks may be recovering, does not place much faith in the possibility of a conservation-based whaling industry. Basing his argument on a series of analyses by Colin Clark, a mathematician from the University of British Columbia, he claims that there is little economic incentive for conservation on the part of the whaling industry. In a freely operating capitalist market, he maintains, the tendency would be to maximize profit in the short run through killing as many whales as possible. Since the reproduction rate of whales is slow, "rational management" (which equals in his analysis economic maximization) would entail using up stocks quickly before investing capital elsewhere. High operating and equipment costs would mitigate against a conservation-based harvest. He concludes that

unless we start again from scratch, and construct a new whaling authority and a greatly diminished fleet, there is no hope of sustained whaling. That leaves unsustainable whaling, or no whaling. Given their past history, and their current machinations, I do not think

it is reasonable to expect the few remaining whalers to exercise any self-restraint. They are, I fear, likely to take the last whale they can. It may not be money alone that finally stops them. There may be greater concerns, like world standing and economic realities, but I think it would be foolish to assume any whales will be given up while there is still a hope that they can be taken. (1988: 227)

The Icelandic government continues to press for its policy of "rational management of the ocean ecosystem," which is to be determined through biological research. The question has not been raised in Iceland regarding the manner in which the means of production are held, and whether this has an impact on maintaining conservationist strategies. An upcoming conference on common property resource use at the University of Manitoba features three sessions dealing with common property and whale management. As these sessions are organised by Milton Freeman of the University of Alberta, Sidney Holt has already suggested that the conference is another move by the whaling industry to begin hunting again.

Defending the nation

As the whaling issue in Iceland is played out in public discourse, a broad distinction can be drawn between two conceptualizations of nature which have become structured in opposition to each other. On the one hand, an international environmentalist discourse presumes a single category called

"the environment" which exists in an undifferentiated space, transcending national boundaries. On the other hand, in Icelandic nationalist discourse the environment is very much territorially contained, and the concern is with protecting Icelandic nature from what are typically perceived as foreign sources of damage.

Outside of the nexus of people surrounding the whaling debate--meaning environmentalist leaders, members of the International Whaling Commission, and the whaling industry--"environmentalism" operates in much the same manner that "nationalism" operates, in Iceland and elsewhere. In Chapter Two I stated that "nationalism is a context for symbolically-held knowledge...[that] serves as a vehicle for communicating (or obscuring) more complex messages regarding social, political, or economic issues." In much the same manner that citizens accept as true certain statements by national leaders because they fit with previously-held knowledge, so too does the success of environmentalism rely on the authority of those who speak in its name to transmit "truth" about ecological damage.

The latter's authority is in part based on a perceived separation of environmental organisations from industry and government. Fully understanding the details of ecological damage requires expertise in several discourses, primarily of the natural sciences, knowledge of which most people do not possess. Thus, when it comes to accepting the statements of environmentalists, their apparent lack of

vested interests makes them appear "value-free" and thus more capable of addressing a cause--that of protecting nature--with which anyone would be hard-pressed to disagree.

Interpreting scientific results by means of its sources is not necessarily an irrational act, since 20th-century history is replete with examples of science being made subservient to other interests. For this reason, when controversial issues are at stake, the conclusions of scientists employed by industry or government are often interpreted by the lay public as expressing the interests of their employers. This symbolic interpretation wherein the categorical source of knowledge stands for a myriad of assumptions about how the world works, eliminates or reduces the need to address the ambiguities, contingencies, and shortcomings of scientifically-obtained knowledge.

The consequence of any knowledge being held in this manner is that it remains inaccessible to refutation. That is to say, it cannot be proven right or wrong because it is not held in propositional form. Symbolically-held knowledge, however, is not a property of environmentalist discourse, but rather is a means by which any discourse can be understood under certain conditions.

As Carpenter points out,
the connection between symbol and thing comes from the fact that the symbol--the word or picture--helps give the "thing" its identity, clarity, definition. It helps convert given reality into experienced reality,

and is therefore an indispensable part of all experience. (1973: 17)

The manner in which the nation is understood is subject to similar scrutiny. Discussion in previous chapters has indicated the discursive means by which the idea of "the nation" is given salience in everyday life. Ideas of independence, purity, and work identity are descriptions Icelanders use to situate knowledge of themselves in the context of the on-going experience of their lives.

In the description given earlier of Greenpeace's "cognitive praxis," it was suggested that the politically-liberal underpinnings of its philosophy assume that environmental space is and should be treated as unbounded and global.⁹ The contradiction which Greenpeace must confront in its practice, then, is the necessity of operating through the structures of the territorially-premised nation-state while at the same time fostering a global strategy. The tension between the various national chapters of the organisation and its coordinating international office is an indication of this more generalized problem. The same situation, of course, exists for any attempt to direct collaboration at an international level. Victories can only be achieved territory by territory.

Greenpeace is not alone in treating the environment in this undifferentiated manner. The "act locally, think globally" philosophy pervades the contemporary environmental

movement. The success of their campaigns relies on their ability to tap into (and at the same time help generate) a sense of outrage over the materialism of capitalism and the destruction wrought by industrialism.

Nationalist sentiment had already been aroused prior to the publication in autumn 1988 of a defence of the Icelandic nation by President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.¹⁰ The President of Iceland is not permitted to make political statements, and to do so is to invite strong criticism from politicians and the public. During the boycott, however, the President took a stand in "defence of the nation." It speaks of the mood in Iceland that her stance was not, with few exceptions, criticized as political. She was voicing ideas which were already circulating in everyday practice, but her advocacy of the "rational usage of ocean resources" lent greater credence to the government's stand through the authority of her office.

The text of her article plays on the rational, sensible use of ocean resources as characteristic of Icelandic behaviour, and juxtaposes it to the cruel and misinformed nature of the personal attack on all Icelanders:

For an Icelander, it is peculiarly distressing to see and hear in the world's media our integrity and honour being constantly impugned over the highly charged and sensitive issue of whale conservation. We are called liars, tricksters and butchers. We are accused of wilfully flouting some "international law" by

continuing to catch a small and strictly controlled number of whales each year for scientific purposes-- apparently because we then utilize the whale carcasses for economic purposes rather than leaving them to rot on the beach. What makes this sustained and emotive assault so galling is that Icelanders, of all people, are among the most careful and conservation-minded people in the world. We of all people have cause to realise how fragile is the ecosystem which is our habitat. We of all people have led the way in protecting and conserving the natural resources by land and sea by which, and on which and through which, we survive.

She continues to criticize the Whaling Commission for failing to conduct whale management from a conservationist, rather than protectionist, philosophy. In conclusion, she points out the potential of future food shortages, and the necessity to maintain a sensible, i.e. consumptive, attitude to all the ocean's resources. Users of resources, she argues, are the best managers, since they have an economic interest in ensuring their sustainable use.

The survival of the nation is ensured, then, by the preservation of territorial integrity and proper property relations regarding exploitable resources. Defending the state, and defending economic interests, is no longer the domain of government and business: the nation must be mobilized to protect its continued existence.

This "drawing tight" of the territorial boundary has created a sense of solidarity amongst the majority--about 75% of the adult population--of Icelanders. They increasingly identify themselves not so much with the whale alone, as with "the whale as part of the ecosystem"--i.e. part of the fisheries. The dominant argument has become, Icelanders have the right to define what they can and cannot hunt in their territorial waters. This identification of the nation of Icelanders with the practice of whaling creates the possibility for Icelandic anti-whalers to be labelled traitors, as indeed several were. Thus, the whaling issue, building on the experience of the Cod Wars, created a boundary across which they defined their sense of identity in the world.

Anti-whaling voices

Virtually all Icelandic opponents to whaling with whom I talked felt the weight of public hostility for holding the views that they did. In 1979, protests by Icelanders were greeted with good humour, and given adequate and sympathetic media coverage (attitudes to Greenpeace were not nearly so benign). As late as 1987, protesters did not experience the same degree of animosity as they reported during the course of the boycott. Public protests were out of the question, and some individuals reported harassment, or were publicly labelled traitors. One of the participants in the televised debate following Magnús' film was publicly criticised for

his behaviour and statements. He received several harassing phone calls, even had his life threatened. Another, highly visible, anti-whaler was deliberately struck by a car, the driver's second attempt to run him down.

Admittedly, these are the more dramatic events, but pressures have been exerted in other ways, pressures that in effect are capable of directing the discourse. For example, a highly-placed citizen, upon making a public statement critical of the continuance of whaling, received a phone call from the Minister of Fisheries "expressing his unhappiness" with such statements. Then, in the words of this man, the Minister "sent his representative"--the head whaling scientist--to discuss the issue with him, to persuade him that his fears were unfounded. The man's criticisms had not been directed so much at the scientific programme itself, but at the danger of damage to Iceland's economy and international reputation which could result from continued whaling. In this case, the individual involved was not dissuaded from his views, nor did he regard these incidents as more than differences of opinion. He was more critical of the hostile attitude of a reporter sent from the state radio station to interview him.

In other cases, pressure was exerted by public opinion. The Icelandic lawyer who represented Greenpeace in its bid to block the broadcast of Survival in the North felt it necessary to hide his face in front of press photographers, and to state that he was representing Greenpeace only in

this one instance. He received criticism for taking the case, both from colleagues and friends. In other cases, some individuals have reported difficulties getting jobs, and suspect (but are unable to prove) a link to their stand on whaling.

The shift to a nationalist interpretation of the whaling issue, and a consequent shutting down of open debate was significantly influenced by the visits of Greenpeace, the actions of Sea Shepherd, and the boycott against Icelandic seafood products. Further, when Ronald Reagan threatened Iceland with a boycott, Icelandic anti-whalers felt themselves silenced by their unwillingness to appear as supporters of either Reagan or the Americans in general.

The editor of Morgunblaðið declared that it was foreigners who made Iceland "a whaling nation." Whaling had been brought to Iceland by the Norwegians, and now it was the Japanese who led Iceland. The foreign protesters, too, had a role in making Iceland a "nation of whalers," whereas before that whaling had been an obscure and peripheral aspect of the economy.

The Icelandic media, however, must also be recognized as playing a large role in framing the boundaries of the debate. For the most part, they did not adequately investigate the differing constructions of the international debate, but rather accepted as authoritative the accounts given by individuals from within the Ministry of Fisheries or Marine Research Institute. Further, they selected as

spokesman for the anti-whaling side within Iceland someone who fitted a preconceived image of eccentric vegetarians who oppose killing in any form, thereby reducing the issue to a matter of personal attributes. By characterising Icelandic anti-whalers as extremists, the media reduced the possibility of accurate representation of all points of view. Some opponents to whaling who spoke out against the research programme prior to 1988, said that reporters would phrase their questions in an accusatory manner, implying guilt on the interviewee's part, and seemed less interested in gathering information than in extracting statements fitting with their preconceived notions.

Conclusion

Drawing boundaries and refusing to compromise characterize not only the nationalist reaction in Iceland, they are also relevant to understanding the "cognitive praxis" of opponents to whaling. Environmentalists, as defenders of a single concern, draw their strength from refusal to compromise. It is a strategy for actors with little power, a lesson which Iceland has learned well in international politics.

When the ground on which knowledge rests is challenged, as it inevitably is in the modern world, there is a compelling desire to hold all the more rigidly to that which is known and trusted. Knowledge claims accumulate faster than society has the means to evaluate them, creating an

atmosphere charged with conflict. As Nietzsche said, "our knowledge will take its revenge on us, just as ignorance exacted its revenge during the Middle Ages." The whaling issue likely presages many such complex confrontations between incommensurable forces, which seek to establish a fundamental truth in a world less capable of containing them.

The idea of threat is intrinsic to modernity, and is built within the very centre of nationalism. The cultural boundary which the nation is duty-bound to protect is one that does not exist but must constantly be constructed. Nationalism seeks to create a centre in a world without a centre, in a time in the modern world when the act of structuring centres is becoming increasingly visible and contested.

ENDNOTES

1. "Hf." (hlutafélag) indicates an incorporated or limited company, and is equivalent to the English "inc." or "ltd."
2. At the 1989 meeting of the Scientific Committee, about 70 scientists and observers were in attendance.
3. Pirate whaling was not new in the 1970s. Aristotle Onassis built his fortune in this way between 1950 and 1955 causing untold damage to whale stocks.
4. Quoted in *Time*, 21 August 1989, p. 44.
5. Alþingi ályktar að samþykkt Alþjóðahvalveiðiráðsins um takmörkun hvalveiða, sem kunngerð var með bréfi til

rikisstjórnarinnar dags. 2. sept. 1982, verði ekki mótmælt af Íslands hálfu. 2 February 1983: "Alþingi determines that the International Whaling Commission resolution regarding the whaling moratorium, as announced in a letter to the government on 2 September 1982, will not be opposed on Iceland's behalf."

6. Then Fisheries Minister Tom Siddon, recently more famous for his mishandling of the Oka crisis outside of Montréal, was quoted as saying "I didn't know [that the] conference was for whalers" (Montréal Gazette, 25 January 1988). It seems that Siddon failed to understand the purpose of the meeting, and had hoped instead that there would be "a free exchange of ideas among countries that share problems in marketing fish products, marine mammal management and other areas." He said that Canada's presence was not intended to "lend credibility to any move by whaling countries to undermine the commission."

7. Guðmundsson did have permission of sorts to use clips from Greenpeace's documentaries. It is Greenpeace policy to allow use of its materials so long as that use is balanced and gives fair representation of the organisation's philosophy. Greenpeace did not have foreknowledge of the use to which their footage would be put, and they accused Guðmundsson and his production partner of misrepresenting their intentions. An attempt by a British Greenpeace volunteer to view the film at a press screening prior to the

national broadcast failed, and the organisation demanded the right to view the film before its public showing.

8. Verbatim record, IWC 39, 1987, pp. 19-21.

9. Given the argument put forth by Giddens (1985) and discussed in Chapter Three regarding the link between the escalation of modern warfare and the rise of the territorially-bounded nation-state, it would be interesting to speculate on the connection between a globalized, undifferentiated space and Greenpeace's anti-nuclear and disarmament campaigns.

10. In Naturoopa, the journal for the Council of Europe's Documentation and Information Centre for the Environment and Nature.

7/ CONCLUSION

This dissertation has analyzed the nationalist reaction of Icelanders to the international campaign against whaling, within that nation's social and historical context. It has argued that the perspective from which the whaling issue is understood fundamentally shapes the way in which truth claims are evaluated. The manner in which the question of whaling came to be understood by most Icelanders was formed by the institutional structures through which knowledge was disseminated, the protest activities directed against the nation, and the fit with previously-held knowledge about the world which views threats as coming from the outside. The international "Save the Whale" campaign contradicted the basic assumptions of appropriate relations to the world--knowledge carried in discourses about property, territory, and nature--and aroused nationalist sentiment in order to cope with this apparent threat.

The campaigns against whaling have failed to persuade Icelanders to forgo the killing of whales. Whether or not they are justified in this decision is not a concern of this text. More revealing, I would argue, are the reasons for this failure which have nothing to do with questions of right or wrong. The globalized, unbounded image of nature implicit in the understanding of environmentalists failed to displace the other discourses which define discontinuous realms of experience in more immediate and everyday manners.

The fact that the anti-whaling movement originated abroad was also significant in its demise. I am not arguing that all foreign ideas are rejected: obviously this is not the case. But given the strong emphasis on independence and the importance of "Icelanders doing it themselves," the identity of the carrier of a particular discourse can be considered significant. When some Icelanders attempted to speak out against whaling, they were accused of being dupes for international "animal lovers."

The concern with relations to the outside world is not surprising in Iceland. Reflected in daily life is an ongoing negotiation with the impact of foreign ideas, media, consumer goods, and tourists. Entry into the world economic system, unmediated by a colonial ruler, came comparatively quickly to Iceland, and has given them little time to agree upon the appropriate adjustments. Suddenly they must cope with being a primarily urban nation-state with a sensitive and volatile economy. It is precisely the vast impact of the outside world, wherein virtually all changes have been brought about by foreign developments, that makes Icelanders react strongly to any outside interference in their affairs. The pro-whaling stance reflects this, made more intense by the actions of protectionists toward the symbolically-charged fisheries. Icelandic identity has relied on creating not just a boundary, but also a barrier to the outside world which is then selectively raised.

I have argued that the discourses of territory, property, and nature have been fundamental to the formation of the Icelandic nation-state. Through them, Icelanders understand who they are in relation to each other, and to the non-human world. They have learned to place themselves in relation to other nation-states, within a system of difference, and to define their "uniqueness" in terms of an essential character constructed by a harsh but beautiful nature, a poetic and pure language, a heroic medieval literature, and a peculiar history fraught with struggle.

Individuals come to define themselves through the nation, by accepting and internalizing as natural the inherent contradiction of individuated being and the collectivity of action. This is possible, I have argued, because knowledge of the nation is carried in discourse, and as such is freely capable of combining with other discourses which inform everyday life. Once created and legitimated, the nation took on a life of its own, and was capable of freely combining with other discourses, discourses of history and self, of politics, science, and economy. The moment when nationalism could be experienced was precisely the moment when it could be spoken of--that is, the moment when there was a way of speaking that recognized the idea of nation.

Nationalism is a means for organizing knowledge about the world. But in order to fully realize the validity of this statement, the notion of knowledge as accurate

representation needs to be abandoned. There are no permanent constraints to knowledge; rather, justification is a social phenomenon, and knowledge is what we are justified in believing. The task of anthropology is to upend our sense of certainty, by relativizing not cultures, but discourses, by placing "the truth" within history and not outside of it.

In this dissertation I have attempted to adopt a critical stance which takes into consideration questions of situation, events and the position of power. Ultimately, the question of whaling will be settled, not by the discovery of truth, but by its creation, when all other voices have been silenced. This is the truth of history:

It's a commonplace that history is written by the powerful; it's more to the point to say that power writes history. Events that do not change into power or that take place outside of the normal circuits in which power is exchanged, outside of the institutional distribution and control of social goods--such events, in certain ways, do not make history at all. They are resistant to history, because history does not know how to account for them; and history resists them, because it can get away with it. Such events are precisely what Walter Benjamin was talking about when he spoke of the articulation of real history as the attempt to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger." But because such moments do not turn into

history, they lose their shape, and turn into stupid self-parodies, legends, nonsense--old stories, told by cranks.¹

ENDNOTES

1. From a speech by Greil Marcus, "Myth and Misquotation", reproduced in Harper's Magazine, December 1988 pp. 21-24.

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