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I, We—and Them: Rhetorical Maneuvering Between National and Professional Positions in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Danish journalists' use of "I" as it casually or consciously shifts to "we" in coverage of abortion rights in the Faroe Islands. This politically controversial issue is a rich site for exploring journalism which creates deliberative fora across geographical divides while touching upon precarious issues of representation, source agency, and the journalist's role as a facilitator. By rhetorically maneuvering the professional journalistic subject position and the Danish subject position, Danish reporters shift between facilitating a transnational dialogue and constituting the Kingdom of Denmark split between a Danish "we" and a Faroese "them." In parallel, the same maneuvering is conducted through uses of the second person singular "you," which constructs a difference to "us" by maneuvering the subject position of the sources. By examining how journalistic mediation can rhetorically maneuver others, this article critically addresses journalism's norms of objectivity and offers an analytical approach to address shifts between national and professional positions in journalism.

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Introduction

Reporting on other nations is an aspect of different journalistic genres, ranging from foreign reporting (Berglez 2008; Hannerz 2012; Waade 2009; Rothenberger, Löffelholz, and Weaver 2023) to travel journalism (Blanton 2002; Dundas 2009; Fürsich and Kavoori 2001; Hanusch 2009), and the way in which journalists participate in the construction of selves and others speaks to the centrality of exploring how this form of mediation constructs political and imperial relationships (Shome 2016; Spurr 1993).

In Danish media, articles and radio segments reporting on Faroese issues can either fall under "domestic" or "international" news. Although the nations of Denmark and the Faroe Islands are both part of the Kingdom of Denmark, the status of the Faroe Islands as either part of or apart from Denmark is ambivalent, and this position invites a study of how journalism mediates between different professional and national subjectivities. The undecidability and subtle shifts of the Faroe Islands, both being within and outside what is considered Danish, are the themes explored through the journalistic use of pronouns

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in maneuvering the journalist's own and the source's subject position, and how this reflects the dual function of journalism in covering and constructing the political landscape at hand.

In this article, the focus is on the central components of virtually all communication: the explicit uses of pronouns as they invite and exclude the participants in a discussion. By analyzing how journalists shift between different ways of referring to themselves in the first person and shift between the ethe of their source's multiple subjectivities, the example at hand shows how journalism employs rhetorical maneuvering in the construction of the self and of others. This aspect of rhetorical maneuvering becomes particularly evident in coverage of communities of asymmetrical power relations, such as that of the Faroe Islands and Denmark, and contributes to the political construction of imperial relationships. The overlap between journalists as mediators in political communities and the representational issues entailed in the maneuvering of self and others invites a discussion of how journalistic mediation and representation interact. By concentrating on these central elements of the speech situation, the article contributes an analytical framework for how subject positions are mediated through the journalistic use of "I" and the resulting construction of source agency. In situations of political adversity, such as the one analyzed, but also as a general element of what the use of pronouns does in reporting of various kinds, pronouns play a vital role in conveying the agency of sources.

This article is organized as follows. First, the context of the coverage is described, and the concept of rhetorical maneuvering is presented as an analytical focal point. The article then moves to a centering of journalism as a forum for public deliberation across political and geographical divides, in which the participants' shifting subject positions are understood as mediations of multiple ethe. Following a presentation of the analytical material and method, the analysis then explores how the journalists' and sources' positions are expressed in personal pronouns. Finally, it presents examples of how these are used to express awareness of the Danish journalist as an outsider mediating a Faroese situation.

National and Political Context

The Faroe Islands are a self-governing overseas territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, consisting of 18 islands and a population of approximately 54,000 inhabitants. After having been a county in the Kingdom of Denmark since 1816, the Faroe Islands acquired Home Rule in 1948, under which the Faroese government gained sovereignty over a list of political issues and increased power of political issues still under Danish jurisdiction. The Takeover Act of 2005 stipulated the limited number of political issues not possible for Faroese jurisdiction as citizenship, high courts, currency, defense, and foreign affairs.

Although historically not having been defined as a Danish colony, unlike, for instance, Greenland and the Danish West Indies (Pedersen et al. 2017), the Faroe Islands have held an exceptional position (Sølvará 2003), which invites analyses of what defines colonialism versus comparable systems of power. Within this complex and perhaps confusing asymmetrical political relationship, the coverage of abortion rights provides an excellent case to study how journalists position themselves and their sources as professional versus national subjects — a positioning in which differences and power hierarchies are implicit but performed through the discussions between Danish journalists and Faroese sources.

In 2018, the Faroese government assumed responsibility for political matters related to family, personal, and inheritance law, including abortion legislation. Although the Faroe Islands and Denmark are highly comparable societies, with similar demographics, welfare systems, and organization of political representation, the Faroe Islands can be characterized as a conservative anomaly compared to the otherwise liberal Nordic countries (Í Skorini, Albinus, and Sølvará 2022). In contrast to the Nordic paradigm of gender equality and emphasis on reproductive rights, the Faroe Islands are often depicted as a traditional society (Hayfield 2020; Gaini and Nielsen 2020) and, as is central to this article, a society in which reproductive rights are not ensured in the same manner as in Denmark.

In 1973, when Denmark introduced the liberal abortion act, in Danish termed *fri abort* (English: free abortion), the Kingdom of Denmark's government structure allowed the Faroe Islands to choose whether to implement the act as well. The Faroese government chose not to. Therefore, the 1956 amendment to the 1937 abortion act remains in effect in the Faroe Islands, which criminalizes abortion except when the life or health of the pregnant person or the fetus are in danger, if conception is caused by criminal conduct, or if the pregnant person is deemed unfit for parenthood (Løgmlaráðið 1956).

This is a paradigmatic difference in abortion legislation, which occasionally springs up in the Danish media landscape as something which Danish journalists, politicians, and audiences are unsure of how to approach. The 2018 Faroese acquisition of the power to directly legislate abortion became a political exigency which caused a notable amount of coverage, in which questions such as “What does this mean for us?” and “What can we do about this?” arose.

As emphasized in the questions, the article's focus is journalists' use of the first person: first, in singular and how this entails one aspect of the journalist's ethos; second, in plural, which employs another; and third, how the journalist addresses the different aspects of the “I” of the sources all are forms of rhetorical maneuvering (Phillips 2006). In the following section, this concept and its relation to subjectivity and subject positions will be unpacked.

Maneuvering the “I”: Between Subjectivity and Subject Positions

The journalistic “I” is a central coordinate in structuring the link between the source, audiences, and the journalists themselves, and in the case central to this article, it also bridges the professional and national selves of the persons involved. The use of “I” situates the person doing the speaking among and in contrast to their audiences and society, and in linguistic terms composes one of three deictic markers in addition to “here,” which locates the issue being discussed, and “now,” which addresses a point in time. Originally defined by Karl Bühler, the deictic constitutes the concrete speech situation, which reflects the traditional questions of journalism: who, where, and when (Bühler 1934). Allison Prash argues for the relevance of deictic analysis as a rhetorical approach, as it “does not simply identify these coordinates; it asks why they are there, what they symbolize, and how this symbolization constitutes specific audiences, geopolitical realities, ideologies, and ways of being in the world” (Prash 2016, 167). As part of the argument in this article, the uses of deictic markers, such as first-person pronouns, constitute the relationship between journalist, source, and context, but most importantly these markers reflect ways in which the journalist shifts between different positions and thus explicates the journalist's different relationships with the theme at hand. Doing so also

constitutes the ways in which journalists connect their readerships to systems of politics, creating the political landscape and national divides which audiences are part of.

Kendall Phillips has devised the term rhetorical maneuvering, which reflects the shifts or movements analyzed in this article. Phillips addresses the ways in which an “I” is “crafted through numerous and fluid citations of existing power relations,” in which the self is a constantly changing object emerging from points of identification in its external fields (Phillips 2006, 310). Informed by and acknowledging the complexity surrounding conceptualizations of authorship, subjectivity, and subject positions, Phillips asks “what kinds of procedures might be employed to turn the tensions that exist between subject-multiplicity and subject positioning into a rhetorical resource?” (Phillips 2006, 311). Or, rephrased to emphasize this article’s focus on journalistic practice, how do journalists express and perform their position as professionals and as nationals, and how does this performance inversely constitute the sources and their political context? As Phillips also underscores, the maneuvering of the self also affects whomever one is in conversation with, since the shift in one’s position shifts expectations regarding their response. This article expands upon Phillips’ argument by adding a dimension to analyzing maneuvers of the self by asking how the journalistic “I” operates in maneuvering the other.

Central to this approach to analyzing expressions of the self and the other is the post-structural notion of a self as performed, not inherent. Phillips specifies the rhetorical aspect of this approach in contrast to, for instance, Judith Butler’s emphasis on performance, which relates to what Phillips terms “the interiority of the moving subject” (Phillips 2006, 318). Phillips defines rhetorical maneuvering as “the movement of subjectivity as a rhetorical resource through which the agency provided by a subject position is turned against that position” (Phillips 2006, 318), a fundamental destabilization of the subject, whereby the ascribed agency is put into play and recreates the speech situation to allow other displays of subjectivity by the speakers’ enactment of different aspects of their identity. But most important, as distinct from Butler’s project, is the emphasis on subject positions rather than subjectivity, with the former being “an intelligible place within a broader formation of discourse” (Phillips 2006, 314), an identity as it is legible in textual form (Charland 1987, 139).

Subject positions will also be the focal point when analyzing constructions or maneuverings of others. The analysis of (post)colonial subjectivities has been pivotal to post-colonial studies, but the creation of subjects is a matter of contestation, which relates to what John Hartley defines as the most important textual feature of journalism: “the fact that it counts as true” (Hartley 1996, 35). Edward Said’s literature has been critiqued for not adequately defining whether colonial discourse constitutes subjects or uses images and rhetoric which distort them (Nichols 2010), but this aspect is apart from the question of how journalists mediate themselves and others. As will be elaborated in the next section, the constitutive effect of colonial discourse relates primarily to how the imperial center imagines itself, and in the upcoming analysis, it will be emphasized that the journalistic maneuverings of the self and the other are expressions of Danish self-image.

Journalism as Connecting “Us” and Our Contexts

Journalism relays the world and its events to readers in a way that positions them as part of that same world. As John Hartley has pointed out, the most important component of its

system is the creation of readers as publics, and the connection of these readerships to other systems, such as those of politics, economics, and social control (Hartley 1996, 35). Journalism connects audiences, sources, and subjects from across geographical divides, and it is relevant to examine the premise of this construction. Journalists orchestrate a conversation between themselves and relevant representatives of the given subject matter, and in doing so they offer positions for audiences to read themselves into or apart from. The relationship between journalists and sources can be formulated in antagonist terms as a power relationship, an exchange, or a negotiation (Kristensen 2004; Manning 2001) with the journalist as watchdog (Bro 2006; Broersma, Herder, and Schohaus 2013) or, less antagonistically but still reflecting a contrary relationship, as a display of courtship (Broersma, Herder, and Schohaus 2013). This reflects that the journalist and their source occupy contesting positions, as a dyad with potentially conflicting goals, but their positions can reflect several perspectives, which can either relate to a reporter and a politician's internal relationship or their mutual approach to a third party.

An ongoing focus in the study of journalism is the representation of others (Fürsich 2002; Callison and Young 2020), and although part of the upcoming analysis deals with the maneuvering of others, it is vital to analyze how constructions of the self play a part in journalism's connection of audiences to the issues covered. A central argument in the field is that the representation and construction of others mirrors an ideology of the self, and it is necessary to underscore Edward Said's point that colonial discourse "as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (Said 1978, 12). Thus, a study of how the Faroe Islands are represented is less an exploration of what the Faroe Islands are than an inquiry into how Denmark is constructed. How are Danish values and Denmark's position in the world imagined in the rhetoric about Faroese abortion rights? In the currently turbulent global reproductive landscape (Hermannsdóttir 2023), the Danish stance on abortion rights has been reinvigorated, and the Faroe Islands have become a figure against which Danish journalists can reflect a Danish sense of self. The division between identity and difference, the same and the other, is a governing structure throughout national discourses, which organizes and creates the markers of an "us" and a "them" (Anderson 2006; Leerssen 2016). In journalism, the writer can share the status of "us" with both the object of their reporting and their intended audience, and the focus is thereby on the ways in which journalists create identification with the Faroese situation or uphold or create markers of difference.

This, in turn, reflects the functions and effects of colonial rhetoric. As Helene Maree Thomas, quoting David Spurr, underscores, "[c]onstructing a 'coherent representation' out of 'incomprehensible realities' is one of the greatest challenges for journalists" (Thomas 2016, 477; Spurr 1993, 3). As David Spurr argues, the media work through displaying the world in all its disintegrating forms for popular consumption, whereby "the rhetorical economy of the media creates a demand for images of chaos in order that the principles of a governing ideology and the need for institutions of order may be affirmed" (Spurr 1993, 109). The mode of affirmation and its establishment of a hierarchical union is also based on the formulation of an "us" represented by a collective subjectivity and a "them" who threaten the institutions of order and unity (Spurr 1993, 122). The institutional threat in this article's case might at face value be read as the lack of fundamental sexual and reproductive health and rights within the Kingdom of Denmark, but upon closer inspection the threat is the ability of the Faroe Islands to be different from

Denmark and what this means for defining the Kingdom of Denmark. Similar to how the Irish conflict over abortion created an “us” and a “them” and reconstituted a “people” in journalistic coverage of the (then) strict abortion legislation in Ireland (Smyth 1998), the Faroese case sheds light on how journalistic practice both is part of and reveals the national political discourses in which the issues covered are embedded. It also evidences how Danish opinion on abortion rights reconstitutes the relationship between journalist and sources as a mutual “I”/“we” by excluding a “you”/“them.”

In this context and in other cases where journalism functions as a facilitating forum for deliberation about both personal rights and the definition of political relationships, the journalist’s responsibility and position as mediator is central. I therefore ask: How do journalists position themselves, how do they engage their own ethos and that of their sources, and how does it reflect or constitute the political conversation they participate in? This fundamentally relates to norms and ideals for what the potential of journalism can be, and in a context such as transnational discussions of public policy, journalism has the means to enable or disable deliberation between parts of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Deliberative Fora: Journalism Making Space for Public Deliberation

The role and ability of journalism to constitute deliberative fora or arenas for sources representing society has been widely acknowledged and criticized (Hall et al. 1978; Kristensen 2004). Conceptualizing the coverage of Faroese abortion rights by the Danish media as a forum for deliberation and dialogue points to how the conversational exchanges represent the political community the participants are part of and how Danish journalists make space for the voices of people with widely different positions and perspectives on the Faroese situation to meet. In this context, deliberation is understood in the Aristotelian sense as the weighing of arguments and claims about the ideal course of action (Jasinski 2001a, 160). It is a discussion amongst interlocutors about, for instance, public policy, such as abortion legislation or the norms of political engagement between the Faroe Islands and Denmark. The point of framing journalism as a forum for deliberative discourse is that it highlights whether or not the representation of sources constitutes their agency as equal participants in public deliberation, both in terms of the sources’ positions towards each other and towards audiences.

Within each article or radio program, these positions represent both national perspectives and express the professional ethos of the journalist and the sources, the media’s institutional norms, societal expectations, and the constraints journalism and deliberation function under. David Spurr, when analyzing the colonial rhetoric of journalism, points out that, “[t]he text speaks ambiguously. Is it the voice of an individual writer, the voice of institutional authority, of cultural ideology? It is all of these things, often at the same time” (Spurr 1993, 11). Although the analysis considers the individual norms of different media, focus is on the individual journalist in relation to their positioning, not a comparison between different media institutions or genres.

The journalist as mediator is always present in a text, whether as a barely visible orchestrator of sources or as an active voice explicating valorization. This presence, or self-inscription, is part of the interpretation and communication of historical actuality. This presence can also function in ways reminiscent of colonial discourse: “For the colonizer

as for the writer, it becomes a question of establishing authority through the demarcation of identity and difference” (Spurr 1993, 7). It is therefore important to note how the asymmetrical positions of journalists and sources replicate or create notions of political asymmetry in the political community they represent.

Authority can be established in several ways, but most relevant is the notion of ethos, the rhetorical representation of the speaker’s character as a means of persuasion (Cherry 1988; Jasinski 2001a; Sullivan 1993). Ethos can be understood as a text-internal resource for establishing character, the audience’s view of the rhetor’s credibility, or the general notion of establishing or losing authority as a speaker at a given time in a given place (Haskins 2004; McCroskey 2006). The ethos of an individual writer versus that of a political representative versus that of a Danish national differ even if they can all be encompassed by the same “we,” but the casual or conscious shift between “I,” “we,” and “you” changes what ethos is invoked and what subject position one is speaking from, and thus remobilizes the forum one is speaking within. According to Callison and Young (2020), navigating complex systems and selecting expertise constitute ethical decisions whereby journalists must negotiate double binds and their own situated knowledges in order to shine light on issues of justice and inequality. When Danish journalists attempt to inform their audiences about Faroese issues, their professional position is not one that is detached from the political situation they also find themselves in as nationals. Nor are the positions of their sources.

To summarize the theoretical basis described above, the use of personal pronouns is a basic and central link between the journalist and the source, their conversation, and context. A focus on these pronouns as expressive of subject positions, rather than subjectivity, allows the analysis of this maneuvering as a rhetorical resource—a means through which journalists construct their own ethos and that of their sources, and consciously or casually shift between them. Conceptualizing journalism as a forum which enables transnational deliberation also points to how easily the rhetorical maneuvering of the subject position disables this potential as well. To illustrate this, the next section elaborates on the material analyzed and method before turning to the analysis.

Material and Method

The material analyzed consists of excerpts from a sample gathered from the Danish digital media archives InfoMedia, Larm.fm, and MedieStream.¹ The original sample does not include opinion pieces from Danish authors other than journalists, such as politicians, activists, and “ordinary people” writing letters to the editor, because the analytical focal point of this article is the performance of the journalistic “I” in relation to sources and audiences, whereas the excluded material was authored by people who did not have a journalistic ethos. The sample includes material limited to the period between 2013 and 2023, as it included material from five years before and five years after the acquisition of political power to legislate abortion in 2018, a pivotal theme in the Danish coverage of Faroese abortion rights.

With the aim of exploring the concept of casual and conscious shifts of perspective, rhetorical maneuvering, and subject positioning, the analysis was conducted using an abductive approach to reasoning (Jasinski 2001b). In rhetorical studies, including those of journalistic practice, the juxtaposition of material and theory is central to developing

an understanding of concepts, be they theoretical or signifiers expressed in the discourse analyzed. As James Jasinski states, this method can be seen “as a back-and-forth tacking movement between text and the concept or concepts that are being investigated simultaneously” (Jasinski 2001, 256). References to how journalists are placed in relation to their sources and the audience, expressed through pronouns in the case of the present article, are thereby illuminative for theories on positionality as much as these theories illuminate journalistic practice.

The examples analyzed were from several genres, including radio shows, reporting, and interviews (Libak and Svejstrup 2018; Astrup 2021; Knudsen 2018; Lauridsen 2021; Ingrisich and Jeppesen 2017; Berglöv 2022). These examples express different institutional and generic norms for journalistic professionalism and were selected because they in similar or divergent ways illustrate how the journalistic “I” is maneuvered and shifts between subject positions or how journalists in parallel shift their source’s subject positions. Moreover, they were selected to exemplify the theoretical precepts and concepts which are the focus of this article. Rhetorical maneuvering as it occurs between national and professional subject positions, thereby reflecting different source and subject positions, illustrates how Danish journalism on the Faroese abortion legislation unfolds, highlighting the way in which journalistic mediations of selves also results in the mediations of others.

The analysis is organized by first focusing on how journalists position themselves and their journalistic or Danish perspectives and maneuver between an antagonist and an allied stance towards their sources. What follows is a turn to the positioning of sources, whereby sources may be interviewed as experts or politicians but are also asked to express a Faroese subjectivity, which illustrates how sources are positioned as representations versus representatives in their given context. I develop Spivak’s (1988) critique of representation by juxtaposing how these two ways of positioning subjects ascribe agency, and I argue that this form of rhetorical maneuvering may be a casual shift for Danish journalists reporting on Faroese matters. This form of rhetorical maneuvering ought rather be employed consciously, as these shifts reveal several layers of the conversation: a conversation about abortion rights but also about the imperial ideology of the Kingdom of Denmark, thus shifting between being about bodily and national autonomy.

Using “We” to Create a “Them”: Maneuvering the Self

This analysis focuses on the dual position of journalists: on the one hand, as contrary to politicians, who are invited to defend their positions, and, on the other hand, as sharing their perspective towards the Faroese other. It is within this duality that we can see how journalists shift between subject positions and reflect differing forms of ethos.

The Danish radio station Radio24syv ran four programs between 2017 and 2018 focusing on Faroese abortion rights. The first two programs were morning shows with different hosts, *Reporterne* and *24syvMorgen*. The second two programs were episodes in the series *55 minutter* hosted by journalist Tinne Hjersing Knudsen. The broadcasting station Radio24syv was created with the intention of:

[C]reating a broadly appealing and innovative news and talk radio station, which mixes news, actuality, culture and debate, with journalistic and communicative quality, new narrative

formats and program genres and with special requirements of having distinctive radio hosts, a high degree of listener engagement, satire and a broad representation of musical genres. (Kulturministeriet 2010)

Steffen Moestrup has analyzed the persona-driven journalism of Radio24syv, and the affective labor of the hosts, who perform authenticity and sincerity in an outspoken, straightforward manner (Moestrup 2019). The hosts and shows I have analyzed are more traditional in their format than those in Moestrup's material, but they represent part of the same spectrum on which the opinions and presence of the hosts are distinctive. Tinne Hjersing Knudsen's character in *55 minutter* is an example of this.

The central issue in all episodes on Radio24syv was the question of what Danish politicians can and should do about Faroese abortion rights. Knudsen's emphasis of her own view and sense of agency was augmented in *55 Minutter* (Knudsen 2018). In the first of the two episodes discussing the Faroese abortion rights situation, Knudsen foregrounded her surprise about the silence amongst Danish politicians, whom she had invited to the show, but who turned her down:

For it happens to be so that when I did this story, I was very much looking forward to calling all the female politicians in our conservative government. Free abortion and women's rights to their own bodies is a key issue for the government. (Knudsen 2018)

Knudsen elaborated on how Ellen Thrane Nørby, Minister of Health, Ulla Tørnæs, Minister of Developmental Aid, and Karen Elleman, Minister of Equality, had all mentioned women's rights and abortion care internationally as priorities, but none had accepted her invitation to participate in the show. Knudsen also mentioned that she did not find public criticism of the Faroe Islands by any of these politicians, nor had she found any political debates in the councils or groups who worked with the transfer of jurisdiction of Faroese matters. Knudsen described every effort she made to try to get any relevant politicians to comment at any time and meanwhile worked up an indignant tone and expressed her frustration at the silence and lack of response to her requests. Finally, her monologue culminated in the following:

And you know what, you three Ministers, you four Venstre women, I actually think it is hypocritical that you can make time to tour the world and say that it is your key issue to implement free abortion and support women's rights to decide over their own bodies. But when it comes to the Faroe Islands, which are in your own backyard and is a place where you have serious and concrete influence, yeah, then you do not want to say anything. I actually think it is weak. (Knudsen 2018)

Knudsen performed the indignant persona of the invested journalist, enraged by the politicians' lack of accountability, and went as far as directly calling them "weak." If the interview is to be considered a meeting between opposing interests, or a dance, a tango, or a conflict, this part of the episode expressed that opposition (Kristensen 2004). Knudsen's position is antagonistic, the fourth estate in confrontation with the silent representatives of political power, with her "I" limited to her professional role and the "you" denoting her local representatives.

The apparent surprise about the lack of critique from Danish politicians and their silence was addressed in Knudsen's questioning of a politician who was willing to comment, namely Mette Gjerskov, spokesperson for Socialdemokraterne (English: Social

Democrats), who had actively criticized other countries with restrictive abortion legislations. Knudsen changed to a softer, reparative, and more quietly surprised tone when interviewing Gjerskov:

But, Mette Gjerskov, that is what I think is so weird, well, that, how can it never have been brought up, when the Faroe Islands are so close to Denmark? We see them, we talk to them all the time, we even speak the same language, we are in the Danish Realm, and all kinds of things. Why is it that the Vatican State gets a clout round the head before the Faroe Islands do? (Knudsen 2018)

Over the course of this single utterance, the surprised “I” changed to a “we” facing a “them” and became the referent of an apparently monolingual Kingdom of Denmark, in which “we,” Faroese and Danes alike, dwell. The “we” is the politician, the journalist, the Faroese object of their discussion, and the Danish/Faroese citizen is a unified inhabitant of the kingdom. If the first quote expressed the antagonism between a journalist and political sources, this quote united them—and their national communities—in their shared perspective and interests.

Knudsen began by formulating her bafflement or surprise as personal—in the sense that it is her own opinion—before describing the context surrounding this confusion. Her shift from the first-person singular to plural changed her perspective from being her own opinion to connecting her position to that of her source and the Danish political landscape as a whole. Knudsen’s invocation of a collective represents a naïve interpretation of this union: the geographical divide is 1400 kilometers, which means that the two populations do not “see” each other, and the Faroese population speaks Faroese, which few Danish inhabitants understand. Knudsen went to some lengths to connect the Faroe Islands and Denmark and expressed an imagined sense of linguistic and political union through the first-person plural. The forum created by the radio program was no longer a venue for journalistic and political antagonism, but one which defined the Kingdom of Denmark as a community, a community in which “we” still have an obligation towards “them.”

The first-person pronoun was also used as a general reference in plural by other hosts. In *24syv Morgen*, host Anna Libak introduced the show, stating that:

In Denmark there is free abortion. But that is not the case in the Faroe Islands, with whom we otherwise share the Danish Realm. In the Faroe Islands, the old Danish abortion legislation of 1956 is still in effect, and it is so old that it is signed by king Frederik IX. That is the law, which we abolished definitively in 1973, but the old law is still in effect in the Faroe Islands. (Libak and Svejstrup 2018)

Libak’s “we” transcends time and space but is specifically limited to a Danish inhabitant, who represents the choice to liberalize abortion: a people, its politicians, and its reporters collapsed into a single pronoun.

The same is at play in the following quote from an online article in the national daily newspaper *BT*. After having never mentioned himself throughout the article, journalist Peter Astrup stepped visibly into the interview by including his own question in the text. Astrup asked, “[b]ut when we pressure Poland, shouldn’t we also put pressure on the Faroe Islands? They are more or less a part of us” (Astrup 2021).

The inclusion of journalist’s question is not uncommon and does not necessarily breach decorum in this type of article. For instance, this can be seen in an article in

which journalist Frederik Meldgaard Lauridsen from the national daily newspaper *Information* interviewed Pernille Skipper, a politician vocal about the need to support Polish women and who wanted to expand the offer to include Faroese women. The article presents a full conversation and shifts back and forth between Lauridsen's questions in italics and Skipper's answers (Lauridsen 2021). However, whereas Lauridsen never referred to a "we" or "I," Astrup chose to include one of his own questions, in which the use of the first-person plural denotes an overlap between the politician and the journalist: they are both Danish but would otherwise not share a subject position in interviews such as these. As the only question from Astrup featured in the article, it is particularly salient—even more so when it reveals the otherwise invisible journalist, who claims a shared authority with the politician he is interviewing in a reference to the Faroe Islands as "they" but as part of "us."

With a shared subject position expressed through a "we," Danish journalism on Faroese abortion rights constitutes a joint position for Danish sources—and journalists—as those who have secured bodily autonomy for themselves or their own population and those with a special obligation towards the Faroe Islands who in some ways are—and in some ways are not—a part of this "we."

Using "You" to Create an "Us": Maneuvering the Other

This Danish "we" or subject position is not only created through reflections of what constitutes the Kingdom of Denmark. As a binary contrast to this "we," journalists use second- and third-person pronouns when addressing their sources and their contexts, which in a form of mirroring of a self in the other, also illustrates implied notions of Danish identity.

Faroese sources featured in the Danish coverage include political representatives, experts, and so-called ordinary people. Sources fulfill different roles in different forms of coverage, and they enact a form of script, which emphasizes the argument arranged by the journalists (Peter and Zerback 2020, 1005). In relation to rhetorical maneuvers of the self, Phillips describes the inverse, a form of speaking out of place or "those moments when we choose to violate the proscriptive limits of our subject position and speak differently by drawing upon the resources of another subject position we have occupied" (Phillips 2006). Phillips focuses on the potential of performing subjective multiplicity in contrast to external subject positioning and ultimately points to rhetorical maneuvers as a site of dissent or resistance. Performing another aspect of what is proscribed as your identity holds potential for the agency you are ascribed, but this relates to how the maneuvering of oneself can change one's available resources.

Addressing a "you" may similarly foreground different aspects of a source's ethos, but it ultimately breaches the established reason for why someone is featured as source, and adherence or opposition to a script shifts their "I" to being reflective of another subject position than the one in which they are initially interviewed.

One of the programs from Radio24syv illustrated this clearly. In the same group of shows as mentioned earlier, the morning program *24syv Morgen* featured three Faroese sources (Ingrisch and Jeppesen 2017). Faroese politician Jacob Vestergaard was interviewed as a member of the Faroese parliament for the conservative party Fólkaflokkurin. Vestergaard was asked about his thoughts on the criticism of the Faroese law and Danish politicians' obligation to critique, and Vestergaard was in the process of elaborating his

point about the value of debating and criticizing, when he was interrupted by Ingrisich, who stated that she needed to ask him a final question: “[B]ecause I know that you are one of the Faroese people who opposes free abortion. A standpoint, which is very common in the Faroe Islands and relatively rare in Denmark. Why are you against free abortion?” (Ingrisich and Jeppesen 2017).

Vestergaard was the first politician and source asked about his personal opinion on abortion in any of Radio24syv’s programs. Some of the Danish sources mentioned their approval of free abortion legislation in passing, to make clear that they support Danish values, but they were not explicitly asked about free abortion. Ingrisich’s question explicated Vestergaard’s position as contrary to the Danish norm, and there was a shift from Vestergaard being interviewed as a Faroese politician to being “one of the Faroese people” by the journalist’s addressing him as “you.” Vestergaard’s position becomes one which illustrates a general category of people, rather than representing a specific perspective on the issue (Peter and Zerback 2020, 1005). By explicating Vestergaard’s opinion beforehand and describing it as “common in the Faroe Islands and relatively rare in Denmark,” Ingrisich shifted Vestergaard’s position as a representative source or a stand-in for the Faroe Islands to being a representation or a depiction of the Faroe Islands. Peter and Zerback’s distinction between the role of informing audiences and the role of illustrating people or events is one way of pointing to a conflation of the different meanings of representation, which can be elaborated on to emphasize the colonial implications of this type of subject positioning. This distinction also epitomizes the difference between participating as an equal interlocutor in public deliberation versus serving as an argument in someone else’s deliberation.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s argument in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is multifaceted and based on a critique of Gilles Deleuze’s claim about intellectuals’ responsibility in political struggle. Deleuze states that “there is no more representation; there is nothing but action,” but Spivak argues that this claim rests on a misunderstood and jumbled version of two forms of representation (Spivak 1988, 70). Spivak’s critique of how representation can fix the identity of those whose rights are argued for, is a way of explaining the dissonance between the roles Danish and Faroese sources are ascribed. As representatives of various institutions, bodies, and organizations, the Danish sources, particularly in Radio24syv’s coverage, are invited to participate in the programs as *Vertretung*, stand-ins for a perspective who are offered the means of arguing — of using rhetoric-as-persuasion (Spivak 1988, 72). Conversely, Faroese sources, positioned as synecdoche for Faroese society, are prompted to behave like *Darstellung*, descriptive of Faroese society in the form of rhetoric-as-trope (Spivak 1988, 72). In contrast to the rhetorical maneuvers Phillips defined, whereby maneuvering is a form of self-representation which affects others, journalists shift the status of the Faroese sources from holding a position of argument to becoming illustrative tropes. Because the Faroe Islands as a place is distant from the Danish audience, its inhabitants are naturally used as depictions of their homeland, but the difference between what role and authority journalists ascribe different sources demands scrutiny due to the consequences for the deliberative forum: the Faroese sources are offered a less agential role in the conversation and are reduced to depictions of society. The forum is not a space for Faroese and Danish sources to discuss how to approach the matter at hand; rather, some (Danish) representatives discuss the representation (Faroese) others are maneuvered to be, which reflects the Danish self-image as a contrast to the Faroese.

This shift occurred with all three Faroese sources in *24syv Morgen*. Victoria Voda was 27 years old, running for office in Copenhagen's city council, and emphasized by the journalist who interviewed her as being someone who knows "several Faroese women who have had an abortion" (Ingrisch and Jeppesen 2017). Her status as a source thereby implies a political ethos, but she mainly embodies a representation of Faroese society by being asked how abortion is navigated in the Faroe Islands, despite the fact that she is living and working in Denmark.

In the interview with Katrin Kallsberg, chief gynecologist at the hospital in Tórshavn and member of the Faroese parliament since 2015, Kallsberg's professional ethos was also exchanged for her personal opinion. Kallsberg agreed with Voda that it "would be a very unwise way of handling it," if Danish politicians enforced a liberal abortion law in the Faroe Islands, as it would be considered a provocation and in conflict with traditional conduct in the Kingdom of Denmark (Ingrisch and Jeppesen 2017). Kallsberg then wished to elaborate on what has been said about the criteria for permitting abortion and underscores that an assessment of the situation must consider the full range of circumstances, including living conditions and not only physical or mental disease but the presence or risk of physical or mental weaknesses (Ingrisch and Jeppesen 2017). This emphasized Kallsberg's role as an expert source, as the person responsible for overseeing the medical area discussed. Ingrisch did not ask Kallsberg any further questions drawing on her expert knowledge, but instead asked whether Kallsberg herself was part of the 25% of the Faroese population who are in favor of free abortion (as shown in surveys from the time). Although this question was framed to quiz Kallsberg as a representative, the question in fact addressed her personal opinion, which set her up as a statistical representation rather than a representative of the Faroe Islands.

The "you" thus shifted the interview from being an interview with a political representative or an expert to focusing on the opinion or experience of the given Faroese person in the studio. It changed the relay of information from being a qualified evaluation of the given situation to what the person "behind" the role thought, and thereby attempted to illustrate Faroese society, rather than the institutions the sources represented, whether it is the political system or the medical system. The conversation was thereby skewed from being a roundtable of different but equal interlocutors engaged in deliberation to some interlocutors falling into the background as illustrations of what the Danish journalists and sources discuss and position themselves as different from. The journalist's "I," on the other hand, became representative of a larger Danish whole. The problem at hand thus points to how the rhetorical maneuvering of others can be detrimental to public deliberations in virtually all journalistic contexts but becomes particularly relevant when covering imperial or asymmetrical political relationships such as the one between the Faroe Islands and Denmark.

Reorientation: Towards Conscious Shifts

Fundamentally, these performances of subject positions can be linked to the notion of objectivity in journalism. As Callison and Young state:

While some have increasingly acknowledged that objectivity—journalism's dominant authority or norm—is flawed, the vast majority have not gone far enough in understanding

how legitimizing a “view from nowhere” impacts power relations both internal and external to the profession. (2020, 4)

Drawing on scholarly moves to destabilize scientific objectivity, Callison and Young claim that a similar intellectual turn has not been made in journalism studies (Callison and Young 2020, 202). Their call to change reaches beyond the issues this article addresses, but a focus on deictic markers expressing the rhetorical maneuverability of positionality for journalists and sources could be one addition to the field of journalism studies.

The acknowledgement of position and uses of first-person pronouns can be used as strategic rituals performing objectivity (Tuchman 1972). One example of this is found in an article in the national daily newspaper *Politiken*, “*Her er ikke fri abort*” (English: No free abortion here), which unlike any of the other material in the full sample included a separate fact-box on what can be defined as the journalists’ method (Winsløv and Helmann, 2021). Under the header “How we did it,” the journalists, Anna Winsløv and Rasmus Helmann, described how they reached their sources, how they cross-checked their sources’ narratives, which authorities were invited to comment, and the fact that they knew their sources’ full identities (Winsløv and Helmann, 2021). The use of the first-person plural thus defines their metacommentary on how the article was created, but also featured throughout their reporting as they move across the country, meet sources, and absorb their impressions of the settings: “A sculpture of a newborn boy in bronze is one of the first things we notice when we step into the entrance hall at the hospital” (Winsløv and Helmann 2021, 121). Rather than presenting the sculpture as unavoidable or determinant for anyone’s impression of the hospital, the journalists included it as their first impression. The audience is offered their perspective, but the inclusion of the first-person plural pinpoints it as a personal impression of someone visiting for the first time—an outsider.

But the active use of first-person pronouns in a way which emphasizes positionality can also emphasize the outsider gaze in explicit ways. An example of this is also found in *Politiken*. In an article from 2022, “*Der er et opgør i gang på Færøerne*” (English: A showdown is on in the Faroe Islands), journalist Emil Bergløv wrote about Faroese youth culture and changes and revolts against conservatism, which was also represented as abortion rights activism (Bergløv 2022). The journalist set the scene at the beginning of the article:

The conditions for broad-mindedness are improving in the Faroe Islands, where a generation of youth are delivering a broadside attack on conservatism. The bars in Tórshavn are displaying their LGBT-friendliness, Pride has become a popular festival, and the young people do not leave [the Faroe Islands] to be fairly met as equals. (Bergløv 2022)

This story about emancipation, agency, and optimism was not the story they pursued, the journalist then explained. The main text began with an encounter with a musician at a bar, named Terji Krossteig, who asked Bergløv and the photographer, Marcus Emil Christensen, if they were working. Yes, they replied, having just interviewed the acclaimed Faroese artist Tróndur Patursson, known for his glass art installations and oil paintings of abstract landscapes. Krossteig responded with a sneer and pulled a face of disappointment:

Yeah, that is what you all come here for. To write about the puffins, and the magnificent nature and our most famous artist, Tróndur Patursson. With all due respect for him. But he is established,’ he says. He fiddles with his beer, a big ring with skulls on his finger, tattoos crawling out from under his shirt. ‘Why the hell is no one writing an article about the underground, about all the young artists who are here, about all of them who left earlier, who are

coming home again? Who writes that ‘fuck you’ article to all the stereotypes about the Faroese?

We could very well be those who did, we answer. (Bergløv 2022)

As the title of the article alludes to, the theme is change in the Faroe Islands, but what the journalist also documented was his internal change in perspective, through a reorientation whereby the “we” draws attention to the speaker’s position. Bergløv performs what Anna Kirstine Hermann has called the temporal tipping point: “the critical point in an evolving reporting situation that leads to a new and irreversible development” (Hermann 2016b, 501). Hermann has analyzed ethnographic journalists who “invest time with their sources in order to adopt a new perspective, i.e., undergo reorientation,” (2016b, 502) and thus adds one more term to Ulf Hannerz’ division between regimentation and representation in relation to writing (about) time (Hannerz 2012). This reorientation gives access to the journalist’s development and becomes an explicit acknowledgement of position. Compared to the journalists whom Hermann analyzes, Bergløv and Christensen have not spent the idealized year or more in the field and do not claim to have set out to enact ethnography as journalists in the sense that ethnographic journalism requires (Hermann 2016a; Pedelty 2010). But the use of the first-person pronoun separated the sources from the journalists and those within the text from their audience—and isolated the speaker from the foreign context the journalists are reporting on. The “we” was used in their conscious reflecting on and documentation of their position as journalists from Denmark.

Hermann’s focus on ethnographic journalism speaks to the ethical implications journalism and ethnography should share, and an active reflection on the shifts between forms of first-, second-, and third-person pronouns should perhaps be an aspect of journalistic practice in general and its potential constitution as a deliberative forum.

In regard to ethnographic authority, what James Clifford calls the “virtuoso orchestration by a single author of all discourse in his or her text” is a relevant understanding of the journalist’s position relating to sources and how they are maneuvered into position (Clifford 1988, 50). Ethnography is a discipline in which professionals, much like journalists, orchestrate voices, discourses, and narratives which are not their own, but for which they should be held accountable for the presentation of. Similar to ethnography, certain forms and genres of journalism feature journalists as more or less immersed in a field which they report on, using either their own responses or those of a selection of representatives (Cramer and McDevitt 2014; Wilson 2019). By comparing journalism to ethnography, both critics and practitioners can emphasize the ethical dimension of interviewing and making the foreign legible to a domestic readership with whom the author shares some common ground (Clifford 1983; Hermann 2016b), in a way which follows Callison and Young’s encouragement for journalistic practice to shift away from the “view from nowhere” (Callison and Young 2020, 212). Nevertheless, journalism still involves obligations to perform professional norms and transparency in order to present the collected knowledge as valid. Maneuvering between professional, personal, and perhaps national subjectivities is a delicate but potent tool for connecting oneself to one’s audience and their social context. Rhetorical maneuvering is a resource which can inform audiences about their context but should be used in respect to the fact that maneuvering also creates the context.

Conclusion: Creating a Deliberative Forum, Constituting a Political Community

As John Tulloch has pointed out, “[u]sing the first person in the narration of journalism is now nearly universal” (Tulloch 2014, 636). A necessary follow-up to this acknowledgement is the question of what “I” is in use. Is it the “I” of the journalistic mediator? Does it employ a professional or national ethos, and how does it reflect or constitute the political conversation it both describes and creates? The effect and potential value of shifting between a professional ethos and a more personal “I” is evident, and rhetorical maneuvering has not been the focus of this article in order to disqualify it as a resource for journalists. Rather, it serves to remind both practitioners and scholars of journalism of how journalism connects journalists, sources, and audiences to the systems which surround them and of the subtleties of constituting political relationships.

This article has argued for the analysis of how rhetorical maneuvering mediates subject positions and thus organizes the ethos and agency of journalists and sources. The deictic markers of personal pronouns show how professional and national roles shift within discrete examples of journalism and highlight how the mediating journalist draws on several subject positions of themselves and their sources. The examples shown point to how journalists use first-person pronouns in modes which differ in subtle ways: The use of first-person pronouns activates their professional ethos as the mediator or orchestrator of the conversation at hand. The first-person pronoun also reflects the journalist’s personal opinion or reflections on the case at hand. In the plural form, the first-person pronoun is used to invoke the ethos of the source and positions Danish representatives as one side sharing values which the other does not. These rhetorical maneuvers highlight the multiple subjectivities of the journalists, who can activate different aspects of their ethos and create different subject positions depending on the situation.

Conversely journalists may also maneuver their source’s subject position by activating other aspects of their ethos, invoking the sources as representations rather than representatives—as a “you” which exemplifies a contrast to “us,” the journalist and audience. This shift may be a relevant and effective rhetorical tool which emphasizes the multiple subjectivities of the source but shifts the function of the source in ways that can be problematic. These problems can productively be dealt with through the positional awareness which, for instance, practitioners of ethnography have drawn attention to. Positional awareness demands active reflection on one’s position as a facilitator of conversations and knowledge about others as well as shifting between these positions and one’s personal and professional ethos in a conscious way.

Introducing postcolonial theory, such as Spivak’s argument on representation in how journalism mediates subject positions, is one way of exploring how political communities are constituted. When dealing with an area and a topic with which one’s audience is unfamiliar, such as Faroese abortion rights, journalists must inform their audiences as well as facilitate the deliberation between the sources who have been invited to participate. And it is vital to consider the various effects of this process:

Even while delivering what is considered vital information in democratic societies, journalistic representations often fail to consider the harm they have done to peoples and environments, historical shifts in the cultures of journalism, and the colonial contexts for the practice of journalism. (Callison and Young 2020, 24)

The issue of Faroese abortion rights reflects a general aspect of sexual and reproductive rights and health in terms of being a venue for defining nationality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989), and, as in Ireland, it is “central to contemporary battles over national identity, with the implications this has for women’s citizenship” (Smyth 1998, 78). This article has shown how the question of abortion rights illuminates the ways in which the Kingdom of Denmark is envisioned by journalists and how they represent the issue to their audience. The shifts between subject positions are one way in which journalistic practice, through its mediation of subjectivity, constitutes the political community it reports on.

The ambiguous political context of the Kingdom of Denmark and the status of the Faroe Islands within it, perhaps, invites shifting performances of position. But these performances also emphasize how the coverage of others constructs the self, not only in the specific context of the Kingdom of Denmark, where Faroese abortion rights emphasize a difference to the Danish norm. The case should rather serve as an example of dynamics which can take place in all forms of journalistic coverage where the journalist represents a majority, or a familiar context shared by the audience, contrasted by the foreign or unfamiliar setting of the topic covered. Be it the unconventional ways of a local subculture, the call for change from activists who disturb the assumptions of the majority, or any representations of what might seem alien to an “us”—the constructed forum comprised by journalist, source and audience.

The journalistic space or forum is not a given or apparent structure, independent of discourse, but rather the result of rhetorical positioning, whereby journalists and sources are ascribed or exert rhetorical authority and establish agency between one another or towards audiences. This is how journalism engenders its most important component: creating and connecting readerships to other systems of power (Hartley 1996, 35). Journalists create forums in which different participants and different opinions meet, and this space mirrors the political location it represents, as it positions an audience as a public in society—as part of the “we” the journalist and sources also embody.

Note

1. The full sample has been analyzed in my PhD dissertation (Nolsøe 2023)

Author contributions

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