

# On the etymology of Far. *Grind* “school of pilot whales”

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It is generally recognised that *grind* in the above sense is a truncated form of *hvalgrind*, first attested in Danicised *Hvalsgrind* occurring in Claussøn Friis (1632), to all appearances based on the report of a Faroese informant from 1592 (Lockwood, 1995).

In her perceptive study “A note on the derivation of Faroese *grind*”, K. Sanderson (1995) demonstrates that Claussøn Friis misunderstood the element *-grind* which he defines as trellis-work, whereas in reality the meaning is mating. There are cognates in Icelandic: (Bløndal, 1920-1924) *hvalir í grindum*, “hvalir, der parrer sig”, *grindingar* f.pl. “parring” (om hundu og ræve), *vera í grindingum* “parre sig” (Magnússon, ) *grinda sig* “maka sig”. This last is comparable to Far. *grindast* “være i Rid, coire” (de cetis), recorded by Mohr, cf. Svabo (1966: 289) evidently the original sense of this verb. Sanderson concludes that Far. *grind* and related words appear to require further etymological investigation. This we now undertake.

The terms in question are known only from modern sources. Nevertheless their mutual relationship can be determined. It

is permissible to find a singular \**grind* in the Icelandic phrase *í grindum*. From this, the basis noun, doubtless of medieval age, the weak verbs Icel. *grinda sig* and Far. *grindast* will have been derived, the Icelandic verb in turn giving rise to *grindingar*.

We now have evidence for a West Norse word *grind* “mating”. It may be formally compared with Dutch and Low Germ. *grind* “gravel; coarse meal” going back to medieval times, further with notable semantic change Old High Germ. *grint* “scurf”, today *Grind*. These West Germanic nouns are referable to a primitive sense “something ground”, the matching verb surviving in Old Engl. *grindan* “grind, scrape, rub”, a strong and therefore primary verb. The meaning of West Norse *grind* “mating” can now be seen as a specialisation of an earlier sense “rubbing”. Remarkably enough, it is paralleled in English, cf. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1987) VI: 846 *grind* “(an act of) copulation”! The word is in common use, though vulgar. The first recording, however, is not earlier than 1893, so that one tends to assume that such usage in recent. On the

other hand, vulgar terms are not frequent in literature. The present meaning may then be much older, even traditional.

At any rate, it is clear that *grind* “mating” is etymologically distinct from its homonym *grind* “trellis” which cannot be associated with words quoted above, and is in fact ultimately cognate with such items as Old Engl. *grindel*, Old High Germ. *grintil*, also meaning trellis and the like, but belonging to a different root, as our etymological dictionaries confirm, see Holthausen (1934), further Falk and Torp (1903-1906), under *Grind*.

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