
The Corral and the Slaughterhouse

**Knowledge, tradition and the modernization of indigenous reindeer slaughtering practice
in the Norwegian Arctic**

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. No part of it has been submitted for any other qualification, and it does not exceed the word limits set by the Degree Committee for Earth Sciences and Geography.

Signed [Hugo Reinert]

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Summary

Title: The Corral and the Slaughterhouse

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This dissertation is a contribution to the ethnography of contemporary indigenous reindeer pastoralism in Norway: specifically, to the study of the neglected fields of reindeer killing and slaughtering practice. Its central contention is that in recent decades, the proliferation of human powers vested in the conduct of reindeer slaughter has created new conditions for practice, placing the identities of reindeer and herders at stake in new and still only dimly conceptualized ways. By exploring these, the dissertation aims to broaden existing debates concerning the so-called modernization of pastoral practice in Norway, drawing attention to some of its neglected aspects and inscribing them in a new register. Two principal strands inform the theoretical framework: one, approaches to the social study of knowledge that emphasise its practical, non-verbal and material aspects; and two, Foucauldian concepts of biopower as these may – or may not – be applicable to the human management of animal life.

Individual chapters examine, in turn: the local politics of space on the Varanger peninsula, focusing particularly on links between the spatial management and the killing of reindeer; the practices and social relations of slaughter as it is conducted at the round-up corral; the social effects of the introduction of slaughterhouses, and of the regime of which they form a part; controversies surrounding specific slaughtering techniques and instruments, particularly the curved knife; and the politics of animal welfare discourse and practices in their application to reindeer herding. Finally, using the figure of animal sacrifice as a guiding trope, the concluding chapter attempts to situate some key aspects of the modernization of reindeer slaughter in relation to the operation of broader sacrificial economies that regulate the destruction of life at aggregate or populational levels.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Let me begin with a vignette from fieldwork. It was night at the round-up corral, near the end of September, and work at the mobile slaughterhouse had finished for the day. The herd had been released out of the corral and were grazing in the surrounding pasture area. The sun had set and a chill breeze blew from the inland plateaus. I was standing at the door of the cooler-truck, holding it open while the manager and her husband searched inside for the tagged carcass of a particular calf that had been slaughtered that day. The owner of the calf had sold the carcass to a local customer down in Vadsø, and had called the managers up to request that they deliver it. Electricity for the lights had been turned off in order to save fuel for the diesel generator that chugged away underneath the trailer. The generator had to remain on through the night to keep the carcasses refrigerated at the correct temperature, in compliance with food safety regulations. The cooler-truck had been built in Germany, to EU-compliant standards as these were specified in Norwegian regulations. Dressed in appropriate hygienic gear, the two herders were sifting through the suspended carcasses in the half-dark, using only the flickering light from the display of a small Nokia mobile phone. Eventually they located the calf, and we lifted the carcass out – carefully, making sure not to touch unhygienic surfaces or cause unwarranted pollutions. Bacteriological samples were regularly taken, and a negative sample result could potentially shut down the entire operation. Finally I tucked the carcass, wrapped in plastic, into the trunk of my car and drove it down to the local Coop supermarket in Vadsø, where the customer in question worked. The customer had gone home, but a Tamil refugee worker helped me shift it into the refrigerated storage unit at the back of the building.

As I experienced it during fieldwork, reindeer herding in northern Norway was far removed from what I might have been led to imagine by the literature on more remote reindeer herding areas such as Siberia (Anderson 2000; Habeck 2003; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003; Vitebsky 2005). Here, the spaces through which reindeer roamed were neither desolate, wild nor remote, but inhabited and utilized by a wide range of actors, whose overlapping spatial practices staked claims that were often incompatible. At practically every step herders were observed, monitored and made accountable to others. With changes in recent decades the practice, traditionally associated with a life of open spaces and independence, had become increasingly enmeshed in a dense fabric of relations – relations that spanned the range from the neighbour whose rose bushes must not be trampled, to unknown EU bureaucrats debating food safety regulations behind closed doors in Brussels. To negotiate these relationships, new skills, knowledge and abilities were required. Whereas reindeer half a century ago were herded silently, with skis, bells and dogs, today they are driven using four-wheelers and snowmobiles – even in some cases with helicopters. Herd sizes have increased and the habit of travelling with the herd has declined, replaced increasingly by practices of motorized commuting to the herd. The organization of labour within herding has shifted accordingly, as the involvement of women and children in practical work has been undermined by factors such as increasingly meat-oriented production, the availability of commercial substitutes for traditional raw materials and the increasing

integration of children into the school year. Herding is becoming increasingly masculinized, dominated by men, and many women are now in alternative employment outside the industry, supporting the income of men who have become the main breadwinners. Overall, all parties agree that reindeer herding in Norway is changing rapidly: too quickly for some, not quickly enough for others and in the wrong ways for many. Many consider reindeer herding a threatened industry, and herders are faced with a choice: adapt their practices to rapidly shifting conditions, or risk losing control – over their lives, their livelihoods and their future.

Perhaps nowhere else are the effects of rapid change more evident, extensive or out and out *confusing* than in the domains of slaughter and meat production. Particularly in the last decade or two, questions of land rights, ecological sustainability and traditional knowledge in herding have received considerably more attention from anthropologists, analysts and political activists than problems of a social, cultural, economic or organizational nature in the increasingly industrialized slaughtering process, or for that matter in the reindeer meat commodity chain. Little or no ethnographic work and scholarship is in existence on these subjects, yet it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the reindeer meat commodity chain as the principal livelihood and source of profit – the flip side, so to speak, of ecological sustainability – for an increasingly professionalized body of herders whose herding production is more and more exclusively oriented towards the market rather than for subsistence: particularly today, after decades of government schemes to reduce animal numbers and herd sizes. At the time of my fieldwork, problems in the reindeer meat commodity chain and the distribution system were probably the most urgent concern facing the reindeer herding industry at the national level. They dominated the agenda for the annual conference of the NRL [*Norske Reindriftssamers Landsforbund*, the Norwegian Association of Reindeer Herders], in Røros in 2004, both in terms of debates and in terms of concerned discussions during coffee breaks. Their importance was proportionate to the radical and extremely rapid changes the field has undergone, over a short span of time, in recent decades.

A generation or two ago, reindeer were often still slaughtered informally and by hand, in the field, whether for private or commercial use, using simple manual tools. Today, the commercial slaughter of reindeer – as opposed to the private, non-commercial slaughter – takes place almost exclusively within the sanitized, controlled and densely regulated spaces of industrial slaughterhouses. Within these spaces, slaughtering is governed by extremely detailed directives and regulations: documents that can span hundreds of pages, composed in their own esoteric register. These complex bodies of rule filter down through vast but elusive structures of transnational authority and power: from global guidelines issued by the UN food safety organ, the *Codex Alimentarius*, through codification and interpretations at the EU, national and regional levels, down to the individual agency of the inspecting veterinarian who lives in the next town but refuses to work weekends. For herders, an orientation or awareness that takes into account the span of these complexities is, increasingly, becoming a necessary condition for full and effective control over herding practice itself – that is, for the exercise of important forms of political, social and economic agency. Herders intent on taking control over their own commercial production need to be aware of and respond to events and processes that

quite literally take place on the other side of the planet: from the impact of Viagra on the aphrodisiac velvet antler trade in South-East Asia (von Hippel & von Hippel 1998), to the media noise of English campaigners protesting the sale of reindeer furs outside John Lewis stores in London (PETA Europe 2003). Skills, technologies and knowledge that enable herders to engage with these global networks become essential – the ability to find grazing grounds and predict the weather now coexists with the need to pay attention to shifting international markets, and the ability to utilize effectively the emergent spaces for political agency that present themselves at the intersection between national and supranational bodies, or within the circulatory networks of the market itself. Whether these skills and abilities come hand in hand, or at each others' expense, remains to be seen.

The Norwegian state has played an important role in these processes, and its effects on the practice of reindeer herding have been clear and dramatic, both in the more remote past and in recent decades. At the same time, the ontological cohesion of this very state needs to be theoretically questioned – as others have elaborated at length, the term itself is a simplifying reification that simultaneously denotes a vast assemblage of actors, interests, practices, structures, devices and institutions, *and* conceals the inconsistent, incoherent and often self-contradictory character of this assemblage (Abrams 1988; Hansen & Stepputat 2001; Taussig 1997). By reproducing uncritically the language of 'thingness' that the State uses to talk about 'itself', social scientists participate in its reproduction through the 'official representation of the official' (Bourdieu 1994:3). Nevertheless, as I noted, the cohesive 'thing'-like qualities of the state also have undeniable ethnographic reality, particularly in the context of Scandinavian reindeer herding practice. I touch on the contradictory social reality of the state later, particularly in Chapter 2 and Chapter 7: meanwhile, for the remainder of the argument here, I will adopt the stylistic convention of capitalizing the term 'State' when it occurs – as an attempt to maintain its complex social ontology in partial suspension, somewhere between mask and reality, fact and illusion.

As a practice, reindeer herding has always presented unusual problems for the Norwegian State. It is a highly mobile practice, distributed across vast territories, with a language and cultural context distinct both from the State itself and from the institutions that have been set up to administer it. For a long time, the feasibility of direct involvement of the State in herding practice was limited by available political technologies and administrative resources. Landmark shifts in this relationship occurred in 1976, with the signing of the *Reindeer Herding Agreement* [*Reindriftsavtalen*] between the State and NRL; and in 1978, with the passing of the first *Reindeer Herding Act* [*Reindriftsloven*]. Together, these two documents specified the terms of future reindeer herding in Norway, as well as the economic, legal and administrative framework for State management of the practice. Reindeer herding was formally incorporated into the infrastructure of the Norwegian national economy as a primary agricultural industry and, like other agricultural industries in the country, became subject to the logic of centralized industrial mass production that dominated Norwegian agricultural policy and thinking in the second half of the 20th century (E. Reinert 2000, 2001).

In the years since the first Reindeer Herding Act was passed, the principal stated aim of government herding

policy has been to reduce the number of herders and reindeer on the tundra, in response to the perceived crisis of overgrazing, overpopulation and ecological degradation of the tundra environment. This aim has been pursued using a range of social and political instruments, including retraining schemes, fines or subsidy schemes linked to strict slaughtering quotas and financial support for herders seeking to leave the industry (Bergland 1998b; Joks 2000). Nevertheless, both in terms of their own objectives and by the reckoning of most observers, these governmental interventions and policies seem to have failed. Critics argue that many of the current problems of the industry – such as spiralling reindeer numbers, growing bottlenecks at the slaughtering stage and inadequate marketing and distribution mechanisms – are the direct result of backfiring and misdirected government policies (e.g. Paine 1994; Sara 2001). For many herders today, financial difficulties and widespread perceptions of mismanagement contribute to an environment of suspicion and resentment towards the State.

Rapid change has also raised the stakes involved in the definition of tradition. Faced with powerful and pervasive processes that are often made to appear intractable, even inexorable, reindeer herders are forced to articulate, selectively, which aspects of traditional practice can or should remain viable and desirable in the present, and which are to be located in the irretrievable and vanished past. This is a charged political field, ripe with accusations of inauthenticity, greed and cultural betrayal. Rapid change poses the urgent need to recognize, develop and exercise new forms and mediums for agency – such as the ability to successfully lobby for change in the regulation of techniques for meat elaboration, to permit the use of smoking or drying in the production of commercial meat, or mastering the complex requirements for a small-scale field abattoir operation, in order to enable continued access to the reindeer carcass, and through this secure a space for the traditional practices of elaboration associated with women and children (see Chapter 3).

Collectively, the changes and shifts that have occurred in Norwegian reindeer herding over the past decades, particularly since the advent of snowmobiles and mechanization in the early 1960s, are often gathered under the loose rubric of modernization. Charged as it is with linear and teleological conceptions of history, the term is ill suited to describe the current situation. Often, in herding as elsewhere, its use serves to represent contingent change as historical process. Frequently the term operates to *displace choice*, lending force and benevolent inexorability to certain processes while simultaneously defining the parameters of appropriate agency, relocating it elsewhere (Law & Mol 2002). As an analytical term it performs a false homogenization, painting a simplified picture that is never politically innocent: many aspects of so-called modernization have been going on for a long time, others have little or nothing to do with the passage of time. Change is powerful, and controlling its name, its meaning and its interpretation is one way of controlling its direction and deciding the shape of things to come. The term 'modernization', with all its normative political and moral content, is both a question and an effect of power – and, as I hope to make clear over the course of the following argument, what my informants did with modernization was nothing so much as putting it in the defendant's box.

Traditional knowledge

Historically, the knowledge, practices and institutions of reindeer herding have tended to remain invisible in the encounter with administrative systems and legal discourse: important herding institutions such as the *siida* have only recently begun to be receive formal juridical recognition and be taken seriously (Jonassen & Kalstad 2003, NOU 2001). Efforts in recent years to make visible these institutions and practices are closely associated with the ascendancy of the notion of *traditional knowledge* in Sámi politics and research. In the last few years, the documentation of such knowledge – in domains such as practical terminology, place names, folklore, taxonomies of animal traits and traditional practices – has become an increasingly important and pressing task (Borgos 1993, Helander 1996, Kalstad 1993, Karlstad & Lie 1999, Lasko 1993, Joks 2000, NOU 2000). Its urgency derives in large part from the rapidly changing face of management practice and the threat of loss and disappearance, as the current generation of elders begins to die out: elders who grew up and learned herding in the decades before mechanization and the escalation of State regulation, and who therefore possess knowledge linked to the old way of life and of inhabiting the land. This knowledge is central to herding practice, but its definition remains unclear and often contested. Potential questions of power arise in defining what constitutes such knowledge, specifying the terms and form of its codification, and controlling its dissemination and utilization. Documentation and codification transform the character of practical knowledge, and obsolescent 'museumization' is an ongoing risk (Visvanathan 2006). Further, the tension between codified, systematized knowledge and lived practice also raises questions about the *relevance* of traditional knowledge. If, as the representative of the NRL-appointed 'Research Committee on Traditional Knowledge' stated when he presented the committee's conclusions at the annual NRL conference in Røros in 2004, 'herding knowledge is organically part of a living form of life and practice', then recording and codification are secondary – and not even necessarily relevant – to ensuring its survival. Rather, such survival becomes a matter of ensuring its ongoing transmission in practice. In turn, this entails attaining a sufficient degree of control over conditions of practice, so as to ensure the continued relevance, viability and development of such traditional practices and the knowledge or skills associated with them.

The initial brief for this project – Research Council of Norway grant no. 27502 – was precisely to explore the relationship between such traditional knowledge and other forms of knowledge in herding practice (H. Reinert 2003, 2004). Of course, this poses the problem of definition. Generally speaking, in the context of Norwegian reindeer herding, traditional knowledge is understood to be embodied, non-verbal and heterogeneous, enshrined in things such as 'clothes, working tools, procedures, social organization and norms' (Bergland 1998a:34). This is in line both with the view of most herders, frequently quite intimidatingly familiar with literature on the subject, and with those approaches that have, in recent years, placed theoretical emphasis on aspects of traditional knowledge such as its tacit, embodied, unsystematic or socially contextual character, and the ways in which it may be linked for example to physical practices, skills, technologies and material objects, conversations or stories. Here I take the line that such traditional knowledge also depends on *relationships*: primarily, perhaps, relationships between herders who talk to each

other, comment, criticize, question, scold and tell stories (Nergård 2006). Oral traditions and interaction through relationships are key to the transmission and development of traditional knowledge – however defined, whatever it is. The knowledge required to be a herder is also, however, developed through relationships with the reindeer themselves. In spending time with the reindeer, herders come to know them – and know things about them – in ways that form an important part of herding knowledge. To give an example, during one conversation I had in late 2004 with a group of herders, we were discussing the weather in coming weeks. Conditions at the round-up corral were bad: the rain froze and the snow melted, leaving the ground impassable for reindeer or humans. One of the herders mentioned that 'the elders' [*de eldste* or *de gamle*] had been watching the reindeer up in the mountains, and that they said it was going to start snowing soon and it would be a hard winter. Everyone nodded. When I enquired further about this another herder, himself middle-aged, explained to me that the elders 'knew the land and the reindeer' so well that they could tell what the weather would be like, simply from observing the behaviour of the reindeer. This came from living outdoors for years on end, herding the reindeer closely, in a way that none of the present herders had done. The elders thus possessed knowledge of the reindeer, and through them of other things, that present generations had not developed, because living conditions and herding practice had changed and with them, the conditions for relationships between herders and reindeer to be formed.

Incidents of this sort persuaded me that the relationship between traditional knowledge and other forms of knowledge might be usefully considered as a question of relational knowledge of the reindeer: of knowledge expressed, developed and utilized in the context of *embodied relationships* with the living animals. This was a complex field, however: such knowledge was difficult to separate from a diverse body of values, moral norms, relational practices, emotional attachments and traditional ideas about the relationship between herders and reindeer. Of course, such a separation would itself be arbitrary, derived from my own received ideas and preconceptions about the nature of knowledge. A more important difficulty, perhaps, lay in capturing the physical, material, embodied character of this knowledgeable relationship. For herders, knowledge of reindeer was enmeshed in their ongoing, embodied life with the reindeer – even if changes in lifestyle meant that they spent less and less time with them. Consequently, such knowledge shared the opaque, elusive, non-verbal properties of practice and of embodied relationships (Schatzki, Cetina & Savigny 2001). For all that I might be able at times to elicit tidy or not so tidy verbal answers to questions, most of them likely designed to make the pesky researcher 'go away and be quiet', the material and embodied dimension of this knowledge – the shifting conditions under which kinds of familiarity and involvement were formed and on which they depended – might continue to elude me. The map is not the territory, and verbal accounts of embodied practice remain verbal accounts. There is of course a very ample literature on this particular subject in the social sciences; for myself, I found my position usefully summarized by Anne-Marie Mol, in her work on clinical practice and diagnosis. In her words:

[t]he ethnographic study of practices does not search for knowledge in subjects who have it in their minds and may talk about it. Instead, it locates knowledge primarily in activities, events, buildings,

instruments, procedures and so on' (2002:32)

That is to say, one response to the 'fetishism of words' (Miczo 2003), so often prevalent in the social study of knowledge, is a deliberate re-orientation towards describing – and capturing in theoretical accounts – the non-verbal, material and non-human elements of social reality.

As the open-ended, theoretically inclusive character of her approach indicates, Mol is influenced by the 'flat ontology' of Bruno Latour and his post-ANT brigade (Law & Hassard 1999); she also situates herself within a broad current trend of writings that share an emphasis on themes such as materiality, heterogeneity, contingency, networks, practice, hybridity, the non-human and the production of coherence (Latour 2005; Law & Hassard 1999; Law & Mol 2002; Law 2002, 2004; Miller 2005). Another writer in this vein is David Turnbull, a historian of science who deals more directly with the subject of traditional knowledge. In *Tricksters, Masons and Cartographers* (2000) he argues that all forms of knowledge, including Western science, are local, in that they are produced, circulated and utilized within 'knowledge spaces', or 'amalgam[s] of places, bodies, voices, skills, practices, technical devices, theories, social strategies and collective work' (2000:43). These spaces, which he dubs 'assemblages' – a term he borrows in modified form from Deleuze and Guattari (2002) – encompass 'a wide diversity of components: people, skills, local knowledge and equipment that are linked by social strategies and technical devices' (Turnbull 2000:20). His approach may be defined by its open-endedness – anything and anyone may be enrolled in operation of a knowledge space – but it still carries an imprint of residual holism, an emphasis on coherence that bespeaks a higher-order resistance to hybridity. Within the knowledge space, Turnbull argues, the 'heterogeneous components of a knowledge tradition' are linked, to produce 'a taken for granted air and seemingly unchallengeable naturalness' (19-20). The question is, what happens when the knowledge traditions are not so neat, the air not so taken for granted?

From what I witnessed at least, the knowledge spaces of reindeer herding and slaughtering were not characterized by any 'unchallengeable naturalness': decisions and opinions, verdicts, practices and procedure were constantly challenged, modified, developed and discarded. Veterinarians supervising the slaughter clashed with herders, who clashed with each other and clashed in turn with officers from State agencies. Herders challenged the opinions of other herders, and elders disagreed with the middle-aged who disagreed with the young. These spaces were fraught with intersection, encounter and friction: not only between people, but also between a range of forms and types of knowledge that people brought with them and presented. In short, rather than forming part of a knowledge tradition in the singular, they operated as junctures and spaces of encounter between multiple and simultaneous forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. They may have formed part of the knowledge tradition of herding, but they were also enrolled in the knowledge traditions of the State, of the biological sciences, of local non-herders – as sites of knowledge production, observation, scientific monitoring, interaction, even commercial purchase. Even within any one of these traditions, conflict, dissent and disagreement ruled the day. Representing this plurality as a singularity, coordinating it into a single knowledge tradition, would be to do its complex impurity and

contradictions an injustice. An account of the knowledge spaces of slaughtering also needs to accommodate this conflicting and unsynthesized character of the knowledge claims that were presented there.

Here I found it useful to draw on work from another canon. In *Battlefields of Knowledge* (1992), the development sociologist Norman Long takes the term 'interface' to denote a site of 'face-to-face encounter' between actors making distinct and sometimes contradicting knowledge claims. A study of such interfaces must emphasize 'the dynamic and emergent character of... struggles and interactions that take place', with an 'acute awareness of the ways in which different, possibly conflicting, forms of knowledge intersect and interact'. As he argues:

'interfaces contain within them many levels and forms of social linkage and discontinuity. Studies of interface should not therefore be restricted to observing what goes on during face-to-face encounters, since these interactions are in part affected by actors, institutional and cultural frameworks, and resources that may not actually be physically or directly present' (214).

The notion of interface thus not only draws attention to disruption, interference and coexistence; it also serves to link specific, embodied situations to wider material, social, cultural and economic factors: structures, networks, resources, discourses and actors that might be located elsewhere, or that might operate at a level of generality or abstraction that makes them intangible in the context of any particular incident.

Between them, these concepts sketch out, ground and justify – I hope – the principal coordinates of the approach to knowledge, traditional or otherwise, that I adopt in the following: it gives a certain precedence to material practices and things, and attempts to situate and relate knowledge claims both to particular practices and to the spaces – physical, social and otherwise – within which they come into contact. In line with this open-ended definition of knowledge, my argument also draws in a wide range of elements – from verbally articulated values to specific instruments of killing – that operate within the fluid boundaries of the knowledge spaces of herding and slaughter. Defining the assemblage as an interface also means that I draw on and relate the views of a wide range of actors whose knowledge of reindeer was relevant in the ambit of everyday herding practice: veterinarians, local non-herders, journalists, scientists and researchers, herders themselves. Finally, I also try to avoid systemic generalizations – on the order of traditional knowledge versus scientific knowledge – in favour of examining specific knowledges and knowledge claims and the relationship between them. Rather than attempting to define knowledge, then codify, summarize or represent its contents, I am more interested in the shifting character of the situations, institutions, material practices and claims through which traditional knowledge comes into contact with and interacts with other forms of knowledge.

Biopower and animals

The other main theoretical strand of my argument is a rather particular reading of Foucault, focused on the cluster of terms and ideas that he developed around the notion of *biopower*. In his College de France lecture

of March 17 1976, he examined the conditions for the rise of what he termed 'state control of the biological' in the 19th century (2004:240). Under the umbrella of the term biopower, he distinguished two 'technologies' or powers that sought to take control of and manage human life. The first of these, which he termed *discipline*, emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries (Foucault 1991). In his terms, this power is individualizing, in that it 'tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if need be, punished'. Its exercise 'centres on the body, produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile'. It aims to rationalize, increase productivity and maximize the efficiency of labour. The other power emerges in the second half of the 18th century. While linked to disciplinary power, it functions on an entirely different scale. Where discipline constitutes and intervenes on *individualized* bodies, this second power is 'massifying' and 'centred not upon the body but upon life'. It 'is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, *a global mass that is affected by overall processes* characteristic of birth, death, production, illness and so on'. Rather than separating bodies, this technology thus *subsumes* and *aggregates* them, dealing with them individually only indirectly as constituents of the larger entities that it takes as its primary object: populations. Foucault termed this technology, or power, *biopolitics*.

The two powers of discipline and biopolitics complement each other, overlapping and intersecting in their effects. Both are 'technologies of the body, but one is a technology in which the body is individualized as an organism endowed with capacities, while the other is a technology in which bodies are replaced by general biological processes'. Biopolitics is a technology of prevention, safeguarding and insurance, which 'aims to establish a sort of homeostasis... by achieving an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers'. In order to do this, and 'to optimize a state of life', 'security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings', mechanisms that 'control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass... [and] predict the probability of these events (by modifying it, if necessary), or at least... compensate for their effects'. Its currency is phenomena that 'become pertinent only at the mass level', events which are 'aleatory and unpredictable when taken in themselves or individually, but which, at the collective level, display constants that are easy, or at least possible, to establish'. In short, biopolitics simultaneously constituted, manipulated and attempted to resolve 'the population as a political problem' (Foucault 2004:242-249).

Subsequent writers and theorists have adopted this original terminology and applied it in a range of contexts. As I return to in subsequent chapters, sometimes this has involved modifications to Foucault's account of the meaning of and relationship between the terms – conflating biopower with biopolitics, for example. With the introduction of other related terms in the Foucauldian register, the semantic situation becomes even more complicated. Here I try to remain more or less faithful to Foucault's original formulation, which posits biopolitics and discipline as two entangled but nevertheless separate and distinct powers that operate within

the umbrella of biopower, as the superordinate power that vests itself in life itself.

The radical character of my reading arises in relation to two limitations, one minor and one more significant, in Foucault's thought, both as he formulated it – though he himself warned us of its 'fragmentary' and tentative character – and as it has been received, interpreted and applied. The first and less fundamental of these limitations is the historical specificity in his account of the emergence of biopower and biopolitics. It should not be disregarded – at least, not without inviting accusations of ethnocentrism and historical myopia – that biopolitics, as Foucault outlined it in the 1976 lecture, is not necessarily the exclusive prerogative of the modern Western State (Purdy 2006). Principles and systems for the management of human life as aggregate or populational units, with attendant knowledges, have been codified, applied and developed elsewhere, at other times. As in the case of terms such as biotechnology (Richards & Ruivenkamp 1996), overly narrow definitions here serve a political and ideological agenda of creating radical discontinuities between 'the West' and 'the rest', exaggerating the uniqueness and priority of the former. In the case of Foucault's account of the emergence of biopolitical power in the 18th and 19th centuries – '[f]or the first time in history, no doubt' (1998:42) – overly strict adherence to its historical specificity serves to inflate the uniqueness of the modern Western State, with its apparatus of knowledges and discipline, preventing potentially useful comparisons and transversal applications.

The second, more significant limitation concerns the application of terms such as biopower and biopolitics exclusively to the management of human life, at the expense of non-human life. This exclusion effectively prevents a Foucauldian optic from responding adequately to correlations and correspondences between the various technologies, discourses, devices, practices and techniques of human and animal management – both in so-called modern and non-modern societies. Today, this limitation is more hampering than ever. Not only are the parameters of human power, control and agency over the so-called natural world expanding at vertiginous rates, but the increasing prevalence of practices such as transgenic bioengineering, xenografting (Papagaroufoli 1996) and animal drug trials is producing new entanglements of animal and human lives that are encompassed within the shared coordinates of the same systems, networks and technologies of biopower. Increasingly, animal life is becoming subject to and transformed by the operation of powers that also affect human life, and in similar or analogous ways. Against this backdrop, the narrowing of life to coincide with human life expresses a potent anthropocentrism that severely limits the scope of a Foucauldian analysis: if the point of biopower is that it takes and manages humans and populations *qua* biological life, it begs the question why the management of other beings *qua* biological life should be excluded from consideration. In this I align myself firmly with those who argue that:

'[if] cows, and other non-human animals, are not clearly eligible for consideration within a discussion of biopolitics, is not due to any essential poverty in the potential scope of Foucault's term. Rather, the deficiency relates to the tradition of politics itself, at least in the West, which has, by and large, exempted the non-human animal from agency as a political being' (Wadiwel 2002).

Considered in this light, the exclusion of animal life from consideration in terms of biopower is *already* a biopowerful operation – in the sense that animals and non-human life are excluded *a priori* from political being. In reproducing this political exclusion, social theory simply re-enacts a political operation that is so fundamental as to have become almost invisible, through which non-human life is constituted as politically insignificant. Of course, if Western politics has historically been premised on the production of a political human subject through the political disqualification of non-human animals, then the extension of political being or significance to non-human animals would radically transform not only the field of politics, but its very meaning. This in turn would necessitate an intentional rethinking of terms such as 'human', 'animal' and 'life' in general, as well as their politics. Taken seriously, the implications of this extend far beyond my argument, and it is not my intention to think through them here: others have explored the demise of the traditional human(ist) subject and sketched out, in a range of registers, the possible contours of a 'post-human' politics (Gray 2002; Haraway 1991:149-181; Latour 2004). For my purposes here, it is sufficient to state that I am not attempting to develop some way of comprehensively translating the rich complexity of Foucault's thought to the study of non-human animals: this would of course be a completely spurious and futile task, reindeer do not go to confession. What I *am* doing is taking stripped-down versions of some of his key concepts, mostly divorced from their wider context within his work, and examining their possible usefulness in the ambit of animal management.

This does merit some further elaboration on the question of the animal. A decade and a half ago, when Tim Ingold asked *What is an Animal?* (1993), his question was practically as old as the West itself, as were the metaphysical presuppositions that accompanied it. For centuries, 'the animal' has been the speechless companion and mirror – negative and positive – of the human: a lynchpin whenever the Western human animal has tried to think about itself, define its own humanity or question the humanity of others. Considered in the abstract, it is a perplexing term – it groups together 'everything from cows to caterpillars, apes to anchovies, and more' (Wood 1999:16), assigning to them an essential quality of animality, then roping them in to reproduce equally stable, essentialist and homogenizing constructions such as 'mankind', 'humanity', 'Man' or 'the human'. The assumption of a more or less unbridgeable ontological gulf separating human from animal saturates the length and breadth of Western thinking – including much current writing in the social sciences. Even recent writers who explicitly set out to interrogate this category of 'the human' that finds its negative reflection in 'the animal' have sometimes remained trapped within the very terms of the distinction they seek to deconstruct. I return to this problem in more detail in Chapter 7, with particular reference to the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Some writers, both in philosophy and in social studies of animals, have made more successful attempts. To some, the 'animal question' is a political problem, a question of tolerance of difference: the animal Other represents difference beyond the human, and 'it is precisely the *difference* of animals that excludes them from the zone of respect for difference' (Aaltola 2005:2). In this sense, the stability of the category 'animal' has turned animals into the ultimate Other of the human sciences: where all other categories have been questioned, interrogated, criticized and deconstructed, 'the animal' remains. Responding to this, some writers have called for more sophisticated deconstructions, both of 'the

animal' and of the human subject that it implicates (Wolfe 2003), and even – as for example in the case of Derrida (2002) – for the abolition of the term itself. As the anthropologist John Knight argues:

[t]he point has often been made that the notion of human-animal dualism results in a subtracted view of humanity (Man = human – animal) rather than an understanding of human beings in the round. But... the criticism of dualism also requires that the notion of 'animal'... be subject to critical scrutiny. As an artefact of dualist thinking, this notion of 'animal' is, of course, open to the objection that it is *too narrow* because of the way it excludes the human species... But there is a second, less obvious objection to the notion of 'animal' deriving from human-animal dualism: that it is too broad, including all other animal species together in a generic (non-human) 'animal' category that begs the question of the differences between these species. In short, human-animal dualism is problematic not just because it obscures human-animal commonality, but also because it obscures *differences between other animals*' (Knight 2005:12).

I agree with Knight in that as a top-level term, 'the animal' performs a profound homogenization and introduces a range of unhelpful, naturalized and culture-specific assumptions about non-human life. At least in the context of an ethnographic study of human-animal relations, it seems clear that its semantic and philosophical baggage needs to be discarded. Self-evidently, to start finding out what something is to others, one begins by attempting to shed precisely those convictions on the subject that are most natural and closely held.

In line with this, calls have been made for the study of lived, embodied and physical relations of coexistence, interaction, attention, care and involvement between humans and animals, to replace the tendency to focus on human constructions, representations and symbolizations of non-human animals (Arluke & Sanders 1996; Knight 2005; Wolch & Emel 1998; Philo & Wilbert 2000). In her *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), for example, Donna Haraway argues that dogs, and by extension other animals, 'are not surrogates for theory; they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with' (5). Humans and animals are 'fleshly material-semiotic presences' (4), and 'live with each other in the flesh in ways not exhausted by our ideologies' (17): in embodied practice, they intertwine their lives in ways that blur and subjugate clear distinctions between nature and culture, producing instead discrete, local, distinctive and situated 'naturecultures' – a term she borrows from Latour (1993). In emphasizing the material and co-productive character of relations between humans and non-human animals, Haraway seeks to resist and counter precisely the kind of reductive and objectifying *readings* of animals that are often produced – and reproduced – by social scientists.

Historically, reindeer certainly qualify as a 'companion species' to humans – depending on whom you ask, even vice versa. The history of human habitation in the Eurasian sub-Arctic, and in northern Norway in particular, is inseparable from the shifting patterns of coexistence and mutual dependence between humans and reindeer. Even if they were only ever herded by a minority among the Sámi, reindeer have still left an indelible and formative imprint on the social, cultural and economic lives of the Sámi community. Here I

take it as granted, in line with Haraway, that reindeer and their human herders 'live with each other in the flesh' in ways that are opaque, complex and ultimately irreducible: subject and amenable to but never exhausted by rules, taxonomies or, for that matter, anthropological descriptions. As will become clear over the course of the following argument, while I attempt to take into account the embodied materiality of reindeer, my focus nevertheless remains on human practices and discourses – in part, because this is after all an anthropological dissertation. In part, however, this also reflects the status of the reindeer themselves, who spend most of their time out on the tundra, more or less unsupervised and outside the coordinates of human control, never mind intimacy – this in itself is a significant point of my argument. In the end, the emphasis on the materiality of both animals and human-animal relationships coincides with the approach to knowledge that I outlined above. It is also a point of methodology: whatever a reindeer was, herders and non-herders alike gave their most interesting answers to the question, not in tidy verbal statements, but day in and day out, in their everyday practice.

Broadly speaking, there are thus two main over-arching theoretical strands that combine in my argument. One is an open-ended approach to knowledge, traditional and otherwise, that emphasizes heterogeneity and the description of multiple spaces, tools, practices and claims. The other is a plea, in the form of an experiment, for the extension of certain Foucauldian concepts and categories to the analysis of the management, by humans, of non-human animals. Beyond the preliminary outline sketched out here, I have opted – keeping in mind the dictum of Andrew Pickering, that 'adequate social theory can amount, at most, to a set of sensitivities in the encounter with empirical phenomena' (2001:164) – to develop and deploy much of the theoretical apparatus for the dissertation hand in hand with the material and the argument, as these unfold over the following chapters.

Fieldwork and methods

The principal fieldwork component for the project was undertaken on the Varanger peninsula in the far east of Finnmark, the northernmost region [*fylke*] of Norway. Finnmark has long engaged the curiosity of travellers, the imagination of writers and the will of statesmen. Over the centuries, it has been a frontier and a borderland: a valuable tract of wilderness, rich in mystery and natural resources, contested between the dominant powers in the area. Its savage nature and 'uncivilized' natives were to be tamed, claimed and brought in, incorporated, under appropriate jurisdiction. For a long time, its nominal integration within the territorial limits of the emergent Norwegian nation-state was contingent and uncertain. As late as the middle of the 19th century, national administrators and State-builders still referred to Finnmark as a colony (Pedersen 1999). Consolidation of Norwegian control had to be achieved against the rivalling interests of other neighbouring national powers in the region: in their time, Russia, Sweden, Finland all staked claims in the region. Between the 18th and the 20th centuries, Norwegian consolidation was pursued, among other things, through the production of a settled and visibly Norwegian population. This involved strategies such as strengthening sedentary agriculture, preventing the sale of land to persons who did not speak Norwegian, centralising the population into urban centres and in general terms, 'Norwegianizing' the region culturally

and linguistically. The long and troubled history of this consolidation represents, in many respects, a history of internal colonialism (Eidheim 1999, Eriksen & Niemi 1981, Niemi 1997, Pedersen 1999). Today, this history has left space itself, and spatial control, profoundly politicized and contested. Debates over territorial rights, State ownership of land and regional autonomy resonate angrily with accusations of colonial injustices past and present (Chapter 2).

Within Finnmark, the Varanger area where I conducted my fieldwork was not only rich in natural resources, but also located at an economically and strategically important juncture between the territories of Russia, Norway and Finland. For centuries it has been a nexus for complex flows of people, goods and ideas: over the years a range of groups – eastern Sámi, Russian traders, Norwegian colonists and several waves of Finnish migrants – have settled and lived in the region, lending the ethnic and cultural landscape a complex patchwork quality. A recent illustrated guidebook to the area narrates it thus:

'A journey through Varanger is a journey through a multicultural landscape which is unlike any other in Norway: We'll come across traditional Finnmark fishing heritage as well as the fishing and agricultural traditions of people of Finnish or Swedish stock; we'll encounter reindeer-herding Sámi as well as the coastal and eastern Sámi, with their traditional strong links with Russian Orthodox religion; we'll come across both an ancient and a completely new Russian tradition: and in South Varanger we'll find farming colonists from the south of Norway. In recent years this melting pot of cultural history has also welcomed new groups of immigrants, such as the Tamils. And besides all this, we'll find all the "ordinary" Norwegians' (Sveen 2000:6).

As Sveen notes, the compound imprint of complex histories of contact, migration and settlement is complicated further by the recent influx of migrants, mostly asylum seekers from other, more remote parts of the world. Walking around Vadsø, the main city on the peninsula, this complexity is tangible: Tamils, east Asians and Mexicans are only the most recent and conspicuous indicator of the long-standing flows and movements that have shaped and reshaped the region. Muslim women in shawls sip lattes at the coffee bar on the ground floor of the central department store, while indigenous theatre groups perform plays by Dario Fo translated from Italian into Sámi and posters advertise regular ethnic sauna competitions held by the long-standing *kvæn* minority in the Finnish quarters of the city. At the local slaughterhouse where I worked for a while (see Chapter 4), the manager used to boast that six languages were in everyday use: Finnish, Russian, Norwegian, English, northern Sámi and Finnish Sámi. In practice, the fact that no one spoke fewer than two of these nor more than three often complicated everyday operations considerably. The ethnic, cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of coastal areas such as Varanger contrasts with the inland of Finnmark, where the cultural and linguistic situation is structured predominantly by the two poles of the Norwegian majority society and the northern Sámi community (Stordahl 1996). Coastal settlements in the region were accessible by sea, and therefore became subject to more intense cultural and linguistic efforts at Norwegianization than the inaccessible – and therefore partly sheltered – interiors. The Varanger area was the object of particularly concentrated attention in this respect. For centuries the fortress at Vardøhus, situated on a small island at the

far eastern tip of the peninsula, represented the central locus of State power in the region – in turn, this subjected the local area and populations to a more concerted cultural Norwegianization. As a side-effect, the intensive and prolonged Norwegianization of the area also facilitated my own fieldwork considerably.

Without exception, the Sámi and herders I worked with who were not monolingual Norwegian possessed native fluency at least in Norwegian and northern Sámi, and were accustomed to effortless switching between languages. Some were themselves ethnic Norwegians who had married into herder families, or Sámi who had 'lost the language', i.e. who were raised to speak Norwegian by Sámi parents (Eidheim 1971). It was therefore far easier and more efficient to conduct interviews and conversations in Norwegian, the language of shared fluency, than to attempt to conduct such interviews in northern Sámi: a language I had limited command of, and in which it would have taken me a long time to gain fluency commensurate to the task of fieldwork. Had I been conducting fieldwork in the core Sámi areas of the inland, in Karasjok and Kautokeino, such an approach would have been impossible and I would have had to set aside considerably more time for language learning prior to or during fieldwork. Undoubtedly, the language situation did structure both the course of my research and the nature of my findings: it became natural, for example, to focus less on specialized herding terminology or nomenclature and more on other aspects of herding practice. It may have limited my access to a Sámi-language 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990): conversely however, it may also be that this situation helped put some of my informants at ease, allowing them a *secret language* in which to discuss matters without my being able to follow. Given my ethnic Norwegian identity and the frequency with which my informants often initially assumed I was some kind of field operative from a government agency, sent 'to spy on them', this was undoubtedly useful. Practical disadvantages were also far and away compensated for by the advantages of shared communicative fluency. Jokes, subtle nuances and complex expressions were communicated easily and in ways that would have been difficult if one party had been a non-native speaker, thus contributing to establish rapport.

During fieldwork for this dissertation I worked principally with one group of herders associated with District 6, the primary 'grazing district' on the Varanger Peninsula (see Chapter 2). The group comprised 15 individual herding licence holders with their families. Within this group, in turn, I worked most closely with the two small groups or factions that controlled slaughtering operations within the district: respectively, a mobile slaughterhouse operation located east of Vadsø (see Chapter 3) and a small-scale industrial slaughterhouse further west, in Varangerbotn (see Chapter 4). Fieldwork on location took place in two batches, from July 2004 to March 2005, and again from August to October 2005. The first of these coincided with the reindeer slaughtering season that year. During these periods it would have been desirable to stay with a herder family, but the herders I spoke to were highly aware of the problematic history of social research on Sámi issues – for one, they were consequently quite reluctant to expose their families to the intimate gaze of a resident anthropologist over extended periods of time. The situation would probably have been different had I not been a native Norwegian speaker. As it were, my language competence entailed an uncomfortable degree of exposure on the part of the family, and insistence on my part in the face of their

reluctance would almost certainly have been interpreted according to my presumed familiarity with informal codices of hospitality and things that were 'not done'. In short, it would have been rude. In not pressing the issue I acted according to a code that was not expected of foreigners – a few years earlier an Indian anthropologist had conducted fieldwork while living with one of the herders (Hoon 2001) – but which I myself had incorporated, through socialization, and by which I was also measured (Rugkåsa & Thorsen 2003; Frøystad 2003). Not only might such behaviour on my part have jeopardized my relationships with the small group, but their discomfort would have been mirrored by my own. Instead I rented a small cabin near the Finnish border, commuted to the slaughtering sites further east and visited my informants at home or in their workplaces. A side effect of this arrangement was to broaden my exposure to other groups within the local community, beyond the group of herders I worked with most closely: for one, my landlady was close kin of herders from the neighbouring grazing district, and had strong opinions about the herding practices of my informants. The cabin was located on the grounds of a larger restaurant, hotel and conference centre that she ran, along with her own neo-traditional healing business. Through these institutions I had the opportunity to interview and develop relations with a range of other actors, both from the district and beyond: veterinarians, administrators, scientists and researchers, tour operators, film crews and other resident local non-herders.

I mentioned that social science research on the indigenous population in Norway – and in Scandinavia in general – has had a long and troubled history (Hirvonen 1996, NESH 2002). Frequently it has been conducted by Norwegian scientists, on terms dictated by the majority society, furthering the interests of pure science and/or the administrative apparatus (NESH 2002). The people I worked with were very conscious of this history, particularly as regards the (ab)use of quantitative and statistical methods, and were wary of being made into the objects of research. The first time I took out a notebook during an interview, my informant immediately froze up and started asking what I wanted the information for – effectively, the interview was brought to an end and transformed into a defensive counter-interrogation. Admittedly this was an extreme reaction, but the field and the people I worked with were nevertheless permeated by a powerful suspicion of 'formal' research techniques. Nearly from the beginning therefore, I adopted a highly informal research methodology, consisting of unstructured interviews – what lay people might call long conversations – in a range of settings, with as broad a spectrum of informants as possible: herders and non-herders, administrators, politicians, scientists, veterinarians, librarians, businessmen, traditional healers, local cooks, even the occasional Russian prostitute. I conducted participant observation at both the slaughtering sites in the district – at the round-up site I cleaved skulls, flayed legs and carried bags of entrails for dog food; at the industrial slaughterhouse I worked briefly at the tail end of the production line, moving carcasses into the refrigerated storage facilities, and spent long days sitting in the break-room drinking coffee and talking. During lulls I also drew extensively on local newspapers and, during periods when I had access to the Internet, followed on-line debates, press releases, reports, government statements and other publications relevant to the subject.

In general, the Internet and online information sources proved more significant for the research than I had anticipated. Reindeer herding in Norway is the object of an extensive knowledge industry – statistics, reports and legislation are published and made available over the Internet, where it is rapidly superseded and made obsolete. Herders often referred me to Internet information sources in response to questions about new legislation, package tracking systems, sometimes even their own migration routes. Back in 2004, my first information on the district I was to work with came from an English-language report on them, by an Indian anthropologist (Hoon 2001), that had been published on the home pages of the Varanger Herder Women Network – a website run by herder women from the district that contained their own essays and lectures, as well as discussion forums for local herders, researchers and members of the public. Beyond this, digital communication technologies were integral to the conduct and practices of my informants. They advertised products, made contacts, arranged events, conducted their own research and circulated information over the Internet: via e-mail, instant messaging systems, forums and noticeboards. If anything, while I was in the field my informants had more extensive access to the Internet than I did, and they certainly made more intensive use of it.

In other respects, the life-worlds and practices of my informants were also 'as mobile if not more so than the ethnographers trying to keep up with them' (Amit 2000:12). Their lives were complex, multiple and extended across space in ways that differed from my own mostly by exceeding it: while I sat in Polmak waiting for the slaughter to start, my key informants were off driving slaughtering-trucks through Germany, taking city breaks in Budapest or attending international conferences in Russia. Effectively, in terms of their resourcefulness, agency, education and relative affluence, I was *studying up*: the group of herders I worked with represented, in many ways, a kind of elite – socio-economically, by virtue of their large herds, but also politically and educationally – within the herding community (Hoon 2001:55). Reflecting this, their strategies and priorities were also formed within and in relation to vast and convoluted transnational fields of flows, interests and actors. Simply attempting to grasp the contour of these, never mind their complexity, took up the better part of my fieldwork. Like my informants, I had to grapple with questions such as the vagaries of international markets and segmented commodity chains, or the relationship between UN, EU and national directives on food safety. Attending to these matters entailed a kind of double focus. On the one hand, there was a limited and precisely circumscribed primary field, composed of a small group of herders in one district in the far north-east of Norway, their practices, other local actors involved directly or indirectly in their practices, and a handful of specific social spaces. On the other hand, this field was constituted in no small part by events, processes, systems and discourses that were not only remote, both in space and time, but often also extremely abstract, diffuse and general in character – both to me and to my informants. As Amit argues, '[e]ven the most intense involvement in activities located at a specific site [is] unlikely, in and of itself, to provide direct information about influential but more distant processes and agents' (2000:12). Consequently, in trying to understand these things and the effects they were having, I found myself reaching for concepts, terms and reifications of an order that the anthropologically trained disposition regards, in some sense, with justified distrust. Nevertheless, these were necessary in order to grasp the character of local

practices, relations and events that were increasingly constituted at the intersection of simultaneously nebulous and concrete things – paradoxical things such as the State or the Market, whose 'misplaced concreteness' may even be intrinsic to their social efficacy (Abrams 1988; Carrier 1997; Taussig 1997). Within these parameters, over-emphasizing the kind of small-scale, in-depth village-level engagement pioneered by anthropology would have meant succumbing to a counter-productive fetishism of the local, of embodied presence and of face-to-face interactions. In responding to the shifting character of practice and life-worlds alike, anthropological engagement becomes, itself, a game of shifting scales.

In a non-trivial sense, the complex realities confronted by the herders I worked with were part and parcel of the everyday social reality that I lived in myself, and my education in many of the issues they confronted was an education in aspects of my own life-world that may have been remote from my own experience, but which nevertheless formed part of the modernity that I, as a native Norwegian, inhabited and had inhabited for many years. At one point I noted in my fieldwork diary that whereas some anthropologists came out of fieldwork as apprentice shamans and sorcerers, I myself looked set to come out of it either as a qualified small-scale meat-business operator or an apprentice food safety inspector: both of them occupations that were, in one sense, familiar to the point of banality, yet also and at the same time, with only a minor focal adjustment, *completely exotic*. As I found myself forced to think more seriously about matters such as the transformation of animals into food or the complex reality of the State, I was in a way one step ahead of the ethnographic dictum to make 'the exotic familiar and the familiar exotic'. The utterly familiar social realities of industrialized slaughter, State regulation and the circulation of commodified meat – realities that I participated in intimately, both as consumer and citizen – were already, to me, far more strange and unfamiliar in their operation than the nominally exotic herding practices of my informants: far more strange to me, in fact, than to my herder informants, who were coping with and adapting to them in their everyday practice. Inseparably mingled, the two quantities folded in on themselves and reversed positions. This had implications for my own ethnographic poise.

Anthropological fieldwork troubles the lines between the personal and the professional – but this very troubling can itself also be mobilized as a heuristic device, for the purposes of research. During breaks from my fieldwork in Finnmark I would sometimes go home, to visit my parents in the south of the country. When I did, my mother often went to the local supermarket to purchase reindeer meat that had been produced at 'my' slaughterhouse, 2500km further north. Not only did reindeer meat flow through and make porous the various lines that demarcated 'my field' and separated it from 'home', creating connections, but the very carnivorous modernity within which reindeer meat circulated was the same modernity that I inhabited myself, and the practices, institutions, and discourses that this implicated were also mine. As consumer, I participated actively in the very systems of commercial production that were transforming the practices I studied; I myself occupied a particular, embodied position relative to, and within, the transnational matrix of discourse, networks, ideology and technologies that constitutes the modernity into which reindeer and their herders were being integrated. An ethnography of the present moment of reindeer herding thus also became,

perforce, a kind of auto-ethnography: to avoid making their effects and their strangeness invisible, I had to attempt to distance myself from institutions and practices that I took too easily for granted. Mark Hobart has argued for a notion of anthropology as 'radical metaphysical critique', and self-critique (Hobart 2000). Here I take the anthropological encounter as an opportunity for a reflexive turn of a more practical bent, using the changing situation of reindeer herding as an opening to examine and interrogate some of the systems and institutions that constitute part of the modernity into which it is being integrated, and which both I and most of my presumed readers inhabit.

Over the last century, the scientific and anthropological knowledge produced about the Norwegian Sámi population has percolated through the community and come to inform practices, self-understanding and the very forms and expressions through which Sámi identity is articulated. When I attended the annual conference of the NRL in Bodø in 2005, a Sámi entrepreneur was manning a small stall at the back of the conference hall that sold coffee mugs engraved with Sámi kinship terminology in three languages, with accompanying leaflets that explained the meaning of each term and summarized the history of Sámi kinship research. My key informants at the slaughterhouse and the mobile slaughterhouse were well versed in the history and problems of indigenous research – some of them not only attended scientific and academic seminars, but participated actively in arranging them, to establish dialogue between the herder and scientific communities. One recurrent figure in my conversations with herders about research on Sámi issues was the annoying, short-sighted, intrusive and clueless researcher, often employed by government agencies, who came in for 'a few weeks', extracted the information he or she expected and then disappeared, to write 'misguided' reports that circulated widely but were never read by the herders themselves. At one point during the 2004 slaughtering season, I was learning to flay reindeer legs at the round-up corral. One of the herders came over to me and asked me to come along. On the other side of the round-up fence another, unfamiliar anthropologist was walking around draped in cameras and expensive equipment, filming and recording interviews with the slaughterers 'left, right and centre' – the herder wanted me to find out 'what on earth she was doing'. It turned out she was a medical anthropologist, conducting a quantitative study of 'Sámi kinship and inherited disease' and out to secure some interviews. When I referred this back, the herder raised her eyebrows and smirked, then looked over at her husband. He shook his head: 'Ah well. She's one of those, then...' Clearly it was necessary to attempt to dissociate myself from this template, and I believe that within limits I succeeded: after some four months, one of my informants expressed amazement and pleasure that I was 'still there' and had not yet left, unlike 'those other researchers'.

Aspects of the anthropological method that I adopted early on – such as the emphasis on participant observation and informal conversations over structured interviews and questionnaires, and the effort to establish longer-term relations of trust with informants – were particularly suited to the task at hand, and to ameliorating the atmosphere of potential suspicion that sometimes surrounded my activities. Quite a few of my informants were university trained themselves, and openness about the nature of my research helped create a relaxed and convivial atmosphere within which they were able to engage actively and constructively

with my agendas: discussing drawbacks and blind-spots, directing me to relevant literature and pointing me to areas that they personally considered interesting or wished to draw attention to for their own reasons. Some of the discussions I had with informants influenced both my approach and my research themes quite significantly. At one point, for example, one of my key informants at the Krampen field abattoir told me how she was 'fed up and tired' of analyses that persistently essentialized ethnicity and similar terms as stable categories and failed to address questions that went beyond the simple relationship between the Norwegian majority society and the Sámi minority. As she said, 'it's always Sámi this, Sámi that'. Instead, she wanted analyses that broadened the field of Sámi research, by paying attention to issues of more general import and going beyond the simple but thoroughly over-rehearsed themes of the anthropological canon: themes such as identity, ethnicity and kinship that were long since exhausted by decades of anthropological research, publications and lectures, and now circulated in the form of coffee mug inscriptions. Instead, she wanted anthropologists and social scientists to engage with 'more relevant issues', such as the effects of State centralization, industrialization and food hygiene regulations on small-scale slaughtering enterprises. Broadly speaking I agree with her assessment of the state of Norwegian Sámi research, and in the light of her complaint I have tried to develop the argument of the dissertation in other directions, deliberately avoiding some of the more obviously traditional themes of Norwegian Sámi anthropology.

Other methodological aspects of my work also need to be discussed. Anthropological fieldwork of the type I conducted involves the researcher in a personal capacity; the personal itself becomes an instrument of research. Developed over time, relations with informants come to exceed any strictly defined situational parameters set by the interview format or the researcher-informant relationship. Social, emotional and personal attachments are formed, and over time the background and personality of the researcher determine the relations out of which a dissertation such as this is ultimately forged. At one point or another, most aspects of my own complex and ambivalent status as a southerner and native Norwegian were brought into play in social relations and situations that in turn produced empirical material. For example, I was raised in a rural island setting in Southern Norway, but both my parents were from Oslo and I grew up speaking a relatively strict Oslo accent. In Finnmark, my accent immediately pegged me as a southerner through and through; at the same time however, I could establish common ground by drawing on a shared register of hostility towards 'rich people from Oslo', the archetypal negative stereotype of southerners. More recently, I have spent the last ten years living permanently abroad: defined as conversant cultural competence and familiarity with the elements of everyday culture, my own Norwegian-ness fell significantly short of the Norwegian-ness of many asylum seekers, never mind that of my herder informants. Despite my linguistic fluency, jokes and references to current celebrities or politicians generally passed right over my head, frequently giving me occasion to admit my own ignorance.

Perhaps most significantly, my father Erik Reinert has been involved in matters of herding policy at the national level for several years, overlapping with my own fieldwork. Among other things, he represented the National Association of Reindeer Herders in the 2001 negotiations over the Reindeer Herding Act (E. Reinert

2006). He was a prominent figure, and the herders I worked with were familiar with him and were generally in agreement with his political agenda: to diminish the powerful hold of the major slaughterhouse operators on the reindeer meat market, strengthening small-scale producers and encouraging product diversification (E. Reinert 2000, 2001, 2002). When introduced and in conversations I often found myself – voluntarily or not – trading on the symbolic capital that arose from my association with him. Often I found myself inundated with information that related to his interests but not necessarily to mine. While most of the associations brought about through the link to my father were favourable, there were also times when this link closed doors, limiting my access to certain practices, locations or actors. Among the more significant examples of this was my interview with the major slaughterhouse operator in Eastern Finnmark, who had long been a political opponent of my father: relations between the two of them were civil, but they had often sat on opposite sides of high-level negotiating tables. When I interviewed him in late 2004, he was courteous and gave me a tour of his processing plant but explained in no uncertain terms that 'after this I do not want to see you again'. As he stated, he had no guarantees that I was not 'doing Erik's bidding', and he had no control over what I would write on the basis of information he provided me with. The political situation at the time was tense. Complex policy negotiations were taking place and a competing consortium of reindeer herders had recently established itself in Kautokeino and started marketing meat, with the assistance of my father. Given this, he preferred to 'play with his cards close to his chest'. I had to accept this and re-structure my research accordingly.

Adopting an open-ended and informant-led approach has influenced not only the orientation and findings of my research, but also the content, structure and presentation of my material in the present dissertation. During fieldwork I was made privy to a range of sensitive information concerning roles, relationships and conflicts between groups and individuals, both within the district and outside it. It rapidly became clear that exposing or discussing these relations, even in the limited medium of a doctoral dissertation, would betray the confidence of my informants and might have considerable negative repercussions. Connections between the Sámi community and the Scott Polar Research Institute are strong (e.g. Eikeland 2003) and, to a determined business rival or hostile neighbour, physically accessing this dissertation would not pose great difficulties. The very distinctive characteristics of the district with regard to size, composition and herding practices made effective anonymity at that scale impossible to achieve. Instead I have actively sought to disguise the identities of directly cited individuals. For example, except where identification for whatever reason is necessary or inconsequential, the same individual may be cited several times in different contexts without the connection between the statements being made apparent – a convention that may be unfortunate in terms of 'thick description', but which I consider warranted and in line with the premises on which I engaged with my informants.

For similar reasons, I have also opted to privilege certain practices, institutions and objects over others, leaving aside any particularly detailed analysis of factions, kinship structures and rivalries – both within the district, and between districts. In general, reindeer herding in Norway is a small, dense, sensitive and socially

transparent field – everyone is more or less aware of everyone else, and interested in their affairs. Beyond this, the particular group of herders that I worked with were distinctive and well known, nationally and internationally. The small size of the group and the instant recognizability of any protagonists would likely have resulted in undue scrutiny and possible exploitation by interested parties. Even as it is, anyone moderately familiar with the district or even Norwegian reindeer herding in general will probably recognize most of the central characters involved in the dissertation. In this context, a discussion of factional politics and rivalries within the group would represent a violation of trust, potentially embarrassing and subject to misuse. This problem was clearly spelled out by several key informants early on during fieldwork and I adapted my work accordingly – particularly as this did not represent a significant break with my original research agenda (H. Reinert 2003, 2004). Additionally, of course, the social institutions of Norwegian herding have already been charted and explored in depth by highly trained *indigenous researchers*, often themselves herders with family backgrounds in the practice and years of practical experience (e.g. Kalstad 1993, 1997, 1998, 1999; Oskal 1995, 2000; Sara 2001). Profoundly versed in the practice of herding and the logic of its institutions, these researchers have been far more suited to such tasks than myself, particularly in the context of a relatively brief research project such as this.

Certain aspects of the style and form of the dissertation are also linked to these issues, and need to be explained here. For one, except for a few short quotes, I make very little use of direct quotations of speech. I acknowledge that this represents both a break with the conventions of anthropological writing and a potential problem, insofar as readers may argue that I do not give my informants sufficient *voice* within the text. As I have discussed already, however, conditions of fieldwork and my relations with informants were not such that it was appropriate to make much use of recording equipment. The overwhelming majority of my transcripts of conversations are therefore written down from memory: some immediately, some after half a day or more had elapsed. Consequently, rather than to affect a simulated precision by reconstructing conversations, I have opted to cite directly only those parts of conversation that I transcribed verbatim. A side-effect of this has been to further reinforce the relative anonymity I have been able to afford my informants: given the close conditions and small size of the community I worked in, extended quotations would have aided identification considerably, particularly in the case of those statements that were the most critical, and which therefore would have been more interesting and often more relevant to refer *in extenso*. More than once an informant turned nervously to me, after some particularly colourful statement or outburst, to confirm that I would not quote them: 'You're not going to put this in your dissertation, are you?' Beyond the immediate ethical questions of anonymity and identification, of course, lurk the theoretical and methodological debates from the late 80s about polyphonic texts and the crisis of representation (e.g. Clifford 1988). It is not clear to me that the practice of including extensive chunks of directly quoted speech necessarily addresses the issues raised by these debates – the overall structure and argument of the text within which they are selectively included remains the voice of the individual anthropologist writer, and there are other, equally effective authorial techniques by which the texture, complexity and dissonance of real social situations can be rendered as textual effects (e.g. Law 2002, 2004).

The material I present here aims primarily at capturing the factors and conditions that affect and determine the form and practice of reindeer slaughtering at a particular point in time and space, namely the time (and space) of my fieldwork. It is not intended as a comparative exercise: the argument moves within and along coordinates set by other writers, but the references are often implicit. No doubt the highly extensive herding form of my informants could have formed the basis for a range of interesting contrasts and comparisons – for example to the more intensive forms of herding and milch pastoralism practised historically in the southern Norwegian districts (Berg 2000). More generally, I could also have placed my material in conversation with the extremely rich and extensive literature on reindeer pastoralism in Finland (Ingold 1977), Sweden (Beach 1981) and Siberia (Anderson 2000; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003; Vitebsky 2005) – or, for that matter, forms of pastoralism further afield, such as in Africa (e.g. Scoones 1995), Central Asia (Humphrey & Sneath 1999) or elsewhere (Ingold 1980; Galaty & Johnson 1990). To do so, however, would have required another thesis entirely – or rather, a whole a series of them. As it is, one of my aims in the present exercise has been precisely to *re-contextualise* pastoral modernization in Norway, re-framing it within a new set of theoretical and historical coordinates. Perhaps in the future I will have the opportunity, based on further research, to develop such lines of comparison – to undertake, for example, an analysis of the relationship between historically intensive milch pastoralism elsewhere in Scandinavia, the so-called 'barnyard model' (Chapters 2 and 6) and the current proposals for 'stationary' or 'post-nomadic' pastoralism in Norway. In the meantime however, the limits of the present format – and of the empirical research that I conducted – prevent me from undertaking such an analysis here.

Even a few years from now, with the introduction of new legislation, the horizons of the situation will have been significantly re-framed – nevertheless, the current situation of reindeer herding in Norway differs so significantly from the situation described in the principal monographs (e.g. Paine 1994) that I believe the effort of describing it has merit in its own right. Simultaneously, as I mentioned, insofar as many of these factors and conditions form part of the modernity in which I myself participate, the argument also contains elements of auto-ethnography and of a more general cultural critique. As the research progressed it became increasingly clear that it was impossible to consider the modernization of reindeer slaughtering in isolation from the wider discourses, devices, conventions and animal ideologies that framed practices of production, circulation and consumption of meat in the West – elements of culture that I had been raised to take for granted, but which here appeared to me in a strange new light, denaturalized, through their effects on the practices I was studying.

In the end, the focus and content of my argument reflect my position, shared by most of my key herder informants, that the most pressing indigenous and cultural problems of the present day may not be those that flaunt their indigeneity on their sleeves, or fly conspicuously the *tricolore* of culture. It is my belief that the restructuring of slaughtering practice may be far more extensive in its ramifications and comprehensive in its effects than any policies currently taking 'indigenous culture' as their object and concern – in large part, for its entry under the banner of an intractable, benign and naturalized modernization. One of the key strands of

my argument is that the recent and not-so-recent shifts and changes in reindeer herding have resulted in an almost explosive proliferation and intensification of the powers and interests that are vested in the reindeer themselves – and more specifically, in the context of this dissertation, in the practices by which they are killed. Within living memory, the act of killing a reindeer has come to involve complex and ever denser networks – of people and machines, flows and economies, rules and legislators – that are dispersed and linked across the globe in ways that traverse scales: from local neighbours concerned about ecological degradation, to the global hierarchies of power, authority and legitimation that are vested in the food safety complex. Collier and Ong define an assemblage as the 'product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic' (2005:12). In this sense, the reindeer themselves are more than ever a *global assemblage* – connected, managed, regulated, killed, processed and distributed in ways that within living memory, two generations ago, were practically unthinkable. Maintaining the continued viability of herding demands that herders adapt to these new conditions, to the new powers vested in the animals that they find themselves herding and to the rapidly shifting fields and networks of global power and discourse within which their practice is now irreversibly situated. Constantly challenged and reconstituted at this complex, unstable and fluctuating juncture, the identity of herders and animals alike is at stake in new ways – ways that are still only dimly beginning to be conceptualized.

Chapter breakdown

Formulated in general terms, the central question I have set myself in the present dissertation is this: what exactly is happening in the field of reindeer slaughtering? What is the nature of the rapid changes that the practice of pastoral slaughtering is undergoing? What is at stake in them and, perhaps most importantly, what are their implications and probable consequences? Early in my fieldwork, one Norwegian informant who was closely involved with the politics of reindeer herding told me how, during a workshop on reindeer meat marketing, one of the major slaughterhouse operators had leaned in close and told him not to 'worry so much' about reindeer herding: after all, 'reindeer are just reindeer'. With this, he meant to say that things were not as complicated as my informant sought to present them – in the end, the reindeer were *just animals* to be slaughtered, like any other animal. This dissertation is formulated as a kind of indirect reply to his remark, and to the homogenization it performs: reindeer are in fact many things, to many people. Furthermore, as conditions for practice and engagement change and reindeer come to be known, interacted with and killed in new ways, they are also effectively becoming new 'things', 'something else' (Law 2002; Mol 2002) – the aim of my argument is to unpack, at least in part, what this 'something else' might be. More specifically formulated, the red thread of a question that unites the following chapters, and encompasses my exploration of traditional knowledge, is this: what *is* a reindeer, and to whom? And more specifically still, what is it at the moment of its death? I approach this thematic through an ethnographic exploration of the intersection, interface or encounter between reindeer slaughtering practices and a range of other practices, institutions and discourses that are loosely associated with the industrial meat system – scientific, economic, industrial and administrative. This interface is not a distinct or easily defined theoretical object – as I return to, in practice

the boundaries between traditional and modern, Sámi and Norwegian, industrial and non-industrial are constantly being drawn and redrawn, by a range of actors and for a range of reasons.

Chapter 2 gives some further background on the principal fieldwork site, the Varanger peninsula, and discusses the movements of the District 6 herd across it. It outlines some of the political issues that were vested in the spatial management of reindeer, including local conflicts, reindeer poaching and what I termed to myself the 'reindeer in the rose bushes' problem, of reindeer turning up in the wrong place. Multiple and often competing utilization produced space as an increasingly limited resource, and unless the reindeer were seen to be *properly* managed, they tended to revert in the eyes of local non-herders to a state of perceived wildness, in which they became increasingly subject to a logic of hunting. Linked to this, the reindeer also came increasingly to appear as pests, or nuisances: that is, as a problem that posited the need for solutions, often in the form of collective intervention. The inappropriate movements and behaviour of reindeer indexed an absence or breakdown of appropriate management, through which important social relations between herders and other actors were jeopardized and potentially disrupted. To repair these relations herders engaged, to a degree, in self-conscious enactments of responsible management. Particularly against the backdrop of widespread concerns with the so-called crisis of reindeer overpopulation, practices of reindeer slaughtering acquired distinctly political overtones: as a socially visible form of reducing reindeer numbers. Finally, the chapter also discusses the question of State control over the marginal spaces of the tundra, and how the limitations of this control were evidenced by the persistence of reindeer poaching practices – in a way that brought into question not only the character of State claims to territorial sovereignty, but also its claims to another form of sovereignty – namely, sovereignty over the reindeer themselves, in the strict Foucauldian sense of exercising the right to kill.

Chapter 3 describes in some detail the practices at the round-up corral, emphasizing the role and effects of the corral in coordinating human and reindeer bodies. In the first place, the corral was a technical device that facilitated herd management. Within its structure, specific animals could be separated out from the unruly herd – as discrete individual bodies that could be manipulated and intervened on. In making the herd manageable in this way, the corral also served a range of other important social functions. The herders I worked with utilised the round-up corral itself, intentionally and strategically, as a device of social engineering that enabled them to influence and control the present and future character of herding practice. Among other things, it ensured the transmission of knowledge and skills; reproduced conditions for developing familiarity with and knowledge of reindeer through physical practice; facilitated the maintenance of social relations in the face of increasing geographical dispersion and mobility; and contributed to the formation of appropriate herder subjects – men and women who possessed appropriate loyalties and attachments to the life of herding. Locating or re-locating into the corral certain practices that had been increasingly shifted out of view – particularly the work of women and children – also served long-term political purposes, making the practices in question appear more attractive and ensuring skill transmission and recruitment. This use of the corral depended in part on its privileged character, as a kind of carnivalesque

or festive space where everyday rhythms were suspended. Developing the theme of social visibility, this chapter also discusses how the round-up corral operated as a visible nexus that concentrated practice, particularly the slaughter, and made it visible to the outside world in a way that contrasted starkly with the logic of the industrial slaughter. Finally, these social functions are briefly discussed in terms of Foucauldian notions of discipline and the disciplining power.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the industrial slaughterhouse as a social space that produces a new order, or distribution, of visible and invisible elements. The closed and exclusive organization that it institutes contrasts strongly with the informal sociality of the round-up fence. With its advent, the act of killing disappears into an inaccessible elsewhere, passed into the hands of paid professionals, and the access of herders to raw materials from the carcass is limited. Effectively, the practical requirements of running a regulation-compliant slaughtering operation also centralize the means of production, excluding herders from the reindeer meat value chain. Beyond this, the seclusion of the act of killing forms part of a wider cultural system of industrial meat production: for herders, control over the meaning of meat, particularly over the killing and bloodshed that it references, has become an increasingly important aspect of adapting to the requirements of market-oriented production. In contrast with the hygienic order of the slaughterhouse, the accessible open-air killing at the corral is also open to observation by lay people – and thus to controversy.

In the light of this, Chapter 5 examines some of the interventions of non-herder groups into the practice of reindeer slaughtering, specifically in terms of the controversies that currently surround the continued use of *curved knives* in Norwegian reindeer slaughtering. These knives were originally designed and introduced in the 1920s as part of a programme to reform slaughter, but have subsequently been adopted by herders as a cherished and traditional tool of herding practice. Their history illustrates key shifts in the parameters for State agency and in the relationship between State and herders, while current debates demonstrate how morally charged slaughtering practices become enrolled in the production of unacceptable social difference. Animal activists develop historical narratives of moral progress that articulate with other discourses to produce a 'present moment of the State' – ethically and socially defined – that threatens to exclude herders from participation in the State project, turning them instead into the objects of reform and intervention. Challenging this negative construction of their own past, herders instead define the knife as an indigenous tradition and invoke the attendant obligations of the State to preserve it. In this way, the technical minutiae of slaughtering practice become a social *battleground* where issues such as citizenship, social inclusion, the value of history and the character or obligations of the State come to be at stake.

Chapter 6 picks up on the themes of the previous chapter, to examine the political pressure towards domestication and increased control over animals produced by discourses – and practices – of animal welfare. The problem of emergency feeding highlights the practical tensions between an indigenous ethic that works to preserve the autonomy of the reindeer, by limiting the degree of human control over them, and the ethical assumptions of activist discourse and scientific discourses of welfare. Non-herder discourses of reindeer welfare fail to register the problem of limiting human control over reindeer: activists render herder

behaviour towards their kept reindeer as irresponsible and negligent, while scientific discourses of welfare elide the ethical issues raised by bringing reindeer into the coordinates of scientific observability in the first place. Drawing on Latour in closing, I suggest that the question of welfare illustrates how modernization operates in terms of practices of purification which produce and reinforce dichotomies – between human and animal, domestic and wild, object and subject – that may be foreign to the ethos and practices of herding, but which are progressively coming to supplant these. In the light of this, perhaps the most pertinent question becomes whether this purification – expressed and enacted in regulations, directives, practices and discourses – can be *realistically resisted*. Will herders be able, in the future, to articulate and sustain as ethical an ethos that limits human control and responsibility over reindeer? If not, this represents a drastic if non-obvious shift in the parameters for future herding practice.

Finally, Chapter 7 uses the trope of animal sacrifice as a device to conceptualize and draw out some overall implications of the argument in the foregoing chapters. Compared to traditional accounts and theories of sacrificial practice, industrial slaughter appears first and foremost as a kind of violence that constantly seeks *to negate or disguise itself*. Whereas the efficacy of sacrificial violence depends in no small part on its recognition *as an exercise of violence*, industrial slaughter proceeds along opposite lines – the more the violence involved in it disappears *qua* violence, the more legitimate and acceptable it becomes. This apparent opposition is complicated by the fact that compared to informal practices of everyday killing – for private consumption, for example – both animal sacrifice and industrial slaughter represent *highly ritualized* forms of violence: complex, closely scripted and rule-bound procedures that transform the act of killing into a minutely choreographed spectacle of death, involving a wide range of specified actors and functions. Perhaps the principal difference between the two lies with the *specification of the audience*: as a spectacle, industrial slaughter is organized specifically for the eyes of the inspecting veterinarian, for an audience of one – herders are expelled from the act of killing and become, instead, part of the *absent audience* of the act. Finally, the notion of sacrifice draws attention to the shifting and socially constituted character of the *sacrificial victim* – a question that returns the argument full circle to the question I posed at the outset, in the present chapter: 'what is a reindeer'? Oriented by Agamben's concept of the *bare life*, I suggest that what is at stake in the industrialization of reindeer slaughter may be the relationship between individual acts of killing on the one hand, and the operation of wider *sacrificial economies* of death on the other: perhaps best exemplified, in the case of my own fieldwork, by the threat of a large-scale reindeer culling operation in Western Finnmark – issued by the State in Western Finnmark during the 2004 / 2005 slaughtering season.

Chapter 2 Reindeer in space

'So are you horrified then, now that you're here?' I had just stepped off the plane at Alta airport to begin fieldwork proper, and this was the first thing anyone said to me during fieldwork. My interlocutor was a salesman sent out by the local garage, where I was picking up a second-hand car before starting the six-hour drive east across the tundra, to the Varanger peninsula. He knew I was a southerner, coming in from Oslo, and – expecting the usual – he had already braced himself. It was safe to assume that people from the capital would be horrified at the size of the tiny airport, the primitive lack of facilities and the desolate, sparsely populated landscape. It took me some time to convince him otherwise. His expectations were neither surprising nor inexplicable; rather, they were the reciprocal converse of dominant assumptions and prejudices in the South, about the North. Before heading north for fieldwork I had received my fair share of warnings from well-meaning friends, southerners who had spent their military service up north and come back, bearing dramatic tales of endless frozen nights, mosquitoes the size of small puppies and crazed drunken locals slicing visitors with oversized Sámi knives, down at the village disco. As I was to find out, such stereotypes and assumptions were mirrored almost point for point up north: 'southerners' [*søringer*] were often assumed to be arrogant, formal, condescending, prejudiced, wealthy but alienated – and not to mention helpless in the encounter with the life up North (Eidheim 1993). Being a southerner meant participating in a complex history of discourses, practices and structural power relations – a fact that was brought to my attention frequently throughout fieldwork, in conversation and in everyday incidents. The politically and historically charged relationship between dominant South and northern periphery formed a structuring backdrop to the complex local spatial politics in Finnmark. In fact, as a dominant referent and metaphor for geographically defined identity, one might even say that this tension was what constituted the local Finnmark itself, in the first place, as a margin or a marginal space – geographical, administrative, cultural and imagined. In turn, nested within this margin, reindeer and their herders occupied and constituted further marginal spaces of their own.

In *Animal spaces, beastly places*, the two geographers Philo and Wilbert set themselves the task 'to explore the conjoint conceptual and material placements of animals, as decided upon by humans in a variety of situations, and... to probe the disruptions of these placements as achieved by the animals themselves' (2000:24). This forms part of their contribution to the emergent 'new geography of animals', which aims at 'excavating... networks of human-animal relations... tracing their 'topologies' and showing how the spaces and places involved make a difference to the very constitution of the relations in play'. In so doing, this new geography also addresses 'broader concerns about non-human agency, about the agency of animals, and the extent to which we can say that animals destabilize, transgress or even resist our human orderings, even spatial ones' (5). The present chapter aligns itself with their approach, in the sense that it seeks to trace and clarify some of the entanglements between the spatial movements and management of reindeer, and the frequently blurred or overlapping categories in terms of which the reindeer were treated, understood,

engaged with – and killed. The application of certain categories to reindeer – categories such as livestock, property, resource, wild game, pest, or problem – related directly to the practices by which they were managed (Knight 2002, 2005). Rather than being set, the claims of herders to the reindeer were in flux, contingent on their ongoing assertion or reproduction through practice, and could not be taken for granted. Between herders, property of reindeer was a social institution and a relationship: it was also, however, a social relationship between herders and non-herders, and property claims were thus enmeshed in a wider matrix of social tensions, relations and practices. Herder claims to the reindeer also needed to be constantly reproduced against the agency of the free-roaming reindeer themselves, who eluded human attempts to exercise spatial control over them, transgressed human orderings of space and ended up in the wrong place, where their presence bespoke mismanagement and weakened both herder claims to the animals and the social legitimacy of herding practice itself. In short, the reindeer occupied a complex juncture where social relations, property claims, entitlements, moral discourses, techniques of control and intervention and the authority of the State all came to be simultaneously at stake, in the spatial practices by which they were managed.

The question of space

Over centuries of internal colonialism, waves of settlement and complex overlapping spatial claims, space in Finnmark has become a powerfully politicised topic. Questions of ownership, political control, rightful utilization and access to natural resources are vigorously debated and contested, both locally and on the national level: in the media, in political speeches and through government reports. Many of the issues vested in the question of space were brought to the fore recently by the passage of the 'Finnmark Law' [*Finnmarksloven*], a law which proposed to devolve control over space to the regional level and establish a council to preside over matters concerning spatial management and land rights in the region. The law was controversial, and both the composition and jurisdiction of the proposed council were widely debated. Nationally, many politicians of the left supported the law as redress for centuries of 'colonial exploitation', while the chairman of FrP, the leading right-wing party [*Fremskrittspartiet*, or the Progress Party], denounced it as a form of 'Sámi racism': as he argued, affording political power and privilege to an ethnically defined minority contradicted the basis of 'egalitarian society' and marked the birth of Sámi 'apartheid' ('Sámi Fundamentalism', *Dagbladet* 13.05.2005). Within Finnmark, tensions ran high. Some ethnic Norwegians were concerned about the relative power of Sámi interests within the council, while non-herding Sámi were worried that the interests of herders would be over-represented at the expense of other traditional indigenous activities.

In general, however, most inhabitants agreed on the basic principle of devolution that drove the law: control over space and resources should pass from the remote South and be restored to the local population in Finnmark. Their present lack of control over their own resources and space was not only colonial and exploitative in nature, but State management at a distance was also generally considered incompetent, inadequate and based on incorrect assumptions. Administrators and bureaucrats 'down south' did not and

could not understand Finnmark. The region and its spaces were best managed by 'local people', who understood its qualities and requirements from custom, lived experience and embodied inhabitation. This was a dominant and widespread opinion: visits to the region by southern politicians were almost invariably hailed, met with nods of approval and comments such as 'maybe they'll finally see how things work up here, now'. To the herders I worked with, such disembodied management at a distance posed itself primarily as a problem of a lacking understanding – on the part of administrators, bureaucrats and legislators – of the particular spatial qualities and requirements of herding practice. Herders frequently argued that policies and interventions were premised on inappropriate assumptions; prime among these was the so-called 'barnyard mentality', or the belief apparently held by administrators that the tundra could be managed as a stable, predictable, safe and regulated environment, 'like a barn'. I return to this matter later in this chapter.

Both reindeer and their herders have figured as a problem of Norwegian statecraft since long before the emergence of the Norwegian nation-state in its current form, in the early 19th century (Bull 1997). Over time, the terms of this problem and the solutions required have varied: each formulation has dictated different forms of strategic engagement and mobilization of resources, in line with the interests, agendas and capacities of the State itself and the people who ran it (Bjørklund 2000). In the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, the dominant formulation of the 'herding problem' was geopolitical: herding was a matter of national security. Crystallizing national borders in the region frequently intersected existing migration routes. Disrespectful of map-drawn borders, the migrant reindeer and the 'nomads' that followed in their trail threatened the integrity of the new, exclusive regimes of space being forged. To State-makers and regulators, their mobility suggested loyalties that were equally mobile, potentially mercenary and easily turned (Eriksen & Niemi 1981). Articulated with the need to produce stable and incontrovertibly national populations, the problem of herding thus became a matter of spatial control and adjustment within the emergent regime of bounded or exclusive State territoriality. In subsequent centuries, the nomadic reindeer pastoralism of the indigenous Sámi population continued to appear as an administrative problem, periodically defined and redefined in terms of the dominant interests and concerns of the Norwegian majority society: as a question of geopolitical security, border integrity, fashioning a stable national cultural identity, regional economic development or – more recently – of indigenous rights, minority welfare politics and ecological degradation due to reindeer overpopulation (Bjørklund 1995). Perhaps the most dominant formulations of the pastoral problem today centre on questions of space – whether as a question of ecological degradation due to unsustainable ratios between reindeer numbers and available grazing resources, or as the tension between herder claims, rights and interests and the interests of other actors with claims to the spaces utilised by herders.

The question of space is also one of the most pressing social and political problems facing the Norwegian reindeer herding industry as a whole. Compared to other herding areas such as Russia and the Americas, herders in Norway operate within a very tight economy of space, competing with a wide range of other users and frequently overlapping claims and practices. Reindeer pastoralism is a spatially demanding practice –

according to official statistics, it utilizes approximately 40% of the total Norwegian land mass (Reindrifftsforvaltningen 2005). The numbers are misleading if read to suggest a claim of exclusive territoriality: in practice, as I make clear in this chapter, herding territories are utilized by a wide range of non-herder actors. Herds and individual animals require access to a complex and differentiated range of spaces, and their requirements may vary unpredictably depending on environmental and human factors. The animals regularly migrate between seasonal pasture grounds; while the dates and precise paths of these migrations are influenced by herders, the animals are also creatures of habit and 'control over the herd must be exercised as a compromise with the territorial bindings of the animal' (Magga, Oskal & Sara 2001:4). Over time, the movements of the herd constitute habitual grooves in the landscape, regular routes which can be modified but not changed entirely – at least, not without great difficulty. Herders are thus in constant adaptation to the requirements of environment and animals, and the ability to respond flexibly to changing conditions can mean the difference between survival and death for large numbers of animals, even entire herds. In spatial terms, this flexibility is increasingly under threat by expanding interests that limit the available options for moving the herd elsewhere and finding alternative grazing grounds when required.

Today, herding territories are under escalating pressure from increasing motorization, expanding road systems, growing tourism, real estate development, national parks, hydroelectric installations and military practice ranges. In many places, traditional management strategies such as 'letting the herd loose' to fend for itself under conditions where feed is scarce (Beach 1981; Sara 2001) are becoming increasingly difficult, even impossible to adopt. To compound this problem, territorial compensation cases have often been settled according to a piecemeal paradigm, whereby compensation for expropriated territories has been measured in financial terms per individual territory, without attention to the multiple functions of specific tracts of land, the compound long-term effects of aggregate territory loss and the overall minimum spatial conditions required to maintain viable herding. As one herder informant told me, angrily, 'Reindeer don't eat money! What do they want us to do with it?' A classic and exemplary study of this latter problematic is Bjørklund and Brantenberg's report on the consequences of the Alta dam project (1981; see also Paine 1982, Thuen 1995). Within the herder community, the pressured economy of space is producing a marked sense of frustration and concern for the future. This dominant mood, a sense of an industry under pressure to vanish, is noticeable at meetings and conferences, in official communications and in conversations with individual herders. At the annual NRL conference in Bodø in 2005, president Aslak Eira told delegates that 'at the current pace, future generations will simply not have spaces left to herd in'. Under such conditions, continued access to herding land has become a fragile, contingent and constantly negotiated achievement, dependent on the ability of herders to organise and make valid claims in the public sphere, and to maintain the social legitimacy of herding itself, through practices such as building social relations within the local community, establishing collaborative rapport with the authorities and managing, insofar as this is possible, the coverage of the media.

The Varanger peninsula

The grazing district system is one of the key administrative tools for the spatial management of reindeer. The system divides reindeer herding territories into six top-tier 'reindeer pasture areas' [*reinbeiteområder*], four of which are outside Finnmark: Troms, Nordland, Nord-Trøndelag and Sør-Trøndelag/Hedmark. Finnmark hosts the largest density of reindeer and reindeer herders in the country, and hosts two of these areas: Western and Eastern Finnmark. Eastern Finnmark is divided further into the two subordinate administrative areas [*reinsogn*] of Karasjok and Polmak/Varanger, where I conducted most of my fieldwork. Each of the top-tier 'pasture areas' is managed by a local chapter of the national Reindeer Herding Administration [*Reindrifftsforvaltningen*], which has its central headquarters in Alta, in Western Finnmark (Lie & Nygaard 2000). Pasture areas are divided further into individual 'reindeer pasture districts' [*reinbeitedistrikter*], each of which contains a number of individual reindeer herding licences or management units [*driftsenheter*]. According to the annual statistics published by the Reindeer Herding Administration there were, as of March 31 2005, a total of 82 such districts in Norway, with a total of 569 active herding units. The Administration estimates that a total of 2855 people are involved in reindeer herding on a national basis (Reindrifftsforvaltningen 2005:54-56). Herding activities in each 'pasture district' are managed internally by district councils [*distriktsstyrer*] composed of herders elected from within the district. Responsibilities of these committees include setting timetables for herd migrations and round-ups, working out shift rotations for herd duty, allocating funds and subsidies, mediating disputes and deciding on matters of collective interest to the district.

In this sense, the grazing district system operates as a social instrument to structure and subdivide the herder population into units, with precisely defined forms and mechanisms of accountability – an effect that harks back to the original aim of the system, which was not only to stabilize the herder population within partitioned, regularized and visible spaces, but also to establish mechanisms of accountability in cases of damage to (primarily) Norwegian agricultural interests (Bull 1997; Jonassen & Kalstad 2003; Hætta, Sara & Rushfeldt 1994). For Finnmark, the general outline of the current grazing districts was established in 1934, following the passage of the 1933 Reindeer Herding Act which called for a more detailed and precise system of territorial administration than what was in existence. Only minor modifications have taken place since then, though there are current plans for a fundamental redrawing of the system, to account for changes in practice and social organization since its introduction (Hætta, Sara & Rushfeldt 1994). With the allocation between districts according to seasons, the system was in theory designed to reflect and accommodate the inherent mobility of reindeer. In practice, it circumscribed the adaptive flexibility of herders, by placing strict and often impractical limits on herd movements. Upon its introduction, the system rearranged existing pasture management systems, recreating them as a grid of inflexible, bounded spatial units amenable to State systems of territoriality (Forrest 1997). It stipulated and enforced fixed, non-negotiable dates for moving between seasonal pasture grounds. Then as today, unusual weather, capricious animals, logistical breakdowns and problems with organising the labour required to round up and move the herd can delay the

migration beyond these dates. Factors such as varying pasture ground conditions and the overall state of the herd may also make it strategically desirable to move the herd outside the set time-frames. Such delays and disruptions invite official sanctions, even lawsuits, and frequently sour relations with locals, administrators and neighbouring herder groups. Many of the herders I worked with argued that the current system is inadequate and in crisis.

Most of the empirical material for this dissertation is drawn from one such reindeer grazing district, the summer pasture grounds in District 6 on the Varanger peninsula. The district is part of the Polmak/ Varanger administrative area. On a map, the district covers most of the Varanger peninsula, except for a broad strip along the western coast that constitutes District 7 (Figure 2.1). Its corresponding winter pastures lie in District 5D. Before the advent of pastoralism in its current form, the peninsula was the site of intensive reindeer hunting: a range

Figure 2.1 Herding districts in Eastern Finnmark (Reindeer Herding Administration)

of prehistoric trapping and hunting complexes still litter the inland

(Vorren & Eriksen 1993). The peninsula lies close to both the Finnish and the Russian borders, and herding in the area was significantly affected by the border closures of the early and mid-19th century. Local migration routes spanned far across the borders; some of the local herders settled on the Russian side after the border closure in 1826. Still, the Russian border closure was loosely enforced and widely disregarded by herders, who continued to move their herds across to pastures on the Russian side for years after the closure. The subsequent Finnish border closure in 1852 was more rigorously enforced and dramatically cut the available pasture grounds for many herder groups, particularly those in Eastern Finnmark (Wikan 1997). The suddenness and extent of this redrawing of space occasioned considerable social unrest throughout Finnmark: among other things, it contributed directly to the 1852 Sámi uprisings in Kautokeino (Zorgdrager 1997).

Today, the district remains unusual for several reasons. For one, most other grazing districts in the country are shared between several distinct kin-groups, or *siidas*. The reindeer of District 6, on the other hand, are owned and managed by one extended kinship group, comprising 15 herding licences or 'management units'. For comparison, statistics for the 2004/2005 season show that there were 409 active reindeer herding management units in Finnmark, or 72% of the total number in Norway. Of these, 227 were in western Finnmark, 139 in Karasjok and 43 in Polmak/ Varanger (NORUT & NIBR 2006). One family member in each household owns a licence, while other members of the household assist informally with the work of managing the animals. The Varanger peninsula herd is also unusually large by Norwegian standards, counting more than 8000 animals, though the number varies somewhat from year to year depending on factors such as slaughtering out-take, grazing conditions, climatic cycles and predator activity¹.

Through the herding year, the herd describes a loose figure-eight pattern; in spring the animals cross over

1 The main reindeer predators in Finnmark are bear, wolverine, lynx, wolf and eagle (Fylkesmannen i Finnmark 2000); in the context of my own fieldwork, the ones that came up most frequently were wolverine and eagle.

from the southern winter pastures in 5D and start moving north along the western side of the peninsula, then drift south-east along the coast towards Vardø and west back towards Varangerbotn, where they pass onto the winter pastures. While on the winter pastures, the herd requires relatively close management: feed is scarce, predators hungry and climatic conditions potentially harsh. The winter pastures are also shared with neighbouring groups from districts to the east. To avoid expensive and time-consuming mix-ups with neighbouring herds, therefore, the animals need to be watched and managed quite closely. This is reflected in the structure of the herd; when it crosses to the winter pastures, the main herd is usually divided into three smaller herds that are managed separately – individual herders take out their own personal herds and recombine them with the herds of other herders within the kin-group. During the summer half of the year, on the other hand, the individual herds belonging to each of the units in the district are managed collectively, as one loose but cohesive herd. The pasture grounds are ample and feed is usually more than sufficient. The district is also surrounded on most sides by water, bordering only on one other summer grazing district, and the risk of herd mixing is small.

Collective management facilitates the efficient coordination of labour. Throughout the summer some herders – usually only a pair – will head out on motorised four-wheelers, on a more or less daily basis, to check up on the herd. This herd duty is organised on the basis of a rotational shift timetable, set up by a District Council composed of herders from the district. In the absence of serious herd mixing or other unexpected events, round-ups are called only at specific and regular points during the year: one in early autumn at Krampen east of Vadsø and one later in winter, at Seidafjell near the crossing to the winter pastures. These round-ups involve a marked temporary concentration of the animals, and the intensification of human control through the combined deployment of human labour and technology. In technical terms, herding in this district is rather more *extensive* than in other districts (Beach 1981; see Chapter 3) and herders make use of relatively sophisticated technological equipment. Depending on the condition of the terrain, the dispersed animals of the herd are gathered and driven towards the round-up site using helicopters and either four-wheelers or snowmobiles.

In the course of this annual cycle, the Varanger herd passes through areas that are utilised and laid claim to by a range of other local actors. Conflict is inevitable. For centuries, the inland of the peninsula has been used by local non-herders for traditional subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and cloudberry harvesting. The recent rise of motorised transportation has modified both the extent and the ecological impact of these activities, creating considerable tensions, both within communities and with local authorities who regulate permits for off-road motorised transport. Herders, themselves increasingly motorised, complain that careless motorists scare reindeer, disrupt herds and damage the landscape. Non-herders in turn express resentment at the privileged 'monopoly' of herders on off-road motorised transport, and turn the accusation of ecological degradation back on the herders. Tourism is also a key element of the regional economy, and motorised transport has led to increased recreational use, by both locals and tourists, of areas that are also used by herders. Finally, State-sector interests in the peninsula are currently represented by two important

large-scale projects, one to establish a natural park and the other to construct a windmill energy park. Both will impact significantly on the spatial dynamic of reindeer herding in the area (Olli 2003), and herders complained about their lack of involvement in approval and planning for the projects: 'the berry-pickers have had more of a say in this than us!'

Many of the herding-related conflicts in the Varanger area could be described as clashes between modes of spatial organization. The mobile and migratory character of reindeer frequently puts herders at odds with the bounded and exclusive territoriality of institutions such as private property and agricultural cultivation². Stories of reindeer invading private gardens, eating flowers or migrating 'right past my windows' were common. Between the persistence of reindeer in their habitual routes on the one hand, and the continuous claims of bounded territoriality on the other, conflicts over such issues were often protracted. Sometimes they escalated over time, to the level of animosity and physical violence. The herders I worked with described illegal fences, reindeer being shot as warning and local farmers threatening them with firearms and legal action. Their principal practical countermeasure to prevent the escalation of hostilities was a form of ongoing boundary work: ensuring that the animals kept out of proscribed spaces such as population centres, private gardens, sheep pastures and the main roads that ran east and north along the coast of the peninsula.

The reindeer belonged 'out there', and not in the way of humans. Whenever reindeer turned up 'in the wrong place' – grazing in the town square, disturbing sheep in their pastures or getting run over by buses late at night – several things happened. For one, blame was directed at their herders. The inappropriate spatial incursions of reindeer represented a breakdown in control and indexed not only human incompetence or inability, but also often the *arrogance* of herders: their unwillingness to manage the herd in an appropriate and socially responsible manner. Secondly, with this visible absence of management, certain socially defined categories began to come into force and be applied to the reindeer. These categories were evidenced in media representations, in debates, speeches and everyday conversation, in the manner in which people talked about and discussed reindeer, and they had normative, practice-structuring effects: influencing the ways in which people engaged, interacted or dealt with reindeer and, perhaps most importantly, helping determine the question of how, when, where and by whom it was considered *appropriate* for the reindeer to be killed. Most of the time, these categories were at odds with the ways in which herders themselves defined their animals. As I discuss in the next two sections, the social situation on the tundra forced herders to patrol their reindeer not only in the physical sense, but also symbolically, at the level of narratives.

2 Conflicts between herders and sheep farmers, for example, are a recurrent trope of Sámi-issue journalism throughout Finnmark. As a recent study concludes, such stories follow predictable lines. The reindeer herders are generally represented as arrogant, lazy and irresponsible, unwilling to invest the work required to manage the animals properly. Frequently the herders are also 'unavailable for contact' at the time of writing (Berg 2001). In one case near my field-site, this conflict was not even mediated by humans. Several times I was woken up late at night by loud and apparently distressed bleating from the field next to my cabin. When I inquired about this, it turned out that a lost and unmarked reindeer calf had turned up that year among the sheep of the local farmer. As it grew larger, the animal eventually discovered the advantages conferred upon it, relative to its adopted brood-mates, by its large antlers. Hence, every night now, the reindeer terrorized the sheep, forcibly herding them into a small corner of the enclosure. This bullying, species-confused reindeer who 'thought he was a sheep' was the source of some amusement on the farmstead.

'Killing in the manner of wolves'

'Generally... the danger of theft has not come from the 'mountain people' [reindeer herders]. The settled people of the coast were the ones that taxed the herds most in this way. During the autumn, while the animals were still on the summer pastures and subject to less strict control, thieving expeditions set off into the mountains, killing in the manner of wolves. Earmarks and often the furs were destroyed and the meat carried to town' (Vorren 1951:35).

Private ownership of reindeer is a central feature of reindeer pastoralism, although the precise definition of property in herding is somewhat unclear and not to be taken for granted. Robert Paine for example has argued that indigenous and legal definitions of theft do not necessarily coincide, and that over recent decades the strict and unreflexive application of certain models of theft by police, media and the administration has contributed to the criminalization of certain semi-legitimate practices within herding, as well as creating an inflated appearance of lawlessness and 'run-away conditions' on the tundra (1999). Nevertheless, both herders and police I spoke to agreed at least on certain essential points: namely, that individual reindeer are owned privately and exclusively by individual herders, who determine when the animals are to be killed and who own the output of the slaughter of that animal. No herder I ever met complained about any excessive zeal on the part of the authorities in preventing the theft of reindeer; in fact, as I return to later in this chapter, it was quite the opposite. In this at least, reindeer herders were in accord with those representatives of the State apparatus who enforced the law. Property is a relationship between people, however, and the property status of reindeer relied on more than the relationship between herders and the police for its day-to-day facticity. Elsewhere, the lines were not so clear-cut.

Generally speaking, domestic livestock are often understood to be docile, managed, more or less captive and subject to the control of humans. Reindeer, on the other hand, are rarely kept confined or under close control; much of the time, particularly on the summer pastures, they move around freely and largely unsupervised. If anything, the animals tend to impose themselves on the herders. 'You go where the reindeer go, you follow the reindeer!' herders would sometimes say, with a grin, when I asked about migration routes. I observed frequently that to many locals, the status of reindeer as private property existed in uneasy tension with their apparent behaviour, not least their tendency to appear 'in the wrong place'. Certainly to the eyes of local non-herders, their free-roaming behaviour made them rather similar to the movements of wild game; the more extensive the herding form, the stronger the similarities (Beach 1981; Ingold 1980; Paine 1964, 1994; Sara 2001). The ethnographic literature documents how one of the attendant risks of extensification is that the reindeer become excessively de-domesticated, reverting to a state of wildness that makes them difficult or impossible to handle and which is very difficult to reverse (Beach 1990:270). A related *social* risk attendant to extensification, particularly in relatively densely occupied spaces such as the Varanger peninsula where the paths of the reindeer and their herders intersect with other human claims to space, is that the reindeer come to be perceived as increasingly wild *by non-herders* (Beach 2004:112). For one, this apparent wildness

makes them increasingly subject to a cultural logic of *hunting* – a logic that effectively neutralises the illegitimacy of poaching, as well as undermining the strength of herder claims to exclusive ownership³.

The physical index of reindeer ownership is the personal earmark, carved into the ears of individual animals as soon as possible after legitimate ownership has been established (Bjørklund & Eidheim 1999; Falkenberg 1978). For most animals, marking takes place during the autumn round-ups, when the unmarked young are let into large enclosures with the females and herders observe which calf follows which female. At least traditionally, personal marks were often designed by the parents of the prospective herder and assigned at birth, and their structure still frequently expresses complex family resemblances with the marks of other herders within the kin-group. The marks are a central institution of herding: an experienced herder can spot and distinguish marks at great distances, and familiarity with an extensive library of marks utilised in the local area is still an important prerequisite for herding practice. Today the marks are also logged in a central database maintained by the Reindeer Herding Administration and available over the Internet. A key concern when creating new earmarks is to ensure their distinctiveness: new marks must be sufficiently dissimilar from existing earmarks in the area to prevent theft of the living animal by re-marking. On reindeer skins, missing earmarks are often an indicator of another form of theft, namely poaching or 'thief-slaughter' [*tjuvslakt*].

Such poaching is committed both by herders and non-herders and for centuries it has been a recurrent problem, in the Varanger area as elsewhere (Krogen 2003). In part because of the lack of other herders in the area, poachers on the Varanger peninsula were mostly local non-herders, who stole animals either for personal consumption or for circulation within the networks of the black market. Such theft was recognized as a criminal practice, but the prohibition was difficult to enforce. Particularly on the summer pastures, the mobility, size and dispersed condition of the herd made individual poachers almost impossible to catch in the act⁴. Theft could usually only be identified as it was happening, by coming across temporary poacher camps with reindeer remains on site. Even then, poachers usually destroyed the earmarks of skins that they left behind or sold. Establishing ownership, and criminal prosecution, were therefore difficult.

As I was sitting one morning in the kitchen of the herder base-camp in Krampen, waiting for the slaughter to start, an elderly stranger dropped by for a coffee visit. He wanted to discuss some genealogical material he had recently uncovered that suggested he might be related to the herders I was working with. It was early in the morning, some of the family members were already up at the corral working with the animals (see Chapter 3), but some were still sitting around having their morning coffee. After a while, when they

3 Formally at least, there are no wild reindeer [*villrein*] in the Sámi reindeer herding areas of Norway; all reindeer in these areas are privately owned domestic reindeer [*tamrein*]. Dispersed pockets of wild reindeer occupy the central highlands in the south of the country, numbering somewhere between 30 000 and 40 000 animals (Direktoratet for Naturforvaltning 2006).

4 In several respects, such human predation through poaching was similar to the regular loss of reindeer to predators. For one, both were nearly impossible to prevent. As in the case with predator loss, herders also frequently discussed and treated the risk of poaching in spatial terms, as a localized property of the landscape. At the time of my fieldwork, for example, the area around Båtsfjord on the north-eastern side of the peninsula was considered a hotbed for poaching.

apologised that they didn't have any food to offer him, he looked out at the reindeer grazing on the nearby hilltop and suggested that he could 'just go shoot himself some reindeer' – the reindeer that belonged to his hosts. Though they played it down politely, the herders around the table were visibly enraged. The husband told me afterwards he wanted to physically throw the man out of the house. The elderly guest stayed for another half an hour, however, to all appearances either oblivious or indifferent to the tense atmosphere produced by his remark. For myself, I found his casual and care-free manner towards both theft and its prospective victims somewhat surprising. I found out later that it was representative of a general attitude that many poachers and buyers of illicit meat in the area shared; perhaps precisely because of the elusive and untraceable character of their theft, both groups were often surprisingly forthcoming about their practices. Not infrequently, upon hearing what I was doing in Finnmark, near-strangers suggested that I come out for a ride with them, to catch some *nisterein* – 'lunch-box reindeer'.

Between herders, of course, attitudes of apparently casual appropriation might be explained, at least in part, by tacit rules that govern the transmission and appropriation of reindeer as property between herders, what Paine terms the 'reindeer messaging system' (1999). As a rule however, the poachers and clients I spoke to in the area were not herders. Black-market clients bragged of cheap meat of dubious provenance, phenomenal profits and dramatic near-brushes with the police. In discussing these practices, they tended to brush off their criminal character almost casually. For a range of reasons poaching was not *really* theft, or not *quite* theft, because reindeer did not fall entirely into the category of thievable property: almost invariably, this was linked to the way in which the animals were herded. The reindeer were practically wild anyway, and they grazed on public grounds, which made them 'common property'; the herders had many more animals, in fact too many, and if they cared, they would look after them more carefully; and so on. The free-roaming and unsupervised condition of the animals provided grounds for justifying theft, on the grounds that the animals behaved 'like wild animals'. This made it legitimate, or at least more legitimate, for non-herders to kill them. It might thus seem that extensive herd management not only increased opportunities for poaching, by dispersing the animals and making surveillance difficult, but that it also drew into question the relationship between herders and their reindeer, and the legitimacy of herder property claims.

Of course, poachers and their clients constituted a subterranean minority within the local population. While silent and absent from the sphere of public debates, however, their justifications still played on more widespread ideas and discourses concerning reindeer – particularly those that concerned the *ambivalence* of the reindeer, their position somewhere between domesticated livestock and wild game. As one of my more critical informants in the neighbouring district said, concerning the extensive herding practice of the herders I worked with: 'they let their reindeer run like wild animals, it's no wonder people hunt them'. The social tensions surrounding this categorical ambivalence of reindeer were sharply highlighted in early January 2005, in a heated controversy that ran through the editorials and letter pages of several Finnmark newspapers.

Just before the new year, the local Labour Party leader in Gamvik, a township on the western coast of

Finmark, proposed the introduction of hunting as a measure to cull the excess animals that were left behind every year on the wrong pastures after the seasonal migrations. Licences to hunt animals on a one-by-one basis could be sold to tourists, earning herders a profit on surplus animals that would otherwise be lost to starvation, accidents or poaching. Packaged for the international tourist market as an exotic experience, the initiative would also help attract visitors and strengthen a regional economy increasingly gearing itself towards tourism. The proposal caused a minor scandal. Several prominent Sámi politicians rejected it immediately, denouncing it in public as absurd and demanding that the Labour party clarify its stance on the issue and distance itself from the proposal. Party headquarters replied, dismissing the proposal as 'not relevant' and stating that the mayor was furthering it strictly as a private individual.

The debate provoked strong responses from herders and non-herders alike. Herders rejected the proposal unanimously; in turn, many non-herders interpreted this refusal as an indication of their unwillingness to cooperate with other locals: herders were accused of being arrogant, inflexible, uncooperative and backward-looking, unwilling to adapt to the changing requirements of herding in a modern age. Herders nevertheless remained unyielding, and the debate eventually died down. The inflexible refusal of herders was easily explicable: reindeer were after all private property, and as capital on the hoof they represented the livelihood of their herders. Under no circumstance was it in the interest of herders to let the reindeer become subject to a logic of hunting. There was widespread concern in the herder camp that any move to enable outsiders to kill reindeer legitimately, particularly in the form of hunting, would lead to an escalation in theft and poaching: practices which not only resembled hunting in form, but which practitioners also justified, tacitly or sometimes explicitly, with reference to existing practices of hunting. For example, in demanding a clarification from the Labour Party on the issue, a politician from the NSR argued that even the very fact of holding a debate on reindeer hunting might be serving to legitimize such theft already (NSR 2001).

What this suggests is that the status of reindeer as property or livestock was opposed and troubled – in local discourses – by their representation as something increasingly akin to *wild game*: more or less legitimately killed by non-herders, more or less subject to a logic of hunting. According to the mayor and his supporters, the fact that the reindeer were left behind 'in the wrong place' was proof that they were not being properly managed. Herders were in a sense forfeiting their claims to the animals, and their reindeer should therefore be treated more like game than livestock. That is to say, within the limits of concessions made to their status as property, they could be hunted. This re-classification involved and depended on a whole set of opposed pairs: livestock and game, domestic and wild, private and public. By their behaviour and their mode of keeping, reindeer troubled all of these pairs, and therefore came to occupy a kind of liminal zone in local imaginations and discourses, where the lines separating categories were blurred. The strong responses of herders and Sámi politicians in the debate on hunting reflected their sharp sense of the need to patrol and reinforce these blurred boundaries, to prevent reindeer from drifting out of herder control *at the level of discourse* – and consequently in practice. The ongoing social reproduction of reindeer as legitimate and exclusively held property required vigilance and constant effort on the part of herders – both physically,

keeping the reindeer out of the wrong areas, and symbolically, ensuring that reindeer were represented and talked about in appropriate ways by non-herders. Beyond this, the basis and principal argument of the proposal to introduce hunting was that if left unchecked and unmanaged, the behaviour and movements of reindeer became a *problem* that demanded solution – particularly in the form of intervention by non-herders. In this regard, both the proposal and the ensuing debate played on another, highly significant theme in local registers for reindeer – namely, their classification as *pests*.

When reindeer become pests

A few years ago, the Sámi philosopher Nils Oskal described how 'reindeer luck' was traditionally secured through respectful interaction with the herd, with other herders and with the landscape (1995, 2000). As he argued, with the rise of mechanization and changing lifestyles such practices of respect are disappearing rapidly from herding, along with both the body of lore they belong to and the modes of inhabiting the landscape that they were enmeshed in. The landscape of Norwegian herding is becoming increasingly secularized. While the spirits and entities that imbued it may not have disappeared entirely, they are certainly becoming less and less relevant to its moral geography. Today, the principal powers that preside over the landscape are human, and it is human interests that must be appeased and negotiated with. For two centuries at least, the most powerful and elusive of these powers has been the State. As I have suggested, already in the 19th century the Norwegian State-makers were uncomfortably aware of the disregard that reindeer and their herders showed for human borders and lines drawn on paper. The animals and their herders transgressed such spatial orderings with insulting ease, ending up where they were not meant to be and troubling the claims of State territoriality. This problem of spatial transgression remains current today, accentuated by the increasingly dense utilization of the spaces out on the tundra. Reindeer belong 'out there', not in rose gardens, town squares or on the motorway. Of course, as more and more people lay claim to space for new reasons, the spaces where reindeer do belong are steadily diminishing. During one of my first interviews, my middle-aged informant looked out the window and sighed, wistfully: 'you know, sometimes I think I'm the only person in the whole of Finnmark that likes having reindeer in the garden [*reinsdyr i hagen*].' We were sitting in a lighthouse, at the tip of a small peninsula near Berlevåg, and outside a number of reindeer belonging to her kin were grazing – she was of herder stock herself, though she had 'lost the language' [*mistet språket*] and was not directly involved in herding. As she said, the reindeer were familiar, they reminded her of her herder father and they made her feel safe and comfortable. As I discovered over time, however, her feelings on the subject were far from representative.

In early May 2006, the township of Hammerfest in Western Finnmark did a brief round of the global media – 'Arctic town builds anti-reindeer fence' announced a widely referred Reuters headline. The dispatch stated that '[f]ed up with reindeer wandering the streets, one of the world's most northerly towns [was] building a 20-km (12-mile) fence to keep the animals out'. An interviewed local stated that '[r]eindeer are a big nuisance, they come into town, get into hotel and business receptions, into churches, into the traffic' ('Arctic

town builds anti-reindeer fence', Reuters 03.05.06).⁵ The decision to erect this fence had been reached only after a long series of meetings and public debates. In the course of these deliberations, strong grievances and irritations from non-herding locals came to light. Misplaced animals and 'reindeer in the wrong place' represented a nuisance and a drain on the resources of local government and communities. Herders who failed to manage their animals responsibly and keep them within their designated spaces were portrayed as 'lazy', 'arrogant' and 'irresponsible', even to the point of threatening human life: road accidents involving reindeer occurred sufficiently often to warrant attention in local media and political discourses, particularly when they happened after the stipulated migration dates. The complaints and arguments expressed by locals in Hammerfest were practically interchangeable with the complaints I heard from locals in the Varanger area.

In general, the two principal resources that herders were accused of exploiting were the land itself, which they sought to monopolize at the expense of other local users, and the State and civic infrastructure, which they were accused of cynically manipulating to their own advantage. A satirical cartoon published in the Norwegian-language Sámi newspaper *Sagat* in the winter of 2004 illustrated the latter point (Figure 2.2): two police officers complain about a number of reindeer grazing in the middle of town; meanwhile, a nearby herder – undercover, with a trench-coat and sunglasses rather than a traditional costume with which this character is usually portrayed – reports to his father that 'they are about to move the herd' for them.

Figure 2.2 *Sagat* cartoon

Criticisms of inadequate management were closely linked to the problem of space as a shared, public or collective resource – the reindeer grazed on public grounds, but over time their grazing produced powerful and exclusive claims to the land they grazed on. Land rights and specific legal protection for herding are acquired through 'traditional usage' [*alders tids bruk*]: that is, they are rooted not in ethnic identity *per se* but in a cumulative historical entitlement accrued through continuous utilization (Bull 1997; NOU 2001). Effectively, over time the spaces of herding are thus *legally transformed* through the combined human and animal labour vested in the work of herding. In managing the reindeer, herders also made a political claim to the spaces that the animals occupied – whether or not these claims were themselves sufficiently powerful to translate into actual privilege. Among local non-herders, the absence of labour evidenced by spatially misplaced reindeer often created a disparity between entitlements and the theoretical basis for these entitlements – a disparity that created resentment particularly when herders sought to exercise their claims at the expense of other local interests.

An informant from the neighbouring district, not a herder herself, once recounted to me a local comedy

5 Locals took the ensuing attention humorously, though the Hammerfest mayor stated that the journalist had been 'very preconceived', and he expressed irritation that people in Finnmark had been portrayed as 'an intolerant people, who tolerate neither Sámi nor reindeer'. A large number of journalists had contacted him after the story broke, and 'some seem[ed] to think the fence was a ten-foot tall affair, with barbed wire and stuff'. Nevertheless, he thought they should stick to the motto that 'all PR is good PR' ('Shut in on the wrong side of the fence', *Finnmark Dagblad* 13.05.06).

sketch that involved herders from the group I was working with. The subject of the sketch was a contested land-case involving a lake in the inland of the peninsula which was appropriated for other use. The herders involved in the case claimed compensation on the grounds of traditional usage. In the sketch, they were named and played by local men. Another man, dressed as the elderly mother of the herders, came on stage and reprimanded them: 'You lazy scoundrels, you've never fished in that lake! You're far too lazy to fish, and the fish are inedible anyway!' The story, which my informant recounted with glee and approval, expressed one common representation of herders, and particularly of the herders I worked with, as greedy free-loaders purely out to secure privilege, resources and gain for themselves. Voiced through the figure of the ageing mother, the critique also expressed the common idea that it was the current generation of herders who had become greedy and betrayed their roots, through their technological, capital-intensive and business-oriented herding practice.

At the heart of such controversies and accusations lay ideas about the moral obligations and civic duties of herders – both to their animals and to the surrounding human community. Informally⁶, these obligations were often encompassed in the term 'the duty to herd' [*gjeteplikten*] – a term that denoted practices such as spending time with animals, ensuring their timely migration, responsibly regulating the size of the herd to comply with limits set by the authorities and preventing nuisance to other local actors. The failure of this duty and the breakdown of appropriate management was inferred from a range of visible indicators, such as reindeer grazing in the town squares, delayed round-ups and degraded pasture grounds. At the time of my fieldwork at least, accusations that herders were in dereliction of their herding duties, and that they were behaving irresponsibly and anti-socially, tended to cluster around the dominant representation of the reindeer crisis. Time and again, in conversations, in the media and in official communications, the reindeer herding industry was represented as being in an ecologically disastrous state: reindeer numbers were spiralling out of control, and the tundra was becoming 'a desert' or 'an ecological wasteland' – 'The tundra is a desert; the animals starve; the extent of the catastrophe grows' ('Shot in the war for grazing grounds', *Dagbladet* 28.12.99).

Most accounts of the crisis in recent years have been strongly informed by Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' hypothesis (1968; Marin & Vedeld 2003). The hypothesis predicts that given unregulated access to common or shared resources, individual actors intent on maximizing yield or profits will expand their share of these resources, capitalizing on the lack of centralized control, to the detriment and eventual exhaustion of the

6 In legal terms, this responsibility is formulated and enshrined in §20 of the Reindeer Herding Act of 1978, as follows: 'It is the responsibility of herding unit owner and other reindeer owners in herding unit to ensure that herding is practised in a professional manner in accordance with current laws and regulations. The reindeer shall at all times be under responsible control [under forsvarlig kontroll], and be kept on legal pasture grounds... The owner of a herding unit shall practise reindeer herding as his or her profession and principal activity... If the regional committee finds that owner of a herding unit or other reindeer owners in the unit neglect the duty to manage [*driveplikten*], do not abide by established weight limits for sex- and age-groups of reindeer in the district and/or decisions concerning maximal reindeer numbers for the unit, or in other ways acts to the significant detriment of the industry or of other right-holders, the committee may, after hearing with the district committee, implement the reduction, cessation or transfer of the herding unit in question'.

commons. In this light, the excess of reindeer thus occurs because of an absence or insufficiency on the part of the State, in its capacity as regulator of individual profit-maximizing herders. This is a hypothesis, however, and its uncritical application with descriptive or explanatory force has been quite extensively criticized (Berg 1996, 2000:18-19; Bjørklund 1999b, 1999c; Joks 2000; Paine 1992, 1994:187-193). In its simplest form, its application rests on the assumption that in the absence of the State, access to pastures is entirely unregulated and that by extension, a catastrophe of over-exploitation was not averted through existing checks, balances and institutions – this argument is immediately countered, by reference to the complex but informal regulatory regimes in existence prior to more recent integration into the Norwegian administrative system (Bjørklund 1999a; Paine 1994). A somewhat more complex version of the argument acknowledges the existence of these regimes, but argues that their disintegration in recent years has effectively *created* a tragedy of the commons situation, a runaway system. Some proponents of this line cite the rise of mechanization and increasing profitability demands (e.g. Ness 1999), while others refer the situation back to the State – only this time to the excessive *interventions* pursued in its name, rather than to its inaction or passivity (Bjørklund 2000).

That is to say, in this line of argument, that the present crisis results, not from the profit-maximizing original greed of herders, but from a series of successive interventions that have ignored existing institutions which regulated pasture access and ensured the orderly and sustainable utilization of pasture grounds. Uninformed interventions on the part of State agents created a situation where traditional and State regimes of management existed simultaneously but on asymmetric terms: one tacit and supported only by tradition, the other supported by the force of law. The former has had to give way when confronted with the latter, meaning that the mechanisms and institutions that ensured social order in herding – such as reindeer ownership, the *siida* working collective and pasture divisions – have been disrupted. As one herder recently argued on national television, '[b]efore, reindeer owners had their own grazing grounds and ensured that there were not too many reindeer on them. Norwegian authorities have introduced a law of common pastures that dissolves the old boundaries' (*Brennpunkt*, NRK 01.03.05). According to this line of argument, the State has effectively created the very conditions described by Hardin's hypothesis, by dismantling existing regimes of resource management.

Both versions of the argument thus open the way for the State to be held responsible for the present situation, but on diametrically opposite grounds: in the former account, the problem lies with its *insufficient* involvement, while in the latter it is *excessive* involvement that renders it culpable. Local discussions of the crisis also often articulated a moral critique of herders, folk versions of Hardin's hypothesis – the excess of reindeer reflected the disorganized greed of individual herders, who monopolized and exploited resources that were held by the community in order to maximize their herd sizes and further their own interests.

Another question is of course whether the crisis is, in fact, a crisis – discussing local reportage of degraded grazing grounds, for example, the herders I worked with frequently pointed out how photos were taken near reindeer fences around the time of migrations, when reindeer flocked towards the fence and depleted grazing

grounds in its immediate vicinity. Meanwhile, they argued, grazing conditions were in fact quite good, at least on the Varanger peninsula. Their skepticism seems to have been partly vindicated by a scientific report from December 2006, which states that lichen levels across Finnmark have *increased* between 2001 and 2005, despite an accompanying increase of 30 000 reindeer during the same period (NINA 2006). The scientific truth of the crisis, however, has relatively little to do with its efficacy as representation and circulating social fact.

In practice, the various indicators of crisis – a surplus of reindeer 'in the wrong place', degraded pasture grounds, images of starved reindeer littering the tundra – have become indexes of a breakdown in control: whether on the part of herders, or the State, or both. Through this breakdown, reindeer are becoming a nuisance to non-herders, and a problem that requires intervention – such as the erection of a reindeer fence in Hammerfest. Both the crisis and perceptions of a widespread loss of control came to a head during the 2004/2005 slaughtering season, when the Minister of Agriculture decreed that unless the reindeer population in Western Finnmark had been reduced by *more than half* by April 1 2005, from over 140 000 animals to 64 300, the State would introduce enforced slaughter as a culling measure (Joks & Magga 2006; see also Chapter 7). The threat was real and taken seriously by many: herders and politicians protested in the media, and the Mayor of Kautokeino threatened to bring the matter before the United Nations, as a breach of human and indigenous rights under international conventions ('Asks UN for Reindeer Help', *Finnmark Dagblad* 03.11.04; 'Threatens new Kautokeino Uprising', *Sagat* 03.11.04). Simultaneously however, many of my herder informants in Eastern Finnmark scoffed at the threats and took the situation with indifferent calm. Memorably, one of them referred to the Minister as 'a clown, pulling clownish stunts'. It seemed that in threatening to assert or re-assert control in this way, the Minister had over-reached the limits of State power, certainly as my informants understood them, and made both himself and the State the object of mockery and derision. This requires some elaboration.

Poaching and the spaces of the State

The State is a powerful social actor in the context of Norwegian reindeer herding. Through directives and long-term policies, licence systems, fines, subsidies, financial incentives, monitoring and other instruments of regulation and intervention, its presence saturates nearly all aspects of herding practice. It informs and influences the strategies, calculations, projections and decisions of all herders: from when to move the herd, to what kinds of education the younger generation should acquire. Hand in hand with its potent ubiquity, however, comes a strong sense of its limitations. Herders often described it as remote, and its actions and policies as ineffective, contradictory and misguided. One vivid example of this was an incident that occurred during my first slaughtering season, and which caused enormous frustration to some of my key informants.

The State Pollution Monitoring Agency, SFT [Statens Forurensningstilsyn] had rejected an application from the managers of the field abattoir at Krampen to bury the waste from the reindeer slaughter in the traditional manner, in a secluded waste-pit a few hundred yards inland from the corral itself (Figure 2.3). In

previous years, the herders had received dispensation from the regional administrator in Finnmark to dispose of the waste in this way, but this year the application had been forwarded from his office to the SFT and considered there. The SFT had ruled that the waste must now be transported to a biological waste-processing facility and disposed of there, 'according to regulation' and at considerable expense – expenses that would likely paralyze and bankrupt the entire operation, forcing the herders to close shop and return to selling their reindeer to major slaughterhouse operators rather than slaughtering for themselves. The herders argued their case, invoking among other things that when buried in the traditional manner, some of the waste was dug up and consumed by the endangered polar fox population in the area. Their plea was rejected, but a compromise was reached and they were allowed to process their waste at a closer facility, incurring bearable costs. Three months later, another State agency took steps to purchase waste products from the reindeer slaughter in Troms, hundreds of miles to the West, and transport it at the expense of the State *to the Varanger peninsula* – precisely in order to feed the endangered population of polar foxes. Concerning the episode, my informants were furious but resigned: 'See what we have to deal with? The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing'.

This often self-contradictory character of State practices and interventions ensured that its theoretically well-rehearsed duality – as mask and reality, narrative and thing (Abrams 1988) – was an all too evident fact of everyday life to many herders, including those of the group I worked with. The totalizing character of its claims and theories broke down in actual practice. Stories and anecdotes often captured and reconciled these contradictions in images of ponderous incompetence: the State was a 'colossus with clay feet', powerful but ignorant, ill-informed and too remote to act effectively. Throughout, its inability to comprehend local space – along with the goals, practices and values of actors who made use of this space – was a crucial dimension of its ignorance: a lacuna that led to the issue of impossible mandates, bizarre rulings, impracticable regulations. Tales I heard to this effect ranged from the trivial and absurd to the serious: from one pollution inspector who refused to allow offal from 150 slaughtered animals to be buried on the tundra because gases produced by the decomposition process 'would damage the ozone layer', to the constantly reiterated government policy aim to stabilize fluctuating reindeer numbers, without accounting for unpredictable environmental conditions that produced variable mortality rates and required flexible herd sizes.

In the words of one herder informant, this was a problem of spatial comprehension [*romforståelse*] 'on the part of the State' – or rather, to deconstruct her terms, of the actors who did the work of the State. Herders sometimes referred to this as the 'barnyard mentality' of the State, denoting the apparent assumption on the part of administrators and legislators that the spaces of herding were safe, stable, homogeneous and controlled environments, more similar to barns than to the complex, unpredictably variable and dangerous spaces of the tundra. The converse of incomprehension was impotence: not only did the State fail to comprehend space, it also failed to control it. One vivid and ongoing illustration of this lay in its inability to prevent reindeer poaching.

The principal active agent of the State in preventing theft is the reindeer police, a special branch of the

national police force established in 1949 upon request by reindeer herders themselves, whose herds had been decimated with the chaos of the German occupation and the attendant increase in reindeer theft (Bull 1997; NOU 2001). Its original mandate, which remains in force today, was to 'control, enforce and prevent the transgression of laws, regulations and instructions that pertain to reindeer herding and the utilization of nature by the public' (Politiet 2005). As such, its responsibilities extend beyond reindeer herding, to include areas such as salmon fishing, hunting and other activities in nature. To herders, effective policing of their reindeer would have represented one tangible and practical benefit afforded by the State. Beyond this, State protection of reindeer as

Figure 2.3 Reindeer police patrol areas in Finnmark (Varangerbotn Police Station)

private property would be an important means

by which its nominal territorial sovereignty was simultaneously confirmed and exercised: rule of Law, expressed as control over space. According to most herders I spoke to, however, the reindeer police were 'useless'. Their work was coordinated from a central office in Alta which currently counted 14 active servicemen, organised in seven patrols of two servicemen each (Figure 2.3). Six of these patrols operated in Finnmark and one in Troms. Between them, they covered an area of 56 000 square km (Holand 1999) – an impossibly vast territory. The reindeer police lacked the necessary herding knowledge, language skills, cultural competence and contacts, as well as the sheer manpower required to effectively patrol the vast spaces under their jurisdiction. Often their involvement was limited to supervising major round-ups, and nominal patrols. This constant but inefficient presence highlighted to herders the tenuous character of State dominion over space, and over herding spaces in particular – spaces whose very opacity came to mark the limits of its power. In short, the ineffective presence of the reindeer police was simply yet another element to be woven into the dominant narratives of the State, as remote, cumbersome, ill informed, inefficient, ineffective – even obstructive. Through this presence, the State became implicated *in the production of its own limits*, and in the production of spaces that were theoretically inside it but which nevertheless remained beyond its reach.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari contrast the 'smooth' and 'rhizomatic' spaces of the 'nomadic war machine' to the 'striated' and 'arborescent' spaces of the State. The former are 'vectorial, projective or topological' spaces which are 'occupied without being counted' (2002:361-362), 'field[s] without conduits or channels' that do not 'meet the visual condition of being observable from a point in space external to them' and can therefore be explored 'only by legwork' (371). The latter are 'metric', 'homogeneous and centred' forms of space, within which

space is 'counted in order to be occupied' (361-362). Other

Figure 2.4 Administrative map of District 6; key symbols inserted (Reindeer Herding Administration)

shortcomings aside, Deleuze and Guattari's terminological playfulness is less amusing than it is politically suspect – nomadism is 'a category imagined by outsiders' (Humphrey & Sneath 1999:1) and deploying it as a figure of thought in this way re-inscribes it in an exoticising and politically charged history of representation that is centuries old, and of which many herders are themselves quite aware (e.g. Oskal 1999). Also, in

practice, no such simple dichotomy obtains between State and herder space. Particularly over recent decades, administrative systems and categories have become inextricably incorporated into herding practice while conversely, administrative maps have become increasingly complex, coming to reflect indigenous practice in great detail. At one point I asked one of my key informants whether she could sketch out on a map the location of the various cabins, fences and corrals that the herders of her district used. She cast me a bemused look and logged on to the website of the Reindeer Herding Administration, where she accessed their map database and printed out a map of the district, complete with migration routes and installations (Figure 2.4). Studying the map before she printed it out, she expressed surprise at the level of detail and even found an old fence installation, disused for decades, that she had mostly forgotten about herself: 'Oh yes, there *is* an old fence installation there, come to think of it. They found that too, huh. Not bad.'

To temper the essentialism of this State / nomad dichotomy, I find it useful to turn to James Scott's model of the State optic (1998). According to Scott, the key problem confronting States is the production of spaces, populations and practices as *legible*, in such a way that they can be 'centrally recorded and monitored.' The simplifications by which this is accomplished function like 'abridged maps', selectively representing those elements of their object that are relevant to the interests that inform their production. Their principal purpose is 'to strip down reality to the bare bones so that the rules will in fact explain more of the situation and provide a better guide to behaviour'. Through such representations, the complex and unwieldy 'social hieroglyph' of actual practice is rendered in 'a legible and administratively more convenient format' (3). At heart, such simplifications are a matter of power: simplifications and abstractions express the specific interests of actors, and insofar as reality 'can be simplified down to the point where the rules do explain a great deal, those who formulate the rules and techniques have also greatly expanded their power' (303). Allied with state power, 'maps of legibility' not only represent, but also reconstitute what they represent: 'a state cadastral map created to designate taxable property-holders does not merely describe a system of land tenure; it creates such a system through its ability to give its categories the force of the law' (3). That is to say, the cadastral simplifications superimpose themselves on existing spaces and practices, reorganising them:

'schematic representations... are powerful misrepresentations that usually circle back to influence reality. They operate, at a minimum, to generate research and findings most applicable to [those] that meet the description of their schematization... In addition, this standardization is typically linked to public policy in the form of tax incentives, loans, price supports, marketing subsidies, and, significantly, handicaps imposed on enterprises that do not fit the schematization, which systematically operate to nudge reality toward the grid of its observations' (300).

Historically, the project of State-building has involved a productive reordering of space: in terms of agriculture, for example, to replace 'illegible and potentially seditious space' with 'permanent settlements and permanent (preferably monocropped) fields' (282). The production of such simplified State spaces is a matter of social control, of creating legible, manipulable populations and fixing them in space. In themselves, the

simplifications by which this is achieved are elementary and neutral, the 'basic givens of modern statecraft' (3). Their application in the context of social engineering schemes, however, has produced a chain of 'disasters' throughout the 20th century: from Soviet collectivization to failed development projects. Once simplified and represented, a system invariably 'depends for its existence on a "dark twin" of informal practices and experience on which it is, ultimately, parasitic' (270). Scott terms this *dark twin* the 'metis', or the 'informal processes' on which the 'formal scheme' depends but which 'alone, it [can] not create or maintain' (6). In failing to acknowledge this dark twin, authoritarian projects confuse the map with the territory, generating a catastrophic potential that comes into its own at the intersection with three other factors: a 'high-modernist ideology'; a strong or coercive state; and a 'prostrate civil society' incapable of resisting the superimposition of simplified state schemes on local practice (4-5). In short, to Scott, State space is not a stable essence but an ongoing project, superimposing itself on existing spaces of embodied practice and – because of the residual dark twin that is always excluded from representation – a project that always remains necessarily incomplete.

This account slots comfortably into current theoretical debates concerning State territoriality. From the point of view of a sovereign State, the control over space that underpins its territorial sovereignty depends on space itself being produced as transparent and visible – in particular ways, from certain points of view – through practices, technologies, knowledge and representations that order space and, at least theoretically, render its contents manipulable. Such orderings reorganise and transform space, creating the preconditions for the State to 'see', to act on what it 'sees' and to be 'seen' to act – and therefore to exist, in a sense, as an effect of a prior ordering of space. As Sarah Radcliffe argues, 'state territoriality *produces* the effect of a sovereign nation-state' (2001:126; emphasis added). On one level, the rule of law – effected through policing, laws, courts, carceral systems and so on – may thus be an effect or product of the State, but at the same time it is also a technology that establishes the preconditions for the State to control space within its own territory; that is to say, the appearance of a State that is capable of acting is, in itself, *an effect of the prior rule of law*. This is significant, and this is where the persistence of reindeer poaching comes in as a problem: quite simply, the State failed to extend, or to extend completely, the rule of law to the protection of reindeer, and to the prevention of reindeer theft.

To most herders, the inefficiency of the reindeer police was frustrating, but it was also expected – something that could safely be taken for granted, part of a broad canon of stories, anecdotes and experiences that illustrated the limited presence and efficacy of the State, and particularly its limited control over space in Finnmark: from herders having to take the law 'into their own hands' to demolish illegal fences or chase away intruders, to Finnish herders sneaking their reindeer across the border to graze on Norwegian grazing grounds unpunished and undetected. In failing to prevent the theft of reindeer, the reindeer police confirmed the impotence of the State – *precisely* at the point where the State exercised its claims and powers: demonstrating, once again, the anticipated and perfectly predictable gap that separated State theory and rhetoric from State practice. The same disparity between theoretical claims and material capacity to act also

became apparent where the State sought, not to prevent, but to *cause* the death of reindeer. Discussing the State's vaunted threat of forced slaughter, late in 2004, one of my key informants expressed disdain: 'Of course nothing is going to come out of this. How are they going to get the reindeer? They have no idea where to find them!' (see Chapter 7).

Despite centuries of escalation in State control over space, the reindeer themselves continued to evade its gaze, occupying cartographic space in a manner that defied claims to control or dominance. The margin that they and their herders occupied was not only spatial or geographic, but also a margin in the configuration of State power: 'a space between bodies, law and discipline' (Das & Poole 2004:10). In Scott's terms, one might say that the reindeer simultaneously activated and resisted the persistent fantasy of State-making, of a regular, precisely measured and transparently visible space. This multiple marginality was not lost on herders: the remark of my informant anticipates where I am going with my discussion of poaching. The inability of the State to control or prevent poaching marked out clearly and distinctly both the limits to its practical control over space, and the point where these articulated with the limits to its capacity to control the life and death of reindeer – effectively severing the 'unbroken link between state power, sovereignty, and territory' (Hansen & Stepputat 2005:2). As the dark twin of the synoptic spaces marked and represented by State cartography, the practice of poaching thus operated as a limit point that related State control over space to State control over the bodies and lives of reindeer – only to disprove the efficacy of both. I return to this point later in the argument, particularly in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7.

Ownership, sovereignty and social visibility

The main aim of the present chapter has been to provide some necessary background and sketch out certain tensions, issues and relationships – centred on matters of space – that span the remainder of the dissertation and inform the practices and institutions I describe in subsequent chapters. As a practice, the spatial management of reindeer raised questions concerning the status of reindeer as property, the appropriate or moral management of reindeer by herders, and the jurisdiction or control of the State over space, and thus over the reindeer themselves. The perceived lack of appropriate management undermined herder claims to exclusive ownership. As the reindeer appeared increasingly wild, so they also began to be treated more and more as such by non-herders. As they shifted between categories, practices of killing other than slaughter also become more appropriate: slaughtering was supplemented by hunting. Appearances of reindeer 'in the wrong place' were often taken by non-herders as evidence for the carelessness, mismanagement and laziness of their herders; in turn, this worsened the already tense relations between herders and non-herders in the local community. Locally, such incidents weakened and jeopardized the social legitimacy both of herding practice and of claims arising from that practice, such as territorial entitlements and rights to resources. At the administrative level, they prompted efforts – by non-herders – at *ordering*, through practical measures such as erecting fences and similar regulatory or controlling interventions.

Let me return to the reindeer-hunting proposal I discussed earlier. I suggested then that the inflexible

opposition of herders to the introduction of reindeer hunting was, at least in part, rooted in their awareness of the thin, frequently indistinct line that separated extensively herded reindeer from wild game in local discourses and imaginations, and the need to patrol this line. More than the prevention of theft and of capital loss were at stake here, however. The outrage and repugnance with which many herders responded to the proposal, and the intensity with which it was rejected as 'patently absurd', also expressed a powerful symbolic link – central to herding practice – between the institution of ownership and the practice of killing. Robert Paine has argued that the pastoral self-identification of Sámi herders is intimately tied to their control over the life-cycle of their animals, including the manner in which they are disposed, and that '[t]his goes beyond which animals to slaughter and when... to consideration of the manner in which the slaughtering is done and by whom' (1994:113). This is corroborated by my own material.

Who is entitled to kill reindeer? On one level, certainly according to herding custom, the answer is simple: herders. Traditionally, both the kill itself and decisions concerning it belonged to the herder that owned the reindeer. Of course these could be delegated – for example to kin, associates or hired labour – but the moment and practice of killing nevertheless remained personally important to many herders: both as elements of the institution of ownership and, more generally, as central constituents of herder identity, of *what it means to be a herder* (Habeck 2003); I develop this point in subsequent chapters. In the meantime, I note merely that in the context of the hunting proposal, the notion of abrogating control over the practice of killing by delegating it to outsiders – who knew nothing of reindeer, who might kill the animals inappropriately or painfully, or kill the wrong ones – was intolerable to herders for reasons that went well beyond calculations of loss and profit but which arose, rather, from a cultural logic of herding and from the particular symbolic significance traditionally attached to the linkage between ownership and killing.

To the traditional monopoly of herders on the killing of reindeer, legal regulation adds as a caveat that the State is also, under certain circumstances, entitled to kill reindeer or designate them for death. These circumstances include the inspections of individual veterinarians, when unsuitable animals are eliminated prior to commercial slaughtering, as well as more radical large-scale measures such as culling and forced slaughter. The latter come into force as regulatory measures, to re-establish control in response to a perceived loss of control on the part of herders.

In practice, as one might expect, things were more complicated than this. *Entitlement* was a somewhat fluid concept and, as I have outlined, at least some local non-herders argued that herders forfeited the exclusive prerogatives of ownership by 'not managing their animals properly', allowing them to fall increasingly under the terms of a logic of hunting. This went some way towards justifying theft, as well as giving rise to criticisms and tension. While enshrined in both tradition and the law, through the property status of reindeer, in practice the prerogative of herders to monopolize reindeer killing also needed to be maintained, and patrolled, through the ongoing practices that I have described here. Failing these, the right to kill began to pass to other actors: informally, to locals who considered themselves entitled to kill the reindeer, and formally, to actors such as local authorities and, ultimately, the State. The theoretical ability of the latter to

intervene in the lives of reindeer however – whether to prevent them from being poached, to kill them directly or to designate them for death – was effectively circumscribed by its limited control over space.

Back to Foucault. Earlier, in Chapter 1, I discussed how he outlined two branches of biopower: the disciplinary power that vested itself in individual bodies, and its cognate biopolitics, which constituted entire populations as the objects of knowledge, manipulation, intervention and control. In the same lecture, he also distinguished between two rights over life: with the advent of biopower, the sovereign prerogative 'to kill and let live' was complemented by a new right 'to make live and let die' (2003:241). In passing, Foucault termed this emergent power, that complemented the old power of sovereignty, the power of 'regularization' (247) – it is also referred to simply as *discipline*, or 'anatomy-politics'. He thus identified two symmetrical powers over life: one older power of traditional sovereignty, that 'makes die' and 'permits' life, and one more recent power that 'makes live' and 'permits' death – or rather, 'disallow[s life] to the point of death' (1998:138). Foucault argued that the ascendancy of this new power coincided with the decline, or at least the transformation, of traditional sovereignty. Developing this line of thought, subsequent writers have rearranged the terms slightly: for example, by defining sovereignty itself as the 'power over life and death' (Das & Poole 2004:25) and pairing biopolitics with terms such as 'thanatopolitics' (Agamben 1998) or 'necropolitics' (Mbembe 2003) to map the relationship between the power that makes live and the power that makes die. Redefined in these terms, the term sovereignty *expands* to become an umbrella term that encompasses both *biopolitical* power – the power that makes live and 'disallows' to the point of death – and its complement, the *necropolitical* or *thanatopolitical* power that exercises the right to kill. Rather than sovereignty and biopolitics being complementary opposites, it becomes meaningful instead to speak of two *parallel forms* of sovereignty, as the 'power over life and death': biopolitical and necropolitical sovereignty. The distinction between these two becomes crucial to the argument at the end of Chapter 6.

Of course, the term *sovereignty* is itself problematic: it has a long, complex and highly charged history, particularly in the political sciences, and its use in the context of herder-reindeer relations might easily be taken for example to imply hierarchic relations between regents and subjects, masters and subordinates, reproducing overly simple assumptions about human domination – assumptions that may interfere with the ethnographically accurate description of these relations. In a narrow and specifically Foucauldian register, however, the term is apt and useful: as Achille Mbembe argues, 'the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides... in the power and the capacity to define who may live and who must die' (2003:1). Clearly, the definition captures a fundamental dynamic of reindeer management, where humans select reindeer for slaughter and killing (and not vice versa). With its two subordinate terms, it provides a useful angle of approach to the problems and issues I have described in this chapter. For the moment, I will only note two points: one, that the efforts of herders to patrol boundaries and prevent other actors from hunting, stealing and killing their reindeer were aimed at maintaining their claim to exclusive sovereignty over their own reindeer, a sovereignty enshrined in the traditional institution of ownership but increasingly jeopardized by changing conditions on the tundra. Secondly, the State claimed the ability and the power to exercise both

biopolitical and *necropolitical* sovereignty: the former by *preventing* forms of death such as poaching, the latter by *inflicting* death in the form of culled and forced slaughter. The exercise of both these powers on the part of the State was linked to its control over space. Effectively, this control marked the *limit* of its access to and control over the bodies that occupied space: in practice, these limits were demonstrated by its inability to exercise either form of sovereignty effectively. Reindeer poaching continued more or less unabated and, as I return to later, the threatened cull never happened (Chapter 7).

In closing, in this chapter I have outlined aspects of the complex, socially constituted forms of sovereignty that are exercised over reindeer, and some of the ways in which their character and legitimacy were linked to questions of space and spatial management in the marginal environment of the tundra. The problems I have discussed here are not a new phenomenon: herders have shared their territories with non-herders for centuries, in the Varanger area as elsewhere, and practices such as reindeer theft have existed as a problem for nearly as long. In recent decades, however, a combination of factors have crystallized the issues and raised the stakes. Trends such as escalating tourism, growth in real estate development, rise in recreational use of space by non-herders and the increasing mechanization of traditional practices, including hunting, fishing and cloudberry harvesting, have accentuated the multiply utilized character of space and created new conflicts. Simply put, there are more people on the tundra, and people are using space in new and sometimes mutually exclusive ways. One effect of these changing stakes in the landscape, and the overall escalation in use of space, has been to create, for herders, a situation where the appropriate – and *visible* – management of the herd becomes more and more important to managing social relations with non-herders, and to maintaining the social legitimacy of herding practice itself. As more and more actors lay claim to space, herders and their reindeer become more and more *visible*, both physically and socially. Social pressure creates the political need to be seen to manage the reindeer – responsibly – and for social strategies that prevent the perceptions of mismanagement, or inappropriate management, from escalating.

In this regard, strategies that visibly confirmed and enacted control over the herd also acquired the character of an ongoing *performance* – in an almost theatrical sense – directed at an audience of critical observers and aimed at establishing, not only physical, but also symbolic and moral control over the animals. One aspect of this work of making visible was keeping reindeer out of proscribed spaces and preventing incidents that bespoke breakdowns of control. Another aspect of this work was slaughtering – appropriately, at the right time and in sufficient quantities. Particularly against the backdrop of the reindeer crisis, the practice of slaughtering acquired a layer of additional social significance, as the principal technique for actively reducing herd sizes. Being seen to slaughter reindeer, preferably in large numbers, represented one way for herders to address the critiques and accusations they were subject to on account of their inappropriate management, deflating tensions through a visible reassertion of control. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the highly visible annual round-up at the Krampen corral provided a key arena for this – a *stage* for the visible performance or enactment of appropriate control – as well also serving in other ways as a vital social space that connected the herders to the local community.

Chapter 3 A carousel of slaughter

'The herd chases round and round in the great corral, like a carousel, the snow creaks and gives way – frosted breath hangs white in the air over the animals. A small group is separated out, the herders make up a small posse using sackcloth and chase the animals into a smaller fence of boards and walls with sliding gates. The boldest helpers and owners are in there in the confusion that chases round and round the enclosure, occasionally a reindeer or two lurch over the backs of the other animals. Then, one after the other, strong hands grab hold of an antler – they've spotted the earmark... Behind my back shots start being fired, a man waves a slaughter-mask around – a reindeer here, a reindeer there receive a red rose in the forehead, it spreads out like a dangerous flower, a flame hisses through the snow into the earth – and the reindeer collapses, hind leg kicking. Or a knife pierces the neck, the reindeer jerks, the lower lip droops. They are dragged in to the buyers, led by the hand – in the tents the knives flash, steaming carcasses – thrown up and hung to cool and be frozen. They end up on the scales, and each has its mark and number recorded. Skinning and gutting goes well, these are skilled boys. Animals that are not to be slaughtered, are let out – and a new group is driven in from the main herd in the larger fence, by the men who swoop down on the animals and drive them into the trap, a whiff of the old days when the Sámi hunted and chased reindeer into such stone enclosures on the Varanger tundra. Ancient days hang over the scene, and the sacrifice. But there were no lassos, so they only walk with the lasso across their bellies... Private individuals try to get themselves a reindeer... People in Krampenenes who house the Sámi also need meat for the household. Down there, there are reindeer people in every house, and open doors – people wander among the houses, talking – one Sámi sleeps exhausted on the bed, another one is having himself some coffee at the table... It is the annual sacrificial feast at Krampenenes, winter is here, darkness falls across the township... There will be work into the evening. Artificial suns glow and flood across the snow. It has been a good summer for the reindeer, they have grown well. Now they prepare for harder and darker times. The Varanger herd crosses towards the winter pastures on the south side... Ravens float in the dark above us, in the night-shade foxes lurk – waiting for the evening meal' (Sundve 1990:123-124).

Erling Sundve was a local essayist and outdoorsman from the Varanger peninsula, close friend to several generations of the local herders and a frequent visitor to their camps. Though some details have changed, his description holds true today as it did in the early 1970s: the autumn round-up of the Varanger herders at Krampenenes remains an impressive spectacle. The slaughtering tents and the local buyers have mostly disappeared, and slaughter-masks have been replaced by captive-bolt stunning pistols, but the reindeer are still caught by hand, and the herd still circles the enclosures 'like a carousel'. His image captures some of the overall atmosphere of the event, too: a festive, almost carnivalesque air infuses the intense, exhausting work of the corral. For a few days in late autumn, the steady rhythms of everyday herder life are suspended and kin, friends and strangers alike descend on the site of the corral: to watch, socialise, re-connect, slaughter or

just to purchase a few reindeer tongues for the winter. All the while, in the background, the herd churns in the enclosures. For many, herders and non-herders alike, this is the closest they ever get to a live reindeer.

There are two main types of fences, or fence installations, in Norwegian reindeer herding. Both are referred to as 'fences' [*gjerder*] in everyday parlance, but it is important to distinguish between them. The first and older type are the conventional territorial fences that mark boundaries and block the movements of reindeer between designated areas, such as districts and pasture grounds. In the Varanger area, the earliest of these were set up in connection with the border closures to Russia and Finland, in the mid-19th century (NOU 2001). The other and more recent type are the enclosed compounds that Sundve describes, which are used to contain and manage the reindeer during round-ups. Technically these are more appropriately termed corrals than fences; there are several types, differentiated according to use. 'Marking fences' [*merkegjerder*] are used simply for marking calves, while 'separation fences' [*skillegjerder*] are used for more complex operations that require separating out particular animals, or groups of animals, from the herd. 'Slaughtering fences' [*slaktegjerder*], finally, combine these functions with the out-take of animals for commercial slaughter. In practice the various types of corral look very similar, with only minor structural differences to distinguish between them.

The current autumn corral in District 6 is of the latter type – a slaughtering fence – and it is situated in the highlands of the peninsula a couple of miles inland from the hamlet of Krampen. An uneven dirt road through the middle of the hamlet leads past the house of the doctor, up to the

Figure 3.1 The round-up corral at Krampen

inland plateau where the corral sits on the shore of a small lake. On a first approach by road, it rises over the crest of a hill – a dark and imposing structure of ageing wooden walls, jutting posts and wire. On closer inspection, the opaque exterior dissolves to reveal a confusing and labyrinthine inner topology of platforms, enclosures and sloping corridors (Figure 3.1). The walls are there to be climbed, adding to the spatial disorientation of the newcomer. Most of the year the corral stands empty, barring the occasional inspection or maintenance work to replace damaged and decaying sections. For a few days each year however, during the autumn round-up, it becomes a dense locus of activity. Engines chug, four-wheelers rumble, grunting reindeer circle in the enclosures, antlers butting the wooden walls. Animals for private out-take are dragged out from the corral through side exits, slaughtered on the grass or snow with knives and loaded onto the backs of waiting pick-up trucks. On the other side of the corral, animals headed for the nearby slaughterhouse are loaded onto transports and taken elsewhere. From the abattoir trailer comes a steady chorus of clanking hooks, whirring cranes and saws, moving belts and crunching bones. Everywhere there are shouts and calls. Children climb the walls and perch over corrals, watching the adults and teenagers at work inside. Others play with discarded reindeer parts, practising their carving skills on hooves and heads (Figure 3.2). Older women sit around the slaughtering grounds stirring buckets of blood, to keep it from congealing, or tidying guts and offal away onto trailers. For a while during the 2004/2005 season, a Scottish

chef in bloodied overalls was collecting discarded innards and offal from the skip next to the abattoir trailer, for speciality dishes. Everywhere there are the smells, colours, sounds and textures of the slaughter: thick red blood caking on the concrete, grey guts drying in the sun, wet furs nailed to the fence-walls, body parts underfoot.

Dates for the round-up are set by the district committee weeks in advance, after consultations among the herders of the district. A rented helicopter is sent out to gather part of the main herd from the summer pasture grounds and drive it towards Krampenes. The main herd is large, and two or three separate round-ups are usually required before all the

animals have gone through the corral. Once a thousand animals

Figure 3.2 Herder children practising on a reindeer head.

or more have been gathered, the reindeer are then driven into the so-called grazing enclosure [*beitenhagen*], a large open area of grazing grounds that surrounds the central compound. Each day during the round-up some animals are gathered together from this area, using either snowmobiles or all-terrain four-wheelers, and driven into the main compound. The initial group is kept grazing in the area around the compound until all, or nearly all animals have passed through the fence and been marked, castrated, medically treated or slaughtered. Once all the animals have passed through and the initial group has been driven out of the grazing enclosure, there is usually a short break in the work before the helicopter is sent out again.

When there are animals in the corral, work for the day usually starts before the crack of dawn, when the men go out to inspect the animals that have been gathered that day. Once driven from the grazing grounds into the compound, the reindeer are initially kept within large holding enclosures. When the time comes, they are driven through a wide corridor that leads into the smaller central enclosure, one batch at a time. This is usually the work of the young boys of the family group, who separate out small groups and drive them into the connecting corridor by running after them, shouting and waving their arms. Once sufficient animals have been driven into the corridor, the gate of the holding enclosure is closed behind them. The reindeer are skittish and easily startled: often they have to be driven several times up and down the corridor before they finally enter the enclosure. Once inside they start circling, while herders and helpers who were lined up along the inside walls move in and start grabbing hold of individual animals. The reindeer are caught as they run past, usually by the antlers. The larger and more powerful old bulls are targeted first, to separate them out from the calves, cows and younger animals, and taken into the smaller pens that open on the central enclosure. These are strong and often unruly animals, with large antlers, and sometimes three or four experienced men are required to subdue one and force it into the appropriate pen. Often they are grabbed first by the hind leg rather than the antlers, to immobilize them partially before approaching.

In general, handling the fast, skittish and stressed animals at close quarters is physically demanding – for animals and handlers alike. The work requires strength and skill, both to catch the animals and to avoid injuries to self and others. Within the confined and crowded space of the enclosure, a failed grab can have dangerous consequences: an imbalanced animal continuing its deflected trajectory can tumble into other

animals, handlers or the walls of the enclosure, gouging eyes or causing other serious injury. In practice, the work of handling the animals therefore tends to be apportioned by age and gender. The strongest and most experienced male herders deal with the larger bulls, while women and teenagers handle the smaller animals. The youngest children try their hands with the calves, sometimes supervised by older women. Once caught, the animals are examined and the necessary operations are performed. This involves the marking of unmarked animals – either with ear-marks or with marks and numbers that are cut lightly in the fur or spray-painted – as well as medical treatments such as vaccinations and anti-parasitics. Most of the animals are then dragged off to one of the gates that line the walls and released into one of the holding enclosures. Those that are to be slaughtered are taken into one of the holding pens inside the compound, the so-called offices [*kontorer*]. From here, animals are either slaughtered on site or moved onto transports for slaughter elsewhere: the former are taken from the holding pens into the even smaller stunning pens that adjoin the slaughtering areas.

When I first arrived in Finnmark, the social and practical importance of such working corrals caught me somewhat by surprise. The key monographs make relatively little mention of them. Robert Paine, for example, conducted most of his fieldwork for *Herds of the Tundra* (1994) in the 1950s and 1960s, at a time when the corrals were first being introduced: the first working corrals in the Varanger area were erected around 1950 (Wikan 1997). Before then, round-ups were much more laborious operations: reindeer were usually gathered in large open spaces and separated manually, using ropes, dogs and human labour. Writing from the area immediately to the south-east of the Varanger peninsula, the Norwegian ethnographer Ørnulv Vorren described the laborious task of separating two mixed herds with this method, on the cusp of its disappearance, in his 1951 treatise *Reindeer Herding and Nomadism in the Varanger Area*:

'The work begins with the unsorted herd being driven out on a mountain lake or a swamp solid enough to walk on. The foreign herders and the locals each go to one side of the herd and drive as many as possible of their animals to their own side. When this has been done as thoroughly as possible, the herd is divided into two by people from each side walking through it, making a passage. Subsequently, the foreign animals on each side are picked out by pursuing each individual animal with a long stick and prodding it, until it is driven out of the herd and crosses over to the other herd. When no more animals can be separated out by this method, the two herds are sent out to graze for the night, each on its own side. The next day the herd containing the least foreign animals is led down to the water. These are now captured with lassos and tied to bushes around the water. Then the herd is led away again while the herd with the most foreign animals is led down to the water and the bound animals are set loose. The next day the latter herd is gathered. The animals that do not belong to the herd are picked out with lassos and bound. Then finally the two herds are led off to graze in their respective areas again. Such a separation often took several days. If there were more than two herds involved, the divisions had to be repeated. If it was a matter of relatively few animals belonging to an individual reindeer herder the case was easier. The foreign animals could then be

picked out using either lassos or sticks. In such a case one might bring along some of one's own animals. When separation took place using sticks, animals separated out from the herd could seek these animals out, and when throwing ropes were used the separated animals could be set loose among the brought animals and watch kept on them' (Vorren 1951:34-35).

Particularly during winter, this process was phenomenally time-consuming and difficult: 'separation of reindeer used to take a long time and required long bright working days', Vorren notes laconically⁷. Labour-saving as they were, these corrals or fences were not adopted without some controversy. When the first one was set up in the Varanger area, at Stuorraduottar near Vestre Jakobselv, local historian Øystein Nilsen states that one elder herder from the district refused to participate, saying that '[n]ow they're about to destroy the animals completely' (1998:113). The fences would concentrate work in time and facilitate it. Their adoption would permit a more extensive herding style, involving less contact with animals and therefore, in turn, less domesticated animals. Herders would spend less time with the animals, and behavioural traits such as ease of handling would become less important in selecting for slaughter.

The elder herder's line of thinking positioned the fence squarely within a familiar and widespread narrative – among herders and non-herders, as well as academics – that links progressive extensification to dangerous technologies that alienate herders from their reindeer, producing ever-widening fissures and compromising the integrity of herding practice. I will not attempt here to specify how the adoption of working corrals may or may not have played into processes of long-term extensification; causality in this matter of technological adoption is something on which the scholars – and herders – disagree (Paine 1994:220). On the one hand, the labour-saving fences concentrated and facilitated work with the animals, perhaps easing long-term transition to a more extensive herding form. On the other hand, their adoption in the first place might equally well have represented an adjustment to factors that were already driving extensification elsewhere. Either way, what is clear is that the working corral today has become an indispensable instrument of herding practice. The idea of conducting a round-up without one is inconceivable. Even the staunchest critics of new technologies, whether herders or not, do not advocate a return to the days when reindeer were gathered in the open, on frozen lakes and mountain-tops. For whatever reason, the working corral has evaded the kind of criticism that continues to be directed at tools such as the snowmobile, which is a technological innovation of comparable age (Pelto 1973).

Matters of knowledge

One does not learn to be a herder, or at least not a *proper* herder, without handling reindeer. Consequently, on

⁷ In the same passage, he also briefly discusses the introduction of so-called working corrals: 'herders have begun to employ the fixed separation fences that are also common in northern Finland. Animals are captured with lassos and led to so-called 'offices' (individual enclosures for separated reindeer, adjoining the main enclosure). At these fences the work of separation is considerably eased. One reindeer owner can participate in multiple separations and thus in a shorter time attain control over most of his lost animals. To a considerable extent, the opportunities for theft given in the situation where foreign reindeer for extended periods of time remain in a herd and even procreate there are eliminated. The calf in such cases can easily receive the mark of the herder' (1951:35).

my first day in the corral I was set the task that no one else wanted to do, given a deeply unfamiliar axe and set to cleave reindeer skulls at the back of the corral, in the rain. With ill-disguised glee, one passing herder shouted to me across the slaughtering grounds: 'That's it! You can't *read* your way to reindeer herding, can you, you'll miss the whole point!' And he grinned, making a sweeping gesture that encompassed the slaughtering grounds, the slick wet wood of the fence, the bloodied pelts laid out in rows in the rain and the towering heap of grinning, half-flayed reindeer heads next to me. I kept my thoughts to myself and shouted something vaguely affirmative back at him. On its own, the anecdote reflects the widespread concern, within the herder community, with warding against the ascendancy of 'theoretical' and 'bookish' knowledge at the expense of practice. More specifically, by putting me to do the 'dirty work', the herders were not only testing me in a humorous manner – testing, so to speak, what side of the fence I would come down on – but also trying to correct the ongoing failure of academic and theoretical writing to capture and engage with the practical aspects of their own herding work.

With increasing extensification, the dominant trend is for herders to spend less and less time handling reindeer. The reindeer themselves have become skittish and wary of human presence. The herd is often widely dispersed, and herders commute to it from home, mostly keeping an eye on the animals from a distance – with binoculars for example. Given this situation, the working corral and the time of the round-up have become the key point for embodied, physical contact between herders and reindeer. In didactic terms, it is where young herders acquire their practical familiarity with reindeer and learn to physically handle the animals. Within the corral, skills and abilities can be tried out and developed in the context of practical work. Trial, example and emulation are central to the herder pedagogy, and the corral provides an informal spatial and social arena for teaching, practice and the acquisition of a herder *habitus*.

Elina Helander has argued that the *lavvo*, a herder tent made from reindeer skin and used to set up camps, used to function as a 'centre of calculation' within the traditional knowledge system of Scandinavian reindeer herding. In the *lavvo* people met, socialized, discussed, narrated experiences, commented and generalized within a physical space and a social setting that was exempt from the everyday: a kind of special, dedicated herding space (Helander & Kailo 1998). As herders increasingly spend less continuous time out on the tundra, this function has declined somewhat, but the working corral plays a similar role; as a collective space of encounter, it plays host to the 'interminable conversations' by means of which the discrimination, judgement and general knowledge required to make swift and correct decisions in the field is developed (Paine 1994). Much of this knowledge is transmitted and developed conversationally, through questions, comments, discussion, corrections, elaborations, anecdotes, criticism, disagreements and discussion (Nergård 2006). Often, such verbalization operates in conjunction with the physical environment of the fence and the presence of the animals themselves. Watching through cracks in the fence, herders discuss the traits and qualities of particular animals, and younger herders ask their elders questions: how to deal with particular situations, how to treat the animals correctly and so on. Weather conditions prompt observations, recollections, comparisons and predictions. The corral thus serves as locus for the transmission, not only of

practical physical skills, but also of vocabulary, values and knowledge that are encoded and communicated in a context-sensitive form, as narratives, anecdotes, comparisons and observations, and which are not easily abstracted, recorded or transmitted in other contexts.

Somewhat curiously, images of the working corral frequently circulate as emblems of effective modernization; often, on websites and in official literature or reports, photographs of corrals will be tagged as 'efficient' and 'modern' installations (e.g. Sandberg 1997:57;), sometimes contrasted to the more primitive arrangements of the past: tents, wooden structures and field slaughter. Given their historically recent introduction, such periodization is perhaps understandable: nevertheless, the tag-line of 'modern' also conceals the ways in which the corral is consciously and strategically utilised, by herders, to formulate *responses* to trends and phenomena associated with modernization. Hugh Beach asks 'who controls the process of Sámi herder enskilment?' (2000:185). In Norwegian herding, factors such as mechanization, changing management forms and the declining amounts of time spent in the field by herders, particularly children, are widely blamed for disrupting the transmission of traditional knowledge. The problem is two-fold, however: herding practice has itself also changed rapidly, and the skills and knowledges of older generations become redundant and obsolete as the practices and management forms that they pertain to change and disappear. The loss of complex herding terminology, for example (Eira 1984, Jernsletten 1997), reflects not only the disruption of its transmission, but also its declining usefulness in modern herding practice. Ivar Bjørklund (2004) has argued that reduced control over pasture access and limited opportunities for 'traditional cooperation' have led to a shift in emphasis in animal management, from 'control over individual animals' to 'control over the herds as such'. Direct control over individual animals – and familiarity with their personal histories – is no longer required, nor realistic. Instead, 'herders have... developed management forms where they only exercise control over individual animals when it is necessary. These occasions are when herders earmark the calves, separate the herds, and select animals for slaughter' (134-135). Within such management forms, domesticity becomes *increasingly redundant* and the animals can be allowed to revert to a state of relative wildness. Among other things, this has important implications for the knowledge required of herders: the shift results in 'a loss of knowledge related to the single animals and their habitat'. To Bjørklund, this loss must be understood as a question of redundancy, produced by the changing requirements of practice. As he argues, '[t]he critical knowledge these days concerns herd management and the use of modern technology, not behavioural or biological characteristics among individual animals' (135). Considered in these terms, the crucial question concerning traditional knowledge becomes not only whether it can be preserved, but rather whether and how its relevance can be ensured: the alternative to relevance is, at best, museumization. As I have suggested so far, the working corral served to ensure the reproduction and transmission of skills and knowledge. It was also used to ensure the material and social conditions of possibility for certain skills and knowledges to remain relevant in the context of herding practice – for example, those associated with the extraction and elaboration of raw materials from the reindeer carcass. This is the subject I turn to in the next section.

The labour of the corral

As I have already noted, during the autumn round-up activities at the Krampenes corral were divided by lines of gender and, to a lesser degree, age. The women never tired of pointing out to me what the men were doing and, pointedly, what they were not doing. The men did all the exciting work, from wrestling unruly bulls in the central enclosure to driving the animals around with four-wheelers. Conversely, the women did most of the back-stage work: menial, repetitive chores such as flaying legs and skulls, salting and drying the furs, brewing coffee. They also helped out with the practical work of slaughter and *duodji*, or traditional Sámi handicrafts: cleaning the concrete floor of the slaughtering area, stirring buckets of blood, extracting sinews, tidying away guts. Much of the traditional work with reindeer by-products was conducted in small groups that gathered around the perimeter of the fence (Figure 3.3). These groups operated almost as small workshops, with the elder and more experienced women instructing and correcting the practice of the young. Sometimes entire classes of schoolchildren on excursions would join in, to learn and practice traditional handicraft skills. In a similar manner to the work with live animals for the boys, these workshops played an important part in the reproduction of female skills and knowledge. They also provided a space for experimentation and development, as well as the transmission of new knowledge.

Let me give an example of the latter point. Early on in the 2004 slaughter, I was being taught to flay reindeer legs by a female herder, a craftswoman who ran a sideline business making traditional handicrafts from the by-products of the slaughter. Among other things, she used the skins from the legs and heads to make traditional Sámi shoes [*skaller*]. After a while her older sister, who ran the mobile slaughterhouse operation on the site, also joined in –

though not without repeated prodding and mockery, along

Figure 3.3 Herder women flaying reindeer legs during the round-up.

the lines of 'Eeh, you think you're too good for this kind of work, don't you?' Very soon, however, she became impatient with the slow pace of the work and decided to demonstrate an alternative technique for flaying legs that she had learned a few years earlier from a Siberian herder at a conference of the Association of World Reindeer Herders [WRH]. My teacher had never heard of the method and was surprised. We tried it out on a few legs, but she decided it was impractical and not suitable to her purposes: true, the skin was more easily removed, but it also remained attached to the hoof in a way that increased the risk of damaging it on removal, reducing its usefulness for shoe-making. My teacher considered the new method, then opted to discard it in favour of the traditional one she was already using.

The lines separating male and female labour were mapped by the physical structure of the corral. Male labour was located in the enclosures, in the interior of the fence and the slaughtering areas, while female labour was conducted principally on the outside and along the periphery of the fences. The lines were clear, but also permeable. In theory at least, the work in the central enclosure was open to everyone, though the bulk of herders on the inside tended to be male while women occupied a supportive position on the margins – partly, as I noted, for reasons of physical strength. Girls with an interest in the more physically intensive,

typically male aspects of herding practice could enter the enclosures freely: sometimes they were even encouraged and taken in by older male relatives. Such movement tended to take place from the female spaces to the male ones rather than vice versa. Most of the men had some familiarity with traditional handicraft practices, but the work of flaying and cleaving was generally left to the women – not without a degree of good-natured mockery and jeers from the female camp⁸.

At first sight, this gendered organization of labour seems to reflect simply the traditional distribution of tasks within the herding household, or *baikki* (Sara 2001). On closer inspection however, it becomes clear how it is not so much *reproducing* this distribution as re-articulating it, in response to changing conditions. Since at least as far back as the middle of the 20th century, one of the dominant trends in Norwegian reindeer herding has been a progressive masculinization of practice (Enoksen 1998; Karlstad et al. 2002; LMD 2004a). Over this period, the traditional family-based labour unit, premised on the participation of all family members in a more or less flexible capacity, has been phased out in favour of a situation where the industry is largely dominated by men, and particularly young men. This is a complex trend, and a range of factors have played a role, from changing consumption patterns and the increasing integration of children into the school system, to the increasing orientation towards mono-crop meat production and the rise of double-income households where both parents are in full-time employment (Nilsen & Mosli 1994). The net result is that the labour of women, children and old people has come to play an increasingly marginal role in the everyday activities of herding. Meanwhile, male labour has remained conspicuously visible and in fact enjoys a raised prestige, associated with the outdoor life, physical danger and machismo. Other aspects of herding labour, including particularly the labour of women, have been mostly re-located out of sight and into the private and domestic spheres.

These practices that do not involve direct work with the reindeer continue to exist, but they have come to mean something rather different – particularly in relation to the ongoing and visible labour of the men. For one thing, there has been a *loss of prestige*, which in turn creates problems for recruitment. In recent years this situation has come to the attention of policy-makers, and a number of reports have been published on the matter (e.g. Karlstad et al. 2002). One recent report, with which one of my key informants from Krampenes was involved as a consultant, formulates the situation in these terms:

[b]eing a reindeer owner is defined as being active in relation to the herd (*siidadoallu*), only the direct work with the reindeer is valued. Women that perform the same tasks as men in reindeer herding constitute a minority. Many women have not been taught to work directly with reindeer, but with *baikedoallu* (a household cooperative involving complex work-tasks)' (LMD 2004a:6).

One effect of the segregation of herding labour into visible and invisible domains is that male and female labour have become separated by a gulf in status and prestige. The trend is further reinforced by the fact that many women who remain in the industry, or return after acquiring higher education, become involved in

8 Interestingly, the one male herder I met who worked extensively with traditional handicraft practices at the corral was also identified – by himself and others – as homosexual (Giertsen 2003).

other invisible domains, rather than the practical work with animals: for example logistics, finance, management, marketing and political work. This was certainly the case among the herders I worked with in District 6, where nearly all the women had highly trained jobs outside the herding industry. Against this backdrop, the political significance of making female labour visible in the context of the round-up and the corral becomes clearer: not only does its relocation into a shared social space facilitate the transmission and development of relevant skills and knowledge, but it also contributes to re-establishing its association with the practical side of herding work. Several of the herder women I spoke to were quite clear on this subject. The work of women needed to be made to appear attractive and worthy of respect – both from the youngsters and from the men – and the corral represented an ideal venue for this: for one, because it represented a kind of privileged or exceptional space, with powerful positive associations.

A privileged space

It was late in the 2004 slaughtering season, and I had dropped by the house of the couple who ran the slaughterhouse operation at Krampenens for an interview. Unfortunately, the wife was not in and the husband was on his way to check some of the reindeer fences in the inland, but I had a brief chat with him while he loaded up the snowmobile. I commented that the round-up was a lot of hard work, they were both working around the clock and looked quite exhausted. He laughed and replied: 'Ah, you know, the work is hard but we don't mind. There is plenty of time to sit there alone in your little house when the long dark winter comes.' His words echoed a more widespread feeling among herders: that the often back-breaking work of the round-up was not just work in the common sense, but also an intensely satisfying and pleasurable activity that many looked forward to every year. The autumn round-up at Krampenens was one of the key periods of activity in the herding calendar of District 6, as well as being one of its social highlights. A seeming infinity of practical details had to be coordinated: not only did the animals have to be rounded up and sufficient human labour coordinated within the district, but the helicopter had to be transported from Sweden, with the Swedish pilot; fuel for the diesel generators must be secured in sufficient quantities to keep the cooler vans operational through the night; fresh-water tanks must be kept filled for sterilizing the slaughtering equipment; inspecting veterinarians must be on call to inspect the carcasses; and a range of other details, great and small. During the round-up, herders got up before dawn to inspect the animals and worked sometimes until well after dark. After hours at the corral, many of them then went drinking with friends they had not seen since the last round-up, crashing out in the early hours of the morning only to get up a few hours later to inspect the animals. In short, the time of the round-up was characterised by intense activity, which contributed to creating an atmosphere of exception, of an extraordinary sociality at odds with the social rhythms of the quotidian.

The round-up also operated as a kind of social gathering point. Children were allowed time off from school to participate, and kin and family in other employment took their holidays or sick-leave in order to help out with the work. Kin and associates that normally lived far away or had other obligations could attend, precisely because of the concentrated, compacted character of activities during the round-up. The structure of

the corral itself contributed to this: it is difficult to imagine how the more time-consuming manual round-ups I described earlier might have been reconciled with the demands of contemporary living. This fact made the corral and the round-up doubly important in the ambit of the social life of herders in the district. Emigration from Finnmark is a recognized and powerful trend, and the threat of negative population growth is considered a social problem throughout the region (e.g. Berglund, Johansson & Molina 2005, the final report from a multi-sited three-year research project aptly titled 'Women Leave, Men Remain'). Young people in particular – many of them women – tend to move away, either permanently or for extended periods of time, often to pursue employment or higher education in the South, frequently in Tromsø or Oslo – a fact incessantly reiterated and complained about by local men. In this respect, the autumn round-up served to gather the dispersed networks of kin and associates. Absent relatives returned home for the round-up, often bringing their partners, spouses and children. Early on during my first round-up, I was somewhat startled to discover that the rugged and competent herdsman driving pistons into calves' heads in the stunning pen turned out to have a perfect southern accent and was, in fact, a Norwegian real-estate agent from Oslo, partnered with a herder from the district who worked in an Oslo supermarket.

The work of the round-up thus helped maintain active kinship ties and reproduce social bonds, providing an excuse for friends and relatives that lived far apart to catch up in person, despite long distances and extended periods of absence. In this sense, it acted as a kind of centripetal counterpoint to powerful social forces that were effecting dispersion and preventing people from participating in herding practices. This was particularly significant for children in full-time education, who might otherwise get very little exposure to reindeer or to herding practice. At the round-up they were able to participate in the key herding activities on a level with adults, while simultaneously completing their compulsory education. Again, this reinforced the importance of the corral as a pedagogic space of socialization, transmission and skill acquisition⁹.

The round-up and the work in the corral were thus associated with an intense and exceptional sociality, akin in character almost to a festival: in turn, this made them the object of powerful positive associations. Children and adults alike looked forward to them, and older herders reminisced about them. One non-herder with a herding background from the neighbouring district once told me, wistfully: 'you know, we children had such fun back then, we used to run around like wild monkeys. Stirring those buckets of blood for hours on end was mind-numbing work, but still, we loved it.' This is to say that both as memory and as lived experience, the work of the round-up was the object of complex and emotional attachments – attachments that far exceeded the simple notion of 'work'. To many herders it was profoundly pleasing to be in the corral and work; to some, even a goal in itself. Older and retired herders often still turned up at the fence to help out, even when they no longer had a stake in the herd or animals of their own. Many of them did this simply

9 Of course, not all young herder children shared this enthusiasm about the round-up. One little girl, the daughter of a herder from the district, stood watching me while I filmed an old herder slaughtering a reindeer. The procedure took some 20 minutes. When he finished she finally asked me, somewhere between perplexed and annoyed: 'What the hell do you think is so interesting about all this? It's boring!' I tried but singularly failed to communicate my professional interest in slaughtering practices. She stomped off, with a dismissive snort, presumably to seek out – in time – work or university studies somewhere in the South: far, far away from the corral.

in order to 'work with the animals' again, out under the open skies with their kin, friends and colleagues. Simply put, for many herders there was a sense of pleasure or joy in merely being there, doing a work that was associated with their idea of *the good life*, and with a range of values such as autonomy, independence and mobility – to list some of the typical values, ideals and aspirations that herders often referred to.

These values and ideas of the good life stood in stark contrast to the 'nine-to-five' drudgery of the 'office slave': a life that many offered up as the very opposite of the herding life. In this sense, one might almost say that the pleasure of the work was one of the marks of a proper herder, one who knew to value the life of the freedom and the open ranges that herding had to offer. These values were linked to the formative experiences of practical herder work, in a way that made theoretical and non-practical forms of knowledge twice over suspect: one, because their acquisition entailed long years of formal schooling at the expense of practical work and useful skills; and two, because they pointed to a lack of certain formative experiences, and through this to a lack of loyalty to a particular herder way of life and to the values that sustained it. Quite often I came across the idea that in the process of acquiring 'abstract' or 'school-based' forms of knowledge and competence, people risked sacrificing the important, even vital early experiences that would ensure their future pleasure in the practical life of herding. Instead, they would subject themselves to experiences that over time shaped both their loyalties and their moral values.

According to one retired herder from the neighbouring district, for example, the key problem of herding in his district was the tension between old herders and the new, bureaucratically literate generation, herders who were schooled and skilled at 'writing applications', but who were disloyal to the values and practices of herding 'as it should be'. These younger, 'bookish' herders spent no time outdoors with the animals and had no sense of the values and pleasures that underpinned herding practice. They 'thought only of money', and their business-oriented actions and priorities were jeopardizing proper herding, a way of life they had no loyalty to. In this sense, the herders who made sure to bring their kids to the round-up were using it, quite deliberately, as a way to ensure the future of their particular style of practice – by ensuring that the next generation of herders were not only skilled and competent, but also that they were *properly formed*, that they had the right values and took pleasure in the right things: things such as physically handling reindeer, the life of the outdoors and the hard work of the round-up. This pleasure in the work and practices of herding was linked to aesthetic and moral orientations later in life, and instilling it was a way of ensuring loyalty to herding as a particular way of life. As a response to factors that made increasing demands on time and drew children away from herding, the round-up and the corral were thus mobilized as a technology for forming *appropriate subjects*. Some of the success of this strategy is captured in the following item of local newspaper reportage, from the round-up corral at Krampenens, which I quote *in extenso* (Insert 3.1).

Insert 3.1 - 'Herding is the good life'

KRAMPENES: They are young, they work hard in the fence from morning to night and most of them are dead sure they do not want to sit in front of a computer screen in the future. As long as there is space for them in the industry...

They are woken up around five. Father John Arne Neshavn prompts his sons Markus and Mikkel to work in the reindeer fence from daybreak. The reindeer must be marked and separated, reluctant and scared animals must be handled, sometimes pinned to the ground. Twenty to thirty animals are let into the central enclosure at a time, where they run around ceaselessly until strong skilled hands take them in. Children try only for the smallest calves. Teenagers are nearly fully trained, quickly recognize the family earmark and throw themselves at nervous and reluctant bulls.

'Yes, it can be difficult. But once I warm up it's fine', says Markus Smuk Neshavn (15).

It's a matter of getting the slaughter out of the way, no use being lazy. Markus and Mikkel aren't reluctant either. 'We look forward to the slaughter every autumn. We've taken part since we were little, after all', says Markus. Big brother Mikkel is already well on his way with reindeer herding school in Kautokeino. He plans to take the two year apprenticeship at home, with the family herd. Markus is still in tenth grade, and wants to take the same path. Better to roam around the highlands and work hard at certain times than to sit in front of a computer screen in an office, Markus thinks.

Friends Aslak Per Margit and Leif Petter Smuk agree. Inside the kiosk the wooden stove crackles. And then it's the money, someone from another table throws in. The others laugh. If you have five or six hundred animals you can live well. If you're good that is, and work hard. No use being lazy...

'The problem is there isn't space enough for everyone who wants to enter herding full time. If you're not entitled to a herding unit by inheritance, it can be difficult', says Aslak Per. The others nod. Many of those who turn up for the slaughter only have a few animals themselves, but still take part in the collective work.

Things are easier for Jovvna Vars Smuk (19). He is an only child, and has a good chance of taking over his father's herding unit. 'This is the good life', says Jovvna. He is at Vadsø high school but has no plans to continue to university or further education. He knows what he wants. Herding reindeer is the good life.

'The whole family getting together out of doors and working together, the fact that we help each other, this also means a lot. It would be boring to keep going all by yourself', says the young boy before finishing up his black coffee, putting on his cap and heading out for the corral again.

Two years ago Nesseby girl Gunn-Tove Balto made a decision. She took over her brother's herding unit. 'I had a chance to keep the unit in the family and took it. Even though I was trained as a nurse and not prepared to enter reindeer herding full-time. I've kept the job, but try to spend as much time as possible with the herd' says Gunn-Tove, who also has the son Stian Balto Rennemo (9). To participate in the slaughter Gunn-Tove spends her accumulated holidays. 'It is like having two jobs, and it can be difficult at times. Luckily I get good help both from my father and other relatives during the rest of the year'. What is it like to take a nine-year-old with you into the corral? 'Fun. It is great that he gets time off school and can join in. That he gets to take part in tradition. I don't always have time to look after him, because I have to be in the corral all the time. No use leaving the responsibility to others. But the great thing is that we're a big family here, and everyone takes responsibility for the kids', says Gunn Tove and smiles.

(*'Herding is the good life', Finnmarken 28.09.02*)

The visible nexus

As I have described it so far, one might say the principal role of the corral was to make things *visible* in certain ways: the reindeer themselves, which were disaggregated from the herd, contained and made individually manipulable; a range of skills and practices, which were made visible and could therefore be emulated and acquired; the labour of women, which was re-located out of the domestic sphere and thus acquired both new arenas for transmission and an attendant rise of prestige; and finally, the herders themselves, who were made physically and socially present to each other, producing and reproducing social bonds and identities in the face of strong trends towards geographical dispersion and mobility. The corral was a public, or at least semi-public space, however, and in making these things visible to herders, it also made them visible to others – in a manner that was not necessarily subject to the control of herders. The round-up corral served not only as a social arena, but also as a social *stage* – a stage on which the practices of herders doubled up as an ongoing performance, for a varied audience of other herders, curious locals, tourists, customers, journalists, kindergartens, film teams, social scientists. Locals came from the nearby hamlet to buy meat and delicacies such as reindeer tongue, kindergartens came on excursions, school classes to learn handicrafts, tourists to watch and take pictures, journalists to cover stories, researchers and film-makers to gather material. Throughout the slaughtering seasons I witnessed, there was more or less constant traffic of outsiders at the corral during the round-up.

This was not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, round-up sites in the Varanger area as elsewhere have operated *de facto* as temporary marketplaces, central both to the circulation and exchange of reindeer meat and to social relations between herders and non-herders. Historically, this exchange of meat and reindeer products has represented an important bridge between the nomadic reindeer herders and the sedentary populations along the coast (Bjørklund & Eidheim 1999). Local buyers would come up to the fence and purchase meat, pick the animals they wanted and, importantly, talk to and interact with herders. As Sundve described at the beginning of this chapter, in the 1970s slaughtering operations at Krampen were also still attended by representatives of the larger slaughterhouse operators, who purchased and slaughtered animals on site in tents that served as mobile slaughterhouses. The introduction of stricter EU-based hygiene regulations in the mid-90s brought a temporary end to this aspect of the round-up, as so-called field abattoirs were made impracticable. Until recently, a system of 'listed abattoirs' also ensured that only animals that had been slaughtered at a small number of selected slaughterhouses were counted towards government subsidy quotas (Paine 1994; E. Reinert 2006) – in recent years, these criteria have been loosened to include any regulation-compliant slaughterhouse.

With the temporary disappearance of mobile slaughterhouses, the only herders able to sell directly from their own slaughter were those with herds sufficiently large to operate independently of the subsidy system, and sell directly on the black market. According to most herders I spoke to, such financial independence required a herd of a thousand animals or more. For those with smaller herds, slaughtering at Krampen was reduced to the very limited private out-take from the herd. For a while therefore, most of the reindeer went directly to

the large slaughterhouses further west, and from there on through formal chains of distribution. Meat now passed through centralized slaughterhouses to non-local markets, and the direct sale of reindeer meat from the corral ceased. This shift, driven by the strongly State-backed centralization of meat production and distribution, had a series of unplanned consequences. Herders complained that it had 'blown their relations with locals to all hell'. Locals interpreted the disappearance of direct meat sales as a withdrawal on the part of herders, and accused them of being greedy and seeking better markets elsewhere. As one herder said, 'they think we don't want to sell our meat to them any more because we get better prices elsewhere'. This in turn fed into local regional tensions between herders and non-herders, supporting widespread perceptions of the herders as aloof, uncooperative and disengaged from local affairs. In this context, the reinstatement of direct meat sales from the mobile slaughterhouse at the corral served to mitigate and counteract social tensions, bridging the perceived distance between herders and the local community. As well as a way of accessing the local market, it was also a way of forging social bonds, cementing relationships and neutralising existing resentments between herders and non-herders.

Let me give an example of the kind of interactions I have in mind. It was evening at the Krampen's corral, slaughtering operations for the day were over and I was helping the couple that managed the mobile slaughterhouse shift some carcasses out of the cooler van. An urbane and well-dressed young Norwegian man arrived, accompanied by a young child, to buy a carcass. Over the course of the ensuing transaction – discussing the quantity and quality of meat required, being recommended a calf, waiting for the carcass to be fetched out of the cooling trailer and wrapped in plastic, agreeing on a price and paying, then finally receiving some advice on meat-keeping and a small informational pamphlet – the man adopted a consistent attitude of knowledgeable expertise relative to the child, pointing out features of the fence and explaining about reindeer herding in general terms. At one point he asked when animals would be gathered up next and, with a significant look to the child, remarked that 'yes, that would certainly be an interesting experience for someone that hasn't seen it before'. He also made a point of showcasing a degree of familiarity with the specifics of reindeer meat-keeping. Conversely, the female herder who sold him the meat provided a relatively dense commentary, on matters of herding practice and meat-keeping. After the two customers had left, I asked her about the transaction and she confirmed that she intentionally went out of her way to provide information in this way. She considered packaging the transaction with contextual information in this manner a political practice, integral to consolidating relations with local non-herder customers and to training the younger generation of non-herders as knowledgeable consumers of reindeer meat. In the same breath, she discussed her efforts to educate local non-herder children from Sámi kindergartens, by bringing in reindeer meat and herding tools for 'show and tell'. Both formed part of a wider range of practices that aimed to manage social relations, so to speak, through the medium of meat – in the attempt to combat 'uninformed stereotypes' about herders, social distance and the lack of face-to-face contact. In the context of this kind of activism, the corral served as an important space for reproducing face-to-face relationships, neutralizing social distance, disseminating information and re-creating or maintaining social links to the surrounding community.

As I mentioned, however, the visibility produced by the corral and the round-up was not entirely under the control of herders. Knowledge of the timing of round-ups circulated widely, and problems or delays became common knowledge with a speed that often surprised me. On returning from the corral, non-herders often quizzed me about whether 'my' herders had animals in the corral yet, how far along in the slaughter they were, how many animals they had slaughtered or were intending to slaughter, even what kind of animals they were slaughtering. Delays were the subject of particular interest and discussion, and opened the herders of the district to criticism. Researchers and herders from districts hundred of miles to the west sometimes expressed surprise and astonishment at the timing of their operations, tinged sometimes with a tone of almost moral reproach: a reproach that became far stronger and more distinct closer to home. The work of the round-up proceeds in intense bursts, a week or even 10 days at a time, punctuated by periods of rest after each batch of the main herd has gone through the fence. The exact timing of this work depends on a range of factors and variables, including temperature and weather conditions, the movements of the herd and its state of dispersion, as well as the availability of labour and technology: herders, helicopter and helicopter pilots, veterinarians to inspect the commercially slaughtered carcasses.

During the 2004 season, the slaughter at Krampen was repeatedly postponed. The temperature kept oscillating around 0 degrees C, so the rain froze and the snow melted, only to freeze again. The ground was constantly either too muddy or too slippery to take reindeer or humans into the fence. This delayed operations significantly. On top of this, just as operations were about to resume again after the first batch of slaughter, one of the older herders died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Operations were suspended for several days in order to organise the funeral, and for a week afterwards out of respect for the widow. As a result of this, only a small total number of calves were slaughtered that year. The delay was so significant that the main herd had to be divided into two sub-groups and managed separately, to save the expense of repeatedly separating out animals that had already passed through the fence from the ones that had not. The former were sent to graze further west, closer to the winter pastures, while the group that had not yet passed through was chased back east towards the tip of the peninsula, to graze in the area around Vardø. By the time it was possible to take reindeer into the corral again, the herd was pushing west, the date for crossing onto the winter pastures was approaching and people had other things to do. The window of opportunity had passed, and the decision was made to let the animals move on, deferring further commercial slaughtering to the winter round-up a few months later, at Seidafjell. Herders blamed environmental conditions that would have made work in the fence dangerous and irresponsible: one herder woman described what would happen to reindeer in an iced-over fence as 'Bambi on the ice, except they'd never get up again'. The reindeer themselves, their needs and requirements, also had to be taken into account. Local critics, on the other hand, blamed the herders, accusing them of inadequate management and irresponsible behaviour: delays were the result of inefficiency, laziness, irresponsibility and excessive reliance on labour-saving technologies, which led to hurried and last-minute operations. The delays would jeopardize the timing of the migration to the winter pastures, causing problems, accidents and nuisance to non-herders in the area and leading in turn, as I discussed in Chapter 2, to further problems for the herders.

The social visibility of the corral extended beyond this, however. The slaughter and other practices at the corral occurred out in the open and could therefore be observed, photographed and filmed with little or no restriction. Many herders were profoundly wary of this fact: images of gutted reindeer were bad publicity, and could easily be taken out of context to misrepresent them. One story I heard several times concerned a European film crew who had gained access to the fence a few years earlier, stating they were making a documentary about reindeer herding. They were allowed to film everywhere, taken on tours with the round-up helicopter and generally helped by the herders, who were 'still so naive'. The footage was used in a documentary that was broadcast on national television. In the words of one herder woman, 'there we were, gathered around the TV with the popcorn, but when it came on our jaws just dropped.' Selective editing had been used to convey an impression of frantic and brutalised animals: footage of animals taken from the helicopter, for example, was cut to show only their speed during an abrupt change of direction, to create the impression that the animals were constantly driven at high speeds. Such images, and images of the slaughter in particular, risked capturing the imagination of consumers and activists at home and abroad, prompting campaigns, lobbying and interventions. Though they considered most such interventions and campaigns a nuisance rather than a real threat¹⁰, herders were still quite aware of the impact of earlier activist campaigns on indigenous practices elsewhere, for example in the case of Greenland seal-hunting.

The discipline of the corral

In short, during the round-up the reindeer themselves and their bodies, physically present in the enclosure, became the focus of a range of social relations, roles, practices and knowledges. The corral thus served as a dense social nexus for cross-species relations, between reindeer and herders, and played a key role both for the management of the herd and in the social life of District 6. As an institution, it was central to the transmission of knowledge and skills, to the training and formation of future herders and to the reproduction of social bonds, under conditions of increased geographic dispersion and mobility. Further, it also served as a juncture or point of communication between herders and other local non-herders. In several of these respects the corral must be considered, not only as a modern innovation in itself, but also as a response to trends and conditions that are commonly associated with modernity and modernization; or rather, more precisely, as a *locus* around which resistance to such trends and conditions could be organized, and coherent alternatives formulated.

Perhaps the social role and functions of the corral, and of the work that takes place in it, could be usefully parsed through the theoretical ambivalence that inheres in the concept of performance: the tension between performance as *ontology* (e.g. Mol 1999, 2002) and performance as *spectacle*. While in the former sense,

10 In 2003, for example, PETA UK launched a campaign to abolish Scandinavian reindeer herding under the slogan 'Give Rudolph the Gift of Life this Christmas' (PETA Europe 2003). Activists organised protests outside *John Lewis* stores in major UK cities, accusing the retail giant of supporting the 'inhuman reindeer trade' by selling Scandinavian reindeer furs. The brief-lived campaign received some attention in Norwegian and Sámi media, though coverage was mostly humorous and dismissive. In a radio interview concerning the protests, the president of NRL dismissed the campaigners as 'ignorant' and 'ill-informed' (NRK *Nordaførr* 03.12.2003).

herders might be said to be performing their identities, constantly reproducing them through the practical work of the corral, they were also at the same time quite consciously performing their work in the latter sense, as a kind of spectacle – e.g. as a visible enactment of responsible control over the herd – presented to an audience composed of other herders, local neighbours, kindergarten children, journalists, film-makers, television viewers elsewhere – and anthropologists. I do not wish to stress overly this theatrical or spectacular dimension of the work: for one, my own informants would be angered and aggrieved at the reduction of their hard work in the corral to 'putting on a show'. As a rule, herders were often fiercely resistant to the spectacularization of herding practices: in private and in public, the visual commodification of reindeer as idyllic and romanticized props or postcard motifs – and the prospect of reindeer herding itself being transformed into a tourist attraction or an 'ethnic show' put on to satisfy German and Japanese tourists – were met with responses ranging from contempt and dread to mildly averse indifference. Among other things, such a re-orientation of herding practice would represent a degradation of practice, as well as entailing an increased dependency on outsiders – on tourism and the vicissitudes of the tourist trade – that would threaten autonomy and economic self-sufficiency. Hence, let me make it clear that the work of the corral was in no sense *primarily* a performance in this sense – the main focus of the work was always the practical requirements of herding and the animals, not the satisfaction of an audience. At the same time however, as I have outlined, the various social functions of the corral to herders entailed precisely such a dimension of spectacle: skills and feats were performed in order to be observed, and mimicked, by the younger; female labour was brought forward and acquired prestige precisely through being conducted, visibly, in the privileged space of the corral. Beyond this, social conditions were also such that the work of the corral acquired a spectacular and communicative dimension to outside audiences: as a performance of control, identity or responsibility, directed at local observers, journalists, researchers and remote audiences. I return to this theme subsequently, particularly in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.

For the moment, the social and socializing functions of the corral invite further consideration. Keeping in mind my intention to consider animals within an optic of biopower, I will develop this point passing via the disciplining power that the corral exercises *over the reindeer themselves*. The operation of this power is straightforward: the very structure of the corral is designed to organize and coordinate the bodies of reindeer, enabling interventions such as marking, castration and slaughter – all distinctly biopowerful in character – to be undertaken on individual animal bodies. In this, the corral quite literally enables 'a seizure of power [by herders] over the [reindeer] body *in an individualizing mode*' (Foucault 2004:243; emphasis added). Of course reindeer are not humans, and it must be said that this disciplining power operated on a simple, physical and strictly temporary basis – certainly the reindeer did not seem to respond to, internalize or reproduce it in the manner of a Foucauldian human subject. Through this physical 'seizure of power', in the process of individualizing the reindeer and making them manageable, the corral also coordinated, organized and socialized the human bodies of the herders: ensuring that they were disciplined and turned into effective, physically and socially competent herders. In this sense, particularly given the relationship between practical experience and values I discussed earlier, it is clear that for all its other functions, herders of the district also

used the corral, intentionally, as an instrument of social engineering, to produce *a certain kind of human subject* – that is, themselves. It served as an important element of what one might term, in faithfulness to Foucault, a human disciplining power: a power that aided and ensured the reproduction of reindeer herding as a social and practical field.

Let me return to the reindeer. Confined temporarily in the pens and enclosures of the corral, they could be observed more closely and their traits – from their behaviour, appearance or state of health to their interactions with other reindeer, their fur patterns or their antler shape – could be assessed. All these characteristics were relevant not only to selection for slaughter, but also to the management of the herd and to its overall condition. The corral was not only a tool for manipulating and intervening on individual animals: in the context of the round-up, it was also the main point at which the herd itself – considered both as the herds of individual herders and as the larger aggregate – was made more or less directly visible at close range and could be manipulated, through the elimination of unwanted animals and ensuring the well-being of desirable ones. The herd itself may have been too large to be brought into the compound all at once, but the gathered selection could still be made to answer important questions: How many calves were there this year? What were ratios like within the herd: old to young, male to female, castrates to fertile males? To the extent that it enabled management of the larger aggregate of the herd, precisely through the control it established over individual animals, the corral might perhaps also be said to afford 'a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but... massifying' (Foucault 2004:243) – that is, a seizure of power that was distinctly biopolitical, in the precise Foucauldian sense of enabling the management of a population, composed of individualized bodies, in terms of populational properties such as birth rates, ratios between males, females and castrates and age-group composition. At this point it becomes significant to stress that this was not the only such massifying seizure enabled by the corral, nor were the herders the only ones to utilize the corral for such purposes: corrals also had their functions for the State.

So far I have discussed only the autumn round-up and the working corral at Krampen. There was also another round-up corral in District 6, however: this was the winter corral at Seidafjell, further west near Varangerbotn, where the herd was rounded up before crossing from its summer pastures to the winter pastures in District 5D. Quite literally, for the District 6 herd, this corral represented an obligatory passage point between its seasonal pasture grounds. Passing through it, the herd was concentrated and individualized, allowing the animals to be counted; in fact, the winter corral was the only point at which numerical data about the *living herd* could realistically be produced, more or less reliably and efficiently, by outside agents. The autumn round-up was not suited to this purpose, as the operations involved were far more complicated and time-consuming than at the later winter round-up. At Krampen, the passage of the herd through the corral was slowed down by medical treatments and slaughtering. Calves also had to be assigned ownership and marked, and to do so they had to spend long periods of time in holding enclosures with the cows, to see which calves followed which cows. By the time the herd was rounded up at the winter corral, on the other hand, most of these operations had usually already been taken care of earlier, at the autumn round-up: there

might be some straggling calves left to mark, and a number of animals were taken out for transport to the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn, but otherwise the herd could flow through quickly.

This made it an ideal place for *counting* – not so much for the herders, who knew 'more or less' the size of their herds anyway, as for the State. Such counting was conducted through the census. For the purpose of this, herders from other districts were recruited and brought in by the Reindeer Herding Administration to count the animals as they passed through the central enclosure of winter corral. This represented a time-consuming and often frustrating operation for the herders, particularly for the owners of animals that were to be slaughtered: in the words of one herder who had experience from that kind of work in other districts, it was commonly accepted that census herders tended to treat the experience as a 'paid holiday', at the expense of the State. At one point, frustrated by the loss of two days' worth of slaughter due to delayed counting, the slaughterhouse manager asked me en route to the corral to drive past the road-stop café in Varangerbotn, to demonstrate that 'those indulgent bastards [were] still having coffee at the State's expense!' Indeed, as we drove slowly past in the parking lot outside and peered in through the windows, they were: the census herders only arrived at the fence several hours later. To my frustrated passenger, the delays and impracticalities associated with the census were just yet another tedious bureaucratic hurdle set in place by the State. To me, they also illustrated the operation of the corral as a site of knowledge production within multiple knowledge traditions – at the very least, the knowledge traditions of herders and the State. In its ability to produce knowledge about *living* animals, and the living herd, the corral differed significantly from the other principal space of knowledge production about reindeer: that is, the space of the slaughterhouse, which produced the carcass as its principal object of knowledge.

Chapter 4 The logic of the slaughterhouse

'Fish, meat and poultry are also brought [to the markets] from designated places not far outside the city, where running water can carry away all the blood and refuse. Bondsmen do the slaughtering and cleaning in these places: citizens are not allowed to do such work. The Utopians feel that slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable. Besides, they don't allow anything dirty or filthy to be brought into the city, lest the air become tainted by putrefaction and thus infectious' (More [1516] 1975:42).

'You have to remember, it's one thing to slaughter for your next-door neighbour, as they do over there [at Krampen] and quite another to slaughter for the market, as we do here' (The manager at the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn).

To many meat-consumers, certainly in the West, industrial slaughter is an unpleasant subject, a kind of necessary evil that is better avoided; certainly, as my own experience attests, in the context of carnivorous dinner parties – an ethnographic experiment that I invite readers to conduct for themselves. In itself, this *aporia* is sufficient to make the slaughterhouse ethnographically interesting. Conversely, it also renders it difficult to engage with. For one, the boundaries of most slaughterhouses are guarded, both symbolically and physically. Access can be difficult to obtain, photography and other forms of documentation are almost invariably prohibited. Beyond this, to the average meat-eating researcher, even a brief foray into an operational slaughterhouse immediately renders apparent the powerful forms of segregation and control that have shielded its insides from view – and from awareness. It does not take peculiar sensitivities, or an ideological opposition to animal killing, to find the constant barrage of industrially organized death disturbing, both as a spectacle and as an experience. In her ethnography of the meatpacking industry in Iowa, Deborah Fink describes the slaughterhouse as an 'ethical quagmire': '[f]or two years after working [in a meatpacking plant] I was unable to put together a logical sequence of words to unpack and lay out the array of physical and emotional carnage I observed' (Fink 1998:xiv). Even the self-consciously dispassionate Noelle Vialles begins her exemplary study of French abattoirs by justifying her 'odd and, to many people, slightly disturbing subject' (1994:3). In no small part, it is this play between concealment and knowledge, suspicion and fact that has turned the slaughterhouse into such a powerful and morally charged trope of the Western imagination, as well as the most immediately recognizable element of a modern animal industrial complex, the constituents of which frequently tend to be regarded as 'technically inevitable and politically neutral', part and parcel of a modernity that is simultaneously intractable and benevolent (Noske 1997:22). This certainly seems to be the case in Norwegian agriculture, where a powerful State-driven high modernist ideology (Scott 1998) that favoured centralization, standardization and large-scale industrial production reigned supreme from the post-war period until quite recently: perhaps, as some would argue, it still does (E. Reinert 2001).

Between them, these factors may go some way towards explaining the relative lack of ethnographic engagements with the modern industrial slaughterhouse, both as institution and social space. Naturalised or not, however, the industrial slaughterhouse remains the discrete artefact of a certain modernity: an institution with its own conditions of emergence, its own historical trajectories and its own distinctive features. In the 19th century, the mechanization of slaughter played a central role in the wider processes of rationalization and reorganization that were transforming workplace and production practices alike. In their time, the hooks and rails of the Chicago disassembly lines provided inspiration for Ford's assembly lines (Hounshell 1984:241) and with them, for the emergence of Taylorist models of industrial production. As an exemplar, the modern industrial slaughterhouse played an important role in the birth of the factory, the attendant 'transformation... in the very rhythm of work' (Pick 1993:169) and, with this, in the emergence of the new orderings of time, space, bodies and energy that today constitute and define the modern workplace. Then as now, the conduct and organization of slaughter within the closed spatial economy of the slaughterhouse differs in very significant respects from other forms and practices of organised animal slaughter. In the case of Norwegian reindeer herding, such differences are highlighted both by the relatively recent introduction of industrial slaughterhouses, and by the persistence of non-industrial slaughtering practices. This chapter examines some of the differences, as they were evident both from my own observations and field practice and from my conversations with herders.

To a certain analytical modality, the regulated interior of an industrial slaughterhouse can offer up a veritable proliferation of carefully patrolled oppositions: clean and dirty, alive and dead, animal and human, person and object, speech and sound, life and death, flow and disruption, profit and loss. Vialles' elegant and enjoyable study of French abattoirs is a case in point (1994). Such a line of analysis is not my intention here, however. Equally, while I did spend some time working in the slaughterhouse at Varangerbotn, moving carcasses on hooks from the slaughter-floor to the refrigeration unit, this does not purport to be an ethnographic account of social relations and events within that slaughterhouse. All else aside, the slaughter-floor staff were mostly monolingual Finns and our communications took place in an *ad hoc* manner comprised mostly of hand gestures and a simple pidgin of Norwegian and English: not ideal conditions for developing rapport with informants. Instead, the present chapter focuses on some of the more general issues raised by the introduction of modern industrial slaughterhouses into reindeer herding. The argument is organized around the following principal points: one, the social effects of the centralization of slaughtering into the closed and inaccessible spaces of the slaughterhouse, and of the social order that this institutes; two, the consequences of the disappearance of the reindeer themselves, out of view and into the coordinates of these densely regulated spaces; and finally three, the transformation of killing practice and the moment of death – of the act of killing itself – as they follow the reindeer into the confines of the slaughterhouse.

A concentration of productive power

Currently there are several active industrial reindeer slaughterhouses in Finnmark. At the time of fieldwork, the major ones were located in Kautokeino and Karasjok; the only one in the far east of the region sat on the

outskirts of the township of Varangerbotn, in a large and anonymous building just off the road to Kirkenes (Figure 4.1). Just behind it, connected to the main animal entrance, a rickety wooden holding corral and stacks of balled-up reindeer lichen signalled its ownership and function to visitors. It was a comparatively small-scale, locally run seasonal operation, managed by a group of herders from the district who slaughtered mostly their own reindeer and those of associates. In general, this slaughterhouse exhibited few if any of the problems associated in the literature with meatpacking plants and large-scale commercial slaughtering operations (Coe 1995; Eisnitz 1997; Stull & Broadway 2004). Slaughter-hall workers were almost exclusively returning seasonal migrants from the Finnish side of the border. They were skilled, experienced and autonomous labour, most of them individually known to the management: a far cry from the captive and impoverished labour pool of larger meatpacking operations elsewhere, particularly in the US (Fink 1998; Stull & Broadway 2004). Relations between management and workers were friendly and relaxed, and a joking, convivial atmosphere prevailed in the break-room. Occasional conflicts between the two tiers did arise, such as when production ground to a halt because certain workers unexpectedly took the day off after a night or two of heavy drinking, but structural tensions and abuse of the type one might be led to expect by the literature were entirely absent: most likely because they were not engendered by the small scale of operations and the informal recruitment dynamic. Production was oriented towards the national market, with a diversified range of products. Meat from the slaughterhouse was refined and packaged at a packaging plant in Vadsø, owned by the same company and located on the ground floor of the offices of the State Food Monitoring Authority. Around the time of my arrival, the company was moving aggressively into the market: its products could already be found in supermarkets as far south as Oslo, and several promising deals with national distributors were in the making.

Historically, the modern industrial slaughterhouse may well be associated with the birth of the factory, with Taylorism and the rise of a new clockwork order of capitalist time that coordinated profit, bodies and energy in new configurations: in the ambit of contemporary herding, however – at least as I witnessed it in Varangerbotn – the operation of any such precise and regularized temporality seemed rather severely circumscribed. My first official tour of the premises at the Varangerbotn slaughterhouse took place in August 2004. Waiting in the break-room while the Sámi manager finished a telephone conversation with a potential client, I passed the time leafing through a recent tract on *Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry* (Jernsletten & Klovov 2002) from the magazine rack, which held pamphlets and informational brochures in Russian, English, Norwegian and Sámi. The walls of the room were adorned with colourful maps of the circumpolar reindeer herding zone, naming indigenous herder groups, their size, distribution and languages. Later I walked with the manager through the empty slaughter-hall while he explained procedures and regulations, pointing to features and discussing the state of the national market for reindeer meat. I asked him at one point whether he thought there was anything distinctively Sámi or indigenous about operations at the slaughterhouse. Stumping a cigarette in a slaughter-floor drain, he laughed and dismissed the question: 'No, of course not'. Later still, during the long hours that turned into days in the break-room, waiting for the constantly deferred slaughter to begin, I began to reassess his claim.

The rhythm and output of the slaughterhouse seemed to be at the constant mercy of factors that were specifically related to the rhythms and problems of pastoral practice, and which would not emerge as problems for a slaughterhouse that was geared, for example, towards the processing of captive livestock. The corral might be iced down and unmanageable; the herd might be dispersed and the round-up helicopter stuck somewhere in Sweden; or the State-appointed herders counting the reindeer might be 'taking their time' at the roadside coffee-stop down in Varangerbotn, enjoying leisurely coffee breaks at an hourly state wage. Beyond such temporary problems and setbacks, the very unpredictability of environment, animals and human factors in herding lent to the productive rhythm of the slaughterhouse a degree of stop-and-start irregularity and contingency that could make it difficult and sometimes frustrating to accommodate the supply schedules and requirements of clients and other actors. The capitalist temporality of the slaughterhouse, as a small space of production situated within the broader industrial economy of meat, was often problematically at odds with the rhythms of herding: meat output was structured by seasonal fluctuations in the availability and weight of reindeer, and meeting the sharp spike in demand for reindeer meat around Christmas, for example, required forethought and planning. When local reindeer were unavailable at the right times, the slaughterhouse operators sometimes found themselves enlisting herders from the Karasjok area, further West, and purchasing reindeer from them. Beyond this, there were also other points of conflict or friction between the various orders – temporal, social, spatial – of the slaughterhouse and of herding practice.

The history of modern slaughter in the West can be written as a history of escalation: in segregation, regulation, control, standardization and, perhaps most importantly, in hygiene – both physical and social, or moral. As the quote by Thomas More at the opening of the chapter suggests, this dual problem of hygiene has been recognized at least since the late Middle Ages, centuries before the advent of industrial meat production *per se*. The fictive citizens of More's *Utopia* perceived in the slaughter a problem of correct governance, both of morality and health: that is to say, the brutality of slaughter and the putrescence of its by-products endangered the bodies and morals of citizens alike¹¹. Segregating the act of slaughter – spatially beyond the perimeter of the city, and socially to the caste of bondsmen – addressed both these risks. As processes of slaughtering modernization began to gain pace over the course of the 19th century, they were generally guided by the same principles of segregation. In Europe, potent urban planning regimes needed to satisfy both the changing demands and the shifting moral sensibilities of a rapidly growing urban population (Brantz 2001, 2002; Lee 2005; Vialles 1994). Emergent discourses of sanitization and hygiene focused on the need to centralize slaughter and eliminate it from the heart of public urban space, variously as a matter of public health, morality, aesthetics and logistics: animals blocked roads, fornicated in public and endangered by-passers, and the spectacle of their slaughter and rutting was declaimed as morally insalubrious, particularly for 'females and children' (Philo 1995:64). Strong and centrally enforced slaughtering regulations

11 Nearly four centuries after More, H.G. Wells' Utopian returned to the same problem, albeit now with a more severe response, attuned to the changed sensibilities and practices of his age: 'In all the round world of Utopia there is no meat. There used to be. But now we cannot stand the thought of slaughter-houses. And, in a population that is all educated, and at about the same level of physical refinement, it is practically impossible to find anyone who will hew a dead ox or pig. We never settled the hygienic question of meat-eating at all. This other aspect decided us. I can still remember, as a boy, the rejoicings over the closing of the last slaughter-house' (Wells 1905).

were implemented 'to clean up the environment, to raise public morale, and to meet the growing needs of a no longer self-sufficient urban population' (Brantz 2002:169). Such slaughtering reforms formed part of the general disappearance of livestock and large animals from urban spaces. With the progressive spatial exile of slaughtering came its disappearance from view, and the obfuscation of the animal that was slaughtered (Vialles 1994:15-32). Writing from France, Vialles locates the pivotal threshold of this modernization of slaughter in the extensive reforms of slaughtering practice that were undertaken in France around the turn of the 18th century, under Napoleon (17-19). As she argues, with a nod to Foucault, the aim of these reforms was to transform slaughtering into a regulated, controlled and accountable practice, facilitating centralized control; the 'exile of the abattoir to an enclosed space simultaneously satisfied the need to monitor, control, and if necessary punish' (22).

From zoning requirements to physical structure and design, these principles of seclusion, segregation and control remain dominant features of slaughterhouses to the present day. Larger slaughterhouses and meatpacking operations are often protected by fences and high walls, guarded perimeters and security cameras, sometimes even barbed wire and armed guards (Coe 1995; Stull & Broadway 2004). Access is strictly regulated, cameras prohibited. If anything, slaughterhouses are less accessible and more carefully guarded today than they were a hundred years ago. Sue Coe, for example, writes that:

[i]n the early 20th century... packinghouses were very proud of their slaughtering techniques and would offer guided tours for the public to show off the new technology. By the end of the 20th century, that is no longer the case. Slaughterhouses, especially the larger ones, are guarded like military compounds, and it is almost impossible to gain access' (1995:v).

One effect of this is to create powerful disjunctions: while the mass slaughter of animals on a global scale has expanded to a scale that defies imagination, marketing studies and industry research in Norway as elsewhere continue to reiterate and emphasize the need for producers

Figure 4.2 'Primitive' reindeer slaughtering installation – Filefjell 1955 (Movinkel 1968)

to dissociate meat products from their animal origins – visually, cognitively and discursively (e.g. Kubberød 2005). As the vegetarian theorist Carol Adams argues, the physical and moral invisibility of slaughtered animals is required for meat consumption practices to continue on an 'as if' basis (1990, 2004). In terms of her argument, the slaughterhouse operates as a kind of invisibility machine or a 'black box' (Latour 1987) – a key juncture within a productive system premised on the ongoing reproduction of cognitive, discursive and symbolic disjunctions between living animal and consumed meat (Adams 1991). I return to her argument in more detail subsequently.

In the field of slaughter, the modernization of herding practice over the last few decades has taken place so rapidly that an older generation of herders still remember and evoke a time when reindeer were commercially slaughtered outdoors, in the field, using at most temporary wooden structures to dry the carcasses (Figure 4.2). The skill to slaughter was widely distributed, part of an elementary set of herder

skills, and herders generally slaughtered their own reindeer, both for personal use and for commercial distribution. In the last few decades, the shift towards increasingly strict regulation and elaborate production requirements have changed this. New and imperative concerns for hygiene, food quality, productivity and commercial viability have dictated a series of fundamental reorganizations in the spaces and practices of killing. In the light of this, herders sometimes remembered or evoked the old times with a kind of ambivalent nostalgia. At one point, I was sitting in the opening of the slaughter-van at Krampenenes with a camera, filming the slaughtering operations. A herder I knew sat down next to me to watch. After a while he leaned over: 'You know, it didn't always use to be like this. In the old days we slaughtered out there', he said, gesturing towards the inland, 'and we left the bodies all over. We had to tiptoe among the carcasses. Maybe it's better this way, I don't know? I guess at least it's cleaner.'

Today, setting up a regulation-compliant slaughterhouse operation requires extensive resources: capital investments, manpower, time and expertise. Most herders have neither the material resources nor the capacity to organize a full-scale slaughterhouse operation. Shifting parameters for commercial production and increasingly strict requirements have created high barriers to entry, generating a powerful drift towards the centralization and consolidation of slaughtering facilities. One net effect of this has been to make herders increasingly dependent on large-scale third-party slaughterhouse operators – effectively, on outsourcing their slaughtering operations. In practice, most Norwegian reindeer herders today operate as bulk raw material providers, selling reindeer on the hoof directly to slaughterhouse operators who then slaughter the animals, process the meat and pass it on to retailers, national chains and other operators. Effectively, herders have become increasingly excluded from the kind of slaughter that directs their meat towards commercial circulation. Since much of the value is added at later stages of the production chain, this sets a relatively low ceiling on herder profit margins. Potentially and to a considerable degree in practice, those who control the slaughterhouse can control and regulate the terms by which reindeer capital is transformed into commercial meat, and therefore into more versatile and potent forms of economic capital. In this sense, the slaughterhouse represents a concentration of productive capacity, and therefore of market power.

Beyond the question of profit margins and economic agency, these structural conditions in the industry have also turned control over commercial slaughter into a problem of indigenous politics, a matter of empowerment and self-determination as much as of simple profit. During a later conversation, I asked the slaughterhouse manager in Varangerbotn – himself a Sámi – why it was important to have a slaughtering operation within the district, controlled by the herders themselves. Without missing a beat, he answered: 'Independence. We can't afford to be dependent on anyone, and certainly not on subsidies from the State'. In no small part, this was a matter of 'herder values'. As I discussed in Chapter 3, autonomy, independence and control were among the core values associated with the good life of herding. Lack of control over the technical machinery of slaughtering entailed economic dependence on those who *did* control the means of production – that is, on the slaughterhouse operators. In response to this problem, my informants had sought to attain and re-establish material and economic control over their own slaughtering practice in a number of

ways: through establishing slaughtering operations of their own, such as in Varangerbotn, as well as through influencing local authorities and lobbying for regulation change at the national level. As a district, they were unusual in that between them they controlled not only a fixed year-round slaughterhouse installation, at Varangerbotn, but also a mobile slaughterhouse at Krampen, the so-called field abattoir.

Such small-scale mobile operations represent one alternative to the large centralized slaughterhouses: smaller and less capital-intensive, such ventures can be more realistically managed by groups of herders. By relocating the slaughter to the round-up site itself, they cut down on distance and associated costs, lowering financial barriers to entry, and reduce discomfort and stress to reindeer during long-range transport. In Norway, unlike in neighbouring countries, attempts to establish such mobile slaughtering operations have been hampered, among other things, by exceedingly strict interpretation of EU directives: during my fieldwork, both herders *and* administrators (e.g. SNT 2002) explained to me that across the border in Sweden and Finland, slaughtering operations generally worked within much looser parameters of inspection and certification. This had recently been recognized as a problem by the administration, and steps had been taken to relax the application of directives, creating regulatory spaces to accommodate and encourage small-scale production. The problem is caused in part by a strong orientation, in Norwegian agricultural thinking, towards the kind of agro-industrial modernity defined by large-scale centralization, benefits of scale and mass agricultural production systems modelled on industry (E. Reinert 2001; H. Reinert 2003). Enmeshed in the discourses and models of this modernity, the large and centralized industrial slaughterhouse has served as a powerful indicator of modernization and progress towards cleaner, more sanitized and productive ways of herding: in so many words, it has appeared simultaneously desirable and inevitable. Despite systematic efforts to shift the administrative culture, this meta-narrative remains widespread and influential. In September 2004, the application of the Krampen mobile slaughterhouse managers for permission to bury waste products in the traditional manner was rejected by the State Pollution Monitoring Agency. One of the reasons cited in the letter was that the 'general trend' was for 'mobile slaughterhouses' to become 'more advanced, and more like conventional slaughtering operations' – that is to say, contrary to stated intentions on the part of regulatory authorities to accommodate small-scale-slaughtering, such operations were to be increasingly adapted to existing regulations, rather than vice versa, and be assessed by the standards demanded of larger operations. As the managers pointed out in their letter of response a few days later, this ran contrary to the stated aim of government policy at the time, which was to minimize all possible bottlenecks at the slaughtering stage – i.e., maximize slaughtering capacity – in order to facilitate the rapid reduction of reindeer numbers on the tundra.

The bounded physical perimeters of the slaughterhouse marked the limits of a closed, regulated and tightly circumscribed economy of space, time and social interactions that stood in marked contrast to the social order of slaughter, both the traditional slaughter as it was recollected and remembered, and the current slaughter as it was conducted at the round-up corral or in private. The discrepancy was brought home to me quite early on in fieldwork, by my own first experience of the slaughterhouse in operation. I had arrived at

the Krampenes corral early one morning during the 2004 slaughtering season, only to find that operations had been cancelled for the day due to bad weather. A herder at the corral wanted to get to Finland, an hour's drive to the west across the border near Polmak, to buy vodka and cigarettes. I was headed back that way and in need of supplies myself, so I gave him a lift. En route we got talking, and I mentioned that I still had not been inside the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn. 'No problem!' he exclaimed. 'We'll drop around and I'll have a chat with [the manager] while you do your research thing.' This particular herder took some pleasure in parading me around as his own 'personal anthropologist' – 'Look! I have an anthropologist! He's researching me!' At this point he was half-way through his first bottle of vodka, so some caution might have been advised. Nevertheless we decided to undertake the attempt, drove up to the slaughterhouse entrance, parked and strode in, one drunken herder with trainee ethnographer in tow, straight from the cold and into the 'clean zone' of the production line. Moments later we had already been expelled, by a furious Norwegian veterinarian shouting about 'people in the wrong place', unhygienic 'loafers' with 'no respect for food safety'.

In the car on the way down, my herder friend offered a somewhat bumbling and apologetic explanation, complaining that this particular

Figure 4.3 Floor-plan of the slaughterhouse floor in Varangerbotn

veterinarian was a rather 'grumpy fellow'. All else aside, it was clear that the confusion surrounding our expulsion resulted from a conflict of expectations on his part: the slaughterhouse was simply not a site for the kind of informal, undisciplined sociality that he had brought with him from the corral. Our expulsion took place across the raised threshold between two distinct regimes of spatial and social organization. In the light of the overall situation I have sketched out in this section, however, our expulsion also pointed beyond this to a more general division, a line separating the haves from the have-nots within the district. Later I heard numerous stories that illustrated the powerful barriers to entry that the regulatory regime placed at the entrance to slaughterhouses. One particularly aggravated operator who ran a slaughterhouse on the border between Karasjok and Kautokeino told me how he had turned up at his own slaughterhouse accompanied by an inspecting veterinarian from the State Food Monitoring Agency, and *both* of them had been denied access to the premises by the inspecting veterinarian on duty at the slaughterhouse.

Trajectories of meat; the logic of the fetish

In time I got myself a position working in that very slaughter-hall, and I had ample opportunity to observe the workings of the sanctified clean space that my herder companion and I were expelled from. The slaughter here was organised around the disassembly line, a combination of conveyor belts and ceiling-mounted railings with metal hooks along which the reindeer bodies were propelled from the entrance to the hall at one end to the refrigeration facility at the other end (Figure 4.3). Reindeer to be slaughtered were either driven on foot or transported using double-decker transports from the round-up corral to the slaughterhouse site. Once on site, they were kept for a short time – no more than 24 hours – in a wooden holding corral behind the slaughterhouse. When their time came, they were taken individually to the entrance [1] and stunned, generally using a captive-bolt pistol. Mostly inert, they were then dragged in through the entrance, into the

slaughter-hall, for bleeding [2]. Once bled, their heads were cut off and the tongues were removed [3], and the heads were then disposed of through a chute in the floor [4]. The body was placed on its back on the conveyor belt [5], where a series of cuts were made to open the abdomen and free the legs, which were broken but remained attached to the pelt. At the end of the line, the carcass was attached to a crane hook, while the two front legs were tied to metal extensions at floor level [6]. The carcass was pulled up towards the ceiling to remove the pelt, which was then disposed off through a chute [7], while the carcass itself was moved along suspended from a rail, to the point where its internal organs were removed [8]. Cleaned and complete, the carcass then passed along the rail to be inspected by the veterinarian [9], who stamped his or her personal seal on it before passing it along to the weighing point [10] and from then to the refrigerated storage space at the back of the hall [11]. En route from living animal to carcass, the body passed through a number of fixed posts, where individual specialists conducted specific operations before passing it on down the line. The operation was efficient in terms of output, but demanding both in terms of capital investments and running costs. Not the least of these expenses was the work required to maintain a regular, disciplined and punctual workforce: it was not unheard of for the managers to go on the local pub circuit during working hours, to track down straying Finnish workers.

The slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn was a so-called 'year-round slaughterhouse' [*helårsslakteri*]: this meant that the meat produced there was marked with an oval seal, certifying it for international export. Under the current system, commercially slaughtered meat is divided into two categories: the 'oval seal' denotes top-level certification and enables the meat to circulate freely within the EEA, while the lower-grade 'square seal' permits only more limited domestic circulation. There is also a third category of meat, the so-called 'pentagonal seal', but this is used exclusively for wild game. In the past some herders have tried to lobby for reindeer meat to be labelled using this seal, on the grounds that the animals behave and live as wild game, but so far such efforts have come to nothing. The categories are determined by the conditions under which the meat is produced: among other things, the production of oval-quality meat must be supervised at all times by an inspecting veterinarian, present in the slaughter-hall, while square-quality certification only requires the carcasses and organs to be inspected at some point after the slaughter but before the meat enters the market. In theory, square-level certification is sufficient guarantee for domestic circulation, but in practice most national-level retail chains and contractors demand oval-quality certification. Effectively, as one operator told me, when it came to food hygiene, the demands of the market were more stringent than those of the State. Private out-take from the herd, on the other hand, is generally not supervised or regulated – though the animals must still be treated in accordance with animal welfare regulation, it is not practicable to monitor this – but the resulting meat is also excluded from commercial circulation, not to be sold to consumers, and limited to consumption within the household and to non-market circuits.

Herders attempting to negotiate a space within the regulatory framework for heterodox production practices, such as smoking the meat over an open fire in a tent, face considerable difficulties. Until very recently, regulations have made little or no allowance for such practices, and though persistent lobbying for regulatory

change has begun to impact on this in the last few years, their use remains circumscribed. One recently introduced exception is a minor quota of meat that can be produced using traditional methods (SNT 2002) but which can circulate commercially only under very specific conditions – for one, consumers have to enter the premises and pick up the meat product themselves. In the herder camp, these difficulties of the regulatory framework in accommodating traditional practices were sometimes interpreted as continuous with the historical state agenda of Norwegianization, an extension of (cultural) war by other means. The question was not without political currency: in 2005, NRL submitted a formal complaint to the UN human rights commission concerning Norwegian slaughtering regulations, on the grounds that they were 'racist'.

One important effect of secluding production into the confines of the slaughterhouses was that it made the resulting carcass unavailable to herders. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the roles of men within the traditional family work unit were centred on the practical work with live animals. Much of the work pertaining to children, women and the elderly, on the other hand, involved the extraction, processing and utilization of raw materials from the dead reindeer body. With the advent of a production system where reindeer are largely purchased on the hoof, removed to far-away slaughterhouses and processed behind closed doors, industrially and out of sight, the reindeer carcass has increasingly become physically unavailable to herders, limiting their access to traditional raw materials and by-products from the slaughtering process – sinews, organs, bone, furs, blood – that are essential to traditional elaboration practices such as the production of handicrafts, utensils and food. Access to these materials becomes dependent on the limited private slaughter: generally speaking, however, private slaughter also excepts the resulting meat from commercial circulation. Ensuring a supply of traditional materials thus comes into conflict with the out-take of animals for economic gain: unless, of course, one controls a commercial slaughtering operation. A range of such traditional utilization practices were in use at the Krampenes corral, precisely because of the presence of a mobile slaughterhouse that made available the by-products of the commercial slaughter.

For one, the soft fur of the heads and the lower legs [*skanker*] was removed, usually by the women, to make handicraft shoes [*skaller*] for personal use and sale. After flaying, the skulls were also often cleaved to separate the eyes and the lower jaw, which were then boiled and eaten. The eyes in particular were considered a delicacy, on a par with the tongue. The blood of the reindeer could be used for a range of food products, assuming that someone was at hand to collect it and stir it in buckets to keep it from congealing. Usually this work was allocated to older women, occasionally to children. If extracted, the sinews could be used to make thread for clothes and shoes, though manufacturing such thread was again a very laborious process, in decline since the increased availability of strong synthetic threads. The sinews of the back were particularly strong and useful, but they also required the most work. Of the inner organs, some were saved for human consumption, particularly the heart, while others such as the lungs, liver and stomach might be used for dog food – though again, this practice had been largely replaced by commercially available brands of dog food. Organs were still collected by older people as pet-food, mostly for nostalgic reasons. The brain, finally, could be eaten or used to make oil to treat furs and skins with.

Of course, comprehensive utilization of reindeer by-products was by no means limited to such traditional extraction practices. Since its inception, driven by a logic of maximising profit, industrial meat-processing has involved a high degree of utilization. Upton Sinclair, writing *The Jungle* from the Chicago stockyards at the beginning of the 20th century, famously attributed the joke to a packinghouse tour-guide that 'they use everything about the hog except the squeal' (1906). In line with this, industrial reindeer slaughterhouses in Finnmark also utilised as much as possible of the reindeer carcass: reindeer entrails were shipped to Denmark for processing as pet food, for example, and penises sometimes as aphrodisiacs to East Asia. Such practices of extraction and utilization were conducted *elsewhere*, however, and by other methods, and the result was that they had little to do with the continuation of traditional practices among the herders themselves. In this sense, the material disappearance of the reindeer body effected by the slaughterhouse lent support to the general masculinization of herding practice, by eliminating the basis for labour roles associated with women and children. The complex effects of the disappearance extended well beyond this, however.

Discussing practices of meat consumption in the West, Vialles takes the terms 'sarcophagous' and 'zoophagous' to denote, respectively, the logic of the 'eater of a substance' and the 'eater of an animal' (1994:127). Between them, the two terms map 'the difference between slaughter on a massive, industrial scale, which for that reason is harrowing and is therefore kept out of sight, and an individual act of killing that preserves a link, however tenuous and purely imaginary, between eater and eaten' (31). The feminist and vegetarian critic Carol Adams has argued that such sarcophagous practices of consumption are only made possible by the widespread, pervasive and naturalised disjunction between living animal and consumed meat – an ongoing dissociation that operates in the spheres of language, discourse, culture and practice, and which is manufactured and reproduced through a range of mediums, from children's books to the physical structure of slaughterhouses (1990). She terms this disjunction the 'structure of the absent referent', the mechanism by which the once-living animal is made to stand in a relation of ambivalent reference to meat, simultaneously present and erased (Adams 1990, 2004).

This mechanism has three modalities. The first is 'definitional' and works in the linguistic sphere, by euphemism: words such as 'meat', 'mutton', 'veal' and 'pork' operate to disguise and efface the origins of animal food products in the flesh of once-living animals, turning the animal into the 'absent referent' of the word itself (41-42). The second is also linguistic, and centres on the use of metaphor as a device that neutralises the reality of animals and animal experiences in the very act of invoking them: when '[a]nimals become metaphors for describing people's experiences... the meaning of the absent referent derives from its application or reference to something else' (42). Metaphoric phrases such as 'the butchering of civilians' or 'the slaughter of war' invoke the animal and the violence inflicted on it, while simultaneously neutralising or displacing the reality of both (39-62). The third modality is more complex than the other two, and is also the most relevant in the present context. It involves the ongoing suppression of the logical link that connects the physical life and death of the animal to the physical existence of the meat, which necessarily presupposes the

uncomfortable fact that a living animal has been killed, or died, in order for it to exist. As Adams argues, '[a]nimals in name and body are made absent as animals for meat to exist. Animals' lives precede and enable the existence of meat. If animals are alive, they cannot be meat' (40). The once-living animal tends, however, to remain unacknowledged in the act of consumption – along with the practices by which it was killed and by which the meat was produced. This more or less imperfect elimination turns the animal into a constantly repressed presence in the meat. One of the principal operations of the absent referent is to pre-empt the attribution of individuality, particularity or personhood to the consumed animal. It neutralizes and erases the specific history at stake in the re-representation of animal products as consumable objects: 'states of objectification and fragmentation disappear and the consumed object is experienced without a past, without a history, without a biography, without individuality' (Adams 2002).

Though Adams' discussion is oriented primarily towards language, discourse and, particularly in her later work, the imagery and visual tropes of advertising and pop culture, it is also clear that the manufacture and reproduction of the absent referent relies on material structures and practices – though of her discussion in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, only a few pages are dedicated to slaughterhouses (1990:51-53). Her notion of the absent referent is not only suggestive but useful: the herders I worked with were certainly aware of the complex balance of erasures and obfuscations involved in the production and circulation of commercial meat, as well as being capable of manipulating it to their own advantage. One operator proposed an advertising campaign for reindeer meat products that juxtaposed the picture of a reindeer with a picture of a cow in an industrial barn. Underneath each picture there would be a text that described the average foodstuffs consumed by each animal over its lifetime, prior to the slaughter: the text for the reindeer would read so and so many kilos of lichen, so and so many kilos of moss and so on. The caption for the cow, on the other hand, would read so and so many kilos of synthetic nutrients, so and so much growth hormone and so on. Effectively, the advert represented an intentional play on the absent referent, representing the unknown and making it explicit – a risky strategy, which is perhaps precisely why in the end the campaign was not undertaken. More generally, awareness of the need to keep the referent absent in commercial meat production transpired in a range of settings and practices: from the reluctance of some herders to allow me to photograph their dead animals, on the grounds that I might post the images on the Internet and 'some animal group or the other might use them', to discussions on marketing strategy and packaging styles. Capitalizing on the comparative advantages of reindeer meat over industrially farmed meats, particularly towards the upper segments of the urban market, required drawing attention to the animal origins of the meat – but *carefully*, striking a balance between explicitness and concealment. Ironically, the comparative advantages of reindeer *as meat* depended on the very qualities that made the animals objectionable and problematic, to non-herders, *while alive* – their wildness, their free-roaming and semi-domestic character (see Chapter 2).

In theoretical terms, Adams' formulation of the absent referent also resonates with Taussig's re-mapping of the fetish, in *The Nervous System* (1992). Here, abstracting from the term's complex lineage in psychoanalysis, Marxism and anthropology, Taussig defines 'the formal mechanism of fetishism' as the

relationship 'whereby the signifier depends upon yet erases its signification'. In this account, the fetish is what 'absorbs into itself that which it represents, erasing all traces of the represented'; alternatively, it is also a 'sign' in which 'the signifier is prized apart from its signification'. This absorption – or fissure – that constitutes the fetish *qua* fetish charges the fetish with a 'deep investment' in the 'death of the signifying function', produced by a distinctive 'architecture of the sign... in which the signified is erased'. Of course, with these turns of phrase Taussig exaggerates the 'death of the signifying function' in the fetish – by his own account, it is precisely the subterranean persistence of the erased signifier that lends power, aura and 'necromantic' potency to the fetish, continuing to operate in and through it. I return to this point shortly. To summarize, then, in so many words Taussig defines the fetish as an object, or a reification, that can 'exist and be effective precisely on account of erasure' (1992:110-140). In this sense meat – particularly the industrially produced, standardized and faceless forms of meat that circulate on the commodity market – could be considered as a kind of fetish, defined by the more or less complete erasure of the living animal that is required for its circulation *qua* commodity. This requires some elaboration.

By definition, meat is organic matter that is subject to decay: as a 'global commodity', its history (Rixson 2001) could be written as a long chain of storage innovations, from drying and salting to refrigerated train carriages, all designed to arrest the inevitable. Today, precisely due to the efficiency of these storage innovations, meat travels the world like other commodities, broaching distances that are limited less by time and decay than by profit margins. The length of these complex trajectories create ever-widening gaps between producers and consumers: gaps that are geographical, social and economic in character, but also a matter of knowledge. That is to say, in a rapidly changing world, 'commodity biographies' (Kopytoff 1986) are becoming ever more complex and difficult to trace and represent. More than ever, it is true today that '[w]hat appears to be a carrot or a piece of meat is... a product with a history and implications more complex and profound than most of us even want to think about' (Lien 2004:5). The blank surface of the meat commodity harbours hidden or obscured realities that are often uncomfortable, and which many prefer to remain unaware of. Following Adams, the discomfort of origins in the case of meat is distinct from the discomfort involved with other commodities: however well packaged, sanitized and controlled, meat remains a kind of substance that is logically charged with the – frequently *undesirable* – violence and killing inherent in its production. The *half-knowledge* of consumers concerning the animal origins of their meat is not reproduced merely through linguistic and discursive structures: increasingly, it is also reinforced by the structure of expanding commodity chains, particularly in the global marketplace. Except perhaps for small children, 'everyone' knows more or less where meat comes from, how it is made and from what – but for many, the specific detail of these origins remain deferred.

Effectively, in a range of contexts, the animal origins of industrial meat in routinised and mechanical acts of bloodshed, evisceration and dismemberment operate as something like the *public secret* of meat consumption, as 'that which is generally known, but which cannot be spoken' (Taussig 1999:51). This is where Taussig's mapping of the fetish comes in useful again. As he argues, the fetish is an object of awe,

danger, fear and fantasy, and its potency and terrifying properties derive precisely from the mystery that is generated by *the erasures that constitute it qua fetish*. Taussig speculates that the very power of the fetish may derive from 'the fantasies of the people prohibited' (130), and that 'the fantasies of the marginated concerning the secret of the centre' may be its most 'politically important' feature (132): that is to say, that to those excluded from knowledge of its production, the fetish becomes an object of speculation and fantasy, a locus of obscure suspicions and dim dangers, precisely insofar as they themselves are excluded from the secret of its production – from the absent referent. Through these speculations, the excluded become complicit in the reproduction of the fetish, and of its power. Formulated in a precise but convoluted manner, the complex and obscure potency of the fetish – in this account – could be said to derive not from what is *known* about it, nor from what is *not known* about it, nor for that matter even from what is *suspected* about it; rather, and far more specifically, the potency derives from what is *known* that one does *not know* about it, and which one is therefore perhaps also complicit in not knowing. Applied in this way, the notion of the fetish captures a powerful intersection or confluence of ignorance, suspicion and fantasy – and of responsibilities incompletely absolved – as well as suggesting a set of complex social relations and distributions of power centred on the fetish itself. Its epistemological structure – the play of concealment and visibility, erasure and presence, knowledge and suspicion – also makes it analogous to the industrial meat commodity, with its play on the absent referent of the animal.

A hundred years or more of regularly occurring disease outbreaks, moral panics and other meat scandals (Lien & Nehrllich 2004; Berg 2004) attest to that fact that industrial meat, for all its ease of consumption, remains a powerfully suspect substance. Today, as the various meat crises of recent years illustrate, the opaque and unknown spaces of the commodity chain foster both suspicion and the potential for scandal and outrage. The very opacity of the meat industry constitutes its concealed activities and processes as the object of knowledge practices and strategies that operate in registers of investigation, exposure and discovery: concealments can be revealed, hidden networks traced, segregated spaces explored, not infrequently by 'undercover' investigators (e.g. Eisnitz 1997). Particularly in the current climate, where a pervasive logic of fear, suspicion and risk awareness informs and orients practices of meat consumption, potent interests strive to neutralise consumer suspicion and produce the requisite degree of trust. The commercial circulation of meat requires that somewhere, behind the scenes, its biographies be authenticated and guaranteed: through expert checkpoints, certifications, strict regulations and quality guarantees. That is to say, lengthening commodity chains and an atmosphere of consumer suspicion and fear converge to produce the slaughterhouse itself as a more and more densely regulated juncture, located at the heart of complex systems of supervision, inspection, documentation and control: a black box perhaps from the point of view of consumers, but *an intensely scrutinized locus of attention* from the point of view of the State and of market operators.

In the case of reindeer meat, this creates a situation where the logic of commodity meat circulation contrasts ever more sharply with its circulation, locally and informally, through non-market channels. Within informal

economies of gifting and exchange, between herders for example, reindeer meat circulated in a socially specified form: its properties and qualities were often referred back to specific animals, grazing conditions or the skills of herders – good meat was often discussed with pride, in terms of what kind of animal it came from, grazing conditions that year and so on. Poor meat, on the other hand, reflected badly on the individual herder whose animals it came from. Through this unbroken and regularly refreshed link of knowledge, meat operated as a kind of social metonym, vested with pride and social significance. There were no systemic secrets here, on the order of Taussig's fetishizing erasure – where there were secrets concerning origin, these were mundane, such as in the case of stolen meat or meat whose provenance was somehow dubious or illicit: the restaurant owner who smuggled in cheap reindeer meat from Finland rather than buying from her own relatives, for example. In the context of commercial meat production, the link of knowledge between meat and its origins was shifted behind the scenes, to the sphere of complex package tracking systems, identification and marking protocols and the accountability ensured by veterinarian meat inspections. The situation profoundly affected herders seeking to get involved in commercial slaughtering: my second ever conversation with a reindeer herder during fieldwork was an hour-long discussion about the relationship between EU food hygiene directives and national legislation, and the impact of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) on market food safety standards in Norway and the UK. At the time, these topics had marginal if any relevance to my research, and I myself had only limited interest in them. As it turned out, however, they formed a central part of the day-to-day management and practices of my informants, and over time I adjusted my agenda accordingly.

Like actors in other food-producing industries, herders found themselves having to comply with increasingly stricter regulations, protocols and inspection procedures, as well as vastly more extensive documentation requirements and escalating amounts of paperwork. Increasingly, with the introduction of new documentation procedures dictated by the transition to a food safety framework based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points; cfr. Codex Alimentarius 2001), slaughterhouses have become the site of control that is exercised, not necessarily through direct supervision, but through extensive systems of surveillance that demand self-policing, in the form of documentation and the inspection of the documentation procedures (Busch 2004). As one mildly exasperated reindeer slaughterhouse operator told me, documented protocols must be in place for every conceivable eventuality: 'we practically need to have a check-list in place for what to do if someone shoots themselves in the head with a bolt-pistol!'

A new standard of killing

I was on the outskirts of the corral area at Krampen, near the beginning of the 2005/2006 slaughtering season. For a while I had been watching an old herder as he finished meticulously butchering one of his own reindeer by hand, using only a knife, a plastic bucket of water to wash out the blood with and a wooden support for the carcass. The commercial slaughter was well underway and in the background, a hundred yards away, the diesel generator for the mobile slaughterhouse chugged away. When he finished, he wiped his hands with some bloodied tissue paper and looked over at me with an undecipherable expression. 'See?'

he exclaimed, triumphant. 'Field slaughter can also be done properly!' His remark took me entirely by surprise: to myself I had been admiring the swift, elegant precision of his movements, mesmerized, wondering what would happen if I tried to wield a knife with such speed. The last thing on my mind was any possible impropriety in his procedure. Of course the herder was aware of this, and his remark expressed his pride in his own skills and in his execution of a routine procedure that, in being observed, had been turned into a performance. The interesting point here, however, was the tacit premise of his remark: field slaughter could *also* be done properly. That is to say, 'proper' was a standard set *elsewhere*, by other practices, in comparison to which field slaughter *could* be conducted 'properly' – which is to say that by implication, or by default, it was not. In this, his remark pointed to one of the more powerful and subtle effects of the industrial slaughterhouse regime, and of modernization in general: the re-valuation of traditional practices as inferior.

In Norway as elsewhere, such re-valuation has been central to the scientific modernization of indigenous practices, and imposed from the top. Time and time again, government experts and reformers seeking to reorganize indigenous livelihoods – such as fishing, livestock keeping and reindeer herding – have defined existing practices as crude, inefficient, irrational, primitive and obsolete, and therefore not only *in way of* but *deserving* of disappearance (Bjørklund 1991, 1995; Kalstad 1997; Paine 1994). The current concern in Sámi circles with the preservation and revival of tradition and traditional practices must be understood against the backdrop of this historical devaluation. The herders I worked with were highly aware of this problematic, and invested considerable effort in identifying, preserving and re-articulating tradition for current conditions. Nevertheless, the remark of the old herder illustrates the extent to which the *devaluation* of tradition continues to be produced – in a subtle fashion, almost as a collateral effect – by the powerful discursive, material and regulatory assemblages that are re-shaping the face of herding practice. For all the explicit value placed on tradition, the simple fact that field slaughter *could also* be conducted properly still speaks volumes of the quietly naturalized primacy retained by certain standards; in this case, the standard of industrialized slaughter, as a hygienic, segregated, technological, efficient, rational and professionalized practice of killing. Several of the more significant differences between this industrial standard of killing and the practice of slaughter as it was conducted outside the slaughterhouse should be clear by now: differences in spatial and social organization, in technical equipment, in the degree of supervision and regulation, in the trajectories of the output. So far I have not, however, discussed what may be the *key* difference for the purpose of my argument: that is, the difference in the relationship or bond that obtains – or which pointedly *does not* obtain – between killer and victim in different contexts of killing. This requires some further elaboration.

In his magisterial history of the 20th century, *Mechanization takes Command*, the industrial historian Siegfried Giedion wrote at some length about the 'mechanization of death' (1969:209-246). One of his key case studies was the slaughterhouse complex at La Villette, in Paris. On its opening in 1867, this enormous complex covered 56 hectares and contained the rudiments of a civic infrastructure, including 'three market halls for the trade of livestock, numerous stables for cattle, sheep, and pigs, and several administrative buildings, including a police station, post office, and stock market' (Brantz 2001). The complex stood as an

impressive monument, both to its time and to the vision of its architects: gigantic proportions encoded powerful centralizing ambitions that responded to the pressing needs of an ever-growing urban population. Despite its industrial scale, however, animals at La Villette *were still felled and slaughtered in individual booths*. To Giedion, '[t]he whole installation bears witness to the care with which the individual animal was treated [and] attests the calm of the handicraft that no cog-wheel, no conveyor has shaken' (1969:211). This sustained attention to individual animals, even in a mass slaughtering facility, contrasted starkly to the automated killing practices that were being instituted, around the same time, in the colossal meatpacking operations on the other side of the Atlantic. Giedion describes the slaughter that takes place in one of these spaces vividly:

'The death cries of the animals whose jugular veins have been opened are confused with the rumbling of the great drum, the whirring of gears, and the shrilling sound of steam. Death cries and mechanical noises are almost impossible to disentangle. Neither can the eye quite take in what it sees. On one side of the sticker are the living; on the other side, the slaughtered. Each animal hangs head downwards at the same regular interval, except that, from the creatures to his right, blood is spurting out of the neck-wound in the tempo of the heart beat. It happens so quickly, and is so smooth a part of the production process, that emotion is barely stirred' (246).

Between them, the facilities at La Villette and the US meatpacking giants – exemplified particularly by the Chicago stockyards – represented two radically different modalities of mass slaughtering. In US slaughterhouses, the introduction of the so-called disassembly lines had raised productivity drastically, transforming the roles of both workers and animals in the context of the slaughterhouse. The practice of butchering had been disaggregated; the old figure of the butcher had effectively disappeared, his labour dispersed among a body of highly specialized workers, each of whom conducted only one very simple, repetitive operation. In a similar manner, the animal itself had also been fragmented, divided into individual operations spread between positions along the conveyor belt.

Discussing this mechanization of death, Giedion noted that the encounter between 'organic substance' and the new industrial machine was a fraught interface: as he observed, perhaps somewhat optimistically, '[k]illing itself, then, can not be mechanized' (246). 'The machine', he wrote, could not accommodate the organic lack of uniformity in living structures: at the heart of the enormous assemblage of industrial slaughter, the act of killing remained the work of human hands. Watching this human work within the industrial machine, he recorded for himself a distinct experience of horror. Its source lay not in the killing of animals *per se*, but in the speed and automation with which it was conducted. The industrial organization of death produced in him an unnerving dislocation: '[o]ne does not experience, one does not feel; one merely observes'. Writing as he did in the immediate aftermath of World War II, he linked this 'neutrality towards death' to the broader course of human events; the neutrality, he argued, 'did not bare itself on a large scale until the War, when whole populations, as defenceless as the animals hooked downwards on the travelling chain, were obliterated with trained neutrality' (246). With this argument, Giedion unwittingly aligned himself with a lineage of thinkers,

writers and activists who have linked the industrial processing of animals to the industrial processing of human beings – an intellectual genealogy that so far might be said to have culminated, for sheer shock value, in PETA's recent 'Holocaust on Your Plate' campaign, where a series of images juxtapose battery animals with concentration camp victims (Snaza 2004). While I return briefly to this thematic in a later section of my argument (see Chapter 7), for the time being the point of interest here is the peculiar *neutrality towards death* that Giedion located in the industrial organization of killing.

Work in the slaughter-hall at Varangerbotn was organised by a strict division between 'clean' and 'unclean' zones [*ren og uren sone*]. The front of the hall, where the reindeer entered and were bled, was 'unclean'. Of the various operations on the reindeer body, only the bleeding and the decapitation took place here. Placing the body onto the conveyor belt marked its transition into the clean zone – from this point on, the carcass must not touch the ground, and could only be handled wearing appropriate and hygienic safety equipment. The hygienic integrity of the meat and the physical integrity of the workers were both strictly regulated and enforced. Personnel or visitors were not permitted to cross from the unclean to the clean zones without appropriate purification: washing hands and putting on white overalls, rubber gloves 'type blue', hair-nets, a helmet and clean footwear, usually white rubber boots. A hard helmet was also required, to prevent head injuries from passing carcasses. Vialles argues that this segmentation of space within industrial slaughterhouses expresses a fundamental symbolic order: '[the] 'dirty sector' is the realm of the warm, the moist, the living, of smells and secretions, of the biological threat that needs constantly to be contained and cleaned up. The 'clean sector', on the other hand, is where everything is inert, bloodless, trimmed, and stabilized by cold' (1994:35). Here her argument borrows from Victor Turner: passing between these two sectors, the animal body that is to be transformed into food becomes, temporarily, a 'nameless void', 'neither an animal... nor... yet meat' (44). To Vialles, the distinction between 'clean' and 'dirty' is an important element of the symbolic work of the slaughterhouse, which is to produce 'disjunctions [that] invite and combine with one another to keep the mass killing of animals at a reasonable distance' (31).

The division between stunning – the act that anaesthetizes the animal and induces unconsciousness – and bleeding, which kills the already inert animal, is another important element of this work of disjunction. As she argues, the partitioning and compartmentalization of the act of killing effects a 'double disjunction', between 'bleeding and death on the one hand, between death and suffering on the other' (45). Materially separated in space and time, between them the two acts dissolve the specific moment of death, leaving neither stunner nor bleeder morally responsible. As she argues, 'two men are necessary for neither of them to be the real killer' (46). In short, Vialles argues that for all the routinization and mechanization of killing in the context of everyday slaughterhouse practices, the moment of death remains, on some level, morally problematic. Her elegant and compelling argument for this is supported both by her own work and by the wider literature that documents moral and ethical problems confronted by slaughterhouse workers and other animal death professionals (e.g. Arluke & Sanders 1996). At first sight, it might seem to contradict Giedion's contention that the industrial organization of slaughter fosters an increased neutrality towards death. On

closer inspection, of course, it is apparent that even if we *do* take Giedion's argument at face value – an argument that amounts, essentially, to a highly personal and subjective, if well-informed, evaluation – then the very emergence of such moral problems *as problems* – that is, as exceptions – in the course of everyday slaughterhouse practice only serves to corroborate the overall effectiveness of the neutralization.

As far as my own material is concerned, one apparent problem with Vialles' thesis is that neither the herders nor the slaughterhouse workers I worked with seemed to show any concern whatsoever, in conversation or practice, with neutralizing or dispersing moral responsibility for the act of killing. In the slaughterhouse it was not only difficult to detect any 'dissociation between shedding of blood and the administering of death' (Vialles 1994:45) in their practice, but for all intents and purposes, the work of death and the operations of killing in which they were involved appeared perfectly unproblematic and routine. At first sight, several possible explanations present themselves for this apparent discrepancy. For one, it might be that Vialles' analysis is flawed: the concern with neutralizing moral responsibility that she identifies might represent an inflated emphasis on her part, resulting from her own moral concerns and shaping her interpretation of her materials. Given the quality of her material, this seems an overly destructive and unwarranted conclusion to draw. Perhaps, on the other hand, the apparent ease masked a kind of hidden transcript (Scott 1990), kept inaccessible to outsiders such as myself by language barriers and by factors such as suspicion or the desire, on the part of the death-workers to enact bravado or masculine social roles. This is possible, but as I discussed earlier practical factors limited my interactions with the Finnish slaughterhouse workers and prevented me from gathering sufficient material for an argument either way. More interestingly perhaps, it may be that the discrepancy could be accounted for by differences between Vialles' material and mine. The slaughter-hall in Varangerbotn was an open-plan arrangement: the entire slaughter-hall remained visible from one end to the other. Stunning took place outside the slaughter-hall proper, but the door was generally left open, leaving no partition. Frequently, the stunner was also the one who took the animal into the hall and bled it. The slaughterers were skilled, with extensive experience of killing reindeer, and the efficient order of operations resolved the question of death swiftly and elegantly, leaving no room for doubt: the reindeer were stunned by hand before being suspended, and decapitated before being moved to the disassembly line. Aside from the practical reasons – the unwieldy and frequently huge antlers made the bodies difficult, even dangerous to handle in close quarters – this decapitation also ensured that the animal was unquestionably dead before it was ever placed on the conveyor belt. The moment of death was thus specified precisely and beyond question, in a manner that prevented many of the moral problems reported by slaughterhouse workers elsewhere – problems such as inappropriately stunned animals being cut open while still conscious, breaking free while being flayed or, as in the case with pigs, being boiled alive (Coe 1995; Eisnitz 1997). These observations are useful to differentiate the industrial slaughter of reindeer – at least as this was conducted in Varangerbotn – from the slaughter of other types of livestock: they also establish some background for the material of the next three chapters. Pursuing these distinctions further here, however, would only serve to obscure a far more significant point: in terms of my argument, the question of whether slaughterhouse workers experienced moral problems with their work is entirely peripheral to the central fact,

that they were not herders – or rather that the herders were, for the most part, not slaughterhouse workers.

The advent of the slaughterhouse as an obligatory, densely regulated passage point to the market has shifted both the act of killing itself and the subsequent operations on the slaughtered body, not only into the closed and inaccessible confines of the slaughterhouse itself, but also into the hands of trained professionals. The moment of death is both concealed and professionalized, as trained experts now work the slaughter behind closed doors, with sterilized technical tools and designated hygienic equipment, segregated into a sterile and inaccessible inside. Slaughtering has become a domain of specialists – or at least, hired labour – and the practice of slaughtering one's own animals has become increasingly secondary to the *economically significant* slaughter conducted in the slaughterhouse, by these specialists. As the remark of the old herder butchering his animal at the corral hinted, this exclusion of personal slaughter from the sphere of economic production threatens to make the skills and knowledges associated with it increasingly redundant and irrelevant – not only to outside observers and policy-makers but, more importantly, *to the herders themselves*. In practice, the formal substitution of trained professional for owner also severs the strong, symbolically laden link between killing and the ownership of reindeer: the link that I discussed earlier, under the heading of Foucauldian sovereignty (Chapter 2). In the modernized slaughter of the slaughterhouse, no relationship or bond obtains between killer and victim beyond the moment of killing itself, not even the theoretical bond of formal ownership. This is not to say that with the advent of professionalized and industrial slaughter, reindeer herders have ceased to be involved in the killing of their own animals. For one, as I have described, the manual private slaughter of animals continues apace, even though the commercial circulation of its output is limited. The decision concerning what animals to slaughter also remains in their hands, and they continue to select animals and designate them for slaughtering. Turning again to the register of sovereignty and necropolitics that I discussed in Chapter 2, what the abattoirization of slaughtering practice might be said to have brought about and institutionalized is a clear distinction between the *physical* practice of killing on the one hand, and the practice of *designating for death* on the other. I return to this distinction, in another form, in the argument of Chapter 7.

The crucial distinction that Giedion failed to draw, in linking the killing of animals to the conduct of war in the trenches of the World Wars, lay between the neutrality towards death that he experienced in the slaughterhouse itself, in the context of routinized animal killing, and a more generalized neutrality towards death that was located *outside* the slaughterhouse, and which had nothing to do directly with the killing of animals at the disassembly line. Analogously, the neutrality of the death-workers *inside* the slaughterhouse is of a different order to the neutrality of consumers located *outside* the slaughterhouse, and entirely uninvolved in the act of killing – however much both groups may be said to be linked participants in the same systems and networks of meat-based industrial production and trade. Giedion also undertook another suggestive correlation. With its 'curious symbiosis of handicraft and centralization', he argued that the complex at La Villette represented an older template for relations between butcher and butchered – one which he himself quite clearly favoured. In considering this curious 'survival of handicraft practices', he wondered whether he

had found the residue of a vanishing notion of animal care, that 'treatment in separate booths expresses the deeply rooted experience that the beasts can be raised only at the cost of constant care and attention to the individual animal' (211). Contrasting the enormous cattle-ranching operations of the US to the small-scale peasant farm-holds of Europe, he wrote that:

'[t]he Great Plains beyond the Mississippi, where free tracts of grassland can be dominated from horseback and where the herds grow up almost without care, are implicitly related to the assembly line. In just the same way the peasant farm, where each cow has its name and has to be attended when giving birth to its calf, is linked to handicraft methods in slaughtering' (211).

In other words, Giedion posited a powerful convergence between highly extensive animal management on the one hand, and industrialised slaughter on the other. As he saw it, both practices produced animals that were anonymous, faceless, de-individualized – and therefore also morally undemanding. In the case of current reindeer herding practice, this might at least superficially seem persuasive¹². On closer inspection this apparent resemblance is a false friend, however: it conceals subtle but fundamental differences.

Half a century after Giedion, in *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), Tim Ingold effectively reiterated a version of this argument, when he argued that while the 'regimes' of hunting and pastoralism differ in their specific dynamics of engagement, they still share common ground in that 'humans and animals relate to one another not in mind or body alone but as undivided centres of intention and action, as whole beings' (75). Both regimes thus differ from the 'alienated' logic of animal objectification that informs and dominates industrial meat production:

'Only with the advent of industrial livestock management have animals been reduced, in practice and not just in theory, to the mere 'objects' that theorists of the Western tradition (who, barring the occasional pet, had little or no contact with animals in the course of their working lives) had always supposed them to be. Indeed this objectification of animals, having reached its peak in the agro-pastoral industry, is as far removed from the relations of domination entailed in traditional pastoral care as it is from the relations of trust entailed in hunting' (Ingold 2000:75)

Ingold here aligns himself with Giedion – and local critics in the Varanger area, for that matter – in arguing that the industrial processing of animals involves their 'de-animalization' (Noske 1997) and that it effectively produces, in practice, the theoretical animal favoured and conceptualized by the 'Western tradition': object-like, stripped of autonomy, sentience and moral worth, entirely unlike the animals that are socially produced within other, more interactive regimes of human-animal practice. The latent essentialism in Ingold's assertion that hunting and pastoralism represent stable and generalizable regimes or modes of production that uniformly determine cross-species relations may be somewhat problematic; nevertheless, his point concerning their shared affinity *vis-a-vis* industrial processing is significant, and merits some further

¹² Perhaps more so than his suggested correlation between industrial slaughter and modern warfare – see, however, Pick 1993 and Russell 2001.

examination.

As I understand Ingold, the industrial 'agro-pastoral' form of reindeer management emerges from traditional pastoralism in stages, from 'symbiotic' to 'predatory' pastoralism, and thence to 'ranching' or 'stock-rearing' (Ingold 1980) – hence also the term 'proto-ranching' to describe 'hyper-extensive' pastoral practice (Ingold 1980:260; see Paine 1994:189-190). I argued in Chapter 3 that long-term extensification has entailed a transition to a more herd-centred style of management. Increasing distance between herders and reindeer is linked to a decrease, on the part of herders, in familiarity with and knowledge of individual animals. In everyday practice, characteristics of individual animals become less significant as the animals become increasingly subsumed into the herd, which shifts centre-stage as the principal unit of management. Combining the arguments of Giedion and Ingold, the *facelessness* of individual animals produced by escalating extensification would converge and run parallel with their *anonymity* as they are processed in industrial mass slaughter. Extensively herded and industrially processed livestock animals thus emerge as objectified, alienated and de-individualized creatures, whose individual qualities are redundant to production and who therefore need only be known as substitutable elements – differentiated at best only in terms of rough taxonomies – within the larger gestalt unit of the herd, or of analogous units of management. This social transformation – or perhaps rather, this de-socialization – of the individual animal would, in turn, be expressed in an *indifferent manner of killing*: indifferent, that is, to the 'whole being' of the animal at hand, now become anonymous, faceless and substitutable.

Of course, not surprisingly, outside the slaughterhouse herders themselves were not squeamish about killing reindeer. To an outside observer, the practices of killing and slaughter at the corral might certainly appear unceremonious, perhaps even indifferent in their casual brusqueness – an inference that animal activists, for example, leaped to with some frequency, conflating matter-of-factness with moral indifference (e.g. Animal Angels 2006; see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). For myself, barring the occasional squeal from an urbanised herder child at the round-up corral, I did not detect any hint that the act of killing itself was problematic, morally or otherwise, or the object of much discursive elaboration. Of course, *this is in no way to say that reindeer could be freely killed*, even by their own herders, or that their killing placed no moral demands. The apparent ease of killing – and for the moment I can only stress the *apparent* ease – of herders must not be confused with a neutrality towards death, either as effected by the structure and organization of industrial slaughter, or as evidenced by the meat-consumer who prefers to keep the referent of his or her meat absent. I elaborate aspects of this subject over the following chapters, before reformulating the distinction between extensive herding and industrial processing more clearly in Chapter 7.

The disappearing reindeer

The disappearance of animals from the life-worlds of modernity is a nearly universal theme in the social and cultural study of animals (Franklin 1999; Rothfels 2002). A recent example is the animal historian Richard Bulliet, who has epochalized the disappearance, arguing that the advent of modernity coincides with 'a new

era in human-animal relations', dominated by the logic of what he terms 'post-domesticity' (Bulliett 2005). This condition or historical stage emerges out of domesticity, which in the context of his argument he takes to refer to 'the social, economic and intellectual characteristics of communities in which most members consider daily contact with domestic animals (other than pets) a normal condition of life'. As he defines it, domesticity is characterized by the regular everyday exposure of humans to various functions of animal life, particularly sexual congress and killing, which have become unpalatable to modern tastes. In post-domesticity, on the other hand, people 'live far away, both physically and psychologically, from the animals that produce the food, fibre and hides they depend on, and they never witness the births, sexual congress and slaughter of these animals'. A post-domestic society 'continues to consume animal products in abundance, but psychologically, its members experience feelings of guilt, shame, and disgust when they think (as seldom as possible) about the industrial processes by which domestic animals are rendered into products and about how these products come to market' (2005:3, 1-32). Considered in this light, reindeer herding is clearly a domestic practice, insofar as it continues to involve regular and intimate contact with the brutal realities of reindeer life and death: the mating, birth and slaughter of reindeer are, or must become, everyday matters, intimately familiar to any prospective herder. As I have already discussed, factors such as changing lifestyles and consumption patterns, increasing extensification, the advent of mechanized transport, the rise of double-income households and the restructuring of the nuclear herder family are, collectively, producing a situation where herders spend less and less time physically involved with the messy realities of the lives of their reindeer. The advent of modernity is threatening to rearrange the conditions of practice and if not eliminate, at least severely limit the basis on which such familiarity rests and through which it is reproduced. The practice of killing forms an intrinsic and significant part of this jeopardized intimacy.

In the corral, the slaughter of reindeer was conducted in a public, accessible and socially visible form; this aided in the reproduction of killing as a key element in the personal, embodied involvement of herders with their own animals. The modern industrial slaughterhouse, on the other hand, represents a key institution of post-domesticity, central to the post-domestic disjunction – not only between consumers and animals but, more significantly in this context, between herders and animals. Hypothetically at least, given current trends, reindeer herders face a possible future in which their involvement with their own animals might decline even further, to the point where they may even no longer be involved *at all* in their slaughter. At the moment this remains a remote possibility, but a possibility nonetheless. Poised at the threshold of a possible transition into something like post-domesticity, control over the practice of slaughter has become more than a matter of politics, economics or even herder values such as autonomy: rather, it draws into question the very character and future of herding practice itself, of relationships between herders and reindeer, the nature of the herding life and of *what it means to be a herder* (Habeck 2003). Putting it in figurative terms, the industrialization of reindeer slaughter threatens to reinforce an emergent herder role or identity, a kind of post-domestic subjectivity, that haunted the speculations of some of my informants concerning the future of their practice: the figure of the young gung-ho male cowboy, on his snowmobile, chasing the reindeer without ever getting close to them.

Historically, as I discussed earlier, the exile of slaughter from view and from the city was a matter of both physical and moral hygiene. In the 19th century, the process gained impetus: driven not only by the practical and logistical requirements of growing urban populations, but also by changing sensibilities – increasing refinement, changing standards and preferences, along with the rise of a new aesthetic of death that called for brute animals to disappear and for their killing to take place out of view. The seclusion of slaughter was both a matter of public health, hygiene and logistics, *and* a matter of culture: of new regimes of taste and distinction, coupled with a morally charged aesthetic associated, in Europe at least, with the rising power and crystallizing sensibilities of the urban middle classes and the bourgeoisie. In this light, the visible disappearance of reindeer slaughter instituted through the introduction of slaughterhouses and the centralization of slaughter extends beyond economics, logistics and food hygiene: it also continues the project of bourgeois cultural formation, and of moral and aesthetic reform, that was initiated on the European continent in the 19th century. The contours of the new post-domestic subjectivities that may or may not be emerging through the modernization of reindeer-herding practice were, in many ways, laid down already two centuries ago, in sweeping legal reforms and in angry letters to local councils in Paris or London. In turn, this narrative of origins raises questions about the ongoing efforts directed by activists and reformers, throughout Europe and the US for more than a century now, to enforce the humanization of animal slaughter. Both in practice and in theory, such efforts represent an intentional technique of subject formation: a set of discourses and practices aiming to produce a certain kind of marked and historically contingent human subject – the effaced killer, perhaps – whose values and parameters immediately belie its claims to transparent universality. Such allegedly unmarked universal subjects represent a familiar target for cultural critics. Effectively, the various new and humane subjects – herders, killers, consumers, legislators, activists – that are emerging and being brought into being at the juncture between legislation, State intervention, reform programmes, organizational restructuring, practical necessities and efforts at activism are, in fact, one of the key living legacies of the 19th-century European bourgeoisie.

Clearly, the restructuring of the reindeer slaughtering sector over recent decades has been, primarily, a matter of sanitation, food hygiene, productivity, efficiency, surveillance and control over practice. Nevertheless, in 1929, when the Norwegian government passed a law which stated that 'during the killing [of reindeer], other domesticated animals *and children under 14 years of age* must as far as practicable not be present' (Skjenneberg & Slagsvold 1968:223; emphasis added), this did not self-evidently involve any of these. Rather, as Jonathan Burt argues when discussing the passage of an identical bill in Britain in 1851, the intervention illustrates the transformation of animal death into a 'complex act', situated at the intersection between a 'preoccupation with the humane' and 'codes that sanction animal killing... in areas outside the field of public vision' (Burt 2001). Certainly in the context of herding, where killing reindeer was a routine and elementary practice, such legislation might be read as an attempt to transform the *moral significance* of the act of killing – or rather, perhaps more precisely, as an attempt to transform the moral significance *of the act of observation itself*. Within the new moral choreography of the Bill, had it been effective, slaughtering would have been *made into* the kind of spectacle from which the eyes of children must be shielded. Nothing

suggests that herders took much notice of the bill back then, any more than they do today. Nevertheless, its very terms point obliquely towards the kinds of concealed, powerful and subterranean pressures that are exerted in the reform of slaughtering practice – moral pressures that are often so naturalized and obscured as to be almost invisible, enshrined in regulations and directives, but which nevertheless exercise radical and far-ranging forms of influence.

Densely regulated and contained within the law as it is, the industrial slaughterhouse nevertheless also operates as a *space of exception* (Agamben 1998) – not only an exception from view, but also from the legal and social codes that regulate animal violence *outside* the slaughterhouse. Inside the carefully arranged ritual space of the slaughterhouse, things happen that would be impossible, unacceptable, *illegal* outside it: it is a Foucauldian *heterotopia* par excellence (Foucault 1986), and its significance as a peculiarly modern institution extends far beyond the generation of meat and animal products. In conversation with Agamben's proclamation that '[t]oday it is not the city but the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West' (1998:181), for example, Wadiwel argues that:

'the spiritual home of biopolitics is not the concentration camp but the slaughterhouse. It is within this facility that life is measured, contained and extinguished with a monstrous potentiality that defies belief; where the slaughter of billions occurs within spheres of exception that are incorporated into the very heart of civil space... [Accordingly] it is here that the most troubling questions must be asked about the human capacity for the management of life, and the mammoth potential for a seeming infinity of daily torments and mass exterminations to occur' (2004:7).

The modern slaughterhouse, with its attendant assemblage of regulations, procedures and technologies, *makes killing happen out of view* – or rather, it *excepts* the act of killing from view for most people, including herders, and relocates it into a new set of visual and epistemological coordinates, controlled and observed by a new expert audience: veterinarians, management, trained slaughtering labour. Along with this relocation of killing comes its *moral recalibration*. To foreshadow the argument of Chapter 7, it is transformed into a segregated or circumscribed spectacle: a kind of hidden rite, presided over by its own expert caste, with its own exclusive and strictly stipulated ritual choreography. The complex social, moral and cultural implications of this passage or transformation are obviated, eliminated, in the neutral language of 'modernization', 'sanitation', 'rationality' and 'productivity'. It seems almost like a sort of double gesture: as though it were precisely in the very act of rationalizing, of being 'disenchanted', that the act of killing was in fact being *ritualized*, transformed into the kind of symbolically infused, morally charged, barely containable action to warrant such an elaborate balance of checks, protections, safeguards, protocols and purifications. The consequences of this transformation of the act of killing are beginning to make themselves felt: to me at least, they seemed to echo throughout the various comments, critiques, discussions and concerns I heard concerning distance and alienation, compromised tradition and lost authenticity.

As Adams argued earlier, the disappearance of the animal and the elimination from view of the act of

slaughter produces a complex and sustained disjunction at the point of consumption – a social fact that was noted already by Ralph Waldo Emerson, on the cusp of the meteoric industrialization of the US meatpacking industry, when he penned the lines '[y]ou have just dined, and, however scrupulously the slaughter-house is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity' (Emerson 1860). Subsequent critics and activists have picked up and substantially elaborated on this relationship between distance, social visibility and moral responsibility, particularly with regard to those animals whose lives are contained entirely within the material, social and symbolic perimeters of the animal industrial complex¹³. According to these critics, both the industrial slaughterhouse itself and the wider networks of practice, discourse, institutions and ideology to which it pertains and within which it is situated need to be considered in terms of the forms of distance to animals – physical, social, moral – that they manufacture. In a discussion of the modernity of the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman argued that moral indifference had to be *produced* – through the manufacture of forms of social and symbolic distance that would enable the extermination to proceed: '[t]he moral attribute of proximity is responsibility; the moral attribute of social distance is lack of moral relationship' (Bauman 2003:184). This is a point or maxim that might well be extended to the relationship between consumers and industrially processed animals and, more significantly in the present context, to the changing relationship between herders and their reindeer.

13 For example, the vegetarian activist and Holocaust survivor Alex Hershaft argues that '[i]n the midst of our high-tech, ostentatious, hedonistic lifestyle, among the dazzling monuments to history, art, religion, and commerce, there are the 'black boxes'. These are the biomedical research laboratories, factory farms, and slaughterhouses – faceless compounds where society conducts its dirty business of abusing and killing innocent, feeling beings. These are our Dachaus, our Buchenwalds, our Birkenaus. Like the good German burghers, we have a fair idea of what goes on there, but we don't want any reality checks' (Hershaft 1998).

Chapter 5 Knives for the slaughter

Through the concealments that it operates, the slaughterhouse shields the act of slaughter from view – not only from the view of herders but also, as importantly, from the view of the *public*. Against the grain, the open-air slaughter of the corral represents an eruption of the act of killing into the public arena – visible to the point of conspicuousness, and recipient of proportionate attention. As I noted in Chapter 3, the public or semi-public character of round-up events represents a mixed blessing for herders. Activists, journalists and researchers have access to the round-up and can observe, describe and document the practices that take place there. Accounts of the slaughter and images of dying reindeer, flayed heads and gutted carcasses circulate readily, across a wide range of formats and media, and fuel controversy and public debates. In themselves, such controversies over reindeer slaughter are nothing new.

In 1924, then reindeer inspector Kristian Nissen penned an article on the reform of 'Lappish' slaughtering techniques (Nissen 1924). The opening statement might as well have been written today:

'In recent years, both the daily press and the organs of the animal protection cause have on repeated occasions printed articles and notices about reindeer slaughter. The methods most in use so far have been characterised – and often in the strongest terms – as brutal. Demands for the humanization of reindeer slaughtering have therefore been put forward' (1924:76).

At the time, the principal bone of contention was the fact that reindeer were not stunned prior to killing; that is, the animals were bled directly, without first being made unconscious, and therefore remained aware – and suffering – up to the point of death. Today, such stunning is prescribed by law, and the prohibition on slaughter without prior stunning is monitored by the veterinarians supervising the slaughter, who report transgressions to the police. Instead therefore, controversies centre on the specific techniques used for stunning: particularly, on the use of so-called curved knives. Activists decry any use of the knives, favouring instead the extension of standard captive-bolt stunning pistols to all forms of reindeer slaughter. Perhaps ironically, in their time the curved knives were themselves developed by welfare activists and introduced into reindeer herding by outsiders – as part of an ambitious and highly successful programme of slaughtering reform, to humanise the slaughter of reindeer and, through this, to humanise the slaughterers.

The present chapter compares and relates two key points in the history of these knives: first, the initial practical field trials, conducted in the early 1920s by a group of Norwegian and Swedish scholars; and second, the controversies that have surrounded their use in recent years. Since their initial introduction, parameters of public concern and State agency have shifted, as has the narrative framing of the knives: to activists at least, they have passed from progressive innovation to barbaric anachronism; to herders, from innovation to tradition. Animal activists on the one side, herders on the other thus contest the present meaning of the knives: residual barbarism to be eliminated, or tradition to be preserved? The relationship between these definitions expresses the relative power of each faction to activate different versions of the

State – and along with these versions, different registers of obligation. In this context, the notion of tradition circulates widely, as a powerful emic tag. It is not my concern here to contest or legitimize such uses, much less refract them against my own 'analytical' version of tradition – rather, the task I set myself is primarily descriptive. Simply put, I am less interested in what tradition *is* than in what it *does* – and what it is made to do.

Reindeer hearts and minds

Norwegian law dictates that reindeer be killed in two stages. First, the animal is stunned. In commercial slaughterhouses, this stunning is almost without exception performed with so-called captive-bolt pistols, which fire a bolt into the back of the neck (Figure 5.1). The combined concussive impact and penetration of the skull disrupts brain function without killing the animal. This ensures unconsciousness while maintaining heart function, and

Figure 5.1 Typical captive-bolt pistol used for reindeer stunning.

facilitates the subsequent

bleeding. Once stunned,

the body is placed on a suitable flat surface within the slaughtering area and its throat is slit, which kills the animal. After a lapse of time, subsequent operations on the body are undertaken. Private slaughterers are also obliged to observe this two-part structure of the kill – though their practice is less strictly monitored – and in general, even the most informal field slaughter tends to observe it: at the very least for practical reasons, as the stunned animal is immobilized and the slaughtering can proceed much more simply and rapidly.

Historically, the two-stage kill is a recent phenomenon. At one point during the 2004 slaughtering season, stirring a bucket of blood at Krampen round-up fence, an elder from the district narrated for me with fond recollection of her days as a young woman, around World War II, when reindeer were killed by *heart piercing*, without being stunned first. This practice involved piercing the heart directly with a knife, inserted between the ribs, and letting the blood of the dying animal accumulate in the chest cavity. At a time when reindeer blood was still utilised for human and dog food, this minimised spillage and allowed the blood to be conveniently gathered for later use. Reindeer stomachs were often used to store this blood in a frozen state. This heart-piercing technique was widespread, both in the northern parts of Norway and in other parts of Scandinavia¹⁴. In the early parts of the 20th century, as Nissen noted, the practice began to attract negative

14 The practice of heart piercing goes back a long way. The scholar Knud Leem described it in his 1767 treatise, *Description of the Lapps of Finnmark*: 'When a Lapp wishes to slaughter a reindeer, he ties it by a rope to a rooted tree-stump, so that the animal is at a few fathoms' distance from the root, whereupon he steps forward, and with a lunge... drives it right into the heart, pulling the knife back in the same instant. When the animal has been stuck, it runs around a few times, and then falls over with its legs in the air. In this condition he lets around half an hour pass or somewhat more, and thereafter he flays it. Not a drop of blood comes out from the wound, but it all remains inside the animal, and upon opening is found among the entrails, whence the slaughterer takes it out and fills it into the animal's stomach' (Leem 1767:152-153, cited in Nissen 1924). The Sámi scribe Turi also gives an account of the practice, in his 1910 treatise: 'the slaughter of reindeer belongs to the men. When the Lapp takes a reindeer from the herd, he leads it behind the tent and ties it to a tree. Then he returns to the tent to sharpen his knife, so that it should be very sharp and clean, to kill the reindeer quickly. If the knife is dirty, it does not kill the reindeer so soon, the reindeer will suffer long before it dies. And some knives also kill less easily; if it is hard steel, it kills well, but soft steel is very bad. And when the Lapp has finished everything, he comes out and takes a comrade with him, if there is

attention in the media and from the public. Animal activists and reformers got involved. The Swedish scholar and activist Hjalmar Dahlström, who later came to play an important role in the development of the curved knife, gave a detailed description of the aftermath of slaughter with heart piercing, based on his field observations in Övre Soppero in 1913:

'During the first minute after the knife has been inserted into the heart of the animal it runs around, chased by the others, or remains standing in one spot. The gaze becomes rigid and fearful, the animal starts gaping. During the second minute the animal begins to walk unsteadily and stumble, or it stands with legs far apart. After two minutes the animal usually falls over. It always falls forward, that is on its front part, on the breastbone, onto the knife that is stuck in its breast. Nevertheless it takes another minute before the blood loss becomes so great that the animal falls over on its side from exhaustion. Breathing becomes more laboured, so the reindeer has difficulty taking in air. The eyes acquire a pleading expression, but the reindeer remains fully conscious. To the attentive observer, the entire countenance of the animal demonstrates the suffering it must endure before death finally comes to free it from the pain. After four and a half minutes, one can usually hear a wheezing or rasping sound. Only after five and a half minutes have elapsed do the so-called 'last gasps' begin, but it takes another minute and a half for breathing to cease entirely. After eight minutes the animal finally appears to have fought its last' (Dahlström 1924: 47-49).

Dahlström noted that this was an average time-frame for death using the heart piercing method. Sometimes the process was over as quickly as in five minutes, sometimes it took 'a minute or two' longer. He also noted, however, that for death to occur too quickly 'was not considered desirable': his herder informants argued that a swift death left too much blood in the carcass. According to Dahlström, the principal aim of 'traditional reindeer slaughter' was 'preserving the blood of the slaughtered animal', ensuring the meat itself was 'as bloodless as possible' (49). The technique that Dahlström and his peers later pioneered was to provide an elegant and practical solution to this problem: by effectively disaggregating the moment of death, destroying consciousness prior to physical death, it enabled the heart to continue pumping out blood without suffering on the part of the animal.

In Norway, the practice of heart piercing was made illegal in 1929, when a law was passed that made stunning compulsory: '[i]n the slaughter of animals and domestic reindeer, the animal shall be stunned immediately prior to the letting of blood' (Law of 21. June 1929, §1). Compared to other European countries, Norway was an early adopter – after Germany – of compulsory stunning legislation (Brantz 2002:192). The law remained in force until it was superseded by the new Animal Protection Act of 1974. The practice of

one. And then they twist the reindeer over and stab it in the breast, and let it loose with its rope; and if it is a good knife, it can not even rise and stand, but that it falls over again immediately. And if it is a poor, dirty knife, it lives (the reindeer) for a long time, and if it is let loose, still a long time passes before it dies' (Turi 1910:138, also cited in Nissen 1924).

heart piercing itself, however, remained in broad use at least until after World War II¹⁵. Other killing methods were also experimented with during this period, including shooting with firearms. Nissen, for example, wrote with some disdain of the killing techniques that were practised in the Varanger area in the early 20th century:

'In some of the northern Lapp districts [heart piercing] has given way, to a greater or lesser degree, to shooting with rifles (or salon rifles). This applies for example to Varanger in Finnmark. But the change is not due to any effort at humanizing the slaughter of reindeer, it merely indicates to what degree the reindeer, through poor herding, have become so wild that it is only with difficulty that they can be gathered and slaughtered in the usual manner' (1924:86).

Most of these methods were impractical, however, and remained relatively unusual: for a long time, heart piercing was the dominant technique for reindeer killing. By the middle of the century things had changed. Writing from the Varanger area only a few years after World War II, the humanist and Sámi advocate Ørnulv Vorren could state with some satisfaction that the practice had been successfully supplanted:

'[the] humanization of slaughter has had more success [than castration reform]. Because reindeer are not so tame and accustomed to the presence of humans and because of the large untidy antlers, it has been difficult to find a way of stunning them. The northern and older method, that is piercing the heart without stunning, has now been improved with a stunning stab in the neck first. This is performed with an experimentally designed knife' (Vorren 1951:31).

This 'experimentally designed knife' was the curved knife, or *krumkniv*. In appearance, a typical knife of this sort is somewhat strange-looking, resembling a deformed screwdriver rather than a conventional knife, with a long three-sided blade tapering to a curved point (Figure 5.4). The distinctive shape and curvature are tailored to the proportions of the reindeer skull. During a curved-knife stunning the animal is held by the antlers, facing the stunner. The thin knife-blade is inserted, in a downward motion towards the stunner, through the opening at the base of the skull, where the spinal cord enters the brain cavity (Figure 5.2). The blade penetrates the brain, sliding along the base of the brain-case until it reaches the fore-brain. Correctly performed, the procedure causes swift cerebral trauma and disrupts brain functioning, producing complete and irreversible loss of consciousness. The animal collapses immediately, and the corneal reflex becomes inactive; the eye does not respond when touched directly.

15 Some veterinarians I spoke to believed it was still in use in parts of Finnmark, though they themselves had not witnessed it, and a recent report by animal activists claims to have footage of the practice from Western Finnmark (Animal Angels 2006; see Chapter 6).

The procedure demands skill and practice.

Figure 5.2 Curved-knife stunning at the Krampen's corral

Application of the knife is

an imprecise art – particularly in the cramped spaces of the stunning pen, faced with powerful bucking animals. Even experienced wielders may miss the correct point of entry on the first try. Calves and young animals are relatively easy to handle, but with large animals at least two persons are often required: one stunner, armed with the knife, and one or more assistants to hold the animal still. Applied incorrectly, the knife may sever or damage the spinal cord but leave brain function intact – superficially mimicking unconsciousness, while in fact leaving the animal paralysed but aware throughout the subsequent bleeding. Substituting a conventional straight-bladed knife for the curved knife produces the same effect.

The trials at Brynhildsvold (1922)

The knives were originally designed in the early 1920s, as part of a slaughter reform programme driven by activists and funded in part by the State, through the Department of Agriculture (Dahlström 1924; Fridrichsen 1924; Nissen 1924¹⁶). The first trials in Scandinavia took place in December 1922, at Brynhildsvold, a farmstead in the mid-country district of Røros. They were conducted by a handful of Swedish and Norwegian

Figure 5.3 State veterinarian and herders – Brynhildsvold 1922 (Dahlström 1924)

scholars, reform activists and

veterinarians, along with a number of herders from the local area who had volunteered their animals for experimental stunning. The trials represented a point of encounter between the mostly urban Norwegian and Swedish reformers and the Sámi – or 'Lapp' – herders (Figure 5.3). The views of the herders on the scholars are not recorded, but the trial reports speak volumes of the scholars' views of the herders. Several of the reformers had years of experience working in Sámi areas, and their views were generally nuanced and positive, if rather paternalistic – Kristian Nissen, the leading Norwegian delegate, stated that while reindeer herders in general 'still possess a primitive level of culture', 'the Lapps from the Kola peninsula in the north-east to Trøndelag in Norway... are no longer at the tribal stage [*naturfolk*]' (Nissen 1924:77). In particular, the reformers were optimistic about the pragmatism and technical rationality of the Lapps: the local herders were 'reasonable men through and through, certain to view such experiments with favour and likely to voluntarily make use of a practical stunning method, should such a method be invented' (Dahlström 1924:73). As I return to below, this optimism concerning the technical rationality of the herders played a central role in the trials.

The key to the trials was a sizeable collection of slaughtering tools and small arms that were transported by

¹⁶ The discussion in this section is based entirely on primary sources published in Norwegian and Swedish journals of the time. Professor Dahlström's account of the trials was published by a minor Swedish animal protection organisation that ceased to exist in the late 1950s. My thanks go to the current owners of the organisation's library, and to the anonymous caretaker who ventured into the cellars to locate the article for me. Except for two very brief articles (Pareli 2003, 2004), nothing has been published on this subject in Norwegian since Nissen's original article in 1924. To my knowledge, the account I give here represents the only written source available in English on the trials.

train over the border from Sweden by Professor Dahlström (1924:76-77). The weapons¹⁷ included conventional and specially designed knives, a range of salon rifles and automatic pistols of different calibres, Browning guns, an army-issue German Mauser and a selection of slaughtering-masks. Over the course of the trials, which lasted for four days, the killing tools were meticulously tested and their effects were compared. High hopes were vested particularly in firearms, which were tested extensively and were, in the end, considered the most efficient in technical terms. Fridrichsen for example, the local district veterinarian from Røros, was of the opinion that 'the swiftest method of stunning a reindeer... is to employ a revolver or handgun' (1924:152). Nevertheless, in the end, firearms were not the preferred choice. Why?

For one, the guns were unsafe and potentially dangerous. During the animals' struggle to break free shots could easily be fired in the wrong direction; bullets might also pass completely through thin sections of the animal's brain-case and accidentally wound other animals or bystanders. Additionally, firearm wounds caused excessive blood loss compared to other techniques. This was undesirable, as the blood was used by the Lapps for cooking.

Stunning at gunpoint

induced vomiting, which

'polluted' the nose and

mouth cavity, spoiling valuable parts such as the tongue: stunning with firearms 'in most cases causes both vomiting and nasal bleeding, which the Lapps find anything but pleasing'. Bullet-holes disfigured the skin of the head, which was used to make footwear; something to which the Lapps 'ascribed no little weight' (152). Furthermore, they were an expensive acquisition and required a constant supply of expensive cartridges: a key problem when introducing reform to a population that still to a large degree operated outside the cash market, often far from supply centres (Nissen 1924:140). Finally, firearms were undesirable for altogether other reasons, mostly unspoken: invoking racial stereotypes of the Sámi as unreliable and violent, Fridrichsen suggested that 'handing guns or pistols to Lapps may in a number of cases also be a less than fortunate course of action'. More importantly than all these, however, the principal argument against firearms was that it would be 'difficult to make the Lapps adopt the method' (Fridrichsen 1924:152). Instead, the victor of the trials was the so-called *curved knife* – specifically, the prototype that the reformers labelled 1A (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 The first set of curved knives (Dahlström 1924)

The curved knife prototypes were only manufactured at the last moment. The original idea for the design came from a 1922 report to the US Department of Agriculture, entitled *Reindeer in Alaska* and based on the work at the Alaskan reindeer research station (Hadwen & Palmer 1922). The report compared unfavourably the heart-piercing practices of the recently immigrated Sámi population (Vorren 1994) with those of local Eskimos, who killed the animals at a distance with firearms. The Alaskan scientist team recommended, for manual stunning, that 'pithing' be aimed at the neck, and directed in a diagonal forward motion so as to not

17 The term *weapon* is apt. Dahlström notes that his 'principal fear' at the time of the planned train journey was being 'mistaken for a dangerous anarchist' and arrested – to prevent this, he secured special dispensation to carry 'all the arms and ammunition' he required, from the Department of Agriculture (1924:76).

only sever the spinal cord but also penetrate the brain thoroughly (Hadwen & Palmer 1922:12-13). During a visit to Oslo in September 1922, Dr. Hadwen had described this technique to Nissen, who was persuaded of its efficacy and went on to become an energetic advocate of the method (Nissen 1924:104-105). Not all of the reformers who assembled at Røros were of a mind to try this, however. Professor Dahlström, for example, had developed his own 'apparatus' for reindeer slaughtering, a kind of modified slaughtering mask that used firearm cartridges to drive a piston into the skull and desensitize the animal (Dahlström 1924).

Nevertheless, following 'lively discussions' in Røros over the weekend before the trials were to begin, the reformers decided to have a set of such knives manufactured, on the basis of a rather sketchy idea of their design: '[a]s we assumed that the knife which had been employed in the reindeer slaughtering experiments in Alaska must have been curved, we bade prepare two curved 'sticking-knives' of different shape' (Fridrichsen 1924:146). The next morning, 'as soon as the little community opened for business' and two hours before the party was to depart for the farmstead, Dahlström and a 'Norwegian colleague' went out into Røros to procure materials for the knives. They had little luck initially, managing to secure only some common 'thin-bladed shoemaker knives' that were too soft for sturdy reindeer skulls (Dahlström 1924:82-84). Eventually however, they located a blacksmith who was willing to make the knives on the spot, with the result that a set of four knives – labelled 1A, 2A, 1B and 2B – was incorporated into the arsenal of reform (Figure 5.4). 1A was long and 'stiletto-shaped', 19cm long along the outside edge and 18 on the inside, 9mm thick at the base and tapering to 5mm at the tip. 2A was shorter, only 16cm, and broader: 12mm across, 5mm thick. 1B and 2B were experimental knives with lesser curvature, subsequently discarded (1924:82-84). In the technical-anatomical register of the reports, this curvature enabled the new knife:

'without being hindered by the *basis cran...* [to] be led all the way in until it internally impacts *os. front.* at the height of the eyes, somewhere in the vicinity of which the animal's centre of consciousness should be located. When the knife is here given a few twists to the side, this part of the brain is transformed into a porridge-like mass' (Fridrichsen 1924:150).

Based on a particular mapping of the 'centre of consciousness' in the reindeer brain, the shape of the knife thus prevented the well-known problems of neck-sticking with straight blades of the 'traditional Sámi sort' – which represented, in Fridrichsen's words, 'an intervention that paralyses the musculature of the body, respiratory activity and parts of the cardiovascular system' (149): leading to slow death by suffocation without loss of consciousness, causing the animal great suffering.

In practice, the curved knife measured well in comparison to the other tools being tested. As the reformers had predicted, the assembled herders were very interested. According to Fridrichsen, 'the enthusiasm with which it was tested should indicate that in the knife we may have a stunning device that the Lapps could be made to adopt at major slaughtering events without too much effort' (1924:152). This was a key concern for the reformers, as they were in more or less unanimous agreement that the new devices must be taken up voluntarily, without enforcement. Policing the reform by force would be an unrealistic undertaking. In his

1923 report to the Ministry of Agriculture on the trials, which he witnessed, Lapp inspector [*lappfogd*] Guldahl reminded his southern readers that:

'concerning the introduction of a more humane method of reindeer slaughtering, I will permit myself to suggest that I consider it contrary to our purposes that this be sought by imperative or force, as enforcement – in this case – will reveal itself to be both difficult and expensive. Certainly one might be able to maintain control at certain major slaughtering events, but it must also be taken into account that a large number of reindeer are slaughtered in the wild where, as can be seen, any enforcement will be nearly impossible' (Guldahl 1923; cited in Nissen 1924:141)

That is to say, in the view of the reformers, the geographical and administrative marginality of the herders made them too elusive to be effectively regulated. As a population, herders were simply incompletely subject to the coordinates of State power. If pressed, they could retreat out of reach, physically and figuratively, into the remote spaces of the tundra and the forest – spaces that were, in practice, beyond the jurisdiction and surveillance of the State. Consequently, compliance could not be forced and reform must operate on the basis of an appeal to the judgement, technical rationality and experimental curiosity of the herders – prompted but not directed by State authority. This pragmatic rationality would overcome the 'tradition-bound' inertia of the herders. As Nissen phrased it, rather self-contradictorily:

'[i]t has been said that the conservatism of the Sámi would prevent the implementation of a humane method of reindeer slaughtering. The Sámi are certainly a conservative people that finds it difficult to surrender what is ancient and customary, but from my knowledge of them I have no reason to doubt that when they see something new which they find beneficial, they will try it with interest and thereafter make use of it' (Nissen 1924:141-142).

The restructuring of slaughtering practice must be voluntary, and the calculus of voluntary adoption dictated that the new technique be affordable, safe, convenient, simple and suited to conditions in the field. It must be similar enough to existing practices to insert itself seamlessly and advantageously into the toolbox of herders, yet simultaneously offer visible technical improvements. Firearms worked rapidly and with certainty: in terms of maximizing welfare by minimizing pain, they were slightly superior even to the knives. On the other hand they were also expensive, impractical and potentially dangerous; they ruined important parts of the reindeer, and some of the attending experts had reservations about entrusting such weapons to 'the Lapps'. On their part, the herders voted with their hands: for the curved knives, more specifically for model 1A. Following the trials, on the recommendation of the reformers, the decision was made to adopt and disseminate the knife as standard stunning equipment in the slaughter of reindeer. The knives were mass produced and distributed throughout the 1930s by the Department of Agriculture, and herders who had been present at the initial trials were subsequently employed as 'itinerant trainers', travelling the country to disseminate use of the knife (Pareli 2003, 2004).

In retrospective – certainly by the standards of interventions by the Norwegian State into Sámi practices –

the reform programme must be considered unusually successful. Today, the curved knife has become an important and valued tool of herding: many herders defend it as a traditional instrument, in use 'since time immemorial'. Its success relies in no small part on the efficiency of its design, and on the careful considerations of the reformers who introduced it to a population that would not permit itself to be forcibly regulated. Its structure re-scripted existing practice and reorganized the moment of death so to speak from the inside: the shape dictated posture, angle of insertion and a path of least resistance through the skull of the reindeer, affording an efficient economy of action that paralysed the animal rapidly and at an early stage of the kill. According to contemporary physiological understandings of the reindeer brain, this path also minimized the self-awareness of the animal as it died. In this way, the knife reconciled a number of concerns: those of largely urban populations scandalised by open displays of 'brutality', of welfare activists intent on eliminating the animal's experience of being killed and of herders, interested in swift, efficient and labour-saving killing techniques. While the physical structure of the knife itself has remained largely unchanged since its introduction, however, the parameters of power and concern that informed its design have shifted quite dramatically.

A new age of the State (2000)

The reports of the reformers from the trials were, primarily, documents of scientific advocacy. To persuade their intended audience, mostly lawmakers and legislators of State institutions in the south, they relied on verbal arguments and evidence, in the form of diagrams, tabulated data, illustrations and photographs. In particular, one series of photographs and diagrams showed the passage of curved and straight blades through the bisected heads of slaughtered reindeer (Figure 5.5). Some three quarters of a century later, an almost identical series of images (Figure 5.6) appeared in the final report submitted to the Department of Agriculture by the impractically named 'Expert committee for the evaluation of the continued use of curved knives in the stunning of domesticated reindeer' (2000). The aim of the committee, set up by the Legal Council for Veterinary Medicine, was to assess 'whether it is defensible from an animal welfare perspective to stun reindeer with curved knives' (2000:1). The need for such a formal evaluation arose in 1995, when a 1973 directive that specifically regulated the stunning and slaughter of 'domesticated reindeer' was replaced by a general directive concerning animal welfare in slaughterhouses (1). Unlike its older counterpart, this new directive did not specifically address the curved knife, which had passed into nearly universal use in the decades following the Røros experiments.

Figure 5.5 Bisected reindeer heads (Fridrichsen 1924)

Figure 5.6 Bisected reindeer heads (Expert Committee... 2000)

More specifically, the committee's mandate was to ascertain whether 'use of curved knives is scientifically defensible in terms of animal welfare', and whether when reindeer were stunned using this method, 'unconsciousness occurred instantaneously upon penetration of the brain by the knife'. Additionally, they

were to assess whether 'a brief training period should be required for use of the knife' and whether there was need for 'specific regulations concerning the use of curved knives... including production specifications' (2). In the committee's view, disruption of consciousness could be established in one of two ways: either by 'registering brain activity and reflexes in connection with curved-knife stunning', or by 'assessing relevant brain damage after killing' (4). For 'practical reasons', the latter approach was adopted. Three heads of animals that had been stunned using curved knives were subjected to detailed anatomical analysis.

The report listed a series of arguments in favour of the knife. For one, it was a cheap one-off investment with no moving parts, that required minimal maintenance and functioned well under all weather conditions. By comparison captive-bolt pistols – which currently represent the only significant alternative to curved knives – became more difficult to operate in extreme cold, as the bolts were clogged by frozen blood, brain matter and fur. Unlike the pistols, the knife also caused little or no vomiting, and seemed to induce less cramps in the animal, something which facilitated the severance of major blood vessels during the bleeding. The knife was also silent, reducing stress for nearby animals, and unlike firearms it posed no physical threat to bystanders or other animals. Based on their own experience, all members of the committee also agreed that it was a fast and efficient method of stunning: animals collapsed immediately, and the corneal reflex failed to trigger when the eye was directly touched. As in the original trials, in terms of stunning speed, firearms were still considered fractionally more efficient, but the advantages of the knife outweighed this (8).

The principal disadvantage of the knives lay in the potential for improper technique and application. The committee linked this to a decline in appropriate training, mostly as a result of current prohibitions: 'where the knife is in common use, the necessary competence has also been maintained' (2). The difficulty of securing the knives in the first place also contributed to this. At the time of the report, appropriate curved knives could only be obtained from Karasjok, in Eastern Finnmark, and were unavailable in the western parts of the region (3). Finally, the committee also considered the possibility that legitimizing the use of curved knives might lead to increased use of other knife types, straight-bladed knives that were not suitable for stunning. They suggested that this problem, like improper technique, resulted in large part from the scarcity of the knives: implicitly, it could be resolved by increased manufacture and dissemination. The committee concluded – with minor reservations – unanimously in favour of continued use:

'[i]n terms of animal welfare, brain piercing with curved knife is an acceptable stunning method for the slaughter of reindeer. The practical advantages for the out-take of animals for personal use are so significant that the method should remain permitted. It is presupposed that the technique is employed by a competent party, and in most cases it will be required that he or she have an assistant to keep the animal still. Competence with the curved knife exists within the industry today, but probably not within all herding units. In today's situation, there appears to be a need for accessible informational materials to ensure that training and transmission of competence concerning correct use of the curved knife can be implemented' (2000:8).

The report thus confirmed the State in its role as agent for the production of appropriately trained and disciplined herder-users. Use of the knife should remain permitted, but also marshalled and controlled, and appropriate use must be ensured through techniques such as the distribution of informational materials. Unlike in the 1920s, the structure and design of the knife were, on their own, *no longer sufficient*: they did not provide sufficient certainty or guarantee. A higher degree of precision had become realistic, and therefore necessary. Voluntary adoption may have been the key problem confronting the Brynhildsvold reformers, but to the authors of the 2000 report the ability of the State to enforce its own directives was safely beyond question. The question attached to the spatial and figurative limits of State power had been supplanted by the question of *how* this State power should be exercised. Effectively, from being an external imposition, the curved knife had now become a kind of *concession*, on the part of the State, to the wishes of herders. This re-framing highlights a redrawing of the boundaries between inside and outside that define the State and its field of power.

Contrasted with the terms of the 2000 report, the very tone of the reports from Brynhildsvold – the emphasis on the calculus of voluntary adoption, embodied in the design of the knives – places them squarely in an earlier age of the State, and of State power: an age when its reach was limited and evasion was not only possible but likely. At the time of the Brynhildsvold trials, the circumscribed State dictated that reform must proceed by conforming existing practice approximately to standards that were impossible to enforce directly. Its role – as mediated by the Department of Agriculture – was simply to support the design process and facilitate adoption through the production and dissemination of the new knives. Today, this version of the State has become obsolete. Over the course of the 20th century – in the years that intervene between Brynhildsvold and the 2000 report – the material and symbolic capacity of the State to regulate and intervene in herder life and practices has increased dramatically. Herders have become increasingly dependent on and incorporated into various cartographies and mechanisms of State power. Both as a population and as an object of State power – the two are clearly inseparable – herders have shifted from a position of spatial, social and administrative exteriority, or marginality, to a position located safely inside the agentive parameters of the State and of State action. Subsidy programs, licensing and registration regimes, policing, territorial management systems and planned production regimes have progressively drawn herders into the networks of State power – as increasingly accessible, known and manageable subjects. Borrowing Scott's optical metaphor of the State (1998; Chapter 2), herders have become *visible* in new ways within the administrative optic of the State – and consequently, subject to its power.

As the language of the most recent report suggests, in the span of time between the two reports the *narrative* terms of State power have also shifted, to displace the appearance of contingency and limitation in its operations. The limited and circumscribed State that backed the Brynhildsvold trials has shifted into a much more powerful construct, capable of regulating within a vastly expanded jurisdiction. Juxtaposed, the two sets of reports thus point to a potent historical shift that has taken place in the parameters, real and narrated, of coercive State agency since the early 20th century. The terms of the relationship originally expressed in its

design – between a State with limited powers and an elusive, highly marginal population – have *shifted*: a shift that is reflected in the new register of assumed compliance and unproblematic enforcement in the 2000 report. As I elaborate in the next section, this shift is threatening to make the knife obsolete.

Shifting faces of the State

In practice, the recommendations of the 2000 report had no effect. Before they could be implemented, the question of curved-knife stunning was shifted to the supra-national level through the 'discovery' that the practice had been technically prohibited since 1999, under the terms of EU directive 93/119/EC, 'On the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing'. After a period of enforced prohibition, during which the practice remained in widespread use but was effectively forced underground, legal controversies over the knife reached a climax and temporary ceasefire in late 2004. At a meeting with the Minister of Food and Agriculture at the end of September that year, a group of Sámi politicians requested clarification on the existing regulations concerning the knife. In November, the minister replied in a letter to the Sámi Parliament that '[o]ur regulations... regulate only the slaughter of animals in abattoirs. The use of the curved knife to slaughter animals outside abattoirs is not regulated by current Norwegian legislation and is therefore not prohibited'. The minister also added that 'it is a requirement that curved-knife stunning of reindeer be conducted by a skilled person with sufficient training and experience in the use of the knife'. This more permissive interpretation provoked animal activists, including the Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance [Dyrevernalliansen], who filed a complaint about the Department of Agriculture with the EFTA Surveillance Authority.

As of the time of writing, nothing has come of this, and the knife has returned to common use in corrals and fences around the country. Activists however continue to decry the curved knife as an inhumane, cruel and – perhaps most importantly – *unpredictable* technique. In a recent interview, a legal advisor to the Animal Protection Alliance called the curved knife 'an uncertain and barbaric method of killing'. She added that '[i]t is not sufficient that the curved knife functions acceptably when used correctly, if there is a significant risk of misuse' ('Sponheim is barbaric', NRK 25.01.05). Negatively charged terms such as barbaric or primitive play here on a temporal register of linear, progressive history that tends to inform activist engagements with reindeer herding in general. In a recent comment to a proposal for new animal welfare legislation, for example, the NSPA or the Norwegian Society for the Protection of Animals [Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge, or DBN] states that:

'[I]f a situation arises where exhausted [reindeer] die of starvation during the winter and spring grazing seasons, supplementary feeding must be implemented. *The starving of kept animals can not be tolerated.* The practice of permitting animals to starve to death when food is available belongs to a past that was less concerned with animal ethics [*en mindre dyreetisk fortid*]' (NSPA 2002:3)

Couched in these terms, there is no contradiction in the fact that the same organizations that introduced the knife in the first place, or their direct descendants, now seek to abolish it. Ethical standards have risen and

practices that may have been acceptable in the past, or even desirable, have now become intolerable. It makes no difference in this regard whether the curved knife is indigenous or foreign, archaic or more recently introduced: either way, it belongs to a past that must be eliminated. Such articulation of social differentiation in temporal terms is a phenomenon that must be familiar to practically any anthropologist working in the so-called modern world: certainly, to those working with indigenous groups.

More specifically, in an article in *Animal Geographies*, Elder, Wolch and Emel argued that 'animal practices' serve as an 'extraordinarily powerful... basis for creating difference [insofar as] they serve as defining moments in the social construction of the human-animal divide' (1998:73). Practices that physically involve animal bodies rapidly become emotionally charged and are easily enlisted to legitimize categories of inclusion and exclusion: citizen and alien, us and them, human and not quite human. This applies particularly to killing practices, in which politicised animal bodies become the 'site of struggle over the protection of national identity and the production of cultural difference' (72). Animal practices thus come to function, at least potentially, as 'tools of a cultural imperialism designed to de-legitimize subjectivity and citizenship... under time-space conditions of post-modernity and social relations of post-coloniality' (73). In the US and Europe, immigrant and minority groups become subject to negative social differentiation through the evocation of colonial imaginaries, of bestial violence and savage or animalised humans. Such differentiation plays on prevalent prejudices and stereotypes to locate practitioners in a primitive and savage past that coexists with the present but is unacceptable, intolerable, and must therefore be reformed. This is precisely the case with curved-knife controversies. Activists deploy a linear, progressive history – measured in the rise of ethical standards – as a powerful device to produce *allochronic* social difference (Fabian 1983), then define this temporal backwardness as ethically unacceptable and thereby force reform. Herders and their practices are defined as existing in the past, and must therefore be brought into the ethical moment of the present.

These claims of activists did not stand on their own, but drew in turn on broader discourses that articulate the identity of the State with narratives of scientific progress and increasing moral responsibility. Addressing Parliament in 2002, the then Minister of Food and Agriculture stated his ambition that Norway should 'remain among the best in the world on animal welfare' (Sponheim 2002). Citing Gandhi, he stated that animal welfare was 'a measure of [Norway's] cultural state and... development as a nation'. The country needed to remain internationally competitive, by strengthening 'national centres of competence' and 'informing the public', disseminating the growing body of knowledge 'about animals and their requirements'. The terms of his discourse closely linked the moral state of the nation to scientific progress. Disciplines such as ethology and animal welfare science had contributed to an increased understanding of animals, which in turn compelled a moral reassessment of previously acceptable practices, in order to bring Norway 'to the forefront' among the countries of the emergent global order. As the minister said, 'knowledge entails obligation'. In effect, his speech articulated the question of animal welfare in terms of two conjoined broader narratives: one, the progressive growth of scientific knowledge, and two, the ongoing project of 'building the

nation': morally, culturally and in relation to other nation-states within a competitive world order.

Through the narrative of rising ethical standards deployed by the animal activist movement, unacceptable practices such as curved-knife stunning thus became linked to powerful State discourses of progress, modernization and progressive integration into the nation-state project. Negative social differentiation was produced, not directly through colonial imaginaries of race and human animality, but through exclusion from the modern, ethical present moment of the State. Slaughtering technique became a matter, if not quite of citizenship, then at least of equal participation in the present of the State as it moved forward. The position produced at this junction or convergence of discourses is well known, and well documented: for two centuries at least, the need to integrate and incorporate the 'backward' indigenous margin has informed and structured official Norwegian policies towards the Sámi population.

At the Krampen corral at least, most herders seemed to treat the ebb and flow of prohibitions with cool detachment. During my first season, in 2004, the question of curved-knife stunning for the private out-take had not yet been clarified, and the knives were still technically off-limits. Nevertheless, the corral resounded with shouts of 'Hey! Does anyone have a knife?' Even some of the inspecting veterinarians who supervised the slaughter enforced the prohibition with ambivalence. One herder told me how one veterinarian had instructed her 'go ahead and keep using the [curved] knives, just do it behind a car or something so we don't see it. If we see it we have to report it'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when I later asked the same veterinarian about the practice, she insisted strongly that it was unacceptable and must be eliminated. In general, herders I spoke to tended to regard the shifting legal status of the knife with a blend of resignation and amusement, classing prohibitions merely as yet another 'absurd' or 'misguided' intervention by ill-informed bureaucrats and 'busybodies'. Insofar as they did engage with the public debates, herders argued to defend the knives not only as rational, efficient and uniquely suited to conditions on the tundra, but also as traditional, as part of the indigenous Sámi cultural heritage. In the words of one elderly herder woman, '[c]urved knives have been in use since time immemorial, and for so long that I don't know the beginning' (*Sagat*, cited in Pareli 2003:44). Of course such claims were vulnerable: a 2006 informational broadsheet from the Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance states that '[t]he curved knife is used to kill the reindeer, and is not a traditional instrument of reindeer herding. It was distributed to reindeer herders by the Department of Agriculture in the 1930s' (NAPA 2006). Primordial or not, however, the knife had still been in use at least for several generations and had become an integral instrument of practice: herders could defend it as part of a herding heritage that the Norwegian state was committed to protecting, both under the terms of its own constitution – the frequently invoked paragraph 110a concerning the rights of the Sámi people, added in 1988 – and by various international treaties to which it as a signatory, including ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

While activists thus sought to define the knife as *backwards* and therefore undesirable, herders defined it as *traditional*, and therefore worth preserving. Between them, the two positions highlighted two distinct and contradictory constructions of the past and its role in the present. Through this, they also brought into play

two equally different and contradictory versions of *the State*, each with different obligations and responsibilities. Activists sought to activate the State as enforcer of a particular present, and of the ethical standards that defined it; herders on the other hand tried to define it as the guarantor and preserver of the very past that activists wanted to reform. Over the last couple of years, it seems as though the balance of the official position has shifted from one of these versions to the other – when I spoke to one of the members of the 'Expert committee for the evaluation of the continued use of curved knives in the stunning of domesticated reindeer' in late 2004, while the knives were in theory still completely banned, he was scornful of the State position on the matter. The 'discovery' of the EU directive that prohibited curved knives was an excuse, he suggested, and a convenient way for State officials to shift responsibility elsewhere – exemption could easily have been negotiated, given the 'cultural' character of the practice. In late 2006, on the other hand, the Director of Food Politics at the Department of Agriculture argued that as a 'cultural event', the use of curved knives *did* qualify for exemption from EU directives on slaughtering, while a spokesman for the Animal Protection Alliance stated that they 'did not consider use of the curved knife a significant element of Sámi culture' and that:

'[t]here are far better and more humane ways to kill reindeer. If the government now decides to permit the use of curved knives, this is a cowardly and easy choice they have taken, rather than furthering animal welfare' ('Illegal reindeer murders are culture', NRK 26.11.06).

As of March 2006, the NRL have commissioned two new and improved designs for the curved knife, in response to the sustained engagement of activists and recent attention in the media on animal welfare issues in reindeer killing. In that context, the NRL president stated that 'it is positive that animal welfare organizations have focused on this matter, as it forces us in the reindeer herding industry to consider matters of animal welfare' ('NRL will make new curved knife', Sámi Radio 06.03.06). The new knives will be shorter, more portable and, presumably, more closely tailored to current mappings of consciousness in the reindeer brain. Whether this modernization of the knives will produce sufficient certainty, and thereby appease the critics, remains to be seen.

Interventions

The argument in this chapter has highlighted some of the ways in which the simple structure – and the not so simple history – of the curved knife are enmeshed in a complex shifting matrix of State power, redrawn boundaries, multiple agencies and changing standards. Are the knives part of Sámi culture? As a reform, the knives were in one sense simply *too successful* – to the point where the very groups that introduced them now find themselves fighting a political battle against the population they sought to reform, who have taken the technological and scientific innovation and transformed it into part of their own cultural heritage. The criteria have shifted, the innovation has become traditional and what was humane has become barbaric. Effectively, control over the narrative framing of the knife – whether it is a good or a bad thing – is inseparable from control over the parameters of herder identity in the public sphere, as well as the power to

define – or at least influence – the specific inclusions and exclusions operated by broader categories such as citizenship and humanity.

The problem of the knife is easily rephrased as a question of visibility. The preference of humane activists for stunning with captive-bolt pistols, preferably within the confines of slaughterhouses, expresses a preference for forms of death that are not only *certain*, but also inconspicuous and morally hygienic, taking place safely out of view. The claim to moral superiority and humane qualities for these streamlined killing practices seems to be rooted in the same aesthetic of concealment and revulsion that drove the slaughterhouses out of urban areas in the 19th century – a rejection of manual, visible, embodied and uncertain death, in favour of death as it is operated elsewhere, precise and unseen, preferably by machines. Intentionally or not, the moral claims of activists effectively promote the post-domestic disjunction that I discussed at the end of Chapter 4. The problem in this case is that:

'although the defining of humane slaughter may promote methods that diminish the trauma and pain that animals experience in the slaughter process, at the same time these “humanitarian” methods are complicit in the process itself and in fact contribute to its efficiency and its overall acceptability' (Burt 2006:126).

The question that these interventions never seem to address is whether the very efforts to minimize the suffering of individual animals, in the place and moment of their death, may not also simultaneously have adverse effects on the well-being of the same animals, elsewhere and at other times – effects that may contradict the very intentions that drive the intervention in the first place.

To foreshadow in another way the discussion in Chapter 6, it is also worth noting that for all their relative obscurity, the Brynhildsvold trials represented a significant point in the trajectory of Norwegian reindeer as scientifically known animals.

The reformers were guided by
s c i e n t i f i c p r i n c i p l e s :

Figure 5.7 Scientific diagram of a knife-stunned reindeer head (Dahlström 1924)

experimentation and meticulous recording aimed to produce sound and persuasive evidence capable of being circulated to academic audiences. The reindeer were to be scientifically observed, both in the moment of death and subsequently, as their bodies were opened up to the dissecting gaze of trained experts. Anatomical diagrams that illustrated the passage and efficacy of the knife were produced and circulated to a wider audience of scientists, professionals and policy-makers (Figure 5.7). As Dahlström's detailed description of a heart piercing indicated, the suffering of reindeer could be observed while they were still alive, inferred from visible indicators such as laboured breathing, posture and evident pain, and also reconstructed posthumously, through inferences that parted from their dead bodies – through the comparative analysis of disruptions in brain structure, for example. Both these modes of observation posited the suffering of reindeer as knowable *through certain kinds of indicators*, by certain people and in certain ways: as a matter of structured observation, physiology and anatomy. This knowledge was specialized, the domain of experts: if it is true

that '[a] principal axiom of modernity was the separation of lay and expert knowledge' (Kroll-Smith & Floyd 1997:197), the trials mark a clear and distinct point in the history of this modern separation. The introduction of this scientific approach to welfare, with its attendant re-distribution of expertise and authority, was not a politically neutral affair: for one, it was charged with potent racial overtones. To cite the most prominent example, district veterinarian Fridrichsen not only recommended not handing firearms to the unruly Lapps – his report also made no direct mention of the participating herders. I read his report first and, from my initial reading, I concluded that no herders were present at the trials – their presence only became apparent subsequently, from the other reports. His version of the events was hard at work to preserve a particular core narrative, of a handful of learned and scholarly ethnic Norwegians scientifically assessing the merits of different killing techniques, on behalf of nameless and textually effaced natives who lacked the means to do it themselves. The omission of the herders, remarkable not only in retrospective but also when compared to the reports of the other participants, reproduced a racially structured and exclusive model of scientific authority and agency and, along with this, the structure of colonial superiority and governance that was vested in it. As I argue in Chapter 6, this tacit politics of racialized exclusion continues to operate in contemporary scientific discourses of reindeer welfare – and now, relative to the changed parameters of State power and intervention, it operates more powerfully, threatening more extensive implications, than it ever did in the context of the Brynhildsvold trials and Fridrichsen's petty racism.

Chapter 6 Reindeer welfare

In the context of a recent joint reindeer herding 'fact-finding expedition' to Finnmark, conducted by a Norwegian and a German animal welfare group, an activist from the Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance commented in an interview that '[f]ear is used as a 'tool' to manage reindeer. This would not be necessary *if the reindeer herders knew more about reindeer behaviour*' (*Reindriftnytt* 01.2006:20; emphasis added). As became apparent over the interview, the knowledge she referred to – which the herders lacked – concerned the behaviour of the reindeer as 'herd animals'. While openly professing her own ignorance of reindeer and herding practice, she made a strong claim to possess a superior, scientific knowledge of reindeer behaviour, of which herders were ignorant. The superiority of this knowledge was evident in the way it enabled her to re-brand the experience, traditions and knowledge of herders as non-existent – as *ignorance* of the very animals they herded (Hobart 1993; Vitebsky 1993). Her comment – and the claim to epistemological superiority that it embodies – illustrates how the welfare of reindeer constitutes one axis along which herding knowledge and what counts as such knowledge is contested, across the public spheres, between different forms of expertise, all of which claim authority to represent the interests, needs and requirements of reindeer: 'what is good for them'.

Figure 6.1 Reindeer circling during long-range transport by sea (Sandberg 1997)

Like most other non-human animals, reindeer are, in human terms, mute: they lack verbal language and are incapable of verbal communication with humans. Their interests, if any, can therefore only be surmised, deciphered, mediated, at best translated. Within human social and political arenas, non-human animals such as reindeer are only able to participate insofar as their interests are *represented* by human spokespeople and intermediaries (Latour 2004). Discourses of animal welfare provide one route by means of which reindeer can be made to speak in this fashion, via human mediators or representatives. This representation of the reindeer good in public and policy arenas depends on relations of power, legitimacy, credibility and recognition between forms of knowledge, and between the variously designated experts and laymen that wield them. As a locus of assumed suffering, the moment of animal death is particularly charged, and attempts to control and regulate it involve a range of mediated understandings of suffering, and of reindeer experiences of pain and death in general. Such understandings are based not simply on abstract or theoretical knowledge, but also arise in the context of specific and embodied practices, social traditions and personal experience.

Let me give a specific example. Over recent decades, with the rise of mechanization, the practice of transporting reindeer over long distances using specialized cattle transports (Figure 6.1) and trailers, attached to trucks or private cars, has come to play an increasingly integral role in Norwegian reindeer

Figure 6.2 Reindeer transport moving reindeer from the round-up corral to the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn

herding (Paine 1994; Figure 6.2). Usually it involves migrations between seasonal pasture grounds or the movement of animals from round-up sites to slaughterhouses, and distances can range up to several hundred kilometres. The subject of reindeer welfare during such long-range transport has been made the object of regulations, reports, research and investigations (e.g. Rådet for Dyreetikk 2000). By nature, the reindeer are singularly unsuited to this mode of transport: they have extensive antlers, and their free-roaming form of life makes them unaccustomed both to human handling and to close proximity with other reindeer in enclosed quarters. Stress is frequent and injuries occur, sometimes even death. This makes the low overall road quality in Finnmark a problem of animal welfare, particularly on the uneven side-roads that often connect corrals to the main road system. In District 6, for example, some herders voiced their concern to me that the dismal quality of the dirt road leading down from the round-up fence at Krampenes might come to the attention of the authorities, forcing expensive and troublesome repairs. Despite the extensive attention this welfare problem has received, however, it is far from exhausted by the literature.

On a sunny day in late July 2004, I was helping a herder friend with some carpentry, extending the terrace of the herder base-camp in Krampenes to facilitate access for older family members during the coming round-up. Over a menthol cigarette his wife, also a herder, was complaining about the way the reindeer were transported from the round-up corral to the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn, on double-decker cattle transports (Figure 6.2): 'The animals on the upper floors piss through the grill, onto the heads of those in the lower decks. Reindeer are clean animals, in nature they never step in their own waste. Disgusting'. She made a face. 'This is not good.' Perhaps unsurprisingly, I found no mention of this problem in the existing literature on welfare during mechanized transportation. Here I take this to represent more than a mere oversight: rather, her notion of what was 'good for the reindeer' required a premise – dignity, perhaps – that was entirely incompatible with the endless discussions of physiological requirements, stress indicators and physical injury in the literature. To her, as an experienced herder, reindeer possessed qualities that extended beyond simple biological or psychological functioning, as these were expressed in visible or measurable indicators, and their well-being could be compromised in ways that were not reducible to such functioning. Here I want to suggest firstly, that predominant definitions of welfare in the literature and discourses of science and activists systematically failed to encompass or reflect such notions of well-being; and secondly, beyond this, that in their application these various versions of welfare threatened to eclipse, supplant and make impossible the existing notions of welfare or well-being that applied to reindeer in the context of everyday herding practice.

The reindeer of the Varanger peninsula were herded in a comparatively extensive form, in a manner that involved little close contact between herders and reindeer. Some commentators have argued that such extensification entails a decline in concern for the well-being of animals: Tim Ingold's descriptions of 'predatory', 'hyper-extensive' and 'carnivorous pastoralism' in Finnish Lapland in the 1970s are among the more vivid examples (1977, 1980). Local residents also sometimes voiced similar concerns and misgivings, often accusing the herders of being 'in it for the money', driving their animals too hard and treating them merely as objects. The herders I worked with were frequently accused of being callous, motivated only by

personal economic greed and indifferent to the suffering of their animals, except insofar as it impacted on profits: in short, of treating the reindeer 'instrumentally', exclusively for their own gain and to the detriment of both the reindeer and other locals. Perhaps the most extreme example of this line of critique was one of my key non-herder informants, a neo-traditional ethnic Sámi healer in the area who was a vehement critic of the group I worked with, and argued that their herding practices were 'disharmonious' and compromised the meat 'energetically', transmitting the sickness and 'fearful energies' of the animals throughout society at large¹⁸. Other locals argued in more secular terms, that high-technology and profit-oriented practices were 'abusing' the reindeer, causing them distress and 'disrespecting' them.

Such accusations were often linked to the use of modern methods, increasing use of technology and the erosion, along with traditional practices, of the close relationship between herders and reindeer. Simultaneously, it was also apparent that within the parameters set by their extensive management form, the herders I worked with cared for and looked after the reindeer in a range of ways. The well-being and survival of the animals was a paramount and ongoing concern, manifest in practices of care both at the level of individual and herd. The movements, location and condition of the herd were monitored and controlled throughout the year, in order to protect the animals from starvation, accidents, parasites and poaching. At round-ups individual animals were vaccinated, medically treated and where required, attended to in other ways – for example, by removing entangled wire from antlers. In line with this, it seems that the accounts of extensification – both local and academic – that link it to a straightforward decline in concern and care for animals must be complicated. Here I consider whether the accusations can be reversed, to suggest that the dominant notions of welfare brought to the table by both welfare scientists and activists rely on powerful but not immediately obvious forms of instrumentalization and objectification of the animals. Conversely, it seems to me that the stance adopted by herders on certain issues, while no doubt motivated in part by the need to protect the animals qua capital on the hoof, livelihood and investment, should *also* be understood as arising from a concern for the well-being of the reindeer as autonomous and independent beings, whose lives were not reducible to human goals. Some of the very practices and attitudes that bespoke callousness and irresponsibility to critics were, at least in part, also rooted in a fundamental respect for the integrity and moral autonomy of the reindeer: a form of integrity that remained invisible within the dominant welfare discourses – and practices – of non-herders.

The science of welfare

In a remarkable auto-ethnography of veterinary practice with laboratory animals, Carbone argues that 'what we do about animals – the policies we adopt, the ways we treat them – has everything to do with what we think we know about them' (2004:5). The converse of this holds as true, that what we think we know about

18 She also warned me to be wary of the herders I was working with, as they were 'spiritually dangerous'. Among other things, because they lived and worked so close to the eastern border, they carried 'dark energies from Russia' in their blood – energies that were corrupting society and which might also corrupt me. When I passed this on to my informants it elicited a series of raised eyebrows, as well as some juicy gossip about the personal life of the healer.

animals has everything to do with what we do about them. As I have discussed already, reindeer welfare is currently hard political currency in Norway, the subject of considerable attention. Perhaps the most pressing aspect of this, in the context of my own fieldwork, was the way in which notions of such welfare were mobilized in representations of and debates over the crisis of overpopulation – throughout the media and official reports, images of starved and emaciated reindeer bodies were evoked hand in hand with staggering numbers, to generate an urgent sense of impending crisis. In 2004, discussing the terms of the 2004/2005 Reindeer Herding Agreement, the Department of Agriculture warned that without a significant reduction of reindeer population, 'an animal welfare tragedy' would follow from 'a reindeer population that is not in balance with grazing resources' (LMD 2004b:19). Effectively, the welfare of reindeer and the prevention of this welfare 'catastrophe' were placed near the political heart of the crisis, mobilized as a powerful motive for drastic and far-reaching interventions. The official science behind the numbers of the crisis – statistics, vegetation growth rates, sustainable yields, population ceilings – has been strongly criticized elsewhere, by laymen, herders and scientists (e.g. Joks & Magga 2006); at the same time, as another aspect of this science of the crisis, the epistemological problems involved in the scientific determination of reindeer welfare have to my knowledge received no critical attention at all.

While attending the annual NRL conference in Bodø in 2005, I found myself with one of my informants from Krampen, during a break in proceedings, discussing the contents of a recently published official report on animal welfare in Norwegian industrial production. The report in question formulated one of the principal challenges for animal welfare research in reindeer herding, as a 'system of terrestrial production', in these terms:

'Mapping of various pre- and postnatal environmental factors, including positive and negative experiences (handling, physical factors in the environment, care routines, transport, social stress factors, hunger, environmental toxins etc.), that affect the survival rates, growth, health, development, learning and environmental mastery, immune function and offspring reproductive ability in domestic animals, including reindeer' (Research Council of Norway 2005:143; my translation).

When I referred the passage to her, she shook her head in resignation: 'I don't know what they're thinking. It's like it's all one big barn or something to them.' Her comment echoed herder critiques of the 'barnyard mentality' of the State; to her mind, the cartographic task of monitoring the impact of 'positive and negative experiences' on the 'learning and environmental mastery' of reindeer calves out on the tundra seemed absurd. Nevertheless, impossible as it may have appeared, its very formulation carried a sinister ring. Backed by the powers that be, it suggested the possibility of a restructuring agenda that would *make* it possible. In order to improve their welfare, reindeer would have to be observed closely and managed in such a way that appropriate knowledge – of things such as 'learning and environmental mastery' – might be produced about them. If carried through, such a programme of tacit reorganization of practice for the purpose of knowledge acquisition would entail extensive changes for herding and herders. As I argue here, the process of making

the reindeer consistently and constantly the object of such welfare measurements and monitoring would, insofar as it brought them into new coordinates of human observation and control, also have converse implications for their welfare when considered from the point of view of many herders.

The correct treatment of non-human animals is a morally contentious domain, charged with complex, frequently contradictory values and fraught with normative constructions of the animal and its needs. Animal welfare, consequently, is a problematic object for scientific practice – certainly insofar as 'the borders of science are... particularly imprecise in dealing with questions of consciousness, experience, feeling, ethics and animal minds – all the subjects most central to animal welfare policy' (Carbone 2004:9). To be constituted as a valid object of scientific enquiry, the welfare of animals therefore needs to be carefully defined, circumscribed and 'purified' (Latour 1993). One prominent animal welfare scientist formulates it thus:

'After the welfare has been measured... ethical decisions about whether or not this situation is tolerable can be taken. It is important that the process of welfare assessment and the process of ethical judgement be separate' (Broom 1991:4168).

Defined in these terms, the science of animal welfare becomes a morally neutral practice producing *objective* data, and results that are independent of and prior to appropriate moral judgement. As Broom's formulation exemplifies, this scientific 'purification' of the notion of welfare operates through the exclusion and elimination of extraneous factors. In its extreme form, Jerrold Tannenbaum describes this approach as the 'pure science model'. Its adherents, he argues, 'all insist that deciding what conditions are relevant to animal welfare and determining whether such states are present, is a purely factual, descriptive task that does not involve making value judgements' (1995:153). 'Pure science' is of course never as politically innocent as it claims, and certainly not when it concerns the management of living beings (Haraway 1991). The report I was discussing with my informant exemplifies some of the problems that such an approach produces when applied to reindeer herding practice. To begin with, the clear distinction between science and culture:

'There are several examples of how cultural ideas influence attitudes to animals and perceptions of animal welfare. For example, Sámi reindeer herding has its ancient traditional knowledge and perception of what is good and bad animal welfare. Views on animals and animal welfare in Sámi cultural traditions are discussed in *St. Meld. 12 (2002-2003)*. In this report... we will focus exclusively on the state of the animal independently of ethical positions. Ethics and animal welfare are thoroughly discussed in [a later chapter]. Cultural belonging *may influence the degree to which animal welfare research can be translated into practice in certain industries*' (Research Council of Norway 2005:30; emphasis added).

In other words, in line with Broom's definition above, the science of animal welfare is located *outside culture* and made to produce results that may be translated into, or in terms of, culture – so to speak as through a glass darkly. Both ethics and culture are excluded from the scientific undertaking, displaced

elsewhere and defined *a priori* as secondary and subsequent to the production of pure, scientific welfare data. This is a political operation: for one, it defines the boundaries of expertise, limiting it to an exclusive set of subjects that are capable of producing appropriate and valid knowledge. This in turn establishes a protective perimeter around welfare science, effectively excluding herders as potential experts on the welfare of their own animals by relegating knowledge to a secondary position, insofar as it is designated as moral or cultural. Pure welfare is thus organised in terms of a closed and fortified 'citadel metaphor' of scientific production (Downey & Dumit 1997) – a metaphor that overlaps, inevitably, with other forms of social and political exclusion.

The report discusses reindeer herding at some length and makes a range of policy recommendations (Research Council of Norway 2005:166-167). Despite this, no representatives of the herding industry or of the National Association of Reindeer Herders were formally consulted or involved in the process, never mind other herders. One ethnically Norwegian representative from the Norwegian College of Veterinary Science served as the committee expert on the subject of reindeer herding. In the present political climate the omission is all the more striking, insofar as the report explicitly mentions the involvement of lay representatives from interest organizations representing horses, cats, dogs, goats, sheep and poultry (20-22). Herder views on reindeer welfare are codified and readily available, and were in fact extensively incorporated and discussed in an earlier Parliamentary briefing (LMD 2002) on which the present report built. Herders who were aware of the report responded negatively to the exclusion, as the response of my informant at the conference suggested. Not only did the exclusion reinforce the existing marking of State and scientific knowledge as politically suspect, its effects were also easily traced in the irrelevance and impracticality of its conclusions and suggestions: at best, the report appeared uninformed and misguided, at worst it could be taken as another racist and prejudiced attempt to extend covert State agendas of acculturation. In practice, the report expressed and reproduced precisely the kind of long-standing colonial asymmetries in the field of knowledge production that have characterized relations between ethnically Norwegian scientists and native, ignorant herders for centuries, and which theoretically oriented critics and activists have been deconstructing for years now (e.g. Helander & Kailo 1998).

The report defines reindeer herding as a system of 'terrestrial production' – as such, it shares one chapter with 'chickens in meat and egg production, turkeys, cattle used in meat and milk production, milking goats, sheep kept for meat production, pigs, foxes, [and] minx' (Research Council of Norway 2005:136). With this juxtaposition, the report disregards key distinctions between these latter 'systems' and reindeer herding: for one, that they are all premised on constant observation and close control of more or less captive animals. By conflating these practices – and defining them all as 'systems' – the report creates a conceptual indistinction which, in turn, structures and informs its subsequent treatment and representation of welfare problems in herding; for example, on the issue of reindeer calf mortality:

'Compared to other species of domestic animals, a calf mortality rate of 30-50% is very high, and this is sufficient reason to examine more closely the factors that influence this in the different reindeer

herding areas. Even if reindeer live in *so-called natural environments*, there is reason enough to focus on the high calf mortality and the condition of cows on thinned winter pastures' (143; emphasis added).

The mortality rate in herding is accentuated through comparison with 'other species of domestic animals', rhetorically minimizing inherent differences between pastoral and other forms of livestock management to create the effect that reindeer are kept inappropriately, under insufficient control. Intrinsic features of herding – aspects that derive from basic environmental and practical constraints – thus come to be treated and defined as problems, and shortcomings to be resolved. The report further identifies as a key subject for future research on reindeer the 'factors that affect health at different stages of production, calf mortality and the nutritional state and condition of cows' (167). In particular, problems of nutrition are a concern:

'In reindeer herding under-feeding of pregnant cows leads to massive calf losses, and emaciation is a frequent ground for rejection at reindeer slaughterhouses. In addition to poor reproductive rate, weight loss, periodic loss of cows and especially high loss of calves... as a consequence of malnutrition cows develop poor bone marrow, with consequent reduction of bone quality. Shortened lifespans may come as a secondary consequence of this. Emergency feeding has become more accepted within the industry as a measure to avoid animal loss due to hunger. Development of good routines for supplementary feeding of reindeer is an important area to ensure welfare in reindeer husbandry. Trials show that supplements of protein-rich concentrated feed in the form of artificial feed [*kraftfor*] in areas with thinned grazing grounds give better cow weights, lower calf losses and higher birth rates for reindeer calves' (177-178).

The passage defines nutrition as the dominant welfare problem of herding, using a range of large-scale and statistical indicators – animal weight and lifespan, birthrates, mortality – that are linked directly to yield and economic productivity. Welfare is linked to productivity indicators, and nutrition becomes a welfare problem insofar *as it impacts negatively on production*. This reductive version of welfare coincides smoothly with the State political agenda, of reducing the excess of reindeer through human action. Here at least – certainly to herders who bothered to read the report – the science of welfare operates as anything but neutral or apolitical.

More than just a matter of politics, this illustrates a serious epistemological limitation of scientific welfare in its encounter with reindeer herding practice and its ethics. *Welfare indicators* are – along with techniques such as preference monitoring – a key scientific instrument for animal welfare science (Broom 1991; Dörfler & Peters 2002). Depending on the model of welfare in question, such indicators can range from endocrinological measurements or screening for 'stereotypical' behaviours in captive livestock, to behaviours and activities that are present in the animal's natural environment, observed by ethologists. What such indicators all share is that, in their most basic sense, they articulate the determination of welfare with *observation or measurement*, as carried out by humans on animals: observation and measurement of the appearance, behaviours, physical properties of the animal – whether living or dead, physically present or, as

in the case of calf mortality rates and slaughtering weights, mediated through statistics. If animals are not scientifically observable in this manner, their welfare can not be measured or established. That is to say, scientific welfare is – *by definition* – incapable of quantifying or determining the welfare of an absent, unobserved animal. In order for its welfare to be scientifically determined, the animal must be scientifically observable. If it is not, this can only appear as a practical limitation that needs to be corrected through increased monitoring, observation and control. As a result of this, the practices of supervision and control by which animals are made observable in the first place become *ethically* invisible: ethics can only come into the picture once the animal is observable, and its welfare can be determined. Within such an optic, the notion that the welfare of animals might depend precisely on their *independence* from the observation and knowledge practices of humans simply can not be formulated, never mind accommodated or resolved. Effectively, what scientific welfare does is extend an ethic of total custodianship that assigns responsibility for animal welfare entirely to humans, articulating it as a human problem. As I discuss in the next section, this is a serious problem in the context of reindeer herding.

Contrary perhaps to what one might expect, the report does assign a role to the sphere of culture in animal welfare research, as an object of study. In an addendum to the main body of the report, cultural notions of animal welfare are described as a potentially unique resource for Norwegian researchers, situated within the international arena of research:

'For Norway indigenous animal keeping is also interesting, particularly reindeer herding among the Sámi. [In such keeping] it is important to consider not only the level of the individual – that is, factors that affect the welfare of individual animals – but also the relationship between animals and humans, respect for the integrity of animals at the level of species, etc. Here *the relationships between humans and animals* are in focus, rather than *pure animal welfare or inherent value*' (Research Council of Norway 2005: 276; emphasis added)

That is, another move to purify: this time, by eliminating the embodied physical relationship between animal and researcher that makes possible the scientific observation, measurement and study of the animal's welfare. Purged from scientific practice, the relationship between human and animal is assigned to the marked, indigenous Other – leaving scientific practice to operate in a relational vacuum, on an abstract animal that is observed by a disembodied, incorporeal gaze: a 'conquering gaze from nowhere' (Haraway 1991:188). Observation entails a relationship, but here the machines, structures, codes, practices and bodies that enable this relationship have disappeared from view. The laborious transformations necessary to produce animals as observable and legible scientific objects have been obviated and naturalised. The unspoken premise of the report is a passive and controlled animal that can be observed, interpreted and read, more or less at will – the absence of this animal must be corrected, and the unscientific *opinions* of herders supplanted by superior scientific knowledge:

'[t]here are many opinions [*oppfatninger*] in the industry concerning what herd structure achieves

harmonious animals and optimal calf production, but little research has been conducted to illuminate themes such as social stress and male to female ratios in the herd' (147).

Throughout the report, terms such as 'reading', 'mapping' and 'measuring' reproduce and re-inscribe a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship between observer and observed, subject and object. If '[t]here is little documentation concerning the health and nutritional condition of cows and calves in Norwegian reindeer herding in general' (143), this is a practical problem that needs to be resolved. In order for certain kinds of knowledge about them to be produced, supplemented and expanded, however, the reindeer must effectively also be produced, in practice, as knowable in ways that enable such knowledge practices to proceed. In effect, as I suggested at the outset, the demand for increased knowledge entails an unspoken demand to reorganise herding practice and recreate the tundra as a 'big barn or something', in which the effect of 'negative', 'ante-natal' experiences on the 'learning ability' of reindeer calves can be effectively monitored. I would suggest that because of the way in which the report naturalises and eliminates the embodied, relational character of scientific practice with animals, the transformation of the herding field that its terms imply – the transformation that will make reindeer scientifically observable – becomes *invisible*, and can not itself appear as a problem.

Veterinarian inspections

The perspective of the report reflects, in certain ways, the conditions for welfare monitoring in the field. The character of reindeer herding practice is such that veterinarians, the principal agents of such monitoring, only very rarely engage with living animals. Wounded or incapacitated animals are usually killed on the spot, when found, and the relatively rare diseased animals who succumb to their illness tend to do so out on the tundra, well outside the range of health checks and inspections. When welfare *can* be assessed, it is therefore almost always in the context of commercial slaughter, and before welfare can be assessed in any detail, the object of assessment is usually already dead. The inspection of reindeer that are to be slaughtered for human consumption operates as one of the main checkpoints that ensure the final meat commodity is well formed and suitable for circulation through the channels of the market and for dissemination to consumers. Its main aim is to eliminate unsuitable raw materials at an early stage of the process that transforms living animal into commodity. Inspection takes place at two points: before and after the slaughter.

The first of these, the so-called ante-mortem examination, is based on visual observation and assessment of the physical condition of live animals, usually in the corral and at a distance. The reindeer are gathered in one of the pre-slaughter corrals and the veterinarian climbs up on a fence wall to inspect them. External signs to look out for here include obvious emaciation, unsteady posture or irregular gait, as well as conspicuous signs such as broken legs, open wounds or visible abscesses. The examination is usually brief and perfunctory, as reindeer seldom display visible pathologies of this sort. As a technique of inspection, the ante-mortem examination is more relevant to animals raised under industrial conditions, which often display symptoms caused by cramped conditions and prolonged, excessive proximity to each other. The principal

reason for rejection of reindeer at this stage is usually emaciation that is considered potentially pathological: that is, individual emaciation which deviates significantly from the overall emaciation level of the herd. The distinction between pathological and normal emaciation is significant, because of the correlation between seasonal grazing conditions and body weight: feed is less available during the winter months, and the reindeer become thinner. Approved animals must be slaughtered within 24 hours, and animals that are judged unfit for the slaughter at this point are taken aside and killed. Reindeer that have arrived at this point are thus already marked for death: they will either be slaughtered, or taken out of the corral and shot. On the basis of observation by a trained and knowledgeable expert, the ante-mortem technique assigns an appropriate mode of death. The reindeer at this point is still alive, its body therefore opaque: assessment therefore relies on external, visually determinable indicators, such as mobility, balance, overall condition and the presence or absence of conspicuous pathologies.

The post-mortem inspection of the carcass and internal organs, on the other hand, takes place after the slaughter. At a major oval-seal operation such as the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn, this examination is ongoing. The veterinarian occupies a position on the slaughterhouse floor, at the end of the production line, and examines each individual carcass as it passes by en route to the cooler. At mobile slaughterhouses the presence of the veterinarian is not required during slaughter operations, and slaughtered carcasses are suspended in the cooler truck for subsequent inspection. All carcasses must be inspected and marked by a veterinarian before they can be commercially sold. In both types of operations, organs including the lungs, heart and liver are removed from the carcass and examined separately for specific pathologies. With smaller operations, where the carcasses are stored for subsequent inspection in a refrigeration unit, the organs are taken out and attached to the carcass by a hook. In the slaughter-hall at Varangerbotn, the organs were tagged to correlate with specific carcasses as they passed down the floor, then suspended on a rolling frame and moved down the line to the post of the veterinarian at regular intervals.

Such practices of post-mortem inspection operate as a form of autopsy, in that they take as their object a dead body opened up to a trained expert gaze, or attention, that discovers and interprets signs (Foucault 2003; Klaver 2005) – relative to the earlier ante-mortem of the opaque living body, Foucault's phrase is apposite, that '[t]he living night is dispelled in the brightness of death' (Foucault 2003:180). This dissecting gaze is organoleptic, requiring full sensory engagement on the part of the veterinarian: palpation, incision and visual examination are the foremost methods of reading (LMD 1994). The internal organs are to be inspected for 'deviations in consistency, colour, smell and eventually taste' (LMD 1994: 3.1.3). An important element of ensuring food safety is the prevention of zoonosis, or inter-species disease transmission between food animals and humans. Accordingly, inspecting veterinarians are to search for signs of 'disease that may be transmitted to humans or animals'; factors that may make the meat 'unsuitable for human consumption'; and finally, signs that the animals are 'worn out, excited or damaged' (2.3.1 – 2.3.3).

The *reading* is aided by comprehensive guidelines, lists of signs and diagnostic tables, but the mandate of the inspector still leaves considerable room for the exercise of individual judgement and professional discretion.

In fact, inspecting veterinarians are formally charged with the responsibility to exercise such judgement in their assessments, both of carcasses and of slaughtering conditions. Decisions are the domain of individual veterinarians, and each carcass bears the individual seal of the veterinarian that inspected it – creating a meat trail of backwards accountability. As of recently, the market-driven introduction of advanced package tracking systems also ensures that if problems arise at any subsequent stage, individual meat items can be traced all the way back, not only to the owner and the relevant herd, but to the specific individual animal from which the meat originated. Unusual, unidentifiable or extreme anomalies, as well as other phenomena that exceed the experience and interpretive skills of the inspecting veterinarian, may be separated out, placed in temporary arrest and sent away for laboratory analysis elsewhere. To supplement their individual discretion, veterinarians thus also invoke a dispersed range of institutional resources that connect the slaughterhouse floor to networks of other sites – universities, colleges, microbiological labs.

The formally stipulated space of discretion allows for a gradual adaptation, on the part of individual veterinarians, to the practical environment and requirements of herding practice. Like Foucault's doctors in *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003), carcass inspectors 'deploy a gaze that relies on a great deal of subjective judgement', and over time, develop familiarity with the conditions particular to herding while 'learn[ing] to work in different situations' (Barry 2001:57). This means that on the one hand, they become capable of moderating and adjusting regulations using their own experience. As one herder told me, 'those veterinarians are useless to us until they've been working here for ten years. Nothing but trouble.' Simultaneously, this space for subjectivity also opens up for charges of arbitrary capriciousness in the exercise of their power. While one veterinarian was described as helpful and 'clued up', another had the nickname 'Cowboy', 'because she never leaves unless she's had a few animals shot'. The space of discretion enabled veterinarians to bring to bear on their practices of examination also, beyond the technical specifications set down in instructions and regulations, a range of less clearly defined criteria that included, for example, personal taste and aesthetics.

Let me give an example. Working at the tail end of the slaughtering line, my role was to manually shift the finished carcasses along the rail into the cooler at the back of the hall. My position was right next to the inspecting veterinarian, who examined and marked the carcasses before passing them along to me. The particular veterinarian on duty that day knew me quite well, I had developed a rapport with her over a period of months, and she was generally forthcoming and informative. During a slow period, she called me over to the carcass she was inspecting. Pointing to a muscular membrane thickly seeded with small white lumps that resembled granules of rice, she exclaimed: 'You see these? They're parasites but they're harmless, they don't pass to humans. We only discard meat with these when they become so thick that the meat becomes unappetizing [*uappetitlig*].' In discarding this particular sort of meat, she was thus acting neither according to the concern for food safety nor, as she understood it, animal welfare: this type of parasitic infestation was generally harmless to reindeer, and possible vectors of infection such as diet were impossible to regulate anyway. Instead, she was concerned with the aesthetic quality of the meat. This formed part of her own

understanding of her broadly defined flexible brief, to ensure productivity and 'high quality' in the establishment she was working with. On a personal level, she was diligent and serious about 'helping' reindeer herders meet the requisite standards.

In short, the post-mortem is literally a practice of structured reading, requiring only an inert dead body and a gaze trained to read its passive anatomical structures. By means of it, the reindeer body is captured, en route from living animal to food commodity, and turned into the object of a particular kind of knowledge within the coordinates of a complex assemblage of rules, practices, entities and devices that produce certain kinds of reliable and guaranteed truth. It becomes a forensic text, to be read, deciphered and interpreted by an expert who can make its indicators speak, authoritatively or suggestively, of factors, conditions and processes that lie prior to and beyond the site of inspection itself. Signs of disease can serve to identify possible threats to the herd that may need to be addressed to ensure the welfare of surviving animals. Depending on their location and character, sub-dermal bruises may indicate long and cramped transportation, rough handling or poor structural design at the slaughtering site – corrals, corridors, ramps and pens may have been constructed in such a way as to damage animals passing through. Thin or malnourished animals may speak directly of illness or of harsh seasons of poor grazing, but in the latter case perhaps also of the management practices of the herder who lets his animals come to this state. Emaciation can be identified already at the ante-mortem, in the living animal, but its interpretation remains ambivalent until an eventual post-mortem. In most cases, it is only at this point that it can be ascertained whether the animal was in fact only malnourished, or whether the emaciation was pathological and therefore a potential risk for food safety or for the remainder of the reindeer population. This knowledge, gleaned from the carcass, serves in turn as the basis and starting point for a range of possible interventions, from fines and revoked licences, to the closure of slaughtering operations and large-scale epidemiological control measures, such as bans, health warnings on meat or even enforced culls. Information and conclusions concerning the welfare of the animal at hand are by definition no longer relevant to the welfare of that particular animal: instead, its indicators are relevant only to the welfare of the remaining animals in the population to which it originally belonged. In this way, the practice of forensic inspection articulates a relationship between the animal carcass under scrutiny and an inferred population out there – knowledge and information that in turn enable and legitimise measures, policies and interventions.

Autonomy and control

Let me return to the report I was discussing earlier, in the section on scientific welfare. In closing, among a small number of recommendations that specifically concern reindeer herding, it argues with some urgency for the need to 'develop systems for supplementary feeding on winter pastures' (Research Council of Norway 2005: 293). Among the herders I worked with, such systems and routines were already in use, but many harboured strong reservations concerning their use. For one, there were practical problems. The animals were unaccustomed to commercially available livestock feed and had problems digesting it. Getting them used to the feed took considerable time and in order to be effective, artificial feeding thus had to begin early, long in

advance of any actual emergency. Establishing and maintaining feeding routines was also laborious, time-consuming and expensive: acquiring the feed, gathering the animals and accustoming them to the new routines, setting up feeding rotas and so on. The herders of 'my' district had success with such routines in part precisely because of their access to pooled capital resources and a coordinated labour force. Such artificial feeding was also considered to affect both the health and strength of animals, and the quality of the slaughtered meat. Such effects were often illustrated anecdotally. One humorous story I heard several times concerned two reindeer calves that lost their mother and were raised on commercial feed. When the time came for their first migration, the two young animals initially kept pace with the herd. By the second day however, they were exhausted and lagging behind. In the end, unable to move, the two animals had to be driven to their destination by car - 'in the back of a taxi', as one herder said. The two calves finally disappeared during a river crossing, presumably drowned. Herders and non-herders alike also often linked the unique taste and qualities of reindeer meat to the animals' diet, particularly when compared to industrially farmed livestock.

Some of the problems associated with artificial feeding could be resolved in advance, through planning and ensuring the availability of non-synthetic feed stocks. The stacks of balled reindeer lichen that were heaped behind the slaughterhouse in Varangerbotn were collected precisely for this reason, as a summer job, by the kids of the district. More importantly, there was also a general agreement that manually feeding the reindeer made them more dependent on humans, undermining their ability to survive on their own without human support. This autonomy was vital in the hostile and often unpredictable environments in which the reindeer lived: herders could not provide total control over the reindeer, to ensure their constant protection. Unable to fend for themselves, the animals would succumb rapidly to sudden changes of climate or difficult grazing conditions. Excessive dependency on humans was a death sentence waiting to happen. To survive, the reindeer must remain autonomous: it was necessary to safeguard and ensure not only survival, but also the *ability to survive* – both for individual reindeer and for the herd. These arguments concerning survival might all still be said to fall within the purview of an instrumentalist treatment of the reindeer – ensuring reindeer survival was 'good business sense', protecting investments and capital on the hoof. There was more at stake than this, however.

In connection with the preparation of the recent report to Parliament on animal welfare (LMD 2002), a report was also commissioned on the subject of *Animal welfare in Sámi culture* (Magga, Oskal & Sara 2001). The three authors were Sámi academics with backgrounds in reindeer herding, and the report drew on their own herding practice, as well as historical sources and publications on reindeer herding. The report distinguishes between three different categories of animal in 'traditional Sámi culture': 'totally free', 'free' and 'domesticated' animals (2). The distinction between these hinges on the relationship of the animals to humans. The first category – 'totally free' animals – includes predators, insects and animals that are hunted by humans. Such animals are not subordinate to human goals, but rather fundamentally entitled to 'their share of what is at any time offered or available and necessary for their existence'. In this view, even the human

hunting of predators that prey on reindeer, such as the wolf, 'must be presented as rightful, not only to other humans, but also to the wolf' (3). Similarly, interactions between humans and domesticated animals such as the dog are voluntary, based on quasi-contractual relationships where 'the animal relinquishes its freedom and independence in exchange for obligations that the human takes on in relation to its helper' (2). The paradigm example of this sort of relationship is the dog, which subordinates itself to its human owner but not unconditionally.

Unlike either of these categories, reindeer belong in the middle category, occupying a position somewhere between domesticated animals and animals that exist in a state of 'freedom in nature' (3). As such, they are capable of moving between the two other categories, according to the requirements of the situation and the demands of herding practice. These moves entail shifting moral obligations on the part of the herder that manages them. For example, 'in situations where the reindeer is fully subject to human care and bereft of its freedom... it appears in ethical terms as a domestic animal and should be treated accordingly.' Such situations of 'temporary domesticity' may include 'the use of individual reindeer for driving, or situations where individual reindeer are captured and exposed to human handling, such as in marking, milking, castration, killing or slaughter, and situations where reindeer are captured in working corrals'. In such cases, the authors argue, treatment of the animals is regulated by 'informal ethical guidelines' (5). No matter how domesticated and subject to human control reindeer may become under specific circumstances, however, they always revert to a fundamental state of wildness. This is a good and necessary thing for the reindeer: 'the best environment and the best 'medicine' for reindeer and all wild animals when they are sick is always *luohhtu* [the state of nature]' (3). Concerning reindeer when they are outside immediate human control, in this 'state of freedom', the ethical questions centre on 'what methods are acceptable for making the reindeer graze without reducing the reindeer's character of being free, mobile and independent' (10).

In contrasting a state of nature to the sphere of the human, the report also troubles the conventional boundaries that demarcate between these domains. Human is not to animal as subject is to object, person to thing. Rather, agentive, responsible and moral subjects are distributed on either side of the putative divide. Nature is populated with persons that albeit different from humans, remain their equals in morally significant respects. Domesticated animals are moral persons that have entered into permanent and mutually binding social contracts of subordination with humans. Wild animals are not bound by such contracts, but nevertheless demand forms of respect arising from their status as persons. Reindeer, finally, are the wild cards in the scheme: fundamentally wild, but subject at times to temporary human control. While subject to human control they demand care and respect, but simultaneously their basic wildness demands consideration of its qualities and conditions: the freedom, mobility and independence of reindeer. Reindeer thus command a complex and composite form of respect, which balances temporary control against the need to preserve their originary freedom. The responsibility of herders involves respecting the well-being and integrity of the animals in terms that are not reducible to the needs and requirements of humans. Subordinating them to permanent human control would not only disrupt their ability to survive, but also represent a violation or

transgression against the moral integrity and dignity of the reindeer themselves.

This is a far from naive or innocent representation on the part of the authors: the ethical cosmology and redistribution of personhood that the report outlines are tacitly and explicitly grounded both in philosophical terminology – one of the herder authors holds a doctorate in philosophy – and in ethnographic traditions. Its formulations clearly draw on the register of global discourses concerning indigenous ecology, ethics and fourth-world politics, as well as effectively constituting a response to trends in herding such as the shift towards exclusive meat-based production and the increased objectification of animals. Nevertheless, its view of reindeer as autonomous persons with their own moral worth, their own agendas and their own mode of being – independently of humans – chimed powerfully with the views of reindeer that herders often articulated or referred to me in conversation, through stories, anecdotes and recollections. The practical work of herding required constant adaptation to the animals and their habits, and stories of herders often illustrated this through emphasizing the independent agency and powers of the reindeer: their ability to predict the weather, find grazing grounds and otherwise *know* things that humans did not know. Part personal experience and part oral tradition, these stories were rooted in a sense of affinity and respect, developed through time and practice, that outsider notions of animal welfare generally failed to capture: indicators of psychological or physiological welfare did not register the complex offence posed, for example, by reindeer urinating on each other's heads on board long-range transports.

Maintaining this *liminal domesticity* of reindeer placed active limits over human control of the reindeer – both to ensure their survival, and out of a fundamentally ethical respect for their autonomy and moral integrity. The ethos demanded of humans that they not intervene excessively, or in the wrong ways, into this autonomy; in this, it also placed certain limits on their ability *to prevent the death of reindeer*. Put in extreme terms, one might say that reindeer were afforded a certain degree of necessary freedom *to die on their own*, outside the sphere of human control. Of course, no herder *wanted* his or her reindeer to die: nevertheless, this sentiment coexisted with a marked discomfort with and resistance to the kinds of preventative measures that would encroach on the mobility and autonomy of the reindeer. For example, herders uniformly derided the idea, advanced by certain politicians and ecological activists, of 'fencing in' the reindeer as a measure for curtailing predator incursions – as did official bodies (NOU 1994). The ethos autonomy overlapped with a widespread but understated notion of what one might term the *agency of nature* in causing the death of reindeer – perhaps most poignantly formulated, in the context of the current reindeer crisis, by a herder from Western Finnmark in an interview with a national newspaper: 'We take out what is necessary, as we always have. Nature itself reduces the reindeer numbers, as it always has' (Aftenposten 15.11.04). Human agency balanced this agency and checked it, but did not extend to fully neutralizing it – all else aside, a transparently impossible task, in the inclement and unpredictable environments of the tundra.

This eminently pragmatic mapping of nature as a force that could be reckoned with but not controlled, and certainly not neutralized, was extremely widespread among herders I spoke to. All else aside, it was reflected in the very dynamic of pastoral accumulation, insofar as this was oriented towards a kind of ongoing damage

control: keeping large stocks of animals in preparation for inevitable but unpredictable bad years, when large numbers of animals died. Over recent decades, as the practice of herding has become more visible and receives more attention in the media and in public discourse, this practice of accumulation itself has become increasingly difficult to maintain, precisely because of welfare. Powerful images of starving animals, emaciated carcasses and rampant suffering circulated widely, mobilizing public sentiment and generating moral outrage that is difficult for herders to address or neutralize. From disapproval in the local community to media debates and interventions at the national level, this situation created an environment that exercised a powerful regulating effect on herding practice. The efforts of animal activists played an important role in this.

Activists and reindeer welfare

As I touched on in Chapter 5, animal welfare movements – as opposed, in theory at least, to the more radical animal rights movements (Francione 1996) – pursue their objectives through programmes of progressive incremental reform, producing a historical meta-narrative of rising ethical standards. The case of reindeer

Figure 6.3 Welfare shock tactics: animal activists use imagery taken out of context to create shock effects (Animal Angels 2006)

herding highlights how this narrative of rising standards can be – and is – deployed for political effect, to locate undesirable present practices in a socially demarcated past time and push reform. An important element of this narrative of rising standards is the specification and extension, over time, of human responsibilities towards animals. In the context of herding and reindeer welfare, this is most directly pertinent to the overpopulation crisis and the threat of mass starvation – a subject that was addressed directly by every animal activist and group representative I was in contact with. The consensus position, if I permit myself a generalization, could be summarized with the statement that I cited earlier:

'if a situation arises where exhausted [reindeer] die of starvation during the winter and spring grazing seasons, supplementary feeding must be implemented. *The starving of kept animals can not be tolerated.* The practice of permitting animals to starve to death when food is available belongs to a past that was less concerned with animal ethics [*en mindre dyreetisk fortid*]' (NSPA 2002; emphasis in the original).

Whether or not this practice was considered permissible in the past, *kept animals* can today *no longer* be allowed to die for lack of human care. This point was put to me with various degrees of conviction by activists I interviewed: from spokespeople and press officers in the South, who expressed the position in no uncertain terms, to the leader of the local Finnmark chapter of NSPA, the Norwegian Society for the Protection of Animals [*Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge*, or DBN], who had received death threats from locals for her work and was reluctant to comment on reindeer herding. 'We try to keep our hands out of that wasps' nest', she said, referring to herding, and on the subject of reindeer starvation would only go as far as saying that 'well, it's not the fault of the animals, is it?'

In terms that echo the conflation I described earlier, of reindeer herding with other 'systems of production', the rhetorical efficacy of such interventions depends on the unambiguous rendering of reindeer as *kept animals*: that is, on the application to reindeer of a category that tacitly specifies a set of human responsibilities towards them, making them functionally and ethically indistinct from other livestock or domestic animals. Holding herders straightforwardly accountable to these responsibilities serves to erase the complex play between wildness and domesticity that governs herding practice, and make invisible the problem of maintaining the autonomy of reindeer that I outlined earlier. Agency – and *culpability* – were located entirely with herders, eliminating nature as the agent or cause of morally legitimate death. Let me formulate this point more clearly: if reindeer died in certain ways, such as from starvation, it was entirely *the fault* of their human herders. Allowing nature to run its course and regulate numbers 'the way it has always done' was simply not acceptable – and certainly not insofar as it could be prevented.

Critics have argued that by endeavouring to reform systems of animal agriculture based on human utilization of animals, welfare activists participate in and advance the very forms of exploitation that they nominally oppose¹⁹ (Francione 1996). What my argument here suggests is that when exported and applied to existing practices that possess their own well-established but often tacit moral codes governing the treatment of non-human animals, normative concepts of animal welfare may in fact operate, against the stated intentions of their advocates, to further the objectification of animals and the extension of human control over them. This is where the distinction that I drew earlier (Chapter 2) – between *necropolitical* and *biopolitical* sovereignty – comes into force. The problem of artificial and emergency feeding highlighted and drew into question the legitimate boundaries to the power of herders in preventing the death of reindeer. The capacity of herders to ensure the life of their reindeer has been, traditionally and in practice, circumscribed both by practical, technological and material factors and by the organization of herding practice. As I have argued here, these limitations go hand in hand with a set of moral beliefs and values that explicitly render certain limits to human responsibility *vis a vis* the reindeer: the reindeer are autonomous beings, and excessive interference threatens to deprive them of this autonomy and subject them to coordinates of human domination. The

19 The human ecologist Mick Smith, for example, directs this line of critique against the operation of animal welfare in industrial slaughterhouses: '[f]ar from raising fundamental issues of animal life and death, moral regulations [in the slaughterhouse] focus on facilitating a clean kill and making killing clean' (2002:55). Techniques of animal control and pacification – such as calibrating the upward slopes of internal passageways or painting the inside walls a specific shade of green to calm the pigs – only substitute the absence of visible distress for genuine ethical engagement. Effectively, such measures not only shore up and legitimize exploitation but *maximize* it, by increasing the capacity of the abattoir to process a maximal number of animals within the shortest possible time. This '(mis)identifies the ethical problem of the abattoir as one of controlling animal and human behaviour', reproducing the status of animals as mute and ethically invisible commodities-in-the-making. Such welfare, Smith argues, merely 'represent yet another step in modernity's movement to efficiently regulate animal spaces, further reducing their room for self-expression, and further distancing us from ethical responsibilities for their existences and ends'. In short, '[the] question posed by welfare arguments is... whether allowing (facilitating) the animal to 'slip' away quietly is indicative of a genuinely moral relationship or best regarded as an extenuation of modernity's persistent failure to listen (attend) to animal Others' (56). To Smith, this is a rhetorical question: by improving productivity and increasing public legitimacy, welfare arguments prop up and legitimate the very systems of exploitation that ought to be engaged with at a more radical level. Animal welfare in food production operates as a *palliative ethic* that pre-empts radical reform, by mapping out a circumscribed domain of possible intervention – animal welfare advocates are thus apologists and accomplices to the very exploitation that they should be combating.

increased material and practical capacity of herders to *prevent* death coincides with the increasing demand, from activists, members of the public and legislators, that they *do so*. The argument that 'nature will sort it out, 'as it always has', is effectively losing ground against the ascendant imperative that herders *prevent this from happening*. In this sense, the demands of activists and others for artificial feeding mark the rise of, for lack of a better word, a biopolitical power that demands the reindeer be *prevented from dying*, that is, 'made to live' – a radical shift indeed in the conditions for herding practice.

Considered in a related but slightly different light – prefiguring the argument of Chapter 7 – the tension between this herder ethos and the demands produced by welfare discourses of incremental reform lends itself to Agamben's reworking of death as a question of exposure (Noys 2005). Through the medium of welfare, activists sought to redefine the responsibility of herders as protecting the reindeer more or less *completely* from exposure to forms of death that occurred outside the sphere of human control: deaths caused by starvation, accidents or extreme climate. To herders, such accidental deaths, or deaths caused by nature were part and parcel of herding practice: undesirable, but also impossible to prevent entirely. The attempt to prevent them entirely – by increasing control over the reindeer, limiting their exposure – would not only be detrimental to the reindeer but also unethical. Pursued to its logical conclusion, such an attempt would require new and improbable forms of herding, in which the reindeer were kept more or less constantly supervised, within safe and controlled environments: fenced in, perhaps, as part of a transition to some oxymoronic post-nomadic form of stationary pastoralism – a proposal advanced most recently, at the time of writing, in March 2006 by a member of Parliament from the right-wing Progress Party ('Collective Suicide?', *Sagat* 21.03.06). The efforts of activists to concentrate legitimate death entirely in human hands in this way represented a radical attempt to re-engineer the most basic conditions of herding practice: the limits, both practical and self-imposed, to human control over the reindeer. At this point, one might well ask whether efforts to shield reindeer from natural death were not also simultaneously exposing them, progressively, to the new and more subtle powers of death expressed in human sovereignty.

Welfare and power

The principal subtext running through my argument in this chapter has been that outsider notions of welfare, in the context of reindeer herding, are subtly re-articulating conditions for herder-reindeer interaction – producing changes with potentially far-ranging ramifications. One thing that these notions of welfare do is articulate a relationship – more or less explicitly, more or less defined – between a concerned and/or responsible subject, and another thing or person whose welfare is at stake. Concern and responsibility, in turn, justify interventions – this has been one of the basic dynamics of State involvement in Sami affairs: to raise living standards, increase economic productivity, further cultural integration and so on. In the human sphere, this has created the complex interdependencies of 'welfare colonialism' (Paine 1977). As I am suggesting here, something similar takes place relative to reindeer and welfare. Considered as a relationship, the question raised by welfare is how this relationship *structures and conditions* the existence of the cared-for Other. This basic question remains the same, whether the cared-for Other is human or non-human – and

the case could be made that animals provide a simplified, clearer illustration of how welfare operates, at least potentially, to create benevolent but totalizing forms of control.

Within a loosely Foucauldian optic, the three outsider versions of welfare I have discussed – scientific welfare, the inspection practices of veterinarians and the welfare interventions of activists – perform quite distinct functions. Scientific welfare relies on indicators, measurements and practices of observation to produce an animal that is known scientifically, and whose welfare can be scientifically determined. Here I have suggested that the epistemological structure and presuppositions of this scientific welfare interface awkwardly with the practice and ethical frames of reindeer herding. In order to produce scientific welfare data, animals must be – or *be made* – observable. The absence of scientifically observed, *observable* animals is a shortcoming that demands correction. If furthered, the demand for scientifically observable reindeer will eventually entail shifts in the extent and character of herder control over the animals and, through this, in the organization of herding practice itself. The inspection practices of veterinarians, on the other hand, infer possible populational welfare problems from the carcasses of individual reindeer. As a knowledge practice, they operate to transform the dead animal into a kind of *biopolitical text*, composed of decipherable signs to be uncovered and interpreted. Through this, the inert individual body can be made to speak of large-scale factors – environmental, epidemiological, human – that affect the welfare of the living population out there. This relationship between reading subject and decipherable object-body, in turn, constitutes the segregated inside of the slaughterhouse and the supervised slaughter as a *junction*: linking the living herd – largely inaccessible and invisible to the State optic – to the levels of policy and decision-making, through the production of information and data.

Neither of these versions of welfare addresses the problem – sharply present to the herder ethos, as I outlined it – of maintaining the *liminal domesticity* of reindeer: that is, the carefully modulated balance between wildness and domesticity, autonomy and subordination that underwrites herding practice. Beyond this, I would suggest that neither was capable even of *recognizing* this problem, never mind engaging with it: scientific welfare, because its epistemological structure prevents it from pronouncing on the welfare of animals that are outside the coordinates of human observation; veterinarian inspections, similarly, because the question does not meaningfully arise in the context of the examination and analysis of dead carcasses. The discourses of animal activists, on the other hand, are hampered in their recognition of the liminal domesticity problem by their unambiguous rendering of kept and wild as opposed and *mutually exclusive* categories. As a result of this, activist interventions often appear torn between recognizing the ethical desirability of reindeer autonomy, freedom and independence on the one hand, and the need to denounce animal suffering resulting from the lack of human control on the other. Their demand to *make the reindeer live* exceeds the traditional boundaries of the herder ethos and threaten to disenfranchise the reindeer themselves, by shifting responsibility for their death entirely into human hands and effectively *turning the animals into captive livestock*.

Insofar as the practical and ethical problems of maintaining the complex and ambiguous semi-domesticity of

reindeer fail to register as a significant problem within them, each of these versions of welfare comes to exercise – as an unintended consequence – powerful pressures towards increased human control over reindeer. In their efficacy, constituted at the intersection of a range of factors – including the tone of media coverage, the attention of consumers and the public, the various coercive instruments of State representatives – these outsider interventions might be said to mark the ascendancy or imposition of a new and imperative power: the fundamentally biopolitical power to *make the reindeer live*, relative to the sovereign power of deciding *when to kill them*. The quiet ascendancy of this power – manifest in the increasing lack of general acceptance for practices such as 'letting nature run its course', for example – marks a dramatic, forcible extension and reconfiguration of the traditional powers of herders over the lives and deaths of their reindeer. Beyond this, by reorganizing practice, structuring discourse and redrawing moral boundaries, outsider notions of animal welfare are in the process of *redefining what a reindeer is*: for herders and non-herders alike, frequently in tacit and indirect ways. Enshrined as they are in the fabric of powerful transnational discourses, directives, regulations and, perhaps most importantly, popular opinion, the terms of this redefinition can be extremely difficult to formulate, negotiate or resist. The problematic of welfare thus returns me, full circle, to the very question I set out with in Chapter 1: what is a reindeer?

Modern hybrids and natural subjects

Both in this chapter and over the course of the dissertation, I have outlined some of the ways in which processes associated with modernization deploy, activate, reproduce and fortify a range of binomial distinctions: between expert and non-expert, subject and object, observer and observed, person and non-person, kept and not kept, human and animal, wild and domestic. On the subject of modernity, or the 'modern constitution' as he terms it (Latour 1993), Bruno Latour has argued that the word *modern* designates 'two sets of entirely different practices'. On the one hand is the practice of 'purification', which operates to divide orders, establish distinctions and patrol boundaries, creating 'two entirely different ontological zones: that of humans... [and] that of nonhumans' (10). The division between these two zones encompasses the various oppositions that define modernity: nature and culture, object and subject, thing and person. On the other hand, 'translation' is a hybridizing practice that 'creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture'. According to Latour, in the modern constitution the ongoing proliferation of hybrids is subterranean, while the practices, institutions and discourses of purification constantly reproduce the appearance of a clear and unassailable fissure between the two ontological zones: between human and non-human, culture and nature, person and object, human and animal. Most of the distinctions I have outlined or suggested here would fall within one or the other of the two 'ontological zones' of modernity that Latour designates. As I have outlined it however, the 'herder ethos' subverts and complicates many of them: perhaps most importantly, it troubles the unproblematic rendering of reindeer as *animals*, by endowing them with qualities, demands, requirements, capabilities and responsibilities that are elsewhere associated with – or limited to – the human. In this sense, reindeer could perhaps be represented as a kind of Latourian 'monster': complex hybrids that straddle categories and ontological fences, disrupting the neat binomial

schemes of modern human-animal dualism with their insistence on being treated as neither quite 'human' nor quite 'animal'.

Translated into practical terms, the interesting question that Latour's framework raises concerns the *conditions of possibility* for such 'hybrids' or anomalies to continue existing within modernity. Will the ongoing modernization of herding leave space, in the future, for reindeer to be managed as something other than 'animals' – or rather, as something other than 'just animals'? 20 years from now, will it be possible to manage reindeer according to an ethos that – in preserving their liminal domesticity – affords them the autonomy *to die on their own*, outside the parameters of human control? As time passes, this looks increasingly unlikely. The headlines that shout catastrophe and call for immediate action express subtle but dramatic and intractable shifts in the social conditions for herding practice – a redrawing of the lines that separate acceptable from unacceptable forms of death.

This is, at heart, a question of knowledge. Important aspects of so-called traditional knowledge do not immediately translate into scientific or production-oriented frameworks, and are not necessarily useful in enabling sustainability or ecological management (Hobart 1993). As I have outlined here, the non-scientific traditional knowledge of herding includes a spectrum of knowledge concerning the reindeer themselves – who or what they are, and how to treat, manage, relate to and coexist with them. This knowledge is inseparable from practices and social contexts of embodied interaction: that is, from the material conditions of engagement between herders and reindeer. As these conditions change, and with them the conditions for socialization and transmission of knowledge, the knowledge itself may also change, or even cease to be meaningful.

Beyond this, this traditional knowledge of the reindeer – of what they are, how they are to be treated, and how they should be allowed to die – is also in constant contact and interaction with other, potentially competing or mutually exclusive forms of reindeer knowledge. As these develop, who will be entitled to speak for the speechless reindeer, represent their supposed interests, and on what grounds? Who will, in the future, possess the ability to define what is good for the reindeer and act on this? Will herders be able to claim this authority, if it involves practices that are unpopular, unpalatable to the public or difficult to accommodate within reigning paradigms of, for example, animal welfare? The social and material reconfigurations and transformations of reindeer death and of the act of killing that I have described here involve powerful and normative conceptions – both those of herders and others – of *what a reindeer is*. Not only do these conceptions differ in important but subtle respects, but – rooted as they are in different practices, knowledge traditions and conditions of engagement with the reindeer themselves – they also remain more or less irreconcilably *at odds* with each other, and will continue to remain so for the foreseeable future; at least for as long as the practice of herders is not fully harmonized with the discourses, expectations, assumptions and interventions of other actors whose interests are tacitly or explicitly vested in the identity of reindeer. Whether such a harmonization will happen one way, or the other, or even at all, remains to be seen. The question is not foreclosed however.

Returning briefly to Latour again, it may be that the changing requirements of the market, and shifts in consumer awareness, represent one possible political resource – hitherto relatively under-utilized – for herders. Recently, in a rather interesting ethnographic study of the interface between consumers, meat producers and animal rights activists in Norway, Maria Guzmán also draws on Latour: she finds that while the conceptual pairs *nature / culture* and *subject / object* do structure meat consumption and related debates in Norway (2003:289), many consumers also choose to trouble the conventionally strict relationship between the terms. Instead of taking subject to coincide unproblematically with culture – and nature with object – consumers frequently conceptualize animals in terms of a *hybrid category* that she terms 'natural subjects' or 'quasi-subjects' (Guzmán & Kjærnes 1998). Such animal quasi-subjects are not *human* subjects – in the sense of forming part of human society – but they are subjects nevertheless, and therefore not to be treated as objects. Instead, consumers conceptualise them as possessing their own distinctive and non-human requirements: '[h]uman subjectivity', Guzmán argues, 'is only to a very limited degree used as a metaphor for animal subjectivity' (301). She also uses Latour to outline the respective positions of the two other groups that dominate public discourse on meat in Norway: meat producers advocate that 'nature is composed of objects' (304) while animal rights activists, on the other hand, seek to establish animals as 'social subjects' – as subjects that are 'part of society' rather than of nature, and which therefore have rights and entitlements on par with humans.

These orderings and classifications have tangible consequences – where consumers class animals as 'natural subjects', for example, strategies such as 'selective meat eating' or 'conditional vegetarianism' are adopted if it seems that the requirements of the 'animal subject' have been transgressed against in the process of turning it into food. Activists who classify animals as 'social subjects', on the other hand, consider meat eating completely unacceptable and therefore adopt strategies of 'unconditional' vegetarianism (307). As a follow-up Norwegian study draws out (Terragni & Torjusen 2005), this creates the apparent paradox that the more an animal appears to have been empowered to act as a subject in life – as a 'natural subject', that is – *the more edible it becomes*. This suggests that there may well be grounds – in the Norwegian consumer market – for an appeal to the perception of reindeer as *edible non-human subjects*. Within limits, in turn, this may enable herders to negotiate a viable space for practices and values that currently meet with disapproval, but which are based on the treatment of reindeer precisely as such non-human subjects. In order for this to happen, however, the herder community will have to disseminate and render explicit the frequently unarticulated values and codes that orient their own herding practices: including – among other things – the particular dignity of reindeer, that demands they be allowed the freedom at times to die on their own, outside the parameters of human care.

Chapter 7 Sacrifice and industrial violence

As I have outlined so far, commercially slaughtered reindeer today routinely pass through a series of complex and strictly regulated operations before their meat enters the market. The aim of these operations is to ensure that the resultant meat is well-formed, suitable for circulation *qua* commodity within regional, national and transnational networks of market exchange: that is, certifiably safe, hygienic, traceable, ethically acceptable and of standardized cut. Animals selected for commercial slaughter are carefully inspected: first at the ante-mortem examination, while still alive, and subsequently, at the post-mortem, at the tail end of the production line. Detailed regulations and precise instructions govern the treatment of animals before the slaughter, the technologies and techniques of the killing itself and the subsequent treatment of the carcass: from the order and timing of operations to the colour of work-clothing, the distribution of hot-water sinks and storage temperatures. Both the act of killing and the operations that transform the carcass into meat are undertaken by designated technicians, within sealed, sterile, controlled environments. Regulations are strictly enforced by officiating state veterinarians from the Food Supervision Authority [*Mattilsynet*]. In their elaborate and pervasive concern with purity and correct action, it is tempting to see in these practices and regulations 'a whole series of preliminary operations, lustrations, unctions, prayers etc. [that] transform the animal to be immolated into a sacred thing' (Durkheim 1965, cited in Lynch 1988:265). There is a resemblance, of external form at least, to the ritualized and purifying preparations that would precede an animal sacrifice: might there be more to this than a superficial isomorphism?

The comparison does not come entirely out of the blue. Until relatively recently, in historical terms at least, reindeer sacrifice formed an integral part of Sámi religious practice across the Scandinavian peninsula. Reindeer were sacrificed to spirits, to gods and to *sieidi*, sacred places in nature (e.g. Sveen 2003; Schanche 2002). The remnants of this prehistoric sacrificial economy of reindeer still litter the inlands of the Varanger peninsula, in the form of reindeer bone-yards and shamanic offering-sites, some of which still lie undiscovered (Vorren & Eriksen 1993). Centuries of missionary activity, the disappearance of the shamanic *noaide* cult and the sustained State-driven project of cultural Norwegianization have all contributed to the demise of the practice: today, reindeer are no longer sacrificed religiously. Welfare regulations, the involvement of animal activists, media coverage and the guaranteed public relations crisis that would ensue effectively make the idea of performing a ritual reindeer sacrifice impossible, not to mention absurd. All else aside, to most herders such a sacrifice would appear as senseless and irrational as it would to any other reasonable, modern, market-oriented livestock producer. Still, traces remain of ritual practices, injunctions and commandments associated with the killing and consumption of reindeer – albeit referred now mostly in folkloric form, quaint even to the elders. A couple of times during meals, some of my informants made half-joking reference to such practices – 'you're an anthropologist, you're interested in this kind of thing' – including the maxim to fully suck the marrow from reindeer bones during meals, or 'the cows won't lick their young', meaning the herd would perish. When I inquired further about such practices, or mentioned them in

other contexts, I was usually referred to the local library. More complex rites were also still remembered, if mostly no longer practised. In Kautokeino for example, a few hundred miles to the west from my field area, a Sámi priest recently documented the extent of sacrificial rites, such as the carving of triple crosses inside the skulls of slaughtered reindeer, associated with benediction, thanksgiving and the regeneration of animal life (Johnsen 2004).

Leaving aside the question of the link between such residual practices or maxims and the vanished institution of reindeer sacrifice, it seems to me that the former represent a version of what Burkert (1983) called the 'comedy of innocence' – expiatory practices that assuage and compensate, associated with killing in a sacrificial context. Insofar as such practices bespeak a certain understanding of killing, and of the relationship between herders and reindeer, their progressive disappearance is significant. Certainly there is a space – temporal, physical, social, symbolic – that separates these vanishing rites of reverential killing from the aseptic, anonymous and market-oriented practices of production that increasingly dominate the slaughter of reindeer, and which I observed during my own fieldwork. In a register of linear history, this distance might well lend itself to straightforward narratives of loss, disenchantment and the secularization of killing. Taken in this way, the situation would appeal to a spirit of ethnographic salvage. This is problematic however. For one, practices of blood-sacrifice have tended to be assigned to the exotic, primitive, non-European Other²⁰ – as a trait distinguishing their 'otherness', whether defined in terms of spatial, temporal, cultural or developmental distance. In the light of this, to speak of the disappearance of reindeer sacrifice is not merely to make a neutral observation: it also involves a narrative or authorial positioning that invokes and endorses a range of disciplinary and meta-narrative discourses – of secularization, rationalization, dis-enchantment – as well as positioning a (modern, western) Self relative to a (non-modern, non-western) Other. Matters are complicated further by the fact that disappeared practices such as reindeer sacrifice form part of a self-conscious dictionary of identity and tradition among herders, deployed and discussed to simultaneously mark continuity and distance relative to a traditional, now vanished past. Disciplinary meta-narratives thus coincide with indigenous discourses to produce the present as a rational, secularized moment – and 'modern herders' as rational, secular operators.

In the light of this, it may be that instead of *reproducing* this all too orthodox and familiar rupture between a vanishing, mythical past and the rational present, it would be more useful to look for ways of blurring, confusing and interrogating it. In *The Nervous System*, Taussig argues for 're juxtaposing the terms of the colonial enquiry' (1992:117), by deploying notions such as *fetish* (Chapter 4) or *maleficium*, traditionally associated with the exotic Other, to the analysis of Western social constructs such as the State. Along similar lines, it might be a worthwhile attempt to re-articulate the notion of animal sacrifice: to make it address and describe, not only archaic, vanishing and exotic phenomena that are in route of disappearance, but also

20 In an influential discussion of Bataille, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy argued that a 'mimetic rupture' separates the 'modern', 'Western' sacrifice from its 'rustic precursors' (1991:21-22). This 'modern' Eucharistic sacrifice is first and foremost a 'self-sacrifice', sublimated and 'spiritual' in character – and, in its very sublimation, a kind of 'sacrifice' of the practice of sacrifice itself: 'sacrifice only in a figurative sense' (24). Nancy's account thus reproduces a familiar, profoundly Hegelian model of history, as a progressive sublimation and refinement of the West.

practices and institutions that are current, even emergent. Such a relocation or re juxtaposing would be first and foremost a *critical* strategy: reinterpreted, the notion of sacrifice might shed new light not only on the changing conditions of reindeer herding, but also on the broader systems, processes and conditions that constitute the modernity or modernities into which reindeer herding is integrating, and being integrated. From Hubert and Mauss (1964) onwards, the literature on animal sacrifice is rich and provides ample basis for developing such a heuristic model (e.g. Bourdillon & Fortes 1980). Consequently, the question that orients this chapter is this: might new and emergent modalities of killing, such as industrial slaughter, perhaps possess their own sacrificial dynamic, and their victims their own particular but recognizable brand of sacredness?

The sacrificial nexus

'Ritual has the effect of separating and isolating a series of actions from the ordinary processes of life. What is otherwise forbidden becomes legitimate in, and only in, the sacred ritual context' (Bourdillon 1980:14).

By definition, an animal sacrifice is an act of killing: an exercise of lethal violence directed at an animal *victim*, by a human agent. The availability of an appropriate victim is one precondition for the sacrificial operation; where it is not available, such a victim needs to be produced, through a range of preparatory practices, unctions, manipulations and purifications that render it suitable for the sacrifice. This production of the victim is important, for example, to theories that emphasize the *substitutive* character of the sacrificial operation. Where the victim is made to stand in for something else, such as a human life, it must possess – or be made to possess – certain qualities or properties, in order to effectively enact the substitution (Girard 2005; I return to this subsequently). The killer or *sacrificant*, similarly, may also need to be prepared and purified, and is often assigned obligations, responsibilities, actions to perform, formulas to recite, even psychological motivations or states of mind to attain or maintain. These two roles are elementary: without a killer and a victim, there can be no blood-sacrifice. A host of other more or less supplementary roles could also be adduced from the literature: the *transcendent recipient*, for example, who presides over the sacrifice and may need to be appeased, propitiated or fed, and who may in turn in some way respond to or repay the sacrifice. Taken together, the elementary trinity of victim, sacrificant and transcendent recipient-observer compose the basic template of the Abrahamic sacrifice (Derrida 1995). Other roles in the drama of sacrifice might include the *mundane recipients*, the actors who may receive the material spoils from the sacrifice, consuming it in the ritual meal; the *donors*, who provide and pay for sacrificial victim; the various *beneficiaries*, often including the donor, who benefit in direct and indirect ways from the sacrifice; the observers or *officiants* – priests, adjudicators, judges – who preside over the sacrifice, ensuring that ritual procedure is followed and that the sacrifice is conducted appropriately; as well as the *audience* – spectators, onlookers, witnesses or testimonies who may assist, comment on or otherwise participate in the performance of the sacrifice: sometimes principally by their very *absence* from the rite, their ritual exclusion as an 'absent

audience' (Sered 2002:20). Here, the key point of this enumeration of roles is that considered in this light, the act of sacrifice comes to appear as a fundamentally *social* event: a central act of violence, framed within a network of linked relationships that constitute a kind of *sacrificial nexus*.

Importantly, this social event has a dramatic or spectacular quality, closely associated with the exercise of violence. Animal sacrifices are conducted for a variety of reasons: to heal and strengthen, to purify or atone, to attack, appease or propitiate, to petition and communicate. Most theories of sacrifice dwell on the central violence of the act, emphasizing its social meaning and effects: catharsis, resolution, purification, consecration. The common ground of such theories is that they depend on the *social visibility* of the sacrificial violence: its social meaning and functions – functions such as exaltation, atonement, cleansing, substitution – require that its exercise be socially recognized *as an exercise of violence*. It is a ritually marked, foregrounded, socially significant form of violence: perhaps precisely where it is concealed or hidden from view, it remains at its most significant, even extraordinary – culturally, socially and symbolically. Contrary in many ways to this, the violence of modern industrial slaughter is a violence that is 'as if it were not' (Vialles 1994), a form of violence that is constantly wrestling itself, attempting to disappear and turn itself – unsuccessfully, as attested to by the ongoing circulation of 'shocking' revelations of slaughterhouse interiors – into something else, something that is not violence: through concealments and seclusions; euphemism; the language of 'beef' and 'mutton', 'production' and 'harvesting'; scientific interventions aimed at easing the flow of animals through the 'production facilities'; the 'humanization' of killing practices; and the elimination of animal consciousness through stunning. The transformation of slaughtering work into paid expert labour creates a situation where no meaningful relationship or attachment between the killer and the killed extends, beyond the physical act of killing itself. Beyond this, marketing and carefully controlled representation erase all traces of this violence in the finished commodity. In short, a veritable arsenal of discursive, symbolic and material arrangements is deployed to make the individual act of industrial violence invisible – physically and socially – and strip it of significance *qua* violence. Insofar as these arrangements succeed the violence of industrial slaughter might, in its quotidian routine and repetitive banality, be said to represent an almost exact antithesis – a negative correlate – to the extraordinary and socially marked violence of the sacrifice.

The notion of animal sacrifice as a spectacular, socially visible display of violence captures an important tension in the passage between the open-air, socially embedded and socially visible practice of reindeer slaughter as it is conducted outside the slaughterhouse (Chapter 3) and the concealed spectacle of industrially organized slaughter inside it (Chapter 4). Many elements of the sacrificial nexus seem to reappear in some form in the practice of industrial killing, clustered around the moment of death. Within the carefully controlled, hygienic environment of the slaughterhouse, trained, purified and appropriately equipped killers dispatch a selection of appropriate victims – healthy and well formed animals, selected as suitable for consumption – using sterilized instruments, under the priestly gaze of officiating adjudicators who ensure that protocol and procedure are followed to the letter. The resulting meat, if deemed worthy, passes on to the

sphere of the market, eventually reaching the consumer recipients. Outside the slaughterhouse, excluded from the proceedings, sits the absent audience – consumers, activists and the herder beneficiaries. In the case of reindeer slaughtering the structural analogy could be taken one step further, to consider the State as a kind of transcendent recipient. Particularly in the context of the overpopulation crisis and the threat of forced slaughter, the transformation of reindeer into commercial meat was carefully monitored, and took place under the watchful eyes of the State: a gaze that was anything but disinterested, but which instead willed the urgent reduction of reindeer numbers, to meet the pressure generated by circulating perceptions of the crisis and of imminent ecological disaster. Failing this, the State held out a very real threat of violence: that the police and the armed forces might be deployed to eliminate the reindeer excess, leaving the tundra littered with the rotting bodies of massacred reindeer. To prevent this, the State had to be appeased and reindeer killed voluntarily – and visibly. While the private slaughter of reindeer generated no paperwork and left little trace, the slaughter of reindeer in slaughterhouses was visible within a managerial optic – subject to inspection, verification and audits. Through this, it was also visible to the State. In terms of a 'political theology' of sacrifice, then, the industrially organized and executed killing of sufficient reindeer could be read as an 'anabatic' or upward movement, aiming to avert and prevent the 'katabatic' or downward exercise of violence on the part of the State, acting the part of the godhead (Daly 1990). Certainly there were times, both in the context of slaughter and elsewhere, when herders discussed the dictates, requirements and expectations of the State in a register of appeasement and mollification that echoed – often sarcastically – a register of theology and worship: 'oh yes, we make our sacrifices to the State'.

Considered in this light, the constructed opposition between animal sacrifice and industrial killing might be read simply as a failure of the anthropological imagination – perhaps rooted, at least in part, in the hegemony of durable assumptions concerning the rational, secular, disenchanted character of contemporary Western practices and institutions. On the one hand, I believe there may be some truth in this observation. On the other, there are also some very significant points of departure between industrial killing and the template of sacrificial practice. As I have already suggested, one key to these differences lies in the shifting character of the violence that is exercised at the moment of killing.

Some observers and critics argue that modern meat production does represent an ongoing form of sacrifice (e.g. Anthony 2004), in the broad sense of being based on the destruction or surrender of living animals for the benefit of humans. Other commentators, closer perhaps to the bone (and flesh) of the traditional anthropology of sacrifice, tend to treat industrial slaughter as having *nothing at all* to do with sacrifice or with sacrificial operations – as, in fact, the very opposite of sacrifice. Expressing something like a general consensus, the French anthropologist Mondher Kilani, for example, argues that with industrial slaughter consumers, producers and regulators conspire in 'the construction of a fictive 'hygienic' death, without spilled blood, or victim, or sacrificer: the modern putting to death of animals *no longer possesses a sacrificial dimension*' (2000:79; my translation; emphasis added). What the brief outline I sketched earlier suggests is that this loosely defined consensus fails to capture at least one important correlation between sacrificial

practices and industrial killing— namely, that both represent *highly scripted, ritualized* forms of killing. Certainly compared to the informal conduct of reindeer killing at the corral, the industrial organization of killing represents an inordinately complex technical script, involving a large number of participants – a script that calls for a large-scale mobilization of resources, manpower and specialists. In this sense, the modernization of killing might be said to involve a kind of secular ritualization of the act of slaughter – a formal specification of actors, procedures, spaces and instruments that stipulates strictly their relationship and succession in time. Through this specification, the slaughterhouse kill acquires a very distinctive choreography: it becomes a spectacle organized and intended primarily for the eyes of the *officiant* – the inspecting veterinarian. The veterinarian is the one who must observe and approve of operations, while the owners of the reindeer are – along with everyone else – transformed into *outsiders* and relocated to the outside: physically, but also socially, symbolically and emotionally.

This industrial script is anything but politically neutral – the powerful exclusions that it operates have far-ranging social, cultural and practical effects. From the point of view of herders, caught up as they are in the momentum of the transformation, these exclusions and seclusions represent a kind of spatial involution of the act of killing. Effectively, one might say that herders are in the process of becoming – like everyone else – an *absent audience* to the secular, desacralized ritual of modern slaughter. Hand in hand with this expulsion, the modern ritualization of killing – with its effacements and segregations, its concealments and surveillance, the standardization of practice and the humanization of death – also seems to involve a series of moral transformations, centred particularly on the moment of observation: a transformation of observer into witness – or intruder – and of routine everyday practice into morally troubling, concealed spectacle. As Bulliett argued in Chapter 4, the post-domestic shock of *witnessing* takes place against the backdrop of a prior disjunction: the revelation of the act of slaughter and the moment of death becomes shocking precisely insofar as it has previously already been concealed from view. For herders – whose lives center on the management of the birth, death and breeding of their animals – this transformation of the act of slaughter from everyday practice into concealed spectacle threatens quite dramatic ramifications.

The unsacrificeable sacrifice

'The awakening of sensibility, the passage from the sphere of intelligible – and usable – objects to an excessive intensity, this is the destruction of the object as such. Of course, it is not what is ordinarily called death... it is, in one sense, quite the contrary. *In the eyes of a butcher a horse is already dead (meat, an object)*' (Bataille, cited in Nancy 1991:30; emphasis added).

One of the dominant themes of my argument so far has been that the modernization of reindeer slaughter and the modern, industrial organization of killing seem to involve the production of death – and of its accompanying violence – as a kind of non-event: conducted safely out of sight, behind closed doors, by paid labour with no relationship to the killed animals. The suffering, pain and death involved in violence are eliminated from view, minimized through the application of humane scientific principles and, finally, almost

completely effaced in the commercial circulation of meat-as-commodity. In its ideal form, the humane act of modern slaughter represents a kind of violence that almost slips past unnoticed *qua* violence – a highly naturalized form of 'everyday violence', or a violence that 'is as if it were not' (Vialles 1994). Against the backdrop of this paradoxically *non-violent violence*, the violence that deviates from the new standard – that is, for example, the violence of the corral, which presents itself to view and thus to representation – becomes problematic, particularly to 'humane' audiences morally troubled by the spectacle of undisguised violence. In this sense, through its industrialization or modernization, slaughtering is being transformed into a *socially invisible* form of violence, and a form of violence that appears morally unproblematic *in new ways* – not to the herders themselves, but to those outsiders whose interests are vested in the reindeer and in the form and circumstance of their dying: from local neighbours, hunters and consumers, to animal activists, welfare scientists and government bureaucrats. In developing this issue, I find it useful to turn to the works of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben.

For a few years now, in his *Homo Sacer* project, Agamben has been tracing the political predicament of the present using the enigmatic figure of the *bare life* [*nuda vita*] (1998). Throughout his work, this bare life appears in many guises: from werewolves, outlaws and Roman priestesses to overcomatose patients and concentration camp victims. Perhaps its principal exemplar however – the figure that Agamben uses to illustrate its dynamic most succinctly – is the *homo sacer* or 'sacred man': 'an obscure figure from archaic Roman Law' who, for his crimes, has been expelled from both the *ius humanum* and the *ius divinum*, from both secular and sacred law. As a consequence of this, it is declared that he 'may be killed but not sacrificed' (Agamben 1998:8). Killing this sacred man therefore invokes no sanction, but his life is also 'unsacrificeable' (82). His existence is thus constituted through a 'double exclusion' that expresses the basic operation of sovereign power itself – the process by which 'the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule'. This is the 'relation of exception': 'the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion' (18). Through this 'extreme form of relation', sovereign power maintains itself in a permanent relation to the excluded. The outlaw for example, as another figure of the bare life, 'is in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him precisely insofar as he is at every instant exposed to an unconditional threat of death' (183). The sacred man and the outlaw are only two figures in a gallery of priests, bandits, kings, werewolves and concentration camp victims, all connected by the thread of the bare life and its shifting parameters. King or camp victim, this bare life is always a figure of the *extreme margin*: life stripped of its everyday humanity, reduced and excluded to the blurred threshold that surrounds the 'city of men' and defines its limits. It is the human *zoon politikon* stripped of the very quality that makes it human: its social being, its character of sociality. Seen one way, the bare life is defined by the fact that it is not – or that it is no longer – *a social person*. This is the sense in which the term has come of age recently: particularly to describe Muslims held at Guantanamo, but also – with variable relevance – to describe social phenomena ranging from premature infant births (Wynn 2002) and homeless people (Feldman 2006) to the geopolitics of post-colonial violence (Sylvester 2006) and, somewhat bizarrely, European tourists in Ibiza (Diken &

Laustsen 2004). In the present context, the more relevant of these applications focus on the question of violence – on the intersection between the sovereign exercise and justification of violence, on the one hand, and the bare life's quality of constant, permanent exposure to the threat of violence on the other.

As Agamben argues, the exercise of lethal violence against the bare life is twice circumscribed by the structure of the sovereign ban. Suspended in the grasp of sovereign power, the bare life becomes vulnerable to certain kinds of violence and ineligible for others. On the one hand, it can be freely killed – the exercise of violence against the bare life is routine, insignificant and unmarked. It requires no expiation or atonement and invites no sanctions: it is banal, without consequence to the law and anything but 'intrinsically mysterious, mystifying, convoluting, plain scary, mythical and arcane' (Taussig 1992:116). Simultaneously, with this subjection to unregulated and freely exercised forms of violence, the bare life also becomes *ineligible for sacrifice* – which is to say, in the general sense in which Agamben interprets the term, that the bare life is excluded from all forms of ritually marked, institutionalized, exalted or sacralizing violence, such as are 'prescribed by the rite of the law' (1998:102): it can not, for example, be 'submitted to sanctioned forms of execution' (103). Between them, these two exclusions operate to *desacralize* the death of the bare life, stripping it of any significance. Its killing and death become trivial, casual, mundane and devoid of higher meaning: to Agamben the observer, the horror of the concentration camp is that as embodiments of the bare life, the men and women there died, to their executors, 'like lice' (114). Thus constituted through the double ban, the bare life is effectively no longer a social being, and the violence directed at it therefore ceases to be socially meaningful. One might say that to Agamben, the bare life can only be an *object* of violence – not its victim. In this way, it stands as cypher for a de-personalization, or dis-individuation, that transforms subjects into objects and enables the free flow of *unregulated* violence while simultaneously, through the trope of denied sacrifice, disqualifying them from the exercise of ritual or sacralizing forms of violence – insofar as they are 'not worthy of this gesture of honour' (Hansen & Stepputat 2005:17).

Certainly there are problems with Agamben: for one, the bare life is a nebulous term, shrouded in contradictions. The kaleidoscopic, highly abstract character of his argument – and his sketchy, often tenuously connected examples – invite the question of whether it is, in fact, meaningful to consider together the various figures he presents under the banner of the bare life. To put it bluntly:

'[E]ven if all subjects are *homines sacri*, they are so in very different ways... It remains woefully unclear to what extent and in what manner the comatose in the hospitals share the fate of prisoners in concentration camps; whether asylum seekers in the prisons are bare life to the same degree and in the same sense as the Jews in the Nazi camps' (Lemke 2005:7).

In a sense, the term itself constitutes a 'zone of indistinction', of the type that Agamben himself is so fond of identifying. Nevertheless, for all that critics point to historical inaccuracies, speculative links and overly imaginative interpretations – for example in his 'extravagant' treatment of Roman law and his 'close to fanciful' analysis of the *habeas corpus* device (Fitzpatrick 2005:55) – the bare life continues to exercise a

powerful hold on the academic imagination (e.g. Hansen & Stepputat 2005): particularly, as a currency of analysis in theoretical engagements with the proliferating obfuscations of the war on terror and the emergent transnational carceral system of the current US government (Gregory 2006). Perhaps the strength of the term lies precisely in its privileging of indistinction over clarity: in the suggestive but irresoluble, even counter-intuitive character of the connections, links and juxtapositions that compose Agamben's argument. In terms of my own material, I found the term initially useful as kind of extreme trope, a theoretical signpost to orient my thinking and present problems without clear resolution. Making it useful beyond this point, however, clearly necessitates a degree of critical engagement.

In the present context, one problem with the term is the way in which Agamben defines the bare life as the 'threshold of articulation between nature and culture'; in positing this opposition, he appears oblivious to the fact that this separation of nature and culture already represents, in itself, a biopowerful operation – one that defines nature as outside the realm of politics. Animals belong to nature, and as such they have already been expelled from the 'city of men'. This is the point at which a certain confusion becomes apparent: in the terms of his scheme, it seems clear that the originary and sovereign expulsion that founds the 'city of men' is *not* the expulsion of human life that constitutes it as bare life in the zone of indistinction, but rather the prior separation of nature and culture that produces nature as the *original outside* towards which the sacred man is expelled. Human life can be expelled only because an outside already exists, and is occupied by 'brute beasts' and 'nature'. By taking the existence of this non-human outside as granted, ignoring its contingent and socially produced character, Agamben blinds himself to the fundamentally political character of the operation by which this outside is produced in the first place – political, because it disqualifies the living beings that already inhabit this outside from political life and being – and to the political ramifications of defining politics and political being as exclusively human prerogatives.

This lacuna poses a theoretical problem when it comes to applying Agamben's thinking to animals – easily remedied, however, by pointing out that the notion of the animal that his argument deploys (and which he elaborates at some length elsewhere) is, in its ontological dualism, very much part of a Western canon of human exceptionalism. Among other things, his reluctance to surrender this doctrinal adherence creates serious problems for his argument in *The Open* (2004), where he identifies the role of the human-animal distinction in producing an image of the human – he coins the term 'anthropological machine' for the distinction and its ongoing work of 'anthropogenesis' – but nevertheless fails to engage critically with the operation of this distinction, or explore alternatives; instead, despite his urgings that 'the anthropological machine must be stopped', he falls back on a conservative, some might say contrived Heideggerian distinction between humans who 'see the Open' and animals who do not. As one reviewer pointedly asks, 'can we be sure that the animal does not see the Open?' (Wadiwel 2004) The answer is, of course, only if we're prepared to go along with Heidegger. In this regard, Agamben situates himself squarely within a canon of contemporary Continental thinkers whose engagement with animals and the animal provides the grounds for a more radical critique than they themselves are willing – or able – to undertake: 'a tale of missed

opportunity, of aborted radicalism' (Wood 1999:19; see also Atterton & Calarco 2004). The limitations of his thinking on animals do not render his theoretical apparatus irrelevant, however: as I suggested, to encompass the politics of expulsion that govern nature and non-human life, his terms merely need to be extended – radicalized – to include the prior and originary expulsion of non-human life from the 'city of men'.

The impoverished Heideggerian animal that Agamben posits – 'poor in world' and unable to 'see the Open' – is close kin to the animals that occupy the confines of the animal industrial complex. Particularly in the context of battery farming and industrial slaughter, it only takes a very minor step, and the surrender of certain entrenched assumptions, to envisage this abstracted, being-less animal as an end result rather than a starting point: the result of processes that have de-animalized animals in ways that mirror and run parallel to the de-humanization of humans. Let me return to the figure of the bare life, this time embodied in the brain-dead patient:

'The hospital room in which the neomort, the overcomatose person, and the *faux vivant* waver between life and death delimits a space of exception in which a purely bare life, entirely controlled by man and his technology, appears for the first time. And since it is precisely a question not of a natural life but of an extreme embodiment of *homo sacer*... what is at stake is... the definition of a life that may be killed without the commission of homicide' (Agamben 1998: 164-165).

In this aspect, the bare life is a life that has been reduced to its minimal threshold of biological activity and beyond, kept alive only by the constant exercise of human power in a technologically created zone of indistinction where the lines between life and death become blurred and flow into each other. The example mirrors Peter Singer's infamous example of the veal calf (Singer 1995:129-136), summarised here by Wadiwel:

'The short life of the veal calf is one which is determined strictly within the coordinates of domination. Calculations made around nutritional and fluid intake, lighting levels, stall size and flooring are directed towards the maximization of market profit from the production of the correctly coloured and textured flesh of the animal. But the priority of the life of the veal calf, no matter how short or painful, is apparent in this process. The life of the calf, maintained in a bare, weak state, is maintained scrupulously to prevent a premature death; a death that threatens the profitability of that life for the livestock complex. Thus a 'balance' is struck, where life is held at a point that borders upon death itself' (Wadiwel 2002:3-4).

If animals can indeed be persons in a real, social, interactive and individuated sense – rather than in the merely figurative, symbolic or metaphoric sense all too frequently deployed by social scientists – then this personhood can also be stripped from them, as it can be from humans. In the case of the calf and the patient, the figure of the bare life captures how both bodies are produced and suspended within dedicated social and technical spaces that effectively constitute two distinct but analogous forms of 'death worlds', or 'forms of social existence in which... populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of

living dead' (Mbembe 2003:40). Perhaps, then, it might be appropriate to add another figure to Agamben's gallery of the bare life: the industrial production animal, whose entire existence is contained within the narrow economic cycles of battery farming, industrial stock-rearing and slaughterhouse disassembly. Obviously, the free-roaming reindeer are never reduced to bare biological functioning in this way; still, the modernization of their slaughter has involved, and continues to involve, profound transformations in the ways in which they are understood, engaged with and treated. With many of these, the figure of the bare life hovers in the background – evoked, but also simultaneously held at bay.

Take, for example, the distinction between hyper-extensive herding and industrial processing that I touched on at the end of Chapter 4. As I have argued, extensification entails a loss of knowledge and familiarity with individual animals for herders: nevertheless, this de-familiarization still leaves individual reindeer with the ability to continue acting autonomously and of their own volition outside the coordinates of human control. In this, the de-individualization of animals under extensification – from the point of view of herders – differs fundamentally from the anonymity of individual animals within the animal industrial complex, where the animals are made entirely subject to human control, human instrumentalization and the requirements of human production, while their agency is scientifically minimized and circumscribed. Even the highly extensive herding practised by my informants was thus continuous with Ingold's traditional pastoral care: the reindeer may have been nameless and individually unknown, but they were nevertheless not posited as objects, machinelike or non-persons. Rather, they operated as a kind of ethical person, whose autonomy required attention and care. One of the salient differences between herding and industrial livestock management thus lies in the space of agency *assigned to the animal* – the capability of the reindeer, both real and ascribed or narrated, to act as autonomous persons or subjects. As I argued in Chapter 6, this autonomous personhood of the reindeer was a central aspect of their relational social being – as well as being an important, even fundamental value for herders, it also structured their relations to the reindeer and the ways in which they talked about and interacted with them. Despite first appearances, consequently, the lives of reindeer as extensively herded livestock were in fact *anything but* bare – out there on the tundra, beyond the 'city of men', they led their own lives: autonomous and independent, free from human control. Failing to distinguish this kind of life from the lives of battery chickens or industrially farmed veal would mean not only succumbing to crude anthropocentrism – it would also mean failing to recognize the personal, symbolic, emotional and social investments that herders place in this life of the reindeer, and in the qualities that keep its potential 'bareness' at bay.

The question of animal agency returns me to the trope of sacrifice, and to a matter that lies close to its heart: what is a sacrificial victim, adequate or otherwise? What is the role of the animal victim within the script of a sacrificial operation? Sacrificially speaking, what is it that distinguishes a living animal – or a human – from a turnip, or a cucumber in the Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1956)? Here I would suggest, speculatively, that what distinguishes an animal victim from a turnip relative to the human killer is the matter of a quality of relative or limited *affinity*, shared between human and animal victim in a sense that excludes the turnip. That is to

say, the role of the animal victim hinges on its *partial affinity* with the killer: an affinity that finds expression in a range of ways, on a number of levels. Girard, for example (2005), argues that the sacrificial substitution of an animal for a human being requires that the victim be socially close enough, both to its killer and the community, to operate as an effective scapegoat. At the same time, it must not be so close as to trigger the latent violence that the sacrifice aims to neutralize in the first place. In order to take upon itself and diffuse the violence that circulates through the community, the victim must thus be simultaneously *of* the community and *outside* it. If it is too distant, it can not meaningfully fulfil its function as a surrogate; if it is too close, the sacrifice risks triggering the very violence that it aims to disperse in the first place. Other forms of partial affinity between killer and victim – social, spiritual, ontological – recur throughout the literature on sacrifice: for example, the animal victim may be deemed capable of speech – like its human killer – and of carrying messages to the gods or the afterlife. More importantly perhaps, the victim often possesses a capacity for *volition*, the exercise of which is central to the sacrifice. By assenting to or willing its own death, the victim may confirm the efficacy of the sacrifice – by refusing it, conversely, it may neutralize this efficacy, or signal ill tidings. Frequently, these partial affinities between victim and killer play a central role in the operation of the sacrifice, enabling it as a meaningful practice – whether its meaning be substitution, absolution or communicating with the gods. Their common thread, I would suggest, is that they point towards an elementary *partial* commonality – the animal victim may not be a human person, but it is nevertheless commensurable, in some way or the other, with its human killer. Perhaps it is precisely this shared quality that lends value to the sacrifice, making it meaningful.

Somewhat sceptically, Walter Burkert (1983:16) refers to practices such as inviting the assent of the sacrificial victim as the *comedy of innocence* – a logical move for him perhaps, insofar as he posits that collective guilt is the prime force moving sacrifice. Here, his term usefully draws attention to the mechanisms that displace and defer guilt, not only in traditional sacrifice but also in industrial meat production – as witnessed in the ceaseless efforts to humanize the slaughter, disperse responsibility and conceal the animal origins of the meat. Compared to the enrolment of consenting animals in sacrificial operations, the very staging and structure of this industrial comedy of innocence expresses, first and foremost, a profound ontological disenfranchisement of animals: there is no room here for agency, volition, participation, or assent on their part. Except in children's literature and perhaps occasionally in advertising (Adams 1990, 2004), modern animals do not and *can not* meaningfully participate in or consent to their own slaughter. They are not volitional agents, and they can not meaningfully be held responsible. Instead, in two steps, the moral responsibility for killing is first confined to the human side of the ontological divide (see Chapter 6), then effaced, fractured or diffused across a network of agents, devices, procedures and spaces: to technicians, veterinarians, legislators, producers, marketers and consumers, who contrive to disguise the animal origins of the meat and transform it into a substance. Through this bureaucratization of responsibility, 'the intentionality of the kill, which is at the heart of the sacrificial act... is completely eluded in favour of a dispersion of responsibility, made possible by a succession of technical acts' (Kilani 2000:79).

To the extent that animal sacrifice does depend on a precariously balanced logic of partial affinity, one might say that it is the advent of radical human-animal dualism in modernity that makes the practice meaningless, even impossible – by replacing affinity with a logic of complete exteriority or radical otherness. Perhaps it is precisely to the degree that animals come to appear insentient, machine-like, objects, non-persons, substance – in short, insofar as they are turned entirely into *the opposite of a human*, into 'meat on legs' or a 'walking larder' (Clutton-Brock 1989) – that they also cease to be meaningful sacrificial victims. Borrowing another phrase from Heidegger, the decline and disappearance of animal sacrifice could perhaps then be taken as a measure of the growing 'abyss of essence' that separates the human from the non-human, and across which the act of killing now takes place: an ontological gulf that reconstitutes the sacrificant, not as a killer but as a *technician* conducting routine manual labour, and transforms the victim into mere meat, stripped of agency, personhood and other qualities that it might have shared with a human sacrificant. This *disqualification from sacrifice* is what would turn the industrial livestock animal – born, raised and killed entirely within the industrial coordinates of total human control – into another iteration of the bare life: too poignant to ignore, excluded practically *a priori* from those forms of killing that recognize and depend on the shared personhood of the victim. As I develop in the next section, reindeer represent a powerful counterpoint to this.

The sacrificial logic of mass killing

Beyond the ritualized physical immolation of animals, the term 'sacrifice' is also applied more broadly to a range of practices and situations where one thing is given up for another. The historian of religion Bruce Lincoln, for example, defines sacrifice as:

'a logic, language, and practice of transformative negation, in which one entity – a plant or animal, a bodily part, some portion of a person's life, energy, property, or even the life itself – is given up for the benefit of some other species, group, god or principle that is understood to be "higher" or more deserving in some fashion or another' (Lincoln 1991:208).

Such 'figurative' or 'metaphoric' usages (Sykes 1980) operate across a wide range of social domains: from chess-playing strategies and the language of dieting fads, to Christian theology and the moral phraseology of militant nationalism. Most of these usages lie far from strict anthropological treatments of sacrificial practice *per se*, but are anything but trivial or redundant to the latter. In the context of tribal India, for example, Padel (1995) demonstrates the powerful, frequently ironic correlations between Christian notions of sacrifice and self-sacrifice among 19th-century British colonial administrators in India, and the 'superstitious' and 'irrational' practices of *indigenous* sacrifice that these very administrators suppressed in the name of 'rational' colonial rule. The eradication of *literal* human sacrifice required the sacrifice – in figurative terms – of far more lives than the practice itself had originally demanded.

It is clear that such broad registers of figurative sacrifice play their part in the industrial destruction of animals for human consumption: meat-eaters explain their meat-eating habits in terms of 'animal protein' or the 'food chain', for example (Fiddes 1991), while vegetarians and activists decry the 'needless sacrifice'

entailed by carnivorous consumption. At first sight at least, the two meanings of sacrifice – literal and figurative – thus seem to *combine awkwardly* in the industrial killing of animals. On the one hand, the individual act of killing seems to have become, if anything, a kind of ritualized anti-sacrifice; on the other hand, the destruction of animals for human benefit operates itself as a sacrificial calculation, often justified or explained in figuratively sacrificial terms – animal lives, for human well-being. Is it possible to articulate a relationship between these two meanings or logics of sacrifice?

Analytically speaking, the figurative notion of sacrifice is useful: for one, it draws attention away from the specific instance of the ritualized killing of a non-human animal, towards the possible operation of sacrificial economies that may not require individual acts to be marked as sacrifices *per se*. Operating as it does at a macroscopic level that elides the physical, embodied character of individual acts of killing, this broader definition of sacrifice tends to turn the notion itself increasingly into a heuristic device: a tool for investigating the operation of loosely defined sacrificial economies, with their equivalences and trade-offs, their substitutions and commensurabilities, their controlled destructions. The questions then shift. Who dictates the terms of substitution in such economies? Who controls the distribution of benefits? Who benefits, whose interests are served, whose power is exercised, challenged or reproduced through their operation? Of course, the move also risks attenuating the very meaning of sacrifice – to the point where it becomes a near-empty category, applicable in theory to any discourse, logic or practice where one thing is given up for something else. The trick is to maintain a double focus – and I contend that the industrial killing of animals is one point at which the two meanings of sacrifice converge and overlap: perhaps precisely, because the act of killing itself has ceased to operate as a sacrifice, traditionally understood.

Concerning the traditional economy of reindeer pastoralism – understood as a kind of sacrificial economy, where reindeer were killed for human benefit – one might say that it was the herders themselves who dictated nearly all aspects of the transformation of reindeer into food and by-products for human benefit: from the where and when, to the how and why. As I have outlined here, over time a wide range of other actors and interests have become involved in almost all aspects of slaughtering practice, and have come to exercise various degrees of control over the process. In the context of my own fieldwork, perhaps the most salient example of such outsider control was the State threat of an enforced slaughter, during the 2004/2005 slaughtering season: unless the number of reindeer in Western Finnmark were reduced, by April 1 2005, from a peak number of over 140 000 to 64 300 – that is, by more than half – the State would be forced to use 'radical measures' and conduct a cull. The issues and controversies surrounding this threat, and the complex processes leading up to it, have already been analyzed to some extent elsewhere (e.g. Joks & Magga 2006). One of the most striking aspects of the situation was the sheer difficulties aligned against the State and its agents in enforcing or executing the threat: practical and logistical difficulties, as well as difficulties produced by the powerful symbolic and discursive mobilization on the part of human actors – in large part, the herders themselves.

One problem was that the threatened cull deployed numbers and entities that had little or no correlate in

actual practice – the proposed intervention floundered, in part, on the fact that the aggregate total population it posited was neither managed nor owned *qua* aggregate. Total numbers only existed on paper and in administrative discourse, while the reindeer were owned by individuals, or at most small groups – there was no total body of herders that was responsible for and which therefore might intervene cohesively on the total body of reindeer (Beach 2000:189-190). As one comedy sketch put it at the time: '140 000 reindeer? Who on earth owns that many reindeer?' The implementation was also flawed in other ways – as one herder pointed out to me, 'who is going to kill the reindeer? The police or the army? They have no idea where to find them!' In the end the cull never happened, and the measures proved ineffective: between March 31 2002 and March 31 2005, despite everything, the estimated number of reindeer in Western Finnmark *increased* by 17 359 animals, from 73 624 to 90 983 animals – 26 683 more than the target limit of 64 300 animals (Joks & Magga 2006:11,102). The precise reasons why this happened – and the exact balance between ecological cycles, market factors and human agencies involved – would deserve a study in themselves, and fall beyond the remit of my discussion here. Rather, the two significant points here are that firstly, the threat was made at all: somewhere, somehow, by someone, a *sacrificial calculation* was made, in terms of which a certain number of reindeer were to be killed in return for something else. The specific terms by which this 'something else' was defined – ecological balance, sustainability, the interests of other actors, social stability on the tundra – are less significant here than the sacrificial logic implied by the equation: a specific number of living reindeer were designated for killing, *in return for* something else; a biopolitical calculation, made with living reindeer bodies. The second significant point is that in the end, the cull never happened.

As I mentioned, implementation or realization of the sacrificial calculus implied by the threatened cull proved highly problematic: execution troubled not only the line between herder and State sovereignty over reindeer – defined as the legitimate power to kill (see Chapter 2) – but also the transparency of the operation of killing itself, tacitly posited in the calculation. Theoretical designation for death could not be translated directly into practice without bridging a significant gap: a gap that was simultaneously occupied and constituted by *the individual act of killing* which, despite escalating industrial modernization and rationalization, remained problematic and opaque, charged with potent personal and cultural significance.

To herders, killing their reindeer was not a trivial operation that could be commanded through a mass calculus. The unavailability for killing of the animals arose at the confluence of several factors: the real political resistance of herders, organized and otherwise, who might resort to civic disobedience and leave the agents of the State without practical means of reaching the reindeer; the spatial and practical limits to State power, which could not – certainly not according to herders – keep sufficient track of the reindeer; and the influence of trans-national powers: international treaties, the global media, indigenous activist networks. All these factors made the prospect of direct State violence against the reindeer appear ridiculous. The idea that 'they' might send in the army to kill reindeer was bandied about as a break-room joke: tanks rolling across the tundra, firing blindly into herds of fleeing reindeer. Of course, unrealistic as the prospect seemed, it *might be* that the State could still have executed its threats – the break-room bravado, perhaps, concealed real

anxieties. The question of whether or not the threatened State violence *could* have been materialized in practice is not significant here, however; the key point is that *it was not*, and that the sovereign designation for death was not remotely coincident with any actual killing. Through this, as in the case of poaching, the reindeer came to demonstrate – to herders, to me and to anyone else watching – the very real space that lay between designation and execution, action and decree, bodies and the law (Reinert 2007).

Here is where I find the notion of bare life most useful – simply put, for expressing the idea that sacrifice is something which requires the life of the sacrificed victim to have *value*, and that under certain conditions life can lose or be stripped of this value, and thereby *be disqualified from sacrifice*. The question that this raises is whether the double disqualification of the bare life – from homicide and from sacrifice, in the wider sense of ritualized, sacralized, socially meaningful forms of putting to death – might not be precisely what qualifies it *as an ideal victim* within the sacrificial calculations of mass biopolitical – or necropolitical – killing. This is a rhetorical question. The very paradox of the bare life, drawn out by Agamben, is that it can be routinely destroyed within the sacrificial calculations of sovereign power – individually and at an aggregate level – *precisely insofar as the act of killing it is no longer a sacrificial operation*, in the sense of representing a marked, conspicuous display of socially significant violence. If a given necropolitical order – such as the apparatus of State, knowledge and discipline that could order the mass killing of reindeer – operates as a sacrificial economy, in which bodies are designated for death and killed *in return for something else*, then the disposable, *perfectly available* body of the bare life represents its perfect victim – to the exact degree that the act of killing it has been made casual, transparent, infused no longer with significance. In this sense, the *figurative* sacrificial logic of the cull operated as the diametrical converse of a *literal* sacrifice: depending, for its exercise, on the very conditions that would negate the latter.

This is where the problem of the *value of a life* – that is, its qualification for sacrifice – comes into force. The terms of the mass killing calculus posited that the reindeer could be killed unproblematically – that is to say, that they existed, as a population, in a condition resembling the bare life, perfectly available for destruction. This is also where Agamben falls short: one key problem with his treatment of the bare life is the way in which he conflates *designation for death* with *the act of killing itself*. Failing to distinguish the two sufficiently lends his analyses an overly theoretical, abstracted form, creating false homogeneities – the outlaw and the concentration camp victim may both be subject to the constant and permanent threat of death, but in practice their *exposure* to this threat is anything but identical. One is out there and must be found, the other is always already there and, as Heidegger might put it, 'ready to hand' – available for destruction. This difference between the outlaw and the camp victim echoes the difference between reindeer and, for example, the various European livestock populations destroyed in the epidemics and outbreaks of recent years. By the very fact of not happening, the threatened cull thus highlighted a crucial theoretical gap or lacuna in the structure of sovereign power – the space that separates designation for death from the exercise of the power to kill. To coin a non-trivial neologism – in conversation with Cohen's work on the 'bioavailability' of organ transplant donors, their availability for 'selective disaggregation' and 'reincorporation into another body (or

machine)' (2005:83) – I refer to this quality of being or not being available for killing as *necroavailability*.

The central problem of the threatened cull could thus be summarized as follows: unlike for example the captive livestock destroyed in the 2001 UK outbreak of foot and mouth disease, the living bodies of reindeer were simply *not available for killing* – certainly not in the aggregate, large-scale manner presupposed by State calculations. They were not *necroavailable*, and here I have outlined a number of the reasons for this. Perhaps – developing the theme of this chapter – one might say that they remained unavailable in this way precisely insofar as they remained subject to a logic of sacrifice, or insofar as the act of killing them retained a sacrificial dimension or aspect: that is to say, as long as the violence of the act had not been fully neutralized *qua* violence. However much the act of personally killing a reindeer might be routine, it was not insignificant. In the context of herding practice, it remained a socially embedded, visible and undisguised act of violence: its violent character was neither concealed nor trivialized. Hand in hand with this, the reindeer had not been *de-animalized* but remained animal Others that commanded respect. Effectively, despite the transformations of herding and slaughtering practice over recent decades, the problems raised in the way of the enforced cull made it clear how the reindeer had *not* been successfully transformed into the kind of life that could be freely or unproblematically killed, or whose deaths could be freely commanded through large-scale calculations.

This notion of necroavailability merits some further elaboration: particularly, I am thankful to my supervisor Piers Vitebsky for pointing out to me that its logical complement or correlate would be *necroevasion*, or *necroevasiveness* – and that on its own, the term seems to posit a life that *has been made* passively available. That is to say, insofar as the necroavailable life has been constituted as such through the agency of others, it seems to possess no agency of its own in determining its relationship to the death that has been assigned to it. Of course, except in the most extreme cases, this is seldom the case – whether with humans or animals. It is true that the unavailability of reindeer for killing resulted in part from the efforts of non-reindeer agents – particularly herders – to constitute them as unavailable in this manner: through political lobbying, interviews with the media, tacit disobedience and other forms of resistance. At the most basic level, however, this unavailability also resulted from the sheer physical *elusiveness* of the reindeer themselves: before they could be killed, they must be tracked down and located, and representatives of the State apparatus lacked the ability to do so. In this, their evasion of the threat of death could be taken as expressing an *active agency* on their part: that is, they were in some significant sense *actively evading* death – being *necroevasive*. In this sense – returning to the figure of the bare life – one might say that the relationship between reindeer and battery chickens, for example, echoed the relationship between the outlaw and the concentration camp victim.

Capturing this dimension of personal agency in the evasion of assigned death is vitally important – particularly if the terms are to be translated to human contexts and applied to practices of killing humans. In one sense, the balance between the two terms only recapitulates and re-frames some of the age-old dichotomies of the social sciences – particularly, the tension between agency and structure. At the same time however, insofar as they rephrase these dichotomies directly as a matter of death and killing – topics that I

believe will likely only come more and more to the fore of social research in years to come – I believe they represent a useful and potentially quite relevant theoretical innovation. Along related lines, one conclusion to be drawn from the present study is that future ethnographic and theoretical approaches to the 'politics of life' and of death – certainly where these make use of terms such as biopower, necropolitics or the bare life – may usefully pay more explicit attention, not only to the designation for death and the processes by which life is constituted and produced as killable or necroavailable, but also to the various factors – cultural, social, symbolic, legal, financial, material – that are mobilized to *resist* this production of life, as freely killable and freely killed. Such a foregrounding of the gap between theory and practice, designation and execution might counterpoint Agamben's pointedly 'bleak and quasi-apocalyptic' (Cohen 2005:79) diagnosis – that 'we are all homines sacri', and therefore permanently exposed to the constant threat of death – and contribute, in turn, to a more nuanced and less exaggeratedly dystopian or defeatist account of the life politics of the present.

Ultimately, what I think is at stake here is the relationship between individual acts of killing and the operation of wider, unmarked sacrificial economies that trade in a currency of living bodies, designated for death. Such economies, and the decisions they enable, are the domain of biopolitics – and necropolitics (Inda 2005). When Foucault discussed the rise of the modern (fascist) biopolitical State, he described its deployment of a 'calculus of war' – which posited a relationship between 'my life and the death of the other' – to enable and justify its exercise of the old sovereign power to kill (Foucault 2004). Rather than war-like, I believe this calculus is better understood as *sacrificial*. Using the figure of the bare life, I have suggested here that the implementation of such mass calculations of death at the aggregate and populational level depends – at least in part – on neutralizing the violence involved in individual acts of killing, making it morally insignificant and socially invisible: an argument that follows in the footsteps of Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of the Holocaust (2003). Such neutralization proceeds in part through the transformation of the life that is killed into something *less* than a life: into a something that can be freely and easily killed, without sanction or repercussion. This, I believe, applies equally to humans and animals: with the key difference – for the many of us who are indoctrinated into human exceptionalism – that with respect to non-human animals this transformation has on some level *already taken place*. Like Agamben, many of us have internalized and naturalized the human-animal distinction to the point that we experience it almost as a kind of intellectual and moral insult when asked to compare human death to the death of non-human animals. The two events are incommensurable: my own experiences when discussing this subject – frequently with fellow anthropologists in Cambridge, a laudably humanist lot – have often confirmed this.

Perhaps precisely because of this, I believe it is vitally important to question and trouble the unproblematic reproduction of this distinction: particularly if one accepts, as some do, that 'the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations' (Mbembe 2003:14) is preceded and enabled by the analogous instrumentalization and material destruction of *non-human* bodies and populations. Charles Patterson (2002), for example, argued that a range of specific techniques, principles and terminology developed in the 19th century for the industrial processing of animals

were transferred wholesale and applied, much later, in the German extermination camps. The dehumanization, objectification and destruction of human life in the camps made use of techniques by which animal life had already been disanimalized and destroyed a century earlier: there were, according to Patterson, social, practical, technological and discursive continuities and links between industrial violence directed at humans and at non-humans. If one accepts this line of argument, then the historical links, relationships and correlations between the production of animal and human bodies as killable can be disregarded only by incurring the charge of naivety – of unwittingly mapping ideologies of human exceptionalism onto history and the workings of power, creating artificially truncated accounts of human violence by concealing its complex relationships to violence against non-humans.

Beyond this point – that the practices and technologies of animal violence have profound effects on the form and exercise of human violence – I would also suggest that the ideologies, discourses and practices of animal objectification in the context of industrial food production form part of a much wider cultural order: a complex of ontological dualism, based on human subjugation of insentient nature, that retroactively decrees animal bodies as always and already killable. As the extensive and growing literature on human-animal relations attests to, this tends to contradict the experience of embodied co-existence between human and non-human animals – in which relationships, attachments and responsibilities often take on the character of social connections between persons, of one kind or the other. The often unspoken insistence on radical human exceptionalism – the safe assumption that in the end, whatever our informants say, non-human animals are ultimately, *really* 'just animals' – is neither an adequate yardstick, nor a safe ontological baseline against which animal personification and so-called anthropomorphism can be judged as deviations or cultural oddities. The human monopoly on personhood and political being is a cultural artefact of the West – an artefact whose lineage is as long and distinguished as it is drenched in blood and false simplicities, and one which is all too easily reproduced in the very terms of the most well-intentioned of discourses and scientific analyses. Perhaps, hopefully, it is also an artefact whose time is coming to an end.

Chasing white reindeer

In closing, let me briefly turn back and explore another take on the concept of sacrifice. In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille argues that acts of sacrifice link the two worlds of the profane and the sacred. As he defines these, the former is the 'world of things', composed of 'objects' that have calculable use values, while the latter represents a kind of exalted state in which existence is intimate, immediate and sublime, not partitioned into discrete 'things'. The fall from the sacred to the profane corresponds to the 'objectification' and instrumentalization of the world, through the emergence of calculating human labour:

[t]he introduction of labour into the world replaced intimacy, the depth of desire and its free outbreaks, with rational progression, where what matters is no longer the truth of the present moment, but rather, the subsequent result of operations. The first labour established the world of things' (Bataille 1991:57).

Sacrifice, as Bataille conceives it, is essentially an act of *superfluous* destruction: a 'wasteful' expenditure that restores the 'originary intimacy' of the sacred world, by negating the 'use value' of what is sacrificed, destroying the 'utilitarian relation' that 'has made a thing (an object) of that which, in a deep sense, is of the same nature as the subject, is in a relation of intimate participation with the subject' (55). Sacrifice thus destroys the instrumental 'thingness' of what is sacrificed, *by taking it out of circulation*: in being sacrificed, it ceases to participate in the utilitarian circuits of the economy. The act of sacrifice thus cancels the subject-object relation of 'servile use' and recuperates an original relationship of ontological non-distinction, in which things have value for themselves or rather, more precisely, have *no value at all* because they are beyond calculation. Through sacrifice, the 'animal or plant that man uses (as if they only had value for him and none for themselves) is restored to the truth of the intimate world' (57). The sacrificial victim – human, animal or inanimate – is placed beyond human goals and calculations of utility and restored to the 'sacred' order of the 'use-less' and non-utilitarian. In this sense, sacrifice has 'the virtue of rediscovering... the intimate participation of the sacrificer and the victim, to which a service use had put an end' (56).

In its time, Bataille's reconceptualization of sacrifice represented a critique of the instrumental materialism of modern life; employing it as a tool for empirical analysis is tricky. Certainly, applying it systematically to my own material would be a difficult act – to argue, for example, that sacrificed reindeer represented some sort of 'accursed share' of the reindeer economy, and their sacrifice a ritualized 'squandering' of this excess. On the other hand, in the present context his notion of sacrifice is useful for drawing out yet another latent potentiality, another possible negative or reverse of sacrifice. Importantly, to Bataille, the physical destruction or slaying of the victim was *not necessary* for a sacrificial operation: it was sufficient that the sacrificial offerings be destroyed *insofar as they have become things* – that is, it was enough 'that the consumption of the offerings, or the communion, has a meaning that is not reducible to the shared ingestion of food' (56). In the context of industrial slaughter, this opens for an understanding of sacrifice without killing: or rather, it opens for the possibility that an act of sacrifice might be constituted precisely in the intentional act of *not* destroying an animal.

In January 2005, I was stuck in my small cabin near the Finnish border. My own car had been out of commission for a while, I had no mobility and for supplies I was consigned to hitch-hiking 20km down to Tanabru every few days. The circumstances were immensely frustrating – particularly as not 30km away, at Seidafjell, the District 6 herd was passing through the winter corral en route to the winter grazing grounds. Finally, by a stroke of luck, I managed to get a ride up to Seidafjell with an old retired herder from District 7 who took pity on me. He himself had no animals any more, he had passed them all on to his son, but he was going up to the corral to look for a particular reindeer: an orphaned calf belonging to one of his son's cows. He had found it the previous winter, sickly and forlorn, and over the following months he had personally nursed it back to health in the garden at the back of his house. From what he told me, it had been a magnificent animal: healthy and powerful, vital, with a distinctive and perfectly white fur. As we drove on towards the corral through the dark winter landscape, snow falling thickly in the headlights, a brooding

lyrical note crept into his descriptions. Despite his advancing age, he was still an active man – the shelves of his living room were lined with trophies from skiing competitions and lasso championships throughout Scandinavia – but he had been forced to spend most of this winter indoors, paralysed by a recent skiing injury. His description of the powerful young reindeer in his back garden was infused with melancholy recognition – not only of his own slow decline, mirrored in its vitality, but of the changing face of herding itself. The closeness between them, forced by circumstance, was of the order of an exception that highlighted the overall patterns – of impersonal distance and alienation – against which it stood out, evoking a bygone intimacy: 'it's not like that any more, you know'. Not that it ever was, necessarily: reindeer make poor pets and inevitably, as the reindeer grew stronger, the terms of the situation shifted.

The garden was fenced in and one day, the reindeer simply vaulted the tall fence and disappeared into the distance. He had spent the entire season looking for it at all the round-ups in the area, but it had not turned up. His last hope was that it might have gotten mixed up with the District 6 herd. Saturated as I was at that point with stories of constant intervention and complex multiple agencies, what struck me most were the absences in his story. The way he told it, no one else was involved. There were no directives or regulations; no regulators, activists or inspectors; no markets, strategies, calculations or agreements: just a reindeer, and a herder. One beautiful animal growing strong enough, in his care, to escape – and in escaping, to confirm their relationship and, in a sense, bring it to its logical conclusion: reindeer were, after all, not pets. Through the marked and singular character of this exceptional central relationship, his story evoked a powerful nostalgia for a past of irretrievable simplicities and direct, unmediated relationships between herder and reindeer. Now he was looking for the animal, not in order to slaughter it – he said he had no intention of this, though the white fur made that reindeer particularly valuable – but to find out whether it had survived. Intrigued by his story, I involved myself in his search. We spent some cold hours in the dark, at the corral, trying to spot that near-mythical white reindeer among the brown and motley mass of the herd. In the end, as if directed by a logic of allegory, we never found it. It may be that it perished on its own, out on the tundra, or that it was poached for its fine meat and beautiful fur. Unlikely as it was, it may also be that it had simply eluded the helicopters this year. Perhaps it was still somewhere out there, on the tundra, and would turn up again next year – or the year after.

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