

It's a Good Life if You Don't Weaken: Taking Care of a Small Farm in Ontario

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Abstract

Small-scale animal agriculture is a fruitful site for examining the relationships among humans, animals, and the land. This thesis endeavours to show what practices are constitutive of these relationships and, moreover, that establishing the “right” relationships between them are ethical concerns with both analytical and ecological import. Basing myself on fieldwork consisting of participant observation, informal interviews, and filmmaking on a small farm in Ontario, I argue that: dominion is the position from which the farm is cared for; that maintaining the farm is both reproductive and generative of the ethical subject; and that the indeterminacies involved in this maintenance might be resolved or unresolved depending on one’s position in regard to the local farming tradition.

Acknowledgments

At a particularly vulnerable moment in this process, my supervisor Meg Stalcup told me that in the course of working and thinking, one might find herself uncertain if she is standing on solid ground. The trick is that the only solid ground might be beneath her feet, and she thus needs someone else to look at her to tell her if it's there. My most sincere thanks to Dr. Stalcup for always telling me what I am standing on.

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Introduction

The winter puts the landscape into relief. The land that had seemed flat when clothed in summer grasses is in fact full of peaks and valleys. The winter plays with scale. Joyce and I make the short trek across the barnyard, but this desert of snow and ice that slips over the tops of our rubber boots feels like a wasteland upon which we turn our backs.

The barn door creaks a welcome and I turn to slam it shut behind us. It's freezing and we're both tired, but there's an orphan lamb that needs to be cared for. Sliding into the crowded lambing pen, Joyce beckons, "nan-nan!" It doesn't take Joyce long to find the little orphan with her eyes. He stands close to a ewe and her two twin lambs, but he is clearly set apart. He is still looking for his mother, but not as desperately as he had in the morning. "Nan-nan, come to Grandma!" Joyce beckons to him once more. His head perks up a bit, and he teeters hesitantly toward her. At the age of 80, though not very tall, it takes Joyce some effort to reach down and pick up the little lamb. But once she does, they both seem quite content. The lamb might not survive the next few days, and even if he does, he will be slaughtered as an easter lamb in a few short months. His life will be short, and as an orphan, he will inevitably cost more to keep than he will ever earn back as meat. Nonetheless, Joyce feeds him, injects him with selenium, and punctures his ear with his identification tag. Having noticed that one of his eyes seems to be hurt or infected, Joyce tries to put some medicated drops into his eyes. At this, the lamb starts to bleat and thrash in her arms. Joyce chuckles and flips him over in her arms to cradle him like a baby. Looking into his face, she says to him, "I know. It's one hell of a world." From behind my camera, my pulse quickens. I can not believe she just said that.

Perhaps I will begin by telling you where we will end up. This thesis is a reflection on the indeterminacy of care. It is a written encounter with what cannot be resolved but can be, and perhaps ought to be, carefully attended to anyway. Joyce cares for the orphan lamb even though the outcome of that care is indeterminate. The logic of her care is not guided by a cost-benefit analysis but instead enacted within an economy of care that nestles the individual orphan lamb within a tradition of domestication practices and a web of relationships between people, animals, and the land. For Joyce, caring for the lamb is the right thing to do, and so she commits herself to doing it. A commitment to a course of action or pattern of thinking is necessary to act, but presents its own kind of problems. Resolve, as ethical work that connects care to action, functions not only to structure and to control but also can over-determine. I have come to the terms commitment and resolve, along with dominion and domestication, which I will introduce shortly, through the work of this thesis, and I will elaborate them in the pages that follow. As such, I don't set out to resolve the indeterminacies of care, but to expand our ways of thinking and talking about what care involves. While resolution would offer clarity and certitude, it would also ensnare and deplete. The thinking that takes place in the following pages is my own encounter with this problem, as presented to me on Joyce's farm, and my first steps in another direction.

The Farm

Millside Farm is located on the outskirts of Oxford Mills, a once booming village in Eastern Ontario. It is a mixed farm on just over one hundred acres of land, with an emphasis on the breeding and showing of Suffolk Sheep. A local branch of 4-H, the agricultural club for youth, has its main base at the farm. Joyce and her husband Maurice own the farm together, but

for as long as I have known them, Joyce has done the lion's share of the work on the farm as well as in the house. Maurice fell ill with a heart condition over a decade ago, and two years ago suffered a stroke that left him confined to a wheel-chair. But I suspect that even before his ailments, Joyce ruled the roost. She is well known and respected, perhaps even adored, in the local farming community, but is frequently referred to as a "battle-axe" of a woman. Maurice, on the other hand, is gentle, slow speaking, and deliberate in his actions. He grew up in Oxford Mills during the Depression, and has memories of taking the morning milk from his family farm to the local cheese factory that once stood where Joyce and Maurice's house now stands. Married for 62 years, they have had four children, who have since had children, who, likewise, have had children. At the country fairs that take place each fall, it is not uncommon to see each of these generations represented en masse in the show ring, proudly displaying the quality sheep from their respective farms. Though the farm generates a small amount of income through the sale of breeding stock, Joyce and Maurice mainly support themselves through their pensions: Maurice worked as a labourer at the local agricultural college while Joyce was the town's postmistress until they both retired almost twenty years ago. Along with the sheep, Joyce's farm also has a large garden, several hay fields, a sugar shack for making maple syrup in the spring, laying hens, and a few beef cows, turkeys, and chickens for meat each year. These products are not sold, but are often shared among people who help at the farm or are informally traded with other farmers. For instance, Joyce brings a woman who owns a local orchard maple syrup in order to pick apples for free.

Joyce has a few teenagers¹ that she pays minimum wage to help at the farm a couple of mornings a week. The kids involved in the 4-H club, as well as their parents, frequently pitch in for particularly onerous jobs, as do Joyce's children and grand-children. Joyce also has a good relationship with a few of her neighbours, particularly David and Ken, who can be counted on to operate or repair heavy machinery. The farm is typically a bit of a revolving door, with many comings and goings of the regulars, like myself and Ken, or old friends just stopping by. For the most part, however, Joyce takes care of the farm by herself. She feeds the sheep morning and night, chips the ice from the water buckets all winter, gets up in the night to feed an orphan lamb in the spring, and, in the summer, picks clover from the pasture to feed the turkeys just because they enjoy it. Though she has, on a number of occasions, downsized her farming operations, she always ends up back at it. She seems to be perpetually too busy, stressed, overextended, and overcommitted. Her loved ones do not understand, and they worry for her.

Millside Farm is located on unceded Algonquin territory, and has been settled as farm land since the early 1800s. Settler colonialism was made possible by the idea that Algonquin lands were *terra nullius* (McMillan and Yellowhorn 2004). While farmers in Western Canada were quickly able to specialize in the cultivation of crops due to the presence of vast prairies, farmers in Quebec and Ontario had to create a farming landscape, clearing dense forest at the rate of about two to five acres a year (Wood 2000, 85). Because of this, many families took up mixed farming, which requires relatively less land use and carries less risk than specialization (Kelly 1973). This history of the land is significant for understanding Millside Farm, and will be taken up further in the first chapter.

¹ I was once one of these teenagers.

The Question(s)

Having spent six years working at Joyce's farm before formally embarking on this project in 2018, my anthropological work on this topic is rooted in friendship, care, and affection for the people, practices, and animals in the pages to come. Upon finishing my undergraduate degree in Anthropology, I felt compelled to do my master's thesis about Joyce and her farm. The reason why I felt this calling remained, for a long time, vague and unspecified. My journey of clarifying what it was about the farm that felt so important to understand is, at least in part, preserved in the following chapters. My work resonates with what Nicolas Langlitz has referred to as "fieldwork in perennial philosophy" (2012, 243). This approach does not assert that there are universal questions, but that there are questions that reappear continuously through time and space. Immanuel Kant articulated some of these questions, including "What can I know?," "What ought I to do?" (Langlitz 2012, 260; Kant 1800, 538). My aim is to make visible how my own encounter with the world has made my version of these questions thinkable, and at times unthinkable. My question was, and continues to be, "How do I live?" This question was, for most of this project, one that I was struggling with deeply. Differently put, "one of the fundamental fantasies of anthropology is that somewhere there must be a life really worth living" (Schneider 1967; Robbins 2013).

Why does Joyce find it so important, perhaps even necessary, to keep her farm going? And why do people flock to help her, even when there is frequently nothing to gain but a few cuts of meat or some maple syrup? During a time in my life when I felt trapped, that what I could do was overdetermined by circumstantial and structural conditions, being at the farm always made me feel good. I enjoyed the work. I enjoyed the companionship and community involved

in working with others. My desire was to know why, and to learn how the others at the farm, particularly Joyce, had been able to give themselves over to it completely. Further, in fact. My desire was to learn to *be like* Joyce, to find a way to be certain about my place in the world and to commit to a style of living.

My concern with this project has thus always been an ethical one, both in these sense that there is some evaluation that needs to be clarified and in the sense that I was concerned with how others have worked on themselves so that I might also be able to transform myself. This has made care, as a conceptual tool and as a method, important for this thesis. The formal research question guiding this thesis is: Through what practices is care exercised at Millside farm? I used this question to understand the modalities of care that structure the relationships produced through, and productive of, Millside Farm, and the ways in which an ethical project, working on one's relationship to oneself and to others, is enacted through these modalities. The question has made available other guiding questions that will appear in the following chapters.

Methodology

My formal anthropological fieldwork began in the December of 2018 and proceeded, with decreasing frequency, through January of 2020. Conducting my fieldwork over a full year was important for this project, since life on the farm is largely structured through a full cycle of seasonal activities. For Paul Rabinow (1977), the methods of anthropology cannot be reduced to fieldwork, since fieldwork is one method among many. What becomes thinkable or visible to us through fieldwork “passes through one or another form of figuration” (Rabinow 2003, 76), which in this case are both writing and filmmaking. Colin Koopman (2015) understands methods as “strictures, constraints, designs, and strategies for inquiry: the way in which inquiry is

conducted” (572). The purpose of methods is to allow for “acts of pulling complex objects of inquiry apart so as to loosen them up” (Koopman 2015, 572). In this sense, then, my analytical concern with ethics and care that will be elaborated below doubles back on itself: they are not only conceptual tools but also methodological tools that develop through this thesis. My decisions in the field and in the process of thinking, writing, and filmmaking are guided by an orientation toward these concepts.

Frank Bechhofer and Lindsay Paterson note that fieldwork methods are most effective when they closely mirror the everyday social life of the locale (2000, 97). For this reason, my interviews were unstructured, with questions posed conversationally and in response to events as they would unfold (Bernard 2011). From December 2017 through March 2018, I visited the farm several times a month to participate in the seasonal events surrounding lambing season. My activities included bottle feeding lambs, caring for sick or injured ewes and lambs, removing dead ewes and lambs, maintaining barn chores amidst the chaos of this season, and simply hanging out with Joyce and my camera. From March through April, I helped with maple syrup season. My activities included tapping trees, collecting sap, boiling sap, bottling the syrup, and cleaning the boiling tools. This time period, populated with others besides Joyce, remains largely absent from my written work. Though I have not used this material², the times in which the farm bustled with activity informs my emphasis on Joyce and the more commonplace unfolding of events on the farm. Through the summer months, I spent about five days a week there. During this time, I helped with farm tasks as well as attending local events with Joyce. These activities varied widely: from making sandwiches for church gatherings to loading animals onto the trailer

² I have not used this material in the written thesis you are reading now, but it is explored in the filmic portion.

for slaughter. When we set out on the project together, I told Joyce that I did not want to be paid. But as the summer wore on, this clearly started to rub Joyce the wrong way. She decided to pay me half of my regular wages, so \$7.50 an hour, for my help at the farm because I was “working half the time.”³ Along with unloading the 40kg bags of feed and wrangling sheep, I took field-notes on my phone, which were transcribed into my computer. I also recorded data on audio-recording devices and on my camera. Like my process of selecting in which farming activities to participate, my choice of data recording method is intuitive and also trained, based on my knowledge of what may emerge in a given interaction. Following Sniadecki, my method is to allow “the aesthetic and sensorial dimensions of the lived experience of informants/film-subjects to directly shape the fieldwork/filmmaking process” (2014, 27).

Over the course of my time at the farm, I have myself become a part of it. As such, this thesis is not an ethnography, nor is the accompanying film an ethnographic one. Following Rabinow and Tobias Rees, it seems to me that there is no object that can be called “ethnos” to be found here, rather an intersubjective happening. Furthermore, the notion of “ethnos” involves limiting the range of possible questions and predetermining an answer involving vocabularies of human difference. This is a thesis about “us”, me and the others at the farm, and the things we do that make “us”; I am an inhabitant of this world that I am objectifying in text (Langlitz 2013, 259). My anthropology is informed by Rabinow’s anthropology of the actual, which is methodologically oriented toward the “near future and recent past” (2003, 55) and grounded in the empirical. I am also informed by an anthropology of the possible (Stevenson 2014). Brief glimpses into what might be thought, what is only half said in a community where talking is

³ The other half of the time I spent “playing on that camera.”

meant for practical transmission of fact, or what is made available for speculation in a gesture or a bodily comportment cannot necessarily be clearly formulated, but I nonetheless try to capture and preserve them in the way that I write.

Filmmaking

Rabinow urges anthropologists to experiment with narrative form. This experimentation involves remaining within and being “oriented toward the actual” and experimenting “with structures that lack closure” (Rabinow 2003, 79). Filmmaking is one way in which this kind of experimentation seems possible. While my filmmaking practice has inevitably focused on particular relationships in particular moments, and thus inherently excluded possible perspectives, it is well-suited for trying to uncover and communicate that which is being fostered on the farm. Lisa Stevenson notes that “Images [...] are useful precisely because they can capture uncertainty and contradiction without having to resolve it.” (Stevenson 2014, 10). This is what this thesis is about: attending to problems without imposing a resolution. Images, put into motion and relationship through filmmaking, are a useful tool in this project: care that retains the indeterminacy and messiness of life on the farm.

David and Judith MacDougall stress the importance of anthropological film’s ability to evoke an “individual embodied experience—the affective, sensory universe inhabited by us all, but which barely makes itself felt in the written monographs of anthropologists” (2000, 3). Though I try to retain traces of this embodied experience in my writing, the experience of watching a film is necessarily different than a reading of someone else’s interpretation of what they saw unfold. Images, insofar as they evoke that embodied experience, are not a direct representation of a transcendental truth, but rather offer an excess of meaning that both exposes

the partiality of knowledge and stays open to the viewer's interpretation (Sniadecki 2014; Allan 2016b). To say that anthropological film has the capacity to evoke an embodied experience that resists the reductionism of written texts is not to say that the object or substance of the film somehow bypasses or exceeds language. No image is self-evident — each image demands interpretation by both the filmmaker and the viewer. At the same time, this interpretation is not always neatly done. Images make space for ambiguity (MacDougall 1995).

Diana Allan says that “the political is aesthetic: it shapes the relationship between what can be seen, said and done in social life.” (2016b, 297). Possibilities for political life are shaped by what is visible; images, then, do not merely document but extend the political “in unstable and unpredictable ways” (Allan 2016b, 300-302). To make modalities of care visible and to study their aesthetic is thus to make a politics of care possible. There are two related aspects to expanding these political possibilities. Firstly, the excesses inherent in images compels viewers to do their own work of interpretation. What film offers as an anthropological tool is that the linguistic frame is not overdetermined by the anthropologist, but arrived at through the viewers' own interpretive framework. This process is inevitably political. Secondly (though actually simultaneous with the first), indeterminacy is its own kind of politics. This kind of politics is necessarily open. Rabinow notes that Foucault's late work is “not only ethical, it is also political; but it is politics without a program.” (1994, xxxviii). Foucault resists politics as a “coherent doctrine” with “more or less clearly defined goals” in favour of a critical attitude, problematization, and ceaseless thinking (Foucault 1994, 77). Filmmaking as a practice and also the watching of moving images open the possibility to realize this version of politics. Movement and interpretation take place without requiring reconciliation between incommensurable parts.

Finally, anthropological film can be thought of as a space for intersubjective knowledge-production. Intersubjectivity means that the film does not focus on one particular subject but rather on the “nexus of shifting social dynamics and affective dimensions between human subjects that entails both compassion and conflict” (Sniadecki 2014, 33). In the context of my project, intersubjectivity is not only between humans, but can also involve non-humans. Intersubjective filmmaking, and the excess of images, lends itself well to attending to the role of animals in human life without getting bogged down in speculation about their ontological status.

Ethics

Why does Joyce care for the orphan lamb? How can it be the right thing to do, when she knows she will have him killed in a few short months? What does it mean for her to acknowledge with him the harshness of the world? How does Joyce keep herself and her farm going?

Since the inception of the discipline, anthropologists have been interested in the study of ethics and morality. From Bronislaw Malinowski (1926), who examined the norms and values that organized ‘savage life, through Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) who argues for anthropologists themselves to cultivate particular ethical subject positions, anthropology has been interested in the cultural diversity of what is considered right and wrong. Michel Foucault’s reconceptualization of ethics marked a shift in how anthropologists understand the study of ethics (Mattingly 2018).

Michel Foucault claimed it necessary to “distinguish... acts and moral code. The acts (*conduites*) are the real behaviour of people in relation to the moral code (*préscriptions*) imposed on them.” (Foucault 1994, 263). In this thesis, moral codes come out of the local farming

tradition. I conceptualize dominion as the position from which the farm is cared for: dominion endows Joyce with the right, and also the duty, to care for her land and animals in a particular manner. I then explain how dominion is worked on, acted out, in the context of domestication. Domestication is a necessarily ethical process; one that controls the relationship between objects and beings. It also requires a particular kind of subject to do the domesticating. Foucault's version of ethics insists that while ethics always proceed through relationships to others, it is nonetheless a project of working on one's relationship to oneself. Foucault analyzes this project through four main categories: ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, ethical work, and telos (Foucault 1994). To understand how Joyce works on herself to be capable of caring for her farm, and why she chooses to do so, I argue that Joyce's commitment to her farm is a mode of subjectivation that becomes ethical work through her practice of resolve.

Both commitment and resolve speak to ethical autopoiesis, a concept James Faubion has used to address the relationship between "the becoming and the maintenance of the ethical subject" (2001, 20). Ethical autopoiesis has two related forms: one process is inventive, open to circumstances encountered in the environment; the other is reproductive, producing locally specific normative patterns of action (Faubion 2001, 20). In the context of Joyce's resolve to maintain her farm, I argue that ethical reproduction and invention are not opposed. As such, my analysis of Joyce's ethical practice resonates with Faubion's interest in the "themetical" aspects of ethics (2011, 20).

Finally, I discuss rage and unresolve. Unresolve, used as a noun, refers to "lack of resolve; irresolution; (also) the state of being unresolved." (Oxford English Dictionary 2020). I use the relationship between rage and unresolve to demonstrate ways in which ethics are not

necessarily concerned with the good. When one must work on oneself in order to continue and maintain, the good can become evacuated from one's relationship to oneself. For me, this resulted in rage. Though I ultimately reject living in a such a state, and instead favour being thoughtfully unresolved, as fostered through practices such as anthropology or filmmaking, rage reveals the indeterminacies involved in being an ethical subject. If the good were clear, or if the good were always the object, ethics would be a matter of simple execution rather than the material worked over, resolved and unresolved, through the process of living.

Care

Throughout this thesis, care is not only the anthropological object but also a conceptual tool and a method. Care as a practice is itself necessarily ethical, and several of the concepts that I develop, like commitment, resolve, and rage, are subsets of care in the coming pages; modalities through which care is made possible and practiced on the farm.

Lisa Stevenson defines care as “the way someone comes to matter and the corresponding ethics of attending to the other who matters.” (2014, 3). Care is a matter of attention; what one is attentive to and how this attention is (or is not) acted upon. In keeping with my view that the ethical is not necessarily equated with the good, care is not necessarily positive. Stevenson's object, which she calls bureaucratic care, is a kind of biopolitics that functions anonymously; care is “administered indifferently, without it mattering for whom” (2014, 5). This version of care makes space for the ambivalences, indeterminacies, and messiness of care.

Annemarie Mol, Ingunn Moser, and Jeannette Pols understand care as “a specific modality of handling questions to do with the good” (2010, 13). Understood as a “mode, a style, a way of working” (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010, 7), Mol stresses that care is “embedded in

practices, buildings, habits, and machines” (Mol 2008, 8). This version of care has been necessary to my thinking about how the work that takes place on the farm, or how care is practiced, is linked to the ethical. I have found my version of care positioned between the messiness of care stressed by Stevenson, and the pointed practices of care oriented toward producing the good that Mol has developed. Though care practices on the farm are not necessarily productive of the good as such, the positive intent to care for the maintenance of the farm helps to make sense of why Joyce works in the way that she does. While the outcome of her care is indeterminate, her concrete practices foster maintenance of a larger project.

Hans Harbers suggests thinking about small-scale agriculture as an economy of care, in which care is not just for individual relations but for the maintenance of the system itself. What is being cared for, and how one is caring, are often multiple, simultaneous, ambivalent, or contradictory. Harbers says that “taking care of was always coupled with having to care about diverse factors [...] caring for and caring about always materialized in the context of self-preservation, the preservation of that network, that way of life.” (Harbers 2010, 148). To maintain the farm, Joyce has to care for her sheep and other farm animals, the land, her husband, her home, and herself. These diverse factors necessarily produce hierarchies, and at times exclusions. Some things simply can’t be cared for. When her husband is sick, for instance, the other objects of Joyce’s care are set aside: as we hurriedly drive past the vegetable garden she admits, “I haven’t even been to the garden in a week. I would hate to look.” When oriented toward maintenance of the larger system, care practices can turn avoidant.

Care on the farm fosters the maintenance of the farm itself, and though the outcome of care in a specific instance is indeterminate, the practice itself is part of an ethical repertoire.

Joyce knows she won't be able to keep going forever, but she avoids breakdown and instead fosters maintenance. There is no certainty in the outcome of her care, but there is a desire to do it anyway.

Chapters

In Chapter One, I argue that dominion is the position from which the farm is cared for. This dominion is rooted in tradition, which links the past to the present in ways that work against alienation (Rabinow 2007). Connecting conversations I have had with Joyce about land use and animal husbandry with historical documents and current writing on Canada's history, this chapter reveals how care practices on the farm inherit and perpetuate a hierarchy. This hierarchy is productive of an economy of care: only so many things can be attended to at once. A result of this kind of care is avoidance; that which is not or can not be attended to is often ignored. Avoidant care and the tradition of land possession speak to how the structure of settler colonialism continues to function in Canada today. I then go on to discuss domestication as a particular practice of dominion. Domestication, however, is a fundamentally incomplete and unstable process. Domestication at the farm is frequently superficial: weeds are chopped off at the base rather than pulled out by the root. Though the incompleteness of domestication is what makes a farmer's work necessary and possible, the manner in which domestication is superficially approximated reveals that even while dominion is an assumed position at the top of a hierarchy, there is an instability that is always worked on, but always avoided. On the farm, holding one's dominion is continuing to farm in a particular tradition. Even though enacting this dominion reveals its own falsehood, accepting this falsehood would be completely alienating: in this way, dominion and domestication are about maintenance.

Chapter Two contends that maintaining the farm is both reproductive and generative of the ethical subject. I argue that Joyce's commitment to her farm is a mode of subjectivation, which becomes ethical work through her practice of resolve. Through an analysis of barn chores, I suggest that one of the reasons that Joyce continually commits herself to maintaining her farm is because the work she does there is a fulfilling experience that binds her to the world through meaningful links that resist alienation. I then draw on material from lambing season, in which Joyce and I must train ourselves to expect the unexpected, to put forward a concept of resolve, a particular commitment to action, as a kind of reproduction. Ethical reproduction and becoming are not opposed. Lambing season demonstrates how ethics can function as a continual reassembling of what exists and has existed. Invention can be organized around maintenance of tradition, but how this maintenance is executed involves a great deal of indeterminacy, given that care practices can guarantee no stable outcome.

Chapter Three focuses on care as a kind of avoidance to locate specific indeterminacies in care. Drawing on material about animal death on the farm, I show how this avoidance can involve literally removing that which is avoided from one's field of vision, angrily getting *through* dirty work rather than carefully attending to the process of work, or becoming stultified by rage. I expand on my experience of rage in the field, and how this rage became available for thought only upon exiting the field, as a gap between what one desires and what one finds to be true, and the inability to reconcile oneself with that gap. Indeterminacies are difficult to live with, and are thus avoided in order to make action possible. I conclude that, though her care is often subject to the same avoidance at the root of my rage, Joyce is able to act in spite of indeterminacies because she is equipped with tradition. I suggest that for myself, as outside of

this tradition, the movement toward attending to indeterminacies while maintaining the capacity for action involves working against alienation, though not by adopting a farming tradition but cultivating a practice of unresolve. I conclude with a reflection on how anthropology has worked for me as a method for turning the indeterminate into an object of reflection, and for doing so without becoming incapable of meaningful action.

Chapter 1: Teetering On Top Of Things: Tradition, Dominion, and Domestication

It's August and the air hangs heavy with humidity. Even in the morning, working in the garden feels like wading through a pool. I am on my knees in the dirt, with my head hunkered toward the ground, trying to separate the mess of weeds from the still delicate carrots. I prefer to work quickly and efficiently, but this is the kind of job, and day, that requires one to take on a slow and steady comportment. A few yards away, Joyce works with her hoe, stirring up a bit of dust from the dry earth. As she's working her way down a row of cucumbers she routinely stops, and, leaning on her hoe, gazes over to the neighbour's yard, or the other way into her own hayfield.

We work in silence, accompanied only by the sounds of chickens, sheep, and cicadas. The sound of the cicadas might as well be the sound of heat simmering on the tin roof of the old barn, or of the wet air coming to boil on parched soil. Cicadas mean sweltering – but also an end drawing near. Their trill intensifies as they rush to complete this phase of their lifecycle, and likewise, our actions and thoughts are strained by the pressure of the summer season coming to a close. Today, the cicadas sound urgent.

As Joyce works, I can tell by the movement of her elbows that she's about had enough. I hurry to finish my row of carrots, so that I might have this satisfaction in my morning's work.

“Ho-hum.” Joyce declares, “Time to quit.”

We drag ourselves over to Joyce's 2016 RAM 2500, step up into the cab, and blast the air conditioning. It's only about 9:30, but as we drive from the farm located on the edge of the village of Oxford Mills, to the house, located within the village, we decide that we have had it for outdoor work today. We pull up onto the sidewalk and park directly in front of Joyce's front

door. To get from one air-conditioned space to another, however, requires walking through the verandah. The verandah is a small porch, entirely closed in by windows, that holds assorted piles of junk, the refrigerator Joyce uses as her farm stand store, and the bucket that she uses to collect food scraps for her hens. In weather like this, the temperature and smell of this room is overwhelming. I hold my breath as I walk through. Once inside, Joyce goes straight to Maurice, who is sitting in his reclining chair, with a cat on his lap, watching “The Marilyn Denis Show” on CTV. Joyce empties his urinal, fills his water, and fusses with his blanket. Though she talks the whole while, one gets the sense that she not really talking *to* her husband, she’s just talking. Maurice never replies, but rather cranes his neck to maintain a line of sight to the TV. As she walks to the back room, Joyce says, “I’m gonna change my pants, then we’re going to town!” I stand in the front room and wait. I usually avoid Maurice. Not on purpose, really. Once, when I asked him how he was doing, and he replied quite simply, “waiting.” I laughed nervously, “For what?” Maurice shrugged. He didn’t smile. It frightened me. Now I don’t know where to look when I talk to him, or even what to say.

Driving to town is a pleasant way to pass a hot summer day. Town, here, is distinct from the village. From Oxford Mills, one drives about seven clicks east down a rural road into the town of Kemptville. According to the town’s Wikipedia page⁴, both Kemptville and Oxford Mills began to “emerge from the forest” around 1819. But the widening of highway 416 in 1999 reinforced a movement in which the small businesses in Kemptville closed down to make room

⁴ Of course, I am not suggesting that Wikipedia is a reliable source of historical information. It nonetheless struck me as an apposite description of the town, and significant that the anonymous person who cared enough to make this entry would describe it in this way.

for Shoppers Drug Mart, McDonald's, and Walmart, while most of the small businesses in Oxford Mills simply closed.

Drives like this one open up the possibility of talking, a possibility that is largely foreclosed during work. Even though a space for conversation is relatively rare, our discussions usually repeat the same talking points. Joyce will note how bad the traffic in town is these days, and how she routinely goes to town and back without seeing a single person that she knows. Even though she says this at least once a week, she always expresses the sentiment with an incredulous tone.

As we drive, Joyce thinks out loud about the people attached to the homes that we pass: "That's old Mike's place. Now I haven't heard from him in a while. He wasn't well you know." Or, about the people that once lived in those places: "That's where Beth used to live, and she was a Thompson. She lived there for years, even after he died. I couldn't tell you who's living there now. Never seen the people." As we drive past the land where, as Joyce had informed me many times prior, the Gagnon family once had their farmstead, Joyce knocks her gnarled finger against her window. Gesturing toward the successional bush that is supplanting the forgotten farmland, she says "Now why are they doing that? They should take that out and make more land!"

In a township where the conditions for life "emerged from the forest," allowing bush to overtake farmland is beyond the bounds of reason. Joyce indicates that "they," whoever owns the land, ought to be responsible for the maintenance of the property as open farmland. This idea has deeply historical roots in the region. The land which was settled as Oxford Mills, once a part of Upper Canada, was united under British rule in 1841 (Morton 1964). By 1867, Upper Canada was subsumed into the Province of Canada; united as the "Dominion of Canada" under

Confederation (Morton 1964). At the time of Confederation, officials considered calling Canada the “Kingdom of Canada” but shied away from the explicit imperial overtones (Stacey 1984, 16). Sir Leonard Tilly quoted Psalm 72:8 of the Bible, which describes God’s rightful dominion over the earth, to suggest the name “Dominion of Canada” (Forsey and Hayday 2006). The notion of dominion comes from the latin *dominus*, which means the master (Forsey and Hayday 2006). As such, the “Dominion of Canada” carries with it the fact of British Rule, but under confederation this rule becomes, at least nominally, “free” and “equal.” The British North America Act of 1867 bestowed upon Canada the right to “Peace, Order, and Good Government” as well as a series of duties to the crown. Canada belonged to the crown, but was generously permitted self-governance. Foucault notes that such juridical notions of sovereignty presuppose “the individual as a subject of natural rights or original powers.” (1994, 59). The notion of dominion, then, carries with it both sovereignty and duty. With the right to govern comes the duty to do so; the right to dominion is to be exercised. Dominion is a specific configuration of power, constitutive of practices and subjects.

This chapter theorizes the farm as a space of dominion. I understand this logic of dominion as rooted in tradition, understood as a “moving image of the past” that is not necessarily opposed to modernity but rather to alienation (Rabinow 2007; Redfield 2013). The logic of dominion is inherited but also extended and practiced as care. Dominion is not itself a form of care, but a position from which one cares, therefore shaping the manner in which care is practiced and what is sought by caring. I attend to dominion by articulating how land is thought of and controlled on the farm. I then discuss domestication as a form of care, a practice of dominion. Dominion perpetuates the structure of settler colonialism that is foundational to

Canada as a nation. Dominion involves possession, and properly controlling one's property is both a right and a duty. In order to responsibly rule, one must be attentive to how and what one is governing. Dominion, as I will elaborate below, is destructive but also constitutive.

Joyce's land is located on unceded Algonquin territory. Settlement was justified by the idea that Algonquin lands were *terra nullius* (McMillan and Yellowhorn 2004). The forests found here were seen as empty, unproductive space. In his history of Ontario, David Wood (2000) traces the activities of early Canadian settlers, who, in less than one hundred years, transformed forest into farmland with their axes, oxen, and horse teams. He notes that between first settlement and the first world war, over 90% of Ontario's forests south of the shield were gone. Alfred Crosby (1986) has directly linked the transformation of landscape and empire, calling processes like the one described above "ecological imperialism." Ontario as we know it, is quite literally manmade and necessarily connected to imperialism.

Patrick Wolfe has described settler colonialism as a structure, not an event (1999), and identified that the irreducible part of this structure is land (2006). And while gaining control of the land required the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, Audra Simpson (2018) has noted that for settlers, the resulting structure was one of possession (168). A key part of this possession takes the form of ecological imperialism: the forests of Ontario became possessed (in fact possessable) as they were transformed into open land. That this transformation took place for the sake of agriculture is also significant. Early in my research, I asked Joyce, "What is a farmer?" And Joyce explained that a farmer is someone who engages in agricultural practices and *owns* agricultural *land*. Someone who does not own farmland, even if they work full-time on a farm, is

just a labourer. Possession of land and its use as farmland are inextricably linked: one has rightful dominion over the land that one owns, but is also responsible for controlling it properly.

The way in which land is to be properly possessed is evident in early documents on the settlement of the region. Settlers had to clear land, not only to have wood to burn in their homes and land for agricultural purposes, but in order for their ownership of their “lot” to be recognized as legitimate by the colonial government (McKenzie 1984). The labour theory of property, perhaps best articulated by John Locke, is foundational to Western liberal thinking. This theory posits itself as a natural law: when man labours in or upon natural resources, he can rightfully claim the fruits as his property (Locke 1690). There are of course finer points to this argument, but the logic that coming to possess individual property through labour as a natural or god-given right is crucial for understanding dominion. But dominion is not easily exercised. For early settlers the forest they found on their “lots” appeared to be a very immediate and threatening “monolith against which it was necessary to struggle” (Wood 2000, xviii). The clearing of land was not only necessary for the mainstays of basic survival, but also paramount to psychic survival (McGregor 1985; Moodie 1853). Robert Fleming Gourlay, a British agricultural radical who moved to Ontario in 1817, wrote that settlers of the region were “cut off from each other and left imprisoned in the woods” (Gourlay 1822). There was no escape from their farms, since all of their economic assets were bound up within them. And so, the only way out was through. Axe in hand. As forest was cleared, wild animals were increasingly kept away from human settlement, and communities were made possible by increased means of movement and communication (Moodie 1853). Wood notes that while those who visited early Canada, or even those settled in towns, marvelled at the beauty of the rugged country, settlers engaged in agriculture could not

afford to marvel at the beauty of nature. On the contrary, for them, the object of beauty and marvel was civilizing, gaining control over, possessing, the environment they found themselves within (Wood 2000, 9).

On our drive from Oxford Mills to Kemptville, this control seems to have been achieved. Farm fields full of browning corn stalks or Angus cows lazily chewing their cud stretch out on each side of the highway. There are trees, a big maple in the front yard of someone's home, or perhaps a hedgerow separating pastures, but little forest. The landscape has been transformed, and the forest that once stood on this land has been rendered invisible. As Joyce's comment suggests, however, this transformation having taken place does not imply that it is complete. The land must be *actively maintained* as farmland through practices in which human farmers, as owners of the land, have both the right and the duty to enact dominion. Joyce's disbelief that the newcomers on the Gagnon lot would allow the farmland to revert to forest lets on that ownership of land does not give one the right to do whatever one wishes with it: possession of land is correct when it relates to its traditional uses. Legal ownership of the land may apply, but correct ownership of the land is to refuse transformation. Joyce also expresses distaste for the 1-acre lots that have sprung up along rural roads. Though these small properties often maintain neat lawns, Joyce laments that this breaking up of space has made the farmland behind these roadside lots less accessible and thus less valuable. Joyce's aesthetic preferences are not just to do with clear and ordered space, but to *how* land is used. Possession and dominion are bound up together, but dominion implies the rightness of certain practices over others.

This logic of possession extends beyond the correct use of land. Joyce and many other farm women in her cohort are, for lack of a better term, hoarders. The things that are hoarded are

usually quite lovely antique items, typically having been made or sold in the region, kept at such volume that they often end up broken, bent, or forgotten in a heap. It seems, then, that the practice of clearing farmland and of hoarding objects does not relate back to a desire for order, but for possession and conservation of particular kinds of objects. When Joyce acquires yet another antique quilt at a garage sale, and I ask her why she would add this to her already overflowing home, she replies as if the reason should be evident to me, "Someone made this!" Because it was made, it ought to be maintained. Though made within the context of capitalism, such a hand-made item can be understood as resistance to commodification: the labour going into such a quilt is not abstracted because it is recognized as handmade. The fact that the quilt is, in fact, divorced from the hands that made it and hoarded in a pile while cheap fleece blankets from Walmart are used on Joyce's bed adds to the irony of the situation. But what Joyce is really doing is working against alienation: while the hands that made the quilt have let go of it, submitting in one way or another to the test of time, Joyce will hold on to the handmade. If someone is relinquishing ownership, and thus responsibility for such an item, Joyce feels compelled to take on the role. The way in which possession is entwined with the maintenance of a certain kind of object makes the enactment of this practice appear natural to this way of life: possession involves the duty to maintain the object as well as the authority to enact this maintenance as owner sees fit. To work against alienation is to hold together a subject and an object that seem to belong together. The quilt legitimately belongs to someone who recognizes its value in being handmade. The land legitimately belongs to someone who works to maintain it as farm land.

Joyce's compulsion to keep items that she associates with her own way of life, and simultaneously recognizes as part of a time come to pass, can add to our understanding of the enactment of dominion. The selective focus of her hoarding, to objects that are familiar to her due to their social and temporal locations, reveals what counts as a worthwhile object to her. One day, while rummaging through the junk drawer in search of a wood screw, Joyce's hand emerges with a prescription pill bottle, repurposed and labelled "arrowheads." This, the only moment in which the colonial history of the land explicitly surfaced in my fieldsite, struck and excited me. "What are those?" I ask her. "Maurice found them down by the river," she replies. Faithful to my conventional line of questioning, I then ask her why she is keeping the arrowheads. As she chucks them back into the drawer, Joyce replies, "Well those are old, you know that!" The "someone" who made these arrowheads is alienated from the object, and though the history of the object is alluded to by referencing the value of the arrowheads as being located in their age, the arrowheads are merely an object. The only subject made apparent by Joyce's comment is her husband who recovered the object. In this sense, the manner in which Joyce keeps the arrowheads enacts what it seems Joyce is working against in her own hoarding practice. Subject and object are decoupled: the people who made the arrowheads have been erased from the history of the object as their way of life on this land was overtaken by a new one.

The garden that Joyce and I have just abandoned under the August sun is approximately a quarter acre patch of dirt. Every year, Joyce plants the whole thing. Every year, the weeds come to rival the top of my head. And, each day of the summer, Joyce eats a variation of canned soup and Cheeze Whiz on crackers for lunch because she has no time to cook a proper meal. The harvest is never bountiful, and the few cabbages or tomatoes that get dragged over from the farm

to the house usually sit on the countertop as empty soup cans pile up next to them, day by day, until they begin to slump into a slop that is wiped into a pail, hauled back to the barn, and fed to the chickens.

Given that I spend a considerable portion of my time at the farm toiling in the garden, this cycle infuriates me. When I press Joyce on the issue, suggesting that we not have a garden this summer, or perhaps we only plant on half of the plot of land, I am met with both resistance and denial. She tells me that she needs to have the garden, because she wants vegetables that “taste of something.” When I suggest that a smaller garden could result in more time for actually cooking, Joyce explains that the land is ready for a garden, so it has to be planted. She has “got to do something with it.” Land *must* be cultivated. Joyce’s relationship to land is rooted in an agrarian tradition. Again following Rabinow’s definition of tradition, this is not to say that the past is reiterated, unchanged, by Joyce’s farming practices, but that the correctness of clearing and cultivating land is rooted in her notions of how agriculture has been, and should continue to be, practiced.

Agrarian people’s labour is not only extractive, but “sedentary, fixed, observable” (Simpson 2014, 101). The land that has been designated as a garden must continue to be a garden, to allow it to be otherwise is a failure to carry on a tradition, and, as a result, a profound relocation of the self in relation to others, or of the subject in relation to a particular set of historically produced objects. Joyce must do the work in the garden not only out of a sense of duty to the preservation of her way of life, but because to not carry on would involve giving up on the self that she has been. She *is* someone who has a vegetable garden. She *always* has been. To not maintain this garden would open Joyce up to an unknown future in which she is

unmoored from her own image of herself and her life. Her husband, Maurice, was *once* someone who worked with cattle and sheep. And Joyce has watched as the need for her husband to accommodate a wheelchair in his life has left him vulnerable to a kind of lack. He is cared for, but his active and authoritative capacities are relegated to his dream world, where he tends to cattle in his sleep.

When the garden escapes us, and the weeds overtake the domestic plants, Joyce straps me into a whipper-snipper and sends me chasing after it, back and forth between the rows of vegetables. While rototilling reaches beneath the soil to destabilize the weed at its root, whipper-snipping achieves an immediate visual control, while the root structure of the weeds is left, invisible, like the mycelium of a fungus. Whipper-snipping is a performance; a visual approximation of dominion over land that conceals a slip, an imminent failure. The garden looks cultivated. Joyce and I can rest easy, for it would seem to anyone calling at the farm that all is how it should be; or how it has been. But I think that Joyce knows as well as I do, that should she peel back the topsoil and peer beneath, she would find that she has already been overtaken. So she does not look.

Dominion is not only something exercised, but also something held by certain kinds of subjects. It is an initial way of approaching the world, one that is assumed as rightful and natural. Dominion is enacted through practices that exercise this dominion, such as domestication. One does not have to strive for a position of dominion: it is a natural position in the world. At the same time, however, dominion is necessarily superficial, since it does not reflect any deep truth about the world: it is a configuration of power. Dominion is a social relationship; and appearing to be properly in control is at least half of the battle. It is for this reason that Joyce uses the

wipper-snipper, or perhaps that such a machine even exists. Stevenson notes that “our contemporary worlds are often haunted by the colonial in ways we do not fully understand.” (Stevenson 2014, 4). But for those who take up subject positions with dominion, the contemporary does not seem haunted in this way. A haunting implies the presence of an absence, particularly one that is noticed or remarked upon (Gordillo 2014, 36). But when one is certain of one’s position of mastery, it seems impossible to notice an absence. Who could one be haunted by? Ann Stoler’s (2009) concept of “imperial disregard” puts forward a kind of unawareness that is not a refusal but an inattention. In a similar manner, Stevenson argues that colonial care can be characterized as indifferent (2014, 3). She goes on to say that “certain colonial attitudes and colonial forms of governance have not actually ended, and in fact are powerfully at work, embedded, as they are, in inherited modes of conduct and care” (Stevenson 2014, 5). Though settlers like Joyce may not be haunted, their initial way of approaching the world continues to assume colonial attitudes, like that of dominion, as the natural order. To have dominion, then, is not a willful domination of others, but a social position in which one does not have to look from the position of another. At the same time, however, and this is crucial: even though one’s position as master is taken for granted as right, the fact that one also has a duty to control and maintain in relation to a particular tradition means that it is possible to fail. This fundamental instability is built in to practices that exercise one’s rightful dominion. In the following section, I will demonstrate how the logic of dominion and the ownership of land as property is linked to the concept of domestication.

The relationship between land, as that which becomes property through visible labour, and animal husbandry are necessarily linked. Animal husbandry is a generative relationship,

productive not only of practices, but also, in turn, ecological, aesthetic, and political relations.

The link between the logic of dominion over land as property and the domestication of animals became apparent to me one evening as Joyce dropped me off at my parents' house, where I was living during my fieldwork.

Located on a narrow dirt road about 15 minutes south-east of Joyce's farm, in the middle of a cedar and pine forest, my parents have made use of clearings in the forest to erect a house, a chicken coop, and a small horse barn. Over a hundred year ago, this land had been cleared of forest and turned into pasture land. When my father bought the property, the soil was degraded and suffering from erosion. He was intent on un-domesticating the space, reintroducing native plant species and allowing the trees to grow where they will. And, as it turns out, the trees grew all over the place. Joyce's truck can barely squeeze up the driveway, and she winces at the sound of branches rubbing up against its pristine white exterior. I make some kind of comment about how I would like to have sheep here one day. Joyce does not like this idea: "You can't have sheep in the bush. I don't know how you can even live in the bush, I need more air myself. And it's wild! This isn't even a bush that's good for anything. It's not a sugar bush like. Just firewood."

Echoing the early settlers' sense of imprisonment in the woods, here Joyce clearly relates the wildness of the forest to a sense of claustrophobia. Furthermore, the worth of the land is thrown into question: the extractive value of the forest is only the warmth it would provide upon its destruction. Her statement shows a moral assessment: this bush isn't *good* for anything. Beyond this, however, is that the forest is not a hospitable environment for livestock. The logic of dominion over land enacts untold contingencies, one of which is domesticating care.

If pasturing were a central aspect of Joyce's animal husbandry practice, understanding her preference for open farm land over forest would be more straightforward. Joyce's pastures, however, are maintained by machinery, while livestock stay firmly behind the page wire fence tightly skirting the barnyard. Given the location of Joyce's farm within the boundaries of Oxford Mills, and the historical importance of the town in accounts of Canadian history and imaginaries (Moodie 1853), the page wire fence could be thought of as not only a limit, but a frontier or a border. Beyond the fence lies a liminal space – a hayfield, which is not entirely domestic and not entirely wild. Beyond the hayfield, however, is the bush. The bush, as I have shown above, is not “land.” Historical and literary accounts of Canada have conflated the idea of the wild with the forest. All elements of the forest are wild (including the people in it). But on Joyce's temporal and spacial side of the page wire fence, land has been historically produced as a possessable object that she is authorized, even compelled, to control. Civilization, usually in the form of a town or village, places domesticity in opposition to the wild. The forest needs to be cultivated and controlled through domestication.⁵

Conventional understandings of domestication locate the neolithic as the transformative moment in which humans stepped out of savagery into barbarism (Morgan 1877), as they stopped being “passively subject to nature and started to be subjects who exerted mastery over it.” (Swanson, Lien, and Ween 2018, 1). Current anthropology, however, has generally accepted that domestication is not an “unproblematic” or “unmarked category” (Cassidy 2007, 2), but rather a complex and partial process. Heather Anne Swanson, Marianne Elisabeth Lien, and Gro

⁵ It is no coincidence that one of Joyce's favourite sweaters says “It's wild out there” accompanied by the image of a couple deer, a wild turkey, and a moose overlaid on the silhouette of a forest. Each of these animals pictured on the sweater are animals that, hunted and killed by Maurice, are now pieces of taxidermy that decorate Joyce's home.

B. Ween (2018) argue that domestication is not a moment, but an ordering device that both classifies and sequences in time: domestication is a historical form. The etymology of the term “domesticate” comes from the Medieval Latin *domesticāre*, meaning to dwell in a house, or to accustom (Oxford English Dictionary). Today, it is typically used as a transitive verb, meaning that it is a verb that only makes sense in as long as it affects something else. As I will explain further in the next section, the term domestication not only implies a directionality, from a formless outside to the interiority of a *Domus*, but also an activity. This activity requires a taken-for-granted dominion, a social position that implies both sovereignty and obligation. Domestic animals are owned as property, and this relationship is made to seem natural. There is, nonetheless, a fundamental instability in this relationship. Domestication is a form of care, a close attention, to the proper maintenance of one’s relationship to animals.

Let us take a step back from the sticky Ontario summer in which we have found ourselves thus far. It’s January now, and the interior of the barn stands in sharp contrast to the blistering cold outside. Even when it is dark more than 15 hours a day, and temperatures dip below -40 with the windchill, the barn is brightened by a few dusty light bulbs exuding a soft yellow light, warmed by the heat of woolly bodies, and filled with the sounds and smells of sweet feed and hay being gobbled up. The pregnant ewes, due to lamb any time in January or February, are enclosed in a large pen at the back of the barn. This is certainly more comfortable for the expectant ewes than outdoors, where their sisters who have failed to lamb successfully or who are deemed too ‘wild’ to be good breeding stock wait until the next trip to the sale barn. But Joyce does not cite the comfort of her ewes as her reasoning for this living arrangement. Rather, the location of the sheep inside of the barn makes it easier for Joyce to care for them and their

lambs. Being handled closely from birth is one way to ensure that a lamb will be ‘tame’ rather than ‘wild.’ Having tame lambs, especially come time for the Royal Winter Fair in November, is a mark of good shepherding. Joyce explicitly decries farmers who have too many sheep, or have sheep on too big of a pasture, to keep them from being ‘wild.’ This opposition and the corresponding value attributed to each category not only echoes the relationship to the forest that I have outlined above, but it is also generative of relationships between humans and animals.

When explaining her practice of separating the pregnant ewes, Joyce told me:

It’s so I can keep an eye on them. Just the other day I was doing the chores and one old girl comes right up to me, “yow-yow-yow,”⁶ as if to say “get in here I need some help!” And she was staying right with me, so I had to tell her “Well, I’ll be back.” I went and got the iodine and baler twine, and then I got the lambs out of her. Isn’t that funny? It was the way she come to me, “I need you to help me.”

It is not only that Joyce was in close enough spatial and temporal proximity to the ewe to be available to help her, but that the domesticating practices produce a dynamic in which a sheep is willing to ask a farmer for help and the farmer is able to understand.

As I have explained in my introduction, part of my methodology has been to trace how care is *practiced* through locally specific modalities that are oriented toward producing the good (Mol 2008). In the particular practice of domestication outlined above, there are at least two goods: one is a conservation of an agrarian tradition, and the other is generative, oriented toward a positive relationship between farmer and animal. The manner in which Joyce organizes her care practices, both on the farm itself and between domestic spaces of farm and household,

⁶ When mimicking a sheep, Joyce uses a sharp “yow” to connote some urgency in the animal’s call, and uses a flat “ba” to explain a mundane call about something like mealtimes.

reflect her values. Some farmers reject animal husbandry in favour of plant cultivation, understanding farmers of animals as “agrarian chamber maids” who fundamentally give up their freedom by tending to their livestock (Nearing and Nearing 1970). Farmers, or perhaps caretakers in general, are located *within* a network of relational practices in which they have obligations but also *oversight*. Domestication is a practice of dominion. Farming, here, is one way of being in the world, but it is also a particular position within it: on top. Questions of care are bound up with authority, an authority that can be linked back to dominion and structures of possession. One exercises one’s dominion by domesticating animals: while the land becomes possessable when mixed with human labour, domestic animals become possessable when their behaviour is noticeably informed by human actions.

Understanding domestication as a practice of dominion gives shape to the political implications involved. Swanson et al. say that as ordering devices, domestication practices “rank the civilized and the savage at the same time that they reconstitute temporal cycles and spatial choreographies” so as to justify its own interventions as legitimate, necessary, or natural (2018, 22). Domestication of the land, then, and the position of care practices that attend to it within the larger economy of care practices at the farm, transports an understanding of land as an inert object, lacking in liveliness, to be maintained as property. On Joyce’s farm, the importance of the forest and soil health for a healthy ecosystem is overlooked; we dump our garbage in a ravine full of native plants; earth worms are stomped on; we don’t bother fertilizing the soil with the abundant manure we have on hand. In exercising dominion, the land is treated like a surface, to be owned and properly controlled, upon which the more important activity of animal domestication takes place.

Gaile McGregor takes up the stereotypical “Canadian” negative response to nature and argues that Canadians willfully ignore their connections to nature, in part by limiting their actual vision to that over which they have mastery — the self, the domesticated, and the safe (1985, 12). McGregor is writing as a critic of Canadian art and literature, and her overarching generalization is not something that I intend to build an argument on. Nonetheless, McGregor’s notion that domestication is a *selective way of seeing* resonates with my understanding of domestication as it takes place on Joyce’s farm. To McGregor, domestication involves a symbolic domination of the landscape by way of humanizing it, explaining that there are two processes involved, “perception (what one sees) and cognition (how one assimilates it)” (1985, 40). As such, McGregor opens up a valuable way of understanding the visual aesthetics of domestication. Earlier, I argued that dominion is a social position in which one does not see or have to look from the position of another. The forest or the health of the soil are things that are not seen and thus not considered. Further, they are not rightful objects of concern. I also explained how Joyce’s domesticating practices involve keeping her animals in close enough proximity to herself that she can “keep an eye on them.” Joyce’s interactions with her animals are made possible by a range of practices embedded in her own locally specific agrarian tradition, in which looking at and thinking about animals is a rightful exercise of dominion.

Swanson et al. also note that by definition, domesticated animals are to be completely mastered by humans (2018, 9). However, relatively recent scholarship attendant to multi-species encounters have written against the idea that domestication is about control, insisting on the agency of animals⁷, the mutuality of exchange between humans and animals (Lien 2018), or of

⁷ Here, it is perhaps useful to recall that Canada, under the dominion of Britain, insisted on its agency as a nation while Britain protected, cared, and extracted resources.

thinking of domestication as a social contract (Armstrong Oma 2010). Anthropologists have argued that domestication is not only a construct but a narrative, mostly told by the west to the west about how ‘we’ became civilized (Swanson et al. 2018). A mark of this process is the movement from hunting and gathering, to horticulture, to animal husbandry. As I indicated above, animal husbandry is the mark of civilization. Claiming that people have felt fairly secure in domestication as a narrative of the evolution of human control and mastery, Rebecca Cassidy (2007), has called for the same scrutiny to be applied to domestication as anthropologists have applied to the category of culture: she claims that both of these categories are imprecise and transport their problematic history. Likewise, Swanson et al. insist that domestication is always partial and renegotiated, and that “control is only partially achieved in relation to domestication practices in the present and consistently fails to predict the impact of such practices in the future” (2018, 17). The movement in this body of work seems to suggest that rather than attend to how domestication works, we ought to focus on the ways in which it does not: the narrative of human mastery can, and ought to be, challenged by focusing on the non-human actors in the relationship of domestication. For example, Lien (2018), examines eider ducks in the Scandinavian subarctic whose nesting habits are constitutive of an entire economy. She claims this case alerts us to “how subtle and repeated encounters between humans and animals have come to shape more-than-human worlds in mutual processes of biosocial becoming.” (2018, 121). Since the eider ducks arrive and nest where they will, causing humans to adjust their behaviour to that of the ducks, Lien argues that approaches to domestication that emphasize human control further marginalize already marginal practices that are valuable in rethinking the relationships humans have with ‘more-than-human worlds’ (2018, 132).

What I hope to make visible here, however, is that people who live with animals already have access to this knowledge; insisting that domestication can fail and is thus incomplete is not a radical departure from the knowledge embedded in domestication practices. From the thrust of an anthropology of domestication in general, I accept that domestication is a concept with a problematic history, which aims to make rigid a process which is in fact fluid and open to change, and that takes a multiplicity of forms depending on geographic and situational specificities. Furthermore, I thoroughly agree that domestication is relational: Joyce's domestication practices shape the behaviour of her sheep, but Joyce's behaviour indeed responds to the sheep, individually and as a flock. The sheep's agency, though conditioned, shapes life at the farm. One night, some of the lambs break out of the yard. Upon our arrival in the morning, some lambs quickly volunteer to be returned to their pen; others require coaxing with grain; still others require a tunnel of gates to corral them back in the yard. The next day, I find myself shopping for a new kind of fence. Farmers know that animals have agency, and farmers know that domestication is relational — even the curse this fact, something I certainly did as I chased lambs through the field the morning of their escape. What I find problematic in approaches to domestication that centre the non-human actors in the relationship of domestication is the way that fluidity and relationality are emphasized at the expense of understanding power and the will to power. It is one thing to recognize that animals have agency and are not completely mastered by humans, and quite another that humans still enact and believe in their rightful dominion over animals. The crucial question, it seems to me, is not how do animals reveal that domestication is an unstable category, but rather, why is domestication insisted upon by those who live it as a practice when its maintenance requires so much? Using “domestic” as a concept for

anthropology does not necessarily imply a reification of the story of domestication as it has been told. What it does imply, however, is that people living with animals who still use and enact the domestic do so even though their actual lives are plagued by the recurring call to coax, negotiate, push, and pull at the edges of domesticity.

The domesticating practices in which I have been involved with Joyce are constructed around the knowledge that domestication is incomplete; the garden has to be replanted as a garden, or it may revert back into forest. Joyce, a farmer who does most her work by hand, knows that domesticity is unpredictable and teetering on the edge of control. It is being able to manage, to stay just ahead of or close behind control of the situation, that makes up the work of a farmer. As Joyce gets older, management is increasingly conservative, oriented toward maintenance. This summer, for instance, we managed to clean the barn, care for the ewes and lambs, keep the barnyard in good condition, and (somewhat) tend to the garden. We had no time for extra jobs oriented toward improvements on the farm, like fixing a door in the hayloft or building a run for the peacocks. Of this problem, Joyce said, “We do a lot but it doesn’t *show*”. Of the labour theory of property, Audra Simpson notes that “that which does not appear to have been mixed with labor is alienable. But only certain forms of labor, those which are perceptible to certain viewers, matter.” (Simpson 2014, 101). Simpson’s argument makes apparent how settler’s ownership of the land then, is a visual relationship. Domestication is insisted upon not because it refers to something stable and concrete, but because to see outside of the domestic, and thus think beyond the domestic, would be to alienate oneself from one’s own way of being.

McGregor (1985) notes that the tension between the physical realities of the Canadian climate and the importance of the land for extractive projects, like agriculture, generates “anxiety

[about] the juxtaposition between man and nature” (44). This anxiety is mediated by domestication practices. Patrick Wolfe notes that the “settler complex” involves the manufacturing of ownership in order to indigenize one’s roots to one’s land (2013). Joyce’s farming practices rely on the construction of borders, or perhaps a fence line, between the orderly and controllable space of the farm, and the wild. The wild, however, does not stay put. I read this anxiety in Joyce’s body when she moves her elbows in a particular way; a restless, jerking, slightly upward motion. She makes this movement in the garden, when her obligations to the dirt drag on too long, and she thinks of her husband sitting alone in the house. She makes this movement in the house, when Maurice slowly scoops the last of his oatmeal from the bottom of his dish, and Joyce’s mind is on the sheep waiting for their breakfast. She makes this movement in the truck, as it rolls down the street between these domestic spaces that Joyce holds together. This movement is the expression of an anxiety that elsewhere, beyond her field of vision, something might have gone awry without her. Joyce flaps her elbows. I clench and unclench my jaw.

Settlers may not be haunted by the imperial or colonial logics that they perpetuate as such, since the other that would be haunting is unable to be remarked upon. And yet, the fundamental superficiality and instability of domestication as a process is indeed disturbing. The weeds are always growing faster than we can pull them out. The lambs are always darting out from under our fingers. We can fail. We are failing. But we try not to notice.

Chapter Two: Committed to Resolve

“Resolve: to be both tentative and hard to startle (though clumsiness and fright are inevitable).”
-Margaret Atwood 1970

It is just past dawn in July, and two old friends meet at the main intersection in Oxford Mills. Joyce and Dave, the sheep shearer, have met at this time, in this way, and for this purpose, for about twenty years. Before that, it was Dave’s father who came to shear the sheep. The day is always a bustle of activity, and no one has much time for talking. But Dave always starts his visit by pulling up on to the sidewalk in front of Joyce’s house, unfolding his lanky frame from his old Chevy, and meeting Joyce amidst the flurry of last minute preparations for the long day ahead. Although they only see each other once a year, there is an affable and warm energy between them. It seems to me that they recognize one another as people who do things in the “old fashioned way,” who still work with their hands and take their time doing it, and their relationship is made stronger by their mutual connection to other people who do things in a similar manner. On this particular morning, Dave shares the news that Joe, a farmer they had both known, has recently died. Joyce asks Dave, “What happened?” and Dave replies that last he heard Joe had “lambbed out” (sold the last of his breeding stock) and that he and his wife were doing fine, enjoying retirement. Dave explains that he didn’t know how Joe died, really, he had just seen the obituary in the paper, and though he was sad to hear this news, he had seen it coming: “I always say, and you watch, they work till they are 65, and they quit. They have no interests or hobbies. Then six months later they’re dead.” Joyce nods her head vigorously, and says “Yes! That’s just it! You have got to keep going!” They nod together for a few moments, looking down toward the ground. Then Dave says, “Well...” and they both start moving again.

This idea is not uncommon around the farm. Friends and family press Joyce to quit farming, to slow down on her responsibilities so that she can relax. Her loved ones tell her, nervously, that she will be “carried out” of the barn one day. But Joyce does not seem nervous about this possibility. She simply does not want to stop.

In the last chapter, I argued that dominion is a way of approaching the world; a position on top of a hierarchy that comes with the right and the duty to control and to care. This position of dominion is brought forward as a tradition; understood as a moving and re-iterated image of the past that is reproduced so as to resist alienation (Rabinow 2007). At Joyce’s farm, the idea that to quit farming is essentially surrendering oneself to death is a powerful articulation of this understanding of tradition. Joyce and her generation of ‘old-timer’ farmers are so connected to their farming practices that to stop is to invite death. Tradition is indeed reproductive, but it is practiced in such a way that requires flexibility, thinking, and change, so as to ensure the movement necessary to keep going. In this chapter, I take up Foucault’s understanding of ethics as the “considered practice of freedom” (1994, 281). I am particularly interested in modes of subjectivation, understood as “self-stylization” or “form-giving” of the self in relationship to a rule, and how that relationship is practiced (Rabinow 1994, xxx). Faubion’s (2011) notion of ethical autopoiesis and the “thematical” as a particular subset of ethics are useful in thinking about the maintenance or reproduction of tradition as well as the inventive becoming of the ethical subject. The maintenance of a certain set of objects or the reproduction of a particular way of being are not opposed to the becoming of an ethical subject; nor is reproduction necessarily opposed to the will to transform oneself or to be otherwise. Through this chapter, I

come to think of Joyce's commitment to her farm as a mode of subjectivation, which becomes ethical work through her practice of resolve.

My work in this chapter has been fraught from the beginning. I had found myself living in a bind between what I desired and my material and structural circumstances for living: I felt trapped, acknowledged the trap as unavoidable, and sought to make the best of it. I saw Joyce living, contentedly enough, in what seemed to be a similar kind of trap: tied down, dutiful, and careful. It seemed to me that she had found a way to foreclose questions about how one might be able to live differently or otherwise. She had access to something that made her able to *do* things, rather than flop around like an impotent fish gasping for water on dry land. I, the impotent fish, wanted access to whatever Joyce had found — an ethical project indeed. But all the while, I continued to think that her secret was the foreclosure of being otherwise, somehow surrendering to this trap, rather than recognizing that what seemed to be trapping me was not trapping Joyce. She has actively committed herself to the life she leads, and resolved herself to caring for her sheep, her land, and her husband.

I think it is important to make this gap in my thinking explicit at the outset of the chapter, since I didn't realize it was there until after finishing a first draft of my thesis. Throughout the process of this project, I had taken for granted that Joyce was somehow unwillingly ensnared, even when she explicitly told me otherwise. One day on one of our long drives in the truck, I asked her: "Don't you ever feel like they [the animals] are a burden?" She replied, "Maybe they are to you, but they're not a burden to me, no. Why would they be? *I want to be out in the barn.*" Certain that she must harbour some resentment, deep in her being, I pressed on, "But there are so many things you could be doing. Don't you want to see... the ocean? Or Paris?" Joyce laughed,

“What good would Paris do me? *I like to be out in the barn*, and so I’ve got to take care of them.” Here, Joyce explicitly understands the barn as good and her commitment to her farm as necessarily moral: the barn is a good place, and so of course she will take care of it. What I could not reconcile at the time was that Joyce had actively made a commitment to her farm, she was not simply making the best out of a trap. Joyce’s responsibility for her animals is something she has chosen: being obligated to be in the barn rather than being free to travel or have other kinds of experiences is not a foreclosure, but something she deliberately fosters. Even though Joyce has obligations to her farm that prevent her from doing things like going to Paris, this obligation is one that she has chosen for herself because she sees the farm as something good.

Maintaining her farm is a mode of subjectivation that Joyce has committed herself to. Commitment involves dedication and the restriction of certain freedoms; the voluntary choice to give oneself over to something *and* the sense that one is being seized (Saris 2013; Cohen 2013). Joyce gives herself over to her farm, and she does so in relation to the farming tradition I have outlined in the previous chapter. The farm *has* Joyce in the sense that her practices are informed by established rules about proper land use, ownership, and domesticating practices. Her commitment is contingent on dominion: she stylizes her relationship to her farm, her animals, and herself in relation to established rules. Doing so resists alienation — from land, animals, and her own past — and provides a certain kind of belonging. Joyce’s commitment is a temporal one, and it has to do with the endurance of her position, her sense of herself, as a farmer: she has to *keep* her farm *going*. But while her commitment to her farm is reproduced through established versions of what is good, the way in which that good is realized is quite loose. Though she binds

herself to a certain form of animal domestication and must also fulfill certain obligations to her animals, the barn is a space where she can be free to work, move, and think as she pleases.

Work, in this case, involves the cultivation of a certain attentiveness, and also an atmosphere of rhythmic and quiet actions that lead to a job well done. The end result of work, a prize winning lamb or perhaps a successful harvest, is itself something good. There is also another good involved: the work itself. Speaking of agrarian work, Paul Thompson says that ethical sensibilities can “become impressed into a person’s being through physical activity in the material world” (2008, 531). Work is not just about following rules or meeting the demands of duty, but about lively engagement with the world — though the duty and engagement indeed inform one another. The work is good, in the sense that Joyce values it and wants to do it.

Through the work, she has an experience with the world, one that keeps her entangled rather than alienated. According to John Dewey (1934), while experience is constantly occurring by virtue of just being alive, *an* experience occurs when the material in one’s surrounding environment is worked through to fulfillment, in “rhythms of intaking and outgivings” (58). Fulfillment implies “consummation and not a cessation” (Dewey 1934, 37); an experience is complete in itself but also integrated within oneself. For the sake of clarity, I am going to use the expression “fulfilling experience” to refer to Dewey’s “an experience” for the rest of this chapter.⁸ The rhythm of barn chores lends itself to a fulfilling experience: a practical and overt activity in the world that requires both perception and receptivity; one that bookends each day with an arc of activity that is completed, time and again. The good is not necessarily a moral evaluation of an outcome but

⁸“An experience” is not necessarily positive, although I am referring largely to positive experiences in this chapter.

it is about enjoyment, the sensory experience we have in the process of work, and the continuity of links between the self and the others with which one works.

The sound of the barn once Joyce starts the morning feed is earsplitting. In a clip of footage I have from one such feeding, there is a moment in which Joyce looks at the camera, says “Rachel,” and then stares at me blankly for several seconds. She then says, “Christ, it’s so loud I can’t even think,” before proceeding with her chores, without remembering what it was she wanted to say to me. The sensory overload of bleating animals, clacking hooves, and shuffling bodies straining toward the grain bucket is indeed overwhelming. Later in the clip, Joyce forks the last of some hay into a hay feeder. Now, the only sound is many little mouths munching on hay, and there are no faces gazing intently up to hers. Joyce grins and says, “Isn’t it amazing what a little bit of feed can do?” While Joyce grants the feed itself due credit for quieting the animals, her grin lets on that she feels satisfied at being the one to deliver it. She was a crucial part in the arc of the morning. There is a consummation but no cessation, for she will be needed again come evening. These feeding chores are one form that Joyce’s commitment to her farm takes. Joyce has to be responsible and dependable in order to properly care for her animals. As such, these chores nicely illustrate the “themitical” in Joyce’s commitment to her farm. Faubion (2011) identifies the “themitical” within the ethical domain to register the relation between “the more ecological and dynamic and the more homeostatic and reproductive aspects of ethical autopoiesis” (20). Importantly, the themitical does not oppose these processes in the “becoming and maintenance of the ethical subjects” (2011, 20). The themitical makes the dynamics of the normative apparent; the ethical is not only the work involved in considered resistance to a norm, but can in fact involve the active embodiment of the norm. Joyce does not

have to discover or invent good animal domestication practices: she already understands laying her hands on the sheep, speaking to them, assessing their health and wellbeing with her eyes as the right or good practice. The work that is being done here is less concerned with creating something good than with maintaining the good; and yet, how the good is maintained requires dynamism. Joyce's activity is integrated within the larger project of domestication, and the enactment of dominion as her initial position for approaching the world provides a framework in which this activity is necessarily good. The good, then, does not need to be found out but achieved. But as the notion of the thematical reminds us, it would be dangerous to think that achieving the good is a matter of straight-forward execution.

Joyce's work with her sheep requires her to be in active relationship with the world. However, daily routines frequently teeter at the edge of mindless execution. As I began to outline in chapter one, having multiple, often competing or conflicting, objects of care requires a hierarchy as well as an anxiety about what is happening elsewhere, to something or someone one is caring for, whilst one is occupied caring for something else. The result of this tension is that one becomes abstracted from the present, outside of the experience, and instead becomes concerned with fulfilling the task at hand as efficiently as possible, in order to move on to other obligations. Dewey notes that such efficiency is the enemy of a fulfilling experience. He says that when an activity is too automatic, when a routine becomes so mundane that one can enact it without conscious thought, the experience lacks the aesthetic quality of a fulfilling experience. When an experience lacks the "chance to complete itself because something else is entered upon so speedily" one's ability to perceive and receive is harshly limited (Dewey 1934, 46). Rather than having a fulfilling experience, experience is then "humdrum," involving a "submission to

convention” (Dewey 1934, 42). On Joyce’s farm, the knowledge that one has gained through the repetition of morning and evening chores is allowed to take the place of inventive actions responding to what is actually happening. The mind is not inside of the unfolding of the experience, but elsewhere. When Joyce asks me “Did we water the calves?” as we drive back from the barn in time to feed Maurice his breakfast, her anxiety about taking care of her husband has prevented her from actively participating in her morning chores: she indeed watered her calves, but she did so because she *always* waters her calves, not because she saw their pail empty and responded to this perception with a thoughtful action. Commitment can mean responding to one’s responsibilities for the good of continuity, but when the commitment is merely executed, it can become evacuated the fulfilment and security that comes with her relationship to her farm and her animals that Joyce is working to maintain. When her perceptive and receptive capacities are clouded by anxiety, convention, or the need to be as efficient as possible, the ethical material inside of work on the farm becomes stunted, mechanically moving toward cessation, rather than a creative process toward consummation. Simple execution of some version of the good is not enough. Joyce has committed herself to her version of the good, but how she maintains this commitment bears weight.

In an early interview with Joyce, she explained her disdain for people involved in animal agriculture whose primary goal is to extract profit, or “make a dollar.” These farmers value their animals instrumentally, while Joyce values her relationship with her animals as well as their instrumental value. To Joyce, only relating to one’s animals as a source of profit is associated with having ‘wild’ animals. To value one’s relationship to one’s animals involves taming them. Joyce told me, “You want your animals to know you.” This knowledge is not the kind one would

expect of a human companion, since it does not depend on language to establish intimacy, but rather that they can come to expect and rely upon the rhythm of her arrival, her movements, and her sounds. She is committed to them. When she handles them, she places her hands upon them and says “There’s my good girl.” A good sheep is a quiet and a tame one: Joyce has not invented this version of the good. But her achievement of the good involves her habits, her necessarily inventive manner of coordinating her life with sheep. Joyce says that sheep are “in [her] blood.” Her domesticating practices affect her at the level of bodily substance. It is not just that the sheep earn her a living, but that her sheep knowing her, and her knowing her sheep, is *good*. Caring for sheep is ethical work, the avenue through which she makes herself able to commit to her farm. The fact that it is ongoing and cyclical tethers Joyce to the world through meaningful links that work against alienation. The *good* here is that the responsibility to show up for this ritual, morning and night, every day of the week, propels one toward a fulfilling experience, gives one a reason to really be in the world. There is an established good that Joyce commits herself to; she both voluntarily chooses to live her life in this manner, and is also thus compelled to behave and think in particular ways. Joyce is obligated to take care of her animals, but she does not feel this obligation as a burden. The sheep matter to Joyce. This project of ethics and care is taken for granted, so rooted in Joyce’s tradition of farming practices that it appears to be the natural order of things. But it takes work.

I understand the manner in which Joyce makes herself able to commit and practices this commitment as resolve. While commitment is a place of action in relationship to a rule, resolve involves the work one has to do on oneself in order to become an ethical subject. Resolve, a kind of ethical work, is how commitment is enacted. In the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), resolve

is always associated with action. The first definition being “The fact of having resolved upon a course of action, stance, etc.; a firm intention.” (OED 2020). It also had to do with finding “an answer, a solution” (OED 2020). The concept of will has a long and complicated history in philosophy that I lack the space to delve into in this thesis. I hope it suffices to say that my understanding of will loosely follows William James’s understanding of will as the relationship between the mind and action: the thought and effort involved in realizing what one could or ought to do and then actually doing it (James 1897; Povinelli 2012). Likewise, Rabinow notes that ethical work involves establishing “the right relationship between intellect and character in the context of practical affairs.” (1994, xxxiii-xxxiv). Resolve then, is not only ethical work but seems to be a particular commitment to will: it involves not just knowing the answer to a problem but *doing* it. And this action is always contingent upon one’s sense of oneself. The word resolve implies something cyclical: the solution is known but has to be reiterated; re-solved. The term captures something of Joyce’s ethics: resolve is reproductive while it remains necessarily in motion. Having resolve is to have will, but a will that is rooted in an extended sequence of dispositions to do with the good. Resolve is thematical. In the rest of this chapter, I will show how Joyce’s resolve works in the context of lambing season.

Lambing season is, above all, about reproduction: the cyclical reproduction of the sheep, the continuity of the farm, and the endurance of Joyce’s practices. But it is also dynamic; requiring active thought. It is the ethical work of resolve that allows Joyce to ask herself how to act rightly in relationship to her farm.

Late January through February is a time during which many Ontarians suffer the effects of cabin fever or seasonal depression. With the holiday season passed and the excitement of fresh

snow decorating the landscape worn off, these months stretch on bleakly. My time with Joyce, however, has changed my perception of this time. It's lambing season. These months have become, for me, like spring. The monotony of daily routines is ripped open, and one is left exposed and vulnerable to new beginnings, unexpected endings, and the confusion of not always knowing which is which. Lambs are born: some need help upon arrival and others appear as if by magic. Newly born calves, with cartoonish eyelashes that flutter up to their ears also arrive around this time. Still looking for a mother, they gently woo us over with soft moos and suckle on our fingers. The barn cats who spent the winter hunched up with raggedy and matted fur start to groom themselves and copulate unabashedly in the aisle-ways. Life is springing up everywhere, even when the world outside remains cold and barren. The barn is filled with the sounds of newly born lambs bleating to their mothers and the ewes' distinctive nickers, reserved only for this time. I feel this time as tender.

There is a certain thrill in being the first human eyes to discover a newborn lamb. But there is also an excitement, though not necessarily the kind of excitement involved in the eager anticipation of pleasure, about the precarity of life. Every lambing season involves a great deal of death. And while each death is not necessarily felt as a tragedy in itself, since death is a routine part of this cycle that one must come to accept, there is weight in participating in pre- or postnatal care and the process of birthing itself, since intentional human action influences outcomes of life and death. As such, caring carries high stakes. One must be alert to and capable of anticipating the unexpected.

One morning in January of 2019, a day-old lamb is orphaned; his mother dead of a post-birth prolapse. Joyce, or perhaps I, could have called the vet the night before, but we did not.

Prolapse is quite common in sheep, and is thus something that Joyce anticipates. But the specifics of each case require some improvisation. In this case, the death of the mother posed two problems for us: how we would remove the body of the ewe from the barn on a day in which Joyce and I were the only two people around the farm; and how we would care for this orphan lamb, who had no other lambs in his close age cohort.⁹

These are problems that both Joyce and I have tools for dealing with, but they nonetheless require thought and inventive actions. Joyce calls her son, Randy, who she knows is on call for work in the area, to come over. Randy and I devise a technique, using baler twine found in the garbage at the barn, to tie the ewe's legs together so that each of us have a handle. Pushing and pulling our way through the twists and turns of the barn, we negotiate ourselves, and the dead ewe in tow, to the barnyard. Joyce then makes a call to her neighbour, David, and asks him if he would mind taking the ewe up to the hayfield when he gets home from work. David pauses, to think, and says maybe he could drag her up on a sled behind the snowmobile. I go to fetch the sled while Randy gets the front-end-loader to pick up the ewe and place her on the sled so she's ready to go upon David's arrival home from work. With the ewe out of the barn, Joyce and I can set ourselves upon the task of looking after the orphan lamb.

Zigon (2007) has argued that it is only in moments of breakdown that people can work on themselves. In a similar vein, Tobias Rees has argued that the emergent or the unexpected provides an "instance of escape" through which one can invent new ways of thinking or being (2018). But in Joyce's case, ethical work pre-empts breakdown or escape. When we prepare

⁹ The problem of how we would *feel* the death of the ewe was not considered. Fault or sadness was not overtly felt, instead the ewe was called a "bitch" for her failure to make it through the night. Joyce had to attend to the more practical concern of removing the ewe from the barn.

ourselves to go to the barn during lambing season, Joyce always warns me to “Go expecting the worse. Then you won’t be surprised.” When I ask her what “the worse” might be, Joyce says “I don’t know, but grit your teeth.” Joyce works on her resolve so that she can maintain her commitment to the farm without breakdown. The ethical work occurs prior to the unexpected event when one anticipates the unusual or unexpected as a perpetually possible problem. Resolve allows for the problem posed by the dead ewe to not be one that requires additional ethical work, but rather a matter of restoring the barn to the way it was before she died: we are not startled, though the manner in which we remove the dead ewe from the barn is quite clumsy, improvised out of the practices and materials we have available. Though the reproduction of the routine was interrupted, this interruption was able to be resolved.

In another instance, Joyce sees the symptoms of a prolapse before it happens. On this occasion, Joyce builds a harness for the ewe out of baler twine, one that literally holds the uterus of the sheep inside of her body. Joyce learned the technique from Maurice, who learned it from an “old” farmer in his youth; which is to say this technique has been practiced in the village of Oxford Mills for at least a century. While the harness is made in the same way each time, the act of making this harness on the ewe’s body involves craftsmanship; Joyce must be attentive to the ewe’s body and the way the twine lays upon it, and tie the twine accordingly. Dewey says (1934, 51):

As we manipulate, we touch and feel, as we look, we see; as we listen, we hear... The eye attends and reports the consequence of what is done. Because of this intimate connection, subsequent doing is cumulative and not a matter of caprice nor yet of routine.

In an emphatic artistic-aesthetic experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception.

Making this prolapse harness for the ewe is a fulfilling experience, one that connects Joyce to the ewe, a history of practices, and to the ongoing maintenance of her farm. It also reveals how prolapse is expected within lambing season. It is unexpected to the degree that Joyce cannot be sure when or how it will occur, and to which animal. As a result, she must continually engage with her environment: looking intently at each individual ewe for signs of prolapse rather than looking with the unseeing eyes of the humdrum.

Even though the harness is made in the same way each time, just like feeding chores are done in the same way each time, the reproductive nature of the practice does not evacuate it of creative, dynamic, or ecological movement. Ethical reproduction and becoming are not opposed. Perhaps prolapse can function as a metaphor here. A prolapse is not necessarily a breakdown or an escape; an uncontrollable and unanticipated kind of movement. A prolapse is a perpetually possible slip, and if one is resolved to catching it, might still be brought back into proper alignment or control. Like a prolapse, the objects for which Joyce cares and the modalities through which this care is enacted may slip out of place, but, like a vital organ, they remain bound in the membrane of the possible, of what might be thought. Joyce's ethical work of resolve is to be ready for such a prolapse, so that when it occurs she is not surprised but ready to act, to turn the unexpected back into the secure functioning of her farm.

In her study of an aging Jewish community, Barbara Myerhoff (1978) notes that doing things in the same way throughout time is a way to make one's life coherent; though there are shifts along the way, doing things in the same manner allows a person to know themselves

through time (34). This is one explanation for the perception that old people are stubborn: particular ways of doing things do not necessarily make sense outside of a life course. When we are at the feed store and Joyce is out of range, the cashier chuckles at me and says “That Joyce, she’s quite the character.” Joyce, in her commitment to being someone who farms correctly by maintaining the tradition of dominion over land and animals, and by keeping her farm going in the manner that it has been going, is not only stubborn, but stands apart from the norm. She is otherwise, and she wants to preserve, in being so (Povinelli 2012). She’s resolved in doing so. She can be terribly difficult to work with, since she always insists that her way of working is best. She draws on how things have been done, and how many times she has done something in that way, to legitimate her own way of working as preferable to someone else’s, even when it comes to something as simple as making a sandwich.

Joyce works on herself, creates herself, in order to continually produce what exists and what has existed; her ethical practice involves the reproduction of a tradition. Yet her commitment to the farm does not leave her stuck and unchanging. The world that surrounds Joyce and calls on her to participate: she checks the weather on her smart phone before she tills her garden by hand. Joyce’s mode of farming may not have been an otherwise when she was a small child, but today it makes her unique, recognized and admired as otherwise by farmers around her. Because of this, the reproductive is always being reassembled. Her resolve is her commitment to a certain course of action, the set of practices that maintain the farm, that organize her ethics around the endurance of a tradition rather than the invention of new forms. When we stop at the corner store that has carried ice cream for as long as Joyce has remembered, and find that the store has been bought up and will soon become a Circle-K, Joyce and I both

recognize that things are changing. Her resolve to maintain herself and her farm in spite of this change is reproductive of tradition and generative of an otherwise. She is otherwise through reproduction.

In a moment of prolapse then, Joyce's resolve is tested. Resolve is oriented toward action, and in the context of Joyce's commitment to her farm, resolve also requires one to act rightly. When Joyce makes one of her routine visits to the lambing pen at the back of her barn, and it seems to her that a ewe has a protrusion coming from her rear end that looks more like a potential prolapse than just swelling or the beginning of birthing, Joyce has to think about the right thing to do: call the vet, monitor the ewe closely, build a harness, or let the problem run its own course. The right thing to do is not simply a matter of execution, but a question that is posed. Resolve has to do with her will to act, but this will is rooted in an extended sequence of dispositions to do the right thing for the continuity of the farm. When Joyce is building a twine-harness for a prolapsing ewe, she frequently stops, and, examining her work, mutters "Is this right?" Or "How did I do this before?" She then resolves the question with knowledge based on her history, as well as attentive perception and thought. In seeing (possible) prolapse and using the connections between eyes, hands, twine, and the ewe's body, there is no sudden resolution of the problem. Rather, Joyce brings the problem to the fore of her sensory perception and acts. Though she is informed by what has worked before, "doing the right thing" is continually problematic.

Early on a brutally cold January morning, Joyce calls me to the barn. The vet is coming to perform an emergency c-section on a ewe with toxemia. As soon as the vet pulls the first lamb from the ewe's side, she hands it to Joyce. Joyce rips off her gloves and feels the lamb's tiny

body. She rubs it vigorously. She holds the lamb up to her face, she puts her lips to the lamb's nose, and breathes into it. She repeats this process as the lamb gasps for life. As the lamb continues to struggle, Joyce grabs it by the hind legs and swings it in circles through the air. I had seen her do this before when a lamb was struggling for life. The vet tells Joyce that she shouldn't do this, that the practice has been found to actually cause more fluids to block the lamb's nose rather than the opposite. Joyce stops, but says, begrudgingly, "I've always done it this way." The vet recommends that instead Joyce stick pieces of straw up the lamb's nostril to help clear the airway before breathing into it. Joyce follows the advice, but she seems tense. Now the vet has pulled a second lamb from the ewe, and Joyce sets down the first lamb to tend to the second. The first lamb grows still, so Joyce sets down the second lamb to tend to the first again. Her hands are always feeling the body of the lamb she is caring for, while her eyes assess the state of the other. She cares with the warmth of her own body, the breath from her own lungs, and a knowledgeable eye, informed by the experience of as many lambing seasons as years she has been alive. But she keeps fumbling with the straw. As the survival of the lambs seems increasingly unlikely and desperation starts to set in, Joyce starts swinging the lambs in circles in the air once again. But nothing works. Both lambs lay motionless in the fresh straw. Joyce quickly retrieves an old feed bag to conceal their bodies, saying nothing of the failure we have all just taken part in.

Swinging lambs in this manner is conventional among her cohort of farmers: it is one action in a repertoire of actions available in helping a ewe with a birth that is accepted as being the right thing to do when a lamb is struggling to start breathing by itself. When the vet tells Joyce that, in fact, this practice is *not* right, and that she ought to do things differently, Joyce tries

to adopt this knowledge but ultimately cannot: she is compelled to act rightly according to convention. Joyce *knows* that swinging the lambs is the right thing to do, in spite of expert advice, and so doing it is the only course of action that allows her to behave rightly. To change, to follow the new instructions provided by the vet, would be for her to abandon her commitment to doing the right thing for her sheep, her farm, and herself. When the good is established and practiced in relation to tradition, new practices are alienating. Joyce has been farming her whole life, how could she not know the “right” thing to do? Here, what is good, and the right thing to do to achieve the good, is quite fixed: the good is the survival of the lambs, and the right thing to do is to swing them in the air. Knowing the right thing to do is necessary for resolve: without some sense of what is right and good, how can one commit oneself to something? The firmness of Joyce’s resolve makes her capable of commitment and of willful action. I admire her greatly for this, but, as we will see in the next chapter, having a firm grasp on “the right thing” comes with its own set of problems. The right thing does not guarantee a right outcome: Joyce swung the lambs and yet they still died. There is indeterminacy in the right thing, but this indeterminacy is largely ignored in order to commit to a course of action.

Joyce’s resolve to keep her farm, and herself, going is thematical. The thematical domain of ethics is worthy of careful consideration: what is being produced through ethics might be a matter of reproduction, but how and why what is being produced *matters* is necessarily in motion. Practices are a certain kind of ethical discourse, and how they are lived through a lifetime changes their relationship to a norm. A notion of the ethical as transformation or requiring some kind of breakdown obscures the ethical as a mode of continuing to be oneself, to not be alienated from who one has been and how one has lived. Reassembling through

reproduction is a different tempo and order of ethics than invention, but both are creative and generative of the otherwise.

Joyce's ethics propose a way of being in the world that is evidently entangled: she knows her sheep, her sheep know her; she knows how to act rightly based on a lifetime of her own farming experience and hearing about the experiences of others. There are hardships, like prolapse or dead lambs, involved in maintaining the farm, but Joyce resolves herself to dealing with them because being part of the farm is a fulfilling experience.

Chapter 3: Avoidance and Rage

“A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an and and not by a but.”

-John Berger 1980, 7.

I'm being blinded by the sweat pouring down my face: it's carrying particles of dust that sting my eyes so much that it hurts to open them, and it's making my nose so slippery that my glasses keep falling to the chicken coop's plywood floor. This situation is making my blood boil: I can feel my heartbeat pounding in my face. What I really want to do is throw the shovel to the ground and leave, or perhaps snap my glasses in two, or maybe just cry. But I can't do those things: such an outburst is not only childish but completely unheard of on the farm. And besides, I'm supposed to be a professional, conducting anthropological research. As such, I have nowhere to direct my rage, nor do I have an escape from it. I thrust my glasses deep into my pocket, close my eyes, and blindly attack the chicken shit with my flimsy shovel.

It's late in the summer, and Joyce, Ken, and I have just loaded and delivered the meat chickens to slaughter. This is a horribly dirty job: the chickens, who were adorable balls of fluff just a few months ago, have quickly grown into 13-pound monstrosities whose legs are underdeveloped for the strain of this weight. Their voices are still those of chicks, and they cry “peep-peep” as they try to run from us, one shuffling step at a time, before, exhausted, they give up and surrender to our grasp. We then pack them tightly into crates and drive down the backroads to the local slaughterhouse. I try not to look inside as I stack the crates by the door, but I can't help but smell it. The stink of that place clings to the inside of your nostrils all day,

contaminating every breath, drink of water, or bite of food. It's the smell of iron and dirt; chicken shit and watered down blood.

Upon our return to the farm, Joyce immediately goes to the house to tend to Maurice. She asks Ken and me to stay behind to clean out the chicken coop. The turkeys, who have another month or so of 'finishing' before it is time for their own slaughter, are going to be moved from their smaller coop into the bigger chicken coop. Before Joyce leaves, she makes sure to tell us to scrape the floors and take down the water pails. Ken and I exchange eye rolls: we know to scrape the floors and take down the pails, we've done this job countless times before. And so Ken and I find ourselves working in silence, side by side in the sweltering hot coop, attempting to remove every trace that the chickens had ever been here at all. When we finish, Joyce comes back to inspect our work, and criticize how we've done it, before we head over to the garage. Our task is to make room in Joyce's freezers for the chicken carcasses we will pick up from the slaughterhouse come evening. Though she has nine full sized chest freezers, as well as three regular sized fridge freezers, there is no room for all these chickens. Every freezer is already full of lamb, beef, chicken, turkey, maple syrup, fruits, and vegetables. These freezers are a testament to how much work Joyce does, but, as I explained in Chapter One, all this work means that Joyce doesn't have time to actually cook with the fruits of her labour. Our best solution is to dig down to the bottom of a few of the freezers and pull out chickens and turkeys from several years ago that have never been eaten. Ken and I load the waste into the truck, and before I head up to the ravine to dump the carcasses, Joyce grabs me by the elbow and whispers, "Don't tell Maurice we're throwing all this stuff out."

Animal agriculture involves a great deal of care, and part of this care involves death and killing. Animals get sick, lambs die or are slaughtered, and prolapse can be deadly. Even if Joyce were to breed her sheep only for showing purposes, the old and the male sheep would have to be killed, since the expense of keeping all of them would come to overtake the cost of keeping the productive members of the farm. This being the case, the relationship that one has to animals must be carefully managed. While you have to be able to care for them, you must not become overly sentimental, and thus become immobilized by the idea of pain or of death, since these are necessary parts of a functioning farm (Law 2010). For Foucault, establishing “the right relationship to the present—to things, to others, to oneself” requires one to “stay close to events, experience them, be willing to be effected and affected by them.” (in Rabinow 1994, xviii). As we have seen, at the farm it is often necessary to stay close to events and to experience them, in fact this is part of what makes the farm good to those who work on it. Due to the fact of death on the farm, having the right relationship to the present involves working against responding too much in order to preserve one’s relationship to the farm as a whole and to preserve one’s own resolve to keep going.

In the last chapter, I explained Joyce’s commitment to her farm, and her care practices that maintain it, as a kind of resolve. Resolve implies a steadfast commitment to a course of action, but it also implies an answer to a problem. Joyce’s resolve to maintain her farm is at least one significant aspect of her answer to the perennial problem “How do I live?” But to resolve also implies that the answer to a given problem is not final: in practice, Joyce re-solves the problem time and time again by continuing to enact her domesticating care. In this sense, where

there is resolve there is an ongoing problem, a question that is continually being posed and then, when resolve is cultivated, solved.

In this chapter, the problem that needs to be resolved is the pain and the death of animals. This problem is one of my own particular hang-ups, and over the course of this thesis I have gone from thinking it a silly and childish one that I ought to get over, to understanding it as a legitimate problem. As I am formulating it, the actual pain and death of animals is resolved obliquely: resolved only through techniques of caring for the self. The issue of animal death, not to mention human death, so rarely comes to the fore because we cover it up. We so often avoid turning the indeterminate into an object of reflection. As I will show in this chapter, Joyce literally removes death and suffering from her field of vision, Ken's anger places blame on Joyce or on the animals, and I find myself full of rage when I am unable to resolve my desire for bucolic certitude and the actual events I encountered on the farm. Each of us care for the farm and the animals while necessarily coming to terms, which might be resolved or unresolved, with failure, death, or killing. In this chapter, care is a kind of avoidance.

While the indeterminate quality of care involves a certain kind of openness, a space for seeing and being in the world differently, it is not necessarily realized. My own practice of filmmaking became increasingly difficult as I realized that seeing the world differently is, to put it mildly, hard. Filmmaking is an act of looking and seeing, but through my fieldwork I needed to look away as a technique of maintenance. If we want to keep moving in the same direction, it is necessary to avoid detours.

During lambing season, my own inexperience with caring for sheep and in preserving my ability to continue caring for them, causes Joyce to take on the role of my coach. She works to

strengthen my resolve by telling to “expect the worst,” to “quit being soft,” or to “toughen up”.

One morning in February, I arrive at the barn and Joyce warns me that there is something I would rather not see in the centre pen. I, of course, go and look right away. I regret this mistake immediately. A lamb that we had welcomed into the world only two days ago, lies struggling for breath in the corner of the pen. Her mother and her twin brother enjoy their morning meal as if nothing is amiss. In every lambing season, there seems to be at least one lamb who dies due to the ewe rolling on him or her in the night. Usually, we find the lamb long dead and completely flat, as if rolled out with a rolling pin. This little lamb, however, has only been partially rolled on, but the ugly scene indicates that recovery is impossible. Her death is only a matter of time.

Horrified, I ask Joyce if the vet is on her way. Joyce, exasperated with this question, says “Why would I call the vet for that? Then I’ll just have a bill and a dead animal. Leave her be.” Having already prepared herself for the worst, an imaginative activity, Joyce is not immobilized by this scenario. She is able to continue on by not looking at the suffering lamb. Joyce has learned that not looking is a technique that protects her relationship to her farm, and she has tried to pass this technique on to me.

Likewise, when an animal dies unexpectedly on the farm, Joyce quickly encloses its body in a feed bag. She then places it by the barn door, where it will be picked up and dumped in the hayfield. Joyce does this without a hint of squeamishness, but she has trained me to never look inside a feed bag by the front door. The removal of dead bodies is not only necessary for the good of the farm, but removes the possibility of a direct confrontation with death. Out of sight, out of mind. When the actual act of killing is required, however, Joyce typically outsources the task to a man. We choose the lambs that will be slaughtered and deliver them to the

slaughterhouse, where the butcher greets us with a smile. He takes the lamb from us with one hand and holds a knife in the other, leading the lamb back into the dark recess of the building. When we return to collect the meat, the butcher typically compliments us, he tells us that the lamb is beautiful as we gather up it up as neatly packaged and labeled cuts, abstracted from the animal we once knew (Adams 1990). Or, when a barn cat is sick, Joyce may call on David to go into the barn with a hunting rifle, while Joyce and I stay safely out of range at her house down the street. Though Joyce deals with death on a routine basis, and frequently orchestrates killing, it is a very rare occurrence for her to actually see an animal die.

Joyce's care is informed not only by experience, but by her perception. From behind my camera, I watch how she attends to her lambs by focusing her gaze on them, assessing the care they need with her educated vision. Likewise, my own watching of Joyce is a form of care: I am attentive to, I care for, the objects, relations, beings, and practices on which I focus my camera lens. I seek to understand how *this* works, and I do so by looking at it. While Joyce is attentive to the needs of animals while they are alive, and her care is often oriented toward the good of their lives, that care is harshly limited once that good is no longer a concern (because they are dying, dead, or going to be killed). She stops feeling with them, and she stops looking at them. The good has shifted, and become oriented toward a broader maintenance of the farm and her relationship to it. To mourn the loss of life, or to lament her own shortcomings as a caregiver, would involve pause, a gap in the rhythm of maintenance that could bring about the cessation of the barn as a place. Care involves maintenance, it involves the resolve to keep the farm going. Joyce's common phrases of "keep going" and "doing the best you can" emphasize that the good sought through her care practices is about this kind of maintenance. Care is then the pursuit of a

means, not necessarily the pursuit of a consequence of care. As such, maintenance embeds the good, a good that doesn't always happen or appear. The farm is a place that is good, but it is also a place of death. Death itself is not fostered as the good, and though Joyce is not squeamish about suffering, killing, and death, the fact that she has practices in place to limit how much she, or others, can actually *see* the dying or acts of killing reveals how care oriented toward maintenance involves avoidance. Likewise, her very refusal to actually enact killing indicates that this is an act that is not ethically or affectively neutral. To keep the farm, and herself, going, it is best not to look.

If an animal needs to be killed, rather than properly slaughtered for eating, Ken is usually the man for the job. Ken, who is in his 60s, grew up in the North-Western section of the Ottawa Valley. He usually wears multiple layers of plaid flannel shirts, Carhartt coveralls, and his grey beard is tinged yellow around his mouth from the cigars he smokes. One of the shirts I see him sporting on a regular basis says "If you don't know me you're not from around here." Knowing Ken, at least if one believes the claim made on this shirt,¹⁰ establishes one as properly rural and of this locale. Every morning, unless he's on one of his semi-annual fishing trips, Ken plays a game of cribbage with his wife. Then he usually drives over to Joyce and Maurice's house, walks in without knocking on the door, and sits down at the kitchen table. After a chat and a (store bought) cookie or two, Ken will head over to the barn to fulfill any tasks that Joyce has requested of him. This is quite an onerous arrangement: at the peak of his duties, Ken might be at the farm four hours a day six days a week. In exchange for his time, Ken receives meat (usually a whole calf, about ten chickens, and six turkeys), farm fresh eggs, and free use of Joyce's machinery and

¹⁰ It should be noted that I, in fact, do believe Ken's shirt, but this is perhaps only because I know Ken and appreciate the validation bestowed upon me by this slogan.

materials. The rest of the time, Ken can be found at his sawmill, working with wood salvaged from neighbours' trees that had been cut down, or from trees he felled himself from his own bush. If a neighbour needs or wants a piece of wood cut in a certain of way, Ken does his best to make it happen — frequently at no charge.

Ken seems to value his rurality and the social life made available to him through farming and woodworking in a small community. It is important to note, however, that his choice of personal practice is with wood, not animals. His engagement with farm animals occurs only through Joyce, and thus seems oriented toward the social aspect of farming and the value ascribed to raising one's own food, rather than toward a relationship to the animals themselves. In fact, one gets the sense that he does not really like the animals, or at least has no affinity with them. He wants them to be comfortable and content, and regularly gets into arguments with Joyce about how the animals are kept. While Joyce prefers to keep the animals in relatively small enclosures in order to have easy access to them, Ken is always advocating for fixing up the fences and turning the animals out to pasture. The argument concludes, however, when Joyce asks Ken if he would like to take on the daily responsibility of the animals, in which case he could pasture them as much as he likes. This shuts him up. Here, Joyce bases her authority not so much on the fact that she owns the land, but on the fact that she is the one who cares for the animals on a daily basis. As such, Ken's involvement at the farm includes that which is necessary, but not routine: construction jobs, operating heavy machinery, tasks that require a lot of physical strength, and killing the old, the ailing, or the useless. When we move the sheep from one pen to another, Joyce asks Ken to step away, since they do not know him, and they will move more willingly for Joyce or for me. At the farm, Ken does not have access to the lively

relationship one has with domesticated animals, which I have suggested leads to contentment.

Instead, Ken gets stuck with the dirty work.¹¹

Come September, Ken and I cram the turkeys into crates as we prepare them for their turn for the trip “down the road.” Breathless from the effort, he straightens his baseball cap and says “Oh Rachel... why she does this I’ll never know.” It seems to me that his voice cracks as he says this, but I can’t be sure. While he will accept and eat the turkeys Joyce gives to him, Ken seems to be at a loss here. It is doubtful that this is because he has become attached to the turkeys; he has not formed relationships with them. But he knows as well as I do that meat has been thrown away to make space for these turkeys in the freezer, and that in a couple of years some of these turkeys will end up being thrown into the ravine as well. Perhaps the purpose of this exercise escapes him even as he is enacting it.

Ken and I frequently commiserate over our frustration with Joyce’s way of doing things. While Joyce seems to find contentment inside of the rhythmic practices of maintaining the farm, when you get stuck doing the dirty work you develop a tendency to rush through the task in order to get it over with as soon as possible. Care for the actual process of *doing* is evacuated, and care is instead oriented toward finishing the job. The trouble is that on the farm there is no end to the dirty work: there is always something else to be done, and the work that one does manage to complete is made invisible by the ongoing list of tasks that still need doing. This is made even worse when Joyce comes to inspect a job, and says that it has been done poorly or incorrectly.

¹¹ While Mary Douglas (1966) talked about dirt as “matter out of place,” the dirt that I am referring to is not necessarily this kind of matter. Rather, dirty work refers to work that no one wants to do due to its physical and affective unpleasantness. In fact, dirty work is matter very much in place. The problem is who gets stuck with the job.

Though I genuinely like Ken, as my time at the farm wore on, I took to avoiding situations in which he and Joyce were together. Joyce's demands on Ken were increasingly overbearing and unrealistic as she found herself with less help at the farm, and thereby increasingly unable to maintain control of her land and animals. Ken's pushback against Joyce's vision of how the farm ought to be maintained became volatile. There was an electric violence in the air when the two of them came together. They would fight over the placement of a gate, they would fight over what kind of bird was kept at some farm a mile away in 1986, they would fight over whether or not there could be a good section of 2x4 in the wood pile. Though Joyce certainly exacerbated the problems with her stubbornness, her role in these fights never struck me as angry, but rather as symptomatic of the firmness of her resolve. Ken, on the other hand, would raise his voice, shake his head, roll his eyes, or stomp away. His typically warm laugh took on a cruel tone. He stopped showing up for his visits at the house.

Interested in what Joyce made of the situation, I asked her why Ken was so angry. She answered, "I don't think he feels good. That's the way it is — when you're sick, you're grumpy!" As far as we know, Ken has no underlying physical ailment. But Joyce's assessment is nonetheless quite astute: Ken doesn't seem to feel good. During this time, I ran into Ken and his wife Lynn on the main bridge in Oxford Mills. Lynn maintains baskets of flowers on the bridge every summer, because she wants to "make sure the village looks cared for." They were out watering the flowers together, and when he saw me, Ken gave me a hug and asked me how I had been keeping. I was surprised, taken aback that the angry man I was used to seeing on the farm was radiating kindness; he was feeling good. On another occasion, Ken and I met on the street in front of the farm, and strolled to the barn together laughing and chatting about the latest antics of

a neighbour. Five minutes later, after a conversation with Joyce, Ken found a nail in the wall and pretended to repeatedly smash his skull onto it. It struck me that Ken is not, in fact, an angry or cruel person. When he's particularly exhausted from doing the dirty work, he will sigh: "It's a good life if you don't weaken."¹² It seems that it is the farm, Joyce's farm, and the work that he does on it that makes him not feel good.

In order to work, one has to identify with the task at hand; or in other words, to be attentive to, and willing to be affected by, the changing circumstances with which one works. At the same time, in the context of dirty work, one does not want to identify with the task at hand too much, because too much sensitivity would slow down the pace required to get done with a job that you don't enjoy doing in the first place. Dirty work must be done by someone, but it doesn't *feel good*, especially when no one thanks you at the end. One is not focused on the task at hand but rather on completing it; one gets through the experience rather than being with it or inside of it. Being oriented toward the end result of a job rather than the actual doing of the job closes off possibilities of doing something differently. You only see the most direct path to the end goal, and efficiency wins out over quality. By rushing toward the completing of the task at hand, care for the process is evacuated.

In his work on veterinary care, Law claims that while someone can learn to accept killing animals, one is horrified by the idea that one can become someone who is used to killing (2010, 64). Self-protection is required, as a way of caring for the self, to retain one's ability to kill but to not identify oneself overly with the actual act of killing. Ken's anger could be explained to be

¹² This is a commonly stated expression in the region. It is also the title of a 1996 graphic novel by "Seth" that takes place in Southern Ontario, as well as the title of a song by the Canadian rock group The Tragically Hip.

such a strategy for self-protection. From my understanding, it seems that part of this anger is rooted in the fact that the dirty work is seemingly endless and thankless and another part works to displace responsibility. Rather than challenging his own values about what it means to be engaged in this rural community and what he has to do to maintain his position, Ken's external expressions of anger are directed at Joyce and her farming practices. He kills the animals because Joyce asks him to, and when it doesn't feel good, his anger is routed toward Joyce.

One day, Joyce asks Ken to kill a sick turkey. Eager to get the job over with, Ken goes to the coop unprepared and empty handed. The only weapon he finds there is a shovel. I open the door for him to take the bird out into the yard, but find myself unable to watch as he starts pounding her over the head with the shovel. The pounding and the squawking seems to go on forever, and even with my back turned to the scene, I squeeze my eyes shut and cover my mouth with my hand. Still refusing to die, I hear Ken call the turkey a "cock-sucker" a few times as his blows intensify. Finally, there is stillness behind me. Ken appears beside me, red in the face and adjusting his cap; "Christ Rachel, should have use [sic] my pocket knife, I thought the bitch would go quicker than that." There is sensitivity here, Ken seems to know that the bird could have died more quickly than she did. Nonetheless, the terms that he uses to describe the bird reveal a sense that she is somehow to blame for her own suffering, that she should have succumbed to the shovel's blows more quickly.

I looked away from this event because I didn't want to see what was happening. It seemed like not seeing what was unfolding would mean that I wasn't a part of it. As if not being there to see the shovel coming down over her head meant that it had nothing to do with me. But this isn't true. I was complicit in the act. I remember realizing what was going to happen before

it actually happened, and thinking to myself that I ought to volunteer to kill the turkey, since at least I cared about *her* and could make sure that her death would be as swift as possible. But my mind flashed back to the kitten I had found in the barn the summer before, mangled and screaming, and how I had gathered the tiny thing up in my hands, laid it under the wheel of my car, and driven forward and back, forward and back; and how that changing of gears and popping under my tires that haunted me for weeks would still emerge, without invitation or warning, from time to time in my mind. I couldn't do it: I couldn't take on the responsibility for killing the turkey. I let Ken do it. Even when it was all finished, I never told Ken that what he did seemed wrong to me. To show the depth of my sensitivity toward the turkey would 'out' me as too soft, too weak, overly identified with animals, and thus not a real member of our little farm community. I had tried to become like them, felt successful when identified as part of the group, and to show my difference now seemed to risk this membership¹³.

I was complicit in the act of killing because I have invested my time, labour, and care in the maintenance of a farm where things like this happen. Domestication is a relationship that, at least some of the time, contains violence. I turned my eyes away from the turkey being beat to death not only because she was being hurt but because it hurt *me*. It hurt me not only because an animal was unduly suffering, but because it was Ken, whom I consider a friend, that was inflicting this violence. I was hurt that this little farm, that in many ways I idealized in my mind, could be such a cruel place. I so desired bucolic certitude; I so desired to be right about the goodness of farm life. I was hurt that I had found myself here, doing anthropological work that I

¹³ Joyce's grand-children have told me that I am part of the family now. And while this warms my heart, and I take this role very seriously, I can't help but remember that Joyce also considers her sheep to be "part of the family," and she is still capable of sending them to slaughter.

hoped would demonstrate the value in living this way, and I was being confronted with this material. And it wasn't just the turkey. It was all the other turkeys too. And chickens. The mangled kittens. It wasn't lambing season anymore, and we were longer attentive to the new and fragile life that crowds the barn in January. It was late summer, and time to toughen up. This dark underbelly of the farm was swelling in my mind at the same time that the mundane practices of maintaining the farm started to lose their magic. My work on the farm felt repetitive and pointless — no matter how much time I spent weeding the garden, the weeds would overtake the plants by the next time I returned to the job. Joyce's stubbornness increasingly rubbed me the wrong way, but given her authority as the owner of the land, my elder, my former employer, and the centre of my research, I felt unable to challenge her. Perhaps worst of all, I felt that my anthropological practice was failing. I seemed more committed to the farm, against my will, than I seemed voluntarily committing to it. I braced myself for each day, got through it by barrelling around like a running back. I worked with my jaw locked, and my eyes always looking down at the foreground, doing the immediate task at hand. In the evenings, I retreated into solitude, numbing myself with beers and mindless television. *I mustn't think too much*. The heat and the constant screeching of the cicadas carried me through this time, like a frame around my tunnel vision.

It was only upon coming back to school, spending time talking to fellow students and some professors, that I came to realize what I was feeling in this time was a kind of rage. Rage can arise from realizing one can be deceived or that one has been played (Burrow 2020; Stalcup 2020). This kind of rage is a reaction to a hit on one's ego: the sense one has of oneself is damaged upon realizing that what one was told to be the truth, and that what one believed and

had accepted as truth, was in fact a falsehood. Rage can also stand in for something lost, a productive space in the place of grief (Rosaldo 1989). This resonates with my experience of disillusionment with the small, rural, farming lifestyle and with my anthropological project, and the sadness of that loss. There is a gap between what one imagines and what actually is: my actual experience at the farm became a different experience than what I had thought it was or would be. This gap was not the underlying condition of rage, but the rage itself. By this I mean that the affective state of rage was not immediately separable, cognitively or on the level of direct experience, from the conditions that produced it. I can only name the experience rage now, after reflection. This collapse, the immanent sense of rage, obstructed my ability to see beyond current circumstance. Rage functioned to deny its own presence. At the time, the rage was just the experience of living. As such, my rage had existential underpinnings: I was living in this gap, but there seemed to be nothing I could do about it.

My rage strikes me now as a kind of unresolve. Unable to commit myself to the farm in the ways that Joyce had, but also unwilling to give up on the farm as a project, the questions of “How do I live?” “What am I doing here?” or simply “Is this right?” became so unresolvable that I did not allow myself to even ask them. I had found myself trapped between two opposing wills, to denounce the farm and my project or to double down on committing myself to the farm, and each option seemed unsatisfactory. Or in Berger’s terms, I became fond of the pig and found myself *unwilling* to salt its pork. In this state of unresolve, my rage kept me stuck. Stuck in the sense that I was blocked, unable to synthesize experiences, affects, and thoughts; but also stuck in the sense that I was able to stay at the farm. While rage is often equated with thumos, a spirited expression of anger (Rabinow 2007), my own experience of it was a non-expression: a

denial of the gap between my desires and what was actually happening, and the refusal to see how wide and deep this gap it might be. While my commitment faltered, the clenched fist of my rage fulfilled the same kind of function that commitment would. While rage is itself uncomfortable and impotent, directed at the very conditions that produced it, I was able to carry on.

Exiting the field is not a cessation, but the entrance into new domains; what can feel like a block in the field can become a place of opening upon our exit (Rabinow and Stavrianakis, 2013, 31). Rabinow and Stavrianakis (2013) note that exiting also involves, amongst other things, the gathering of the “*equipment* generated (or constructed) during fieldwork’s participant-observation.” (34). Rabinow understands equipment as the medium through which logos, reasoned or true discourse, is transformed into ethos (2003, 11), the “space of practice at the interface of ethics and culture” (2003, 4). Equipment is a kind of toolkit, one that aids in “confronting and coping with external events and internal passions” (2003, 10). Equipment is, of course, flexible, but its relationship to logos and ethos mean that it is also always temporally located and bound. While I had equipment, my actual filmmaking equipment as well as my affective and ethical equipment, with me in the field, how the equipment works and how the equipment has changed could not be objectified or clarified until my exit. My equipment involved careful looking with my camera, which was itself informed by my affective states in the field as well as the ethical problems I was encountering. And yet this equipment lacked design; it was crudely cobbled together out of necessity.

MacDougall (2019) has noted that one of the difficulties in ethnographic filmmaking is resisting the urge to look away from what one finds awkward, painful, or problematic (10).

During the spring and early summer, my filmmaking was consistent, yielding vast quantities of footage, but this practice slowed to nearly a halt in the late summer and fall. It is no coincidence that my ability to film mirrored the sensitivity required by farm life, and thus also my rage. When looking was easier, encouraged, even necessary while caring for young lambs, my camera and I were eager to respond. But when it came time to limit my sensitivity, I was unable to resist the urge to look away, keeping my camera stashed safely in its case. I couldn't acknowledge, much less find a way to film, the gap between what I imagined and what I found. There was thus nothing to be objectified by me and my camera's gaze. Not only is looking and seeing intersubjective, a negotiation between perspectives and the availability of objects, but these processes are themselves indeterminate.

Over her lifetime of farming, Joyce has learned to see things that would be invisible to many. Her vision is attentive, and looking is a practice of care. She knows that the barn door has to be closed only to a certain notch of wood, to allow the barn cats the leeway to move in and out. These ways of looking are care, and are oriented toward the maintenance of Joyce's world. At the same time, Joyce also knows not to look at the lambs once they have died and to ignore the thick roots beneath the weeds she chops down with her whipper-snipper. In cases such as these, not looking is itself a form of care, an avoidance that fosters continuity, conservation, survival. Care is inevitably selective and partial, but modalities of care that seek maintenance are always conservative in the sense that we prioritize practices that keep things as stable as possible while avoiding that which disrupts this stability. I see no evidence of my experience of rage in Joyce, nor can I speculate that she has passed through it. But she has certainly lived, in her own way, the gap: she has gazed out on a quiet pasture at dusk, admiring her gleaming animals

catching the last rays of sun, and known the idyllic scene is just a moment, that the stability is temporary, that tomorrow there will be a slaughter. She has come to terms with the gap in her own way; she has turned the gap into resolve. But for me, and Ken, that's not what happens. The gap is not bridged but lived in. While I very much admire Joyce's strength, her propensity to make decisions and to act on them, I also came to suspect (and fear for myself) that becoming so is a trap. My rage emerged as I was realizing that maybe I did not want to maintain this world, but that I was also unequipped to think outside of it.

Following Foucault and Rabinow, a break from "the contingency that has made us what we are" requires thought, which comes with certain difficulty to the thinker, so as to introduce a significant difference to "being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think" (1994, xxxv). This involves caring not only for what is, attending to the maintenance of our own world, but caring for the indeterminate, cultivating a close attention to our own will to look and to see. The gap itself, however, is not about care but desire. The gap can only be attended to, cared for, when there is will involved: there must be more than just wanting something, but the commitment to action. I *wanted* the idyllic domestic and pastoral life, and upon finding that it didn't exist I did not know what to *do*. For Dewey, and pragmatists following Dewey, thinking involves identifying indeterminations in a situation and working toward resolution (Rabinow and Stravrianakis, 2016). But perhaps the indetermination and the resolution do not have to be opposed. Perhaps indetermination or unresolve does not have to be the impotent absence of action. Rage signalled a detour, one that I was only able to take upon my exit from the field, when the maintenance of my world no longer involved showing up at the farm each day, but instead involved attending to the gap I so desperately wanted to avoid. The effort involved in

enduring, in keeping up with the flow of life, so often means that openness comes at a cost we can't afford. We turn our gaze away from detours or breakdowns because we don't have the will or the time to confront the unexpected. But it seems to me that some kind of breakdown is necessary; at this present moment, survival is not rooted in the maintenance of what has been, but rather in need of radical rethinking.

Anna Tsing (2017) has argued for “arts of noticing” as a methodological and political necessity for survival in the “time of planetary catastrophe” we live in (Tsing, Swanson, Gan, and Bubandt, M7, 2017). These arts of noticing involve the embrace of indeterminacy that I have mentioned, as well as the importance of slowing down enough to look, to see, and to attend that I have gestured toward in my discussion about dirty work. This approach emphasizes the interconnections and entanglements of life (and death) on earth, and urges us to notice these connections and care for them. While I have gained great insights from thinking with this approach, arts of noticing emphasize the necessity of noticing over the ways in which noticing is bound to be partial. I want to make clear that though my thinking resonates methodologically with arts of noticing, my argument is quite distinct. We may all be entangled, but the nodes that we emphasize or that we might learn to emphasize depend on the equipment we carry. The medium we think in defines what we can see (Sousanis 2015). My practice of filmmaking has become a kind of equipment, a medium for thinking. Arts of noticing hold open, indeterminate space, but also strike me with the “eerie ridiculousness of attempting either to lead a life or to describe life from no point of view” (Rabinow 2003, 35). And while we can, or perhaps ought, to be flexible with our equipment, there is no one who can hold every tool or notice everything at once. It is *me* behind my camera, and I am often full of rage. That is why I look the way I look,

and why the absences are absent. The knowledge I have gained from my fieldwork, and that I have worked to translate in this thesis and in my images, are necessarily connected to my subject position “although not identical” (Rabinow and Stavrianakis 2013, 37). Or as McDougall has said, every image has a haunting, and “in my films the ghost is me” (2019, 14). Perhaps it is here that we can find a practice of unresolve, of committed indeterminacy that is not impotent inaction, nor a view from nowhere. The subject and object are not decoupled. I may live inside incertitude but I refuse to be alienated.

On a sunny November day, I go and visit Joyce at the farm. Having been living in the city and analyzing my fieldwork, I arrive at the farm with my summer rage held at a distance. I feel warm, loose, and open. As I watch her feed one of the calves that I had helped her raise since the spring, I am overcome with the beauty of the creature. Probably weighing almost 1,000 pounds by now, the heifer’s coat is gleaming with good health. Familiar with both of us, the heifer stands so near that I feel her warm breath on my hands. Relaxed, giant, and radiant in the warm light, I feel I am in the presence of something divine, and I’m in love with the process that made her so. “Joyce!” I exclaim, “She is so beautiful!” Joyce looks at the creature, who closes her eyes with pleasure as Joyce caresses her face, and says, “Yes, yes, you’re beautiful... and you’ll taste good too.” There is a jolt inside of me, and I pull back from the moment. It is, after all, nearly time for the calves to go to slaughter. Joyce, however, continues working and petting the heifer with a smile on her lips.

Almost directly reproducing the epigraph of this chapter, Joyce indicates that the beauty of the cow and how it will taste are two separate things, things that seem to me held together by Joyce’s commitment to farm life. Her statement gestures toward the same dualism that Berger

does: the cow is *both* beautiful and will taste good. The separateness of these process is, I have argued, in part enacted by a management of visual range. But this separation does not mean that one is simply unaware that both of these things happen and are true, rather, they are things that must be held at once, but at a proper distance from one another. This comes to be resolved as part of a tradition, the fact that the cow will be killed and eaten is inside of a larger sequence of events, one with greater meaning and purpose for those practicing them than the life of one cow. My position is somewhat removed from this local farming tradition and thus differently equipped. My encounter with the cow is located at the start of a sequence of events, a sequence that is terminated by her being killed. Joyce always insists on the importance of knowing what she is eating, a relationship that always seems to me to present more problems than it does solutions. But by knowing what she is eating, Joyce in fact resists the alienation of people from domestic farm animals. Of the 20th century, Berger notes that animals become marginalized as “manufactured commodities” (1980, 13), a process which is accompanied by the marginalization of the peasant class who “remained familiar with animals and maintained the wisdom which accompanies [the] ... acceptance of the dualism at the very origins of the relation between man and animal.” (1980, 27-28).¹⁴ Joyce practices a refusal of the marginalization of people from animals by accepting the dualism at the core of the project of domestication; the same dualism that I am unable to resolve is the one that keeps her going. Joyce knows that her calves will be slaughtered, and she knows that she is connected to them, like they are connected to the grass, like the grass is connected to the bush, on and on into the wilderness, and then back again. She

¹⁴ Though her economic wealth makes it difficult to classify Joyce as a peasant, and I have instead been using the term “agrarian” the geographic and historical conditions of settlement in Canada mean that Joyce is not far removed from the kind of agricultural labour, which is always bound to cycles of ‘nature’ and as a necessity of life, that is used to identify the peasant class in Berger’s work.

will not be alienated. Knowing this doesn't mean she will notice it all of the time, and noticing it does not mean she will realize any kind of change. Joyce is equipped with tradition, and, for her, it works.

“To see, to perceive, is more than to recognize. It does not identify something present in terms of a past disconnected from it. The past is carried into the present so as to expand and deepen the contents of the latter.”

-John Dewey 1934, 24.

Conclusion: The Unresolved and Indeterminate

“Who one is, emerges acutely out of the problem with which one struggles.”

-Rabinow 1994, xix

It's mid-February of 2020 and I am in the middle of thinking and writing this thesis. I haven't spoken to Joyce in over a month. One night, I find myself in her darkened living room. Maurice sits silently in his chair, and Joyce is seated in her rocker, looking at me. The glow from the one illuminated bulb in the ceiling casts a shadow on her face, such that I can't read her expression. I nervously ask her, “How have you been?” She replies with her typical response, “We're getting by. I do what I can. That's all I can do at the moment.” Guilt pings inside me. Joyce never directly tells me that she needs me at the farm, but I know that she does. Knowing that I can't be there, I have resorted to avoidance. I don't call her, I don't drop by. And the longer that I avoid her, the more anxious I become that things have finally fallen apart. I know she wouldn't tell me if they did. With guilt and anxiety mounting in my chest, I press on: “And at the barn? You getting help? Is everyone okay?” At this, Joyce leans forward in her chair, her face coming into the light as her hand reaches out for mine. Her touch is electric, full, and desperate; I clutch her hand like she's hanging on the edge of a precipice. In fact, she is! “They're gone. They're all gone,” she tells me with eyes so empty they keep sinking down forever.

I wake up from this sleep with blood rushing in my ears and my limbs too weak to move. I tell myself I will call Joyce in the morning, and that things will be okay. But I don't call. I don't call because I know this nightmare could be real, and I don't want to know if it is. I don't want to have to look. It's too hard.

In April, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, my phone rings. Joyce and Maurice's son, Raymond, tells me that Maurice has passed away. Faced with the actual nightmare, I find I am able to care and to respond. I am able to show up for Joyce in spite of the physical distancing measures. I am able to talk to her about how she was with her husband when he died, the moment she realized that he was gone, and what she said to him upon that realization. Nonetheless, I am horrified. My fascination with Joyce, the reason I set myself upon this project in the first place, was the naive impression that she had some tool that I might be able to uncover and possess for myself; that she understood something about how life works and how not to be so injured by the process of living. And to an extent, this remains true. But Maurice's death made it all too clear, to both of us, that Joyce's carefully stylized repertoire of practices for enduring, caring, and living, were no match for such a loss. In the face of perennial problems, those involving life and death, it seems that nothing works. But just because nothing works completely does not mean that it is without value. Life, and being able to live, is full of indeterminacy. This indeterminacy is more or less acknowledged, because acknowledging indeterminacy is uncomfortable, anxiety inducing, destabilizing. We all know that animals die for the food we eat, that the people who lived here before were displaced so that we could possess the land we live on now, that our actions deeply damage the planet we live on, and that we and everyone we love are ultimately going to die. We can recognize the truth of these things, but fully realizing them as problems is troublesome, since there is no solution. As such, indeterminacy is often left implicit or subconscious rather than an object of reflection. We care, but this care is avoidant. This thesis is an effort to attend to the indeterminate, to make these uncertain questions into objects of

reflection rather than problems we avoid. It is perhaps an exercise in cultivating my own methods and thinking above all else.

In the first chapter I located dominion historically as a position for approaching the world, one that is enacted on the farm through domestication of land and animals. Domestication is itself an indeterminate and incomplete process, but the work involved in maintaining tradition links the present to the past in such a way that it works against alienation. Furthermore, the relationship between dominion, domestication, and control, as historical and ongoing modalities of care, offers one way to understand why the farm is important for Joyce, her neighbours, and for myself, while also linking what happens at the farm to the larger structure of settler colonialism in Canada.

In chapter two, I talked about Joyce's commitment to her farm as a kind of resolve. In committing herself to the maintenance of her farming tradition, Joyce reproduces her own version of the good while also producing herself as otherwise in relation to the suburban sprawl that is creeping toward the edges of her farm. Reproduction on the farm involves expecting the unexpected, and while the outcomes of Joyce's actions are always uncertain, she draws upon a careful repertoire of practices that stabilize indeterminacy, push prolapse into proper alignment, to transform flux in order to keep living.

By chapter three, the concepts in which I had become interested in the field started to double back on my self and my practice of anthropology. Rage, the name for my experience of disillusionment that I had during a certain slice of time at the farm, is indeed rooted in my fieldwork, but it only became an object for reflection once I was able to think about the experience, track my own ability to look and to see, and work out these relationships through

writing. While being in the field and filming are certainly discursive, some parts of these experiences don't make themselves immediately available for thought. I lacked adequate equipment for doing so.

Reviewing fieldnotes, watching and transcribing my own clips of film, and exercising my own memory, were the spaces in which I found myself able to experiment with my own equipment, thus making rage available as an object of reflection. By making the feeling of the gap between the farm I desired and the farm I actually took part in, and my immediate denial of it, into the object "rage" I was also able to work on a kind of disassembling and examining of my own mode of being and thinking, one that is impossible when simply getting through fieldwork. This transformation is, also, where anthropology happens. Exiting the field is also an "entrance into a range of other domains" (Rabinow and Stavrianakis 2013, 31). Between the gaps in available methods, the transferring across the direct experience of "having been there," of filming, of making notes, of writing, and of reflecting, have proven to be the most challenging tasks, but also the most productive. For me, anyway, this explorative use of equipment provides a space for seeking a new relationship with the world, from which to "face the future" (Rabinow 2003, 10).

What anthropology has done, for me, is offer methods to turn experience into an object of reflection. In this sense, anthropology is a commitment; one that involves a voluntary giving of the self over to a project, to words on a page, or to a computer screen, as well as the not so voluntary seizing of the mind and obsession with a problem. But where Joyce has worked on her resolve as a mode of commitment to her farm, what has been produced by my commitment to anthropology is a kind of unresolve. I so desire certitude, but the more I chase after it, the faster

it seems to escape. But while the unresolve of rage kept me stuck, in a way that was indeed helpful for the tasks on the farm, the unresolve of anthropological inquiry is productive of openness, a willingness to be uncertain. Transfiguration involves the discovery of a certain critical self-awareness that involves accepting indetermination. That is what unresolve is about. Joyce also transfigures, makes herself aware of indeterminacy and practices self-awareness. Yet she doesn't go *with* the indetermination: the indetermination is what she works to resolve. Resolve is ongoing, the indetermination is battled time and again.

Joyce's farming practice is informed by her life as part of a tradition, the fulfilling experience she has with her animals in the barn, and the person she has worked to become in order to maintain her farm. Emerging through our experience in the world, the toolkits we assemble to face the future are always in relation to what we can see. John Berger notes that "What you saw was relative to your position in time and space" (1973, 18). Joyce and I farmed *together*, engaging in a practice that produced shared modes of thought, shared ways of looking, and shared affects. But my way of farming was always also anthropological, always also young, naive, and hurried, always also a little bit romantic and urban in spite of my geographic dwelling; while Joyce's way of farming drew on chains of traditions and histories, years of experience of working with this land and these animals, and the firm resolve she carries with her old age.

Indeterminacy is a condition of care. Care is the work involved in selecting an object, finding a way to work with it, and doing so in an attentive manner. Care practices on Joyce's farm are productive of a certain kind of otherwise even as they often reproduce that which already exists. Care, as I experienced it in the context of settler colonialism and animal agriculture, can be a kind of violence; exerting control over some objects, while avoiding others.

Looking at this process, attending to the ways in which the indeterminate works seems to me fruitful as both a personal ethic for myself in my life, but also in thinking about an anthropology of care.

This thesis is, above all else, a negotiation of my relationship to animal agriculture and with Joyce. Though I have learned that what works for her doesn't work for me, her steadfast commitment to what matters to her has touched me deeply. I hope that what I have learned by working with her might be shifted to new, differently configured, objects.

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