What's Love Got to Do with It? Care, Curiosity, and Commitment in Ethnography beyond the Human

MARIANNE E. LIEN
Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Norway

Abstract An ethics of care in nature conservation must ask not only whose voices are heard, but also which interspecies relations that come to matter. Inspired by Jane Bennett's question about how ethical codes are transformed into laudable acts in interspecies relations, this article explores alignments between affective enchantment and interspecies response-ability. Juxtaposing two ethnographic sites in Norway, salmon aquaculture and nature conservation, Marianne E. Lien argues that ethical conduct calls for relational interspecies commitment beyond mere affect: enchantment offers no guarantee of animal welfare. But nor does a set of legal regulations. The first section of this article explores the practical enactment of sentient salmon in Norwegian aquaculture, and details interspecies response-ability and care through practices where legal regulations and affective registers intersect. In the second section Lien turns to what some call untouched nature, while others call it home, and shows how enchantment of nature in the abstract may legitimate the dispossession of the vital relations between local people and their worlds. Both cases suggest the need to pay close attention to relational and vernacular arts of noticing that have been cultivated by others. Shifting our attention from the outsider's gaze as an affective enchantment toward the relationality of others, we may notice the myriad of generative interspecies relations that unfold quietly, in a minor chord, and often in unexpected places. The article draws on extensive fieldwork within aquaculture production sites in western Norway and in the coastal regions of Varanger, North Norway.

Keywords care, aquaculture, nature conservation, enchantment, dispossession, Norway

Standing next to each other, in silence, we stare down into the tank where tiny salmon alevin crowd together, like a swarm of black wiggling dots against the dimly lit bottom of a water-filled tank. Another batch of farmed salmon is about to be ushered into the world of commercial aquaculture, and this is their first feeding. All day we have tiptoed between these tanks, anxiously trying not to frighten the little ones.

Environmental Humanities 14:2 (July 2022)
DOI 10.1215/22011919-9712511

The understanding among our coworkers in this smolt production facility is that fear makes them crowd together, reducing the oxygen density around them.[1]

The tiny alevin need to be courageous, to spread out from the amorphous mass that constitutes their swarm, and to be curious about the pinches of dust-like fish feed that we drop onto the water surface, trying to catch their attention. These pieces of dust are their first introduction to a life that will, from now on, revolve around feeling hungry, being fed, and putting on weight until they are ready for slaughter and human consumption. It is a moment of transition, and some will not make it.[2]

Suddenly I hear Tone's voice, nearly whispering near my ear: come up, eat (*koma opp, eta*). She has the soft, high-pitched voice that women sometimes use to speak to newborn babies, a voice of tempered excitement and awe. And in that moment, it is as if the movement of alevin in a fish tank becomes pregnant with meaning: we become more intimate than we really are, middle-aged mothers-in-arms, temporarily navigating a strangely familiar terrain.[3]

> This event took place during fieldwork in a smolt production site in western Norway, and a key site for Norwegian salmon aquaculture. In the evening I concluded my fieldnotes like this: This is not a maternity ward, and we are not best of friends. What I notice is simply this: that in this practice, there is a kind of human-to-animal bonding going on, or perhaps rather a relation-in-the making, in which there are elements of care and affect on the human side, and who knows what is going on down below. And then that the practice is gendered.[4]

In my book, *Becoming Salmon*, I mobilized these and other ethnographic examples to argue that practices of care and affective attachment unfold even in "the belly of the beast," that is, within the confines of industrial aquaculture operations that have profit as their overarching goal.[5] Such sites are often seen as the prototype of modernist disenchantment.[6] I am not arguing that Tone's affective care justifies farming operations, nor do I present this ethnography to downplay the negative ecological and environmental impact of salmon farming operations on coastal regions.[7] Instead I use this

1. John Law and I did joint fieldwork on salmon farms in Norway on and off from 2009 to 2012. We returned to a handful of locations, became familiar with the mundane practices of salmon care work, and got to know some of the people we worked with rather well (Lien, *Becoming Salmon*; Lien and Law, "Practices of Fishy Sentience").

2. According to the Norwegian Veterinary Institute's annual report, the mortality of farmed salmon in Norway in 2020 was estimated at 17.9 percent. This is based on information for the entire production cycle and presented as a median (Sommerset et al., *Fiskehelserapporten*, 19).

3. This section paraphrases an ethnographic account previously published in *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish* (Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 111–16).

4. Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 114.

5. Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 145–47.

6. Bennett, *Enchantment*.

7. Taranger et al., "Risk Assessment."

ethnographic snippet to explore relational alignments between affective enchantment and interspecies response-ability.[8] As the world of industrial salmon farming is often cast in black-and-white, heroes and villains, it seems necessary to show that maximizing profit and caring for animals are not always antithetical but parts of the heterogeneous assemblage that constitutes human-animal relations within industrial domestication. My interlocutor, Tone, performed the shifts from abstract calculation to affective care a number of times each day, swiftly and with ease.

In this article I make several arguments. First, with reference to aquaculture I claim that, although affective attachment matters, it is not enough. Care is hard work and enchantment offers no guarantee of animal welfare. But nor does a set of legal regulations. Hence we need to ask, with Jane Bennett, what enables "the jump from recognizing a moral code to living it out?"[9] The first section of this article approaches this question from the domain of industrial domestication and addresses the gap and the interrelations between what Bennett calls disenchanted codes of ethics on the one hand, and affective bodily attachment on the other.

In the second section I turn to what some call untouched nature, while others call it home. The Arctic is a constant source of awe and wonder for outsiders, and Finnmark, Norway is no exception; from the affective blend of hype and hope promoted by extractive industrial investors, to the enchantment of nature lovers with a soft spot for the North. Where the enchanted gaze has all too often been framed by the outsiders' gaze, I ask what goes on besides that: What might locally grounded interspecies relations tell us about the work involved in sustaining vital relations beyond the human? And how might different forms of enchantment mobilize different ethics of care?

Narratives generated by ecologists and others can be powerful tools for promoting local conservation, but, as I will show, they can also be alienating and dispossessive.[10] I draw on Bennett's elaboration of the several chords of ethics and care (see also Cecilie Rubow, this issue) and indicate how their differences matter. By way of conclusion I propose the practice of "rewiring our senses" as a method to cultivate a passionate yet humble approach to both the wild and the domesticated.[11] Cultivating arts of noticing,[12] we may also avoid the simplistic dichotomies that serve to alienate local forms of interspecies commitment.

In her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*, Bennett wants to "tell a story of contemporary life that accentuates its moments of enchantment and explores the possibility that the affective force of those moments might be deployed to propel ethical generosity."[13] Her claim is "both that the contemporary world retains

8. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.
9. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 133.
10. Rozzi et al., "Changing Lenses," 131; West, *Dispossession*.
11. Mathews, "Coming into Noticing," 106.
12. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 159; Mathews, "Coming into Noticing."
13. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 3.

the power to enchant humans and that humans can cultivate themselves so as to experience more of that effect."[14] Since the book was published, notions of enchantment, emotion, and affect have been deployed analytically in environmental anthropology and elsewhere, making her claim appear less radical today than it might have been around the turn of the millennium.

Yet, as Bennet also suggests, the affective turn is insufficient as a solution to the challenges of the Anthropocene. Bennett mentions several dangers, such as the capture of ethics by aesthetics (licensing the unruly and selfish, or relying on sensuous manipulation), and the apolitical and noncollective model of ethics as an individualized exercise (ignoring the political or legal context that makes ethical conduct practical and feasible).[15] This leads one to question how ethical codes are transformed into laudable acts in interspecies relations.[16]

For Bennett "*enchantment* entails a state of wonder," distinguished partly by "the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement." Hence, to be enchanted, according to Bennett, "is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter, it is to be transfixed, spellbound."[17] What she describes here is an individualized expression of human affect. Anyone can feel it, in principle. But whose suspension gets to count, and which interspecies relations come to matter? That modern life, even aquaculture, retains the power to enchant and transfix is clear (cf. Tone's first feeding), but enchantment is a treacherous emotion, and certainly not all you need. How may enchantment propel ethical generosity in interspecies relations?

Killing Your Babies: Practices of Care in Aquaculture

Few people are enchanted by farmed salmon. This is in stark contrast to the excitement that a freshly caught wild salmon may elicit as it gasps for oxygen at the end of the fishing line, with an artificial fly and hook stuck to the soft inside of its mouth, before it goes viral on social media. I have always wondered about this kind of enchantment, so entangled with animal suffering and what I imagine to be mortal fear. Their fear may be ungrounded, as most salmon escape death by the gentle release from the hook, as anglers increasingly practice catch and release, which is also a kind of care, they would argue. But do fish sense that the angler cares? And what if they were bred and hatched within the salmon farms nearby?

To most anglers, farmed salmon are ugly, especially if they escape into one of the rivers of their ancestral origin.[18] Anthropologist Anita Nordeide has vividly described the disgust they elicit among anglers who pride themselves in catching the "real thing,"

14. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 4.
15. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 132, 160.
16. Bennett *Enchantment*, 133.
17. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 5.
18. Lien and Law, "Emergent Aliens."

the salmon that has spent its entire life in the river and in the ocean.[19] Affective enchantment can take many forms, and animosity is its silent companion. Treacherous indeed.

On a salmon farm it is all very different and more boring. Caring for farmed salmon is tedious, repetitive, and systematic. It is also often cold and wet. Farmed salmon are not particularly charismatic for the farmworkers (though there are exceptions, see below). They don't speak back. Their eyes have none of the expressions that we humans have learned to recognize. Hence they rarely elicit enchantment as Bennett defines it. The salmon farmworkers that John Law and I encountered during fieldwork at salmon production sites in western Norway were nice enough, but their practices of care were rarely affective in an overtly expressive manner. Tone's momentary soft call was an exception.[20] Similarly, her boss would sometimes hold a young fish gently between his hands, pretend to kiss it and exclaim to the audience of visitors and farmworkers: "Isn't it beautiful!" But his act was performative and out of the ordinary. The day-to-day care for farmed salmon is mundane and utterly practical, kind of like housework. As María Puig de la Bellacasa defines it, drawing on a feminist perspective, "Caring is more than an affective-ethical state: it involves material engagement in labours to sustain interdependent worlds, labours that are often associated with exploitation and domination."[21] The entanglement of domination, exploitation, and care is as relevant to human-animal relations in the Domus as it is to family relations in the household.[22] Domestication often involves relations of exploitation and domination.[23] Can affective care and animal sentience unfold in such relations? Our answer, based on ethnography on-and-off salmon farms, is clearly yes.[24] As indicated in the story about the alevin, that farmed fish are confined to a tank and destined to be slaughtered does not preclude feelings of emotional attachment, even awe and wonder. The question is: Does it matter? Does it change anything regarding their day-to-day welfare? Not necessarily. Or rather: it depends.

During our fieldwork with salmon, new legislation on animal welfare was implemented in Norway, with specific regulations for aquaculture. Farmed fish are now granted the legal status of sentient beings on the assumption that salmon might have the ability to feel pain. The Norwegian animal welfare law (*Dyrevelferdsloven*) that came into effect in 2010 specified the practical implications of the requirement that fish feel pain. It states, for example, that "fish shall be protected from unnecessary stress, pain

19. Nordeide, "Møte mellom mennesker og laks."

20. Another exception was when something went terribly wrong and salmon died unexpectedly. In this situation, affective commitment, emotional distress, and sorrow were strongly felt among workers. For details see Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 136–38.

21. Puig de la Bellacasa, "Nothing Comes Without Its World," 198.

22. Tsing, "Nine Provocations for the Study of Domestication."

23. But not always, see Lien, Swanson, and Ween, "Introduction, Naming the Beast."

24. Lien, *Becoming Salmon*; Lien and Law, "Practices of Fishy Sentience."

and suffering at the time of slaughter" and consequently that they shall be stunned before they are bled, leading to a complete makeover of aquaculture slaughtering facilities in Norway.[25] The animal welfare law also requires mandatory completion of fish welfare courses at regular intervals for all fish farmworkers and managers.

My first participation at a fish welfare course in 2012 was also the first time for many others. Fish farmworkers who had worked together for years gathered for a couple of days in the spacious facilities of the company head office for PowerPoint presentations and group exercises. It was "back to school" for everyone, regardless of their position of previous training. Fish health and welfare guide much of what is going on around the tanks and pens. But it was the first time that the fish farmworkers were explicitly and collectively asked to identify welfare issues and potential for improvement in relation to the fish welfare regulations. During this exercise several ideas came up about practical solutions to potential welfare issues. Might it be a problem that fish are flushed from a wide to a narrower pipe, and get stuck for a moment in a "traffic jam"? Should pipes always be of the same size? Ideas for improvement were proposed, not for efficiency or profit, but for the sake of salmon well-being. Tentative solutions to welfare concerns were thrown back and forth as participants evoked and responded to what they imagined might cause salmon to suffer or feel pain. This was the first time that our fieldwork on the salmon farm involved a discursive space focused exclusively on how to achieve good care, that is, how to become response-able in relations with salmon as sentient beings.[26] It was important in the sense that the fish farmworkers enacted salmon sentience as significant and were explicitly expected by management to do so. From being a cause of individual concern (or indifference), affective care had become a collective responsibility, legitimately evoked among those who cared for fish on a day-to-day basis. It hardly solved the issue of welfare in aquacultural operations,[27] nor did it alleviate the environmental threat that farming operations continuously represent to the marine environment and the long-term viability of wild Atlantic salmon.[28] But the welfare courses, being a mandatory requirement, have come to stay. As a result they represent an unprecedented social arena for fish farmworkers across Norway to speak up against management when profit considerations and other demands push welfare to its limits.[29] This implies that the affective and ethical dispositions that

25. Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 142.

26. For details, see Lien, *Becoming Salmon*, 142–45.

27. Gismervik et al., "Comparison of Norwegian Health and Welfare Regulatory Frameworks."

28. According to Norwegian risk assessments, there is a moderate to high hazard related to genetic introgression of farmed salmon in wild populations and related to wild salmon mortality due to migrating sea lice. There is a low hazard related to organic eutrophication and spread of viral diseases from farmed to wild salmon, although the latter is a risk to the farmed salmon populations. See Taranger et al., "Risk Assessment."

29. As detailed in Medaas et al., "Minding the Gaps in Fish Welfare," a sense of morality and empathetic concern is rhetorically evoked in the teaching material in the welfare courses. The take-home message is that animal suffering is unacceptable, and anyone who appears to be indifferent about inflicting pain in animals is wrong or holds a lower moral standard.

might emerge in human-animal relations in aquaculture are externalized and reflected on collectively, and sometimes this may lead to small changes in infrastructure.

So what might this teach us about relations between affect and ethical commitment? First, affective attachment and enchantment are not irrelevant to fish welfare. The human ability to imagine, for example, what it might be like to be a salmon flushed through a pipe is among the many sensibilities that constitute tinkering within the aquaculture assemblage. Mandatory welfare courses for fish farmworkers reaffirm the legitimacy of an empathetic human response and offer an arena for articulating this in ways that can make a difference. Yet such sensibilities offer no guarantee of fish welfare. Legal regulations matter too, as they specify a number of "disenchanted" requirements such as size of tanks, density of fish, saturation of oxygen, the unacceptable number of sea-lice, and the frequency of medical treatments. These legal regulations make real differences in practice, regardless of the sentience of the fish farmworker herself. Following Puig de la Bellacasa[30] we might say that the regulations of fish welfare acknowledge, frame, and institutionalize an ethics of care within the context of commercial aquaculture, as well the ontological status of salmon as sentient beings.

Legal regulations enact salmon as sentient beings through mechanisms that transcend the modern dualism of enchantment/disenchantment. Three dimensions can be clearly identified: (1) They enact a social and moral collective, amplifying individual concerns about fish suffering and fish welfare in aquaculture settings. (2) They ensure a level of standardization and coordination; fish welfare is no longer about each individual salmon farmer (or company) tinkering on their own, but about predictability and standardization across sites. (3) They ensure a certain continuity: the standards implemented today will be in operation next year and the year after, until they are replaced by new sets of regulatory measures. This is legal bureaucracy in practice, ethics of care institutionalized within the disenchanted realm of regulations, control, and mandatory reporting. Not much love in sight, but undoubtedly a small move toward the better for farmed salmon.

These legal improvements are the outcome of numerous ways of seeing and wondering. They enact care in everyday human-animal relational practice.[31] They are not primarily about ethical principles, but rather about embodied sensibilities and practical tinkering; they are about "how." They touch the realm of the political, the ontological, the legal, and the moral, but they are nothing if not "transformed into acts,"[32] through detailed practices of handling things differently and better in sensual, technoscientific, and mimetic modes of interspecies response-ability.

We may also speculate that without the response-ability of caretakers like Tone, whose affective interspecies enchantment transcends the formal legal code, the farmed salmon are likely to be less happy. Tone gives voice to what Bennett refers to as the

30. Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*.

31. Law, "Care and Killing."

32. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 131.

"minor chords of enchantment," amplifying "what the more insistent sounds of suffering might mask."[33] This is a form of aesthetics captured by ethics, but not completely. There is still a space for awe and wonder, still a space for being enchanted by alevin, regardless of legal codes. This space is worthy of attention, "partly because the more aware of wonder one is—and the more one learns to cultivate it—the more one might be able to respond gracefully and generously to the painful challenges posed by our condition as finite beings in a turbulent and unjust world."[34] In the next section I turn to various chords of affective enchantment unfolding in the Nordic Arctic. In the first instance this is directed not at a single species but at an entire landscape, appreciated for its unspoiled qualities yet also systematically misread. I shall draw on several decades of engagement with the Varanger region, as well as historic and contemporary documents.

On Not Fetching Firewood; Green Colonialism in the Nordic Arctic

In 1827–28, Balthazar M. Keilhau, lecturer of mineral sciences at the nascent University of Oslo (previously Christiania), made a scientific journey through the Varanger peninsula, Finnmark, in the northeastern part of Norway bordering the Barents Sea. Geological field studies in Norway were his main duty, but his pioneering work was also an enchanted journey to a (for him) unfamiliar part of the country. In his report he describes the northern coast of the Varanger plateau:

> Like this, and without variation, I saw the land and the sea and the sun, in the morning and evening, at midday and at midnight; I traveled mile after mile, the scene remained unchangeably the same. However, its monotony was neither tiresome nor unpleasant, on the contrary it made a deep impression. The Grandeur, the marvelous melancholy of this scene cannot be put into words. . . . This sacred solitude, which in the New World still resides in the jungles, is here located in the high Nordic mountain ranges, or at these distant shores, flushed by the sea.[35]

This account of the sacred solitude and bewildering melancholia of the mountains of the high North anticipates the gaze of polar explorers a hundred years later, and the Nordic Arctic as a tourist destination today. The writing is itself enchanted, inspired beyond words; he is a man "alone"[36] in the wilderness, his solitude is sacred, reflecting the

33. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 160.

34. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 160.

35. Keilhau, *Rejse i Øst- og Vest-Finnmarken*. Translation by the author. The original reads: "Saaledes, uden afveksling, saa jeg landet og havet og solen, om morgen og aften, om middag og midnat; jeg flyttede meg mil efter mil, - scenen blev dog uforanderlig den samme. Dog er det langt fra, at denne monotoni derfor var trættende eller ubehagelig; tvert imot just saaledes var det, at denne natur formaaede at gjøre et dypt intryk. . . . Storheden, den forunderlige melankoli i denne scene er ikke mulig at skildre med ord. . . . Denne hellige ensomhed, som i den nye verdensdel endu bor i urskogene, er hos os hentyet til det høie nordens fjeldstrækninger eller til disse fjerne strandbredder, som havet beskyller."

36. Was he actually alone? Maybe not. For many other explorers of his era, locals were often engaged to guide them or carry the necessary supplies.

elated pleasure of his soul immersed in the oceanic wilderness. Although he walks for days in a landscape that he sees as unusually monotonous, his sense of enchantment is timeless. Here are no changes of seasons, no blizzards to avoid, no food to be urgently gathered, but the sense of being alone in the universe, an eternal moment that captures everything around him, and himself, in a higher unity with God. Keilhau strikes a chord of romanticist enchantment nurtured by his extraordinary experience of the sublime.

To dwell in this region is to acknowledge, embrace, and hold the skills to deal with the variability of the landscape, including a world of ever-changing weather and seasons. It entails a sense of being in a world constituted, as Tim Ingold puts it, by the aerial flux of weather rather than the fixities of landscape.[37] It is to know how to live comfortably—to collect enough firewood for winter, pick cloudberries in summer, and to make sure your storage of food is reliable. Most people I know in this region have at least two freezers. Some have five.

Living well involves taking care of others, human and nonhuman. This involves engaging in gift giving and the nurturing of social ties with other people,[38] within and beyond the spatially bounded local community, but also to care for relations beyond the human. This could be, for some, accommodating reindeers' appetite for mushrooms in August, and assessing whether the snow's deep layers of ice still call for supplemental feeding in the spring–winter season known as giđđadàlvi. For others it could imply ensuring that the sheep graze where the pasture is most nourishing, or accommodating unexpected visitors behind the house, such as a fox feeding from the birdfeeder or a litter of hares. Small interventions may be called for to sustain the co-presence of sheep, birds, foxes, and tiny hares. The chords of affective enchantment in such practices are subtle and anchored in relational practices that involve the landscape as an interspecies totality. Like Tone's careful calling for the tiny alevin to come up and eat, these are enchantments of the minor chord.[39] They cannot be disentangled from the "messy worldliness" of which they are part,[40] hence they do not travel well.

To dwell in this region is also to engage what Sámi scholar Mikkel Nils Sara,[41] referring to traditional reindeer herding practice, calls the coexistence of predictability and unpredictability, often overlooked in nature management policy. Sara details how an awareness of the "reindeer's acquired affiliation to seasonal pastures and migration routes is important for its direction of movement."[42] This entails an order, "modified or strengthened depending on how the terrain, wind, and season affect each other,"[43] as well as the moss, the lichen, the mushroom, the texture of the snow, or other specific affordances of the landscape at any particular time.

37. Ingold, "Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather."
38. Kramvig, "Silent Language of Ethnicity."
39. Bennett, *Enchantment*, 160.
40. Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 10.
41. Sara, "Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge."
42. Sara, "Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge," 163.
43. Sara, "Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge," 163.

This is not the wilderness that William Cronon would succinctly describe as a human creation many years later.[44] As Stine Rybråten's interlocutors in Nesseby insisted when confronted with outsiders' enchanted gaze: "This is not wilderness, this is where we live."[45] Keilhau's enchanted description conjures exactly that "reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires"[46] that would later pass by the term *wilderness*, according to Cronon, and be institutionalized as national parks and nature reserves. But environments are more than discursive objects. As Knut Nustad notes, they are also the outcome of long histories of struggle, with human as well as more-than-human actors.[47]

I came across Keilhau's text because an excerpt was cited on the website of what is now Varangerhalvøya National Park, legally protected under the Ministry of Environment, and with three nature reserves, one of which is the Syltefjord Valley Nature Reserve.[48] Then I saw it again, printed on the maps and information pamphlets that the National Park board had published for tourists. And finally, as I searched for the original text on the web, I came across a report written in 2004 by two geologists and commissioned by the Finnmark County Governor, which cites Keilhau's text at length on the first page.[49] Perhaps it was their sudden encounter with the founding father of Norwegian geology that made the geologists cite him at length. In the popularized version on the web, and on the maps, the landscape is described as "Arctic and ancient." Geology, it appears, is still enchanted. But whose enchantment gets retold? Whose affective attachment gains traction in nature management decisions?

Certainly not that of my friend Vibeke. Since we met in Varanger in the mid-1980s, during my first fieldwork in the region, we have been friends. Ethnographic fieldwork sometimes leads to affective relations and long-term commitment, and this is one of those relations that never ended. One evening, a few years ago, she called me and was quite upset. She had been told that she and her husband could no longer fetch firewood in the slopes near the house that is now their second home, in Syltefjord. This is the farm where she grew up, and where they spend great parts of the year, but it is hardly a farm in a conventional sense. Situated at 72 degrees North, and technically within the Arctic,[50] this is sheep and reindeer pasture, not farmland.[51]

44. Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness."

45. Rybråten, "'This Is Not Wilderness.'"

46. Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness," 69.

47. Nustad, "From Wildlife to Natural Resources," 30.

48. Lien, "Dreams of Prosperity."

49. Sørbel and Torgelsbakk, *Landformer og løsmateriale på Varangerhalvøya*, 1.

50. Average temperatures in July below 10 degrees Celsius is one among several definitions of the Arctic. The Barents Coast of the Varanger Peninsula falls within most definitions of the Arctic. See Lien, "Dreams of Prosperity."

51. While ploughing and fertilizing to increase the yields of alfalfa fodder was strongly promoted during the twentieth century, the output was meager.

Birch trees grow near the Syltefjord river, a few hundred meters from their house. The river runs through the Syltefjord valley, which has become a nature reserve, adjacent to the Varanger Peninsula National Park.[52] But the birch forest where they used to collect firewood is now situated within the boundaries of the nature reserve. The nature reserve comes with signs announcing Syltefjorddalen Naturreservat / *Oardu luondumeahcci* with excerpts of legal paragraphs, such as: "Vegetation, including dead bushes and trees are protected against injury and destruction. It is prohibited to remove plants and parts of plants from the nature reserve."[53] The selection of this particular paragraph for the signpost is hardly random. Firewood collecting is anticipated by the authorities. Inscriptions on signs serve as fences by proxy: if you intend to use this valley for anything other than recreational purposes, stay out.

Vibeke and her husband Øystein found the new regulations ridiculous and contacted the forestry manager to ask for permission to continue their traditional practice of fetching firewood of broken branches in the birch forest. Their trips would be guided by attentive curiosity, assessing the effects of snowfall on tree structures, considering how clearing of fallen trees would make the forest more accessible to humans and sheep. The forestry manager was sympathetic to their practice, but the regulations were clear. There was no room for dispensation: removing broken trees for firewood was illegal. For a while my friends had to rely on imported firewood from the local gas station. In the meantime, and (possibly) as sheep no longer graze in the valley, the birch meadows near the river have grown denser and have become nearly impossible to walk.

Our conversation triggered a process of renewed collaboration[54] in which we explored traces of human intervention in and near the Syltefjord Valley Nature Reserve. She located a number of named sites within the nature reserve that had been used as uncultivated grass meadows (*utmarkslått*)[55] until the 1970s. Few of these were legally owned, but a practice of naming served to associate each site with its users. Hence *Gydaholmen* denoted the grass meadows on the rivershore that were cut and used as fodder for the sheep that belonged to Gyda, Vibeke's grandmother. *Gydaholmen* is not inscribed on any official map, nor are any of the other names that Vibeke recall from her childhood. People's ownership to land (especially that which was not cultivated in a conventional sense) was seldom formalized as legal deeds in this region.[56] Hence matters

52. See https://www.miljodirektoratet.no/ansvarsomrader/vernet-natur/norges-nasjonalparker/varanger halvoya-nasjonalpark/ (accessed March 10, 2022).

53. See also *Forskrift om verneplan for Varangerhalvøya*. Vedlegg 2. Fredning av Syltefjorddalen naturreservat/Oarddu luondumeahcci, Båtsfjord commune, https://lovdata.no/dokument/LF/forskrift/2006-12-08-1385.

54. Elsewhere, I have described how the landscape that is described as "nearly untouched" was in fact used for generations, including by Vibeke's grandmother; see Lien, "Dreams of Prosperity."

55. *Utmarkslått* were cut in July and August to provide fodder for animals during the winter. Far from any farm or settlement, and often on commons or state-owned land, they differ from *slåttemark*, which were cultivated grass meadows closer to the farm, usually ploughed and often fertilized, and usually privately owned.

56. Ravna, "Den tidligere umatrikulerte grunnen."

Figure 1. Handmade wooden map of the area showing local names and affordances. Photograph by the author.

of ownership were settled locally between families, and through the mutual recognition of various claims based on established patterns of use, and remembered by first names.[57] These plots were never formally legalized as private property,[58] but they reflect a shared recognition of distributed user rights entrenched in patterns of relations that extend both within and beyond the human realm. As such, they tend to escape the judicial authority of the nation-state, as well as official maps. However, in an old school building, repurposed as a summer café, we came across a set of hand-drawn maps on wooden plates along the walls of the former school hallways. Painted colors differentiated land from sea, and black lines indicated the shape of the coastlines and roads. The maps include more than fifty pieces of handwritten place-names glued onto the wooden plates. A silent monument of a naturalist arts of noticing, the maps contain a microscopic cartography of stories: with names such as *Løkholmen* (onion point) they reveal local knowledge about the specific affordances of nooks and crannies of the fjord in use in the mid-twentieth century, but now mostly forgotten (fig. 1). Alongside these processes of forgetting and falling out of use, other practices seek to recodify the same areas as specific natures in need of protection. Let us turn to the nature reserve.

The Syltefjord Valley Nature Reserve, or *Syltefjorddalen naturreservat/Oarddu luondumeahcci* as it is called in the local official languages of Norwegian and Northern Sámi, manifests in different places. You may encounter it from the road that runs through the length of the valley. From there, you may discover one of the many signposts, metal signs on poles solidly grounded to mark the boundaries of the reserve. In summer you will be surrounded by low birch trees and shrubs and never be far away from a wide

57. For details see Lien, "Dreams of Prosperity."

58. Attributing legal title of land ownership (called matriculation) was formalized late in East Finnmark, cf. Ravna, "Den tidligere umatrikulerte grunnen."

river, home to salmon that you may legally catch if you buy a license from the local hunting and fishing association, sold at the summer café. There are few trails, but—as is the case with most uncultivated land in Norway—you can walk wherever you like, and even put up a tent.

You may also encounter the nature reserve online, on a webpage set up by the Varanger Peninsula National Park.[59] Here, beneath the headline *Syltefjorddalen naturreservat/ Oarddu luondumeahcci*, you may enjoy a photograph of the river, a mountainside, and a rainbow on a spring day. Underneath, four short paragraphs describe the nature of the landscape, its botanical character, and the basis for its protection. You will learn that the Syltefjord Valley Nature Reserve is protected "to secure a nearly untouched deciduous forest area and a side valley with limestone with its rich biodiversity." Here is a range of species that exist "at their absolute northern limit" or "at the very margins of their habitat" (this and the following translations are by the author).[60] If you read on, you will learn that the lower part of the valley has a fertile and lush birch and salix forest, which is the largest and most continuous forest along the southern slopes of the Falcon mountain. Twenty-two different species of flowers and herbs are mentioned and located as they appear in different parts of the valley. The final sentence reads: "On the Dolomite slate above the tree limit there are rich fields of mountain avens (Dryas octopetala)."

There is no mention of animals, although moose, reindeer, foxes, and hares are not uncommon in this area. There is no mention of birds except for the falcon that gave the name to the highest mountain. There is nothing about the river, or the salmon that locals cherish and anglers travel from afar to enjoy. There is also nothing here about the sheep that grazed the lush grass of the birch forest as late as the 1980s. Blueberries are mentioned, but not cloudberries, locally seen as the most precious of all. Instead, we are presented with a botanical topography valued by its uniqueness, and by the fact that plants here exist at the northern margins of their habitat. By these omissions, as much as by the words "nearly untouched," the valley is portrayed as pristine wilderness, constituted by other-than-human relations worthy of protection.

To claim that the valley is nearly untouched is historically incorrect. It erases the presence not only of the extensive use of the valley's various affordances (grassy meadows cut for fodder, salmon, cloudberries, and the importance of this valley as a necessary source of firewood), but also the historical presence of houses and small settlements. Vibeke's own great grandfather grew up in a house whose foundations can still be located upriver. Photographs and collected narratives tell stories of human liveliness in the valley well into the twentieth century. But none of this fits with the image of the valley as a unique forest area worthy of protection. It is as if the eagerness to justify

59. Syltefjorddalen naturresrvat, https://www.nasjonalparkstyre.no/Varangerhalvoya/verneomrader/syltefjorddalen-naturreservat-oarddu-luondumeahcci (accessed March 10, 2022).

60. Syltefjorddalen naturresrvat, https://www.nasjonalparkstyre.no/Varangerhalvoya/verneomrader/syltefjorddalen-naturreservat-oarddu-luondumeahcci (accessed March 10, 2022).

protection measures called for a reframing of the entire valley, as if hardly anyone lived here before. People-places have been erased, as well as the interspecies relations that mutually carved out a space for livelihood along this Arctic coastline. An abstract notion of "northernmost" adds a sense of Arctic to the valley's character. This word hinges not on what is here but on the implicit comparison to more hospitable and crowded places elsewhere. The shore is made significant by comparison: right here, on Europe's most northern coastline, on the shores of the Barents Sea, pretty much everything that happens to grow will be at its habitat's "absolute northernmost boundaries."

Syltefjord Nature Reserve's online representation exemplifies not only the dualism still implicit in some versions of contemporary nature management and the cultural erasures that result. Through its subtle coproduction of rationality and affect,[61] it also exemplifies a peculiar kind of enchantment, vaguely resonant with Keilhau's report, but in the more sober discourse of natural science modes of knowing. Keilhau's sacred loneliness is replaced by "nearly untouched," and the grandeur is replaced by the image of being at the northernmost edge of the habitats of certain named plants. If the comparison seems far-fetched, then recall how Keilhau's quotes interspersed the texts about the national parks, rhetorically eliciting a kind of enchantment that cannot be achieved through the far more restrained style of conventional scientific prose. Ironically, while the historical presence of the interwoven worlds of humans and animals who have inhabited the valley is omitted from the story, the enchanted scientific report about grandeur and sacred loneliness is quoted at length. This underscores how enchantment of nature in the abstract serves to justify the dispossession and erasure of vital but messier relations in the here-and-now (such as between birch forests and local livelihoods). In this way the Syltefjord valley is made to be pristine, exotic, and up for grabs for tourists, biologists, and nature lovers from elsewhere who like to imagine themselves "alone in the wilderness" rather than as treading on other people's doorsteps.

Ethics of Care—Rewiring Our Senses

The story above can be read as an all too familiar critique of how legitimate conservation measures rub up against local or indigenous concerns, or yet another example of dispossession and green colonialism, or an act of slow violence.[62] As in the case of aquaculture welfare regulation, we may reasonably argue that even the regulatory measures that made the Syltefjord valley a nature reserve have contributed to institutionalizing an "ethics of care." Both sets of regulatory measures ensure the collective coordination and continuity that might be needed to protect other-than-humans: just as animal welfare regulations are needed in commercial aquaculture, nature protection regulations are needed to look after vulnerable forests.

The signposts erected along the boundaries of the reserve enact a social and moral collective of human visitors, whose whimsical desires and poor judgment will be guided

61. Sörlin, "Wisdom or Affect?"

62. West, *Dispossession*; Nixon, *Slow Violence*.

by a set of legally sanctioned rules about what do to and what not to do. Through these imperatives (sanctioned by state authorities), the signs ensure a level of standardization and coordination, justified by reference to enshrined botanical knowledge of what is. The solidity of the signposts themselves and the inertia of the legal system ensure a continuity and suggest that people will continue to restrain themselves in the future. But in doing so, vernacular practices involving human livelihoods are written out of the equation. The contrast between these signs and the subtle place-names on the maps in the school building is stark. Some worlds are sacrificed for others to flourish.

And yet, protecting parts of the "nearly untouched" could, in fact, be exactly what is needed in this region, where land is increasingly valued as potential sites for windfarms, for mining, or for tourism, activities that are invariably justified in relation to the Anthropocene and the need for alternative energy and rare minerals. These threats could be even more detrimental to local livelihoods than current conservation measures. After all, having to buy firewood from elsewhere is hardly a tragedy. If ends justify the means, does it matter that the narrative mobilized to justify the Syltefjord nature reserve as "nearly untouched" is factually incorrect?

From a strictly conservationist perspective, perhaps not. But the nature approach that justifies this position is the same that rendered the landscape seemingly untouched. If we refuse to accept the dualist premise of nature as pristine and devoid of humans, it also becomes difficult to accept the utilitarian logic that imposes an official nature conservation landscape on a vernacular one.[63] Then we need to ask what affective formations underlie these measures, and what kinds of relational response-ability ensue as a result? Whose sentiments, and what interspecies relations attain legal traction?

Keilhau may never even have returned to the landscape of his marvelous melancholy. And yet his affective imagery continues to shape the official landscape that is now a designated Varanger Peninsula National Park. His prose was timeless and traveled well, his words had the capacity to inspire explorers, tourists, and nature lovers for nearly two centuries. Neither Gyda nor Vibeke have succeeded in making their affective relations a cause for legal protection. The unnamed makers of the hand-drawn maps in the school building, naturalists of a different era, are forgotten. Their ways of noticing, like those of Tone in the smolt production site, escape the categories that make them worthy of serious consideration, their interspecies commitment remains unseen.

An ethics of care in nature conservation must ask not only whose voices are heard but also which interspecies relations that come to matter. Just like the subtle, affective relations played out by women in the smolt production site, these interspecies relations remain private, vernacular, in a minor chord, and are easily seen as irrelevant to legislators and conservation bureaucrats. How might these cases help us rethink the role of affective enchantment in sustaining vital relations beyond the human, and our role as scholars in these relations?

63. Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 17.

Sverker Sörlin has recently argued that the stakeholder concept has served, perhaps inadvertently, to "limit the controversy to those with acknowledged rights to speak because of their stakes, as landowners, residents, community members."[64] Vernacular landscape practices are not easily mobilized by the format that the role as stakeholders requires. Even when locals are called on to witness, their affective enchantments, like handmade signs on a wooden map, tend not to travel well. Their modes of knowing are situated, relational, and contextual and thus not easily translated in a courtroom, a public hearing, or a legal text.

Anna Tsing sees twentieth-century scholarship conspiring "against our ability to notice the divergent, layered, and conjoined projects that make up our worlds"[65] and proposes the cultivation of humanist and naturalist arts of noticing as a way of "opening the terrain for transformative encounters."[66] Andrew Mathews, trained in forestry and anthropology, learned to see the vernacular temporality of ancient Italian chestnuts from farmers and shepherds. I learned to see alevin from a salmon farm worker, and birch forests from my friend Vibeke. The stories that emerge from these ethnographic encounters are passionate but also humble and uncertain. Unlike colonizing narratives, they are grounded in vernacular arts of noticing that have been cultivated for generations. They take time, are relationally grounded, and involve what Mathews calls a certain "rewiring of the senses."[67] Countering the slow violence inflicted by official narratives, such stories can help us act and give a voice to vernacular environments, from backyard gardens to salmon farms, from Italian chestnuts to Arctic birch trees. They could even help us pause, for a moment, our outsider's gaze. Carefully shifting our attention, sidelining our too quick assumption and enchanted alignments, we might learn to notice the myriad of generative interspecies relations that unfold quietly, in a minor chord, and often in unexpected places.

MARIANNE E. LIEN is professor at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Norway. Her research interests include food consumption and food production, domestication, aquaculture, human-animal relations, landscape temporalities, and nature conservation, focusing on Norway and Australia. Recent books are *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish* (2015) and *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, coedited with Heather A. Swanson and Gro B. Ween (2018).

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Cecilie Rubow, Stine Krøijer, and two anonymous reviewers for wise and critical comments to earlier versions. Thanks also to research participants in Finnmark and at the smolt production site for generously sharing their time, experience, and insight. Special thanks to John Law and Christian Medaas for fieldwork collaboration on and off salmon farms.

64. Sörlin, "Wisdom or Affect?"
65. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 22.
66. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 160.
67. Mathews, "Coming into Noticing."

References

Bennett, Jane. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 68–90. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.

Gismervik, Kristine, Brit Tørud, Tore S. Kristiansen, Tonje C. Osmundsen, Kristine V. Størkersen, Christian Medaas, Marianne E. Lien, and Lars H. Stien. "Comparison of Norwegian Health and Welfare Regulatory Frameworks in Salmon and Chicken Production." *Reviews in Aquaculture* 12, no. 4 (2020): 2396–410.

Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2008.

Ingold, Tim. "Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): 19–38.

Keilhau, Balthazar M. *Rejse i Øst- og Vest-Finnmarken samt til Beeren-Eiland og Spitsbergen i Aarene 1827 og 1828* (*Travels in East and West Finnmark, and to Beeren-Eiland and Spitzbergen in 1927 and 1928*). Christiania, Norway: Johan Krohn, 1831.

Kramvig, Britt. "The Silent Language of Ethnicity." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 45–64.

Law, John. "Care and Killing: Tensions in Veterinary Practice." In *Care in Practice: On Tinkering in Clinics, Homes, and Farms*, edited by Annemarie Mol, Ingunn Moser, and Jeannette Pols, 57–71. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2010.

Lien, Marianne. *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Lien, Marianne E. "Dreams of Prosperity, Enactments of Growth; The Rise and Fall of Farming in Varanger." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 29, no. 1 (2020): 42–62.

Lien, Marianne E., and John Law. "'Emergent Aliens': On Salmon, Nature, and Their Enactment." *Ethnos* 76, no. 1 (2011): 65–87.

Lien, Marianne E., and John Law. "The Practices of Fishy Sentience." In *Humans, Animals and Biopolitics*, edited by K. Asdal, T. Druglitrø, and S. Hinchliffe, 30–47. London: Routledge, 2016.

Lien, Marianne E., Heather Swanson, and Gro B. Ween. "Introduction: Naming the Beast—Exploring the Otherwise." In *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, edited by Heather A. Swanson, Marianne E. Lien, and Gro B. Ween, 1–32. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Mathews, Andrew S. "Coming into Noticing: On Being Called to Account by Ancient Trees." In *Intertwined Histories: Plants in Their Social Contexts*, edited by Jim Ellis, 102–11. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2019.

Medaas, Christina, Marianne E. Lien, Kristine Gismervik, Tore S. Kristiansen, Tonje Osmundsen, Kristine V. Størkersen, Brit Tørud, and Lars H. Stien. "Minding the Gaps in Fish Welfare: The Untapped Potential of Fish Farm Workers." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 34, no. 5 (2021): 1–22.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Nordeide, Anita. "Møte mellom menneske og laks: Om laksefiskepraksisar ved Namsenvassdraget" ("Interfaces of People and Salmon: On Salmon Fishing Practices along the Namsen River"). MA thesis, University of Oslo, 2012.

Nustad, Knut. "From Wildlife to Natural Resources—and Back Again? Translating Natures in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park." *Ethnos* 85, no. 1 (2020): 17–32.

Ostrom, Ellinor, *Governing the Commos: The Evolution of Institutions of Collective Action*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. "'Nothing Comes without Its World': Thinking with Care." *Sociological Review* 60, no. 2 (2012): 197–206.

Ravna, Øyvind. "Den tidligere umatrikulerte grunnen i Finnmark: Jordfellesskap fremfor statlig eiendom?" ("The Formerly Unmatriculated Land in Finnmark: Commons Rather than State Property?"). *Tidsskrift for rettsvitenskap* 133, nos. 2–3 (2020): 219–63.

Rozzi, Ricardo, Juan J. Armesto, Bernard Goffinet, William Buck, Francisca Massardo, John Silander, Mary T. K. Arroyo, Shaun Russell, Christopher B. Anderson, Lohengrin A. Cavieres, and J. Baird Callicott. "Changing Lenses to Assess Biodiversity: Patterns of Species Richness in Sub-Antarctic Plans and Implications for Global Conservation." *Frontiers in Ecology and Environment* 6, no. 3 (2008): 131–37.

Rybråten, Stine. "'This Is Not a Wilderness. This Is Where We Live.' Enacting Nature in Unjárga-Nesseby, Northern Norway." PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2013.

Sara, Mikkel Nils. "Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge." *Northern Review* 30 (2009): 153–78.

Sommerset, Ingunn, Britt Bang Jensen, Geir Bornø, Asle Haukaas, and Brun Edgar, eds. *Fiskehelserapporten 2020* (*The Fish Health Report 2020*). Report 41/a 2021. Oslo: The Norwegian Veterinary Institute, 2021.

Sørbel, Leif, and Torgelsbakk. *Landformer og løsmateriale på Varangerhalvøya- en beskrivelse til arbeidet med Varangerhalvøya nasjonalpark* (*Landforms and Loose Materials on the Varanger Peninsula—A Description of the Work with the Varanger Peninsula National Park*). Rapport nr. 2. Vadsø: Fylkesmannen i Finnmark, Miljøvernavdelingen, 2004.

Sörlin, Sverker 2021. "Wisdom or Affect? Emotion, Environment, and the Future of Resource Extraction." *Polar Record* 57 (2021): e27. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247421000097.

Taranger, Geir-Lasse et al. "Risk Assessment of the Environmental Impact of Norwegian Atlantic Salmon Farming." *ICES Journal of Marine Sciences* 72, no. 3 (2014): 997–1021.

Tsing, Anna. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Tsing, Anna. "Nine Provocations for the Study of Domestication." In *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, edited by Heather A. Swanson, Marianne E. Lien, and Gro B. Ween, 231–35. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

West, Paige. *Dispossession and the Environment*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.