

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**A Stable Environment:
Surrogacy and the Good Life in Scotland**

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

In this thesis I describe the claims that a group of people living in rural Scotland make about maternal surrogacy. For them, surrogacy is a topical issue that provokes speculative ethical judgements. This is in a context in which they are building good lives, strongly informed by environmentalist 'ethical living' and local wildlife conservation. I describe the kinds of ideas they employ and reproduce in discussing the ethics of surrogacy to capture the nuanced judgements that go into ethical claim-making. I argue that, in order to understand these people's ideas about what is natural and what is moral, they should be considered along with their more ordinary ideas and practices. I describe how some of the same concepts they use to talk about surrogacy figure in their conceptions of goodness and what makes a good life, in order to both contextualise and extend their ideas about the ethics of surrogacy.

Through ethnography of their everyday lives, I show the importance of effort and care in the making of relationships with other people, animals and the land and in fashioning an ethical subjectivity. I analyse the connections between nature, kinship and ethics in lives that are structured by efforts to protect the natural world, feel closer to other people and experience a fulfilling life. I examine the importance of choice and money in enabling these lives and raise questions about the location and status of transcendent values in contemporary Britain. I discuss the temporal orientation of these people in relation to the influence of environmentalist ideas of impending ecological crisis and consider how this links with their ideas about how to live in the present as well as how these connect up with their ideas about parenthood and kinship.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Juliet Emerson, for everything – and for the scrambled eggs.

*I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable.
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.*

T.S. Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*

The Sperm Whale's Jaw

I found this jawbone at the sea's edge

Ted Hughes, *Relic*

Early one Friday morning in December 2006 I went with some of my friends and neighbours to see the body of a sperm whale that had washed up at Roseisle beach. The whale was an adult male that had died from malnutrition, which my friends attributed to environmental change and the threats of human activity to cetacean habitats and food sources. At the beach there were about ten others including a local journalist. Each person simply looked at the whale, occasionally talking in hushed tones. It lay on its right side in a shallow indentation of sand filled with bright, clear blood – a jolting reminder that this had once been a living being. Later, Sophie said she felt an atmosphere of reverence amongst the onlookers, which I had also sensed. On the way home she said, “It’s so sad to see something so beautiful in life in death. Although it’s still beautiful in a way, it’s just sad because you get so excited about seeing a sperm whale in the place where you live and then the only opportunity you get is when it’s dead”. One person touched the animal gingerly, as if letting everyone know that she harboured no ill intention; a few others followed as though they had received permission. Despite not having touched the body, Willow said afterwards, “I know it’s irrational but I feel sort of unclean, like I need to wash my hands”.

The most striking thing about this body was that its jaw had been removed during the night. The remaining stump dripped fresh blood into the pool below. Disgust at this post-mortem mutilation was on the lips of everyone present. Later that day it transpired that the jaw’s disappearance was the subject of a criminal investigation. The theft or removal of cetacean body parts is a criminal offence in the UK, not only because of their endangered status, but also because under the Royal Prerogative such bodies legally belong to the Crown. Amongst those I spoke to and in the media there was a great deal of discussion about what would happen to the body and the infamous jaw¹; no-one seemed to be able to conceive of what to do with this tragic leviathan. After some negotiations a

¹ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/highlands_and_islands/6169055.stm and <http://www.newscientist.com/blog/shortsharpscience>

wildlife crime officer from Grampian Police retrieved the jaw and the council moved the rest of the body to the local rendering plant. What remained of the head and part of the jaw was later delivered to the wildlife centre in Spey Bay so that they could exhibit the skeleton for visitors.



Figure 1: Onlookers at the scene of the stranded sperm whale's body, Roseisle, Moray, December 2006.

It was unclear exactly what had happened to the jaw in the intervening hours between its disappearance and reappearance until the following May, when I attended a local environmental action meeting led by another wildlife crime officer. He asked if anyone in the audience lived in Burghead, a village close to Roseisle, explaining that if we were from there we would know who had stolen the jaw, implying that “a large family who act as if they are the local lairds” had taken it. Most people I spoke to had assumed that the jaw was stolen because sperm whale teeth are financially valuable. However, in the media it had been reported that locals believe the teeth are ‘lucky’; the police officer noted that in some parts of Scotland these teeth represent fertility and there is a tradition of large families handing them out amongst their sons.

The jaw had eventually been recovered after the police offered the Burghead family immunity from prosecution in return for its surrender. In the course of their investigation, they uncovered three worn out diamond bit chainsaw blades, numerous pairs of waders filled with congealed blood and a

Landrover Discovery which they quickly returned to its owner because of the unbearable stench of rotting flesh that it gave off. Whatever the true reason for this macabre theft – and it remains shrouded in mystery – it is clear that the perpetrators were prepared to go to some lengths to acquire this jaw and its teeth, and the expense entailed suggests that it was not simply for financial gain.

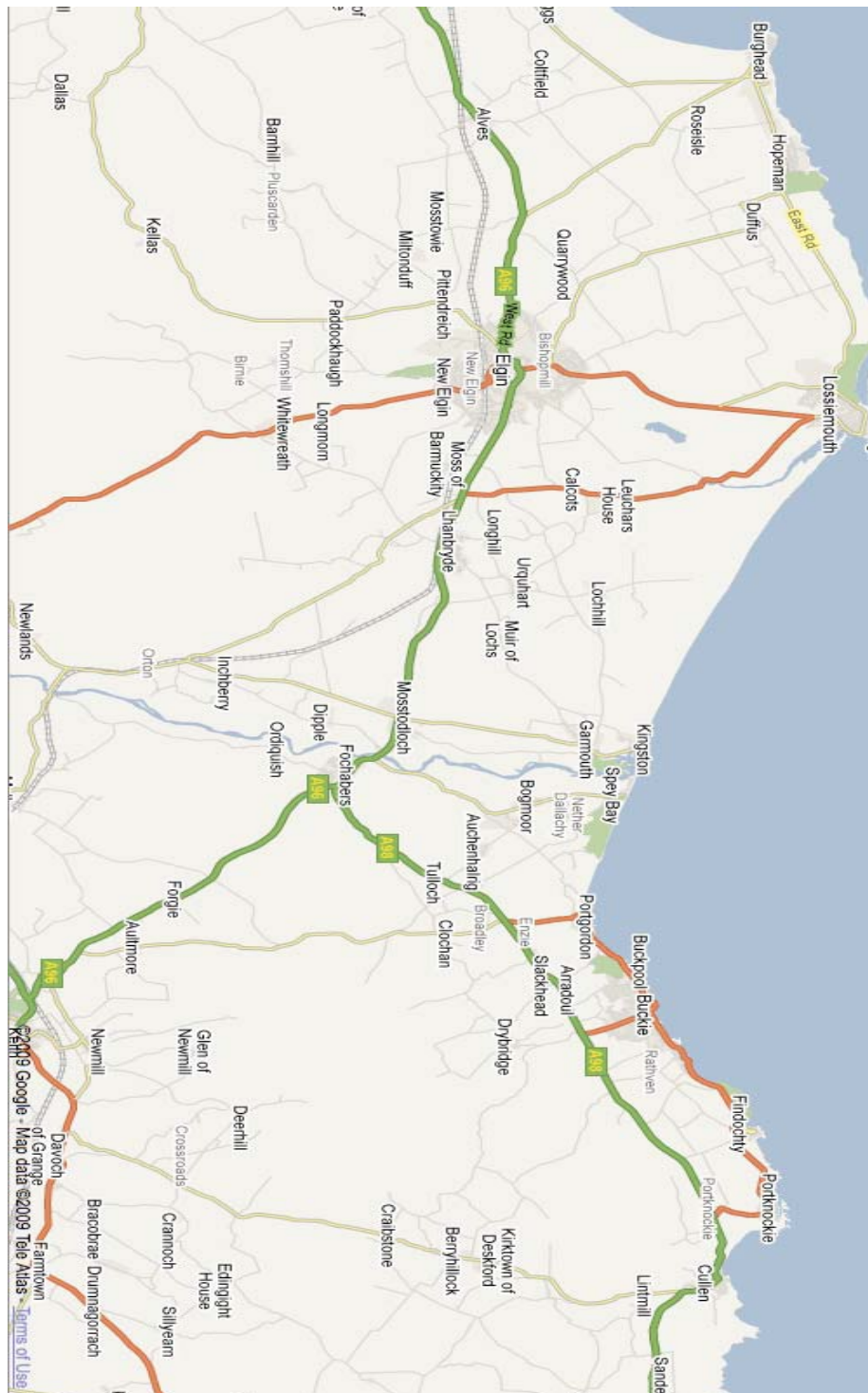
In the Moray Firth area of Scotland where this took place, whales and dolphins are constant presences, being regularly sighted from the villages perched along the coast. They are, amongst other things, a source of local pride and tourist revenue. Therefore, this – admittedly sad – story of the Roseisle sperm whale makes a fitting initial frame for this ethnography. In starting with this mystery, my aim has been to show some of the preoccupations of people in this part of the world and thus to indicate some of the major themes that I will explore here.

For those I visited the scene with, the whale's body symbolised the ecological catastrophes that the world faces in the near future unless we can arrest anthropogenic effects on the environment. This whale had strayed from its 'natural' home in the deep open seas, searching desperately for its usual food of squid – whose numbers, I was told, have declined with industrial fishing methods – only to die exhausted and starving in the Moray Firth, its body washing up on Roseisle beach where it suffered the final indignity of having its jaw plundered. For these people, who are largely incomers to the area, attracted by its "better" lifestyle and wild, natural beauty, everyone has a responsibility to care for and protect nature. In their incomprehension at the actions of those who took the jaw, there is a tension between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' values, the claims of those who are attached to the land by time and blood and those by personal effort and feeling. It also suggests alternative conceptions of wealth and value, competing and conflicting models of nature and the ubiquity of ideas about ethics and human nature.

I went to Moray to find out what people there think about maternal surrogacy, a practice that provokes pressing ethical questions in the British context, and for them. In this thesis I will argue that it is highly beneficial to consider people's ideas about such practices in conjunction with the context of their everyday lives. What I want to suggest by beginning with this strange yet telling vignette, then, is the ubiquity, salience and inter-connectedness of ideas about nature, ethics and belonging for these people, all values which structure and inform their claims about surrogacy as well as their everyday lives.



Map 1: Northern and central Scotland



Map 2: Spey Bay and surrounding area

Where the River Meets the Sea

*How long was his love for that river
In its unbound abandon
And the headlong salmon
Soaring high from its spate
And how broad his contempt
For the efforts of those
Who tried to impose
The violence of order
On its deep dark flow*

John Mackie, *Where the River Meets the Sea*

Spey Bay is the name of the tiny village in the county of Moray in Scotland in which I lived during fieldwork. It is perched along the picturesque Moray Firth coast, a place at times windy, salty and spindrift-flecked, at others a tranquil, sunny haven. Here, the Spey's peat-browened, pure freshwater, filtered through the Cairngorm mountains, reaches the end of its long journey in a cataclysmic encounter with the chilly saltwater of the North Sea. Being at the confluence of a powerful river and a churning sea, the sand and shingle banks of the bay are in constant flux, the river's force constantly hewing fresh margins to its passage. Both the Moray Firth and the River Spey are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Inner Firth is designated a Wetland of International Importance. The village of Spey Bay lies within a 450ha nature reserve, beside the Speyside Way long-distance footpath, and its shingle beach is also a SSSI.

One of the longest and fastest-flowing rivers in Scotland and world-famous for its natural resources, the Spey provides delight to anglers, adventure sports enthusiasts and whisky connoisseurs as well as locals. Amongst other 'native' species, the Spey is home to Atlantic salmon, which provided the original reason for the area's settlement and development as an economic centre. Tugnet, at one end of Spey Bay, was, as the name suggests, the base for a significant fish-processing operation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, supplying wealthy Londoners' burgeoning taste for Scottish salmon. The main complex of buildings in Tugnet served as the accommodation and

offices of this operation. It now functions as the flagship wildlife centre of an international conservation charity, the fourth most visited tourist destination in Moray (Moray Council n.d.). During fieldwork, I lived in the former station manager's house, which has been split into two adjoining residences. along with various wildlife centre employees and volunteers (see Figure 4).

The Moray Firth boasts a resident population of bottlenose dolphins and receives occasional visits from whales and porpoises migrating and hunting around the British Isles like the sperm whale described in the Prologue. Drawn close to the coast by the salmon, trout and other fish, dolphins and whales can, in theory, be spotted from any cliff or vantage point along the Firth during the summer months. The human inhabitants of the villages along the coast associate themselves with dolphins on village name-signs, in the décor and products of local businesses and in the blue plastic dolphins that hang from so many residents' car rear-view mirrors. Spey Bay is a particularly good place for land-based wildlife-watching, with frequent dolphin sightings during the summer months and if one were to ask locals what makes the area special most would include the dolphins in their answer.

The opportunity to spot dolphins in the wild is a major draw for tourists. For those who work in the wildlife centre in Spey Bay, who are jokingly referred to by other locals as "the dolphin people", as for the increasing number of wildlife-watching tour operators in the area, the dolphins are literally their reason for being there, but they are significant for all residents. While the Highlands which border Moray to the west enjoy a well-established and internationally recognised identity, northeast Scotland, being somewhere in between Highland and Lowland, has a more nascent identity, though its picturesque coastline, rare wildlife and dramatic landscape all contribute to a local and national sense that it is an altogether more 'natural' place offering a 'better' way of life.



Figure 2: Spey Bay from Garmouth, on the opposite bank of the Spey. Tugnet sits in the middle of the picture, with the bay to the left and the rest of Spey Bay village extending to its right. Beyond, lies the sea.

Apart from the wildlife centre, with its shop and café, the only other public facility in Spey Bay itself is the village hall, which is the venue for community events and leisure activities. Residents sometimes voiced disappointment that there is no pub in the village, and thus no obvious social focal point. There is in fact a hotel, but all but its golf course has been closed for the last three years due to a lack of investment. At the start of the twentieth century, this golf complex was the most important village industry alongside fishing. The golf links, and a hotel, were built in 1907 and this was by all accounts a popular leisure destination, so there has in fact been over a century of tourism in the village. However, this declined during the Second World War, when the hotel was requisitioned for RAF troops based at Nether Dallachy, one mile southeast of Spey Bay. The hotel was largely destroyed in a fire in 1965 and later rebuilt with little of its former grandeur.

The golf resort's current owner runs self-catering accommodation in converted steadings next to the hotel. Another middle-aged couple run a bed and breakfast operation from their home, which, like many other houses in Spey Bay, enjoys superb uninterrupted views out to sea, while another retired couple from Yorkshire make crafts including handbags, home furnishings and paintings of the local area, which they sell in local shops and craft fairs. The wildlife centre is therefore the largest employer in Spey Bay itself and most other adult residents who are not already retired travel outside the village for work.

The nearest pub and food shop are in Garmouth, on the other bank of the Spey. However, they are only nearest as the crow flies or if one is walking – by road, the closest amenities are in Fochabers, five miles inland. Fochabers, with a population of around two thousand, is home to the Baxter's food manufacturing business, famous for its tinned soups, and its 'Highland village', the most popular tourist destination in the county. Tourists can take tours of the Baxter's factory, modelled on those run by whisky distilleries. The Highland Village also has five shops, specialising in 'fine' and 'ethical' foods, gifts and cookware and a café, aimed at the tourist and coach-party market and promoting Baxter's products. Fochabers has a primary school and high school, three pubs, two Co-operative ("Co-op" or "Co-opie") convenience stores, two butchers, a fish and chip shop ("chippie"), two antiques shops, a large garden centre with gift shop and café and an outdoor clothing shop as well as two schools, a doctor's surgery, an estate agent, a veterinary practice and two churches.

The closest large town is Elgin, home to twenty thousand people. Elgin, famous for its seventh Earl's escapades in Athens, has a fairly standard provision of shops that would be difficult to distinguish from those in many other British towns. Respondents² view Elgin, which, although set in beautiful rolling countryside, is not the most attractive town in Scotland, with a coy affection tinged with embarrassment. Trips to Inverness, Aberdeen or even Edinburgh were seen as opportunities to take advantage of the more fashionable shops and leisure facilities in these bigger cities. When I made a return visit to Moray in November 2008 and went into Elgin with a couple of friends they took me to the newly opened Starbucks café, remarking ironically that they had at last caught up with the rest of the world.

Like the rest of the UK and Western Europe, Scotland has in the last generation been experiencing something of a fertility 'crisis' and, until recently, a declining population.³ Compared with England, Scotland's situation seems particularly acute given its history of economic emigration, sparse inhabitation⁴ and the relative political and social marginality of many of its rural areas. Scottish life expectancy and population growth rates are both behind the average for western Europe. In recent years, the live birth rate has been dropping, reaching its nadir in 2002, in which the fewest births since registration began in 1855 occurred, though 2006 marked a reverse of this trend, with the highest number of births since 1998. The average age of Scottish birthing women has increased over the last few generations, standing at 29 years old in 2006. Births to unmarried parents in Scotland are rising markedly, with an increase from 36% to 48% between 1996 and 2006. Not surprisingly given this, marriage rates are falling, though 'tourist weddings' have buoyed up figures: in 2006 more than a quarter of Scottish weddings were between non-Scots.⁵ Divorce figures have also been rising on average over the last twenty-five years.

² I use the term 'respondents' as a generalised term to refer to those I regularly spoke to in the field including those I did and did not formally interview as I reject the negative connotations of the word, 'informant', on political and ethical grounds but also because it does not capture the participatory and personal nature of my relationships with these people (cf. Edwards 2000: 82). I have changed all of their names (and do not name the conservation charity in Spey Bay) to protect their anonymity, though most other details are unchanged.

³ The following data is available in the government publication *Scotland's Population 2009* (GROS 2007).

⁴ Of the UK's sixty million inhabitants, only five million live in Scotland despite it covering over a third of Great Britain's landmass.

⁵ Many of these took place in the small Borders town of Gretna. Gretna became a popular marriage destination for English people in the eighteenth century, when a law was introduced requiring parental consent for marriages where either party was younger than twenty-one. A number of couples travelled to Gretna as it is very close to the border with England and was on the stagecoach route between London and Edinburgh. Today, it remains a popular wedding location because of this 'romantic' reputation.

Numbers of teenaged mothers have risen slightly over the years, though teen pregnancy rates are lower in Moray than the Scottish average (Information and Statistics Division Scotland 2007a, 2007b).

As these figures suggest, there are grounds for ordinary people to perceive that Scotland is in the midst of significant demographic change. Like the rest of the UK and much of the developed world, Scotland has an ageing population. In 2006 19% of Scots were of pensionable age while 18% were under sixteen years old. A number of (typically, older) respondents did remark on Scotland's ageing population to me, explicitly linking it with their concerns about the future, phrased in terms of "pressure" on financial, medical and natural "resources". Scottish households are typically one or two adults, and the number of large households (one or two adults with children) is projected to continue falling in the future, as well as an increase in households headed by older people. However, respondents in this study generally buck this trend, as the vast majority of them live in shared accommodation with friends and colleagues or co-habit with partners and, if they have them, children.

This nationwide demographic change is an important context for this study, not only in that surrogacy is a technique to alleviate infertility, but also in that 80% of respondents here are themselves migrants to Scotland. They have also experienced some of these changes in family structure and gender roles characteristic of this period themselves, as we shall see. Various 'solutions' to the decline in population have been discussed in public, including incentives to encourage more births, increasing access to fertility treatment and attracting migrants, including a much-publicised campaign to increase migration to Scotland of skilled foreign nationals to fill the population 'gap' (GROS 2009).⁶

Between 2002 and 2006, Scotland's population increased, due to in-migration from elsewhere in the UK and abroad. Scotland's cities enjoy in-migration of young Scots as well as people from abroad, while rural areas tend to see the opposite flow of young Scots outwards balanced out by in-flows of people from older age groups. In 2004, residents of eight Eastern European accession states were extended the right to work in the UK as part of a wider deal that allows migration between EU states for their citizens, resulting in an influx of migrants into the UK, with nearly nineteen thousand registering to work in Scotland in 2006.⁷ Many respondents were aware of this and welcomed it,

⁶ See Sweeteners plan to bring immigrants to Scotland, *The Scotsman*, 2nd October 2004; Plan to boost population, BBC News Online, 25th February 2003.

⁷ See Eastern influx helps boost Scotland's population, *The Herald*, 27th April 2007.

and there was a general perception that Eastern Europeans fitted in because they are “hard-working” and their culture was thought to be not dissimilar to Scots’.

Spey Bay consists of about thirty dwellings, each inhabited on average by two to three people. The accommodation for the wildlife centre, which is the two houses that once made the fishing station manager’s house, accommodates three people on one side and five on the other, plus frequent guests. There are two properties adjoining them, which together form a square courtyard. All four properties are rented to their inhabitants by the Crown Estates. One house accommodates a middle-aged couple originally from northern England, the husband of which is a retired maintenance worker in the RAF and the wife a nurse. Their son, who is in his early thirties and studies in Aberdeen, visits regularly at weekends and school holidays with his children, of whom he has shared custody with his ex-partner. The other house is rented by a couple in their thirties. Rob, a former theatre technician, met Helen, who comes from southeastern Scotland, through her work as arts manager in the local council when he came from England with a touring theatre company. They had their first child shortly after moving to Spey Bay from Fochabers in 2007.

The majority of people living in Spey Bay are middle-aged commuters or retired people, mostly couples with independent adult children, and often grandchildren, living elsewhere. Commuters work in a range of jobs, though most that I knew worked in the caring professions and service sector, particularly in the local food industry, NHS, RAF, schools and local council. There are six families with children under eighteen living in the parental home in the village. As far as I can tell, this greater proportion of older people compared to young families is also typical of the neighbouring hamlets of Bogmoor, Nether Dallachy and Upper Dallachy. Larger villages and towns like Fochabers, Buckie and Elgin seem to have higher proportions of families with children, presumably due in no small part to greater proximity to the schools and other facilities that Spey Bay and similarly tiny settlements lack.



Map 3: Spey Bay – detailed map

Home, belonging and community in Moray

As with England and Wales (Frankenberg 1957; Rapport 1993; Strathern 1981), much of the anthropology of Scotland has concerned small, often rural and politically marginal places (Cohen 1982, 1987; Ennew 1980; Macdonald 1997; Mewett 1986; Nadel-Klein 2003; cf. Charsley 1991). This reflects the fact that the village has been the principal location for ethnographic investigation since the beginning of the discipline. One major effect of this focus has been a preoccupation with questions of identity, belonging and community in the ethnography of the UK, which of course reflects old concerns in anthropology but also increasing attention to such questions in the popular discourse of Britain as elsewhere. Cohen (1982, 1987) has sensitively approached these topics through focusing on the reproduction of symbolic boundaries, based on his fieldwork in Whalsay, a remote Shetland island. Cohen describes the symbolic values of what it means to be part of Whalsay, including egalitarianism, modesty and controlled behaviour, which all prevent dominant personalities from emerging in social life and create an image of a collective to be projected outside. What he also captures, though, is the skills and attributes of individuals and the way that social life is characterised by a constant oscillation between these individualising and collectivising forces (see also Rapport 1993).

An important theme in Cohen's work is the place of history and tradition in collective and individual identity in Whalsay. This reflects a wider sense in popular discourse that Scotland is an ancient place with an important heritage (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Trevor-Roper 1983), an idea that has been thoroughly utilised by the tourism industry. The Highlands, in particular, have been romanticised since the Victorian 'discovery' of Scotland and Macdonald has noted that, in the Highlands, 'geographical marginality, empty spaces, lack of urbanisation, the Gaelic language, Highland hospitality, crofting, the apparent relatedness and closeness of the inhabitants, and the alleged slowness of everyday existence are all taken as evidence of a way of life which modernisation has largely passed by' (1997: 2; see also Basu 2007).

My fieldwork took place in an area that is less marginal than Shetland or Skye, but definitely rural and with a consciousness of its difference from other parts of the UK. Perceptions of Moray are of course influenced by wider collective imaginings of Scotland and as it borders the Highlands it shares many of the associations of timelessness and natural beauty of northern, rural

Scotland in contrast to the cosmopolitanism, culture and crime of Glasgow or Edinburgh. One striking difference between the respondents in this study and the people that both Cohen and Macdonald worked with is their relative lack of interest in Scotland's past. That is, they know the main features of Scotland's history and think of these events as important, yet generally show little interest in knowing more than basic information. In particular, as I shall show in Chapter Three, ideas of history and heritage are largely unimportant in their sense of themselves and how they might belong to Scotland. In creating a sense of belonging they instead employ images of Scotland as a natural place with a beautiful landscape and rare wildlife that lack a foregrounded sense of timelessness, suggesting that they have quite a different relationship to the contemporary world. It may also be that, as most of them are migrants to the area, they resist images of 'traditional' Scotland in order to preserve a more egalitarian sense of belonging that can be shared and accessed by all.

Much of the anthropological work on Scotland predates the founding of the devolved Scottish Parliament, established in the Scotland Act 1998. By the time my fieldwork started, however, it was well established and in fact the more significant event during the time I spent in the field was the 2007 elections after which the Scottish National Party (SNP), led by Alex Salmond, took over as a minority administration in the Scottish Government. The SNP are a centre-left party committed to re-establishing Scotland's independence from the UK, which they aim to fund by wresting control of Scotland's oil and gas resources.

Political attitudes in Scotland are markedly different from those in England and it remains a staunchly anti-Conservative area with widespread support for Labour and the Liberal Democrats (McCrone 2001). Northeast Scotland is, however, the heartland of the SNP and First Minister Salmond's constituency is Buchan, which borders Moray to the east. A few respondents – each of them English by origin – did express support for the SNP based on a mixture of dissatisfaction with Labour after the war in Iraq and with the Liberal Democrats who had just lost their popular leader, Charles Kennedy. Particularly important for them, also, was their perception that the SNP has better policies in terms of local environmental issues and Angus Robertson, the SNP MP for Moray, is known and respected for being vociferously pro-environmental.

The rivalry and at times hostility between England and Scotland is well known. Although I was warned a couple of times by relative strangers to be careful given my English accent in places such as Aberdeen and Peterhead, I was never subjected to anti-Englishness. From respondents, I only heard one

example, which was the bullying suffered by one respondent's brother at school when their family moved to Edinburgh in her teenage years. During fieldwork, the only notable incidents occurred in relation to football, which is of course a divisive issue within Scotland, in the Old Firm rivalry, just as much as in its relationships with other nations. During the 2006 World Cup, two cases made national headlines, both of which involved attacks on people wearing England shirts. A seven-year-old boy and his (Scottish) father were assaulted by a man while playing football in an Edinburgh park, while another man, who happens to be disabled, was dragged from his car and beaten while driving in Aberdeen.⁸ If what I present in the coming chapters seems too rosy in its lack of seething resentment between Scots and incomers from England and elsewhere, I can only say in my defence that that is because I did not experience this. I would suggest that the fact that Moray is an area with a recent history of quite widespread in-migration (see below) has to a large extent normalised migrants.

As Basu says, 'Scotland is not merely a place: it is an idea and an ideal' (2007: 47; see also Macdonald 1997). Basu carried out an ethnographic study with 'roots tourists', who travel to Scotland to trace their origins. Roots tourists have homogenous ideas of what Scotland is like and what it means to be Scottish. This 'imagineering' is, he says, reproduced in the interchange between the 'homeland' and the 'diaspora'. Basu describes roots tourists' 'selectiveness' in their identity-making and notes that there is an implicit ranking of different ethnicities amongst them so that Scottishness is prioritised over Englishness and Highland roots over Lowland ones. He links this with the Gaelic Renaissance and romanticisation of Scotland, showing once again the power of popular representations of Scottishness. In particular, for roots tourists, it seems that Scotland as a place and Scottishness as an identity offer up for them stability, community and tradition, which they explicitly contrast with a depiction of America and elsewhere as wracked by atomism, consumerism and meaninglessness (2007: 48; see also Basu 2005b). Basu notes that many of the examples of Scotland's historicity utilised by roots tourists are in fact the result of quite recent developments, just as its wild, natural landscape is in many ways a direct result of human activities such as the Clearances (see also Macdonald 1997: 77-80).

⁸ See *Blair condemns attacks on England supporters*, The Guardian June 21 2006; *England shirt attacks condemned*, BBC News Online June 21 2006; *Park disgrace as boy, 7, in England top punched by yob*, The Scotsman June 21 2006. The reporting of this event in itself stirred up something of a hornets' nest of national(ist) sentiment, as in *Tartan army vents its fury over 'slur' by Blair*, The Scotsman June 22 2006.

Roots tourists seek knowledge of their roots in order to construct a constitutive idea of the self. Basu argues that self-identity has come to seem increasingly malleable, whilst also being called upon as the seat of a personalised morality as 'traditional' values have eroded. With this, he argues, 'the need to "know" the self has become one of life's imperatives, whilst, at the same time, the nature of the self (its "knowability") has become increasingly complex and problematised' (2007: 160; cf. Pike 2001a: 221). Basu argues that roots tourists' attempts to find themselves in Scotland are not, therefore, about excavating the 'true self' but constructive processes, though 'the constructive nature of this project must remain obscure, and must, instead, be misrecognised by the subject as a *reconstructive* process' (2007: 162; original emphasis). Their genealogical identities are discovered not simply through historical records, but from the self through the increased identification with their homeland that comes from embodied familiarity with Scotland, its history and culture.

The example of roots tourism suggests some of the popular ideas about Scottishness in the twenty-first century and the interchange between views inside and outside the country. The people I met in Moray tended not to reproduce ideas of Scotland's particular history or to emphasise clan in their claims of belonging. Basu notes that as roots tourists become increasingly familiar with Scotland many start to reject the populist tartan and bagpipes image in favour of claims of intimate knowledge of its landscape and a superior understanding of what it 'really' means to be Scottish, which is more in keeping with the ideas of Scottishness employed by respondents here.

The contrast of the experience of respondents here with roots tourists or those in Macdonald's (1997) study in Skye suggests not only the different ideas of Scottishness that might be employed by particular individuals and groups, but also what is at stake in making such claims. This also of course implies that the ability to claim such identities is important and valuable in the twenty-first century, however much opportunities for movement and mobility seem to have opened up.⁹ The pertinent question here is what Scotland is seen to signify, so that it seems the right place to build a good life, though, as Basu makes clear, in the claiming of any identity, one should consider what is being left out of the picture as well as what is being taken up, since belonging is simultaneously an action of inclusion and exclusion (Edwards and Strathern 2000). While

⁹ Even those respondents who are 'native' to the area have typically spent time abroad and moved during their lives, so in some sense have similarly made a conscious choice to stay or return to Moray.

respondents rarely dwelt on the lives they had left behind, choosing to move to Moray rather than staying in London, Scarborough or even Munich implies that these places did not offer the right conditions for building a good life.

It is quite difficult to know with real accuracy the numbers of people from within the UK and EU who have migrated to Scotland, as they are not legally required to have visas or register their arrival with authorities. However, the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) has published in- and out-migration data for Scotland's regions, based on data from sources such as NHS GP registration. Data from the 2001 Scottish census (GROS 2001; see also GROS 2009) shows that the percentage of people living in Moray whose country of birth is Scotland is 79% while those who were born in England make up 16% of the population. This is compared to the figures for Scotland as a whole, where those born in Scotland represent 87% and English-born people are only 8% of the population. The percentage of people living in Moray who were born elsewhere in Europe is slightly higher than the Scottish average, at 1.68% compared to 1.1%, while those originating from outside the UK and Europe is higher in Scotland as a whole than Moray, 2.25% in Scotland compared to only 1.79% in Moray. Between 2002 and 2006, the peak age for migration to Moray, both in and out, was eighteen years old. The young child age group of between two and six years old is also high for both in- and out-migration, along with the early twenties and early thirties age groups. While I would not want to claim that the respondents here are representative of other migrant groups to Scotland in any straightforward way, what this shows is that, as mostly English and European migrants to Moray, they are not particularly unusual.

One of the questions raised by the experience of most of the respondents here is what it means to feel at home in a place with which one does not share primordial connections. Their experience raises the question of how such feelings are produced, as well as suggesting the important factors in creating attachments to place and people. One of the major focuses of Cohen's analysis of Whalsay is the way in which the concept of community relies on symbolic boundaries, which both confer a sense of identity to those inside (and outside) but also serve as a means of policing entry to and exit from the group (cf. Mewett 1986). As he says, in this practice, 'when reference is made to kinship, or crew membership, or neighbouring, the salient topic is not their configurations as elements of social structure. It is, rather, their efficacy as idioms which encapsulate the foundations of social knowledge' (1987: 58).

In her work in Elmdon, Essex, Strathern (1981) describes a place, like Moray, that has attracted incomers looking for the benefits of country living (see also Edwards 2000; Hughes 1997; Little 1997; Rapport 1993). In Elmdon, ideas about the village and family are connected through the concept of class, but villagers do not simply reproduce dominant ideologies of class. In Elmdon, class represents the labile intersection between 'given' and 'made' knowledge; it is both what is fixed and what may move in a person's constitution (see also Edwards and Strathern 2000). In Part Two, I will argue that, by locating themselves in relationships of care with the local environment, appreciating the landscape and cultivating close connections with other people and animals, respondents here negotiate a place for themselves in the fabric of the area and thus eclipse their lack of given ties to the land and community. One of the key ways in which they achieve this is in their relationships with the local wildlife and particularly the iconic Moray Firth dolphins, which are metonymic of their ideas of the good life and what makes a place home but are also, crucially, thought of as a *local* and natural asset. So, while they lack 'blood ties' of birth or kinship to the place, they use some of the same idioms of connectedness, mutuality and attachment to land that might just as easily be used by long-standing residents.

Scotland has a long and illustrious industrial history, though the economy shifted towards the service sector during the twentieth century, now accounting for 72% of Scottish economic activity in 2006 (Scottish Executive 2006). Scottish gross domestic product was £86 billion in 2005 (Scottish Executive 2006). Today, industries like computing, electronic engineering and biotechnology are growing rapidly, benefiting from links with Scotland's academic centres and global investment. Food and drink production is an important industry in Scotland. The Speyside whisky industry dominates Moray, with over half of Scotland's distilleries in the area. Oil was discovered in the North Sea in 1966, creating many jobs, especially in Aberdeen, which is just over sixty miles from Spey Bay. Scotland has great potential as a producer of renewable energy, and the countryside of Moray and neighbouring Aberdeenshire is dotted with wind farms and there are plans to increase energy production through developing wind, wave and tidal power.

Scotland currently has the highest employment rate of the four nations of the UK. During 2007, 80% of Moray's working age population were employed, compared to 76% for Scotland as a whole. In both cases, slightly more men than women were working (Scottish Executive 2006). In Moray, as in Scotland as a whole, the major economic sector is the service industry and administrative

and public sector jobs including education and health provide over a third of employment. Moray has slightly higher employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing and in manufacturing compared to Scotland as a whole, while it has many fewer people employed in finance and business (Scottish Executive 2006). These figures largely reflect the work of those respondents who do not have paid jobs in the wildlife centre, who work in social care, nursing, local government, food, the arts, forestry and tourism in nearby towns and larger settlements including in particular Elgin, Fochabers and Aberlour.

Though it is now in decline due to the restrictions imposed by the EU to curb over-fishing in response to a global decline in fish stocks, the fishing industry is still active along the coastline of Moray and Aberdeenshire (Nadel-Klein 2003). Unfortunately I did not come into contact with those who worked in the fishing industry except for the occasional encounter with retired fishermen visiting the wildlife centre, who might remark with wistful authority upon the number of times they had seen dolphins and whales bow-riding on fishing trips. Undoubtedly, further investigation into the relationship between members of the fishing industry and environmentalists in the area would provide some fascinating insights but this was beyond the scope of this project. While I argue that whales and dolphins provide a source of local identity in this area, it seems likely that this is a relatively recent phenomenon that has emerged alongside the decline in fishing and the political concerns about sustainability and environmental conservation that that reflects and so it would be illuminating to know more about what those in the fishing industry think about cetaceans.

It is popularly assumed that Spey fishing has prehistoric roots. The Tugnet salmon fishing station was built in 1768 and was the major industry in Spey Bay apart from the golf complex. The fishing station employed one hundred and fifty people at its peak, fishing on the river in handmade coracles. Originally, salmon was salted for preservation, but in the nineteenth century the industry turned to ice packing. Tugnet icehouse, reputed to be the largest in Scotland, was built in 1830. It was used to store the ice, cut from the river in winter, in which the fish were packed before being sent south towards London on the railway, which ran along the Moray Firth coast and stopped just south of Spey Bay itself.

The salmon fishing operation closed in 1991. Fittingly, this same complex of ashlar buildings is still the home of the major contemporary industry in the village, the wildlife centre, which opened in 1997. Reflecting on the contrasts between these kinds of work suggests much about the way that work

has changed in this village. It also speaks to wider changes in the area, as the Moray Firth coast has shifted from being focused on the North Sea fishing industry to becoming associated with leisure and tourism. While deep-sea trawlers are still common sights in the harbours and ports along the coast, they are increasingly likely to be moored next to wildlife-watching tour boats (some of which are converted from old fishing boats) and even in some places private leisure craft.¹⁰ Clearly, these shifts in industry will have had significant effects on popular and local perceptions of the area and the people who live there and must therefore be implicated in the current perception amongst respondents and others that this is a place that offers a good life.



Figure 3: One side of Fochabers town square with the larger of its churches.

Surrogacy: Public, legal and anthropological representations

Britain is known as a country whose attitude to reproductive technology and biomedicine is permissive yet strictly regulated (Franklin 2007). Innovations in this field tend to provoke public controversy and media coverage, which has been analysed by anthropologists (Cannell 1990; Edwards et al 1993; Rivière

¹⁰ Spey Bay actually lacks a harbour. The nearest harbour is in Buckie, about seven miles eastwards.

1985; Shore 1992; Strathern 1992b, Wolfram 1989). The law relating to biomedicine and reproductive technology in the UK is based on the report of the 1984 Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology, or Warnock Report. As the media coverage and the fact that the Warnock Report was chaired by a moral philosopher suggest, assisted conception and embryological research raise profound ethical questions for British people.¹¹

According to Childlessness Overcome Through Surrogacy (COTS), the major non-profit support group for British people involved in surrogacy, as of 2007, there have been over six hundred births to surrogate mothers in the UK (COTS website). Uptake of surrogacy is relatively low in Scotland and certainly proportionally much lower than England and Wales (GROS n.d.). Upon entering the field, I was keen to investigate whether this reflected hostility to the practice. In fact, I did not find this, but instead interviewees' responses were marked by their attempts to empathise and understand the perspectives of all parties to surrogacy arrangements. My decision to study 'ordinary' people's ideas about surrogacy rather than those involved in the process themselves was partly a practical one due to this low uptake. I also wanted to pursue the idea that surrogacy is a topic about which public and media coverage is disproportionately large, suggesting that it indexes wider cultural anxieties.

I decided to focus my study narrowly on surrogacy as opposed to reproductive technologies in general as I felt that, compared to the other relatively established assisted conception techniques of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and sperm and egg donation, this is a topic that has been relatively under-theorised in the British context, despite the fact that it seems to be particularly provocative. In particular, surrogacy seemed to me to offer up enticing opportunities to get at British people's ideas about motherhood, femininity and money. I had also assumed that, given its contentious treatment in public discourse, surrogacy would provoke lively debate and thus act as a lightning rod for sensitive and even divisive attitudes. As will become evident, though, this naïve assumption was quickly overturned by respondents' sophisticated responses.

¹¹ Surrogacy has received varied coverage in Western popular culture. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1992) is a dystopian vision of a socially and religiously conservative society in which 'handmaids' provide the reproductive labour for higher status couples inspired by the Biblical story of Hagar, Abraham's handmaiden and is illustrative of a wider trend in contemporary culture to use surrogacy and other forms of reproductive technology to stand for unsettling scientific progress. In British popular culture surrogacy tends to be relegated to the more sensationalist plotlines of television soap operas.

Surrogacy is interesting because it is a practice that seems to represent particular changes in society, economics and demography, but also contemporary currents of thought. In addition to this, while anthropologists have worked on the public and media representations of surrogacy and other assisted conception techniques and on the experience of those in surrogacy arrangements, relatively little work has been done on the ideas of laypeople who are not personally involved in surrogacy (although see Edwards 2000; Hirsch 1993). My ethnography captures this discourse 'in between' public representation and personal experience. As such, one of the questions informing this study is whether media, legal and academic debate accurately reflects lay attitudes to this practice. This is a question with some significance given that the British approach to legislation around surrogacy has been to try and represent public attitudes, as in Warnock's soliciting of laypeople's testimonies to inform the deliberations of her Report.

'Traditional' surrogacy, in which a surrogate mother is inseminated with the intending father's sperm, predates IVF, though, like artificial insemination (AI) itself (which started to be used in humans in the 1930s), it is difficult to know whether it was in fact practised historically.¹² 'Gestational', or 'host' surrogacy, in which eggs and sperm from the intending parents are fertilised *in vitro* and implanted in a surrogate mother's womb, is a more recent innovation that only started to be practised once IVF became an established procedure. As the birth of Louise Brown, the world's first 'test tube baby', in Oldham in northwest England in 1978 suggests, Britain has long been at the forefront of reproductive medicine. Scottish scientists and research institutes have been heavily involved in these developments and there is a sizeable biotechnology industry in Scotland and groundbreaking embryological research including, most famously, the birth of Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned animal, at the Roslin Institute on the outskirts of Edinburgh in 1996.

Demand for surrogacy and other assisted conception techniques not only suggests important ideas about reproduction, genetics and relatedness for British people, but also reflects the practical consequences of a rapid decline in children available for adoption with the advent of hormonal contraception and legalisation of abortion in the UK (except Northern Ireland) in 1967. In 2006, 418 adoptions took place in Scotland, half the number in the early 1990s and only a

¹² The first recorded surrogacy contract in the USA was made in the late 1970s, arranged by (in)famous American surrogacy 'broker', Noel Keane (see Markens 1007; Satz 1992: 122; Stanworth 1987a: 27).

quarter of the average figure in the 1970s (GROS 2008b). Of these 418 children, 11% were aged under two years and most of these were adopted by non-relatives, compared to 30% of the overall figure being adopted by step-parents. This again points to a demographic shift, as adoption becomes less a 'solution' to childlessness and more a response to changing family constitutions.

The first 'commercial' surrogate mother in the UK was Kim Cotton, a mother of two who gave birth to a baby girl in London for an anonymous infertile Swedish couple who paid her £6,500 in 1985. This was arranged by an American agency working in southeast England. Cotton's case provoked a media furore and led to the establishment of the Surrogacy Arrangements Act (1985). Cotton later went on to be an unpaid, or 'altruistic', surrogate for a friend and founded COTS. According to the Surrogacy Arrangements Act, it is illegal in the UK to initiate or negotiate a surrogacy arrangement 'on a commercial basis', or to cause anyone else to do so (1985: 2). Both surrogates and intending parents are also prohibited from advertising in order to broker a surrogacy arrangement and anyone publishing surrogacy adverts in the UK is breaking the law (1985: 3-4). As this suggests, while in popular usage, 'commercial surrogacy' tends to mean any sort of surrogacy arrangement in which the surrogate mother is paid more than a token amount or reimbursed for costs directly related to the pregnancy, in British law it specifically means those arrangements which have been 'brokered' by a third party agent.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990: 36 [1A]) amended the Surrogacy Arrangements Act, adding that 'No surrogacy arrangement is enforceable by or against any of the persons making it'.¹³ This raises thorny questions about who should look after a child born through surrogacy if a surrogate changes her mind about handing it over to the intending parents. In UK law, the 'carrying mother' of a child is always its legal mother. Therefore, once a child is born, the intending parents must wait six weeks before applying for a Parental Order, which gives them full and permanent rights over the child; the surrogate relinquishes all rights over her at this point. Also enshrined in the 1990 Act is a proviso that Parental Orders will only be granted when payment between parties to a surrogacy arrangement has not exceeded 'expenses reasonably incurred' (1990: 30[7]). As such, payment of surrogates is not illegal *per se*, but if intending parents give surrogates more than 'reasonable

¹³ In contrast to some states in the US, where surrogacy contracts are legally enforceable, the UK has not experienced the fraught legal battles between surrogates and intending parents as in the Baby M case (see Chesler 1990; Dolgin 1994), since intending parents would have little legal basis to contest a surrogate mother's claim to custody of the child.

expenses', they can lose any parental rights over the child, which is clearly a strong incentive to comply with these guidelines. Intending parents must also be married, over eighteen years old and at least one of them should be genetically related to the child for a Parental Order to be granted. Otherwise, they must apply to adopt the child.

In her essay on British public attitudes to surrogacy as seen through the reaction to the Kim Cotton case, Cannell has described the importance of the assumption that the family is a natural phenomenon that comes under threat in the case of surrogacy, in which the normal connection between sex and reproduction has apparently been severed and says that these debates reflect a 'gendered ideological division in advanced capitalism ... between a world of work and a world of the family, to which it is opposed' (1990: 670; see also Markens 2007). As Cannell's work suggests, in the UK as elsewhere, surrogacy has been treated as an anomalous practice that raises profound questions about the 'naturalness' of kinship, reproduction and gender.

There have been a handful of anthropological studies with those involved in surrogacy arrangements. Most notable amongst these is Ragoné's (1994) study of commercial surrogacy agencies in America. In her ethnography she describes many of the strategies that surrogates, intending parents and programme directors employ to normalise and naturalise the surrogacy process in order to make the arrangements successful and to counter the threats to cultural axioms that surrogacy represents. These threats include the ideas that surrogacy 'splits' motherhood into biological and social components; that it is tantamount to infidelity between the intending father and surrogate mother; that surrogates are 'selling' children or at least their reproductive capacities; that intending parents are 'buying' a child or 'renting' a womb and that surrogates are forced to abandon 'their' babies.

Roberts also describes the way that American surrogates, intending parents and clinicians challenge dominant ideas that technology threatens and corrupts the natural processes of reproduction to re-establish links between the foetus and intending parents and sever any tie between the surrogate and the child she is carrying. She observed that many surrogates subvert the critical language of anti-surrogacy writers by describing themselves as 'baby machines' and 'vessels'. This has the effect of implying that the intending parents' relationship to the child is more natural than the surrogate's while also suggesting the surrogate's hyperfemininity in contrast to the depictions of surrogates by some critics as unfeminine and unnatural women who reject

maternity (1998: 206). Teman (2003) has written about similar practices in Israeli surrogacy clinics, where various strategies are used to treat the intending mother as the mother, for example in her experiencing couvade-like symptoms of pregnancy. These strategies naturalise the arrangement, equalise the relationship between the two mothers and allow for the intending mother to claim authoritative knowledge through her body. Thompson (2001) has also shown the work of 'strategic naturalizing' that goes on in American infertility clinics.

Many who object to surrogacy reflect the problematic nature of the practice by using different terms such as 'birth mother' or placing quotation marks around the word, 'surrogate', implying that a surrogate mother is the child's *de facto* mother and that a denial of her natural rights as the woman who has gestated and given birth to a child is the result of gender inequality. Arguing that Euro-American thinking contains within it mechanisms to integrate new knowledge about things like surrogacy, Strathern says that the fact that the woman who gestates the child quickly became known as the surrogate in the UK 'showed an openness to new possibilities long *before* they became overtly debated' (2003: 286; original emphasis). She identifies a tendency in Euro-American thinking to distinguish between two orders of reality, creating meaning 'by dividing phenomena into those whose meaning is self-evident or self-signifying and those whose meaning has to be made explicit by reference to what is being signified', an argument that has echoes with her work in Elmdon (1981).

In the case of surrogacy, contests over whether a woman is a surrogate only emerge when the relationship breaks down and she asserts herself as the 'real' mother. The problem that surrogacy presents, therefore, is that it creates a contest about reality. When contested in this way, Strathern argues, appeal is made to further 'foundations' to ground assertions about reality, but in so doing, their foundational status is destabilised. So, 'Disputes over carrying and birth motherhood show the point at which biology ceases to be an axiomatic foundation for motherhood – not because 'social' motherhood is opposed to 'biological' motherhood, but because *what is biological about biological motherhood* has to be made explicit' (2003: 291; original emphasis).

Anderson's piece, *Is Women's Labor a Commodity?* exemplifies the explosion of popular and academic polemic against commercial surrogacy during the 1980s and 1990s:

The case of commercial surrogacy raises deep concerns about the proper scope of the market in modern industrial societies. ... When market norms are applied to the ways we allocate and understand parental rights and responsibilities, children are reduced from subjects of love to objects of use. When market norms are applied to the ways we treat and understand women's reproductive labor, women are reduced from subjects of respect and consideration to objects of use. If we are to retain the capacity to value children and women in ways consistent with a rich conception of human flourishing, we must resist the encroachment of the market upon the sphere of reproductive labor. Women's labor is *not* a commodity. (Anderson 1990: 91-2; original emphasis)

Anderson's argument reflects a Kantian view of humans as properly treated as ends in themselves rather than means (see also Blyth and Potter 2003; Rae 1994; Shannon 1988), based on the assumption that humans are properly 'above' the market sphere. Ironically, this separation of persons and things has been identified as an attribute of capitalism (Parry and Bloch 1989).

For Anderson, commercial surrogacy's 'commodification' of female reproductive labour and of children is fundamentally degrading. Satz (1992) rejects this 'asymmetry thesis' in its treatment of reproductive labour as a special case. For her, Anderson's objections rest on an essentialist view of women, motherhood and maternal bonding. Satz argues that the sale of reproductive labour is not *ipso facto* degrading, but that in a context of 'pervasive gender inequality' (1992: 109-10), surrogacy contracts 'will turn women's labor into something that is used and controlled by others and will reinforce gender stereotypes that have been used to justify the unequal treatment of women' (1992: 123-4).

Many writers who reject Anderson's arguments have pointed out that much anti-commercial surrogacy polemic rests on the assumption that the surrogate mother is the 'real' mother (Wilkinson 2003: 145); a woman can only be alienated from a child if it belongs to her in the first place. It also implies a view that 'altruism' preserves the inalienability of things while payment makes them alienable, reinforcing dichotomous thinking about gifts and commodities. Anderson and other anti-surrogacy writers argue from the point of view that markets are inevitably disempowering and exploitative of women in particular. This argument has been rejected as both difficult to show empirically and insufficient basis for a paternalistic prohibition of surrogacy (Wertheimer 1992;

Wilkinson 2003). As quite a few writers suggest, if women turn to surrogacy out of poverty and a lack of options based on gender inequality, then it may be reprehensible to limit their options further by prohibiting commercial surrogacy.

Parry and Bloch argue that 'in order to understand the way in which money is viewed it is vitally important to understand the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated' (1989: 1). Because of a failure to do this, they say, economic anthropologists 'have commonly fallen into the trap of attributing to money in general what is in fact a specific set of meanings which derive from our own culture' (1989: 1). Anti-surrogacy polemic betrays specific assumptions about what 'market norms' entail and imply that doing something for love and doing something for money are fundamentally at odds with each other. Healy (2006) has shown, through his discussion of the social organisation of blood and organ distribution systems, the cultural work employed by organisations in order to sustain a sense of altruism. This preserves a culturally acceptable spirit of altruism in order to separate human goods from the marketplace and ensures a steady supply of such goods through promoting a sense of social responsibility (see also Tutton 2002: 528). Like Zelizer's (1997, 2005; see also Miller 1998) important work on money and social life, Healy shows the impossibility of separating out gifts and commodities, love and money and altruism and self-interest in reality while also attesting to the persistent significance of such distinctions in ethical rhetoric.

One of the most interesting aspects of surrogacy for anthropologists is the way it highlights how people in western, capitalist societies think about money, materialism and commodities. In Schneider's 'cultural account' of American kinship, the opposition between love and money is fundamental. For Americans, 'Money is material, it is power, it is impersonal and unqualified by considerations of sentiment or morality' while 'Love is not material. It is highly personal and is beset with qualifications and considerations of sentiment and morality' (1980: 48). While Schneider's account has been criticised on the grounds that it is difficult and/or unhelpful to isolate such a 'pure' account (Schneider 1984; Yanagisako 1978; Yanagisako and Delaney 1994), many of the symbols of American kinship that he identifies endure in popular assumptions about the basis of American, and British and western European, kinship thinking, as we see in the polemic surrounding commercial surrogacy. Ideas about maternal bonding, materialism and altruism relate to concerns about the surrogate mother's motivation. This is interesting anthropologically since, by making claims about the ethics of surrogacy and particularly the

surrogate mother, the claim-maker is also 'performing' her own ethical stance. One of the points of connection between respondents' ideas about surrogacy and their everyday practice, then, is their ideas about human motive and how this intersects with money, choice and morality.

Respondents felt that the best motive for a surrogate mother would be to help another to have a child. This assumption that 'altruism' is the best motive for surrogates reflects the value of altruism, along with compassion and love, for them. Philosophical models of altruism distinguish between generalised altruism in which an individual acts with others' interests in mind and supererogatory altruism, in which this is extended to actions for others without regard for oneself. The first type, avoiding harming others, is simply a part of one's duty as one living amongst others, whilst the latter is an effort to directly help others (Seglow 2002: 2). Altruistic surrogacy seems, as it is framed in public discourse, to lean towards the more supererogatory end of the altruistic spectrum, as pregnancy and labour are, despite the improvements of modern obstetrical medicine, onerous bodily processes with occasionally fatal consequences for mother and/or child. 'Pure' altruism is a cultural ideal, much like the pure gift, but real-life decisions by particular individuals will necessarily entail a complex intermixing of motives that may be construed as 'altruistic' or 'selfish' according to when, where and by whom such assessments are made. While apparently aimed at the common good, purely altruistic or self-sacrificial actions, meanwhile, may be excessive and therefore in some sense anti-social (Douglas 1990).

Proponents of altruistic surrogacy often invoke the idea of the gift as a means of placing this 'exchange' on acceptable moral ground. Overlapping altruism and gift-giving in this way reinforces surrogacy's acceptability since in the UK as elsewhere in the Western world, the motives for giving are typically viewed as positive, warm and non-instrumental, belonging to the world of affective relationships between friends, lovers and kin (Carrier 1990, 1995, 1997; Strathern 2003). This is in contrast to Mauss' (1990; Douglas 1990) original point that gift exchange also reproduces hierarchy, expresses aggression and creates bonds of obligation. In Ragoné's study, the surrogates claimed that, although they were paid, they were motivated by altruism (1994: 59) and the agents in her study found gift rhetoric invaluable in recruiting surrogates (1994: 32). Describing surrogacy as 'the gift of life' is, she found, beneficial to all parties in ensuring the 'success' of the arrangement and doing least to threaten cultural norms. Ragoné's findings complicate assumed

dichotomies between commercial and altruistic surrogacy, as the 'altruistic' gift becomes entangled in what is also a commercial exchange.

As Parry says, 'The interested exchange and the disinterested gift ... emerge as two sides of the same coin' (1986: 458) – an elaborated ideology of the pure gift arises in a context of an advanced division of labour, a significant commercial sector and a 'salvationist' religious milieu. In his insightful reading of Mauss, Parry reminds us that attempts to quantify self-interest and disinterest (or 'altruism') in gift exchanges miss the point that such a distinction is itself a feature of the context (1986: 458; see also Strathern 1992a: 2; cf. Konrad 2005). This ethnography provides a window onto some of the realities of living in a cultural context framed by a dichotomy between gifts and commodities (cf. Strathern 1988) and the importance of nuanced judgements in balancing out such ideals in real life.

Ragoné (1994: 51) says, 'The tendency to cast surrogates' intentions into dichotomous, often antagonistic, categories such as either altruism or monetary gain may reveal more about American culture than it does about surrogacy itself'; the same point can be made for the UK. In the public discourse around surrogacy and assisted conception of the 1980s and 1990s, altruism was defined as a distinctly British value (Wolfram 1989), bolstered by rhetorical association with the gift. Titmuss' study of blood donation systems provides a related example of the power of altruistic and anti-commercial rhetoric in the UK. He concluded that, overall, the 'altruistic' model of blood donation as used in Britain is a healthier and more efficient basis for a transfusion service than the largely commercial one in place in the USA at the time. This conclusion is not a morally neutral one. For Titmuss, blood donation motivated by altruism and voluntarism, which for him is best exemplified by the British system, is a fundamental goal of public policy *and* the 'right' way for people to behave:

Where are the lines to be drawn – can indeed any lines at all be pragmatically drawn – if human blood is to be legitimated as a consumption good? To search for an identity and sphere of concern for social policy would therefore be to search for the non-existent. All policy would become in the end economic policy and the only values that would count would be those that could be measured in terms of money and pursued in the dialectic of hedonism. Each individual would act egotistically for the good of all by selling his blood for what the market would pay. To abolish the moral choice of giving to strangers could lead

to an ideology to end all ideologies. (1997: 58)

Despite his belief in a natural altruistic impulse (1997: 311), paid blood donation systems are, says Titmuss, one sign of a potentially totalising economistic world-view. As he says, differences in blood donation systems tell us ‘something about the quality of relationships and of human values prevailing in a society’ (1997: 59), and his book is in itself an interesting artefact of British attitudes to money and human motive in the post-war era. Of course, such attitudes have changed since Titmuss was writing. The Thatcher period was experienced by almost all respondents and many of the younger ones grew up in it. Thatcher’s policies of course had seismic effects on British models of money, choice and political economy (see Franklin 1997; Strathern 1992a), though it is worth noting that she was always deeply unpopular in Scotland and indeed the SNP are particularly resistant to the more Thatcherite policies of the contemporary Labour party in Westminster such as public-private initiatives in the health sector.¹⁴

Kinship, knowledge and morality

The people I have defined here as respondents refer to the sixty people I regularly talked to and spent time with, including those with whom I lived and worked, so they include those I interviewed but not those visitors I met briefly such as tourists in the wildlife centre, though I will occasionally refer to these more fleeting acquaintances. Only a third of respondents are male, which in part reflects the fact that more women than men work in the wildlife centre, but may also be related to my own gender and the perception of a few that I was interested in “women’s issues”. 30% of respondents are parents, though only a third of those work in the wildlife centre themselves (as volunteers). Respondents are evenly split in numbers who are divorced and those who are married, both representing 18% each. These percentages reflect past and current status, so some people will fit into both categories if this is their second marriage. Nearly 40% of respondents are single and nearly a third are in long-term relationships. Two respondents are widowed, but both now have new

¹⁴ See, for example, *Plans to end private cash for NHS*, BBC website 21st June 2007

partners. Only three respondents' parents are divorced. Within the group of respondents, there are eight couples. All of the respondents' current relationships are heterosexual, though a few have been in single-sex relationships at some point in their lives.

In *Born and Bred*, Edwards illustrates through a range of examples how Bacup people 'put to work' both 'born' and 'bred' categories of knowledge to make certain claims and connections:

The power of Born and Bred kinship is in its hybridity, and the kinds of connection made through the interplay between being born and being bred are robust and ubiquitous. Focusing on the way in which idioms of relatedness, such as birth and breeding, are put to work by residents in the north of England towards the end of the twentieth century reveals the cultural repertoire from which different kinds of experts select. As experts in kinship, the people whose words I have borrowed in this book mobilize different strands of connectedness: strands they trace through such things as blood, or genes, or care, or love and which together make up kinship. Perspectives (vantage points) are created when one set of connections is made instead of another. And perspectives can be congealed and often are for particular political purposes. Thus for another kind of expert (say in science) it may be instrumental to emphasize one set of connections over and above another. But to do this – to extract just one strand of kinship thinking and present it as the whole story – is partisan. The kind of kinship on which I have focused is generated from the interplay between born and bred perhaps couched in terms of nature and nurture, or the biological and the social. It not only makes fine differentiations between categories of person and relationship, but also lumps them together in broad encompassing categories. It formulates "communities" as well as "families", and it connects people to, and disconnects them from, places, pasts, and each other. And it is not confined to Bacup. (2000: 248)

I have quoted this passage at length because it is a clear and thorough summary of Edwards' model. In addition to illustrating the interplay and mixedness of given and made knowledge in British kinship, it makes clear some of the effects of this model. In particular, Edwards describes born and bred kinship as 'robust and ubiquitous' but also as mobile, generative, differentiating,

homogenising, connective and disconnective, capturing the way that it contains within it sometimes contradictory meanings. Importantly, she shows also the way that this model can be used to make claims that are both 'partisan' and individualising but also collective and 'encompassing'.

Of course, Moray and Lancashire are quite different places.¹⁵ In addition to the different national, political and historical contexts of northwest England and northeast Scotland, the people Edwards worked with in Bacup were predominantly working class, while the respondents in this study are almost all middle-class.¹⁶ However, they are both places which seem to offer elements of the rural idyll or good life to incomers. Despite the differences, it seems that Edwards is correct to assert that the born and bred model of thinking is identifiable further afield than Bacup. In Moray, I found that people similarly drew upon and played with given and made domains of knowledge and made connections between the familiar and unfamiliar in discussing surrogacy. Making connections in this way was a regular part of their claim-making as well as a means of suggesting implications and it permeated speech not only at the level of ideas, but also in the very fabric of what was said, which was frequently marked by tropic language.

Describing the born and bred model of kinship as 'robust' suggests its force and Edwards notes the relationship between knowledge and authority. In *The Sport of Kings*, Cassidy (2002; see also Borneman 1988) extends these points by depicting the close connection between kinship and power in Newmarket. Horseracing people are highly selective about 'recognising' their kin and success in racing may be just as important as genealogy in making kinship. Newmarket is a place marked by status difference, where mobility and communication between different groups is discouraged and Cassidy carefully delineates the various ways in which the structure of this society is reproduced and how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are maintained, largely through ideas about kinship and reproduction as seen through the particular lens of pedigree and Thoroughbred breeding.

In Newmarket, women and men are conceptualised as different based on their physical attributes and Cassidy says that 'using a primarily physical idiom of gender has eased the crossover of ideas from animals to men and

¹⁵ Having said this, one respondent who volunteered in the wildlife centre comes from Wigan in Lancashire and I met quite a lot of people in Moray who originated in Yorkshire, which borders Lancashire, though given the traditional rivalry between the two counties they would no doubt be the first to claim the differences between them.

¹⁶ If asked to categorise the respondents in this study in Bacupian categories, they would perhaps fit best in the subgroup of 'th'ippies'.

women, so common in Newmarket ... Women are associated with birth and nurturing, perceived as “natural” processes, but “nature” is also powerful and violent and ... associated with male virility’ (2002: 37). Just as the ‘empty’ mare is ‘covered’ by the stallion and mares are thought to contribute weakness and temperament to foals that must be compensated for by the strength of the stallion, women in Newmarket can only access success through marrying or being born into already successful families (2002: 38).

Theories of reproduction are central to the maintenance and regulation of the horseracing world, as in other social worlds. In Newmarket, this relies on the use of a specific and highly elaborated idiom of breeding, but the wider point, that ideas about kinship and procreation reproduce normative ideas about gender, remains salient (see also Davis-Floyd 1992; Delaney 1986; Franklin 1997; Ginsburg 1989; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Konrad 2005; Martin 1991, 2001; McKinnon 1994; Paxson 2004; Ragoné 1994; Rapp 1999a; Stanworth 1987a). In Part One, we shall see in particular that, in making speculative judgements about the ethics of surrogacy, respondents frequently supported their claims with reference to normative ideas of motherhood and different gendered roles for men and women in parenthood. This is one place in which specific ideas about gender and kinship expressed by respondents here, particularly their ideas about altruism, love, responsibility and emotionality, can be seen. I will take up these points in Part Two in exploring further how such ideas are expressed through experiences of work and in people’s relationships with and ideas about cetaceans.

Edwards describes Bacup people’s anxiety about nameless donated gametes and embryos uprooted from their kinship connections and relational context while removed from parental bodies and manipulated in clinics: ‘The notion of moral obligation ... emerges when people talk about the vulnerability of detached entities such as gametes and embryos. ... Responsibility goes with connection and clinicians, for example, are unconnected to the embryo and gametes with which they work and are not therefore axiomatically responsible for them’ (2000: 229). In this and other examples, Edwards’ co-conversationalists seem to me to be talking not only about connections or contextualising novel reproductive practices by linking them up with their own experience, but also expressing moral judgements (see Hirsch 1993). This is further implied by Edwards’ related observation that ‘roots’ provide examples and experience that contribute to people’s character (2000: 216).

It is my view that kinship is inextricably linked with morality and that this should be reflected in anthropological analysis, yet the development of the subfield within anthropology, especially through the structural-functionalist models of the earlier twentieth century, has led to a situation in which this point has at times been neglected in favour of a focus on 'natural facts' and juridical function. In Western societies, kinship has been assumed to exist in a separate, private realm that can be isolated from other domains like politics, economics and religion; the same shift marks our perception of morality. Surrogacy is interesting as it is a practice that seems to fit most comfortably within the 'private' domains of kinship and morality or ethics, yet it is explicitly regulated by the State. Through my analysis here, I will investigate how kinship acts as a site of moral authority in order to reunite the common concerns of kinship and morality and to show that neither can be relegated to the private domain since the way that people think about these issues can be an expression of wider concerns as well as a means of reproducing particular ideologies.

As I will demonstrate, respondents treated surrogacy as an ethical issue, which, since they are not personally involved in it, provoked them to make speculative moral judgements about the practice and motives of those who might become involved in surrogacy arrangements. Respondents' ideas about surrogacy therefore provide an opportunity to explore further the relationship between kinship and morality, and how this is crosscut with normative ideas about gender. British models of kinship, as elsewhere, not only provide the bases for claims of belonging or a means of creating and maintaining connections between people, but also model moral values and proper behaviour between people.

In her work on British ova donation Konrad (2005) describes relations between anonymous donors and recipients as 'transilient'. Transilience – literally, leaping across – is in Konrad's usage a notion of linkage and extension between people and across time and space. In contrast to Maussian notions of reciprocity, an Ego-centric kinship model and the idea of the alienable individual with property-like rights over her body parts, she shows how anonymous recipients and donors make 'irrelational kinship' between themselves and others through the webs of relations, real and imagined, known and unknown, that connect them through the act of donating part of oneself. While Konrad describes the experiences of those personally involved in anonymous donation, her ideas about transilience and irrelational kinship may have some relevance in this context of a group of unrelated people whose relationships to each other

have many of the qualities of relations between kin. In particular, I would suggest that respondents' relationships not only with other people, but also with the natural world and animals, have a transilient nature. These people are located in extensive relational networks premised on qualities of altruism, love and care with people, animals and places to which they mostly do not have biogenetic ties. Especially since they use the idioms of kinship, nature and community to talk about these relationships, it is perhaps therefore appropriate to describe this as a form of irrelational kinship.

The power of nature

The fact that Spey Bay contains an official nature reserve points to the importance of conceptions of nature in this ethnography, and this is one particular place where we can see most clearly the fertile intersections between respondents' ideas about surrogacy on the one hand and their everyday practice building good lives on the other. In the coming chapters I will trace these intersections in order to demonstrate my point that ideas about surrogacy and other similar ethical issues need not be divorced from their cultural context. As I started to talk to them about surrogacy and participate in their everyday lives, I noticed that respondents have particular and specific ways of thinking about and acting towards nature and the natural world and it quickly became clear to me that to leave this out of my account of their views on surrogacy would be analytically sterile.

One of the key contributions of anthropologists in recent decades has been their thorough reconsideration of nature as a variable, contingent category that encompasses many different meanings, not just in the contrasts between Western and non-Western societies (Descola and Pálsson 1996; Strathern 1980), but also within Western societies (Franklin 2003; Franklin et al 2000; Gould 2005; James 1993; Keller 2008; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Strathern 1992a, 1992b, 2003; Thompson 2001, 2002; Tsing 1994; Yanagisako and Delaney 1994). That nature is a polysemous category is evident from considering the many meanings that it has in the English language alone (Cronon 1996; Franklin 1997: 54; Keller 2008: 118; Schneider 1980). Williams (1983: 221-224) was an early contributor here and identified nature's various personifications in British thought as a god or king associated with natural forces

and potential for destruction, as a lawyer whose workings are rational and can be discovered by science, as the innocent and beautiful world untainted by human activity exemplified by the English countryside and as selective breeding and survival of the fittest. As Keller (2008) argues, blurring nature's sometimes disparate meanings is an inherent feature of Euro-American thinking about this concept.

In this study, the distinction, and constant elision of, ideas of naturalness and the natural world is salient and in juxtaposing respondents' various ideas about nature, from representations of local wildlife to their consumption of natural foods to claims about maternal bonding, we will see how naturalness, nature and the natural world are implicated in each other, as well as the historically and culturally specific nature of their ideas about nature and the natural world. Respondents are particularly influenced by environmentalist conceptualisations of nature. Of course, the environmental or green movement by no means presents a monolithic vision of nature, encompassing a spectrum of views. 'Nature' is nonetheless central to the movement and in many sense what holds it together. It is therefore particularly interesting to consider how it works in the lives and thinking of a group of people for whom it is so vital.

Environmentalism has begun to receive sustained interest in anthropology alongside its increasingly greater purchase on Western, and to some extent non-Western, politics, economy and culture (see Berglund 1998; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Milton 1993). Since the Second World War, the green movement has grown from its initial (and often patronising and dismissive) associations with the hippie counterculture to become a staple of the mainstream political agenda that crosses party political lines. Theorists have shown how the contingent meanings of nature may be employed to support particular claims and in order to effect specific aims by those working in the environmentalist movement and with animals (Thompson 2002; Yearley 1993). As these studies suggest, much is at stake in making claims about, with and on nature.

Most of the respondents in this study work in nature as paid staff or volunteers in the wildlife centre in Spey Bay. Many other people I met during fieldwork also making a living from nature, most obviously the wildlife-watching tour operators in the area, but also people from such disparate fields as forestry management, tourism, food, outdoor education and the arts. Even whisky distillers have come to associate their industry with images of natural purity and the traditional use of natural resources (see, for example, the Glenfiddich

website). As noted, the presence of rare wildlife in Moray provides local people with ideas about who they are and the special nature of the place they live in. One way this is evident is in how people claim a connection to nature and the natural world through their work, whether in making art that demonstrates an appreciation for the landscape and environment, sharing the 'magical' experience of watching dolphins in the wild with tourists or in the more nebulous sense that the 'slower' pace of life and closer proximity to wildlife in this part of the world facilitates a more natural way of living and working.

The importance of ideas about nature and the natural world in people's lives have been particularly successfully demonstrated by anthropological studies of relationships between people and animals. As Cassidy has shown for horses and as we will see in respondents' contingent and nuanced ideas about cetaceans, the animals that human groups identify with may be thought of as family at one moment and an alien species at another and such ideas can reproduce particular ideologies about gender, class and reproduction in humans. Like the natural world more generally, animals are fecund with sometimes contradictory meanings:

Whether one believes that a horse can be loyal or brave, is secondary to the observation that, in Newmarket, horses are both, and also naughty, funny, wicked and spiteful. They are at times "people just like us" and at others "man's noblest creation". It is the tension between these two positions that enables horses in Newmarket to be such flexible resources for thinking about relations between humans and between humans and nature. (Cassidy 2002: 129)

In a review of work on human-animal relations in anthropology, Mullin (1999) notes the relationship between trends in anthropological thinking and the treatment of animals in ethnography. She sees the 'windows and mirrors' approach as a productive one, and makes the related point that, just as ethnographic accounts of Western kinship can help expose some of the underlying assumptions of anthropologists that have informed kinship theory (Bouquet 1993; Edwards 2000; Franklin 1997), ethnographic explication of the ways that people think about the other species in their lives similarly reflect the preoccupations of social science. So, an interest in identity politics and reflexivity in the social sciences along with a concurrent increase in the influence

of environmentalist discourse has gone alongside a recent mushrooming of attention paid to the relations between people and animals.

As Franklin (1997, 2003, 2007) has shown, ideas about nature and the natural are fundamental not only to how Euro-Americans think about the natural world and animals, but also to kinship and reproduction (see also Becker 1994; Bouquet 1993; Cannell 1990; Carsten 2000a; Cassidy 2002; Davis-Floyd 1992; Delaney 1986; Dolgin 1994; Edwards 2000; Ginsburg 1989; Hayden 1995; Hirsch 1993; Martin 1991, 2001; Ragoné 1994; Rapp 1994; Schneider 1980; Strathern 1992a, 1992b, 2003; Thompson 2001; Tsing 1994; Yanagisako and Delaney 1994). Franklin argues that understanding the idiom of naturalness is essential to grasping Anglo-American cultures (1997: 57), and this is particularly acute given the close connections that she identifies between anthropologists' own ideas about nature in reproduction and kinship and what they find in their ethnographies, as was particularly evident in the Virgin Birth debate (see Leach 1969; Delaney 1986; Shore 1992). Franklin asks, 'How might ethnographic representation work in relation to the production of cultural theory, when the ethnographic subjects share the same confusions as the anthropologists?' (1997: 72) This is a pressing question for any anthropologist of Britain attempting to handle nature – and of course other key concepts in British culture – which it would be unwise to ignore.

Tsing (1994: 114) argues for American culture, and this can be extended to the UK, that nature fills in gaps in our knowledge, providing a basis for understanding that which is apparently unknowable. Defining that which is natural and unnatural is an exercise of power, therefore one of the key questions that I address in this thesis is, what are the effects of claiming that something is natural or unnatural? A major contribution of anthropological theory on kinship and reproduction in the last few decades has been to show the workings of power in human relationships with the natural world and the way that nature may be used to legitimise and reproduce inequality. For Yanagisako and Delaney, nature has picked up where Christianity left off after the decline of institutionalised religion in western European and North American societies: 'what was left was a rule-governed Nature, Nature stripped of its cosmological moorings and therefore presumably generalizable to all peoples. Rather than the dichotomy between the natural and supernatural, what was left was "nature" vs. what man did with it – namely, "culture". This move obscured the specificity of the concept of "nature"' (1994: 4; see also Sahlins 1996).

Because of an Anglo-American belief in natural facts as the basis for kinship and reproduction (Franklin 1997; Strathern 1992a), Western models of kinship posited a system in which culture simply elaborated on a natural baseline. This has consequences not only for our theories of reproduction and relatedness, but also relations of power in intimate relationships and especially gender (Martin 1991, 2001; McKinnon 1994; Rapp 1999a). As Yanagisako and Delaney (1994: 9) make clear, given nature's position as the heir to Christian theology in contemporary Western society, this means that current public debates about procreation such as those surrounding new reproductive technologies or changing patterns in gender relations reflect ontological and cosmological concerns.

One of the major concerns with which I will engage in this thesis is the relationship between nature, ethics and morality and in tackling respondents' relationships with nature from various different angles I aim to show the interrelatedness of claims about each of them. In my view, the fact that what was once called the green movement has been reconceptualised and remarketed as 'ethical living' is one crucial reason for the increasing currency of environmental thinking in British culture and politics (see also Grove-White 1993). As Cronon writes:

Popular concern about the environment often implicitly appeals to a kind of naïve realism for its intellectual foundation, more or less assuming that we can pretty easily recognize nature when we see it and thereby make uncomplicated choices between natural things, which are good, and unnatural things, which are bad. Much of the moral authority that has made environmentalism so compelling as a popular movement flows from its appeal to nature as a stable external source of nonhuman values against which human actions can be judged without much ambiguity. (1996: 25-6)

Such moralism has long been a feature of environmentalist writing and of course thinkers as diverse as Henry David Thoreau, James Lovelock and William Morris have all simultaneously suggested particular (and notably different) ways of life alongside an ethic of caring for the natural world.

In line with the meaning of nature as that which is untainted by human activity or artifice, a view of nature and culture as two points on a dichotomy has a long history in both anthropological theory and native Western thought (see,

for example, Lévi-Strauss 1962, 1966; Schneider 1980). This has in recent years come to be replaced by an awareness that nature is as inextricably bound up in human thought as any other concept (Butler 2007; Cassidy 2002; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Keller 2008; Franklin 2003; Franklin et al 2000; Mullin 1999, 2007; Strathern 1992a). This awareness has provoked some theorists to proclaim that the many meanings of nature are all 'cultural constructions that reflect human judgments, human values, human choices' (Cronon 1996: 35), though of course as Strathern (1992a: 2, *passim*) makes clear, while seeing nature as a product of human thought in many ways moves the debate forward, using the term 'cultural [or social] construction' retains the sense that there is some baseline from which to build (Latour 1993).

Franklin writes that as a consequence of this critique of the nature-culture dichotomy in the social sciences, some theorists have concluded that nature is now redundant. Instead, she states, 'the category of the natural remains central to the production of difference, not only as a shifting classificatory category, but through *processes* of naturalization, de-naturalization, and re-naturalization' (2003: 68; original emphasis). She therefore argues for an analytical approach that considers the 'traffic in nature' (Franklin et al 2000). As she says, a key feature of Euro-American ideas about kinship, biology and nature is their ability to encompass, and thus constantly vacillate between, 'given' and 'made' elements of knowledge; hybrid elements of nature and culture, individual and society are inherent in these concepts. Consequently, nature may have come to seem more fluid, but instead of weakening it, this has in fact strengthened its appeal and force (Franklin 2003: 68).

The connections that Euro-Americans make between given and made knowledge that Franklin describes are conceptualised by Strathern as 'merographic'. She defines merographic connection in the following way:

Consider: domains such as "culture" and "nature" appear to be linked by virtue of being at once similar and dissimilar. What makes the similarities is the effort to "see" connections; what makes the dissimilarities is the "recognition" of difference. Difference thereby becomes apparent from a simple fact of life: *it is a connection from another angle*. That is, what looks as though it is connected to one fact can also be connected to another. Culture and nature may be connected together as domains that run in analogous fashion insofar as each operates in a similar way

according to laws of its own; at the same time, each is also connected to a whole other range of phenomena which differentiate them – the activities of human beings, for instance, by contrast with the physical properties of the universe. This second connection makes the partial nature of the analogy obvious. It presupposes that one thing differs from another insofar as it belongs to or is part of something else. I call this kind of connection, link or relationship *merographic*'. (1992a: 72-3; original emphases)

In this ethnography, I will show that nature works primarily in two important ways for respondents, as a grounding concept and as a source of goodness. I use the term grounding concept (cf. Strathern 1992a: 195, *passim*) to refer to those ideas that respondents use to support particular claims. The idea of grounding points to the fact that, although these concepts may in practice be contingent and encompass contradictory meanings, when they are used to support particular claims, they are referred to as *if* they are incontrovertible and uncontested. They provide the grounds or reference points in a particular argument. Nature also works as a source of goodness in respondents' ideas. As with the concept of the good life, I use goodness here to denote both virtue and fulfilment. Living 'closer' to or 'in harmony with' nature is for respondents a source of pleasure and happiness, but also a means of acting in accordance with one's moral and ethical obligations to care for the natural world. As this suggests, recognising, caring for and building a relationship with nature is inextricably linked with respondents' ethics, again both in terms of their moral values and their ideas about how to live.

This ethnography offers a portrayal of how nature looks for a group of people living in northeastern Scotland in the early twenty-first century, a period marked by environmental awareness and ethical living but also by apparently proliferating technological development and demographic change. This depiction is of a specific, local culture of nature, then, but wider cultural, political, economic and ideological currents are of course relevant and there may well be many points of connection with other like-minded communities in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Respondents' relationships with specific animals are extremely important in structuring their ideas about nature, belonging and ethics, but they have by no means cut themselves off from 'mainstream' society and many of their ideas about how to live well can be traced to environmentalist writing and campaigning – which has itself become increasingly accessible in

recent years – as well as more diffuse cultural ideas about the natural world and humans' place in nature.

While terms like 'grounding' and 'source' suggest nature's earthliness, it also has a transcendent quality (see also Berglund 1998: 152), though in contrast to the American homesteaders described by Gould (2005: 4), I see it more as an ethical than spiritual¹⁷ category for respondents, which is no doubt due in no small part to the different histories of both nature and god in British and American thought (Gould 2005: xxi, *passim*; Strathern 1992a: 93-98, *passim*; see also Franklin et al 2000; Tsing 1994; Yanagisako and Delaney 1994). Of course, cultural and ethical ideas are difficult to disentangle from religious ones (Cannell 2005, 2006; Lambek 2002; Sahlins 1996), and we shall see that Christian themes including salvation, sacrifice and charity are very important in their everyday lives.¹⁸ There are also many points of similarity in Anglo-American ideas about nature and the Christian god. Nature has not replaced god, but as a concept it works in similar ways and can have similarly powerful effects. Nature is powerful and even omnipotent for the respondents in this study. This potency is due to its polysemy and specifically because, amongst its many meanings, it is a grounding or baseline, and thus fundamentally knowable, but *at the same time* a transcendent and cosmological principle that is ultimately unfathomable.

In *After Nature*, Strathern (1992a) juxtaposed English people's ideas about nature in kinship and in their concerns about ecological crisis, suggesting the fruitful and important connections between these ideas as well as nature's capacity to travel. Nature is powerful not only because of its meaning as a pre-cultural, timeless essence, but also in its ability to permeate all areas of life since one of its meanings is as the baseline that precedes all else. Given this, one of the contributions I hope to make in this thesis is to suggest the fertile links between ideas about nature in human relationships with the natural world

¹⁷ Gould's definition of nature as a spiritual category for homesteaders reflects contemporary ideas about spiritualism as a form of religious life that embraces more personalised and non-institutional forms of practise (see Pike 2001a: 14).

¹⁸ Indeed, as Lambek (2002) notes, not only is religion notoriously difficult to define cross-culturally, but it is also closely related to some of the key concepts I will discuss here including particularly nature and ethics. I would suggest that for respondents, most of whom do not practise any world religion such as Christianity, nature is a concept that could not exist as it does without the deep-rooted influence of certain religious – and, specifically, Christian – ideas in their cultural and intellectual milieu. However, while religious concepts *are* important in respondents' ideas about nature – as well as kinship, gender, work and ethics – this is not their primary manifestation or only aspect. For this reason, I see nature more as a transcendent cultural and ethical category for respondents than a religious doctrine or immanent deity.

and in kinship and reproduction, and in particular to consider environmentalist ideas about nature in connection with Strathern's analysis.

In *After Nature*, Strathern presents her seminal thesis on nature in English culture. As she makes clear her designation, 'the English', is not intended to represent a simple empirical reality, but to exemplify a particular way of thinking. In my view, the people who I met during fieldwork in many ways fit into this category of 'the English'. This is partly because most of them were born and bred in England and because, despite some important differences, the English and Scottish have an enormous amount in common. It has to be said that, had I conducted fieldwork with a group of Scots who were native to or longer settled in the area, then this would have been less straightforward, as it seems likely that the differences between 'Scottish' and 'English' kinships would have been more salient, as is suggested by Cohen's informants in Whalsay and Basu's work with roots tourists. One significant reason for arguing that respondents here are similar to Strathern's 'English' is her definition of them as 'the class that does not just advertise but analyses its own conventions [and] ... that makes its implicit practices explicit to itself' (1992a: 26; see also Firth et al 1969: 17). It will hopefully become clear in the coming chapters that this tendency towards reflexivity is also characteristic of the respondents here. Similarly, much of their awareness of issues like surrogacy, and for that matter environmentalism, is filtered through news media, literature and the arts.

Strathern describes an English tendency to make explicit, or 'literalise', things to themselves. In the late twentieth century, she argues, this has an important culmination:

There is one specific move towards literalisation whose effect I wish to make explicit: in the currently prevalent idea that nature and culture are both cultural construction, the one term (culture) seems to consume the other (nature). We might put it that an antithesis between nature and culture as it might have shaped certain discourses in English life has become flattened; if so, it is flattened in a mode specific to the late twentieth century, and one that has indeed had an interesting effect as far as culture is concerned. (1992a: 5)

In the 'postplural' period, she says, nature comes to lose its grounding function (1992a: 195), with the consequence that one can no longer perceive context or identify a particular perspective. This has fundamental consequences for ideas

about individual, society and culture and speaks to key issues of contemporary Western life including choice, consumption and morality:

What is in crisis here is the symbolic order, the conceptualisation of the relationship between nature and culture such that one can talk about the one through the other. Nature as a ground for the meaning of cultural practices can no longer be taken for granted if Nature itself is regarded as having to be protected and promoted.

After nature: modification of the natural world has become consumption of it, in exactly the same way as modification of the world's cultures (through colonisation) has become consumption of them by the international tourist. The old double model for the production of culture – society improves nature, society reflects nature – no longer works. The individual consumes cultural and natural products alike, but in consuming them him or herself reproduces only him or herself. (1992a: 177)

I will address Strathern's claims about personalised morality in Chapter Five and will return to her sense that nature has lost its relational facility in the Conclusion. What I want to draw attention to for the moment is the claim that nature can be, or even has been, 'flattened'. As noted, nature was one of the recurring ideas (or set of ideas) that respondents spoke about during my fieldwork and the contingent and divergent ways that they used it, in different situations, in relation to different topics and to particular claims, all suggest its polysemy and thus its apparent 'constructedness', but also, as I have just suggested, its persistent potency. Has it, then, been flattened? This is a question that runs through the chapters. I will argue that, for the people we shall meet in the proceeding chapters, fifteen years after *After Nature* was published, nature has not been flattened, but instead works as a grounding for particular claims and as a site of transcendent value. In particular, we shall see that for this group of people, nature has a particularly ethical flavour and that this is a vital part of its ideological and rhetorical force.

Following Strathern's argument about the flattening of nature, Macnaghten and Urry conclude that, 'if nature is no longer viewable as simply "natural" but is socially and culturally constructed, then nature does not and cannot provide, as has often been argued, the simple and unmediated ethical or

moral foundation for the good life' (1998: 30). As I have suggested here, this statement contradicts my experience of how nature works in respondents' lives. It is of course vital to remember that Strathern's ideas about a postplural nature are inferences based on certain ideas in public discourses and the social sciences. In saying that nature loses its grounding function or that it becomes flattened, she is not pretending to describe an empirical or even ideological reality, but the intellectual consequences of how nature was conceptualised at a particular moment in history. The status of nature in a postplural or postmodern world is a particularly thorny one, not only because of its endless layers of overlapping meaning, but because of its ideological, normative and intellectual ramifications.

Extraordinary and everyday ethics

Surrogacy is, like cloning (Franklin 2007), ova donation (Konrad 2005), amniocentesis (Rapp 1999a), pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (Franklin and Roberts 2006), abortion (Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004) and IVF (Franklin 1997), one of a family of biomedical techniques that are seen to provoke profound ethical questions for the people in the countries where they can be accessed. Indeed, the development of these techniques has been accompanied by the expansion of an inter-disciplinary field of bioethics as well as the rapid growth of science and technology studies in the social sciences. As we saw earlier, feminists have been particularly vocal in the debate about surrogacy, with many arguing against it on the grounds of commodification and exploitation of women's reproductive labour (Anderson 1990; Anleu 1992; Blyth and Potter 2003; Rae 1994; Satz 1992; Shannon 1988. Cf. Arneson 1992; Wertheimer 1992; Wilkinson 2003), damage to maternal bonding (Anderson 1990; Chesler 1990) and the spectre of the development of a 'breeder class' of women (Chesler 1990).

In this ethnography I will show how these people talk, think about and live ethics. Of course, there are differences in the way that respondents talked about surrogacy and about their everyday ethics. Further, talk about environmentalism, wildlife conservation and ethical living were routine topics of conversation while I deliberately instigated most of our conversations about surrogacy, though there were occasions on which I was introduced to a stranger

or someone enquired how I was getting on with my research, which led to my being offered a spontaneous opinion on surrogacy. Both surrogacy and environmentalism straddle the dual meaning of ethics, as a normative framework for moral judgement and as everyday practice aimed at producing a virtuous life. As such, I aim to capture both the differences and the interplay between these two forms of the ethical as they manifest themselves in speech, thought and action.

The participants in this study tended to treat surrogacy more in terms of moral judgements, while environmentalism was more closely associated with ways of living. The material presented here reflects that particular stress, though of course surrogacy and environmentalism speak to both meanings of ethics. Living an environmentally responsible life is not only about the daily practices that enable one to eat, form relationships or work, but also always entails normative judgements of just what is good about a good life. Similarly, while surrogacy is primarily a topic that caused these people to expound moral principles and express gut feelings about right and wrong, it is also something that suggests much about how we should live and conduct ourselves on an everyday basis. As such, it seems to me that these people, as a group already explicitly concerned with ethics – and as we shall see with ethical issues that overlap with the kinds of concerns that surrogacy provokes – are a particularly interesting one with which to explore the dilemmas of surrogacy.

Foucault defined ‘technologies of the self’ as techniques ‘which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality’ (1997: 225). Respondents in this study have refashioned their lives and selves and reoriented themselves towards particular goals that are informed by specific moral, political and ethical values. I would therefore argue that there is good reason to describe their ethical actions as akin to technologies of the self, though with some caveats.

Foucault contrasts the ethical edict to ‘care for oneself’ in the Classical world with a suspicion in Christian societies of excessive attention paid to the self. In the latter, he says, ‘being concerned with oneself was readily denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self-sacrifice required’ (1997: 284-5). While selfishness is indeed associated with immorality in British culture, this may obscure the subtleties of actual ethical practice. Foucault seems to imply

here that there is no space for action done on the self in the building of an ethical subjectivity in the contemporary West, yet work done for others is also inevitably work done on the self (see Gould 2005; Pike 2001a, b). For the respondents in this study, ethical living, ostensibly aimed at others' good – whether that other be the environment, animals, the land or people – is also work done in order to attain personal fulfilment and which necessarily involves care of the self.

Foucault notes that technologies of the self are inseparable from the other technologies, though each is associated with specific forms of power. Technologies of the self are 'technologies of individual domination' (1997: 225) through which an individual exercises power over herself. Paxson criticises Foucault for neglecting gender in his analysis of ethical subjectivities: 'Ethics, the moral values and agreed-upon virtues of a society, is a major mechanism not only for subjectification ... but also for the consolidation and reproduction of social inequality, including that organized through gender' (2004: 17; see also Mahmood 2005). Drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics, in her analysis of motherhood in contemporary Athens, Paxson describes gender as a 'system of virtues', arguing that, 'people's experiences as gendered beings are embedded in moral principles, and thus gender theory should take into account historically and culturally contingent ethical systems' (2004: 19). Of course, not only should we consider ethical systems in the study of gender, but also 'historically and culturally contingent' gender systems and gendered power dynamics in the analysis of ethics.

Foucault's claims about freedom are also somewhat problematic. Ethical action, he says, is a practice of freedom (as opposed to liberation): 'for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [*réfléchi*] practice of freedom? Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection' (1997: 284; cf. Faubion 2001). Laidlaw (2002: 323) argues that Foucault did not prescribe what human freedom might be and emphasised the *exercise* of freedom rather than its realisation, in line with his point that choices are always constrained by particular power dynamics, which shift with historical periods. As Laidlaw puts it, 'the freedom of the ethical subject, for Foucault, consists in the possibility of choosing the kind of self one wishes to be. Actively answering the ethical question of how or as what one ought to live is to exercise this self-constituting freedom' (2002: 324). He is however critical of social scientists' talk of human 'agency':

In so far as talk of agency raises the question of whether persons' choices are genuinely their choices – in so far, that is, as it points to questions of freedom – it does so in a way that is necessarily and systematically conflated with the question of the capacity or power which their choices have in causal terms. This means that, as an index of freedom, the concept of agency is pre-emptively selective. Only actions contributing towards what the analyst sees as structurally significant count as instances of agency. Put most crudely, we only mark them down as agency when people's choices seem to us to be the right ones. (2002: 315; see also Mahmood 2005)

Faubion similarly argues for an anthropology of ethics that takes full account of power and how it is implicated in the exercise of autopoiesis in particular historical and cultural moments (2001: 96-97). As this suggests, notions of freedom, choice and agency present some knotty problems in analysing ethical action. Choice is a fundamental part of respondents' ethical practice in that they have made certain conscious and momentous choices in choosing to live a good life in Scotland. Furthermore, the freedom to choose, enabled by a certain amount of social and economic capital, is necessary in allowing them to carry out their ethical projects.

Lambek (2008) distinguishes between obligation, choice and judgement, arguing that the latter is most appropriate to describe ethical practice. Judgement, he says, has four overlapping characteristics: it involves achieving balance amongst extremes such as egoism and altruism; it requires practical judgement (he uses the Aristotelian term, *phronesis*); it entails balancing incommensurable virtuous ideals and it necessitates discerning between values, which may be arranged in a hierarchical fashion so that some seem transcendent 'meta-values' while others are more ordinary and contingent to the individual (2008: 145).

Lambek is clearly influenced by Aristotelian virtue ethics, which is perhaps appropriate here given Aristotle's interest in the good life. Lambek says, 'Virtue ethics asks not how we can acquire objects of value nor how we can do what is absolutely right, but how we should live and what kind of person we want to *be*' (2008: 134; original emphasis). Virtue ethics therefore offers a way of moving from considering ethical action in stark terms as either following the rules or making free choices to a more sophisticated approach that 'shifts the

focus from having, to doing, to being' (2008: 134). The idea of conscious reflection in ethics suggests once again the fundamental place of the self in ethics. It reminds us that describing an action as ethical does not simply denote a good outcome but, perhaps more importantly, suggests the motives and purpose behind it, since an ethical action is one that has been considered and reflected upon.

Virtue ethics is often contrasted with Kantian philosophy, especially Kant's ideas about priceless values such as human dignity, which, as noted, have been central in the polemic against commercial surrogacy. Lambek (2008: 138) identifies a distinction in Western thinking between economic value, which is seen as relative and measurable, and ethical virtue, which is fixed and immeasurable. The two are thought to be incommensurable to each other, yet, he says, in practicing ethical judgements, we inevitably qualify and balance absolute values and thus begin to relativise them. As anthropologists, he says, 'we need to examine the claims made for relative and absolute values and the efforts taken for constructing, maintaining or reducing the distance between them in any given period or argument' (2008: 138). This relates directly to my aim in this thesis of describing and analysing the form and functions of the values that structure respondents' claims and practice.

Lambek identifies a tendency in human thought to posit culturally variable 'meta-values' which, he argues, constantly run the risk of being relativised and even displaced. Earlier I suggested that nature is for this group of people a transcendent value that provides a grounding function in their claims but works as a source of ultimate goodness in their lives. Nature is in this way a meta-value for them. Lambek notes, following Rappaport, that meta-values or 'ultimate sacred postulates' are 'deeply meaningful to their adherents but they are effective and enduring because they are referentially empty and unfalsifiable' (2008: 144). Again, this relates to my earlier point that nature's polysemy is what provides it with transcendental and cosmological potency.

In the coming chapters we shall get a glimpse of what it means to be actively involved in building an ethical life and doing ethical work in the contemporary Western world. In my analysis of these efforts, I aim to show the way in which this group of people practise judgement and conscious reflection in their claims about surrogacy and their everyday practice of building a good life. We shall see, in particular, the workings of particular values and the way that these people handle and negotiate meta-values and the dichotomies, such as that between love and money, inherent in their 'cultural repertoire' in their

everyday practice. As noted, this is a group of people who come from a social class that is reflexive and analytical of its own postulates and values and we shall see this in their thoughts, actions and speech.

As anthropologists have repeatedly shown, the major strength of ethnography as a research method is its ability to capture the extraordinary minutiae of everyday life. I noted earlier my intention to extend on Edwards' work in Bacup by considering further the place of ethics in models of kinship, nature and morality and the relationships between them. Like Edwards (see also Hirsch 1993), I asked people who are not personally involved in assisted conception to talk about surrogacy as an example of something that seems to imply pressing and timely questions, and like Bacup people they interpreted these questions as opportunities for moral and philosophical speculation. While Edwards' aim was to demonstrate the particularities and practices of English kinship through these examples as a complement to her previous work on their everyday lives as 'ordinary people', I am taking a slightly different approach in showing how claims about surrogacy not only show kinship thinking in practice, but also ethical judgement. I aim to illustrate how such claims are shaped by innovative forms of conscious reflection and that this can be captured in ethnography. This difference in approach reflects the particularities of what the people I met during fieldwork talked about. As we shall see, while they do make connections between their own lives and experience of kinship in thinking about surrogacy, they treat it primarily as something that poses ethical and moral questions. Furthermore, my ethnography shows the importance of specific values in their lives and claims, as is clear from their conceptions of nature which are clearly rooted in wider historical and cultural ideas about nature in the UK, but also heavily influenced by environmentalist thinking.

The approach to ethics that I take here rests on the congruence I see between the content and form of the ideas expressed to me by respondents and the theoretical framework developed by Lambek. That is, I will use data from both interviews and participant observation to capture the contingency of individuals' ethical judgements and the place of the self in ideas about goodness, while also paying due attention to the workings of meta-values in structuring, grounding and providing an impetus to claims and practice. In this way, my work once again speaks to Strathernian models of kinship, culture and nature in British life such as Edwards', in suggesting the difficult tightrope one must walk between representing the reflective and conscious nature of the everyday judgements of specific individuals and groups while also noting how

such ideas work on an abstract and normative level in reproducing certain models of thought and behaviour.

Methods

I was in the field between November 2005 and September 2007. I also made three short follow-up trips in January, March and August 2008 during the writing-up process. I have stayed in contact with almost all respondents, helped in part by the timely innovation of the Internet 'social utility' Facebook, as well as the more old-fangled methods of e-mail and telephone. The analytical process has benefited from my closeness to respondents in that I have had the opportunity to make follow-up trips and further elucidate their responses through continuing the conversations we started when I was living amongst them.

The data that I collected during fieldwork is based on two primary methods, which are reflected in the layout of the thesis, though I would emphasise that the links between the two are crucial. Most of my time during fieldwork was spent doing participant observation, whether volunteering in the wildlife centre, accompanying someone on a walk or a trip to the shops, cooking for and eating with people, taking rubbish to the recycling plant, watching for dolphins, feeding chickens, collecting driftwood kindling for the fire from off the beach, giving someone a lift somewhere, having fancy dress parties and many more diverse activities besides. It is on this participant observation, and my fieldnotes recording that, that much of my impressions of respondents' everyday lives are based. In addition to this, I carried out semi-formal interviews on their ideas about surrogacy with about half of respondents. Most of the interviews were carried out in the latter months of fieldwork, as I felt it was important to have established a rapport with interviewees before I interviewed them. As a result, none refused to be interviewed, and most seemed intrigued by the prospect.

The interview questions included general questions about interviewees' experience of family life, their plans for or experience of parenthood, their views on assisted conception and adoption and a series of questions about surrogacy. Interviews were only semi-formal, so I did sometimes ask further spontaneous questions based on interviewees' responses. With interviewees' knowledge and consent, I recorded the interviews using a digital voice recorder, uploaded them

onto computer and transcribed them verbatim, largely while still in the field. When I returned from fieldwork, I began the process of analysing my transcripts, coding certain responses to find patterns, while also highlighting tensions within respondents' own responses as well as differences of opinion between them. As noted, the respondents here are 'laypeople', not personally or professionally involved in surrogacy or any other techniques of assisted conception. As such, their responses to my questions were abstract and speculative in nature and recording them has afforded me the opportunity to carry out a deep analysis on this rich, often equivocal content.

As for many ethnographers, especially those working in the Western world, my immersion into respondents' lives was not immediate. When I first arrived in northeast Scotland I lived in another coastal town, Macduff, some twenty-five miles away from Spey Bay. During these initial months, I built up my knowledge of the area by visiting a number of tourist sites including a number of local whisky distilleries, Chanonry Point, Loch Ness, Culloden and the Cairngorms. I continued these trips throughout the fieldwork period, often with other respondents where possible and made some trips further afield in Scotland. A few months into fieldwork, I visited Spey Bay for the second time (the first time had been on a preliminary recce before fieldwork) and met Sophie, who had agreed to talk to me about becoming a local volunteer. Luckily, she decided to take me on and I soon started regularly going to Spey Bay to volunteer and thus quickly met and formed relationships with many of the other people who worked there. My 'studies'¹⁹ were from my colleagues' perspective all too easily put aside in the service of giving a talk to the public on whale-watching, helping erect a marquee, supervising a beach clean, counting stocks of plastic sealife or donning a dolphin costume and rattling a collection tin.

As soon as space became available in the wildlife centre's volunteer accommodation I moved to Spey Bay, thus embedding myself at the centre of an extended web of friends, colleagues and acquaintances. I lived in the volunteer accommodation, the eastern half of the old fishing station manager's house in Tugnet, until May 2007, when I moved next door to live with Sophie and Luke when Steve moved out after buying a flat in Elgin. Nearly all

¹⁹ Despite the numerous times I explained that I was doing fieldwork-based ethnographic research, and the fact that many of them had taken part in interviews at some point, respondents still found it difficult to shake off the not unreasonable impression that, as a PhD student, I should be spending most of my time studying books. This reflects not only their impressions of what research is, but their rather modest assumption that I could not be particularly interested in what they had to say, but was instead always on the brink of driving off to interview someone far more interesting or expert than them.

respondents work or volunteer in the wildlife centre themselves. Those few others who do not are relatives, partners or friends of wildlife centre workers, other residents in Spey Bay or people I met along the way. As such, the way that I 'recruited' respondents for this study is based on the connections I made through the everyday work of the wildlife centre.

Spey Bay is a very small village and while it accommodates a number of staff including of course the residential volunteers, not all people who are involved in the work there live in the village. Patterns of residence are generally quite scattered in this area as most people have cars, which they rely on – despite concerns about carbon emissions – in the absence of a well-developed public transport infrastructure. As such, respondents live in a network of settlements surrounding Spey Bay, many in other coastal villages, and a few in nearby Fochabers. Spey Bay is the central locus of my fieldwork, not just because it is where many respondents and I lived, but also because it provided the grounds and the opportunity for most of the connections I made with respondents. It was, also, the location of a great deal of social interaction and where I carried out most interviews.

As noted, respondents are generally middle-class. They are also exclusively white, which reflects the ethnic make-up of this part of Scotland, which is – jokes about the weather aside – noticeably white compared to urban Britain. Of the 80% of respondents who do not originate in the area, nearly all are English. A few are from southern Scotland, one is American, two are German and one is French. Respondents' ages range from late teens to sixties, along with a couple of respondents' children.

Almost all respondents do not practise a religion, though there are notable exceptions: Erin, her husband Duncan and their daughter Rosie are the only Catholics and attend church every Sunday. Willow grew up in a non-religious family but converted to an evangelical Christian sect in Edinburgh in her late teens. Her faith is very important to her and she attends church when she is in Edinburgh, but does not regularly attend in Moray, as none of the local churches seem to offer the right setting for her to worship. A few other respondents would describe themselves as Christian, based on their current beliefs and their experiences of attending churches in their younger lives, but do not feel the need to practise their religion. For example, Sophie went to a convent school in northwest England but other than this has never been a regular churchgoer. While she does not define herself as a particularly religious person, she does believe in god, largely based on the Christian god, though this

is along with a rather eclectic set of beliefs influenced by her exposure to different faiths and ideas from her diverse set of friends and experiences when travelling. Other respondents have typically experienced going to church and especially Church of England primary schools, so have had exposure to Christian ideas in their upbringing but do not practise any beliefs that they may have now. Their general attitude is that explicitly religious practice such as prayer and church attendance is unnecessary, that belief is largely a personal matter and that in many ways the most important part of a faith are the values and ethical principles that it professes.

The data that I present in the coming chapters is of a mixed nature. This can of course present problems in handling the differences and overlaps between each type of data, but it also offers advantages and opportunities. By living amongst the interviewees and participating in their everyday lives, I was able to build up a much better, in some ways intuitive, understanding of them as individuals, how they live their lives, the values that are important to them and their relationships with others. While I am not suggesting that my interpretation of what they said to me is foolproof, I do believe that my deeper familiarity with them as a participant in their lives helped me interpret their responses. In presenting these two types of data together I am suggesting not only that tracing the connections between people's claims in interviews and the way they live their lives provides fertile ground for anthropologists, but also that existing ethnographic research methods already offer the means to do this. While there are many excellent anthropological studies of people's experiences of assisted conception based in clinical encounters and on rich interview responses, many of these accounts lack the everyday context of interviewees' lives. This may be because of an underlying assumption that such everyday lives in North America and western Europe are already familiar to us, but, especially since ideas about reproductive technologies seem to touch so deeply on other ideas in cultural life, this is an assumption we can ill afford.

Plan of chapters

In Part One, *Extraordinary Ethics*, I present the main findings from my interviews with respondents about surrogacy. These two chapters provide insight into the kinds of ideas that they employed in making claims about ethical

and moral behaviour and the grounding concepts and values that are particularly important to them. The first chapter focuses on the idea of the maternal bond as a grounding concept that is closely linked with ideas about the relationship between nature and society. I will show how the concept is used in respondents' claims and what ideas it reproduces. In Chapter Two, I will focus on respondents' ideas about the distinction between 'commercial' and 'altruistic' surrogacy. Here, we will start to see their nuanced approach to money, work and commercialism and get some insight into their ideas about human nature and motive. One aim of these chapters, then, will be to examine whether popular representations of British people's ideas about the ethics of surrogacy, as captured in the media, legislation and philosophical polemic, does justice to the complexities and contingencies of this particular group of laypeople's judgements about surrogacy. We shall see that respondents' claims about surrogacy are marked by equivocation. This seems to suggest that tolerance of others' viewpoints and perspectives is ethical in itself for them. As such, in these first chapters I will explore the ethics of claim-making as well as their claims about ethics.

Part Two, *Everyday Ethics*, contains three chapters, in which I provide an ethnographic window into the ordinary lives of these people I lived amongst during fieldwork and who agreed to tell me their thoughts about surrogacy. In Chapter Three, I will show what everyday life is like in Spey Bay and Moray. In particular, we shall see how residents use ideas about nature, landscape and community to create a sense of belonging and connections with other people, land and the natural world. This chapter also introduces the importance of effort and care in these people's lives in making connections with others and their environment but also in structuring their lives as ethical people. In Chapter Four, I extend this point in focusing on the work of the wildlife centre to show how notions of social responsibility and ethical imperative are used to garner support for the cause of wildlife conservation and the values that inform this. Following on from Part One, I will return to respondents' ideas about money and altruism, this time in relation to their fundraising efforts in the wildlife centre. I will also consider how the experience of working for charity speaks to particular assumptions about work and gender in the contemporary UK and consider how profession is implicated in respondents' ethical subjectivities.

Throughout Part Two, I will reflect on respondents' relationships with the local wildlife and particularly the Moray Firth dolphins. In Chapter Five, I will consider how ideas about dolphins are implicated in their ideas about

themselves, their community and the place where they live and how ideas about ethics, morality and power are implicated in people's relationships with animals. A key theme in this chapter, which I extend upon in Chapter Six, is the role of choice in these people's ideas about having good lives and being good people, and in Chapter Five we shall see this in particular in my description of their consumption decisions. In these chapters, and in the links between the first and second Parts of the thesis, I shall consider the location of morality and ethics in the contemporary UK.

In Part Three, I will return to my interview data to look further at the role of choice in these people's everyday ethical judgements in relation to their own plans for parenthood. I will also present some of their responses to the more problematic aspects of assisted conception in order to show again how nature works in their claims. In this chapter, then, I will argue that nature has not lost its grounding function, but in fact works as a transcendent meta-value that provides meaning and structure to these people's lives. I will also consider ideas about time, crisis and change in relation both to respondents' ideas about assisted conception and their ideas about the environment. In particular, I will consider what the effects are of building a life that is modelled around an idea of future crisis as opposed to a halcyon past.

As noted, the layout of this thesis reflects my use of different research methods in gathering data. I have largely placed the two sets of data side-by-side rather than mixed together for clarity's sake but also in order that we might see the contrasts, as well as the similarities, between the results of each method. This hermeneutic split between extraordinary and everyday ethics reflects the dual nature of ethics itself, as both normative moral judgement and everyday practice aimed at building a good life. Despite this analytic separation, I do not mean to suggest that their different meanings and uses can be neatly chopped up with the omniscient ethnographer's blade and arranged into their 'proper' categories. 'Extraordinary' and 'everyday' ethics are in fact implicated in each other. As I have argued, ethnographic methods can capture the way that particular models, norms and ideas are employed in ethical claims and practice and the connections between them. My contention, then, is that we cannot fully understand ideas about nature, ethics or morality by looking at them in isolation from other ideas and practice in people's everyday experience. Furthermore, bringing together claims and practice, the extraordinary and the everyday, in this way allows us to use ethnography to capture the contingency and nuance of people's ideas and the conscious reflection that goes into ethical judgements.

**PART ONE:
EXTRAORDINARY ETHICS**

But soon they'll have the artificial womb, I wonder how I feel about that.

Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing*

With unrelaxed and breathless eagerness I pursued nature to her hiding-places.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

In these first two chapters, I focus particularly on the ethical claims respondents made about surrogacy. Both ethical claim-making and practice entail the performance of particular moral and ethical subjectivities. Whilst claim-making may seem to demonstrate the potency of ethical rhetoric most obviously, everyday practice also involves making moral judgements. Whatever the differences between the details of their individual lives, respondents here have made conscious decisions about how to build their lives that cannot be divorced from their conceptions of what is good and, thus, what is bad.

It will become obvious that there is something of a change in register between Part One and Part Two, as is perhaps inevitable in the shift from the extraordinary to the everyday. The contrasting ways in which people speak in each Part is of course related to the different methods I used to gather data. In these first chapters, we shall see that respondents' ideas about surrogacy, which I deliberately solicited in interviews and subjected to close textual analysis, have a more normative and even at times scripted flavour compared to their everyday ideas and practice. In these first two chapters, then, we will see how grounding concepts like nature and altruism work as limiting factors in the formation and expression of ethical and moral judgements.

Despite these general differences in tone, we shall see that respondents' judgements about surrogacy are nonetheless nuanced and sometimes even contradictory. When I asked them if I could interview them, many respondents told me they were concerned that they lacked the sufficient expertise or experience to provide me with any useful answers and some were worried that I might think they were "stupid", even though I reassured them that I was interested in their views rather than testing their biomedical knowledge and that I was no medical or bioethical expert myself. Listening to them in interviews, I often felt as if they were in conversation with themselves as they weighed up different sides of each argument within their own responses, sometimes appearing to change their minds mid-sentence. I have aimed to preserve a sense of this equivocation in my selection of quotes.

The judgements respondents made were often prefaced with the proviso that this was just their "personal view" and bracketed within various caveats, suggesting a discomfort with imposing a prescriptive set of ethics as well as particular assumptions about the status of lay knowledge and expertise. Jenny, who I will introduce in Chapter One, demonstrated this in her response when talking about assisted conception:

I think each case is probably very individual and I think that it's, there's a great desire in society probably to draw a conclusion that, it's like a round-hole conclusion, and then, as soon as you've done it, you get somebody with this square problem that doesn't fit that round hole! And I think that broad-brush approach – I'm using all my metaphors here – but I think it doesn't work terribly well in things like this at the moment. I know there have to be underlying general principles – I do understand that, but I think, often these cases are so particular, and have particular needs, you know, that, ideally there would be some discretion around the ethics of an individual case, I think. ... There probably does need to be some over-arching, general concepts, but I would hate to be drawn into having to draw something like that up, I think.

Jenny's hesitancy here suggests that, while she felt freer to speculate about surrogacy in one sense as it does not come within her immediate personal experience, she is still sensitive to – albeit anonymous and putative – others who might actually be involved in the practice.

Edwards writes of her co-conversationalists' similar equivocation about assisted conception:

[T]he views of Bacup residents with whom I spoke about NRT were marked by ambivalence [references omitted]. On the one hand there is an empathy with what is often referred to as the heartache of infertility and on the other a call for limits on possibilities presented through medical and scientific intervention. Some techniques are more problematic than others, and there is a general agreement that 'science' can go *too far* and its excesses need to be curbed; there are some ways of conceiving and growing a child deemed not only inappropriate but beyond the pale. But limits are not fixed points. It is not possible to discern, from what people say, a line between appropriate and inappropriate intervention. The same criteria are not applied to every instance and what is relevant in a particular context depends on the question formulated in interaction and itself provides the context for subsequent ideas. (2000: 236; original emphasis)

Discussing the ethics of surrogacy and other assisted conception techniques demonstrates the fact that 'limits are not fixed points', but, as Edwards shows,

grounding concepts may be referred to in specific and contingent ways and to illustrate apparently contradictory values without necessarily losing their grounding capacity. It is therefore perhaps not completely accurate to describe respondents here, or in Bacup, as ambivalent, since it implies that they are unsure or that they are let down by their native categories of thought, when in fact it is precisely the inherent polysemy of grounding concepts that enables their effective use.

Perhaps a brief observation from my interview data will illustrate these points before I begin the first chapter proper. In discussing surrogacy with me, many respondents, like Jenny, used metaphor to aid their own understanding of surrogacy and I have used some of their more memorable phrases (in italics) as subtitles throughout the thesis. The British have a reputation for enjoying wordplay and the mixed origins and large vocabulary of the English language afford great potential for analogy and metaphor, which may be used to humorous effect in the case of punning or to help express difficult or novel ideas (see Strathern 1992b). Two male respondents saw prostitution as an apt parallel to surrogacy. Andrew, a graduate student and conservation volunteer, said, “I certainly don’t agree with people paying for surrogates, or ladies selling themselves. It’s a much larger scale of prostitution in a way, I guess, selling your body for nine months rather than a night”.²⁰ Richard, a writer in his sixties with three adult children, did not straightforwardly object to prostitution or commercial surrogacy on moral grounds, but was, rather, concerned for the welfare of the women involved and their likely exploitation, asking rhetorically, “a country that can’t even regulate prostitution properly without there still being some harm being done to the women, can it handle surrogacy?”

Prostitution is effectively illegal in the UK²¹ and an established moral discourse surrounds it, so referring to it signals particular social ‘ills’ (Day 2007). As with all analogies, there is some freedom for the listener in which overlaps he perceives between the two domains brought into relation in this way, as suggested by Andrew and Richard’s differing attitudes. Eleanor, a former artist and single mother of three school-aged children, initially argued in favour of commercial surrogacy when I discussed it with her:

²⁰ In order to differentiate and highlight respondents’ thoughts, I put any non-block quote from them in double quotation marks. All other quotations are placed in single marks.

²¹ To be precise, soliciting, ‘pimping’ and profiting from brothels are all against the law. The Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 added to the existing laws, making the purchase of sex a criminal offence in Scotland.

I don't have too much of a problem with [surrogates] being paid for it, actually, I don't have a problem. If someone's good at carrying babies and they promise not to take any [illicit] drugs and do all this, you know, perhaps you could look after their welfare better if they were paid, because you could say, 'come and live in such-and-such a place'. You could have surrogacy farms! [Laughs ironically] That doesn't worry me. It might almost be more fun! Why not put a whole lot of surrogate mothers together?

However, as she explored this possibility more, she conceded that there would be some potential for exploitation in such an idea, eventually referring to surrogacy, like Andrew and Richard, as "a sort of alternative to prostitution".

Eleanor, who grew up in rural Northumberland (though in a family of engineers rather than farmers), initially uses this agricultural analogy to suggest a bucolic wholesomeness to her vision of commercial surrogacy if it is handled the right way. Yet, as she realises, this analogy leaves room for a more negative image of commercial surrogacy. Given the current concern in the UK about industrial farming (Franklin 2007; Reed 2002; see Gould 2005 and Mullin 2007 for the USA), there is conceptual space on Eleanor's surrogacy "farm" to imagine a surrogate as either a contented cow unconcernedly chewing cud in a sunny green field or one of a mastitis-ridden herd pumped with antibiotics giving birth to veal calves. Making an analogical connection between commercial surrogacy and prostitution is not the same as saying that surrogate mothers are prostitutes, but it does suggest that there is some overlap between them. These examples demonstrate the complex way in which respondents approached surrogacy, suggesting already the way that certain ideas may be employed in complex, contingent and even contradictory ways.

The following two chapters are structured so as to reflect the two major ethical sticking points that surrogacy seems to pose both in British public discourse and for respondents: the idea that a woman can relinquish a child she has borne and that she can accept monetary compensation in return for reproductive labour. This structure also reflects the fact that, instead of considering all parties to a surrogacy arrangement in their discussions with me, respondents focused to a very large extent on the surrogate mother. This suggests the importance of ideas about femininity in their responses and the interrelation of gender and ethics (see also Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004; Rapp 1999a); the fact that these ethical claims are crosscut with normative ideas

about gender also points to the fact that moral and ethical issues are always about power.

Scrambled Eggs

Mater semper certa est

Upon entering a surrogacy arrangement, intending parents place a great deal of trust in a surrogate mother; she literally and figuratively carries a great responsibility. Amongst respondents, the motivations of the intending parents did not elicit much speculation, based on the assumption that they simply wanted to have a child 'of their own'. The surrogate mother, meanwhile, was far more mysterious. Not only were her motives for acting as a surrogate a source of uncertainty and potential concern, but, whether or not she received payment for her part in the arrangement, she seemed to represent a deviation from normal maternal behaviour. In order to understand this, it is necessary to explore the meaning and status of the maternal bond. Maternal bonding is crucial to respondents' understandings of surrogacy and motherhood more generally. The maternal bond is a concept with wide cultural appeal and a fundamental element of psychoanalytic theory, perhaps most elaborated in attachment theory (Bowlby 1984; see also Miller 2004).

Embedded in the idea of the maternal bond are normative expectations about motherhood that have significant and tangible effects for the way in which women's lives are structured and experienced. For respondents with and without their own children, the maternal bond was seen as a natural, inevitable phenomenon that arose out of physical experience. By analysing some of the ways they talked about surrogacy here we shall get a glimpse into the mechanics of ethical claim-making. In particular, we shall see how the concept of the maternal bond can be appealed to as if it were stable yet is in fact used in creative and mixed ways to make particular and partisan claims. In this way, we shall see the kind of work that maternal bonding does and the ideas that it reproduces.

A vital difference: The maternal bond

I met Erin, her husband Duncan and young daughter, Rosie, a few months into fieldwork through a kinship connection of my own – Duncan is an old friend

of my father's. Due in no small part to their great warmth and generosity, we quickly became friends and I spent many evenings with them in their cottage in Hopeman, a coastal village close to RAF Lossiemouth, and Erin and Rosie visited or met me for tea quite a few times during the day while Duncan was at work. Erin, who is in her early thirties, is currently looking after Rosie full-time and studying for a second degree with the Open University part-time. She previously worked as a mental health nurse; Duncan also works in this field. As noted, Erin and Duncan are some of the few respondents in this study who practise any religion, and the only Catholics. After being seriously injured in a car crash when she was a teenager Erin was told that it was unlikely she would ever conceive 'naturally'. She and Duncan, who has four adult children from his previous marriage, attempted to adopt but were turned down because of his age. They married after a few years co-habiting and Erin found out she was pregnant after returning from their honeymoon. They had been living in Moray for about six months when I met them.

When I asked Erin what being a parent meant to her, she described being "hit with this massive responsibility, or a notion of responsibility, which just explodes when the child arrives". Throughout my interview with her, she made it clear that motherhood was one of the most important and transformative experiences of her life. Her ideas about maternal bonding are largely representative of others', though they were particularly fully formed and I got the impression that this was something to which she had given a good deal of thought.

Erin identified a "different" kind of bond between her and Duncan in each of their relationships with Rosie: "The bond is different. The emotional bond is different. The basics are the same, obviously, you know, I think ... either one of us would do what it takes, we'd probably kill for our child, we'd behave in characteristic and uncharacteristic ways to protect her safety and protect her environment. But the bond is different". Reflecting further, she continued:

I also think it's special in my case by having my own child, carried myself, delivered. Your mind, psychologically, you're attached to this bundle of cells before it turns up. So arguably you're a mummy from the first day the pregnancy test produces two lines and you think that your vision has gone momentarily and I think there is a bond and if you like, albeit imaginary, it's real, it's literal, but there is an element of sheer imagination and I think the bond there is created that is built on and

extended. I also think, for me, part of this special bond was, all the way through the pregnancy, my intestines were being kicked to bits, I was the one on the loo twenty times a day, but it was actually something that Duncan could only participate in to a point. You know, I could say, 'ooh look, come and feel this baby kicking', but you already have a psychological and emotional bond that, if you like, I got a nine month head-start on the bloke concerned and I think you can't compete with that and I think that makes mummies that carry their own children special in their own right.

Erin talks here of having a "nine month head-start" on her husband in terms of the "special" bond that she enjoys with their daughter. She says that, while she has this intimate connection with her daughter from having had her growing inside her, Duncan can only participate up to a certain point as he lacks such a physical connection. In this way, she locates the maternal bond in both a different time and place from the paternal one.

Jenny brought up her adult twin sons, one of whom is mildly brain damaged, on her own after their father's death. She works in social care and is in her early fifties. She lives in Lossiemouth with her partner, Paul, who also has adult children from a previous marriage. When I asked her whether she thought men and women approach parenthood differently, she made a similar argument to Erin: "I think the process of a woman actually giving birth ... Yes, there has to be a uniqueness about that that simply can't be present for a man in his parenting role. It's just different, it fundamentally has to be different, because that nurturing of, the breast contact with the child if they try to breastfeed, and all of that".

As noted in the Introduction, English kinship recognises 'both the biological and the social' and 'emerges from an interplay between the two, rather than from the social elaboration of natural facts' (Edwards 2000: 28). Erin drew on similarly 'hybrid' ideas when describing motherhood and maternal bonding to me:

Women, biologically, are more genetically predisposed to nurture in a far greater way, a different way from men. But I think that's been increased a thousand-fold by the fact that this nurturing instinct has been thoroughly utilised by the stay-at-home mummy principle, by the fact that until very recently women didn't get top jobs, there was a whole, you

know, you couldn't have a career and a child, you had to make a clear choice and even then you could choose career and wouldn't necessarily earn as much as a man. ... [M]odern motherhood *is* special because of this immense emphasis on our nurturing role. So, as a modern feminist, it's quite difficult to say, thanks to people that stay at home, I feel more in touch with why people felt women needed to stay at home. And it isn't just the domestic, I think there's an emotional value in that, and – don't get me wrong, don't mistake me, I don't believe that mothers that work full-time have a different bond with their children, not at all – but I think that a modern condition has evolved where our bond, and even men, even my husband would say and would defer Rosie in some situations that involved emotional bonding or nurturing, would push her towards me because he feels that's what I do. And maybe not best, but that's my role, and I think that's related to the mother bond. (Original emphasis)

Erin sees female nurturance as both a “role” and a “predisposition” and views the bond between mother and child as doubly special because it is both ‘natural’ and ‘social’. The implication of this view is that both elements should be present in the mother-child relationship, a point with obvious significance for surrogacy. By associating the responsibilities of parenthood with the maternal bond, which is seen as being closely related to the physical intimacy of pregnancy and birth, it becomes both a biological and ethical expectation for a gestational mother to form a close bond with her child (Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004; Rapp 1999a).

Nina is in her early twenties and works for the conservation charity in Spey Bay. She comes from a small village near Nairn and her boyfriend is in the RAF. She told me that she planned to have children in the future and that if she had trouble conceiving ‘naturally’ she would prefer to use assisted conception rather than to adopt, though, like others, she felt that adoption was a social good (see Chapter Two). I asked her to explain more why she felt adoption would not be “enough” for her:

Yeah, it's just carrying on the family line, I guess, and I don't know if you'd ever have quite the same bond with a child that you'd adopted, even from a baby, with a child that had actually come from you and you'd had inside you for nine months. I think that's – it might be different for men and women – because, you know carrying a child for nine months, you're bonding with it for all that time. Whereas, adoption, you don't

really get the whole thing, you just get the baby, you don't get the whole experience that goes with it. I think just being pregnant, before you even get the child, is a big part of it, and something that every woman maybe wants to experience.

For Nina, adoption lacks the opportunity to carry on "the family line" but also, and perhaps more importantly for her as a woman, the embodied experience of pregnancy and labour, which she suggests is key to the formation of the maternal bond and an important part of female experience. Interestingly, this formulation also makes room for motherhood as fulfilling a personal or even 'selfish' need of the individual woman for a particular experience.

Erin similarly contrasted her bond with her daughter to one that she might have had, had she successfully adopted a child, saying, "I think I would've developed a different bond, but I'm in no doubt that ... [it] would have been exactly the same in terms of love, opportunities and ideas, and hopes and aspirations". In Born and Bred kinship, ideas about both birth and breeding 'are mobilized in a constant process of including and excluding persons from social categories which are, in turn, reproduced in the process' (Edwards 2000: 28; see also Cassidy 2002; Edwards and Strathern 2000). Both Erin's and Nina's comments here similarly imply how ideas about maternal bonding may be used to include and exclude people from valued roles and identities.

All respondents shared the ideal of a "special" bond between mother and child. For respondents, this was a concept that required little explication or explanation. Most of the mothers that I interviewed told me about how difficult or even traumatic their children's births had been and both mothers and fathers expressed the difficulties as well as the rewards of parenthood. So, while they did not state it explicitly, some of their experience did imply an underlying sense that maternal bonding must also be worked on, as is further suggested by wider discourse around managing pregnancy, birth and breast-feeding in order to facilitate bonding between mother and child. Yet, while maternal bonding may not always be easy or immediate, the mothers I spoke to told me they had bonded with their children and described that experience (albeit after the fact) as rewarding and fulfilling. Although I heard some remarkably 'liberal' views on surrogacy, as we shall see, not one respondent questioned the concept or value of the maternal bond *per se*, or the idea that mothers *should* form a close bond with their children. The maternal bond is not only a 'natural' phenomenon but also a moral and ethical one.

I asked almost all respondents, parents and non-parents, about whether they perceived differences in how women and men approach parenthood. Responses were quite evenly split. Those who said mothering and fathering were different tended to believe that they were complementary roles (cf. Schneider 1980) and so were generally accepting of this difference. However, when those who initially claimed there was little difference between mothers and fathers elaborated on their views it was clear that this was more of an ideal than a reality. This suggests a tension between the ideal of gender equality and the belief that gendered parenting roles are in some way inevitable. Again, this was related to the maternal bond. For example, Amy, who grew up in England, is in her early thirties, single and works in the wildlife centre in Spey Bay, told me:

I think the mum has a stronger bond at the beginning, but I think that's just to do with carrying the baby around for nine months. But then, the dad seems to be kind of more doting and spoils the child a lot more sometimes. So, I think the mother – it's kind of stereotypical – but the mother always seems to be the more kind of practical one and does the basic care of the child, whereas the dad is usually the one that comes in and spoils the children and plays with them and stuff.

Sophie is in her late twenties, single and works in the wildlife centre. I asked her how important she felt it was for children to have two parents while growing up:

I think there's probably still an element of quite ancient desire from the woman to sort of care and nurture and the male to provide. But then again, I think that's a sort of stereotype and I do think people can fit into those roles and it sometimes can be mixed around, though I think it often works in that kind of partnership. I s'pose then that that does mean that in some situations if there's only one parent they have to try and fulfil all of those sides as well, which is possible. And maybe we're all growing towards both members of the family, of the parents, still providing both of those sides anyway, so, like, everybody has a bit to play.

Other respondents also told me that they believe in the equality of men and women and similarly characterised 'traditional' parenting roles as "stereotypical",

yet nonetheless expressed a sense that such roles are largely inescapable (cf. Moore 1988: 38).

Kirsty is a medical researcher in her mid-thirties with a toddler daughter. At the time of our interview she had recently returned to full-time work. Her husband, who is disabled, looks after their daughter full-time in their house in Aberdeen. When I asked Kirsty if she perceived differences between her and her husband's parenting styles, she referred to the different physical experiences of parenthood for men and women:

I think that men and women approach parenthood differently in the time leading up to it. Women have the nine months where they're getting used to the idea – your body's being taken over by this parasite that you've got growing inside you. Men, although they kind of know what's going to happen, it doesn't really hit them between the eyes until the moment that the baby arrives and then, in our case, it was a bit of a shock to the system. He was like, 'oh my god, I'm a dad!', but in a good way.

In our case, we approach parenthood in exactly the same way. We have pretty much the same views on what is the right or wrong thing to do. The difference is that when my daughter cries, I have a physical reaction to it, not just an emotional reaction. It's not quite so bad now she's a year old, but you can feel the hormone rush in response to the crying, which he doesn't have, so I respond more quickly and a little bit more anxiously, and he's a little bit more chilled out – but that's not a bad thing! I don't think other than that that we approach it any differently.

Kirsty is keen to emphasise what she and her husband share, which is the values they bring to parenthood. However, the difference between them is that Kirsty feels a physical reaction when her daughter cries, while her husband 'only' reacts emotionally to the sound of her crying.

Like Erin, Kirsty refers to the nine-month period of pregnancy to differentiate her experience as a parent and the initial bond with her daughter from her husband's, though she suggests this is only an initial difference, which will ultimately be evened out. Of course, Kirsty is somewhat unusual in that she and her husband have reversed typical roles, with him as househusband and her as the main breadwinner (indeed, this may be one reason why she was

careful to note the special physicality of her role as a mother). She stressed that she felt her daughter was still her priority over everything else and that a major motivation for her work now was to provide her with a “good role model”. Both Erin and Kirsty, as mothers themselves, here express their special bonds with their daughters, but implicit in their comments is a judgement about their relationships with their husbands as well.

Nicola is in her early forties and comes from England originally. She works in the local council and volunteers at the wildlife centre at the weekends. Her partner is in the RAF and neither of them has children. Like others she differentiated between maternal and paternal bonding and suggested that this difference may be more lasting than Kirsty believes:

[Y]ou had that physical bond for like nine months, I mean it's something that's grown inside of you and it's, I think there has to be some kind of, some kind of emotional bond, perhaps that, perhaps in time can form as strongly with a father, but certainly, initially, I think there has to be something more in the mother-child relationship that, say in time, can maybe be equalled in some respects by the father, but not, I don't think it'll ever be the same, somehow. I don't know, perhaps until the child has left home, and once it's actually out of the physical environment with the parents, then maybe the relationship can level off, I don't know.

What Nicola's response here, along with the others preceding it, shows is the effect of the concept of maternal bonding in reproducing normative ideas about the relationships between 'biology' and 'society', between men and women in conjugal relationships and between mothers and fathers and their children. While respondents disagree about how far-reaching the effects of the mother-child bond may be in time, they assume that the physical, hormonal and emotional realities of pregnancy and labour inevitably create a “special” relationship between mother and child. Respondents are broadly speaking supportive of gender equality, yet here they foreground biologically determinist ideas of gender difference, suggesting that when it comes to motherhood, this difference is particularly salient.

***Naughty woman!*²² The surrogate mother and the maternal bond**

As we have seen, the initial location of the child in the female body means, for respondents, that the mother will inevitably form an attachment to the child, thereby reinforcing feelings of maternal responsibility and altruism. Surrogacy disturbs normative ideas of maternal bonding, suggesting that it may not be as inevitable as the quotes so far suggest. With surrogacy, the category of the natural maternal bond collides with the moral expectation to uphold a bond²³ of trust, or 'give the gift of life' (Konrad 2005; Ragoné 1999) and facilitate a couple's natural desire to reproduce, an obligation that women may feel particularly strongly (Raymond 1990).

Surrogacy raises the novel possibility that a child can have more than one mother (Cannell 1990; Ragoné 1994; Strathern 1992a, 1992b).²⁴ This is thrown into stark relief in those cases where the surrogate decides she cannot give up the child she has borne, and respondents were clearly concerned that a surrogate mother might do this. Fiona, a divorced teacher in her early fifties with one adult daughter, was generally pro-surrogacy, but was concerned that a surrogate would find it difficult to hand over a baby and saw this as the great risk for all parties to a surrogacy arrangement. Like Erin and Kirsty, she described to me her own enriching experience of having a close bond with her daughter and drew on this when she explained her concerns about a surrogate mother's ability to relinquish a child she has gestated: "I know that I could never have handed over a baby that I had borne. I would find that completely impossible, and that's not a rational decision based on any kind of belief, I just simply couldn't do it. ... Some women don't have nearly such a strong maternal sense. To me, it would be like cutting off my hand, I couldn't do it".

Luke, a graduate student and conservation volunteer in his late twenties, described the bond between a surrogate mother and child in a very similar manner to that used by others to describe the bond between a conventional mother and child: "I can fully understand the attachment after having gone through all the process of having the baby growing inside you must, you can't shut yourself off from that, you can't treat it like it's a job, so I can understand

²² This quote is from an interjection of Jenny's, which she made when I began to ask her about whether she felt a surrogate mother had a legitimate claim to keep the child she had carried for the intending parents. It was said with a rather sardonic inflection.

²³ Of course, the word 'bond' has a further, financially inflected meaning, which is worth remembering in relation to the discussion on commercial surrogacy in the next chapter.

²⁴ Though of course this is not completely novel, *given* the parallels with nannyng, and particularly wet-nursing.

the emotional attachment. ... It must be very natural for a mother to want to keep the baby". Willow, who works in the wildlife centre, is in her mid-twenties and grew up in southwest England and then Edinburgh, similarly worried about the surrogate becoming "too attached" to the baby and being unable to relinquish it to the intending parents. She said, "I just can't imagine doing that, carrying a baby and knowing full well that you're gonna give it to someone else, 'cos I'm sure that there must be quite a strong bond formed". She felt that a surrogate mother would have a claim to keep the child, explaining, "I just have this feeling that it's sort of their body and ... it's them that's been nurturing this baby and I just feel it's kind of theirs".

The physical fact of the child's location inside the surrogate's body during pregnancy adds to her claim on the child – as Willow explained, "it's been theirs [the surrogate mother's] for the time it's been in them". The bioethical dilemma of surrogacy here is that the bond between mother and child is fragmented. Where once maternity was 'certain' because a child's mother could only be the woman who had given birth to her, with surrogacy and ova donation, opportunities to have more than one 'biological' mother are opened up (Ragoné 1994; Strathern 2003). Luke and Willow suggest that it is natural that a surrogate mother should form a bond with the child she has carried, so it would be unnatural for her to 'reject' this bond by relinquishing the child to the intending mother. Yet, to do so is to abrogate her moral (since they are not, in Britain, legal) obligations towards the intending parents.

In talking with me about the hypothetical 'nightmare scenario' of a surrogate mother refusing to relinquish the child, many respondents interpreted this as a question of whether the child was, in fact, 'hers' (cf. Warnock 1985: 47). Nina said quite bluntly, "Well, it's not her baby, is it? ... [B]iologically, it's not hers. I mean, she's carried it". Many other respondents also assumed that gestational surrogacy, where the surrogate carries a foetus which has been conceived from the intending parents' gametes using IVF, was the most common form of surrogacy, though in fact this is not the case and 'traditional' surrogacy is more common as the 'technology' of donor insemination has been available for much longer, and is easier and cheaper to administer. This in itself suggests a desire to minimise the more culturally problematic aspects of surrogacy.

The question of whether a surrogate can legitimately claim to be a mother immediately brought up questions of ownership, belonging, rights and connection. Here I quote Nicola:

I think the only place where she [the surrogate mother] would have any kind of say in [keeping the baby] or any kind of weight if she changed her mind would be if it was her egg. I think if she's agreed to carry a child and it's not her egg and it's not, clearly not her sperm [laughs] ... if she's agreed to do it and it's not her flesh and blood, then I don't think she'd have any right to turn round and say, 'well, actually I want to keep it', because she's offered herself as a carriage, basically, not as a donor. I think the same applies if it's a donor egg. I think it's only if it's her egg that she should, at least, she'd have some kind of right, then, to say, 'look, you know, I want to keep it', 'cos it's half her.

Andrew also argued that a gestational surrogate who lacks a genetic link with the child has a less valid claim to motherhood:

I think that, while the nine month period is very, very important, I don't think that, if she doesn't have any genetic link and she's been aware from the first instance that it was almost a business relationship – and I'd imagine they'd sign contracts these days, anyway – I don't think I would grant custody [to the surrogate] if I were a judge in that situation.

Andrew, Nina and Nicola propose a much more prescriptive approach to maternal rights in the case of surrogacy than Willow, Luke or Fiona. The former three employ 'biometric' genetic reckoning (Cassidy 2002: 150) to argue that a traditional surrogate retains an inalienable claim to motherhood over a child that has resulted from her ova, while the latter highlight the experience of pregnancy, emphasising a surrogate's gestational kinship to the child (cf. Konrad 2005; Ragoné 1994; Thompson 2001).²⁵ Yet both approaches serve to protect the status of the maternal bond. As we have seen, the maternal bond is, ideally, both biological and social. Like Erin and Kirsty earlier, Willow, Luke and Fiona expect a surrogate mother to form a bond with the child they carry because the maternal bond arises naturally out of the embodied experience of pregnancy. According to this reasoning, it is impossible to deny either a traditional or

²⁵ Notably, when talking about her own reproductive plans as quoted in the previous section, Nina emphasised the importance of pregnancy to the experience of motherhood, yet in talking about surrogacy she sidelines gestation as a feature of motherhood. These examples are not, however, necessarily contradictory, as in each case she aims for a balanced picture of maternity in which biological and social elements are both present. It is also worth remembering that out of these six particular respondents, Fiona is the only one who has experienced pregnancy and labour.

gestational surrogate mother's claim to the child since, to repeat Luke's point, "it must be very natural for a mother to want to keep the baby". Nicola, Nina and Andrew, meanwhile, claim that the maternal bond comes from genetic kinship. As such, they suggest that it would be impossible to deny a traditional surrogate's claim to motherhood, while gestational surrogacy is acceptable as the intending mother's claim represents a more comfortable balance of both biological and social motherhood.

In making these distinct claims, each set of respondents draws on the concept of the maternal bond as a natural, inevitable phenomenon, rejecting the idea that it may be sidestepped by choice, and thus reinforcing its status as inevitable and given. Here, they are also defining what is morally right through the idiom of naturalness. What allows them to differentiate their claims is the polysemy of the maternal bond as well as nature; the maternal bond is still 'natural' whether it is based in gestational or genetic kinship. The maternal bond has a very wide reach, as it is a physical, hormonal, emotional and relational phenomenon that effects a fundamental transformation in women's identities. The breadth of the maternal bond means that, at any one time and for any particular purpose, its different aspects may be appealed to in order to make specific claims, and it is this multifaceted nature that gives it its strength and purchase. In particular here we also see that this already powerful concept takes on extra potency when elided with morality.

A number of respondents suggested to me that the surrogate mother required a certain level of emotional "strength" for her task. Lizzy, a student and conservation volunteer in her late teens who comes from Forres in western Moray (but whose parents are English), explained that she would not be able to act as a surrogate mother: "I am a very emotional person and I am not sure if I would be able to cope emotionally being a surrogate mother", adding, "after going through the emotional rollercoaster of having a child and then to give it to someone else even if that was already established beforehand, I don't think I would be able to do it". Earlier, we saw that the bond between mother and child is experienced and expressed in terms of emotional attachment based on physical experience. When respondents such as Fiona expressed their concerns about the consequences of a surrogate forming a bond with the child, they suggested the emotional and psychological ramifications of surrogacy arrangements on the parties involved. Respondents seemed particularly concerned about the surrogate mother's emotional state, particularly at the moment of postpartum handover, once again showing the cultural and moral

significance of this act in the surrogacy arrangement.

The idea that a surrogate might decide to assert parental rights over the child was often expressed as a “change of mind”, based on the assumption that she might not realise that she would bond with the child, and that this natural emotion would “kick in”, causing her to feel that she was, after all, the child’s mother. The special emotional strength required of a surrogate mother is the strength to detach from a maternal bond that occurs naturally, an altogether unusual task. A surrogate represents conflicting obligations, being expected to experience feelings of maternal altruism and responsibility towards the child but also to uphold her promise to help the intending parents. In the next chapter, we shall see how ideas about gifts, altruism and sacrifice are implicated in respondents’ ideas about surrogacy and parenthood. It may be that for those who are in favour of surrogacy, the surrogate’s ‘unnatural’ act of renouncing the maternal bond to the child she has carried is obviated by the sacrificial and altruistic act of helping another against one’s own interests.

Many respondents believed that some semi-formal process of psychological assessment would be appropriate before a surrogacy arrangement was set up, suggesting that counselling should be provided to the parties involved (but especially the surrogate mother), not only to provide emotional support but also as a means of vetting potential surrogates by weeding out those who are not emotionally fit for the role.²⁶ This idea that the assessment of a potential surrogate’s psychological state may act as a competent measure of her fitness for the role is commensurate with British clinical practice, as surrogates and intending parents are expected to attend repeated counselling sessions throughout the entire process (Brinsden 2003). Emotional strength is a useful measure in assessing surrogates, as emotion is by definition a labile yardstick. By insisting that the surrogate be emotionally strong, respondents set limits on surrogacy’s availability. By arguing that women should undergo rigorous emotional tests in order to qualify as surrogate mothers, they express their hope that surrogacy will not become more widespread and instead only be an option of last resort.

²⁶ One interviewee in Hirsch’s (1993: 73) study in southeast England suggested further that counselling may help individuals uncover their true motivations for wanting to use assisted conception, and, by implication, that understanding this will prevent them from going through with it.

Being fair: Upholding the surrogacy contract

As we have seen, competing claims to motherhood provoke knotty ethical dilemmas. For some, this was couched in terms of fairness, as in Amy's response to my question of what happens if a surrogate mother decides to try and keep the baby:

I think it's just a really hard decision for someone to make in the first place and it kind of makes me think that surrogate parenting is bad, because how do you know? How can you kind of have a child and then give it away and then maybe down the line you would change your mind, but I don't think you could really change your mind because I don't think it's fair on the people that have started bringing up the child. But I don't know, if I actually came across that situation, I don't know how I'd feel then.

Amy's framing of her argument in terms of fairness, a value that is popularly thought to be quintessentially British, suggests that upholding a surrogacy contract is just.

Many respondents assumed that intending parents would draw up contracts with surrogate mothers and that these should be enforceable. Paul, Jenny's partner, is a conservation volunteer and trainee counsellor in his mid-fifties. He grew up in London, but brought up his children in Orkney before moving to Moray after he and his wife divorced. He felt that a legal contract could preclude the formation of a bond between a surrogate mother and the child. Once again, I asked him if a surrogate would have a right to keep the baby she had borne:

Paul: Not if she'd signed some sort of legal contract, which I assume people would do, because that's where it all, for me, could go pear-shaped, because human emotion would come in. I mean, that woman [the surrogate mother] could get attached to the baby in the womb, even, and once she sees it, you know, everything's gonna kick in, biologically and emotional attachment, you know, it could be very tricky. And she might at a later date feel she's got a right to see that child, and then the father might decide he wants to meet this woman who carried his child. He's got some kind of relationship with her, in a way, hasn't he? It's very

complicated.

KD: So, to you, it would be quite important that there was a legally enforceable contract?

Paul: Well I think it would make things a lot easier. Because otherwise, you're asking for trouble, I think.

... Yeah, I think that would make it a lot clearer, that – you know, 'I undertake to carry this baby, blah, blah, blah, and to hand it over when it's born and I have no rights over access or ownership,' – not ownership! But parental rights – 'I waive my parental rights.' I mean, surely you'd have to? Otherwise you'd be setting yourself up for problems as the parents of the child.

KD: So presumably, from that, you think that parental rights can be waived?

Paul: Yeah, I mean, I thought that was the whole point of it, that you're undertaking to carry that baby and as soon as it's born to hand it over, otherwise it's false pretences if you intend to keep it, so I think that's gotta be better to make that black and white, so everybody knew what the deal was.

Clearly, the argument for a legal contract is one that favours the rights of the intending parents over those of the surrogate mother. This serves to minimise the challenge to cultural axioms of motherhood and kinship that surrogacy represents. It also points to the ethical responsibilities of surrogacy. Surrogacy arrangements rely on the ability of the surrogate not to claim maternity to the child she has carried and, by implication, not to form a bond with it. In surrogacy between friends or relatives, it is assumed, reciprocal obligations between the surrogate and the intending parents encourage her to honour the surrogacy agreement (see Chapter Two). If the surrogate and intending parents do not know each other previously, a legal contract may provide an alternative means of enforcing her obligations towards the intending parents. As such, respondents like Paul refer to the law to support what they feel is fair. In doing so, they expect more from British law than it actually

provides, as surrogacy contracts are not legally enforceable in the UK (Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985; Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990). This disjuncture between respondents' expectations and the actual legal situation is interesting precisely because these laws were aimed at reflecting the public's 'gut feelings'. In particular, the Warnock Report was based partly on evidence collected from 'the public' about their ideas about such practices.

Paul and others referred to the law as a higher authority that can provide ultimate judgement about who is a child's mother, informed by an accurate recognition of natural maternity. While the Warnock Report assumed social consensus on bioethical issues like surrogacy, here we see instead an appeal being made to the law to try and settle something that seems instead to inevitably provoke ambivalence. Faced with the uneasy ethical dilemmas and kinship ramifications of surrogacy, respondents appeal to grounding concepts such as nature, maternal bonding and the law in order to support their claims, and they do so in such a way as to imply that these concepts are incontrovertible, though in fact we have seen that in practice it is precisely their ability to straddle different meanings that makes them effective.

Conclusion

Mothers I spoke to during fieldwork told me repeatedly that having a child was a transformative experience, though with both positive and negative effects. While the maternal bond is a particularly robust concept, respondents disagree about its specific form and effects, with some saying that it is an initial difference while others suggested it is long-term or even permanent. Similarly, while this difference was closely associated with the physical experience of maternity, this could be in relation to pregnancy, labour and/or breast-feeding, or even hormonal and emotional responses to the sound of a child crying. While respondents did not suggest that fathers lack a physical connection with their children and took intending parents' desire to have children 'of their own' as self-evident, when talking about maternal bonding, they pointed to a different *kind* of bond between mothers and the children they have carried and borne, which has significant ramifications both for how parenting is organised and for the ethical status of surrogacy.

Surrogacy has the potential to threaten both the ideal of maternal altruism and the naturalness of maternal bonding, as the surrogate mother seems to be rejecting a child to whom, according to the logic of the maternal bond, she should inevitably have become attached. For respondents, the maternal bond is both natural and social and thus appears to be a 'total social fact' (Mauss 1990) that requires no explanation. Yet, the discussion about what happens when a surrogate mother claims the child she has carried as part of the surrogacy arrangement as her own showed that nature may be used in different ways, albeit with similar rhetorical effects. In this case, one group of respondents claimed that all surrogates retain a claim to maternal rights because of the naturalness of gestational kinship, while another group claimed that only traditional surrogates could legitimately claim maternal rights because of the naturalness of genetic connection. Various anthropologists have shown the way that those personally involved in surrogacy arrangements manipulate concepts like nature and maternity strategically in order to place surrogacy within a more socially acceptable frame (Ragoné 1994; Roberts 1998; Teman 2003; Thompson 2001). Respondents' ideas about the maternal bond presented here demonstrate the balancing of different values in ethical judgement as well as the polysemy of grounding concepts. While surrogacy seems to literalise ideas like maternal bonding, thus exposing them to destabilisation, this facility for being manipulated is in fact here a strength rather than a weakness.

Not only do respondents here use nature in shifting and contingent ways, but they also often elide their sense of what is natural with what is morally right. This has the effect of strengthening nature, and the claims they make with it, further. It also at once suggests what is distinctive about this group of people's responses to surrogacy. There is of course a long tradition of positive association between morality and nature in British culture, not least in the environmental movement. Yet, nature has also historically been a site of danger, bestiality and chaos, something to be controlled and tamed by people and inimical to society (see Cassidy 2002; Cassidy and Mullin 2007; Cronon 1996; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Gould 2005; Milton 1993; Schneider 1980; Strathern 1992a; Williams 1975; Yanagisako and Delaney 1994).

Drawing critically on Schneider's (1980) separation of symbolic and normative elements in American kinship, Edwards writes that Born and Bred kinship contains both of these elements and that they are interlinked (2000: 28-29). The concept of the maternal bond as analysed here shows that models are not just abstract entities that describe how things are, they also show how things

ought to be done; they are never morally or politically neutral. The maternal bond has profound implications, informing expectations about women's different responsibilities and identities in all spheres of life. In this way, 'bond' is an appropriate term, as it contains within it notions of physical constraint and obligation as well as emotional attachment. As we have seen, locating the formation of the maternal bond in the pregnant woman marks off motherhood as special, unique and somewhat mysterious. The maternal bond serves to delimit boundaries of inclusion and exclusion around the deeply valued status of motherhood. Furthermore, thinking about surrogacy shows that natural expectations like the formation of a unique bond between mother and child carry with them gendered ethical responsibilities – (good) mothering is seen to entail self-sacrifice, selflessness and extreme responsibility, but it is also something profoundly and uniquely fulfilling. Motherhood is a key exemplar of the ethic of femininity (Franklin 1997; Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004; Rapp 1999a, b) and it is impossible to separate notions of proper feminine behaviour from ethical judgements about surrogacy (Cannell 1990; Ragoné 1994).

Respondents were often hesitant to be seen to be prescribing specific ethical principles in relation to surrogacy. Having said this, the example of maternal bonding demonstrates particularly clearly that in making ethical claims, they do nonetheless express and reproduce normative ideas about kinship, morality and gender. This suggests that one aspect of making claims is considering the effects of one's pronouncements on one's interlocutor. Empathising in this way is important in avoiding offence and in marking one's own status as a sympathetic and tolerant person. This has clear implications for anthropological research methods that are significant both in recorded interviews and participant observation. This emphasis on avoiding 'judgemental' rhetoric also suggests the importance of freedom of choice as an ethical principle for these people, which has clear relevance to their own lives, as we shall see.

Tolerance, fairness, politeness and individuality are all popularly thought of as British traits and respondents' speech here reflects this. Here we have also seen many examples of ideas about feelings and emotion running through their talk about maternal bonding and motherhood. This is clearly linked for them with physical, embodied experience, reflecting the idea that the maternal bond is primarily a feeling of attachment that creates the necessary conditions for a mother to respond to and nurture her child appropriately. Once again, surrogacy is troubling because the surrogate is expected to resist a feeling that is

supposed to be so strong and compelling that refuting it would be 'unnatural' and emotionally damaging.

The importance of feeling has another dimension here in terms of empathy. Respondents cannot draw on their own personal experience of surrogacy, though they can express their knowledge of maternal bonding. Again, we see this in their hesitation to express rigid views about surrogacy and many of them noted the speculative nature of what they were saying, such as Amy's comment above about surrogacy contracts: "I don't know, if I actually came across that situation, I don't know how I'd feel then". What Amy points to here is the difficult position I put her and other interviewees in, of speculating about a practice with emotional, physical and relational consequences but which they have not experienced themselves.²⁷ So, one further function of this is to reflect their awareness of the abstract nature of what they were saying. While everyday life is lived amongst others, the claims respondents made about surrogacy were uncoupled from this relational context, and it is for this reason that Amy and others say that they might feel differently about surrogacy if they knew those personally involved in it. Relationality indexes moral obligations, but here in being asked to make claims about surrogacy they are somewhat freed up from such sympathies (cf. Konrad 2005).

²⁷ The divergent ways in which ethics is expressed and conceptualised finds a parallel in the different forms of ethical claim-making encountered here, in the different responses to different kinds of questions – claims that are solicited and speculative or spontaneous and reflective – and in the different kinds of values and concepts – grounding concepts or implicit moral values – employed to make these claims.

Love and Money

*We've made a great mess of love
since we made an ideal of it*
D.H. Lawrence, *Mess of Love*

*How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object!*
Henry IV Part 2, Act IV, scene 5

Surrogacy seems to respondents to have the potential to disturb the formation of the maternal bond, a bond which models a perfect combination of natural response and altruistic impulse (Cannell 1990; Morgan 1985; Strathern 1992b, 2003; Zipper and Sevenhuijsen 1987). As Cannell (1990) has shown, British media representations of surrogate mothers rest on a sharp distinction between the 'good' (altruistic) surrogate mother who acts to help a sister or friend out of love with no financial reward and the 'bad' (commercial) surrogate, exemplified by Kim Cotton, who was seen to be driven simply by desire for money. This response reflects importantly on the status of the mother-child bond 'as the essence of natural, family ties' (Cannell 1990: 668; see also Zipper and Sevenhuijsen 1987). It also suggests the moral and ideological significance of this concept. Respondents here were clearly concerned about not only the consequences of a surrogate forming a bond with the child she has carried, but also the implication that this bond, while 'natural', is not necessarily automatic and must in fact be cultivated. Surrogacy appears dangerous because it implies that maternal bonding can sometimes fail.

The public response to Kim Cotton also importantly reveals much about the nature of 'market values' and what they are seen to engender in British culture (Strathern 2003: 290). In this chapter I will explore respondents' ideas about altruism, love, money and commercialism in relation to commercial and altruistic surrogacy. I will explore what respondents mean when they draw upon a cultural model that pits altruism and self-interest as opposing and irreconcilable forces when assessing a surrogate mother's motives for entering a surrogacy arrangement and what effects they imagine that might have for those involved.

As noted in the Introduction and as we shall see here, proponents of surrogacy often employ gift rhetoric in order to normalise and ethicise the practice. While in popular and even academic rhetoric gifts may be called on in direct dichotomous relation to commodities, lived practice is more likely to be characterised by a mixture of these forces, though of course this in itself works through the reproduction of dichotomous ideals. As Lambek (2008: 136) has said of the gift, the Maussian 'obligations' to give, receive and reciprocate the gift are 'neither mechanical acts of rule-following nor simple or maximizing choices'. Instead, as in other ethical judgements, gift-givers must weigh up and balance competing considerations and commitments. In respondents' various ideas about commercial and altruistic surrogacy as well as paid blood, egg and sperm donation presented here, we shall see this contingency in practice.

Being a mother

We met Erin in the previous chapter. She was born in rural Ireland and moved to southeast England with her family as a teenager. Her father died when she was a child and she had to give up her place at Cambridge University to look after her younger brothers after her mother died when she was eighteen. As we saw in the previous chapter, becoming a mother brought with it a new sense of responsibility. She told me:

[Being a mother means] an absolute emotional relationship, an immense emotional relationship that is tied in with a huge amount of responsibility, I think in essence. Attached to that are all the offshoots, you know, in terms of a positive change of lifestyle involving a child, and that affects day-to-day and your long-term – it changes your goals and ambitions. So that, if you like, alters your, not your personality, but it alters your perception on your life and where it's going and where it's going with regards to your child. So, if you like, the emotional bond is tied in with personal responsibilities and then social responsibilities.

Motherhood effected a transformation of Erin's very being, her sense of self and her place in the world, her lifestyle and her relationships with others. Despite her

extensive experience of caring for others, being a mother was singular in its transformative effects.

Motherhood is transformative because it demands that one takes full responsibility for another dependent and vulnerable person. As we saw in the previous chapter, the bond a mother has with her child is thought to be “special”. Like her partner Paul, who described his own experience of fatherhood as “a two-edged sword”, Jenny considers parenthood to be a mixture of hard work and pleasure. She told me, “I’ve found it, on the one hand, rewarding and lovely, and I wouldn’t have wanted not to have been a parent, but it would be less than honest if I say that it’s been a good experience in total in my life. I think there have been elements of it that have been extremely difficult and challenging”.

Eleanor was clear about the way in which ultimate responsibility for a child lies at the feet of its mother, based on having a quite different experience of new parenthood compared to her ex-husband (see also Oakley 1986; Rothman 1989; Wolf 2001):

I think that women don’t know what’s happened when they’ve had the baby. And it’s a sort of ghastly realisation, because you prepare for the birth – all this talk about childbirth, and how you’re going to do it, how you’re going to breathe and how you’re going to do this and how you’re going to do that and, ‘oh and don’t forget to get some vests and some babygros’. But suddenly, it’s there and you haven’t a minute for anything else. And because you’re the mother you *haven’t* a minute for anything else and so you have to do it. But you’re all up and down and the man, because he doesn’t have to do it, he sort of doesn’t know what to do and doesn’t get involved at all in the same way. So it’s a very tricky time.
(Original emphasis)

In these descriptions, becoming a mother entails an all-encompassing sense of responsibility in which the mother’s previous status, identity, roles and sense of self are eclipsed by the needs of her child. However, on the other edge of the sword, motherhood is “fulfilling”, “rewarding”, “lovely” and “important”. In these cases, motherhood represented the realisation of a personal desire or, as Fiona put it, “a deep-rooted need”, which is also a natural expectation.

Erin summed up the rewarding side of becoming a mother:

[Y]ou feel very proud, you know, somebody that's related to you, that you love, that you've created, so immensely proud and it's immensely positive because you are given a chance for another identity, if you like. You're given a chance to be somebody's mummy, or somebody's parent. So [when I gave birth] I sort of felt – I'm sure some of it was hormonal – euphoric, at the idea that you can recreate yourself. So if you like, it's a second chance to deal with some of the mistakes you have previously made, so yeah, there's definitely a reinvention of identity.

Here, Erin points to the fact that reproduction produces both a mother and a child. Erin suggests that, in becoming a mother, her identity was reinvented in a positive way, that in a sense, she became a 'good' person who has dealt with previous "mistakes" (see also Miller 2004; Paxson 2004). In this way, she implies that birth is, for the mother, a purifying rebirth much like a ritual initiation (cf. Davis-Floyd 1992; Martin 2001). Erin's description of motherhood is also reminiscent of the concept of the calling²⁸ (Weber 1992), which points once again to the important connections between morality and kinship and between motherhood and ethics. She suggests that motherhood brings about a change in a woman not only because of physical changes and natural responses, but also because it is a deeply morally laden status, so that women bear an ethical responsibility to be good mothers.

In Euro-American cultures, maternal altruism, the expectation that a mother will be wholly dedicated to the care and nurturance of her child even to the point of abnegation, is a highly valued trait (Anleu 1992; Boydell n.d.; Ginsburg 1989; Miller 2004; Rapp 1999a; Raymond 1990; see also Paxson 2004). Maternal altruism is closely associated with the expectation that a natural bond will form between mother and child and that mothers can be relied upon to provide care, nurturance and protection – in other words, to embody this ideal. Implicit in Erin's comment that motherhood "alters your perception on your life and where it's going", along with the clear importance of responsibility identified in the examples here, is a sense that an important part of maternal altruism is an acceptance that, in order to best care for a child and to reap the rewards of motherhood, one may need to make some sacrifices.

²⁸ Erin is of course a trained nurse, a profession that has traditionally been particularly closely associated with the idea of the vocation.

An altruistic envelope or a sausage machine?²⁹

The ideal of altruistic surrogacy is enshrined in UK law, in reaction to the 'moral panic' (Jenkins 1992) surrounding the Kim Cotton case (Cannell 1990; Wolfram 1989). In the clamour that surrounded the passing of the Surrogacy Arrangements Act (1985) and Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990), an attempt was made to prescribe a morally acceptable version of surrogacy, and this was 'altruistic surrogacy', in which any vestiges of a financial transaction are eliminated. British law prohibits the granting of Parental Orders to intending parents who have given surrogates more than 'reasonable expenses', yet these are not in fact set. This suggests that the distinction between altruistic and commercial surrogacy is, in practice, a grey area even in Britain, despite the moral repugnance about commercialised surrogacy arrangements evident in the Warnock Report and the reaction to Kim Cotton's case, and there is evidence that there have been 'commercial' surrogacy arrangements in the UK that have not been prosecuted (see Blyth and Potter 2003; Brazier et al 1998).

The model of surrogacy favoured by most respondents that I spoke to was, broadly speaking, 'altruistic':

Emily: I would think that people would decide to become a surrogate mother probably because they know the couple involved, or at least one part of them and they want to provide the facility that the couple can't do themselves, as a sort of altruistic – more than a gesture – deed. I can't think there's another good reason for doing it.

Nina: You hear a lot of bad stories about, you know, people paying people to carry their children for them and people taking advantage of people and I think, say, getting a stranger to be a surrogate for you would be very weird, I think. You have to keep it within your circle and the people you know or else it just becomes, I don't know, that's when it becomes a bit of a moral issue, for me. And I think there'd be less chance, maybe, of the end result not being right, you know, as in someone keeping the baby and not actually giving it to the [intending]

²⁹ Emily, who is a writer, coined these two phrases when she told me her views on altruistic and commercial surrogacy respectively. She is in her early fifties and married without children.

parents. I think that would be less of an issue if it was a friend or family member who was being a surrogate.

Sophie: I think it's nicer [when it is altruistic] and it seems less 'under the carpet' and sort of like a business transaction. Yeah, I think that's what makes the difference for me, I don't like the idea of it as a business transaction. I *do* like the idea of it as a sort of almost a community thing and a family or a community caring for each other and trying to help out. That's where the line is. (Original emphasis)

In these three illustrative examples, we see not only the claim that altruism is the best reason for acting as a surrogate mother, but also what is understood by altruism in surrogacy. In these examples, altruistic surrogacy is: an offer of support and assistance to known others that implies sympathy and mutual support; a means of preventing exploitation; knowledge between parties which ensures that obligations are fulfilled; a way of differentiating an arrangement from a "business transaction"; something that creates community and it is about "caring for each other and trying to help out". We also see some examples of what it is not: "taking advantage" of others, being "weird", creating a "moral issue" and a "business transaction". Altruism is clearly a complex and multifaceted concept, and these examples do not exhaust its meanings.

Lizzy, who we met in the previous chapter, introduced me to her school-friend, Alex, who is also from Forres. Lizzy thought it would be a good idea for me to interview Alex as she had offered to act as a surrogate mother for a mutual gay friend of theirs if he wanted to have children in the future.³⁰ Alex told me:

I wouldn't consider being an anonymous surrogate. It would only be a consideration if it were for someone I knew very well that needed help. That way I would know what kind of a family the child would be going into, as well as I think it would make the whole experience easier, as in that situation you would not be thinking that you are having to give your baby away to a couple, it would be more of a case of knowing that you

³⁰ Two other respondents told me that had thought about being surrogate mothers themselves. Eleanor had considered offering to act as a surrogate for her younger sister, who, though she later had two sons, initially had had trouble conceiving. Charlotte also told me she had once offered to consider acting as a surrogate for a friend who had been diagnosed with spinal problems that meant her future ability to carry a child to term might be impaired, but noted that she was relieved that she had not taken this offer up.

are really helping someone you care about and you can be excited for them having their baby and it just happens to be that it's through you. Also, you would be able to keep in touch and that would let the child know where they came from.

In this quote, Alex talks explicitly about knowledge four times, encompassing and addressing a number of concerns that she has about anonymous or non-altruistic surrogacy. Knowledge here seems to stand for context, (cf. Edwards 2000: 229), it also stands for trust, identification (in specific contrast to anonymity), the needs of others and the promise of continuing future relationships. By focusing on knowledge, she separates out the act of giving up the child from that of "helping someone you care about". This re-routing means that she can see herself simply as a means "through" which their needs are fulfilled rather than as someone who has given a baby away. The idea of helping someone you know grounds her claim that surrogacy can be socially and morally acceptable.

In Alex's formulation "your" (the surrogate mother's) baby becomes "their" (the intending parents') baby. This not only reorients attention away from the means of the surrogacy arrangement (the surrogate mother) towards the end (the child), but also implies that thinking of others is a sufficient reason for doing something, in contrast to more capitalistic models of human action that see people as basically self-interested.

While Alex recognises that a surrogate mother may inevitably feel some attachment to the child, she believes that she should try and resist this in order to uphold her side of the surrogacy agreement. This anticipates the realities of commercial surrogacy arrangements as described in Ragoné's ethnography of American surrogacy arrangements: 'By focusing upon her relationship to the adoptive mother, in particular, to the idea that she is giving the adoptive mother a child, the surrogate shifts the emphasis away from her relationship to the father vis-à-vis the child and from the perception that she will be "giving the baby away"' (1994: 124; see also Roberts 1998; Teman 2003). Ragoné concludes that this focus allows for the surrogate's actions to be cast 'in a more socially acceptable light' (1994: 124). It also enables the arrangement to run 'successfully', that is, to ensure that the child ends up with the intending parents.

Alex is clearly uninterested in acting as an anonymous³¹ surrogate, and

³¹ By 'anonymous' she seems to mean not only a situation where the intending parents and surrogate mother remain completely unknown to each other, as is the case in sperm or egg

one reason for this is to know “what kind of a family” the child would be raised in. In her study of anonymous British ova donors, Konrad (2005) found that many donors, despite wishing to remain anonymous to the recipients of their eggs and unconnected to any resulting children, expressed a profound interest in the results of their donations, and specifically whether their ‘gift’ had resulted in any live births. As Konrad suggests, this complicates commonplace assumptions about both gifts and anonymity and the kind of sociality that they enact. Alex and others made the assumption that altruistic surrogacy is not anonymous, that it is about helping *known* others. This suggests an inability to conceive of a scenario in which a surrogate or donor would be willing to go through the pain, inconvenience and potential kinship ramifications of surrogacy or donation without some prior personalised relationship of reciprocity, obligation or love. Konrad’s respondents meanwhile focus on present intention rather than on prior or future relationships.

The personal reward for the surrogates that Ragoné spoke to is their sense that they are doing something special that takes them beyond their everyday roles. She says, ‘Surrogates do not want to mother a child; they want instead to be socially rewarded for having made a valuable contribution, made to feel special, and, at least for a short time, made the center of attention for having accomplished something that they consider to be of tremendous value and importance, giving birth to a child’ (1994: 86; see also Konrad 2005: 77). Only one respondent, Jenny, anticipated this idea, saying, “I would imagine that [as a surrogate mother] you would get a lot of high personal regard on a very profound level that you could never get probably in any other way, I would imagine. I would like to think that that would be the biggest payment that you could get back, that that would be a motivator”.

In the previous chapter we heard Erin and Nina’s ideas about adoption and maternal bonding. Respondents generally expressed the view that adoption is a morally and socially responsible option for childless couples, but that wanting to have a child ‘of one’s own’ was understandable and that the realities of adoption in the UK were often onerous and unssatisfactory. None had adopted children themselves, though some who did not have children said that they would consider doing so. In discussions about adoption, one of the commonest ideas I heard was that there are a number of children “out there”, and as Willow

donation, but also a commercial surrogacy arrangement where the intending parents and surrogate are unknown to each other prior to the agreement but become acquainted through surrogacy.

said, “it would be nice in an ideal world if people would look after the children we already have”. This perception suggests the importance of having parents for children’s development and that providing children with parental care despite lacking a genetic relation to them is a social good. Jenny described adoption as “a good social responsibility choice” and linked this not only with her perception that there are many children without parents in Britain, but also with a wider demographic picture, saying that the world is already “overcrowded and overpopulated”. But she suggested that adoption was not as readily accepted by society as it might be and would benefit from better promotion. So, while it may be a “socially responsible” option, it has a somewhat second-class status compared to having one’s ‘own’ child.

Contrasting adoption with conceiving a child through IVF, Richard said, “what I would hope is that adoption would be as much about providing a home for an existing child as providing a couple – or not a couple – with a child. ... [A]doption should be as much about that existing child as about that couple’s needs”. The decision to place a child with adoptive parents is ultimately made by social workers and other professionals who are supposed to be working in the best interests of the child, not by the adoptive parents.³² For respondents, adoption is a moral action because someone is prepared to take on the responsibility for a child to which they usually have no kinship connection, whose background may be unknown or undesirable and because they must bear scrutiny of their private lives and undergo onerous tests of parental fitness. Those who are prepared to subject themselves to this, it is assumed, must be doing so not only for themselves, but also for the child.

Those who adopt make a sacrifice, since they are not passing on their genetic inheritance and subordinate the ‘selfish’ yet ‘natural’ desire to have children of one’s own to the needs of someone else’s child. This sacrifice may in turn be rationalised as altruism or social responsibility. Bloch examines various examples of ritual sacrifice to argue that both gift-giving and the self-identification of the sacrificer with the victim – based on an assumption of fundamental resemblance between parent and child – are crucial parts of sacrifice, and that this is because sacrifice is concerned, like other rituals, with regenerating the group’s strength and vitality (1992: 37). Pertinent here is Bloch’s point that, in revitalising the group, sacrifice enables an inversion of

³² The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act was instituted by the Scottish government in 2007. Its stated aims are to improve the provision of fostering and adoption care for vulnerable children, with the particular goal of finding more permanent placements for such children.

power relations: the sacrificer/victim gains new strength through hurting himself. Sacrifice is also a means through which social reproduction is reinvigorated, which is perhaps why in the classic cases Bloch discusses the victim is usually substituted at the last minute, implying that the sacrificer's *intention* to submit her or his own interests to the greater good is more important than the act itself. This also returns us to the point made in the previous chapter that focusing on the abnegatory elements of the surrogate mother's act may 'restore' her femininity and make her act of relinquishing the child more culturally acceptable in obviating the problem of maternal bonding.

Lambek sees sacrifice as a performative act that 'casts intention forward' (2007: 33) and 'bring[s] into being a new conventional or moral state' (2007: 29):

Sacrifice is both a passionate culmination for the victim and a significant initiative by the person who offers it. It draws a line in blood between "before" and "after". Once you have killed something there is literally "no going back" for either victim or killer. Sacrifice is thus a materialization of intention and a consummation of resolution. (2007: 23)

In describing sacrifice as a 'pure beginning' (2007: 30) which sets a normative standard against which subsequent acts may be judged, Lambek makes clear the importance of intention and motive – and how those are perceived by others – in such acts. This has particular relevance for the cases of adoption and altruistic surrogacy³³ as discussed here, as claiming altruism, or sacrificing one's own interests, as a motive casts such acts in a morally acceptable light, but also allows for the donor/sacrificer to wield power.

In the first quote from Erin in this chapter, she said, "the emotional bond [of motherhood] is tied in with personal responsibilities and then *social responsibilities*" (emphasis added). Similarly, Sophie described the ideal scenario of altruistic surrogacy as "a family or a community caring for each other and trying to help out". This suggests the importance of an ethic of altruism in these people's lives, and the connection between individual and social responsibilities. We saw in the previous chapter that motherhood should contain a proper balance of biological and social elements and that, for some respondents, adoption was problematic because the mother would lack the

³³ The classic Biblical case of human sacrifice is Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, who is substituted at the last moment with a ram. Isaac's mother was Sarah while his (half-)brother Ishmael was borne by Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, who is often described as the first surrogate mother.

biophysical experience of pregnancy and labour, which might impair the formation of the maternal bond. We see here in Jenny, Willow and Richard's comments a further imbalance. If having a child the 'natural' way is in some way selfish and adopting is a self-sacrificial act, then in adoption the proper (to them) balance between egoism and altruism in the decision to have a child is upset, which also necessarily has an impact on the power dynamic between parent and child.

Sisters doing it for themselves? The ties that bind

Almost all respondents have siblings and most of them described the sibling relationship as special in some way, and different from a relationship with a friend. Sophie said about her relationship with her two older sisters, "you know family members right from the beginning and so there's that feeling of, they really know you and if you try and pretend to be somebody you're not they're going to catch onto that quite quickly and sort of know the real you so you can't get away with it". In contrast to her friends, Sophie said of her sisters, "I probably take them for granted more and expect more – whatever I've done, I kind of know that they'll still be my sister, and they'll still probably be there for me, however horrific I am". One of the benefits of a relationship with someone with whom one shares a deep knowledge, then, is that one can share the bad times as well as the good, without this threatening the relationship.³⁴

Sophie's experience suggests that sibling ties are indissoluble, and Lauren, who also works in the wildlife centre and is in her late twenties, said, "you can't get rid of a sibling like you can get rid of a friend ... the choice to basically write a sibling out of your life is a very hard one" (cf. Edwards and Strathern 2000; Schneider 1980). Emily, who has a warm relationship with her older brother and younger sister, was wary about the sibling bond, drawing on the experience of friends who have difficult relationships with their siblings:

If that bond is emphasised too much against the will of the people concerned then it can be a really bad thing and very difficult to fight

³⁴ Notably, in her study of Scottish adoptees, Carsten (2000b: 693) found that for quite a few people who had sought their biological kin in later life, relationships with siblings proved to be more rewarding and successful than with their birth parents.

against. Friends can be the most important people in your life, and however you come together with them, they can be a billion times more supportive than most people's families and that can happen to people as easily as people's families can be supportive.

Surrogacy between sisters has been described as the ideal form of altruistic surrogacy in British culture, in that it seems to be least threatening to the formation of the maternal bond and which fits best with the ethic of maternal altruism (Cannell 1990; Wolfram 1989; Zipper and Sevenhuijsen 1987). Most respondents in my study did not specify a particular relationship that might work best in surrogacy arrangements (even though I asked them directly), though most favoured a close relationship between surrogate and intending mother and, as we have seen, thought altruism was the best motive. A few did talk about sister-surrogacy, but not in exclusively positive terms. Just as Sophie suggested that altruistic surrogacy might be, though more ethical, "more complicated" in practice, those respondents who talked about sister surrogacy felt that it would make surrogacy more difficult. Amy summed this up, saying, "when I've thought about it before, I've kind of thought it would be a bit weird it being your sister". I asked her if this was because she felt the relationship was too close. She replied, "Yeah, I mean I think maybe it would be hard for the surrogate mother. Yeah, just really close, and they would be a family unit anyway because they'd still see the child and stuff, so, like, thinking about the child and how they would feel about it as well, then it's kind of, yeah it's quite difficult". For Amy, difficulty arises from the surrogate mother's proximity to the child, both in terms of kinship connection and the likelihood that she will see the child grow up but not be its mother.

When I talked to Jenny about sister surrogacy, she told me that her aunt had nearly adopted her in an informal surrogacy arrangement:

[M]y mother thought she was having twins when she had me and her sister-in-law and my father's brother, they couldn't have children, and they were a lovely couple and they wanted children and my mum said that if she had twins, she would give one of the babies up to them, so that's a type of surrogacy, because the DNA would have been similar ... but it was only me born, so there was that poignancy for them whenever they were with me because they were perhaps thinking, that could have been the child we were bringing up.

Although this arrangement never went ahead, this “poignancy” that Jenny perceived in her aunt and uncle’s relationship with her seems congruent with Amy’s feeling that surrogacy between sisters has its own set of potential problems. Emily also noted that surrogacy between siblings might have the unintended consequence of raising tensions in the relationship between surrogate and intending mother, suggesting that in some cases a friend would make a better surrogate mother than a sister as “all sorts of childhood jealousies and insecurities” might come out in a sister surrogacy arrangement, concluding: “Extra care, I would say, with members of the family!”

Sister surrogacy has both positive and negative connotations because of the notion of closeness (cf. Edwards 2000: 99; *passim*). In sister surrogacy, closeness is not only that of physical location – a sister surrogate would be expected to stay in contact with the child and the intending parents which might make it harder for her to detach – but also of emotional connection. This reflects an assumption that maternal bonding is inevitable (and with sister surrogacy, the biogenetic connection would presumably be all the more relevant), as well as a recognition of the obligatory nature of close relationships and gift-giving (Strathern 1992a: 15).

I noted the common tendency to use gift rhetoric in surrogacy arrangements in the Introduction. Mauss claimed of the gift, ‘the thing given is not inactive. Invested with life, often possessing individuality, it seeks to return to ... its “place of origin” or to produce, on behalf of the clan and the native soil from which it sprang, an equivalent to replace it’ (1990: 16; cf. Konrad 2005: 49). Gifts are, in this view, endowed with an inherent tendency to move, they never fully belong somewhere, as they must always be reciprocated. The association between surrogacy and gift-giving points not only to altruism but also implies the potential pitfalls of close relationships. As Emily said, the emotional upheaval of surrogacy might cause memories of past slights or rivalries to surface in the relationship between surrogate and intending mother if they are sisters, and so have a negative affect on its outcome and the sibling relationship. If we take into consideration Sophie and Lauren’s point that siblings have a licence to behave in ways that they would not with friends, this fear is understandable. For a sister surrogate, also, there is an added poignancy, as Jenny suggests, to the inevitable ambiguity of her relationship to her niece or nephew, which would presumably become relevant to the child as she grew up too. It is clear, then, that, while public discourse might promote sister surrogacy as an ideal, for these

respondents, the likely realities of such a situation may outweigh the benefits of keeping it in the family.

Anleu (1992) argues that altruistic surrogacy between women who have existing affective and/or kin ties exploits feelings of duty and obligation that are a feature of kinship relations, and which are all the stronger for women, who are, more so than men, expected to behave altruistically towards others. Raymond calls this the 'moral celebration of women's altruism' (1990: 8) and, like Anleu, identifies it as a normative expectation for women. Women are, in particular, expected to display supererogatory altruism more than men and this is clearest in the idealised figure of the selfless mother. Employing idioms of altruism and gift-giving in surrogacy not only casts surrogacy in a more socially acceptable light, but provides a regulatory structure to the relationships entailed in the agreement.

Ragoné shows that a surrogate mother must navigate between claiming a motivation based on altruism that is not maternal – as this would complicate the relationship between her and the child – but sororal with the intending mother. This has the effect of placing such arrangements under a socially acceptable rubric of altruism, yet may have the unintended consequence of establishing an expectation that there will be a continuing relationship between intending and surrogate mother, an expectation that is often held by the surrogate but not reciprocated by the intending mother (1994: 80). Gift exchanges contain inherent regulatory mechanisms – the parties involved know what is an appropriate gift and counter-gift, what an expression of reciprocity and what of hostility or domination (Mauss 1990). In contrast to the privatised market sphere, which appears to be ruled by self-interest, keeping surrogacy within the ties of friendship and kinship means that self-interest may be suppressed by inherent mechanisms promoting obligation, duty and self-sacrifice, yet this is precisely what respondents fear will sour the relationship between sisters as intending and surrogate mothers.

Reflecting on familial love, Miller argues that:

Siblings and friends are understood to be cared for with more reason than obligation or reciprocity. Love is essential because it asserts the ideal of agency within any given relationship. What is rejected is any language of obligation that suggests we maintain relationships solely out of enforced behaviour. To define a relationship in any terms other than

love seems to be taken as a debasement of that relationship. (1998: 35-6)

The cultural ideal of love as freely given obscures its obligatory and even exploitive potential. Offering to act as a surrogate mother for one's sister is construed as an act of love, yet if sisters go ahead with a surrogacy arrangement, respondents fear that this will cause sibling rivalries to surface. Respondents' fears about sister surrogacy suggest that they feel that while love or altruism may be an appropriate *motive* for acting as a surrogate, it may not actually be the best basis for a successful surrogacy arrangement given the ties of kinship, but also the unbalancing of power relations between the parties that surrogacy will entail.

In talking about sister surrogacy, respondents expressed fear about the potentially repressive side of altruism and family love. However, as Bloch suggests, 'sacrificial' acts like altruistic surrogacy may invert power relations.³⁵ In Mauss' analysis of the gift, just as the donor is obliged to give, the recipient is obliged both to accept the gift and to reciprocate it (1990: 50-55). This is the ambivalent nature of donation: in instigating a gift relationship, the donor wields power over the recipient and constrains him or her within a relationship of mutual dependence. Gift-givers, like sacrificers, gain power through offering (part of) themselves (Bloch 1992; Douglas 1990; Parry 1986; Ragoné 1994; Rapp 1999b), yet they may also be compelled to instigate the gift relationship in the first place by existing, and potentially repressive, bonds of love and kinship.

***Look out for squalls*³⁶: Commercial surrogacy and human nature**

In the Introduction I summarised the divisive and heated public debate provoked by commercial surrogacy in the 1980s and 1990s. As noted, anti-commercial surrogacy polemic of the time was based on a model in which humans are properly 'above' the market sphere, which anthropologists have identified as an attribute of capitalist society, in contrast to a Maussian view of

³⁵ Ragoné (1994: 72) observed that surrogate mothers feel that having babies is something that they are good at, and by implication better at than intending mothers. Similarly, she suggests that surrogates' description of their act as a gift tacitly implies that no financial compensation could ever equate to the extraordinary thing they have done (1994: 59).

³⁶ This is another phrase of Emily's, which she used in reference to the risks, as she saw it, of commercial surrogacy.

non-capitalist societies in which people and things are bound up with each other (Parry and Bloch 1989; see also Strathern 1988). Warnock states that, with surrogacy:

Even in compelling medical circumstances the danger of exploitation of one human being by another appears to the majority of us far to outweigh the potential benefits, in almost every case. That people should treat others as a means to their own ends, however desirable the consequences, must always be liable to moral objection. Such treatment of one person by another becomes positively exploitative when financial interests are involved. (1985: 46)

This comment reflects the moral revulsion that underlies much anti-surrogacy polemic and which was a particular sticking point for Warnock herself (Sarah Franklin, personal communication).

One key feature of anti-commercial surrogacy polemic is the 'slippery slope' argument, that allowing money into surrogacy arrangements breaks down the barriers around those things, like blood and babies, that are considered properly outside the realm of commodity exchange, rapidly leading to a situation in which everything is commodifiable and every exchange is a financial transaction. Zelizer (1997) notes a tendency amongst economic theorists to assume that money has the capacity to penetrate all spheres of life, and that once it does so, emotional and social ties will be eclipsed by rational self-interest and the pursuit of material gain. This is exemplified, she says, by Simmel's notion of money as 'colourless' and possessing the power to 'flatten' (cf. Strathern 1992a: 5) social ties with its great homogenising power. Zelizer (2005; 1997) shows that in reality, it is difficult to uphold this position given that money is inextricably bound up in intimate relationships and is moulded into different forms through its use in social life.

Kopytoff has shown that commodification is a process of becoming rather than being and that, 'The only time when the commodity status of a thing is beyond question is the moment of actual exchange' (1986: 83):

Out of the total range of things available in a society, only some of them are considered appropriate for marking as commodities. Moreover, the same thing may be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another. And finally, the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a

commodity by one person and as something else by another. Such shifts and differences in whether and when a thing is a commodity reveal a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible transactions. (1986: 64)

Appadurai similarly suggests that attending to the 'social life' of things and the moments in which they are transacted can illuminate the political dynamics at work in the processes of commodification and the different 'regimes of value' at work in the apparently straightforward worlds of consumption and commercial exchange (1986: 4). Both Kopytoff and Appadurai are discussing things here rather than services, a distinction with some salience as we shall see in a moment, but the processual and transitional nature of commodities that they identify is important. We know that goods may shift in and out of commodity status and there may be a parallel with the 'service' of motherhood.

Surrogacy entails a 'splitting' of motherhood into component parts, with the outcome that different women may compete for the status of being a child's mother, but it also shows the more everyday splitting of motherhood into those parts that may and may not be financially rewarded. Surrogacy elucidates the distinction between these different aspects of mothering, as it is much more ethical in British culture to pay a woman for providing childcare, as in a nanny or childminder, than to pay her for gestating or birthing a child. As we saw in Chapter One, the physical experience of pregnancy and labour is seen as a vital part of motherhood, providing the natural, biological and social grounds for maternal bonding. Given this close relationship, it is perhaps unsurprising that pregnancy is the component of motherhood that is seen as least appropriately rewarded with money.

In distinguishing between the ethics of commercial and altruistic surrogacy, commentators like Anderson (1990) refer to particular 'regimes of value', with commercialism and egoism pitted against altruism and voluntarism. While few respondents drew such stark distinctions, the same kinds of dichotomies remain important values when it comes to making claims about the ethics of commercial surrogacy. An important factor in the ethics of commercial surrogacy for respondents is their perception of the surrogate's motive (Cannell 1990; Markens 2007; cf. Ragoné 1994; Roberts 1998; Teman 2003). In introducing Part One, I discussed the connection drawn by three respondents between commercial surrogacy and prostitution. This analogy, as well as one between surrogacy and slavery, was also frequently drawn in the public debates

about surrogacy of the 1980s and 1990s. One anxiety that this analogical move indexes is a fear of exploitation in an unequal world. Whatever level of concern they felt about commercial surrogacy, most respondents were worried about the possibility that poor women might agree to be surrogate mothers out of financial imperative, though they did not generally state that this was a sufficient reason to ban surrogacy.

Lauren is in her late twenties and lives with her partner, Jack. They do not have any children, but plan to in the future (see Chapter Six). Lauren was born and grew up in America, and had been living, studying and working in Scotland for around four years when I first met her in Spey Bay. Jack is from an English family who moved to a Hebridean island when he was a small child. Lauren was concerned that women would be drawn into commercial surrogacy impelled by financial hardship:

I think I probably would have a hard time if they were paid so much that you had women who felt they had no other options to make money, being surrogates not because they chose to, but because they, you know, had no other options. Then I would have a problem with that. And I don't know where that financial line is, because I mean I certainly think they should be paid to cover all the costs, any lost wages that they would have made if they were working before that, and probably some amount of money for their 'efforts', if you will. But, you know, if you're paying a mother £5,000,000 for nine months, that's going to put a lot of pressure on people to make that choice, not because they are comfortable with it, but because they need the money.

Many respondents were loath to condemn payment for surrogate mothers outright, arguing that they should receive some compensation for the time they are pregnant, especially if it stops them working, though they felt this would be difficult to regulate. Nina argued that the intending parents should help the surrogate with any out-of-pocket costs related to the pregnancy, but qualified this with characteristic clarity, saying, "I think paying a fee to get a life is just too much. I think it's morally wrong and a bit sick". Nina's view here is, like those on other subjects, somewhat more rigid than most, but her distinction between exchanging money for "a life" and compensating someone for their time was salient for others.

Although Andrew was generally against money being involved in

surrogacy, he recognised the argument for compensation, saying with a hint of irony in his voice, “it’s like a job, having a job for nine months, I suppose!” Other respondents also made this point, like Eleanor, who said of the surrogate, “she’s doing a service. Having babies is hard work”. This reflects two important points, that surrogacy is like a job in the efforts it entails and that money is an appropriate reward for work done or services rendered; eliding the two suggests that there is an argument for commercial surrogacy. In everyday life one receives compensation to cover for or mitigate direct costs in doing something that is not financially motivated, such as volunteering as a wildlife conservationist, so the distinction between compensation and payment is therefore one based on an assessment of motive and incentive. For respondents, surrogate mothers may be financially rewarded for their “efforts” but should not be (primarily) motivated by money.

Erin was more outspoken than most others in her condemnation of commercial surrogacy:

I think if there was money involved [in a surrogacy arrangement], I think human beings don’t – capitalist society that we live in, I think where there’s the exchange of human beings and money, it takes us far, it takes us back to the Dark Ages. It takes us, you begin to question, did Wilberforce do anything for the human race? You question where our morals are at in the twenty-first century.

Erin’s argument is framed by a certain idea of progress, working from the assumption that human morality is progressing in a positive way, as evidenced by milestones like the abolition of slavery. The ‘Dark Ages’ is in the British idiom a time of archetypal moral corruption compared to the apparently morally enlightened twenty-first century in which slavery is seen as very wrong. This reminds us of the particular ways in which people think about time and progress, and that the commodification of people is neither a new phenomenon, nor an old one.³⁷

I have noted that, in contrast to other groups of British people who employ the past as a means of critically reflecting on the present (Basu 2007; Cohen 1987; Edwards 2000), respondents here are more likely to be future-oriented in

³⁷ It is worth remembering, also, that connecting slavery with surrogacy may be both an argument for and against payment of the surrogate mother, since slavery has been condemned as morally wrong both as the buying of persons and as making people work without financial reward (cf. Wilkinson 2003).

their outlook, which is no doubt connected with their interest in environmentalist ethics, which is based on acting responsibly to avert future catastrophe (see also Hirsch 1993). This may also be connected to the fact that most respondents are migrants to the area, self-consciously building good lives (cf. Carsten 1995). Erin is concerned about moral degeneracy in the future, but in stating her case she is putting a limit on what is acceptable, suggesting that while such backsliding may be a tendency, it is not inevitable and can be averted. By talking about the past, Erin suggests also that commercial surrogacy cannot be seen simply as a symptom of the particular times in which it was born – the reasons for it are more complex, as the differing social attitudes and approaches to its legal regulation around the world reflect.

For Erin, the commodification of babies and bodies that commercial surrogacy represents is a cause for real anxiety:

[T]here's something quite emotionally – not to use a pun, but – barren about, barbaric, about, you know, handing over money and somebody walks off with a child. You know, you can't put a price on human life. What message are we giving to that child? You know, what, is one child worth [£]15,000, another worth [£]20,000? It's ludicrous, and I can't morally justify that situation to myself.

As Erin's pun suggests, allowing money into the creation of human life negates the fecund potential of assisted conception. In her view introducing money and questions of price into human reproduction creates emotional sterility, implying further that assisted conception, despite alleviating an individual or couple's childlessness, will have the effect of making the wider community "barren" in its corruption of normal social transactions.

Revulsion at the idea of 'baby-selling' – indexing the idea of the priceless child (Zelizer 1985) – is the cornerstone of the legal prevention of commercial surrogacy and it seems that, for many respondents, commercial surrogacy necessarily implies buying a life rather than paying a woman for her reproductive work. Just as many were afraid that commercial surrogacy would amount to selling babies, they were also concerned that it would mean the commodification of women's bodies and reproductive capacities, though this was less of an explicit concern than baby-selling. Like Erin and Lauren, Andrew picked on the idea of price when explaining his objections to commercial surrogacy, wondering how this might affect intending parents' motives for

selecting a particular surrogate: “Well, I guess if an egg and sperm match, do you choose the prettiest surrogate? Do you pay more for one with big breasts? How does it work?”

Jenny said she would prefer for surrogacy to occur between friends or family members based on ties of mutual support and was somewhat concerned about the potential for exploitation of women who acted as surrogates, but she suggested that the involvement of money in surrogacy arrangements was not necessarily immoral:

[I]n the real world, I think there probably might well be good reasons why somebody should have some form of remuneration for [being a surrogate mother] and I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing. I think it's valuing what somebody's doing for you in a very profound way. And at the end of the day, money is, like it or hate it, and I'm certainly not somebody myself who puts a lot of store by money, but, I mean, realistically, it's the currency by which we measure a lot of things.

Jenny recognises that “in the real world”, money is the usual means of assigning value and so it makes sense to her to apply that to surrogacy like anything else.

In her comparative study of public and legal responses to surrogacy in New York and California, Markens (2007) has shown the work of two competing ‘frames’ in arguments both for and against surrogacy, one as ‘baby-selling’ and the other as ‘the plight of infertile couples’. Markens makes the point that these two frames are both easily understood and likely to elicit sympathy, so that one cannot argue successfully against either but only highlight certain aspects of each frame in order to argue for a certain position. This reflects once again that, while many respondents feel that lines do need to be drawn, and logically must be in order to make a judgement, where that point will be is by no means obvious. Knowledge is never fixed in advance and the nuance and contingency of the responses of respondents in this study suggest that public and legal discourse does not do justice to the sophistication of ‘ordinary’ people’s attitudes and the complicated interstices of knowledge that they bring together when making ethical judgements.

These points were brought home to me most clearly when I interviewed Fiona, the most pro-commercial surrogate of respondents. In the previous chapter, we saw a split in respondents’ ideas about whether gestational surrogates form bonds with the children they carry and how that influenced their

judgements of the ethics of surrogacy. Views about commercial surrogacy were similarly split and far from uniform, instead characterised by a nuance that would be very difficult to capture in a quantitative survey.

I asked Fiona if she was in favour of surrogacy:

Yes. I think it's absolutely fine under the very strictest and most stringent of conditions and I really do think that everybody in the triumvirate, as it were, needs to have their needs looked at very carefully. Yes, I think a surrogate mother is a wonderful thing. Some people who've perhaps had two or three children, really don't want another but have somebody they'd really like to give this incredibly special gift to, I think that's wonderful. An absolutely ultimate gift from one person to another, to give birth to a child for someone else – wow, I think that's incredibly special.

... I actually don't have a problem with the idea of the [surrogate] mother being paid rather than compensated because it is an absolute human truth that we don't give something up unless we have something better to put in its place. There are very few people who are so unselfish that the giving up of the baby is compensated for by how wonderful they feel about giving that gift to someone else; we're just not made like that. So, lovely idyllic dream as it is, I think it's fraught with problems. Whereas if you have a proper contract which says that, 'giving up this baby is a simple exchange and I will get x amount of money to do x', is actually a much, much better way of doing it because the surrogate mother is left feeling that they've got something out of it. Although it doesn't sound very nice, I'm afraid I think that that is probably crucial.

Fiona's view that people do not give things up without a reward in one sense suggests that people are basically self-interested, but I do not think she intends this to imply a corrupt morality. What is "selfish" in her view, is keeping a child that one has borne – something that respondents agree is natural and, in usual circumstances, desirable. Fiona also told me that she felt that surrogacy on the whole would work best as a "transaction", which underlines her sense that it should be an exchange based on reciprocity.

Like commercial surrogates in America (Ragoné 1994), Fiona describes a commercial surrogate giving a "gift" in return for payment. She thereby implies that a child *can* be exchanged for money without this necessarily compromising

the morality of the parties involved and that money *could* adequately reciprocate for a culturally 'priceless' child. Clearly, Fiona does not have a basic moral objection to commercial surrogacy on the grounds of commodification unlike Erin, nor does she seem to hold with the 'slippery slope' argument that once something becomes commodified there is no going back, but sees commodification as a matter of individual choice which does not *necessarily* compromise one's morality. Fiona also complicates the gift/commodity dichotomy that flavours so much writing about surrogacy and underlies much economic theory, by describing a surrogate's work as both "an ultimate gift" *and* as best rewarded with, and even motivated by, money. This radically contrasts with the dichotomous view of gifts and commodities that is usually attributed to Western societies and the moral philosophy that posits a rigid distinction between people and things, maternity and commodification.

I asked Fiona how she felt about the involvement of third parties in 'brokering' such a contract along the lines of the American model. She told me, "Again, you come up against this nasty thing called greed, which is in most people, and they may well do a better job if they're paid for it properly than if they're not". This argument is consistent with her one about surrogate mothers: a third party agent may ensure that the surrogacy arrangement runs smoothly because she has a vested (financial) interest in doing so. This not only suggests a belief in human "greed", but also a faith in human choice and agency.

I asked Fiona what she thought would be the most valuable qualities in a surrogate mother. Along with emotional and physical health, she said, "In some ways you're not looking for maternal qualities, in some ways you're looking for the opposite. So in the commercial world, you may get the right surrogate mother". The intending parents should, she said, have the opposite values:

[T]he baby is going to the parents who want a baby desperately enough to pay a large sum of money. To me, that's the right way around because that's where the baby is going, so they're putting the baby ahead of the material stuff. To me, that's ok. Ok, [the surrogate mother] - that's the commodification side of it, but, so what? They go off with their lives and they've chosen things over the baby, that's up to them.

As in her suggestion that a commercial surrogate is providing an "ultimate gift" in return for payment, Fiona here again mixes money, materialism and maternity. This suggests that, while she does not object to the involvement of money in

surrogacy on the grounds of a gift/commodity dichotomy, and so explicitly recognises that money cannot be separated from the sphere of personal relationships, she does not question the association between self-interest (or “greed”) and money (though perhaps without quite the same moralistic tone as other respondents), just as she assumes that maternalism is antipathetic to it. Unlike Erin, Fiona does not object to commercial surrogacy because it is baby-selling, but argues that just because it might be baby-selling does not necessarily make it unethical. She is able to argue this because she simultaneously draws on competing ideas about human nature as on the one hand venal and self-interested (see Sahlin 1996 for the links with Christianity here) and on the other hand as inherently good. Significantly, it is maternalism that exemplifies this human good.

While Fiona went further than other respondents in her support for commercial surrogacy, others similarly did not see payment for the surrogate mother as necessarily reprehensible. Luke did not object to the compensation of surrogates, and even said that he had assumed that they would be recompensed:

Luke: I think I would have thought that they’re doing it for the love of it, but then a lot of people do things for the love of it and still get paid. I just assumed that people get paid, some sort of compensation somewhere along the line, if not professionally.

... [F]rom my point of view anyway, it’s not like a straightforward medical procedure that you can do on the NHS. I think it’s more of a personal thing, journey. But on the flipside, it is rather a massive undertaking and presumably the surrogate mother would have to take time off work or whatever she does if she’s not a professional surrogate mother. So I just assumed that there would be some sort of compensation, or something changing hands somewhere along the line in a few cases. But then the over-riding thing, I would have thought, would be compassion and love.

KD: As a reason to do it?

Luke: Yeah, rather than financial gain. But as I say, in terms of harsh reality, it’s difficult to do without some sort of remuneration, but not in terms of a living wage, I wouldn’t have thought.

What is particularly interesting about Luke's response here is his point that love and money are not necessarily incommensurable motives for doing something. Just as Fiona describes the actions of a commercial surrogate mother as "an ultimate gift", he says, "a lot of people do things for the love of it and still get paid", which not only complicates the dichotomy of love and money, but also suggests once again that surrogacy may be properly viewed as work. Both Fiona and Luke make nuanced judgements here that positively value choice and personal autonomy and that suggest that money is not necessarily bad. Yet at the same time they demonstrate their sense that money is associated with many negative things, as in Fiona's description of greed as "nasty" and Luke's depiction of the "harsh reality" of capitalist society.

Lambek (2008) has written that, in the capitalist Western world, economic value is seen as measurable and variable, while ethical virtue is fundamentally incommensurable. However, as he makes clear, and as is illustrated by Luke's comments above, in making ethical judgements, this distinction may come to seem less certain:

Understood as judgment rather than obligation, ethics itself relativizes or at least contextualizes value. Practice emerges through evaluation, the sizing up and fitting of action to circumstance. Yet judgment selects among alternatives not by means of a binary logic of exclusive acceptance or rejection but by balancing among qualities. Such evaluation or judgment is grounded in more general, culturally mediated, understandings of the human condition and the ends of human life as well as those internal to the practice at hand. (2008: 137)

Aside from Fiona, respondents' views on commercial surrogacy tend to reflect a split between whether they view remuneration as being a reward for the surrogate's work or a payment for a child, with those in the former camp being much less concerned about commercial surrogacy. It may not be a coincidence, therefore, that, as a group, the mothers I spoke to were least concerned by commercial surrogacy, as they were clear that the surrogate was doing "hard work", though of course Erin, also a mother, was strident in her condemnation of commercial surrogacy. As Jenny suggests, money is the usual means of valuation in contemporary British society and is typically the most appropriate means of rewarding work done and services rendered. Importantly, Fiona, Luke

and Jenny's comments suggest there *is* room within the way that motherhood – as reproductive labour – is conceptualised in British culture for it to be associated with financial reward.

A nice little earner: Money in blood and sperm donation

When I talked with respondents about commercial surrogacy I also asked them their views on blood donation, in order to gain another perspective on commercial surrogacy as well as to see what kind of linkages they might make between the two practices. Respondents were generally against paid blood donation, though many conceded that remuneration might provide an incentive for more donations, which is significant given that they perceived a shortage of blood in the British healthcare system. A couple of respondents even admitted that the offer of a cash incentive might encourage them to make a donation. Erin regularly donates blood for free, but admitted that she might be swayed by a cash incentive:

[I]f they started a campaign saying, 'right, if you come and give blood we'll give you a free cup of tea,' – which they already give you – 'and £5,' would that persuade me to go more? Probably not. Would I take the £5 note when I got there? I don't know. If everybody else around me was and I was thinking, well, if not, it's only going to go back in the system to buy more tea bags, I might take £5 towards a new handbag.

Other respondents tended to link the idea that money would work as an incentive for potential donors explicitly with exploitation, assuming that those driven to donate their blood for money would need that money for basic necessities rather than to go towards a new handbag.

Erin was keen to point out that, while she might accept money as a reward when donating blood, this did not mean that it would be her motive for donating. As we have seen, she was one of the most vocal respondents against commercial surrogacy and is very concerned about the exchange of human lives for money, yet she clearly does not believe that accepting a token payment for blood donation would compromise her morality. She explained later in our interview that selling blood and selling babies is fundamentally different, saying,

“if you pay for a blood bag ... it doesn't have a personality, it doesn't have a soul, we're removed from it by the science”. In the previous chapter, I noticed the more speculative and abstract nature of respondents' ideas about surrogacy compared to those things that form part of their personal experience. Erin does not have personal experience, and therefore an instrumental reason, to rationalise commercial surrogacy. Significantly, also, she told me that she would not use assisted conception herself because of her faith, but would not stop others from using it. Lambek says: ‘any adherence to or advocating of an absolute value like truth or justice must be qualified in and through lived practice and this will entail the acknowledgment of additional values among which a balance appropriate to any given situation is sought’ (2008: 138). The difference in Erin's attitude to receiving five pounds for her own blood donation and revulsion at the idea of commercial surrogacy clearly demonstrates this contingency.

Respondents claimed that, as with surrogacy, the best reason for giving blood is altruism. Some referred to a generalised altruism, such as Alex, who argued, “I don't think that blood donors should be paid for donating as people should not need a cash incentive to help save peoples lives”. When I talked about this with Joanna, she referred to an earlier conversation I had had with her about voluntary work. As well as her regular (paid) job as a care-worker, Joanna is a volunteer at the wildlife centre, for which she never accepts any of the expenses for lunch and travel costs she is entitled to because, she told me, it is her choice to work there and she “doesn't do it for the money”. On blood donation, she said, “I wouldn't want to be paid for it. It's like what we said about volunteering – you volunteer to do something and then if you're getting paid for it you're not actually volunteering anymore. So no, I don't think people should”.

Lauren made voluntary blood donations in the US until she came to the UK. While she can see an argument for reimbursing donors' expenses, just as she reasoned that a surrogate mother should not be left out of pocket by her pregnancy, she would prefer donation to be based on “community values”:

[I]n a lot of cases, blood is in really high demand and so if there's the funding available to make it feasible for more people to give blood I would be ok with that. ... [B]ut if people are able to abuse the system, 'cos it really depends on how regulated it is and there's always ways to get around a system like that even if it is regulated. So I would worry about paying people. I mean, I think we've got very skewed community

values and social values – if we could educate people such that it was a part of, you know, that's sort of how community works, if somehow you could use – I don't know how you'd do it – but if somehow you could use that money to just fund understanding and create a sense of community.

Lauren makes a neat inversion here, arguing that money which might be used to provide an incentive for donors should instead be used to fund an awareness campaign that would foster those community values which ideally provoke people to donate blood 'voluntarily'. The difference for her seems to be that it is acceptable to fund a campaign that will promote social responsibility, in contrast to funding individuals directly for their 'gifts' of blood.

For Titmuss (1997), the ideal donor is someone who gives up her time and some of her blood in the interests of the greater good. It is an altruistic act, a voluntaristic gift (cf. Mauss 1990; Parry 1986). Tutton notes, based on his study with blood donors who participated in genetic research in Orkney, that reasons for giving blood or genetic material are inherently complex and multifaceted (2002: 532) and may not in fact be conceptualised as gifts. As the examples of Erin accepting five pounds towards a new handbag for her altruism and Lauren's argument about using money to foster community values suggest, in practice the distinction is rarely so clear-cut.

Andrew is both a blood donor and a registered organ donor. When I interviewed him he was a volunteer in the wildlife centre, which he did out of a love for wildlife, a commitment to protecting the environment and to get work experience to further his career. He seamlessly combined altruism and self-interest in explaining his reasons for donating blood: "I think you should do it because you think it's going to help other people and you might be in the position that you need it yourself, not because someone gives you a fiver to do it".

Erin was similarly candid about why she gave blood, saying "you do it in the hope that, god, if you ever need a blood bag or ... one of your loved ones does, there's one there for them. So it's like, you know, we're all human beings and we're all in it together and we're all trying to help each other out. It's a humanistic principle". Erin, who worked in the NHS for many years, gives blood as she or her family might one day need it, but also because she feels a responsibility to contribute to a sufficient public supply. Giving blood is therefore, according to this "humanistic" model, an investment in the future, whether a general pool or one's kin network. In this model, which seems to be based on an

idea of sharing and social solidarity as opposed to the supererogatory pure gift, the distinction between altruism and self-interest is blurred: Erin and Andrew give blood because they feel it is a moral action that benefits other people *and* because it might benefit them or their family. Furthermore, their examples show that the boundary between self and kin is similarly hazy – and that actions done for kin may be both ‘altruistic’ and ‘self-interested’. Respondents recognise that money is necessary for everyday life and that it is mixed in with affective ties (see Zelizer 2005: 24), but in order to maintain propriety, they make certain distinctions and mark boundaries around the particular ways in which they combine economic transactions with intimate ties, and one important part of this, I have suggested here, is the framing of motivation.

Paul told me in interview that he was quite concerned about commodification in commercial surrogacy, but distinguished between paying a surrogate and paying a sperm donor:

Katie, I don't see anything wrong with being paid to donate sperm. I don't think anyone would want mine now, otherwise you'd have given me a nice little earner. I feel it's a very different issue – excuse pun – to donate sperm and walk away not knowing where it's going, as opposed to carrying someone's baby for nine months, giving birth and then having to give away what is really your baby.

... I don't see there's any problem there, if people want to get paid for donating their sperm, or their blood, or any other bit of their body they don't particularly need or want! For some people, it might just be some way of making some money for people, and I don't see any harm in that. But it's not the same as creating and developing a human life. It's not the same at all, is it? Blood isn't the same as a baby, there's a big difference there, you're talking about a human being. A vast difference.

As Paul says, the “vast difference” that makes commercial surrogacy unacceptable is that it is the exchange of money for a human being, rather than blood, organs or sperm, which he sees as fungible. When talking about blood donation, other respondents made a similar distinction between “bits of their body” and people.

While eating dinner with Steve, Sophie and Willow in a pub one night, the conversation turned to sperm donation. In contrast to Edwards' (2000: 33) co-

conversationalists, who were coy about assisted conception and subjects that touched on sex in public arenas, I often found myself having quite scatological conversations with younger respondents and those I was closest to. These conversations relied heavily on in-jokes and quite obviously 'childish' behaviour in contrast to their work personas, which for most of them involved communicating with members of the public in a professional manner.

Joking and banter are common marks of inclusion in this friendship group. Being subject to collective teasing is a sign that the target is a well-liked member of the group, that they can take it and can occasionally be a mechanism for defusing awkward situations or deflating an over-sized ego. On this occasion, Sophie was teasing Steve, who is in his early thirties and works in forestry, about consuming pornography and suggested he "put his sperm to good use" by becoming a sperm donor.³⁸ Steve turned to me and asked if he could get paid for it and I said that he could receive expenses. Willow asked me if payment is legal for egg donors. As I responded, Sophie interjected with a sound of disapproval, then said, "it's funny, my immediate reaction there was that it's wrong to get paid for eggs but not for sperm, 'cos it's just sort of different, but I'm not sure why". Willow suggested it was to do with amounts, saying, "you know, like with fish, they have thousands of eggs and it's a certain amount". Sophie continued reflecting on her gut reaction, trying out loud to work out why there was a difference, then said, "you know, I think maybe I think that an egg is more like a potential baby and the sperm is just something you add, like, you always think of the sperm coming in and fertilising the egg". I asked, "so, would it be like you were paying for a baby more if you paid for an egg?" She agreed. I asked them if they thought it was also to do with the process of collection. Steve and Sophie laughed and Sophie said it might be a factor while Steve noted that collecting sperm was more pleasurable than collecting eggs. Willow added, "with egg collection, it's kind of dangerous, there's much more risk".

In this conversation, sperm donation was straightforward and comical, and therefore not problematically associated with money, while egg donation was an emotive and onerous procedure that should not be rewarded with money. While there are obvious differences between the physiological experiences of sperm donation, egg donation and surrogacy, these distinctions, and the implication

³⁸ Steve in many ways positioned himself as the 'alpha male' of the group in Spey Bay, rarely missing an opportunity to display his masculinity and often railed against being surrounded by so many women, whom he regularly teased (usually in a mimicking high voice) for talking about dolphins non-stop. He was, also, one of the respondents who took his environmental responsibilities the most seriously and was thought of as a sensitive and responsible person and a loyal friend.

once again of the association between such services and prostitution, point to a gendered difference in what is appropriately fungible and what kind of 'work' can be appropriately rewarded with payment. As such, when Willow commented that egg donation was "dangerous" or risky, she was referring not only to a more difficult process of collection but also the fact that if women are paid for elements of their (potential) maternity they are rejecting the cultural model that posits mothers as symbols of altruism, love and care.

When comparing different donations in this way, respondents drew distinctions in different places, using particular and competing logics. We saw earlier that Jenny was relatively unconcerned about surrogate mothers receiving payment on the basis that this was a typical means of assigning value in British society. She felt that the practicalities of sperm donation compared to egg donation and surrogacy were important, but argued that "out of pocket costs to any donor should be met, regardless of sex of donor":

In principle I feel there is nothing wrong in being paid but I imagine like a lot of people, I'd feel it's perhaps seen as an altruistic gesture and that probably plays into our mindset of feeling 'it's "better" if it's done for love of fellow mankind³⁹ [sic], rather than for a straightforward financial transaction. I think this is because the whole concept of creating a new life is imbued with high emotional context and moral standards.

Just as Jenny described payment as the prevailing means of marking value in British society, here she explicitly identifies the importance of altruism – "love of fellow mankind" – as a virtue within the cultural milieu in which she lives. When talking about blood and organ donation earlier in our interview, Jenny told me that she had donated blood in return for money when she had lived in Greece and said, "I think [blood donation is] promoted in [British] culture, our very localised culture, as being an altruistic action. I don't necessarily think that payment's offensive, but I think we've promoted it in our society hitherto as an altruistic thing". Jenny's response demonstrates the point made in the Introduction that respondents are reflexive about their own ideas. Public discourse about surrogacy, assisted conception and biotechnology in the UK is well established. The examples here demonstrate that this relative fixedness

³⁹ Here Jenny uses a model of altruism that is between a general "mankind", who may not necessarily be known to each other, as opposed to the model of altruistic surrogacy between people in existing relationships described earlier.

does not reflect the contingency and mutability of 'ordinary' people's ideas, despite the fact that the Warnock Report and similar documents were specifically designed to posit a normative ethical framework for British law (cf. Strathern 1995).

Conclusion

Respondents' ideas about altruistic and commercial surrogacy offer further illustration of the rhetorical efficacy of grounding concepts in informing ethical judgements. Their ideas about altruism, commercialism, money and human motive all say much about their social values and ethical principles, as well as suggesting a model for how we should live. Here I have pursued further the point that, in making ethical claims, respondents demonstrate the contingency with which grounding concepts are invoked, as we saw for instance in the contrast between Erin's views on commercial surrogacy and paid blood donation. Such contrasts seem to emerge most strongly in the difference between lived experience and speculative moral judgement.

Since surrogacy is 'extraordinary', it becomes necessary to rationalise and understand the choice to act as a surrogate mother. We saw in the previous chapter the important relationship between nature and morality in the concept of the maternal bond, but in this chapter we have seen another important facet of nature, as human nature, which is related to its meaning as pre-cultural essence. Most respondents saw 'altruism' as an appropriate motive for a surrogate, in contrast to avarice. This judgement condenses various assumptions about what altruism and commercialism mean and we have seen here the way that certain dichotomous values may be played off against and overlapped with each other in ethical claim-making. Yet, in contrast to more extreme models of altruism, sacrifice and asceticism, which might seem in some sense moral ideals, respondents typically draw on a model of human behaviour that mixes altruism and egoism.

Altruism, and its analogues including love, compassion and selflessness, is also culturally very closely associated with ideals of femininity and, in particular, maternalism. Altruism has a significant moral weight in its connotations of virtue, but this is also, and importantly, a gendered value. We shall see the close connections between ideals of feminine behaviour and

ethical living, and the complex way in which these connections are employed in respondents' everyday lives, in Chapters Four and Six. In these two chapters, though, we have started to see how, in talking about surrogacy, normative ideas about proper maternal behaviour and femininity get reproduced.

Despite the fact that respondents are heavily influenced by environmentalism, which is in its rhetoric often explicitly anti-capitalist, their ideas about money and market values are far from straightforward, as we shall see further in Chapters Four and Five in particular. While a few were clear in their antipathy to commercialism when talking about commercial surrogacy, this was a minority view. In contrast to the model of money as a flattening and contaminating agent that inevitably causes corruption, exploitation and a loss of human dignity that is apparent in anti-commercial surrogacy writing and Kantian moral philosophy, most respondents suggested through the way they talked about payment for surrogates, blood and sperm donors that money is not necessarily an instrument of immorality. They also suggest that love or altruism can be mixed with money without dire consequences.

In this chapter and the previous one we have seen the way that ideas such as love and money, altruism and commercialism, are used in shifting ways, sometimes held in dichotomous relation but, more often, brought into conjunction with each other, in Strathern's (1992a) terms, merographically. Grounding concepts like these encompass given and made knowledge, can be both 'social' and 'natural' and are both similar and different and, in their use, any and all of these elements may be brought into play in order to make and ground specific claims.

In agreeing to carry another woman's baby to term, a surrogate mother is assumed to have made a choice and in assessing the ethics of that choice respondents judge whether it was free and whether it was done for the right reasons. Respondents' ideas about what it might mean to become a mother for love, money or a mixture of the two suggest much about how they conceptualise human nature, choice and agency. None of this can be divorced from the context of their everyday lives, to which I now turn. As suggested in the Introduction, this is a particularly important point given the specificities of respondents' ideas about nature, and human nature, and how this is associated with ethics and morality.

In delving into respondents' more everyday concerns in the next three chapters, I will aim not only to add contextual flavour to their thoughts expressed here, but also to explore further the central themes that have come up here but

which are also manifested in everyday life, from their ideas of the good life to understandings of nature, relationships with others, ethical values and personal identity. As such, I will show that we cannot understand the claims that people make about particular practices or topics in isolation from their everyday lives since, although they will take different forms and have divergent effects, the same kinds of principles and grounding concepts inform both the extraordinary and the everyday. This is key to what this ethnography primarily describes, which is the sophisticated, contingent and nuanced way in which people balance ideals and meta-values against personal commitments and contextual judgements in the pursuit of the good.

PART TWO: EVERYDAY ETHICS

I consider this politicization of Green thought and action has led us dangerously astray. It stops us from realizing that it is not them, the multinational companies or the state industries of Russia and China that are wholly to blame for our fast degrading world. Our much too vociferous advocates, the consumer lobbies, and we the consumers are equally responsible for the gaseous greenhouse and the extinction of wildlife. The multinational companies would not exist if we had not demanded their products and at a price that forces them to produce without enough care for the consequences. In our belief that all that matters is the good of humankind we foolishly forgot how much we depend upon all the other living things on Earth.

We need to love and respect the Earth with the same intensity that we give to our families and our tribe. It is not a political matter of them and us or some adversarial affair with lawyers involved; our contract with the Earth is fundamental, for we are part of it and cannot survive without a healthy planet as our home.

James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*⁴⁰

⁴⁰ While respondents are aware of the writings of Lovelock and other prominent environmentalists, most do not spend a great deal of time reading these works, because they read them when they were younger, or because they are resistant to adhering to any one particular view. Instead, much of their everyday knowledge about the environment and the environmentalist movement comes through newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent* (and occasionally through more specialist publications such as *The Ecologist*), travelling, the gradual attainment of knowledge through spending time in the countryside and talking to local experts and watching wildlife documentaries (the BBC naturalist and presenter, Sir David Attenborough, is a hero for many of them).

A good life will necessarily vary somewhat from person to person, but there are common ingredients and principles in respondents' ideas about this. As noted, the overarching influence on their ethical practice is environmentalist 'ethical living', a contemporary development of the Green movement, in which advocates seek to minimise their own and others' impact on the natural world by reducing carbon emissions and pollution and working to conserve and protect endangered habitats. For respondents, the local population of dolphins and other rare wildlife provide a special focus for such efforts. Recently, efforts to employ fairer and more sustainable modes of consumption, such as Fair Trade schemes, supporting local shops against supermarkets or even 'growing your own' and eating goods that are seasonal and have lower 'food miles' have been absorbed into the environmental movement, suggesting the current significance attributed to providing ethical choices to individuals who then feel they are 'doing their bit'. A further popular element in this mode of thinking, and one that seems to many adherents to be connected up with these principles towards the natural world, is the promotion of a feeling of community. Of course, notions of community are as multifarious as ideas about nature, but in the case of respondents here, this is reflected in the simple but significant idea that connections with others are an important part of a good life and of feeling at home.

In her analysis of homesteading ideology and practice in America, Gould (2005: 2) suggests that homesteading is a response to a 'problem of meaning' in contemporary mainstream American life. Homesteaders provide a useful counterpoint to respondents here, as they share many values, but there are also important differences. Homesteaders reorient their lives around home and nature: 'the ethic of living "at home in nature" is an ethic of simple living, of being a producer more than a consumer, and of letting nature set the terms for one's daily choices' (2005: 2). As Gould makes clear, these are self-consciously ethical choices informed by specific ideas about nature, economy and spirituality. In this way, homesteaders are similarly motivated to the respondents here. Both groups of people aim to live a good life, one that is enabled by choice, that positively values nature and home and which resists certain elements of mainstream life, especially unsustainable consumption. Respondents here are far less extreme in the changes that they have made to their lives than the homesteaders in Gould's book. They do, however, greatly sympathise with their philosophy and values, though as we shall see the specific

historic and cultural versions of nature and home that they have inherited are somewhat different. This is an important point, as common appeals to 'nature' in the construction of good lives may (deliberately) obscure differences in belief and practice for each group (Thompson 2002; Yearley 1993). That homesteading, like environmentalist ethical living, is not ordered by a rigid code of practice may, in fact, be part of its appeal.

As Gould suggests (2005: 218), homesteaders' choices to change their lives are enabled by the fact that most of them, like the respondents here, are middle-class and well-educated and so have significant financial solvency and cultural capital. The people I met in Moray and lived amongst in Spey Bay are seeking good lives that are both personally fulfilling and informed by ethical principles. They have chosen to build these lives in a place in which most of them are not native, with interesting implications for notions of home, belonging and community. Like homesteaders, then, they suggest that a good life is one that is chosen and made rather than given.



Figure 4: Tugnet, Spey Bay, on a sunny afternoon. The former salmon fishing station manager's house in which I lived is the two-storey building in the middle. The Spey lies to the left of the photograph and the sea is behind the buildings.

Living on a Nature Reserve

Knowing someone lives in Inverness is a very poor guide to their cultural background

Alex Walker, *The Kingdom Within*

The conviction that the world is facing ecological crisis is a vital factor in structuring respondents' ideas of the good life. Tackling climate change has in the last few decades also become a permanent fixture on the British political-economic agenda as previous doubts about the scientific veracity of this complex of phenomena have eroded. Here I will give a sense of what everyday life is like in Moray in order to begin to contextualise the responses outlined in the first chapters. I will describe what makes the area special for the people who live there and why it seems to lend itself to the building of a good life. I will show some of the ways in which respondents come to feel a sense of belonging, enacted through a sense of being closer to the natural world and part of a community. I will analyse what kind of claims they make about, for and on the place they think of as home.

In her account of homesteading life in Maine, Gould describes nature and home as 'central orienting concepts' in homesteading practice (2005: 101). Of course, the USA's geographic landscape is larger and more varied than Britain's and a great deal of American land was settled much more recently. Alongside this, being 'at home in nature' in American culture seems to be more about embracing wilderness and frontierism compared to British, but specifically English, visions of living closer to nature. Scotland seems to offer a wilder, more rugged version of nature in the popular imagination than England. Nonetheless, visions of the good life in both England and Scotland tend to have a more pastoral flavour (Williams 1975) conjuring up not only hedgerows, empty beaches, fields and open skies, but also villages, close-knit communities and the local pub. This suggests that, while the British Isles are relatively small and have for centuries been populated in almost all habitable areas, living amongst others is an integral part of the rural good life for British people.

For homesteaders home symbolises all that is good about the good life and wrong with the old one. Similarly, the choice to live in Moray might be seen

as a rejection of the prevailing values of 'mainstream' British society, which is, to a certain extent, true. In contrast to those born into rural communities (Cohen 1982, 1987; Edwards 2000; Ennew 1980; Frankenberg 1957; Rapport 1993; Strathern 1981), respondents actively seek to be part of a marginal or remote community and in the final section of this chapter I will explore Foucault's (1986a) notion of the heterotopia in relation to this ethnography.

As in Whalsay, Moray is coloured by its (largely, past) association with the fishing industry. Like the Highlands and Islands, also, particular markers of Scottishness are readily accessible in this area, not least in the figure of the Speyside whisky industry, but also in the sense that Scotland is a place of wild, natural beauty. Life in Moray bears many similarities to life elsewhere in Scotland and the rest of the UK, not only, but not least, because it is a place marked by migration, though here we shall also see some of its particularities, especially in respondents' relationships to a nearby religious community, the Findhorn Foundation, and to the local wildlife and landscape. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind the differences with other places with which we have become familiar through ethnography. For instance, Edwards' description of Bacup, Lancashire, is of a place in which the present is scarred by memories and imaginings of its industrial past, manifested in both nostalgia and anxiety about the future. While Edwards is clear about the ambivalences of particular values such as community in Bacup, she also shows that in many ways community is celebrated and sought there because people feel they have lost it. The people I met in Moray also seek to build a community, but with quite different bases. Again, the fact that this is a group dominated by recent migrants is undoubtedly pertinent, but their ideas about community and relationships with others are influenced not by a sense of loss (cf. Nadel-Klein 2003), a desire to recapture something from their past (cf. Basu 2007; Macdonald 1997) or indeed a straightforward rejection of prevailing mores, but instead part of a process of coming to belong somewhere and building connections to others in a place in which they quickly come to *feel* at home.

As well as its cultural associations with domesticity, in Western societies home also refers to origins and birth, though birth and breeding may be emphasised or de-emphasised according to particular circumstances (Cassidy 2002; Edwards 2000; Strathern 1981). In order to live from their own toil and in harmony with the natural world, American homesteaders built or adapted new dwellings that had the land, space and conditions to facilitate these new lives. Like the respondents here, they uprooted themselves from their native

connections in search of somewhere that seemed to offer the right environment to build a life closer to nature. Homesteading, then, may be an act of going 'back to the land', but it is not an act of going back home. Gould focuses on the meaning of home as the site of domesticity, close family and the small-scale. As such, she does not fully address the implications of the fact that, while these homesteaders embrace one notion of home, as dwelling, they have apparently rejected the other side of home, as place of origin. In this chapter I will explore the implications of the idea that one can feel at home in a place with which one does not share native connections.

In the British context terms such as 'mainstream', 'conventional' and 'alternative' simultaneously hold positive and negative connotations, reflecting a sense that balance, tolerance of difference and pragmatism are more appropriate, attainable and even desirable goals to strive for in structuring everyday life. Halfacree (2007) has identified a common tendency to associate 'back-to-the-land' projects with the 1960s counterculture movement. As he makes clear, such projects have deeper historical roots and a wider social provenance than this straightforward correlation might allow, and in the UK they tap into widespread positive perceptions of the benefits of living in the countryside and being closer to the natural world. While the concept of the good life implies the pursuit of higher ideals, in Britain middle-class good living is more likely to entail a decision to 'downsize' and move to the country as opposed to founding a vegetarian commune or religious enclave. Similarly, for respondents, a good life is one that mixes, and aims to achieve a balance between, what is good about both conventional and unconventional ways of living. While they are in many ways influenced by back-to-the-land ideals, they are ultimately resistant to the more extreme choices of groups such as these homesteaders. In describing their everyday lives and choices, then, I aim to show the kinds of negotiations, dilemmas and judgements that go into leading an ethical life, and thereby to suggest some of the overlaps with their claim-making as seen in the previous chapters.

The long-standing idea that moving to the countryside can offer a better way of life has become increasingly popular in recent years. The 2008 Matthew Taylor Review on Rural Economy and Affordable Housing reports that in the last decade, the UK's rural population has increased by 7%, compared to only 3% in urban areas and the Office for National Statistics predicts that this will continue to rise over the next decade. Half of survey respondents living in urban areas report that they would like to move to the country while only one in ten rural

residents report that they would prefer to live elsewhere (Taylor 2008). This pattern has created tensions between native residents and incomers in some areas, with the common perception that counter-urban migration to rural areas, which typically have lower wage levels than urban centres, drives up housing prices, effectively preventing long-standing residents and their children from getting a foothold on the 'property ladder'. Such feelings were, in my experience, largely absent in Moray, perhaps partly because house prices are still very low compared to many other parts of the UK and rural Scotland has quite a sparse population but also, I would suggest, because of the area's long and varied history of migration. One obvious reason for this recent history of local counter-urban migration is the presence of two major RAF bases in Moray, at Kinloss and Lossiemouth, and five people who work at the wildlife centre are connected to the RAF through their partner's employment. Of these, only one, Nina, is native to the area.

At home in Moray

The reason most often stated to me for being in the area was a sense that it was somewhere that offered a good life, a feeling shared by respondents and native residents. Residents in Moray show no timidity in declaiming the qualities of the area and they are united in their perception that Moray offers a positive lifestyle. Many of these ideas about what makes Moray a good place to live in overlap with popular perceptions of the rural idyll (Rapport 1993), but according to residents, what makes the area *special* is the presence of rare wildlife, and particularly the Moray Firth dolphins.

Respondents' ideas about what makes Moray a desirable place to live in afford an insight into their values and priorities. One of the main reasons cited for living there is its wild, natural landscape. In contrast to the Highlands that border it, Moray enjoys fertile and productive land and great swathes of the area are set aside for agriculture; this is particularly evident in the low-lying area of coastal Moray from Fochabers to Brodie called the Laich of Moray. The palette of the place is more varied than the browns, greens and purples of Highland Scotland, with bright yellow broom and coconut-scented gorse visible for much of the year, the ever-changing silver-grey-blue swirl of the sea, the pink pebbles and yellow sands of the beaches and the primary colours of the fishing boats in

the harbours.

Those who live along the Moray Firth coast point to their good fortune at living so close to a dramatic coastline with many fine beaches and, of course, the resident dolphins and seals plus visiting whales, porpoises, basking sharks and rare fish. In Spey Bay and its neighbouring villages, visitors are told proudly about the River Spey and its world-famous whisky distilleries and salmon. Living in this area suggests to respondents that they live closer to the natural world, an idea that is not only deeply fulfilling for people who value nature so highly, but also promotes action, since there is a sense that having all this on one's doorstep makes the imperative to live ethically all the more pressing.

Residents in Spey Bay see it as typical of all that the area has to offer. This is due not only to its being a wildlife-watching hotspot and the fact that most of the houses have beach views, but also because it is a tiny village where life seems slow and peaceful. Since the village is a tourist destination, most of the people who pass through it each day are there for leisure, walking along the river or beach, watching for wildlife, playing golf or visiting the café. This is in contrast to the atmosphere in the private office of the wildlife centre, which can often be frantic as staff deal with the daily concerns of cashflow, managing volunteers and dealing with the errant septic tank system. Out of work hours, staff enjoy the positive lifestyle that Spey Bay seems to offer. Living next door to the wildlife centre, Willow and Sophie would often remark how lucky they are to have a 'commute' of less than a minute's walk and many staff would spend their lunch-breaks (when they took them) walking by the river or idly chatting with friends and colleagues, often planning parties and other social events.

Those who work in the wildlife centre see Spey Bay as somewhere in which people come and go, just as the wildlife does. This is particularly due to the biannual cycle of residential volunteers leaving and arriving, many of whom return, some permanently. The constant ebb and flow of visitors and tourists does not, however, detract from a common feeling that this is somewhere in which one can feel at home. One reason for this is the constant presence of certain well-known figures, such as Sophie and Steve who, although they have themselves only been there five years, have settled indefinitely and see the place as their home.

The other residents of the village who do not work in the centre have generally been there for quite some time and many are retired, so they appear to act as fixed points in the landscape of the community. Wildlife centre staff and volunteers tend to socialise mainly within their own group, but have cordial

relationships with the other villagers. Since walking and wildlife-watching are common leisure activities amongst all ages in the area, much contact between neighbours occurs on an ad hoc basis as they bump into each other while out having an evening stroll or watching for dolphins and birds. Wildlife centre staff and volunteers also come into contact with their fellow villagers through occasional projects at the centre, such as Willow's scheme to solicit donations of plant cuttings to start a wildlife garden and quite a few villagers have been involved at least briefly in helping out at the centre at some point in its history. Residents also come together at the regular events held in the village hall. These include parties to celebrate events such as Hogmanay, Christmas and Halloween, as well as pub quiz evenings and gigs by the local band, The Beaufighters (named after the RAF squadron based in neighbouring Nether Dallachy during the Second World War). The hall is also available for hire for private parties, invitations to which often extend to neighbours. These events offer opportunities for respondents to chat, dance and drink with their neighbours and to keep up-to-date with local news.

As far as I could observe⁴¹, the attitude of local residents towards each other is, broadly speaking, genial. Respondents also feel that in many ways their largely older and retired neighbours represent continuity and stability as well, in a few cases, a bit of 'local colour'. One retired resident, in particular, is known by everyone in the village as he offers to walk people's dogs for them along with his own. Respondents have various anecdotes about getting caught chatting to this man for a long time after crossing paths with him while out walking. Luke had one notorious encounter with him in which he noted how lucky he was because his house, which overlooks the golf course, is "the highest house in Spey Bay" and so, he surmised, he would be the last remaining resident "when the seas rise" as, he observed, most other houses in the village only stand a few metres above sea level, while he had measured his own as a whole four metres above sea level. When Luke recounted this thesis amongst other respondents, the reaction was largely one of friendly amusement, though one person remarked rhetorically, "and who is he expecting to row out to his little island with food and everything to keep him going?"

In this unsolicited comment about rising sea levels we see that even those residents not directly connected with the wildlife centre are concerned

⁴¹ Of course, since I lived amongst the staff and worked at the wildlife centre, I was no doubt associated with them by other residents and so they might have been more cautious about revealing any resentments in front of me.

about climate change and have their own ideas about how it will affect them. This also shows that, while respondents and their neighbours may be speaking the same language on this issue, the ways in which this is translated into their everyday lives can be quite different. This illustrates the point that, while almost everyone I met throughout fieldwork valued the local wildlife and saw it as an important and positive feature of the place, and while the vast majority of people I spoke to expressed concerns about climate change and destruction of wild habitats, the amount they considered these issues in structuring their lives varied. What they share is a sense of ethical responsibility to at least minimise harm to the environment through daily practice, but those who work in the wildlife centre try to go beyond the least harm principle by actively aiming to arrest or prevent ecological problems.

This example also shows the quality of the relationships between residents in Spey Bay. This man was the resident that respondents most frequently came into contact with because of his regular walks around the wildlife centre site. They valued his presence, as a “character”, but also as a compassionate man who cares about animals and tries to help other people, however eccentric some of his ideas might be. In their response to his comments about being the only survivor in Spey Bay after the seas rise, respondents bowed to his (notably proprietorial) version of future events, but managed to retain a place for themselves in the vision of them taking supplies to him in rowing boats, an apt and rather poignant image for a group of cetacean conservationists. While they are prepared to respect, and even prioritise, older and longer-standing residents’ claims to residence, this shows the importance they place on their attachment to the place – such that they would not abandon it even in flooding – but also their own self-appointed role caring for others.

Spey Bay and Moray are locally portrayed as idyllic. Many tourists that I spoke to whilst walking about the village or volunteering in the wildlife centre told me that they would love to be able to live in a place like this and many times while I was outside Sophie’s house gardening, collecting logs for the fire or feeding the chickens, a passing stranger would remark how lucky I was to live there. Of course, the obvious reason why more people do not live in Spey Bay is the limited number of opportunities to make a living that the area offers as well as the constraints of space and housing stock. Similarly, Moray is seen as offering a limited social life and the young women at the wildlife centre often poked fun at themselves for “wearing fleeces and drinking tea” while their peers were, they implied, busy running around dressed in the latest fashions, listening

to trendy music and consuming sushi and cocktails.

We met Sophie in the previous two chapters. She is in her late twenties and has lived in Spey Bay for five years, volunteering and then working in the wildlife centre. She grew up in rural northwestern England and spent family holidays in a cottage owned by her parents on the Highland north coast of Scotland. After leaving home, she lived in Edinburgh for four years, where she went to university and later worked. Between leaving Edinburgh and moving to Spey Bay, she spent a year travelling and working on charitable projects abroad. She enjoys hiking, cycling, wildlife-watching and other outdoor pursuits, but also modern art, world music and foreign cuisine. She is never short of superlatives to describe Spey Bay, Moray or Scotland and frequently expresses a great love for the area. When I asked her if she felt that Spey Bay was her home she said “yes, definitely”, without hesitation, then added that what was important about belonging to the place was a feeling of being *at home* there.

Sophie is thought of as the “lynchpin” of the group connected to the wildlife centre. She is an extremely warm, enthusiastic person who devotes almost all of her time and energy to doing things for other people. In this way she is also something of a role model. She is notorious for her tendency to invite people spontaneously to dinner or to stay at her house, which I quickly became accustomed to after I moved in with her myself. One of my foremost images of Spey Bay is her orange-painted sitting room with its flickering open fire, Indian throws for curtains, disco ball, multi-coloured rug, large and well-used dining table, huge stacks of CDs and hookah pipe in one corner. On the walls are a poster of a turtle, a memento of a Caribbean conservation project she worked on, a framed photograph of the mountains near her parents’ Highland holiday cottage, a world map annotated by hand with notes of her and her friends’ travels and a felt painting of a tern made by a former residential volunteer, who settled in the area after falling in love and having a baby with a local man.

Some respondents reported examples of people they had met who had “escaped” to the area after misfortunes such as a marriage break-up, nervous breakdown or redundancy (see also Watson 2003: 77). It certainly proved a haven for a number of respondents’ friends over the time that I was there, such as a friend of Sophie’s who had recently suffered a relationship break-up and a broken neck in a car accident who came for a few weeks and stayed for three months after falling in love with the area. During one conversation with Sophie about this friend, she told me, “it’s nice that coming to Spey Bay has made her start to think about settling down” and reflected that when she came to Spey

Bay herself, she had realised that, “although travelling is really good and fun, staying in one place, when it's the right place and you have a job you love and people you love, can be the really amazing thing”. This neatly expresses what is special about Spey Bay for Sophie, and is representative of many others’ feelings about the place.

While doing an enjoyable job and being surrounded by friends is vital to the desire to settle in Spey Bay for Sophie, what first attracted her to the place and what she constantly returned to when she spoke about it over the months I lived there, was its beauty. This idea of natural beauty was a recurring one amongst respondents in describing Spey Bay and Moray more generally. Although I share the view that many parts of Moray, and Spey Bay in particular, are very beautiful, they are not of course unique in this respect. As Hirsch (1995: 2) has argued, as ethnographers we need to be aware of the way that landscape is ‘produced through local practice’ and that familiarity with the landscape of the field is a vital, though often unconscious, part of the experience of acculturation in fieldwork.

When respondents described Moray as beautiful they were referring to emotion and experience as much as an aesthetic appreciation. A beautiful landscape in this case conjures up images of being outdoors, looking out to sea, contemplating the distant hills, appreciating the flora and fauna, which goes along with the sense that this is a place with a slower pace of life where people have more time to appreciate their surroundings, whether that be land, animals, plants or other people (see also Vergunst 2004, 2007; Whitehouse n.d.). Hirsch argues for a view of landscape as ‘cultural process ... which relates a “foreground” everyday social life (“us the way we are”) to a “background” potential social existence (“us the way we might be”)’ (1995: 22). The process of landscape in this view specifically concerns people’s efforts to achieve the idealised ‘background potentiality’ in their everyday lives, a process that sounds extremely similar to the idea of building a good life. It is therefore apposite that landscape should be so important to respondents’ ideas about the good life here. For respondents here, a ‘good’ landscape is one in which nature is evident, which suggests the interrelations between nature, landscape and ethics.

While the contours of Scotland may have been shaped by the movement of ice and rock over millions of years, the plants and trees that grow on it, the siting of human and animal populations and the boundaries of occupied land and wilderness are products of human will and history (Franklin 2007: 108-113;

cf. Prebble 1963). There is a perception, nonetheless, that Scotland is untouched or wild compared to the rest of Britain. For local residents, the presence of rare wildlife is one sign of this. The area is also subject to an, even by British standards, unpredictable climate due to the untempered influence of the north wind. Coastal Moray is bi-seasonal, seeming to come alive in the spring and summer, when migrating birds start to arrive, dolphin sightings begin and the first batch of tourists visit, whilst during the long autumn and winter it closes in on itself and one's willingness to stay through the cold, dark nights is testament to one's status as a resident rather than visitor. The daily weather in this corner of the world is changeable and highly localised. One week in Spey Bay in late March 2007, for example, opened with gale-force winds, horizontal snow and extremely rough seas, but a few days later I was eating lunch outside in Sophie's garden in mild sunshine. Locals know how to manage themselves in the climate and can find beauty in a boiling sea or a fog-bound beach. This perception of beauty even in inclemency is crucial to their attachment to the area. While respondents would complain about the weather amongst themselves, there was a sense that it was part of the whole package, or even a price for the extensive rewards of living in this place.

John Mackie⁴², the poet cited in the Introduction, is in his early sixties. He was born in Garmouth, on the opposite bank of the Spey to Spey Bay, where his mother still lives. He spent some of his childhood and much of his adult life in London, as well as living and working for some years in northern Africa. He has a doctorate in political science from the London School of Economics. He returned to Moray with his late wife, who was terminally ill, so that she could enjoy a healthier lifestyle in the final period of her life. After she died he decided to stay in the area. I first met John when he performed some of his poetry in Spey Bay icehouse. Like Sophie, he is a great admirer of the area's beauty and the sensuous appreciation of Moray features repeatedly in his poems. John currently lives in Banff, a fishing town about twenty-five miles east of Spey Bay on the Moray Firth coast and for a period Banff Bay acted as a muse for his poetry, culminating in a series of poems based on his observation that the tide is in the musical key of A.

While walking by the Spey one twilit August evening with John, Sophie and some others, we were treated to one of Spey Bay's many stunning sunsets. On this particular occasion, the sea and sky towards Buckie, in the east, went a

⁴² While I have changed the names of all respondents, I have made an exception here with John, as his poetry is pertinent to the discussion.

battleship grey, while the sky over Lossiemouth, to the west, was a mixture of greys and blue with bursts of bright pink and red. John remarked that this was a “metallic” sunset, labelling the greys in the east as “pewter and silver” and described the “carmine” of the sun behind the grey clouds “feminising” the sunset. In classifying this sunset, John showed not only his appreciation for its beauty, but also his intimate knowledge of the area (see also Cohen 1987: 40).

In his study of contemporary English migrants to Scotland, Watson (2003: 80) analyses participants’ multilayered reasons for moving to Scotland. Many of these resonate with the ideas of respondents here, suggesting that their motives for seeking a good life in Scotland overlap with popular perceptions of what life in Scotland is like. In particular, many of his participants identified Scotland as somewhere where one can get away from the fast pace and pressures of urban British life to enjoy a better way of living (2003: 71); many also cited the landscape and scenery of Scotland as a motivating factor in their migrations (2003: 72).

Reflecting on the 1997 Scottish Election Study (i.e. prior to devolution and, later, the election of the SNP to head the Parliament), McCrone reports that amongst those respondents, while ‘birth, ancestry and residence are the main markers of Scottishness, probably in that order ... over half accept a very liberal criterion for [Scottish] citizenship – residence alone – which would make Scotland one of the most open societies in western Europe in terms of citizenship’ (2001:172). McCrone argues that a key factor of Scottish identity is the association, and grounding, of national character and belonging in the land, rather than in any particularly well-defined sense of who the Scots are:

Being Scottish seems much more attached to ‘a sense of place’ rather than a ‘sense of tribe’, as the historian TC Smout observed. That is, the sense of territorial, civic, identity appears stronger than an ‘ethnic’ one such that people can claim to be Scottish by living here. The parliament reinforces that sense of ‘place’ insofar as people participate because they live here, not simply because they were born here. Further, the evidence seems to suggest that the longer people who were not born here live in Scotland, the more likely they feel able to make a claim to be Scottish. (2002: 1)

This suggests that, as well as common ideas about the importance of land and place to life in Scotland, there are inherent mechanisms in Scottish identity that

may be employed by migrants in creating a sense of belonging and that key to this is the ability to activate relationships with the land.

John is a local who has returned to his 'homeland' – as he puts it in *Where the River Meets the Sea*, he has 'circled' back to Moray 'like the Arctic Terns of the Spey'. Themes of belonging, connection and identity recur in his poetry, including his poem *Ancestral Voices – A Polemical Rant on Scottish Identity*, where he draws on the scattered locations of his ancestors, which traverse Scotland, England and North America like a genealogical spider's web. In the following passage from *Ancestral Voices*, he expresses, through his ancestors, his own ideas about identity:

As we sit late in our high house in Banff,
once owned by a Polish grocer, ancestral voices
silent in their frames speak volumes
they say – Nationality is a construct, its foundations symbols
of a shared, often mythical, past – Identity
is more particular and proven.

John told me subsequently with some amusement that he had recited *Ancestral Voices* at an informal SNP event in Banff and been told by audience members that it was a good example of nationalist poetry. Yet, in concluding, he reminds us that nationality, like any other aspect of identity, must be maintained through certain performances and rhetorical claims:

we polish and practice
the people we'll be:
selecting from ancestral voices,
fashioning diversity.

John's sense of the contingency of identity and belonging is particularly interesting given his unusual status amongst respondents as a 'native' of Moray with genealogical connections there that are clearly significant to him and which he could choose to foreground rather than question. Instead, he expresses here the sense that feelings of belonging and identity with place must be made and maintained as well as given, pointing to the importance of "selection" in identity.

Caring for the environment

The resident dolphin population provides a local focus of concern for residents of the Moray Firth area, but marine conservation is also seen to fit with wider environmentalist aims. Of course, environmentalism is not a monolithic doctrine and the construction of an enormous wind-farm in the outer Moray Firth in summer 2007 posed an ethical dilemma for respondents as they feared that underwater construction noise could harm cetaceans by interfering with their means of identifying food, echolocation, yet they generally support the use of sustainable energy sources like wind power to combat global warming. When respondents talk about the natural, wild beauty of Moray, this is not a straightforward positive appreciation. While nature is a vital source of goodness in their ideas about how to live, it is also a site of conflict, contradiction and contingency.

Gould describes gardening practice amongst homesteaders to give a sense of the differences in how members of this group approach nature. Comparing Scott and Helen Nearing's garden with that of their former acolyte, Sal, she shows that gardens are not only vital to homesteaders' self-sufficient livelihoods but are 'the center for aesthetic expression and ethical decision making' (2005: 42). The Nearings' garden is neatly ordered to maximise productive efficiency while Sal's approach is influenced by an idea of nature as random and fortuitous. Each garden presents different effects of a tension between asceticism and pleasure, reflecting the good life's dual status as virtuous and pleasant. While homesteading is in many ways a 'retreat' into the private world of home and family, the actions of homesteaders in re-ordering their lives closer to nature, she says, 'always resonate symbolically' (2005: 49). As such, she describes gardening as both a means of making the self and expressing dissent (see also Foucault 1986a: 25).

Different elements of wildness and nature, as healing and benign on the one hand and dangerous and savage on the other, are sought and resisted by respondents in the pursuit of a good life. The mixed status of nature and the wild were evident in the way they thought about the local wildlife and in particular the Moray Firth dolphins. Dolphins and whales are wild animals, and campaigning against whaling and their capture for display in aquariums is a key feature of charitable work done on their behalf in Spey Bay. For respondents, dolphins could be both benign, playful scamps and wild, ferocious hunters. Similarly, the

natural world is for them a place of beauty that deserves protection and care, yet is also unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Many of the wildlife centre staff were somewhat uncomfortable with the fact that, in their daily working lives, dolphins were routinely anthropomorphised, though as we shall see, they were aware that this could also help in gathering support for their cause. I often heard stories amongst them about the ‘nasty’ side of dolphins, such as hunting porpoises for sport and indeed it seemed that, the more a particular individual knew about cetaceans, the more complex their view of them was likely to be.

Respondents were similarly uneasy with dolphin ‘fanatics’⁴³ and with those who erred too much towards the mystical end of the spectrum in their ideas about these animals. For example, they reacted with derision to a flier from a self-described “dolphin channel” who was holding “dolphin-singing” workshops at Findhorn beach in order to “send healing energy to the dolphins”. Having said that, even those who had been in Spey Bay for a long time and spotted whales and dolphins regularly never grew tired of seeing them and told me that it was “always exciting” to spot a dolphin in the Bay, just as it was profoundly moving to encounter a dead whale as we saw in the Prologue.

When I first heard John Mackie recite his poetry in a performance in the Spey Bay icehouse, he finished with *Whalesong*. In a conversation many months later when John had become increasingly involved in the work at Spey Bay, he described *Whalesong* as his “‘70s” poem and said that it drew on the cultural idea that whales are sacred, wondering aloud “if whales and dolphins have taken the place of medieval gods”. He added that he had decided to re-write *Whalesong* after going out on a dolphin-watching cruise during which the skipper, a member of another local conservation charity, had “gradually disabused him of all this New Age stuff”. “For example,” John told me, “you think you’ve seen a lovely leap in the air, but it’s four males gang-banging a female. That’s what we need to remember instead of all this New Age, sacred stuff – it’s biological. I want to re-write it with the marine biology facts in it”.

Staff at the wildlife centre told me a few times about visitors who had come into the centre and asked when they could see the dolphins, as if they were visiting a dolphinarium. This question frustrated them, as one of the key roles of their work in Spey Bay is education about cetacean welfare. The charity

⁴³ I joined wildlife centre staff at a screening of Herzog’s (2006) documentary *Grizzly Man* in Elgin, which tells the story of the death of grizzly bear conservation activist Timothy Treadwell in a grizzly bear attack in Alaska. In comparing their own work for cetaceans to his work with bears, many noted a frustration that they were not more “hands on” like him, yet concluded that Treadwell was ultimately a “nutter” whose death was sad but predictable.

produces literature to discourage people from visiting dolphinariums⁴⁴, arguing that the capture of dolphins and whales for public exhibition is “cruel” and that keeping them in captivity drastically reduces their life span and quality of life (see White 2007). Telling me about these visitors who had misinterpreted the wildlife centre’s operation, one said, “We don’t keep dolphins in tanks like SeaWorld!⁴⁵ You have to come and watch and wait, you can’t just expect to get everything you want whenever you want it!” As this suggests, for them, dolphinariums represent the prioritisation of human desires for convenience over wild animals’ welfare. This comment differentiates their relations to dolphins as one based on respect and understanding compared to the patrons of SeaWorld, whose relationship to these animals is, they imply, one of commodification and consumption of nature (see Davis 1996).

These examples suggest the complexity of respondents’ relationships with nature. For those who are employed full-time in the wildlife centre, conservation, even though they may see it as their calling, is a job. They are acutely aware of, and ultimately resistant to, the popular imagining of whales and dolphins as majestic leviathans of the oceans⁴⁶ or playful and benign helpmates respectively, and as we shall see they also resent the gender stereotyping that goes along with dolphin appreciation.

Although staff are on the whole passionate about treating animals respectfully and believe wholeheartedly in conservation and green ethics, they are reflective about the full implications of these causes. For example, Willow, who has spent her entire adult life involved in conservation projects, once explained to me that pandas were not worth conserving because the effort put into their conservation far outweighed the likelihood of ever reinstating a healthy population. Willow is trained in assisting stranded marine mammals. On a number of occasions, juvenile seals washed up on Spey Bay beach and she would often be one of the first on the scene, ready to jump in the car with the seal and drive it to the nearest marine veterinary facility in Perthshire, some three hours’ drive. Again, her attitude to this work had an unsentimental edge, as she told me that she often felt that others were too busy “fussing over” the seals and “feeling sad for them”, when the most important thing was to get them

⁴⁴ There are no dolphinariums in the UK because, although they are not illegal, the animal welfare regulations are so restrictive that they are financially unworkable.

⁴⁵ SeaWorld is a collection of three marine parks that exhibit dolphins and whales to the public in the USA.

⁴⁶ Indeed, they expressed a great deal of mirth when a misprint in one of the charity’s brochures described humpback whales as ‘the wandering gonads of the sea’. It should have read ‘wandering *nomads* of the sea’.

to medical attention as efficiently as possible.

In March 2007, I took part in a series of visits to local tourist sites with other wildlife centre staff, which included a guided visit to the Aigas field centre just outside Inverness. Sir John Lister-Kaye, an influential naturalist writer, has developed this estate as a conservation centre offering nature holidays and environmental education. His latest project, which he zealously described to us over coffee and cake, is a controlled reintroduction of European beavers to the estate. Lister-Kaye believes that beavers deserve reintroduction to Scotland not only because they were once native until hunted to extinction, but also because they would be of ecological benefit to the country. For proponents, reintroduction offers an opportunity to put right the damage inflicted by humans, whose attempts to control wild landscapes has led to the destruction of native populations which, in this thinking, have as much right as humans to occupy the land. Respondents were quite sceptical, wondering whether reintroduction was a positive step forward and seemed somewhat unconvinced that humans and once-native species to Scotland like beavers and wolves really could live side-by-side.

In promoting relationships of care with the natural world, environmentalist rhetoric perpetuates distinctions between wild and domestic, animal and human and nature and culture (Cassidy and Mullin 2007: 1), prioritising positive associations of wildness over negative ones (Mullin 2007: 279). This has an extra layer of meaning in this context given popular perceptions of Scotland as a place offering wild, natural beauty. According to environmentalist rhetoric, wilderness is something to be valued and preserved, rather than tamed or domesticated and humans should only act on the natural world to give it a helping, rather than controlling, hand. However, we see here that even amongst people who value and try to live in accordance with environmentalist ethics, ideas about nature, the natural world and wildness are complicated and their feelings are mixed.

A further point that emerges from these examples is that having a sophisticated and well-informed appreciation of the natural world is a means of staking a claim on it. By claiming a role in Scotland's fabric as guardians of the land and sea, respondents embed themselves in the landscape but also put in the work that supports claims of belonging, building reciprocal relationships between themselves and the place (Edwards and Strathern 2000: 151-2; Watson 2003: 117). It is not surprising, then, that they are so horrified by the idea that climate change will destroy Scotland's nature, since as well as being

its most permanent asset, this is what grounds their sense of belonging.

Carsten (2000b; 2007; cf. 1997) has carried out research into the experiences of Scottish adoptees who sought reunions with their birth parents in adult life. For adults who were adopted as children, the process of finding out about one's natal kin was, as the title of her paper indicates, one of 'knowing where you've come from'. Carsten says that, while these adoptees seem on the one hand to be promoting the primacy of biogenetic connection by seeking their birth parents, they also 'disturb' this assumption (2000b: 689) since while they believed that it was important to find out where they came from, they 'strongly assert the values of care and effort that go into the creation of kin ties' (2000b: 691; cf. Edwards 2000; Edwards & Strathern 2000). Of course, people who have been adopted may have a particular stake in promoting care, rather than biogenetic connection, in kinship and for this reason it is perhaps unsurprising that their experience resonates with the feelings of incomer respondents here towards their adopted home in Scotland, who use their relationships of care with their environment to support and maintain feelings of belonging. Both examples suggest the capacity within British kinship thinking to foreground both given and made elements of kinship to effect particular claims.

In *Kinship at the Core* Strathern describes two models of the village held by Elmdon residents. Incomers largely hold the 'community model' and feel that by acting in the interests of the village or getting involved in community life, 'part of their lives becomes concretised as a contribution to an on-going system' (1981: 46). 'Real' villagers, meanwhile, are more likely to have an 'interest group' model, which 'assumes an ordering of roles in public life such that organisation on a "village" basis is always the prerogative of other people'. 'Real' villagers do not feel an obligation to participate, since they are 'the legitimate recipients of welfare, charity and education' (1981: 47-8; see also Cohen 1987; Frankenberg 1957; Watson 2003: 117).

Incomer respondents here seem to be more successful in creating belonging than those in Elmdon. The work of the wildlife centre is generally held in positive regard by other locals, partly because of the tendency of locals to associate themselves with dolphins, partly because the Centre does not charge entrance fees, partly because they include and work alongside local interest groups and partly because they emphasise the localness of the dolphin population. Crucially, wildlife centre staff also promote what they do under the rubric of altruism and social responsibility. One example of this is the beach cleans held at Spey Bay once a month on Sunday afternoons. As they work to

clean the beach, the staff hope that participants will see for themselves the amount and type of detritus that collects along their shoreline, from old car tyres to fishing nets and plastic food wrappings. Families are particularly encouraged to come, to do something together and to instil a spirit of charity in their children.

During my fieldwork, wildlife centre staff also set up a monthly Local Action Group held in a pub in Fochabers, in which members attended presentations about the local wildlife such as the talk mentioned in the Prologue. For respondents, ethical action undertaken on behalf of the local environment may be used to ground claims to be at home. It also creates a wider sense of social responsibility, implying a moral imperative to ally oneself with these principles that may ultimately bridge differences between natives and incomers. In contrast to commuters in Elmdon who seem to feel they can absorb a readymade sense of community just by moving to the country, respondents here work directly with the environment, developing knowledge and cultivating a relationship of care with it.

You have to make your own fun

Living a 'good' life for respondents has a double aspect, referring to virtuous living and personal fulfilment. Along with ideas about the area's beauty, pace of life and closeness to the natural world, respondents express a sense that they are part of a "community". For those who live in Spey Bay in particular, friendship and the positive experience of intimate sociality are, as Sophie suggested earlier, important parts of belonging, and especially, feeling at home.

Apart from my friends and neighbours in Spey Bay, whom I shall return to shortly, Erin and her daughter Rosie were the people I spent most time with during fieldwork and the many conversations we had about life in Moray were significant in my getting to grips with life there. Erin and Duncan moved to Moray not only to take advantage of the lower cost of living, but, more importantly, because they felt it would be a good place to bring Rosie up. The idea that Moray, as a rural place with a sense of community, fewer pressures and beautiful scenery to play in, was a good place to bring up children was expressed to me by a number of others, too (see also Watson 2003: 122; cf. Gulløv 2003).

In talking about the differences between living in Moray and England, Erin

told me a couple of times about her observation of parents leaving their children in their prams outside village shops. When I came to interview her, quite late on in our acquaintance and asked her about life in Moray compared to elsewhere in the UK, she returned to this phenomenon:

The Scottish are – it must be clan thing – more like, I'd say, the Irish, interestingly, in terms of they are very warm-hearted towards children. ... [There is] remarkable charity and soft-heartedness and care about children and that comes across whether they get a free portion of chips on St. Andrew's Day on the High Street in Elgin or if a child is lost in a park, and I've actually seen this in the village that I live in, that there is immense concern and kindness and a real arm stretched out towards children in the community. I think children are valued, even very young children, they are valued.

I also think they have, because of their community spirit – and I think a lot of people take the piss of, even people like me now who live up in the north – that we're not as sophisticated or as sharp as people in the Borders. I don't see that. ... Up here, there is a quite an accepted mentality or belief, they leave very young, newborn babies in prams outside shops, for example, in the village – not just in villages, I've seen it here in Elgin. I found this personally shocking, I know that in London or where I lived in England or even where I lived in real western Ireland, that would just, you just wouldn't do it in fear of somebody snatching your child or a car careering up onto the pavement or something. ... I don't do it myself, I don't judge people that do it, but I must say, if my hand's on my heart, if I'm walking along, especially in my village where I live, where I care about, and I care about any child, I will get into my car more slowly, I will watch that pram until the mum or dad comes back because I think that, now I've seen it and if something happened, I would be, you know, implicit in that situation. ... It doesn't come out of ignorance, it comes out of a belief that – people, children are important up here like they are anywhere – but children are loved and respected as part of the whole community and no 'normal' person would harm a child so they feel safe to do that, but it's something I've noticed that is very different from other places that I've lived.

Coming to understand that leaving children temporarily unattended is not about “ignorance”, but about “love” and “respect” for them has been a fundamental part of Erin’s process of becoming part of her local community. In explaining this to me at length, she implies her village’s moral superiority compared to other more urban or English places while at the same time retaining her own position somewhere in between. In doing so, she employs popular notions about rural and urban life to suggest that, while from an urban point of view leaving a young child or baby unattended might create an unnecessary risk, taking such risks is part of life “up here” because of the safety of knowing the other members of that community. What Erin also implies here is that, in a rural community like this, everyone shares responsibility for looking after children so, in claiming her own sense of responsibility for other local children, she is also demonstrating her role as a member of that community.

Erin suggested that part of the reason for Scottish people’s warmth towards children is their clan heritage, drawing on popular ideas about Scotland’s history as one based on communalism and strong kinship ties. This image of Scotland is of course well known and is promoted abroad along with other quintessential elements of Scottish heritage such as tartan, bagpipes and haggis by tourist agencies. As noted in the Introduction, respondents are largely uninterested in pursuing clan connections or other elements of Scotland’s heritage and instead focus on Scotland primarily as a natural, rather than historical, place. This is true of Erin too, whose own roots are in Ireland rather than Scotland or England and the greater congruence she sees in attitudes towards children between Scots and the Irish may be another way of claiming belonging for herself. Erin refers to clan to ground her claim about a particular facet of community life in rural Scotland, but she casts it less as an ethnic category than an inclusive affiliation of community in her imagery of “a real arm stretched out” to others. In contrast to roots tourists (Basu 2007), who promote essentialist notions of genetic heredity through tracing their clan lines, Erin draws on a model of clan that emphasises inclusivity and interconnection rather than the delineation of particular bounded groups.

Erin and Duncan may particularly appreciate local community spirit as a safety net in the absence of their own kin to help look after Rosie, should anything untoward happen. In their case, this is because both sets of grandparents have been dead for some time, but this point is also salient for other incomer respondents whose parents and siblings live elsewhere. It is not particularly unusual for British middle class young adults to move away from

their parents, and for many respondents (of all ages) the initial move away from their native homes was to university, so in a sense many had already made the choice to move away from their wider kin networks (temporarily at least) before they had ever thought of moving to Moray. Nonetheless, it is notable that, while these people clearly feel that having a sense of community and cultivating relationships of care with others are extremely important, their kin are not apparently a necessary part of this, a point I will return to shortly.

Two of the major annual events in Moray are the Lossiemouth Folk Festival and Speyfest, a folk music and crafts festival held in Fochabers, which bring people of different ages, tastes and classes together to dance, drink and enjoy themselves. In choosing to attend these events, which fall outside mainstream popular culture, participants engage in a self-conscious celebration of community and mark a feeling of togetherness and belonging with a specifically 'Scottish' flavour. Respondents take part in these activities also because of a general feeling that efforts to bring people together should be encouraged in an area with limited cultural activities and facilities. Folk activities like ceilidhs offer incomers an opportunity to sample and share in Scotland's heritage and natives a chance to demonstrate their cultural expertise. Learning how to dance at a ceilidh or finding a new appreciation for folk music shows just how successfully an individual has woven himself into the cultural fabric of the place.

One ceilidh that I attended in Aberlour, twenty-four miles upriver from Spey Bay, and held as part of the 2007 Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival, exemplified the blend of tradition and innovation that seems so fundamental to contemporary Scottish identity (McCrone 2001). The band, a group of local boys in their mid- to late-teens with the usual set-up of guitars, drums, keyboard and vocals, played a combination of traditional ceilidh numbers with their own compositions, heavily influenced by both western pop music and Scottish folk, fronted by a young man wearing a kilt and a t-shirt with the slogan, 'Eat Sushi', who played a range of traditional instruments including bagpipes. Ceilidhs are inclusive events for people of all ages. The bands use traditional songs and accessible arrangements and everyone is expected to have a go. Since many people will not know the dances, the band usually 'calls out' the steps before the dance begins and if dancers find themselves spinning off in the wrong direction they will quickly find a helpfully firm arm steering them back onto the right course. Most dances only work if dancers work together to keep time and avoid collisions, so those who know the steps have a practical interest in supervising

those who do not.

During a return visit to Moray in January 2008, I attended the Burning of the Clavie in Burghead. The origins of the festival, which takes place on the first day of the Julian calendar, are rather hazy, with some linking it to Roman custom and others to Norse, Pictish or Pagan ritual. A few other fire festivals take place in Scotland, including the Hogmanay fireball ceremony in Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, the Up Helly Aa festival in the Shetland Islands and the Beltane fire festival in Edinburgh. While the Stonehaven ceremony is most akin to the clavie, Up Helly Aa draws on Shetland's Viking heritage and Beltane is a contemporary version of a Pagan festival marking the beginning of summer. These festivals have become increasingly popular with tourists and locals alike and the Burning of the Clavie has in recent years become known locally as a quirky festive activity and was first on a list of 'Top 5 Things to do this Weekend' in the Scottish edition of *The Times*. These events seem to offer discerning tourists a more 'authentic' Scottish experience than the better-known ceilidhs, Highland Games or Edinburgh Tattoo.

The Clavie King, the head of one of the old families of the town, leads the procession and oversees proceedings. The clavie was lit at the southern end of the village and carried down the main street that runs through Burghead like a spine. At this point it was a barrel – traditionally a herring barrel but now a whisky barrel – within a drum with long charred sticks coming out, which were removed and placed outside the residences of long-standing and prominent members of the community. The procession continued along the street, stopping outside these houses, with the men carrying the clavie shouting either "hip, hip" or "Burghead", to which the crowd replied, "hooray". All of the men were dressed in fireproof clothing and gauntlets despite reports I had heard that they are not properly equipped for the fire.

The procession continued up the street past the last couple of houses and finally to a mound known as the Doorie Hill. The clavie was placed on the mound and more sticks were added. People crowded around and watched as the men who had led the procession gradually added more and more fuel until eventually fire started to sweep down the hill, threatening to engulf the men – who blithely walked in to add more fuel – and participants at any point. We could feel its heat from the opposite hill. Throughout, there were periodic shouts of "hip, hip, hooray" or "Burghead, hooray" and a sense of anticipation, excitement and danger in the air. Eventually, the fuel was spent and the clavie started to break up. The crowd dispersed and children started queuing up on the hill to get

a piece of the broken barrel until there was no more left. It is customary for residents to open their houses on Clavie night. We gathered instead at a local pub, where they were serving free haggis, neeps and tatties to fortify the chilly crowds. A few days later, Luke and I watched some footage of the event broadcast on national television and were surprised to notice that they had overdubbed the piece with bagpipe music despite the fact that not one piper was present. Indeed, there was no music at all except for the periodic chants of festival-goers crashing onto the surrounding waves.

Like the other villages and towns of Moray, Burghead's population is by no means homogenous. It is only seven miles from RAF Kinloss and the Findhorn Foundation (see below) and there is constant movement in and out of the town as young people move away, incomers move in and tourists and holidaymakers come and go. The Clavie festival is overtly a celebration of local community. This is clear in the way that local dignitaries are honoured with the placing of pieces of the burning barrel outside their homes and the institution of the Clavie King. It also employs particular sets of ideas about Scotland and rural life that differentiate the place and people. Burghead is the home of the family mentioned in the Prologue, but I do not know if those implicated in the theft of the sperm whale's jaw are the same family who provided the Clavie King. Nonetheless, Burghead's involvement in that theft similarly worked to suggest a singularity to the place and people, with the implication that they believed in ancient fertility rituals.

Watson shows that participating in activities that celebrate the specific nature of Scottish culture such as folk music and local history can help successful acculturation and integration into Scottish life (2003: 120). By taking part in ceilidhs and rituals like the Burning of the Clavie, respondents participate in, and reproduce, the idea that Scotland is a traditional place with a unique and valuable heritage. They know very well that the 'tartan and bagpipes' image of Scotland is largely mythical (Trevor-Roper 1983) and see the more extreme versions of that image as unappealing and anachronistic.⁴⁷

Folk activities appear to respondents to carry a somewhat lighter load of cultural baggage than more touristic events like Highland Games, and thus seem more accessible and inclusive to incomer Scots. Having said this, for most, even folk activities were periodic and for special occasions and it is

⁴⁷ For example, I will probably never forget the look of appalled incredulity on Sophie's face at the sheer amount of tartan that met our gaze upon entering a hotel in Glenshee, on the Balmoral trail in the Cairngorms.

notable that the local band, The Beaufighters, most of whose members are originally Scottish, prefer to play bluegrass rather than Celtic folk, though their set-list usually includes a cover of Nat King Cole's 'Route 66' reworked as 'Get your Kicks on the A96', referring to the major route between Aberdeen and Inverness that passes through Fochabers. Everyday sociality for respondents is more likely to be found around a friend's dining table, in the pub, by the beach or in someone's garden. Such activities are not obviously Scottish, yet they remain an important factor in creating belonging since they cement the relationships with others that are a vital part of feeling at home for respondents.

Luke is one respondent who is unusually interested in Scotland's history. This is no doubt due largely to the fact that while he was based in Spey Bay, he was studying for a postgraduate degree in archaeology. Luke grew up in England and primarily defines himself and his family as English. Both of his parents came from working-class London backgrounds, but "worked their way up" and by the time Luke, the youngest of three siblings, was born they lived in a sizeable cottage in an affluent part of Essex. Luke has a Scottish surname and often expressed a sense that he has a solid Scottish ancestry through both parents and from the first time I met him was keen to play this up, referring to himself as "a bit Viking". I once visited Culloden battlefield with him and his mother, who was visiting from England as she was keen to see the spot on the site at which her own ancestors might have fought. Standing on the windswept, eerily quiet battlefield, she said, putting herself in the place of a Jacobite soldier, "I can feel the rain coming down into my eyes!" She clearly empathised with the men who had fought and died there as she tried to imagine the conditions they were in and concluded that she would not have been able to bear it herself.

Luke was based in Spey Bay while I was in the field, but spent some months studying in Kirkwall in Orkney. Orkney is the place where the clan from which he claims descent originates and he told me that before going there to study he had felt a pull to go there and experience "the home of his ancestors". He had expected this to be a moving experience of homecoming, but was disappointed because, unlike his mother, whose experience at Culloden seems more in keeping with that of roots tourists, he did not experience a "personal connection" with the place. Instead, he felt a deep kinship with Spey Bay, despite a lack of any ancestry in the area, and concluded that this must be due to his connections and friendships with other residents there. Luke's experience suggests that, while ideas like clan may be useful in forging connections with Scotland for some (Basu 2005a, 2007), it will not necessarily be accepted as an

integral part of one's constitution if it is not backed up by an embodied experience of belonging.

Luke's experience points to the important question of whether respondents see themselves as Scottish. Of course, some of them, like John, are Scottish, in the sense of place of birth and upbringing, but the majority originate elsewhere and even John's thoughts about identity suggest his need to rethink and re-establish his connections with his home, and to do so he uses the same idioms of belonging as incomers. Most English-born respondents would not describe themselves as Scottish, but would instead claim to be British, thus recognising both where they have come from and where they have chosen to make their lives, though of course the close association between ideas about goodness and their present lives implies a qualitative difference between the two. The structure of the UK as a group of nations within one country, as well as the combination of given and made knowledge in British kinship, is useful here in allowing such fluidity in identification. By locating themselves at the supra-national level, respondents can stake a claim to belonging whilst remaining vague about where exactly they locate that belonging. This is in contrast to the roots tourists encountered by Basu, who tended to be highly specific about their origins, locating themselves in particular villages or even specific houses, thus giving materiality to their ancestral claims but also reproducing a sense that their ancestors did not move.

By describing themselves as British rather than Scottish, respondents can also pre-empt refutation of their claims of belonging. Their Scottish neighbours would, I think, be quite tolerant of the idea that they are at least in the process of becoming Scottish, as McCrone (2001) suggests. I cannot speak for other residents of Scotland, of course, but I can identify a slight uneasiness amongst respondents with the idea of claiming to be Scottish, which I would link both to a sense that they do not feel the need to refute their origins and to sensitivity to others' 'better' claims to be Scottish. Nonetheless, while questions of national identity are of course important considerations for them, they tended not to speak in terms of identity or nationality so much as belonging; they do not try and set a place as home but instead focus on the experience of feeling at home.

For Luke, as for other respondents, a key part of belonging is the experience of being surrounded by, as Sophie put it, "people you love". Preparing food and offering hospitality was vital to my fieldwork experience. I quickly lost count of the number of times I cooked for large groups of people, cleaned up the grill on the barbecue and helped Sophie, Luke or Willow magic

ever more crockery out of nowhere as the number of people invited to dinner steadily increased during the day. At these shared meals, food came from mixed sources including supermarkets, Organic veg-boxes,⁴⁸ the local butcher, respondents' own gardens and the shop at the Findhorn Foundation. A variety of dishes would be made to cater for the differing tastes and dietary requirements of guests and typically individuals would contribute different dishes or bring drinks to spread cost and effort. The efforts that went into these meals are an example of the work that respondents put into their connections with others and the complicated choreography of sourcing food for these meals offers a microcosmic view of living in a consumer society whilst also attempting to resist some of the values that are seen to go with that. It also shows that money can be used positively to enable sociality and as such, is inextricably linked with intimate and warm relationships (Zelizer 2005).

At the many dinner parties held in the house I shared with Sophie and Luke, we would sit in the sitting room described earlier and Sophie would typically sit on the rug by the fire, often playing with Steve's much-loved Labrador or any other visitors' pets, leading the conversation, skilfully including all of her guests and noting links between people to stimulate conversation. The core group of neighbours, colleagues and close friends, who would have probably arrived early to help prepare the meal or try and catch some time with Sophie on her own to have a chat, would sit on the sofa and futon by the fire or the rug nearby. Guests and visitors would more likely sit on chairs around the dining table, included but slightly at a remove from the regular participants. As this suggests, a welcome hand is extended to all, but it is not always fully open – something must be retained for oneself, which is only shared with the core group of intimates. At some point in the evening, especially if alcohol was flowing, the core group of friends would come to dominate the conversation, with topics ranging from banality to profundity without warning or apparent reason. The predictability of the conversation did not matter as they had had these conversations before, in different colours and shades, and so understood the flow. They did not tire of them, as they were an outlet for knowledge of themselves, for true intimacy and for laying themselves bare. This once again demonstrates the importance of shared knowledge in this community.

⁴⁸ Veg-boxes have become popular in the UK in the last few years; they can revitalise business for small-scale farmers and provide for consumers of a more ethical bent. A local farmer delivers the boxes in Spey Bay fortnightly. The fruit and vegetables are all organic and almost all seasonal produce from his farm, though he also offers sidelines like organic confectionary, meat and dairy products.

In the previous chapter, we saw the high value that respondents accord to compassion and altruism between people in close relationships and as a basis for action in relation to surrogacy. Friends in Spey Bay are expected to be closely involved in each others' lives and to share confidences. Individuals are conceptualised as bound up in overlapping networks of acquaintance, reciprocation and mutual support and are encouraged to "be themselves", however eccentric or singular that self may be. Of course, certain differences are less likely to be tolerated, such as denying climate change or expressing an enthusiasm for 'blood sports', but differences in ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age or socio-economic background are generally accepted as part of life and indeed, what makes people "interesting". As such, there is a general sense amongst respondents that diversity and individuality are traits to be welcomed and even celebrated (see also Strathern 1992a: 22, 30, *passim*). This self-portrait of a close-knit community as tolerant and mutually supportive is not of course unique to the area. What is particularly interesting here is to connect up this sense of difference with the deliberate choice to move away from mainstream British life.

Helping friends with problems is a regular feature of life and relationships between those who live in Spey Bay. Charlotte, who is in her mid-twenties and comes from rural East Anglia, worked in the wildlife centre for eighteen months. She arrived with her then partner Mark, an engineer at RAF Kinloss. Charlotte had studied marine biology at university in England and was keen to find a job in this field, so felt very fortunate to secure a job at the wildlife centre. This provided her with a ready social network, which became all the more important to her after Mark ended their relationship a year after they had first arrived in the area. She eventually left the area herself in order to follow a new direction in her career. She visits Spey Bay whenever she can, though she told me that she had not been able to face returning there for six months after she had left "because it was too hard" to go back to a place with so many happy memories and in which she knew she would feel a strong compulsion to stay.

Two examples from Charlotte's experience illustrate some of what it means to be part of the groups of friends in Spey Bay. While Mark and Charlotte were still together, he was posted to Iraq for six months, his first active service. His time there caused tension in their relationship and his calls home were frequently distressing for Charlotte, as he seemed to her to be taking his fears and frustrations about being in Basra out on her. During this time, Charlotte often confided in her friends, especially Sophie, who regularly invited Charlotte

over in the evenings as she was worried about her being alone in her house in Fochabers. While Charlotte's friends felt a certain amount of sympathy for Mark, given his difficult situation, they were shocked and angry that he should be treating Charlotte unfairly and jeopardising their relationship and felt a keen responsibility to help her through this difficult time.

An example from Charlotte's professional life offers a slightly less straightforwardly positive picture of this community. Charlotte had some professional differences with her line manager, Michelle, in the wildlife centre. Charlotte objected to Michelle's tendency, as she, and others, saw it, to demean her. This grated on Charlotte because the centre was otherwise a place marked by a sense of egalitarianism and democracy in which colleagues strove to evaluate each employee's contribution in terms of effort and merit rather than where she stood in the organisational hierarchy. Charlotte, an extremely friendly and open person, had quickly struck up close friendships with the rest of her colleagues and volunteers. Michelle, meanwhile, had remained at a remove from the group, rarely socialising outside of work events. This was largely due to a lack of interest on her part in becoming part of the group, not least because, unlike Charlotte, she had lived in the area for some time and had a network of friends outside the wildlife centre. It was also because she did not quite fit in. She liked animals but was otherwise uninterested in environmentalism or ethical living and her approach to life was far more 'conventional' than others'. Charlotte initially received sympathy from her colleagues but over time, this began to even out as they expressed understanding for Michelle as well and deliberately avoided being drawn into "taking sides", with some even making conscious efforts to strike up friendships with Michelle while also maintaining their friendship with Charlotte. This suggests that for them, the most important principle was to maintain the integrity of the group as a whole by avoiding any schism and a self-conscious resistance to favouritism and inclusiveness.

Teasing and joking is an important part of social life for the core group of respondents, reflecting their close intimacy. Inevitably, the other side to this is gossip and people did occasionally complain about information that they had told others in confidence somehow finding its way into circulation. However, it was commonly accepted that anything that one told another person would eventually become common knowledge. Trusting outsiders or newcomers to the group with sensitive information is also a means of testing the boundaries of the community. If people can accept the more negative aspects of life in such a close-knit community, with few secrets and a limited range of social activities,

that suggests that they can fit in there. Disseminating sensitive or confidential information about other friends then, while potentially infuriating for the subject of that gossip, is an important means of cementing group membership through shared knowledge.



Figure 5: A beach barbecue, Spey Bay, May 2007.

Parties and other social events in Spey Bay celebrate and consolidate friendship. The intimate knowledge of others suggests that for respondents, their friends have come to be a sort of family. As we saw in the previous chapter in the discussion about sibling bonds, they do differentiate between the ties of kinship and friendship, suggesting that each relationship is characterised by different types of knowledge and that biogenetic kinship can bring a permanence that friendship may lack. Nonetheless, the intimate, ‘warts and all’ relationships that they have with their friends suggest that this difference can be gradually eroded to the point of meaninglessness. In this way, friendship in Spey Bay is reminiscent of that between the gay people encountered by Weston in San Francisco. For some gays and lesbians, Weston argues, a relationship between friends or lovers that is envisaged to endure is expressed in terms of a ‘forever’ that ‘represents neither a will to eternity nor an immutable biogenetic connection, but rather the outcome of the day-to-day interactions that organize a relationship’ (1998: 76). As she says, ‘In this transformation of the dominant

biogenetic paradigm for kinship, permanence in a relationship is no longer ascribed ("blood is blood"), but produced' (1998: 76). As for the friendships between respondents here, it is the work that goes into maintaining them that becomes significant (1998: 80).

The fact that respondents' visions of the good life do not necessarily include living close to, and thus relying on the material and practical support of, their biogenetic kin is notable. While most have chosen to live apart from their families, they have not by any means severed their ties with them. Most of them, and especially the younger ones, have warm relationships with their parents and siblings and keep in regular contact with them by telephone. Spey Bay was often very quiet at Christmas, when people would typically leave to visit their families, though most saw them more regularly than an annual visit and many of their parents and siblings came to Moray to visit them. Many of the few respondents who originate in the area kept in close contact with their immediate family as well.

While those who work in the wildlife centre do span a broad age range, most tend to cluster around the early twenties to thirties age group and the fifties to sixties age group. The former group are generally of an age at which they have not yet had children and whose parents are not yet infirm, so such support may not be at the forefront of their minds. As we shall see in Chapter Six, when I discussed their future plans for parenthood with these younger respondents they did not indicate that they planned to move closer to their parents when they had children, though this is not to say that this might not change. In fact, the origins and location of their partner might well be more pressing, for those who are single and for those in relationships, since the partners of those already in relationships typically originated in different places anyway. Meanwhile, many older respondents' parents are dead, and their own adult children live independently so for them the decision to live apart was a mutual one.

Like those members of the gay and lesbian community that Weston worked with who were disowned as a result of coming out, many of the participants in Pike's study of American Neopagan festivals moved away from their natal families and homes as a result of being stigmatised for their religious affiliations and 'alternative' lifestyles, which makes their search for community amongst like-minded festival-goers all the more poignant. While there are some strong ideological and ethical overlaps between respondents here and the Neopagan movement, especially in the value put on nature and community, respondents here have not been turned away by their families and in fact most

are supportive of their choices to live in Moray. In particular, the idea that Moray is somewhere naturally beautiful with a community spirit was an idea shared by respondents' families, and they appreciated the opportunity to participate in this when they visited. However, a few told me that their families were concerned that they might be missing out on career opportunities or on meeting future partners by living in such a tucked-away place, which betrays a wider perception that, while moving to the country may offer many benefits, these are most appropriate to those in later life.

While belonging for incomer respondents in Spey Bay is not based on ancestral connections to old families or centuries of residence, ties with other people and the land are still vital to feeling at home. This suggests the importance of choice in respondents' ideas about the good life and points to their awareness of the importance of maintaining ties in the present, rather than relying on the privileges of birth and traditional identities. It seems that, in order to have a life that is 'better', respondents prioritise the place and what it has to offer over their native ties. Many would be happy for the geographical distance between themselves and their families to be shorter, yet it does seem that a certain amount of distance is also what allows them to manage their choice to reject certain elements of mainstream society in order to build a good life that is based to a significant extent on a positive appreciation of difference.

As Pike (2001a: 222) remarks for Neopagans, "'Family" and "tribe" have not disappeared as the locus of moral authority, but they have been redefined, no longer determined by birth, blood, name, and institutional affiliation'. Of course, even in those places where people do have such primordial links at their disposal, their employment of them is by no means predictable or straightforward (Cassidy 2002; Edwards 2000; Edwards and Strathern 2000); the facility to claim belonging or kinship using elements of *both* 'given' and 'made' knowledge is inherent in wider cultural models of kinship and identity. This is reflected in the dual sense of the phrase, 'at home'. Like the adopted Scots interviewed by Carsten (2000b), the Neopagans encountered by Pike (2001a, b) and the lesbians and gays in Weston's (1998) study, respondents suggest that it is the effort of cultivating and conserving links between people, and between people and place, that is vital to belonging.

Belonging outwith

Spey Bay is tucked away from other settlements, typically approached by a five-mile road alongside the Spey from Fochabers. Like respondents, I have experienced the sense of being enclosed by a ring of warmth and intimacy and the shift of perspective onto the small-scale of my immediate surroundings once in Spey Bay (cf. Allerton 2001; Ott 1981). Outside, one is unknown, part of a homogenous mass; this is both ideology and affective experience. As we have seen, residents of Spey Bay feel they are part of something. Key to this is the feeling of connection and shared knowledge between people, but also a sense of being on the edge, geographically and socially (see also Cohen 1982, 1987; Edwards 2000; Rapport 1993; Pike 2001a, b).

The road to Spey Bay marks both a phenomenological and spatial boundary. Inside, one is part of something different and, by implication, better. Respondents seem to feel a positive sense of difference both in their social lives and relationships to the natural world. As such, the choice to live there is in one sense a form of cultural critique. American homesteaders' visions of the bad life include excessive individualism, consumerism and industrialism, along with environmental degradation. They believe that this should be replaced with a life closer to nature (Gould 2005). Given the shared values between homesteaders and the respondents in this study, it might be assumed that they are similarly pessimistic about the current state of the world. Yet, while they can identify problems in the wider society, economy and politics as well as what is wrong with particular ways of living, they do not feel that the mainstream world that they retain one foot in is irrevocably degenerate. Rather than focusing on what is wrong with their previous lives, which they rarely talked about, they emphasised the positive experience of their current ones. The choice to move to Moray is primarily a positive choice towards achieving certain goals rather than away from an unpleasant past.

Along with their nuanced and fluid way of thinking about nature, home and kinship, and their wariness at being thought of as 'hippies', respondents are sceptical about utopian community-building projects. This is clear from the contrast with the nearby Findhorn Foundation, a religious community whose members draw on Christianity and New Age teachings as well as nature worship and practical ecology (see Walker 1994). Findhorn village lies about twenty-five miles west of Spey Bay at the mouth of the Findhorn estuary. It has been settled since the seventeenth century, when it was a major seaport in the local herring

trade. Like Spey Bay, it is home to many incomers who have moved there for the lifestyle and proximity to the sea and the remains of a large icehouse mark its importance in the earlier fishing industry.

I often visited the Findhorn Foundation, its shop, 'slow food' restaurant and vegetarian café, as well as Findhorn village's stunning beach and pubs with respondents. Over time, I noticed a marked ambivalence in their attitudes to the Foundation, along with a shift towards greater identification with the village. As with dolphin aficionados, feelings towards the Foundation could veer from a feeling of ideological kinship to outright derision. No doubt this partly reflects the fact that the Foundation has a sizeable population drawn from quite disparate origins, whose reactions to outsiders were predictably diverse. Most interesting, I think, is what it says about respondents' own sense of themselves and their community.

The Foundation was set up in 1962 by Eileen and Peter Caddy and their friend Dorothy Maclean, who came to live, along with the Caddys' three sons, in a caravan in Findhorn village after losing their jobs running a nearby hotel. In order to support themselves, they started growing vegetables and, despite the dry, sandy soil so close to the sea, were very successful which they attributed to having fortuitously accessed the plants' spirits, which guided them. Eileen published a book about her insights and experience and people started to come to Findhorn to learn how to attune to the 'intelligence of nature'. Some decided to stay and a community grew up around them just as the vegetables had.

Respondents tacitly recognise the congruities between themselves and members of the Findhorn Foundation, including the fact that many of them are incomers. They share an interest in protecting the natural world from harm, of living a good life, of resisting certain aspects of mainstream society and achieving personal fulfilment. However, respondents are sceptical about the Foundation's view of nature as a spiritual, immanent force. For them, nature worship is "a bit silly" and, while nature does have transcendent qualities for them, it is not a deity.

Trips to the Foundation were ostensibly pleasurable activities, a chance to have a change of scene, to get a glimpse of their own ideals being put into practice, or simply to shop or have a gossip over a decent cup of coffee and a piece of chocolate and almond torte, yet respondents often expressed a subsequent sense of dissatisfaction. The main complaints levelled against the community's members were that they were unwelcoming and haughty, that they had an unseemly interest in money and that they did not always prioritise

ecological principles. These complaints are not, of course, mutually exclusive. The first two were often a direct reaction to visiting the Foundation shop, which stocks a mixture of New Age crafts and wholefoods, staffed by community members who are, in my experience, not particularly friendly. The goods for sale are typically Organic and/or Fair Trade and from independent producers. Much of the fresh produce is from the Foundation's own gardens, bakery and dairy. It is more expensive than most shops or supermarkets and, while respondents recognised that this was a reflection of differing costs of production, they did feel that many prices were excessive. This relates to their assumption that every part of the Foundation should operate on a non-profit basis because it is both a charity and a religious community. Of course, this also reflects the difference in claims between themselves and the members of the Foundation, who are seen as self-consciously and deliberately building a utopian community with particular set principles in contrast to their own more makeshift and organic lives. This is perhaps why they came to feel an increasing kinship to the villagers outside the Foundation.

The Findhorn Foundation's 'Ecovillage', founded in the 1980s, is a collection of self-built homes of varying levels of grandeur from caravans, yurts and converted whisky fermentation vats to state-of-the-art eco-homes sandwiched in a roughly cleared forest between Findhorn village and the RAF Kinloss runway. When walking around with respondents on numerous occasions, they would often point out the conspicuously orange Calor gas canisters outside many of the homes. For them, this was an irrefutable sign that Foundation residents were prepared to compromise their ecological principles for their own wants. They also often remarked upon the closeness of the houses, speculating about the inevitable "politics" that would arise in such a close-knit community, and noted that many of the houses lacked gardens⁴⁹, which seemed incongruous given their apparent reverence of nature.

Despite these complaints, we continued to visit the Foundation. It was, still, a "special" place, where they would take visitors from "down south" to show them this utopian community and, perhaps, remind themselves of how different they are. As both Pike (2001a) and Cohen (1987) argue, it is at the boundaries that we may most clearly glimpse the tensions of community identity. It is my

⁴⁹ Respondents also tend to have very small gardens and few opportunities to grow their own crops, as houses in the area tend not to have particularly large outside plots. In Spey Bay in particular, the volunteer accommodation is shared and does not have a garden because of its layout in the courtyard formation, though volunteers did grow herbs in pots on the windowsills. Sophie's garden, meanwhile, is over-run by her chickens, though Rob and Helen, her next-door neighbours, are keen gardeners.

view that the Findhorn Foundation acts as something of an ideological foil for respondents. On a couple of occasions I heard Luke and Willow joke that, as the end of Spey Bay in which they live is effectively surrounded on three sides by water, it would be simple to build a moat along the fourth side and make it an island. They were reflecting on the fact that their lives are almost completely embedded in and attached to this place and an island seemed an apt metaphor (Abell et al n.d.). This also points to their sense that to some extent it would be desirable to set up a utopian community in Spey Bay, since individual lives there are in reality quite communal and it would provide a good environment for them to settle in, set up their own ecological businesses and eventually raise children. However, the initial costs of establishing this, as well as the fact that the land is owned by the Crown so unlikely to come up for sale, quickly put a brake on such utopian fantasies. Further, such conversations would usually end with the conclusion that their more organic community was ultimately better as they are equally aware of the negative sides of utopianism, in their recognition that it is difficult to live an ecologically blameless life, that tight-knit communities may be riven by internal tensions and that setting boundaries around one's home is a process of exclusion just as it is of inclusion.

Instead of a utopia, Spey Bay might be more appropriately described as a heterotopia (Foucault 1986a). Foucault's concept of the heterotopia is split between heterotopias of crisis, particularly related to life crisis events, and heterotopias of deviation. The community in Spey Bay would more likely fit into the second category, though of course it is structured by a sense of ecological crisis. Foucault specifically contrasts heterotopias with utopias on the basis that the former are real and the latter imaginary and idealistic. While utopias are a form of perfected society, heterotopias, which he argues exist everywhere, are 'counter-sites' in which 'all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (1986a: 24; see also Hirsch 1995: 4). What utopias and heterotopias share is that they 'have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect' (1986a: 24).

Pike (2001b: 160) similarly describes the Burning Man festival in Nevada as a heterotopia. For Neopagans, festivals are a site of home and community as well as a place in which the self is made and recreated. Like other similar festivals around America, she says, Burning Man 'provides a locus where cultural problems, and especially problems of ultimate meanings, are expressed,

analyzed, and played with. The festival is an important cultural and religious site that exemplifies the migration of religious meaning-making activities out of American temples and churches into other spaces' (2001b: 157). American Neopagan festival-goers work to separate Neopagan experience from ordinary life, or 'mundania', in order to keep it sacred. One way they do this is by creating 'place myths', which combine rumours, stories and images that create a sense of other-worldliness, which 'may extol a place's vices as well as its virtues' (2001a: 19). Similarly, in Spey Bay, regular war stories of problems with the septic tank system and struggles with rodent infestations provided opportunities to set the place apart.

In Spey Bay, difference is further marked in the cultivation and celebration of eccentric behaviour amongst members of the community. I went to a Hogmanay party in Spey Bay village hall with Luke, Willow, Amy and Ingrid and as we were getting ready to go, one person remarked that we did not have costumes, which seemed strange considering the number of fancy dress events held in Spey Bay.⁵⁰ One person suggested that we dress normally, but make our own hats. As we approached the hall together, some started to feel self-conscious. After some discussion, we decided we should wear our hats, however silly we looked, because otherwise it would have been pointless to make them, but we all felt a little embarrassed as we made our entrance into the hall. Once we had found a table, opened some sparkling wine and settled into the party, the hats came to be a focus of the conversation, with much joking and teasing about our particular designs. So, while our hats had for a moment made us waver and feel self-conscious, through the evening they came to represent instead a positive perception of difference and, indeed, eccentricity.

Strathern has described the individuality of persons as the first fact of English kinship (1992a: 14). In the modern period, she says, 'the English were regarded both as a productive amalgam of diverse peoples and as a highly individualistic nation holding on to individualism as a transcendent characteristic of themselves' (1992a: 30). Here we find another facet of the sense that Spey Bay is a place in which one can feel at home. This is a place in which one is known intimately and in which individuals have little time, or information, to themselves. In contrast to the idea that home is the privatised, domestic realm,

⁵⁰ Many parties held both in the village hall and privately in the homes of wildlife centre staff were fancy dress and many respondents felt that chatting about ideas of what to wear and going shopping together to source costumes beforehand was one way in which to extend the "fun" of parties before they had even started. They may also be an outlet for people who live in such close proximity to each other to temporarily take on alternative identities.

a haven from industry and alienating labour (Engels 1972; Carrier 1993), respondents feel at home in a network of people with whom they share values and knowledge but 'lack' primordial ties. Respondents feel that Spey Bay is a place where they can be themselves, however singular. The fact that this is accepted and celebrated by other members of the community creates a strong sense of belonging and kinship. It also, of course, inevitably serves to differentiate the insiders and thus excludes those whose difference does not fit.

Conclusion

Cultivating a positive relationship with nature and being part of a community are the two central principles that structure respondents' experience of building and living a good life in Scotland. These two connective impulses, towards nature and other people, are of course problematised by the fact that most respondents cannot claim original ties to the area or people there. Yet, seeing this as a problem belies the fact that a certain amount of fluidity in concepts of home, kinship and community is already present in the 'idioms' (Edwards 2000) of the 'reproductive model' (Strathern 1992a) of kinship and belonging in the UK. In the previous chapters we saw the malleability of grounding concepts like the maternal bond, altruism and human nature and earlier in this chapter I identified a similar fluidity in respondents' ideas about cetaceans and wildness.

Arguing against a romantic perception of community, Edwards states that 'a particular kind of kinship thinking informs the generative possibilities of community. It is both an entity and a set of relations; it is both fixed and fluid. Community is mobilized to designate an inclusive set of people and to exclude others; who belongs to it shifts according to the reasons for formulating it' (Edwards 2000: 247-8; see also Edwards and Strathern 2000). Erin's comments about the differences between living in England and Scotland (and Ireland) fluently demonstrated how, as we have already seen with nature, the polysemy of concepts like home and community is a source of strength in making claims and negotiating connections. Erin drew out particular characteristics of people and place and played them off against each other to demonstrate both her own familiarity with, and thus attachment to, her new home, but also her reflexive position as someone who can see the good and the bad in both ways of living

and who has made an informed choice about her own vision of the good life.

Connections between people entail obligations and claims, as do connections to place. In Moray, incomers ground their claims of belonging in terms of kinship to nature and to their friends. In so doing, they emphasise qualities of cultivation, conservation and care over primordial ties and statuses. They frame this as part of an ethic of good living, but also connect their actions up with the locale by focusing their efforts on the nature of the local environment. As in Bacup, Elmdon, Whalsay and elsewhere, both incomers and native residents are implicated in the maintenance of symbols of community, and in Moray the “local” wildlife is a primary signifier of the community and what makes it special. This is also another point of contrast with Findhorn and other utopian communities. The Findhorn Foundation in a community that has set certain expectations for its membership and models itself as having boundaries, however porous they may be in practice. Given this, it appears more inwardly oriented compared to the community of respondents here, who, in their efforts to embed themselves in this place, instead seem to reach outwards to their environment and to other people.

Cultivating a relationship of care with one’s environment is not only about creating a feeling of belonging in a new home and claiming the right to live in a particular place, but also about building and conserving relationships. It seems appropriate therefore that feeling and emotion have figured repeatedly in this chapter. In Chapter One, I noted the importance of feeling, from the emotional aspects of maternal bonding to expressions of empathy and sympathy, in ethical claim-making. Talk of relations, whether to people, place or animals, provokes emotions. In the examples discussed here, respondents expressed feelings that are culturally closely associated with relationships between kin, friends or lovers. In their attachments to the environment, they constantly remarked upon its beauty, implying both Romanticism and romance. While ethical judgement may seem to foreground the balancing of different types of knowledge and commitment, it is also experienced emotionally. Just as the maternal bond is, primarily, a compelling feeling of attachment that causes women to act in particular ways, belonging to a particular place entails an emotional bond that models behaviour and creates responsibilities.

The emphasis on caring, ethical action in the everyday lives of respondents returns us to some of their ideas about human nature and motive. Although their ideas about altruism and money are nuanced, they expressed a sense that human action should be motivated by ethical judgement and that

thinking of others was a key part of this. Respondents agreed that, assuming the surrogate mother was motivated ethically and did not bond with the child, on the whole the best outcome for a surrogacy arrangement would be for the child to be brought up by the intending parents. This suggests a sense that trusting the upbringing of the child to the intending parents is the most socially acceptable outcome for a surrogacy arrangement. It also points to an acknowledgment that biogenetic ties may not always be a sufficient basis for parenthood. It may be that this is linked to their experience of building strong ties of belonging to a place that is not their native home.

Many respondents feel that one of the virtues of the place where they live is that it is a good environment for children. This idea has some interesting implications, including that children can thrive somewhere where they are distanced from their wider kin network but which offers a good quality of life and that a place that offers the right environment for children also offers the right kind of life for their parents. Undoubtedly these ideas are influenced in part by the emphasis in environmentalist rhetoric on preserving the environment for future generations. In classic anthropological theory on teknonymic societies (see Geertz and Geertz 1975: 90), it is argued that one effect of naming parents after children is to create a kinship system in which the focus is on the youngest generation rather than on progenitors. Implicit in respondents' idea that Moray offers a good place for children to grow up is a sense that, by choosing to raise their children there, they may start to activate native ties to the place. Once again, this points to their temporal orientation towards the future rather than the past. Of course respondents have not formed a teknonymic society, but this different orientation is notable, especially, once again, in the contrast with the ideas of roots tourists and other genealogists, whose ideas and practice are markedly oriented towards connecting with the past rather than working in the present to make a good life in the future.

Charity Work

Funny business, a woman's career. The things you drop on your way up the ladder so you can move faster. You forget you'll need them again when you get back to being a woman. There's one career all females have in common, whether we like it or not: being a woman. Sooner or later we've got to work at it, no matter how many other careers we've had or wanted.
All About Eve

My voluntary work with the conservation charity in Spey Bay was the catalyst for most of the relationships I made with respondents and provided the means for participating in their daily lives. In this chapter I will focus on the work done by the staff and volunteers in the wildlife centre. I will therefore be extending on the themes of the previous chapter, in which we saw the importance of care and effort in creating belonging and connections with others in respondents' lives. These efforts are given weight by cultural ideas about what constitutes good work and ethical action. In Spey Bay, this is conceptualised particularly in relation to ideas about cetaceans and the ethical imperative on humans to protect and care for them and their habitats. Such imperatives can link people together in a common purpose, provide the grounds for particular ways of acting and help sustain a sense of social responsibility.

Describing working life in Spey Bay is important not only because my observations of respondents' lives are largely filtered through participating in their work, but also because, as for most people in Britain, they spend many hours of their days at work. This is given added salience by the perception that charity work, in particular, reflects a part of the self and the worker's values. We will see here how wider ideas about charity, altruism and the gift are employed and reproduced in this work and in the ethical subjectivities of charity workers, donors and supporters. We will also see how ideas about localness, children, femininity and rural life are closely implicated in environmentalist work, and its success.

By describing charity work in the UK I am also contributing to a somewhat underrepresented area of anthropology, since, while there are many ethnographies of industrial work in the Western world and beyond, other

professions, including especially white-collar ones, have received less attention from ethnographers, though various scholars have started to chart the development of the professional environmental sector in the UK (see Grove-White 1993; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Yearley 1993). Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 73) have described a shift in environmental organisations in the late twentieth century from a consultative and non-confrontational relationship with government towards a more vocal role as campaigners and advocates seeking to find solutions to problems that are now accepted as real. As they note, this has entailed a complex relationship with the private sector, in that they have come to occupy a space that is seen as moral and principled compared to 'untrustworthy' industry, yet use many of the same marketing techniques used by big businesses. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly common for businesses to boast environmentally friendly credentials however unrelated or even hostile to environmentalist aims their products and services may appear, so that environmental groups may be increasingly challenged in wresting symbolic and conceptual control over the terms of debate.

Berglund (1998) has carried out ethnographic fieldwork amongst environmental activists in various projects in one town in Germany, providing a valuable illustration of the kind of work such activists do and thus giving content to terms such as 'environmentalism'. Her ethnography demonstrates that, rather than taking concepts such as science and nature as universal constants in our analysis, they should be treated as contingent categories of thought that are used for particular purposes and with specific effects. As she says, Euro-Americans 'mix and match nature and culture even as we struggle to be consistent in setting boundaries between them. We still act (and agonise) with nature in mind ... it is upon the power that enables the establishing of those boundaries, that anthropologists are able to comment' (1998: 13).

White (1996) has identified a strain in American environmentalist thinking that associates work primarily with the destruction, rather than appreciation, of nature. He associates this with a tendency amongst environmentalists to see their proper interaction with nature as appreciating it in leisure time rather than through physical labour. Undoubtedly, the appreciation of wildlife in Moray is largely seen as a leisure activity and particularly aimed at holidaymakers, implying that this is a place apart that can usually only be accessed in time out from usual patterns of work and consumption (see also Davis 1996). Many respondents enjoy outdoor pursuits in their spare time so in a sense see the natural world as both their place of work and their playground. While White

raises important points about the separation of humans and nature, work and leisure, in contemporary American life, his essay also betrays a sense that non-manual labour is not real work. While wildlife centre staff are aware that their jobs are not particularly hands-on, there is no reason to suggest that what they do does not count as work, as is only too clear to them when facing a tight budget spreadsheet, a group of expectant school-children or after an exhausting day spent rattling a collection tin while dressed as a dolphin.

Saving the whales

The wildlife centre employs six full-time paid staff based in the centre plus another two who are not office-based and two more based in its offshoot centre outside Inverness that opened in 2007. During the summer, they employ around five residential volunteers who work full-time in the centre, guide on wildlife-watching tours out of Buckie and live in one half of the old fishing station manager's house in Tugnet. They are provided with accommodation and a weekly food allowance and many explained to me that part of the appeal of working at Spey Bay was that, unlike many overseas conservation projects, they did not have to contribute towards their living costs to work there. This means that the work is more accessible for those of reduced means, and residential volunteers come from quite varied backgrounds. Residential volunteers stay for six months, so I came to know a couple of cohorts during my time in the field. Mostly, they were recent graduates in their twenties, from the UK or western Europe, but a few were also in their thirties or forties, taking 'career breaks'.

During summer, when the centre is open seven days a week, there are usually around ten regular "local volunteers"⁵¹ who offer a day of their time each week. In addition, there are at any time a varying number of additional more casual volunteers working in the centre and helping out at events and with particular projects. Non-residential volunteers include students getting work experience in conservation during their summer holidays, retired or school-age locals from Spey Bay or the neighbouring villages, recent incomers who support the cause and are interested in meeting new people and friends and partners of staff or more regular volunteers. All but one of the centre's paid staff are female.

⁵¹ Ironically, this was the category I fell into as I did not volunteer every day and paid for my accommodation myself.

Women residential volunteers also significantly outnumber men, but non-residential volunteers are quite evenly split in terms of gender. The charity, whose headquarters are based in southwest England, but have four more international offices, also part-funds a scientific research project with Aberdeen University on the Black Isle, on the other side of the Moray Firth, and volunteers and staff typically participate in annual surveys of the Moray Firth cetacean population run by this team.

The two main categories of visitors to Spey Bay are families with young children and naturalists. The wildlife centre is made up of the shop, café, icehouse, wildlife garden and exhibition area, which also serves as a location for talks and children's play area, plus, away from the public gaze, office, store-room and volunteer accommodation as well as a car park and outside area that includes a grassy knoll which provides the best vantage point for wildlife-watching. From the outside it does not look that dissimilar from a traditional collection of crofters' cottages and inside it is compact, dark and, in the winter, quite cold. The very first sight that greets visitors on entering the centre is a display promoting the Adopt a Dolphin programme (see below). The shop is targeted at tourists and wildlife enthusiasts, selling books, soft toys, gifts, ornaments and clothes, typically with a wildlife theme though they also sell some 'Scottish' items such as folk music CDs, tea-towels printed with humorous rhymes about Scotland and guides to the local area. The café is similarly aimed at the day-tripper market, serving sandwiches, ice cream, notoriously indulgent cakes and soft drinks.

The centre has a somewhat makeshift appearance, which partly reflects that fact that the building complex is not only rented from the Crown Estates but also listed, which effectively curtails any building or refurbishment work that goes beyond conserving what is already there. Volunteers and staff usually maintain and decorate it themselves in spare moments, giving it a homemade feel. Staff did feel that the centre could be smarter, and there were constant projects to improve its look and accessibility, but they reasoned that since admission was free, visitors could not really expect it be too flashy and if they spent more on its appearance it could have had an adverse effect on their fundraising, as it might suggest that potential supporters' money was less necessary than was being claimed. Such concerns were, in any case, academic, as they simply cannot afford to spend large sums on the centre's upkeep.

The exhibition area is reached through the shop and consists of a series of interpretation boards with information about the Moray Firth dolphins, local wildlife, climate change and conservation. It is also the location of the sightings board, which records the most recent wildlife sightings at Spey Bay, Chanonry Point and elsewhere nearby. The rest of the exhibition is in the separate icehouse, usually only open in the summer as it is prone to flooding, where visitors are shown a DVD about whales and dolphins and given a talk on the history of Spey fishing and shown historical fishing equipment.

Thousands of visitors come to the wildlife centre each year, lured by the promise of seeing dolphins, ospreys, seals and other wildlife in their natural habitats. A large number of visitors are holidaymakers from England, and many of these are repeat visitors to Spey Bay and the wildlife centre. Many locals also visit the centre, either by themselves or with visiting friends and family, including especially children and grandchildren. They did not express any discomfort that those who work in the centre are mostly not Scottish and did not question their claims about the importance of their work. The centre is well known locally and has in a sense put the village on the map. A sizeable proportion of visitors that I met while volunteering in the centre expressed great love for the place, and saw a visit there as a treat. This reflects the current status of wildlife-watching as a leisure activity in this country and the pleasure that such experiences offer.

During summer, the centre is open seven days a week, from 10.30am to 5pm. In winter it is only open at weekends though the staff remain employed full-time and volunteers will be found work to do, often helping pack mail-orders, which are particularly popular in the run-up to Christmas. On a typical day in the summer, some of the paid staff will be working in the office, while the education officer might be engaged with a school group. At least one residential volunteer will be in Buckie guiding on the wildlife watching boat. The shop will either be run by a paid employee or residential volunteer with the help of one or more local volunteers. Further staff, often volunteers, will also be running regular talks in the exhibition space such as a guide to the best places to spot dolphins, with an emphasis on promoting reputable tour operators who do not harass the wildlife, as well as hourly tours of the icehouse. One member of staff will also be on the rota doing Shorewatch, an hourly dolphin survey (see next chapter).

Wildlife centre staff have daily direct contact with supporters and members of the public, so their work is an opportunity to “educate” people about the threats faced by cetaceans, focusing particularly on the Moray Firth dolphins, and to promote the interests and causes of the charity as a whole. Many local

school parties visit the centre during the spring and summer months to take part in educational activities laid on by staff. I helped out on many of these occasions, assisting children in making sea-themed musical instruments, participating in games that illustrate the importance of recycling rubbish and leading nature trails along the banks of the Spey. Staff also travel to local sites for special events. For example, I participated in a day's exhibition at Aberdeen's Maritime Museum as well as an annual weekend boat festival in nearby Portsoy, Aberdeenshire. Such events are multi-purpose, providing opportunities for fundraising, education, advocacy and the promotion of environmentally responsible behaviour in the local population.



Figure 6: Wildlife centre staff grapple with their model of a minke whale surrounded by local children dressed as sea creatures before processing around Spey Bay as part of Save the Whale week, July 2007.

In the rhetoric of wildlife conservation, whales and dolphins need 'saving', and there is a Save the Whale week in Spey Bay every summer. Until the middle of the twentieth century, when it ground to a halt almost as abruptly as it started in the eighteenth century, whaling was a highly lucrative industry in Scotland and nearby Peterhead was a significant whaling port. Towards the end of the industry's career, whaling had, as with comparable economies like fishing and agriculture, become industrialised and many species had become

endangered and faced extinction. The International Whaling Commission (IWC), set up in 1946, originally acted as a self-regulating body for the industry but steadily shifted its position and in the 1980s placed an international moratorium on whaling.

Arguments against whaling reveal much about humans' perceptions of these creatures. They also provide a model and impetus for action and many environmentalist groups treat the state of cetacean populations as an ecological bellwether. Anti-whaling views range from the conservationist camp, which does not see killing whales as wrong *per se* but objects to whaling on the grounds of species endangerment, to those who are against commercial whaling but allow for subsistence whaling by aboriginal groups, to preservationists who believe that whales are a special group because of their particular attributes and place in the ecosystem and therefore should never be intentionally killed (Stoett 1997: 105; cf. Einarsson 1993). The charity in Spey Bay would primarily fit with the conservationist frame, though many individual staff members told me that they can see the argument for aboriginal whaling too, though they framed this in terms of ecological "sustainability" rather than primarily as a means of preserving a 'traditional' way of life.

What is particularly interesting about the global Save the Whale campaign is its successful establishment of an ethical imperative to protect cetaceans. Stoett states, 'Environmental issues have ethics at their heart: questions of what constitutes proper human behaviour and proper relations between people and nature' (1997: 108). This reflects once again the shift of environmentalism in British culture from Green politics to ethical living. Stoett points to the inconsistencies in established anti-whaling arguments and argues instead that, whatever the specifics of anti-whaling discourses, the wider problem of habitat destruction makes stopping whaling an ethical imperative for all humans (1997: 128). As he notes, the shift in worldwide attitudes to whales, from economic resources to hapless victims of the excesses of human industry, has gone alongside a marked depletion in cetacean stocks and both of these factors have contributed to the ending of whaling. Mixed claims may be brought into deciding why cetaceans should not be hunted, but what is generally agreed in the UK, and by all respondents here, is that they should be saved, rather than destroyed. In promoting their work, the charity that runs the wildlife centre is able to draw on both a sense that the local dolphin population is what makes the area special and worth conserving and a more global, though not uncontested, sense that 'saving' cetaceans is a good thing to do. The fact that most whale

and dolphin species are migratory is no doubt useful in this elision of local and global causes, though if we consider the comparison with the equally local salmon population, the importance of ideas about specific species becomes clear.

In the film, *Local Hero* (Forsyth 1983), which was filmed in Pennan, on the Moray Firth coast, a Texan oil company attempts to buy the village and its coastline to develop a refinery. I was reminded of the film when I first heard about American entrepreneur Donald Trump's plans to develop a golf and leisure complex near Balmedie on the Aberdeenshire coast (within First Minister Alex Salmond's Gordon constituency),⁵² which have been resisted by local environmental groups including the charity in Spey Bay. Their objections are based on the project's siting on environmentally sensitive land, part of which is a SSSI. Trump's proposals had an embattled course through the local council planning system and were finally approved in November 2008 after being referred to the Scottish Government. Trump, who has been keen to emphasise his family roots in the Western Isles throughout the process,⁵³ plans to spend £1bn on a golf resort that will be 'the greatest in the world'. No one doubts that this could bring considerable benefit to an area of Scotland that is in need of investment, though many are sceptical that the money will trickle down to ordinary people.

There was a feeling amongst respondents that the Trump case was an example of local government being swayed from taking the ethical course of action – protecting the natural world from exploitation – by the lure of money. While they did not suggest in so many words that those councillors who agreed to the proposal were taking 'kick-backs', they did see a clear link between financial "greed" and approval for the plans, which were defeated by one infrastructure services committee member's vote in the November 2007 stage of the proposal. Those I spoke to saw this man's action as a triumph for moral integrity and an example of bravery, reflecting their awareness that financial incentives may be hard to resist for most people and that standing up for one's principles can entail sacrifice; indeed he was sacked from the committee shortly after the vote.

Local resistance to the Trump case is revealing in demonstrating the complexities of claim-making. For many, Trump's claims to Scottishness rang

⁵² I was not the first person to see the parallel – see Billionaire Donald Trump faces kilted curmudgeon opposing his Scottish golf resort plans, *Daily Mail*, 21st October 2007.

⁵³ See, in particular, Donald Trump on Lewis: Aberdeen Golf Plan is for my Mother, *The Herald*, 29th July 2008.

somewhat hollow, and this is probably less to do with his criterion – the rather compelling fact of his mother’s Stornaway roots – than with what is at stake in accepting it. Once again, we see the fluidity in ‘given’ categories like nationality. Media coverage of the project was mixed, reflecting competing local pressures to protect the environment and invest in rural areas. There was a suggestion in some quarters that locals directly affected by the development were motivated by parochialism and there may be an added issue of class tension as the Aberdeenshire coast is quite economically depressed while golf, though a Scottish invention, is also a rich man’s sport, which Trump’s luxury complex does little to dispel. Respondents, however, tended to focus on preventing the “inevitable” damage the development would cause to an area of coastline that they described to me as “unique”, “special” and “rare”. In backing their claims, they pointed to the SSSI status and the responsibility to protect the area that that entails, suggesting this was an obvious ethical, and political, imperative. As such, their ire was focused not so much on Trump, who was thought simply not to understand locals’ attachment to the land, but on the apparently morally corrupt *local* councillors who were, it seemed to them, so quick to override environmental safeguards in pursuit of economic benefit.

For wildlife centre staff, the Trump case seemed only too familiar after their involvement in the Whiteness Head case. Nearly a month before the sperm whale described in the Prologue washed up on Roseisle beach, I attended a hearing at the Highland Council regarding the proposed development of Whiteness Head, the site of a disused oilrig fabrication plant outside Inverness, into a residential and leisure site. On the day, I had had a desperate telephone call from Sophie asking me if I could give her a lift to the meeting in Inverness as she had been called upon to represent the charity’s objections to the development at the last minute since no one was available to travel up from the English headquarters. The charity’s objections were based on concerns about the effects of increased boat traffic on the cetacean population due to the large new marina that was planned as part of the development. Whiteness Head is very close to Chanonry Point, a spit of uninhabited land on the northern side of the Inner Moray Firth which is known in wildlife-watching circles along with Spey Bay as one of the most reliable places to spot the Moray Firth dolphins, with almost daily sightings at the height of summer.

Having driven Sophie to the council offices, I went in with her to lend moral support and had an opportunity to witness local political process for myself. The council chambers are set up much like the Scottish Parliament, with

councillors and interested parties seated in a horseshoe oriented towards the chairperson's desk. Their desks are equipped with power points for laptop computers and microphones which light up when in use. A further layer of public seating, without desks, encircles this. The councillors themselves were all white, male and middle-aged and wore either dark business suits or more brightly coloured tweed suits. The only women present were the chairperson's assistant, Sophie, the representative from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and me. Sophie, the MoD representative and I were also the only ones under thirty years old.

Applicants and objectors were each allotted time-slots of ten minutes according to the official guidelines for such hearings (Highland Council 2006). First to present was the representative for the applicants, who went to some pains to detail the length of time and amount of effort and money the company had spent on every aspect of the plans as well the involvement of the architect, whom he consistently referred to as 'Sir Terry' in a manner that suggested both deference and familiarity. Throughout, he emphasised 'best practice' and the environmental and social credentials of the project, which seemed to be a pre-emptive strike at the objections that he knew would follow.

After the developers spoke, the councillors were allowed to ask questions and seek clarifications about the proposal, many of which focused on potential problems with increased road traffic. Once all the questions had been answered the objectors had their turn to speak. First was Jeff, a member of a local grass-roots conservation group. He talked about his observations of dolphin behaviour and boat-based human-dolphin interaction, claiming authority through the amount of time he had spent observing cetaceans, to argue that further boat traffic would be detrimental to them. His testimony had an emotional and anecdotal style. Sophie spoke next from a prepared statement, which gave clear reasons for the charity's objections and argued that developments such as this should not be treated in isolation when deciding on their likely ecological and environmental impact. Last to speak was the MoD representative who spoke about the potential effect of the development on the operation of a nearby firing range.

The councillors were given a chance to ask questions and seek clarifications from the objectors next. Almost all of the questions were directed at Jeff and Sophie and centred on statistical information, which Sophie had already noted was difficult to collect (see also Stoett 1997). The councillors seemed unconvinced that increased boat traffic would be detrimental to the cetacean population, though this was largely based on general feeling rather than

‘objective’ evidence – in contrast to their demands for statistical evidence, or “proof”, as they put it, from the objectors to support their views. The chairperson remarked that he had observed no problems in the cetacean population on his last fishing trip in the Moray Firth, while another councillor said that he was old enough to remember when people had gone out fishing for herring on the Firth and that that traffic seemed to have had no effect on the cetacean population. He concluded, “I’m concerned that we are suggesting that these dolphins and porpoises aren’t as resilient as nature intended”. This comment reflects a model of nature that diverges from respondents’ ideas, arguing for a *laissez faire* approach to ecological management based on a particular concept of natural competition. This highlights a tension within conservationist thinking between ‘interfering’ with and ‘helping’ nature, which is of course also salient in debates about assisted conception (see Chapter Six). As implied by Willow’s comment about pandas in the previous chapter, conservation groups have to make a convincing case that the animals they work with need ‘saving’ while at the same time avoiding the implication that they are hopeless.

Next, the applicants were allowed to respond to the objections. The previous spokesperson handed over to their “expert”, a biologist from St. Andrews University. He asserted from the start that everything he said would be based not on anecdote, but “scientific research and evidence”. He did not present any statistical evidence of the sort asked of the objectors, instead referring repeatedly to two papers he had written on the matter, which were not detailed in the proceedings of the hearing and which, it may not be far-fetched to assume, had not been read by most present. He relied to a great extent on *ad hominem* argumentation, focusing particularly on the contrast between his “scientific” and Jeff’s personal style. This again highlights the unequal demands for “scientific evidence” from each party to the case (cf. Thompson 2002; Yearley 1993). One of the first things the conservation charity teaches people about cetaceans is that knowledge about them is very limited because they are a difficult set of animals to study in the wild; presumably the biologist would have known this. The planning officer then announced that the development had been approved, subject to certain conditions, followed by a final set of questions from the councillors. In the closing comments the councillor who had commented on cetacean resilience above said he was concerned about the process of “place-making” in this context, as he was worried that people would be moving in for the place, with no provision made for extra employment and industry.

Afterwards, Sophie railed against the set-up of the hearing, saying, “I don’t want it to be like this, but I can’t help but wonder if it would have made any difference to our case if I’d been a middle-aged man in a suit”. The development of Whiteness Head is, like the Trump development, a project motivated by commercial interest and enabled by money. In accepting the proposal, the council demonstrated commitment to the area’s ‘development’, bringing more money into the region by expanding the population and increasing tourist numbers, which is laudable in a context of concern about the country’s population ‘crisis’ and a national shortage of affordable housing, though, as we saw, some were concerned about the top-down engineering of communities that this implied.

In this case, the conservation charity was in a difficult position because its over-arching aim is to protect the local cetacean population, which means opposing the site, yet revenue from tourism is its financial lifeblood. Recently, it has also been fighting to prevent the licensing of exploration for oil and gas deposits within the Moray Firth’s Special Area of Conservation (SAC).⁵⁴ The common source of frustration for conservationists in these three proposed developments is the sense that despite stringent measures like SAC and SSSI protective statuses being in place, government bodies may countermand these. Their concern is that those making decisions about ‘exploiting’ environmentally sensitive areas like these may ultimately succumb to greed.

Sophie’s comment about being taken seriously if she were a middle-aged man reminds us that women must make difficult negotiations between their working and personal lives. Further, forms of authority are gendered and as the biologist made clear, scientific knowledge enjoys the greatest authority within this society (Culley and Angelique 2003: 446-7). The conservation charity itself is aware of the importance of claiming scientific objectivity and most paid staff have a background in the biological sciences (see also Berglund 1998: 153; Yearley 1993). Reference to ‘scientific proof’ is one of the most effective means of claim-making in Euro-American societies, despite the fact that science may not always live up to its ideals of objectivity (Latour and Woolgar 1986). Wildlife centre staff are involved in a range of scientific research, most of which focuses on collecting records of the numbers of cetaceans in the area through surveys, sightings data and “Photo ID”, where they take photographs of the dorsal fins of any dolphins sighted while guiding on wildlife-watching boats in order to identify

⁵⁴ The SAC designation is in recognition of the local cetacean population.

them and record their movements.

For charities like this one, having a solid foundation of scientific evidence is very important, though they face the problem that, as Sophie noted, cetaceans are difficult to study, being underwater and out at sea for most of their lives. A further complication to the status of science in the specific case of cetacean conservation is the 'loophole' of the IWC that a certain amount of whaling may be carried out 'for scientific purposes', a qualification that has been exploited, as anti-whalers see it, particularly by Japan. As in this case, one of the major obstacles facing charities and interest groups is gaining access to authoritative means of claim-making. This may be a function of inequalities in funding as well as uneven access to mechanisms of power.

Claim-making is always and inevitably an exercise of authority, as the examples described here demonstrate. The reproduction of ethical imperatives is key to bolstering the claims of environmental campaigners, and those who are pitted against them in such battles, and parties may survive or founder based on the kinds of appeals they make and the authority of their claims. In the Whiteness Head case the environmentalist lobby lost the battle, and one of the key factors seems to be the developers' better access to scientific authority, as well as the councillors' faith in nature's resilience. The point here is not so much that the biologist or the councillors were able to point to specific evidence, but the kind of claims they made in their rhetorical performances.⁵⁵ Sophie and the charity she represented made the mistake of reporting their own science in terms that implied an incomplete or contested knowledge. It seems, therefore, that rather than engaging in science wars with the biologist in the Council chambers, the best course of action for the charity would have been to draw on popular support based on the ethical imperative to care for the local wildlife.

Fundraising: Giving money

The idiom of salvation – like charity, overtly Christian – suggests that cetaceans are helpless and that it is up to humans to help them⁵⁶, as well as

⁵⁵ Incidentally, Jeff, Sophie and the biologist all originate in England and have English accents, so I do not think that their 'outsider' origins were significant in this battle, though that is not to say that they might have become useful if there had been some differentiation.

⁵⁶ This is in contrast to an increasing tendency to portray human subjects of charity as being empowered and a focus on universal human rights in arguing for specific causes.

implying that it is from humans that they need saving in the first place. The Adopt a Dolphin scheme is the charity's financial backbone. On the charity's website, it claims that, by joining the scheme, 'you're not just helping your dolphin, you're helping us to protect whales and dolphins all over the world'. It then lists the different ways that the charity works to protect cetaceans through the money it raises from the scheme, for example: 'Stop the deliberate killing of whales and dolphins for commercial and so-called "scientific" purposes,' 'Stop whales and dolphins falling victim to man-made threats such as pollution or entanglement in fishing nets,' and 'Prevent suffering in individual whales, dolphins and porpoises, whether in their natural environment or in captivity'.

The dolphins in the scheme are chosen by the charity and presented in a leaflet and on the website with a description of their characteristics so that potential adopters can pick the dolphin that most appeals to them. The term 'adoption' posits a kinship link between adopter and dolphin, implying an even closer solidarity than between a mere cash donor and recipient and drawing attention away from the financial aspect of this transaction. The programme is largely marketed at children, though usually paid for by adults. This relates both to popular ideas about dolphins as appealing to children and taps into a wider sense that adults should work to prevent their children from having to face human-made problems of climate change and species depletion in the future.

The major supporters of the work at the wildlife centre are, as one staff member put it, "little girls who like pink", who show their love for cetaceans by persuading their parents to pay to adopt a dolphin, raising extra funds for the charity themselves and even visiting the centre to try and see 'their' dolphin and buy souvenirs in the shop. In the previous chapter I mentioned the uneasiness of wildlife centre staff at the anthropomorphism of cetacean advocacy. In the scheme's promotional material one female dolphin is described as 'a great hunter and a very attentive mother', while one male is 'a social dolphin who is often seen splashing and leaping with others' and another 'is a very friendly dolphin always in a party mood!' In order to make dolphins appealing to children, and particularly girls, they are not only anthropomorphised, but also domesticated and even infantilised.

The popular portrayal of cetaceans as benign and even helpless is reinforced by the gift received by adopters of a dolphin soft toy, along with the many other child-oriented depictions of cetaceans on display in the wildlife centre shop. This may partly be a reaction to the problem of reconciling the idea that gift-giving promotes social solidarity between humans with the act of giving

donations 'to' animals. This gift also represents a need for reciprocity between the charity, as agents working for the dolphins, and supporters; those who 'altruistically' donate to charity must be rewarded with recognition (Gibbon 2007). The toy dolphin and supporter pack providing information about dolphins, whales and the charity's work to protect them, both provide this and serve as mnemonics of the adopters' original choice to support the cause. The website says: 'As recognition of your dolphin adoption you will receive a brilliant certificate, personalized with your name, showing how you are caring for and supporting the dolphins!'

Charities like the one in Spey Bay rely on their causes' economic value in order to help them. Popular ideas about dolphins portray them as intelligent, altruistic and beautiful. I heard from wildlife centre staff that many people who have visited dolphins in captivity argue that they appear to be 'happy', since the way their jaws sit gives them a perpetual 'smile', despite their drastically reduced life expectancy compared to cetaceans living in the wild. Conservation groups recognise that emphasising dolphins' benign nature helps to secure financial and popular support for their cause; this is particularly clear if one considers the contrast with shark conservation. Nonetheless, as staff acknowledge, such one-dimensional depictions may entail compromising their ideals if dolphins must be made to appear more human in order to retain their place in the natural order.

Charitable institutions work, by definition, on a not-for-profit basis, but they are not immune to the 'audit culture' (Strathern 2000) that has pervaded professional organisations over the last few decades, and in fact may be particularly anxious to appear 'accountable', given popular and official ideas about charity. Key to this is fundraising, obtaining money through voluntary donations with (at least in theory) no expected material return. While it is, culturally speaking, relatively unsurprising for corporations to be unethical in their dealings, it is felt that charities should be as morally upright as possible, especially when it comes to their spending, as was suggested by respondents' attitudes to the Findhorn Foundation in the previous chapter. Indeed, it could be said that one reward for donors is the reassurance that their gifts will be spent wisely. In the case of this charity, whose work is largely campaigning, research and education rather than hand-on conservation this may be all the more challenging as it is more difficult to point to where their funding actually goes. This is countered to a large extent by the personalisation of the dolphins in the adoption scheme, so that adopters feel as if their money is going to one

particular dolphin, rather than – as is more likely – funding a lobbyist’s trip to the IWC or educational leaflets promoting responsible wildlife watching.

As with many other charitable organisations, a large proportion of the funds raised by this charity go on staffing.⁵⁷ In a briefing about the 2008 IWC annual conference that I sat in on, a senior member of staff visiting from the head office summarised the work he and his colleagues had done to defeat Greenland’s proposal to start hunting humpback whales, summarising in an ambivalent tone: “Hundreds of man-hours – person-hours – thousands of pounds, saved ten whales”. Just as there is a perpetual feedback of dependence on cetaceans to be both appealing and in need of saving in order to sustain this charity, like some financial ouroboros much of its budget is spent on the salaries of staff whose roles are in one sense or another to raise funds. However, they strive to spend their earnings ethically, thereby further supporting the overarching cause they work for.

Defining certain things or groups as in need of outside help implies not only that they are vulnerable and dependent, it also criticises the usual mechanisms of welfare provision, be that government, society or family, and the unequal distribution of wealth and power in the wider political economy. However, this is not straightforward across the board. As noted, Scots are known for being particularly supportive of political parties that promote social welfare such as Labour and the Liberal Democrats and this is true of respondents as well. Underlying the idea of charity is a critique of private self-interest, yet this is complicated by the fact that, in practice, charities typically represent specific niche causes, in contrast to the state, which in some sense represents the common good. This is reflected in Mauss’ assumption that in industrial western societies with highly developed states, gifts come to appear increasingly voluntaristic as they lose their political functions as tools of the social contract (Parry 1986: 467; see also Strathern 1997).

In the West, the notion of charity can be traced back to the Christian virtue of *caritas*, or selfless love. In Christianity, this is love for others and god, inspired by god. In contemporary usage, charity has come to focus more on charitable actions, though of course the concept condenses certain assumptions about human motive and charities must be careful to cultivate an ethic of altruism amongst supporters. Parry argues that in contemporary industrial societies like the UK, charitable good works and disinterested giving are the

⁵⁷ In their 2008 Annual Review they report spending 20% of their £2.4 million budget on fundraising, 7% on trading, management and administration and 59% on charitable activities.

counterparts to pure utility, resting on the ideas that persons and things are separate and on the spatial and qualitative 'chasm' between the earthly world and the transcendent realm of god (Parry 1986: 468).

Parry argues that, in his analysis of the gift, Mauss stressed 'a combination of interest and disinterest, of freedom and constraint', but this is not self-interest: 'It is not individuals but groups or *moral persons* who carry on exchanges' (1986: 456; original emphasis). For Mauss, in industrial, western societies:

[G]ifts come to *represent* something entirely different. *Gift exchange* – in which persons and things, interest and disinterest are merged – has been fractured, leaving gifts *opposed* to exchange, persons *opposed* to things and interest to disinterest. The ideology of a disinterested gift emerges in parallel with an ideology of purely interested exchange. (Parry 1986: 458; original emphases)

The same people who make 'pure' gifts carry out financial transactions in their daily lives, but with the development of capitalism these different types of transaction come to be increasingly differentiated, so that gifts become laden with associations of altruism, love and emotionality while economic exchanges come to be conceptualised as divorced from human emotion and characterised only by rational calculation.

Donations to charity seem at first glance to be pure gifts, but the reality may be more complicated, since, as we have seen here, charities provide donors with non-monetary recognition of their altruism. Unreciprocated gifts and charity are condemned by Mauss because they deny obligation and create relations of asymmetrical dependence. Instead, Mauss implies, 'The remedy for our modern ills is a system of social security founded on the old morality of gift-exchange, to which we too are heirs' (Parry 1986: 458-9). Writing about Titmuss' (1997) problematic and partial application of Maussian gift theory to blood donation systems in the US and UK, Tutton (2002: 528) argues that the salience of Maussian gift theory to his work is its 'metaphorical resonance'. For Titmuss, Tutton argues, the gift contained values of 'social equality, altruism and community', which for him were 'embodied in the liberal welfare state' (2002: 528), which he saw as a defining part of British culture. Tutton reminds us that the combined ideologies of pure gift and pure altruism have a powerful ethicising and normative force. As with surrogacy agencies (Ragoné 1994), the rhetoric of

the pure gift provides donors and agents of charities with a moral grounding and an acceptable model of human motive. Such idealism also provides charities with perpetuity – the question of what would happen if endangered species either became extinct or over-populous is the elephant in the boardrooms of conservation charities the world over (Stoett 1997: 130).

We saw in Chapter Two that respondents think of pure gifts, like pure altruism, as rarely attainable ideals. At the same time, their actions suggest that such ideals may be appropriate goals to strive towards. Respondents demonstrated an acute awareness of the difficulties inherent in the idea that a surrogate mother gives ‘the gift of life’, suggesting that compassion toward the intending parents must be combined with a certain amount of self-interest for the surrogate mother or the relationship will be based on an uncomfortable power imbalance.

As with respondents’ ideas about commercial surrogacy, the example of fundraising suggests that, for respondents, money can be used to enable ethical projects, and that money may be an appropriate thing to donate to charity as a ‘pure gift’. In another sense, though, charity donors ‘buy’ altruism – they spend and consume in order to support the causes that are important to them, and which are marketed and branded successfully by such charities. The role of individual choice in support for charities is evident in their efforts to market their causes, which itself eats up much of the funds they raise. Just as those who work in the centre strive to build a good life, supporters of the work at Spey Bay constitute themselves as ethical persons by giving their time or money voluntarily. They thus demonstrate what they think is worthy and make a claim about themselves as ethical subjects. In this sense, there is a tension between the posited voluntarism of charity donation and the moral and ethical imperatives that charities employ to garner support for their causes.

Volunteering: Giving time

According to Scottish Household Survey data for 2007 (Scottish Government 2008a), Scotland has higher levels of volunteering than the rest of the UK. 30% of adults in 2007 had given up time for volunteer work, with work related to children being the most popular cause, while 6% volunteered in the category ‘the environment, animals’. Roughly equal numbers of men and

women volunteer in Scotland. The peak age range for women volunteering is thirty-five to forty-four while male volunteers' age seems to make less difference to their volunteering. Those in paid work and living in less deprived areas are more likely to volunteer. The most likely types of volunteer work done by survey respondents were 'generally helping out' and 'raising money', which reflects the reality of volunteer experience in Spey Bay.

In the wildlife centre, the genders are more evenly balanced amongst volunteers than amongst paid staff, there is also a greater range of ages amongst volunteers, though most are either at the beginning or the end of their careers. Residential volunteers are primarily motivated by the future career opportunities that their experience working in Spey Bay will provide them. Quite a few that I have known have gone on to projects abroad or paid jobs within the environmental field in this country. Sophie, Ingrid, Amy, Luke, Willow and Charlotte all volunteered in the centre before securing paid jobs of various sorts in the charity and respondents recognise that many who have volunteered in Spey Bay feel the pull to return there all the more strongly.

The amount of time local volunteers make available to the charity varies according to their other responsibilities and their desire to engage in the work. Most of the female local volunteers also worked full-time and described their motivation for volunteering as a mixture of support for the charity's aims and extending their social networks. The men, most of whom were primarily engaged in studying rather than paid work, tended to be either young men at the beginning of their careers looking to get some work experience or middle-aged. The latter were embarking on new phases of their careers or easing into retirement and consequently felt they had more time to devote to projects like this. No local volunteers had dependent children, but quite a few of the older ones had adult children.

Residential volunteers follow a set rota of work duties, as well as an individual research project, so the type of work they do is fairly evenly distributed amongst them. For local volunteers, whose work is seen to be the most voluntaristic, and consequently that most likely to be withdrawn without warning if the volunteer is unsatisfied, work duties are less clearly set, though it is hoped that they will join in with whatever needs doing. I observed that male volunteers tended to be much more enthusiastic about the 'public' side of the centre's work, giving talks, taking visitors around the icehouse and doing Shorewatch, while female volunteers tended to be more nervous about public speaking and were more willing (or felt less confident refusing) to help with children and work in the

shop (cf. Blackstone 2004; Culley and Angelique 2003; Gibbon 2007; Wilson 2000: 228).

Based on research amongst female volunteers in rural southwestern England, Little found that women's 'natural' altruism and facility for caring was an important legitimising factor in their voluntary work and for many this was due to the ideological fit with their kinship roles (1997: 204). These helping activities fill in for gaps in state provision, so such gendered conceptions of altruism are therefore employed and reinforced by the state (1997: 204). Little notes the strong connection between ideas about women's work, domesticity and rural life:

[Women's voluntary work] was seen to capture the "spirit" of rural living. It was seen to link closely to valued attributes of the rural community, including smallness, self-sufficiency, and a willingness to help out. The implication was that in undertaking voluntary work in the village school, women were benefiting the whole village and helping to preserve the traditional community. (1997: 206)

Voluntary work was especially empowering for incomer women, who described activities like serving on the village hall committee as 'helping them to feel "part of the community" and to "contribute to village life"' (1997: 202; see also Hughes 1997; Strathern 1981; Watson 2003: 117). At the same time, though, the unequal involvement of rural women and men in volunteering in Little's study reflects both the less powerful structural position of women and the cultural devaluing of unpaid work compared to paid work, and the connections between these two inequalities (see also Moore 1998: 43).

Just as donors to the charity in Spey Bay are rewarded with token gifts that recognise and represent their altruistic gift, volunteers are rewarded with recognition of their efforts and access to a friendly and sociable network of people (cf. Wilson 2000: 215). Charity work like that described here is not obviously productive and, as I suggested earlier, it may not be even be obviously effective when funds go on campaigning, education and advocacy rather than direct action or goods production. Nonetheless, it seems to 'produce' relationships, as is implied by the terminology of the Adopt a Dolphin scheme. The fundraising work of volunteers and staff and the financial input of donors produce – or perhaps, conserve – connections between people and animals, people and the natural world and between individuals. This can be vital in

fostering a sense of belonging, as we saw in the previous chapter.

The work volunteers put into cultivating new roots in Scotland's soil are also of course inextricable from their projects of building a good life and being good people. While volunteering may be highly rewarding (as it certainly was for me), this is balanced out by notions of helping out, altruism and community involvement that suggest a more interpersonal orientation to the work. Wilson argues that while volunteering clearly does provide volunteers with rewards and they may weigh up the amount of reward when deciding what kind of volunteering to get involved with, this may not be their *reason* for volunteering: 'A volunteer might feel good about doing the right thing, but she does not do it because it makes her feel good; rather it makes her feel good because she thinks she ought to have done it' (2000: 222).

In capitalist economy, work and money are conjoined in the belief that work, and the time spent doing it, is best rewarded with money. For many, this reflects an assumption that, in a parallel process to the separation of gift and commodity exchange, work alienates the worker from her true interests so her wages are both compensation for this and a means for her to pursue those personal interests outside of work (Carrier 1993). This points to an assumed split between professional and personal selves. It also suggests that work is usually done for money rather than love, though money may be what enables the worker to do what she loves outside of work. The phenomenon of volunteering and the case of altruistic surrogacy both suggest that work may in fact be done and time given without financial reward. Similarly, we shall see in a moment that the ideals and motives of volunteers and paid staff in choosing to work in cetacean conservation are a similar mixture of 'self-interest' and 'altruism'.

A labour of love

As with non-profit work in general, conservation work is based on qualities of caring and compassion, which are culturally associated with femininity. Just as donating money to charity is promoted under a rubric of altruistic gift-giving by fundraisers, working for charity is seen to entail sacrifice and to be motivated by responsibility and altruism, all traits that are culturally associated with femininity and domestic labour. Nonetheless, the young women

who work in the centre do so not only because they value the aims of wildlife conservation, but also because they want personally fulfilling careers. For most, this is their first or second job and often the first with significant responsibility. Cetacean conservation is the glamorous end of this field, and many of them had worked in 'exotic' tropical locations before coming to Spey Bay, which was part of the work's appeal. However, the pay-off for such fulfilment is low pay compared to equivalent jobs in the private sector as well as the competitive nature of the work, which means that many people work as volunteers for a few years before securing a paid job. Yet, as Luke said in Chapter Two, it *is* possible to get paid for work that one loves doing. Indeed, it is something of a middle-class ideal to find a paid career that is personally fulfilling and the paid staff in the wildlife centre repeatedly told me how, despite the petty problems and stresses of everyday working life, they felt very fortunate, as working for the charity in Spey Bay was a rare opportunity to be paid for doing a job that they loved.

Although the upper echelons of its England-based headquarters are male-dominated, far more women than men work in the wildlife centre and they often expressed frustration at the difficulty they experienced in recruiting men. Sophie told me of her disappointment that a female colleague had once told her that it was impossible to hold a high-ranking position as a woman in the organisation and have children because staff should be wholly dedicated to their work. As well as the gendered expectations for childcare that this suggests, it implies that conservation work is a vocation rather than 'just' a job and, given this, that there is actually a certain amount of blurring between the experiences and motives of volunteers and paid staff.

In fact, as Weber's (1992) classic analysis of the calling suggests, capitalism works through particular ideologies about work and money that, although at times contradictory, are also mutually reinforcing. Surrounding charity work with connotations of altruism and compassion not only offers opportunities for those who participate in it to acquire particular ethical subjectivities, but also serves to legitimate inequalities in pay between particular sectors of the market and for different working roles. While in the case of the wildlife centre, this may not be based in any straightforward way in ideas of worldly asceticism, one clear lesson of Weber's analysis is that the idea of human motive as a direct result of rational, maximising choices is not only flawed but a product of capitalist ideology in itself. Whatever the exact genealogies of individual respondents' particular moral and professional ethics,

Weber reminds us of the close relationship between work and morality which is relevant to all forms of industry but seems particularly explicit in the case of charity work.

In her ethnography of London sex workers, Day (2007) describes these women's strict distinction between their public lives as workers on the one hand and the private realm of home and love on the other. These women were scrupulous in demarcating boundaries which clients, as opposed to partners, could not cross and many were fastidious about washing and preventing the exchange of bodily fluids with clients, which Day argues is not only about hygiene, with all the assumptions about public and commercial dirt that that implies, but maintaining a rigid separation between their outer, public, working self and inner, private, personal self.

Strathern (1988: 142, 152) has noted that a key assumption of capitalist economy in the West is that work is exploitative, which is based on a particular way of viewing the person as a freestanding individual as well as specific assumptions about ownership. As Day (2007: 39-40) notes, the idea that a part of the self can be alienated, bought and sold as a worker while leaving space for the rest to remain as an authentic private, relational person is a 'central fiction' of capitalism. Like the gift and commodity (Parry 1986; Strathern 1988), the definition of one side of the dichotomy relies on the invocation of the other. Further, she argues, the private sphere in this context is more highly valued than the public, and this is linked to long-standing ideas about women's proper location in domestic and private spheres.

The wildlife centre staff constantly berated themselves for letting work bleed into their personal lives. This problem was particularly acute for Sophie and Willow as they live next door to their work premises, are in managerial positions and socialise regularly with their colleagues. Charity work seems to blur the boundaries between the professional and personal, public and private for workers (Little 1997: 200). Along with the assumption that charity work is a vocation, choosing to work for a specific charity implies personal commitment to the cause, and many charities specify support for the organisation's aims as a requirement for prospective employees in their recruitment packages. So, in securing their careers, charity workers are assessed not only on their skills, qualifications or experience, but also on their ethics.

For middle-class people in Britain, a person's choice of career is thought to say something about the kind of 'real', private individual they are. For those who work in charities, such a choice is therefore also an ethical performance,

whatever individual vicissitudes may have brought her to a particular job or organisation. Specifically, it is assumed in Britain that someone working for a charitable organisation is not primarily motivated by money. It is common knowledge that non-profit sector jobs are less well remunerated than those in the financial sector, but this assumption is also indicative of the kind of values that are thought to motivate people to work for charity, including love, compassion and altruism. Nonetheless, as with other kinds of work, charity workers are rewarded for work that is thought to reflect their personal, private, ethical selves, with money.

Because of the stigma against their work, sex workers must do a good deal of rhetorical work to reclaim themselves as private women, but charity workers do work that is already culturally evaluated as good. As such, the fact that profession is a significant aspect of British middle-class identity works in their favour, as their chosen careers imply they are virtuous, principled people. On the other side of the coin, since charities aim to cultivate a sense of social responsibility in their supporters and the wider public, it may be that people who identify themselves as having a sympathetic ethical stance feel a particular responsibility to work professionally towards that stance.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, such work clearly provides benefits, especially to those wishing to build an ethical life.

Gould notes that, since 'Staying at home ... is the central physical and symbolic act of homesteading' (2005: 203); this raises questions about gender politics in homesteading. In practice, homesteaders take different approaches to the division of labour between heterosexual couples, with some recycling traditional roles and others working out new ones. Gould states that since homesteading is about resisting the division of labour along capitalist, industrial lines, this is the primary principle in the organisation of agricultural and domestic work between heterosexual homesteading partners. She suggests that this prioritisation is because homesteading is spiritual, ethical practice, so it eclipses homesteaders' concerns about sexual equality (2005: 218). Yet, ethics, spirituality and capitalist economy are always informed by ideas about gender. Unlike homesteaders, but in line with mainstream contemporary middle-class expectations, the wildlife centre staff have entered the waged workforce. They expect to be able to build successful careers, to be self-reliant and independent. Their work is rather conventional, producing paperwork and using computers, telephones, e-mail and so on (cf. Trauger 2007). However, the values that

⁵⁸ A few of the wildlife centre staff and volunteers had actually been members of the Adopt a Dolphin scheme as children or young adults.

inform it and the location in which it is done are seen to be congruent with ideas of the good life.

Various elements of the work done in the wildlife centre seem to be linked with normative expectations of femininity and female labour. We have seen that women do much of the everyday work in the centre, while men act as volunteers or are part of the higher management team based in England and that charity work is thought of as a vocation rather than 'just' a job. We have seen that whales and dolphins are popularly thought of as particularly appealing to girls and that much of the charity's marketing efforts reflect this fact. The work in the wildlife centre is primarily centred on caring for animals and educating children, both forms of labour thought of in this milieu as traditionally feminine. I have argued that personal values of compassion, altruism and love are seen to drive charity work and, as we saw in the first two chapters, these are traits particularly associated with maternal and domestic labour. We have also seen the importance of cultural ideas about rural life in the conceptualisation of work and volunteering in this setting. These ideas are central to respondents' ideas about the good life, but are also inflected with specific assumptions about gender, money and the natural world.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the work that the women in the wildlife centre do simply reproduces ideologies of femininity. While it does rely to a large extent on the successful implementation of a particular ethic that is thought, culturally speaking, to be informed by 'feminine' values, this is only a partial picture. While they want to be 'good' women, they also participate in traditionally male spheres. They have chosen to move away from their families in order to build good lives and have fulfilling careers. While their work may be informed by an ethic of care, it also entails 'public' activities of advocacy, campaigning, fundraising and scientific research. By doing ethical work, respondents straddle, and thus contest, dichotomies of public and private, work and home, commercial and altruistic, wild and domestic and masculine and feminine.

Conclusion

In contrast to one strain of environmentalist thought that posits a clear association between capitalism and ecological destruction (as in Lovelock's

quote that heads Part Two), respondents have a nuanced attitude to money. All wildlife centre staff are involved one way or another in fundraising, a practice that immediately suggests money's ethical potential. We have seen also that money is an important facilitator of the good life, in enabling the sociality that is such an important part of the experience of belonging and feeling part of a community in Spey Bay. In respondents' working lives, money is a reward for 'good' work and an instrument for achieving certain goals, so the ethical emphasis is on the motives that are seen to inform those goals and the ends to be achieved rather than the means with which they are effected.

In both cases of environmental 'exploitation' described here, they saw "greed" as a motivating factor for those in favour of the developments, yet placed the responsibility for this squarely on these individuals and their motivations rather than on money's immanent facility for corruption. For donors and volunteers, making 'altruistic' contributions to charity is a means of marking their values and making a claim about their own ethical stance. This is not to imply that they volunteer only because they want to be 'good' people, but that this may be the ultimate reward for their contribution. In volunteers' experience we see again the importance of time and effort in creating belonging and building good lives.

While respondents have not explicitly rejected capitalist modes of work by going 'back to the land', the realities of their working lives do seem to contest normative ideas about work, money, gender and charity, albeit in subtle ways. Ultimately, the work they have chosen suggests much about the people that they are, their values and priorities. This raises questions about the status of capitalist ideology in their lives. We saw in the previous chapter that they reject more extreme or utopian models of community-building in favour of a more pragmatic and balanced approach to ethics which draws on the 'good' elements from both mainstream and alternative ways of living. Similarly, here we have seen that they do not renounce capitalist ways of working or try to organise their lives without money.⁵⁹ In contrast to popular and academic models of capitalism, they not only suggest that money can be used ethically, but that the experience of work in capitalist political economy is not necessarily exploitative or alienating, though this is not to suggest that their work is constantly rewarding and enjoyable, as I suggested earlier in noting its relationship to the calling.

⁵⁹ The Findhorn Foundation, by contrast, operates a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) and an alternative credit system, the 'Eko', which members can use in the on-site shops and community organisations.

The experience of the wildlife centre staff shows that work in twenty-first century Britain need not entail a neat separation between the public worker and the private self, nor that professional relationships are modelled simply around profit maximisation. Just as respondents mixed ideologies of love and money when talking about surrogacy, in their working lives, they contest the dichotomies that underlie formal models of capitalism. Rather than becoming alienated through labour, the wildlife centre staff do work – which may or may not be paid depending on whether they are volunteers or paid staff – that is not only avowedly ethical, but produces relationships, cultivates attachments and is seen as inextricably bound up with their private, personal selves.

In Chapter Two we saw that respondents were concerned that financial imperative might drive people into acting as surrogate mothers or blood donors. They also felt that while a surrogate mother should not be primarily motivated by money, it was acceptable for her to receive some payment, though they were clear that this should be viewed as compensation or expenses and thus clearly differentiated from the idea of ‘selling’ a child. With the exception of Erin, they thereby suggested that, under certain circumstances, money could be mixed with motherhood without corrupting those involved. This went alongside an assumption that money is an appropriate reward for services rendered, so that if one views a surrogate mother’s reproductive labour as a service, then it becomes appropriate to pay her for it.

Just as respondents argue that a surrogate mother can get paid for her reproductive services without it corrupting her morality or negating her claim to be motivated by altruism, they use different and even apparently contradictory models of work, payment and reward in their own professional lives. These examples of work and ideas about money illustrate the kinds of considerations that go into ethical judgements. They also resonate with Latour’s (1993) argument that modernist attempts to ‘purify’ elements of human culture are in a sense destined to fail since it is through the necessarily concurrent process of hybridisation that such ideas come into being. What the example of charity work as described here shows, then, is that, while ideologies of capitalism are omnipresent in these people’s thoughts and practice, they are ultimately ideologies and so may be called upon in flexible and contingent ways, weighed up against each other in ethical claim-making or brought into merographic connection in order to make sense of the contradictions of reality.

Choosing a Good Life

We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet

For auld lang syne

Robert Burns, *Auld Lang Syne*

Respondents put work into their connections with others, but these efforts cannot be separated off from their ideas about and relationships with themselves. In this chapter I will describe their ethical subjectivities through two examples that are both ubiquitous in their everyday lives and highly significant in their ideas about good living: their relationships with the local wildlife and their consumption. In the two previous chapters we saw how this wildlife is implicated in respondents' relationships with the land and with each other. Here I will consider further how relations between humans and cetaceans in Moray are linked with ideas about ethical living and morality. I will also reflect on what it means to associate oneself with specific species thought of as "local", "wild" and "endangered".

As Cassidy notes, the animals that certain groups of humans identify and share their lives with can tell us much about that society and how it views itself. On horses in Newmarket, she says, 'in attributing human properties to horses we reveal our perceptions of the nature of those properties and, by implication, of what it means to be human' (2002: 126; see also Franklin 2007). For Cassidy, human-animal relations are a mirror onto human thought and culture. The anthropomorphising of horses in Newmarket and the inter-species identification it suggests, she says, 'contradicts the category distinction continually identified by theorists as central to the modern perception of the relationship between humans and animals' (2002: 136; see also Latour 1993). As she shows, the relationship is far more complex than binary oppositions between human and animal or domestic and wild would allow. Unlike horses (Cassidy 2002) or sheep (Franklin 2007), dolphins are viewed as wild animals, yet this is not a barrier to identification. Being 'charismatic megafauna', there is an accessible fund of popular knowledge about what dolphins are like for humans to draw upon. As we saw in the previous chapter, popular images of dolphins that emphasise their playful lovability may be particularly useful when trying to secure funding for

their cause, just as, in private, respondents reject that image for one of a more 'authentic' wild nature.

For respondents, as for anyone else, everyday life entails choices and decisions. We have already seen some of the lived realities of such choices, but here I will consider further the role of choice in living an ethical life and being an ethical person. Of course, choice is not a neutral term in Western society, being popularly associated with consumerism and many of the 'ills' of contemporary life. It is perhaps apposite, then, that one of the most significant places in which we can see the prominence of choice in respondents' lives is in their consumption decisions.

The dolphin people

Every hour during daylight in the summer months, a member of staff from the wildlife centre stands, wrapped in warm clothing branded with the Spey Bay conservation charity's logo, on the small mound by the icehouse with a pair of powerful binoculars and a stopwatch, clipboard and pencil. After scanning the sea for ten minutes, he records the time, visibility, sea state (on the Beaufort scale), type and number of birds and boats visible and any bottlenose dolphin sightings, by number, the time they were visible and their behaviour. This is "Shorewatch", the hands-on research that they do at Spey Bay and one of the jobs I did regularly as a volunteer. Usually, dolphin sightings, being unpredictable, happened outside the allotted minutes of Shorewatch. At these times, a rush of excitement would pass through the wildlife centre as word spread that dolphins had been spotted. Watching cetaceans in the wild has a somewhat magical status in popular culture and I regularly heard the experience described using superlatives like "amazing" and "awesome".

Dolphins are much more commonly sighted in the summer, not only because that is when they tend to be feeding in the shallower bays of the inner Moray Firth, but also because the seas are usually calmer so they are easier to spot. Typically the first sign for dolphin-watchers is a dorsal fin cutting through the water. Since bottlenose dolphins are grey (though they appear almost black from a distance) and the sea also has a rather greyish hue, they can be quite difficult to spot, but once seen they are unmistakable, especially if they then begin to hunt or "play", leaping through the air, throwing fish or slapping the

water with their tails.

In Spey Bay, it was difficult to avoid having conversations about dolphins and, to a slightly lesser extent, whales with locals and visitors alike and descriptions of watching them were a regular feature of conversation. Indeed, while in the field, cetaceans seeped into my mind so deeply that I regularly dreamt about them. When I first met one wildlife centre employee and described my interest in reproductive technologies, she replied, “Oh, did you know, dolphins do surrogacy? When the babies are born the females take turns to look after them”.⁶⁰ Quite a few villages along the Moray Firth coast have dolphins painted on local village signs or in the decoration of shops and locally made greetings cards often display photographs of dolphins taken in the Firth. There is also a fashion for people to hang small blue plastic dolphin figures from their car rear-view mirrors. As noted, the wildlife-watching industry is growing steadily in the area. These ventures are relatively easy to set up as, given the history of fishing along this coast, most villages have established harbours and old boats that can be refitted for wildlife-watching cruises.

The local wildlife is an important selling point for local tourism. The coast is lined with bed and breakfasts, hotels, guest houses and quite a few caravan and camping sites with mobile homes perched on the edges of the coast so as to maximise the sea views which (mostly) English tourists stay in over the summer. Quite a few families in Spey Bay utilise the local landscape and wildlife in their own business enterprises including the family that runs the café in the wildlife centre. Not surprisingly, although the café is a separate venture from the conservation charity, it is decorated with many depictions of dolphins including stencils of leaping dolphins on the walls. They also display for sale some of the artwork of a local retired couple, also originally from Yorkshire, whose house in Spey Bay is crammed with their various arts and crafts projects, all of which in some way reflect the local environment, but especially the sea. Another retired couple in the village, from Perthshire, run a bed and breakfast that is explicitly sold to visitors on the promise of seeing dolphins, as the upstairs sitting room has an enormous full-length window that overlooks the bay and so provides ample opportunities for warm, comfortable dolphin-watching.

Locals view the resident dolphins favourably, which tallies with a popular attitude to these animals as benign, social, intelligent and even helpful to

⁶⁰ This quote is representative of a few initial responses in the speaker's assumption that, by talking about surrogacy I was referring to a generalised sense of the term rather than its specific application in maternal surrogacy.

humans.⁶¹ Swimming with dolphins, though discouraged by conservation groups, is thought to be therapeutic for humans and is frequently listed as 'something to do before you die'. There are also a number of accounts of dolphins 'saving' humans from danger, such as a case from New Zealand which was made into a docu-drama by BBC2 shown in February 2008. In this case, some young swimmers were surrounded by a group of bottlenose dolphins, which appeared to be herding them together to protect them from an approaching great white shark. Dr Rochelle Constantine, from the Auckland University School of Biological Science, is quoted in the *New Zealand Herald* (24th November 2004) saying, 'Dolphins are known for helping helpless things. It is an altruistic response and bottlenose dolphins in particular are known for it'. When I mentioned this 'altruistic' dolphin case to one wildlife centre employee, she dismissed the idea that dolphins could be altruistic out of hand, rolling her eyes and saying firmly, "yeah, whatever, they're wild animals!"

As well as promoting responsible wildlife-watching, the conservation charity in Spey Bay works to educate people about cetaceans and the threats that they face to their lives and habitats. I observed many occasions in which centre staff taught adults and children about the local dolphin population and noticed that they typically played on these positive characteristics. They particularly emphasise the "similarities" between humans and dolphins, especially their high intelligence and complex communication skills, as well as their tendency to live in groups. By linking themselves with these animals, locals claim for themselves a distinctive and positive identity and imply that they share their characteristics. This subverts the view that northeastern Scotland is a rural backwater and suggests that residents have a superior relationship with the natural world to that of city-dwellers, a claim which has added salience in a time of increasing environmental awareness.

Early in August 2007, a minke whale calf stranded in Fraserburgh harbour, fifty miles east of Spey Bay at the mouth of the Moray Firth. Minke whales, recognisable from their disproportionately small dorsal fins, are the most common type of whale to be spotted in the Moray Firth and are therefore thought of as "local". Fraserburgh is a busy industrial fishing port whose harbour

⁶¹ Dolphins' helpfulness and intelligence, as evidenced for example in their use by the US military, is well-established in Western popular culture, as in the film, *Jaws 3D* (1983) and television series, *Flipper* (1964; 1995), as well as Douglas Adams' books, *The Hitch-Hikers' Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) and *So Long, and Thanks for all the Fish* (1984), in which he humorously portrays dolphins as a more sophisticated species than humans who even have a 'Save the Humans' campaign when Earth is destroyed by aliens. For an interesting consideration of the ethics of human-dolphin interactions, recommended to me by Mark Simmonds (see below), see Thomas I. White's (2007) *In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier*.

is usually crammed with the enormous state-of-the-art hulls of deep-sea fishing trawlers. This calf had swum unexpectedly into the harbour, following a trawler, and was stuck there for three days, apparently too disorientated to swim back out. In discussions about the case both with local people and on the news, many mentioned reports, never fully substantiated, that an adult female minke, which quickly became referred to as “the mother” had been spotted swimming in the sea outside the harbour wall during this time.

This unusual incident attracted a great deal of local attention, with people of all ages crowding around the harbour walls to see the whale. As Severin Carrell, *The Guardian*'s Scotland correspondent put it, ‘Since the whale surfaced, Fraserburgh has discovered a new industry: eco-tourism. Car parks are busy with families unpacking cameras. Harbour authorities have erected crowd barriers and a sign stating: “Whale watching: entry to piers at own risk.”’⁶² Amongst these well-meaning onlookers, one young man took things too far, stripping to his underwear and jumping into the water to swim with the whale, emerging after thirty minutes to be arrested by Grampian Police.

Local conservation groups quickly sprang into action to try and coax the calf back out to the open seas. Amongst those involved in the rescue effort, there was a great deal of discussion about whether intervention was appropriate, with many worrying that their attempts to drive the whale out with underwater noise would be too distressing. Eventually, just as the humans began to lose hope that they could rescue the whale, it followed a small flotilla of dinghies out to sea. Willow was in one of these boats and enjoyed the chance to experience a hands-on cetacean rescue and returned to Spey Bay that evening to a hero's welcome.

That national newspapers and television news picked up this story is probably partly due to the January 2006 case of the Thames whale, which had also captured the British public imagination.⁶³ In a letter to *The Guardian* following Carrell's article, Mark Simmonds, Science Director for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, wrote:

In your report of the good news that the young minke whale was freed from Fraserburgh harbour on Friday (Free Marvin, August 3), you refer to

⁶² Free Marvin: can scaffolding and fish bait save the whale? *The Guardian*, August 3rd 2007

⁶³ See Minke whale escapes from harbour, BBC News online, 3rd August 2007; Rescuers resume attempts to save stranded whale, *The Guardian*, 3rd August 2007; Sound idea leads whale to freedom, *The Times*, 4th August 2007. The story was also covered by Channel Five news, amongst others.

the Thames whale rescue attempt, noting that some have advocated non-intervention in such cases. However, there is an enormous difference between the Thames and Fraserburgh whales. Minke whales naturally occur in shallow waters around the UK. Thus the Fraserburgh animal was released from a stressful and dangerous situation (a busy harbour) into its natural environment. The animal also appeared healthy and had never stranded.

The Thames whale, by contrast, was an animal of the deepest seas: a northern bottlenose whale. It was hundreds of miles from "home" and already in considerable trouble when the rescuers secured it. This is the key point: when most whales and dolphins strand (or turn up in rivers) they are already highly compromised and unlikely to survive. Stranding also harms the animals because it causes unnatural pressure to internal organs. So the odds are almost always against the rescue teams and in many cases the most humane action is euthanasia. Rescue efforts are also made difficult by the sheer size of the animals.

The UK has a well-established marine animal rescue network and while improvisation is often involved (such as the use of scaffolding poles with the Fraserburgh whale), in each emergency consultation with experts happens before any intervention. As we increasingly industrialise our coastlines and shallow seas, there will be more interactions with these animals. We should be proud of our rescue teams, but we also need to be realistic about outcomes. (Home truths about lost whales, *The Guardian*, 6th August 2007)

As Simmonds' letter suggests, the difference in these two cases was that, unlike the Thames whale, the Fraserburgh minke was in its 'home'. Simmonds deftly delimits what is natural and unnatural here to make his case: what is unnatural is the industrialisation of the British coast and the beaching of whales in unfamiliar territory (much like the sperm whale in the Prologue), implying a correlation between the two, while coaxing this minke whale back out to the open sea is, by contrast, simply 'giving nature a helping hand'.

Respondents discussed the story of the Fraserburgh minke whale repeatedly, which is perhaps because of the deep metaphorical resonance it may have had for a group of people so involved in cetacean conservation, but

also concerned with the future of their own community in a climate of social, economic and ecological change. In contrast to the sperm whale stranding in the Prologue, this was a chance not only to make a 'hands-on' effort to help a whale in distress, but a *successful* one that offered hope of salvation for the whale but also, symbolically, for the human community that had rescued it.

It is surely significant that this whale was a calf, given environmentalist rhetoric about protecting future generations and wider cultural ideas about children embodying progress and inheriting the world left to them by previous generations. The distant figure of the calf's putative mother waiting in the nearby Firth, apparently unable to help it back from its reckless path into the harbour, added a particular poignancy to this particular stranding story for a group of people who we know to be concerned about maternal bonding. For respondents, the extra distress that separation from its mother would cause the calf was taken for granted, and reuniting them seemed to them to be the best, and perhaps only, way to ensure its survival. Indeed, once it swam back out into the Firth they rapidly lost interest, based on their assumption that it had returned to the safety of its mother, pod and home, and so no longer needed human assistance.

In identifying themselves with particular species, people draw upon and reformulate cultural ideas about those specific animals' characteristics, which are, of course, no more 'natural' than humans' ideas about themselves. While dolphins are thought of as particularly intelligent, this is a benign, even innocent, intelligence in contrast to a Western post-lapsarian model of humanity as fundamentally greedy and self-interested (Sahlins 1996). Dolphins and whales often stand in anti-whaling and environmentalist rhetoric as the victims of industrial greed, again implying associations with sacrifice and the slaughter of the innocents. Dolphins have a deep emotional appeal and multi-layered symbolic resonance for these people, which is closely related to wider ideas about these animals, nature and ethics, but which also draws on Christian imagery and doctrine. That dolphins are thought of as "social" is also pertinent and I often heard respondents and visitors to the wildlife centre describing cetacean pods as networks or communities of nuclear families, especially when they were talking to children. As well as standing for proper relationships to the natural world, then, dolphins represent a kind of ideal sociality.

Lévi-Strauss' contribution to the long-standing debate on totemism was to move the debate 'toward the intellect' in his famous suggestion that apparently totemic animals (and plants) are 'good to think' (1962: 89). Particular

groups identify themselves with specific animals not because of their economic utility, he says, but their symbolic and metonymic efficacy. As Cassidy (2002: 129) suggests, animals demonstrate the 'flexibility' of how people use analogical connections in the making of culture (see also Edwards 2000; Strathern 1992b), but they are not simply passive signifiers of human self-obsession, but dynamic agents. She shows this in the way that ideas about horses both reflect and reproduce ideas about the 'natural order' in Newmarket. As this suggests, animals are not only good to think but also good to act with.

While in Newmarket, people have an active, controlling role in horses' lives as owners, breeders and trainers, in Moray, people play down such ownership of 'their' animals, instead emphasising that they are wild animals that are also "local" to the area, so more like neighbours than property or pets. Given that dolphins embody the values and motives that inform respondents' efforts to protect the environment, it is perhaps no coincidence that they are popularly thought of as helpful and benign even to the point of altruism. In Moray, dolphins and whales stand for particular ideas about nature, and human relationships to it, as well as for proper inter-subjective relations. Ideal human-cetacean relationships promoted locally are based on compassion, support, altruism and even love, the same principles that respondents strive for in their friendships with each other. In the previous two chapters I showed how human-dolphin relationships help create connections and model ethical action. In the Prologue we also saw that coming into contact with a lost and malnourished dead whale was particularly sad for those respondents because it reminded them of the problems that these animals face in securing sufficient food and a safe environment to live in. All this suggests that, even in the Western world, a community may contain more than one species.

Ethical consumption: An alimentary analogy

Respondents demonstrate and consolidate their connections to their new home through their commitments to protect it from harm. As well as campaigning to protect cetaceans, they aim to lead environmentally friendly lives, recycling as much waste as possible, using low-energy light bulbs, walking or cycling rather than driving and even growing their own vegetables and keeping (free-range) chickens. One main way in which they strive to protect the

environment is by making careful and responsible decisions about what they consume. There is a growing range of 'ethical' alternatives on sale in the UK, with food being a particularly well-developed sector in this respect. Supermarkets and chain stores dominate the markets of northeastern Scotland, but, as is the case elsewhere in the UK, the area has also seen a recent flourishing of businesses selling a more ethical way of life to consumers. Given its global image as a wilder, more natural place and its reputation as a farming nation with excellent produce, Scotland seems to be in a particularly strong position to exploit this market for more ethical foods.⁶⁴ Ethical shopping may refer to quite a broad spectrum of concerns including cutting carbon emissions, improving the working conditions of food producers, anti-globalisationism, seasonality, supporting local businesses and improving the nutrition of self and kin, any and all of which may be employed to suggest a particular product's ethical credentials.

Although a good life does entail certain sacrifices, respondents see people living in urban Britain, and particularly England, as being constrained by time and money from living a life that is both more personally fulfilling and which allows them the opportunity to cultivate relationships of care with their environment and other people. They reject excessive consumption and materialism on the grounds of environmental sustainability and because it seems to imply impoverished relations with others (cf. Gould 2005: 31). However, as we have seen, they do not think of money as bad in itself. We have seen that respondents are aware of the problems that come with utopianism and, once again, their consumption habits reflect their attempts to maintain a balance between ideals and the practical limitations of everyday life on the margins of the mainstream.

Respondents strive to be ethical consumers of food. A few are vegetarian or vegan and many of those who do eat meat aim to eat "happy meat" – that is, Organic, local and humanely reared and slaughtered meat – and fish from sustainable sources. Some also get their fruit and vegetables delivered in a 'veg-box' and a few who have gardens grow some of their own fruit and vegetables. However, they do much of their food shopping in one of the two twenty-four hour superstores in Elgin, though they choose from the Organic and Fair Trade ranges wherever possible. Much as they express antipathy to

⁶⁴ This does, of course, contrast with the unenviable reputation of Scots as appalling cooks who do not know what to do with such bounty and the fact that Scotland has notoriously poor nutritional health for a wealthy, developed nation. (See for example *Diet action plan targets 'missed'*, September 11 2006, BBC News online <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/5335212.stm>).

supermarket chains, they do offer convenience and value for money and as such are seen as something of a necessity given the extra time, money and distance that sourcing food completely ethically would entail.

In Sophie's kitchen, she has a small card on the wall with a list of fish with various symbols next to them. This list is produced by the Marine Conservation Society and represents those species that are and are not acceptable to consume according to the Society's reckoning of stock sustainability. Sophie, like others who work in the wildlife centre, is fairly well-versed in the ethics of fish consumption and strives to eat that which is sourced sustainably, though she does occasionally succumb to her love of tuna sashimi. She and others tend not to eat a great deal of fish and usually get it from the fish and chip shop in Fochabers or when dining out in the pub in Findhorn which specialises in local seafood.⁶⁵ While respondents value the fact that they live so close to a world-famous salmon river, they do not go fishing themselves which is partly due to their sense that Spey salmon stocks are in decline (even though there is a Spey Fishery Board regulating this and one must obtain a licence to fish in the Spey), but also because they associate Spey fishing with more upper class 'huntin', shootin' and fishin'" leisure pursuits, which do not easily mesh with their sense of themselves.

Most respondents said that Organic foods are preferable to intensively farmed foods, being "healthier", and suggested that choosing them is a means of protecting the natural world (James 1993; Reed 2002).⁶⁶ Erin frames her preference for Organic foods as a concern for providing her family with the best nutrition that she can. She and her family rely on her husband's salary from his work as a mental health nurse. Although she did not discuss their financial situation with me in detail, it was clear that while their income was adequate, they would like to be able to afford some luxuries such as foreign holidays and perhaps to live in a slightly bigger house than their cosy two-bedroom bungalow, ideally with more space for accommodating visiting friends and any further children. In fact, Erin told me with some pride quite soon after I met her that she and Duncan had managed to spend only £500 on their wedding including a honeymoon in Rome.

⁶⁵ In Scottish fish and chip shops, haddock is the standard fish on offer, in contrast to England where cod is most popular. Both are rated '5', i.e. least sustainable, by the Marine Conservation Society in their list of 'Fish to Avoid' (Marine Conservation Society website).

⁶⁶ Franklin has shown that a significant additional factor in the current demand for less intensive farming practices in the UK is the discovery of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001. As she notes, the foot and mouth crisis, in particular, provoked a new enthusiasm to return to traditional farming methods to reverse the perceived over-industrialisation of British agriculture (2007: 184-5).

Erin and I discussed food shopping a few times, especially when I first moved to Moray and she gave me advice on where to find the best deals and recommended one particular supermarket for its well-priced range of Organic fruit and vegetables. Erin told me that she aims to buy Organic whenever possible and wherever it is not too much more expensive than non-Organic alternatives. She also grows some salads and fruits in pots in her tiny patio garden. There are a few everyday items like milk that she always buys from the Organic range. This is important to her, as items like milk are necessities but also do not vary a great deal in price, so the extra cost of Organic can be budgeted for. It also means that Rosie – who, incidentally is a very fussy eater who does not (yet) share her parents' interest in good food – will be consuming something Organic every day.

Any sunny day in Spey Bay during the spring, summer and early autumn is an excuse to get friends together to eat their evening meal outside. Here I return to the commensality described in Chapter Three to give a sense of the preparatory shopping. Typically, the suggestion that friends have a picnic dinner would come from Sophie or Luke. A decision would then be made based on the weather and a quick survey of people nearby to see if they were available at short notice (which most of them would be). The next decision would concern what food to have and who will provide what. Usually, Sophie would make a good deal of the food or at least provide ingredients if she was very busy at work. If eggs were needed, she would provide them from the chickens she keeps in her garden. If she were less busy that day, she might use the time to drive over to Findhorn to pick up some “nice” items from the shop there such as Organic wine, artisan bread or hand-made sauces. I would often accompany her on such trips, making my own contribution, or if she was too busy I might go with Luke instead. We would often also visit one of the supermarkets in Elgin on the way back from Findhorn for more everyday items.

Often, such outdoor meals would be barbecues, in which case someone, often Luke or Amy, would visit the butcher in Fochabers, which stocks local meat, some of which is Organic. The butcher specialises in red meat and game including local venison and always has his own recipe haggis on sale in two versions: Haggis from Heaven and Haggis from Hell, the latter being a spicier version of traditional haggis with chilli. His goods are perceived by respondents to be more ethical than anything available in the supermarket in that they assume that the animals that produced the meat have had “better” lives and deaths and that their localness and seasonality means their production and

transport have impacted the environment less by producing fewer carbon emissions. The butcher, who is German, is also very friendly (and gently eccentric) and likes to chat about his products' provenance and exchange recipe tips. Respondents value his warmth and knowledge and feel that by supporting his business they are contributing to the local economy and, thus, community. They also feel that, despite its superior quality, his meat is better value for money than comparable ethical goods bought at Findhorn or in farmers' markets, for example.⁶⁷ It also has the benefit of being in Fochabers, only five miles from Spey Bay, so necessitating a shorter car journey than a trip to Elgin or elsewhere, which is again "better" for the environment.

Other items of food, such as vegetables to grill on a separate barbecue for vegetarians, would probably come from veg-boxes or even respondents' gardens, though the lack of space for gardens and tough growing conditions right next to the sea exposed to the north wind means that opportunities to grow food in Spey Bay are more limited than people would prefer. Everything else would usually come from the Co-Op store in Fochabers. This chain of mini-markets is ubiquitous in northeastern Scotland. The Co-Operative Group formed in northern England in the nineteenth century out of the gradual association of various retail societies, based on the principle of cooperative management and rewarding members based on turnover rather than capital investment. It pioneered Fair Trade produce in its shops and its own brand Fair Trade wine and chocolate are particularly popular amongst respondents. While it might be tempting to see this promotion of ethical goods as simply an entrepreneurial response to the ethical living movement, therefore, in this case it also links with older efforts to improve business practices and the conditions of the working classes. The Fochabers Co-Op also stocks many local favourites including goods from a nearby bakery including butteries (an Aberdonian version of a croissant), morning rolls, Empire biscuits, pineapple tarts and snowballs. Despite this being a chain shop, the staff are thought of as friendly and helpful, which is probably also linked to its explicit promotion of ethical consumption and business practices.

Lévi-Strauss (1979) described the cooking of food as an analogy for the process of making culture. In this reading, cooking is a process of transformation and appropriation of natural products to human wants. In places

⁶⁷ Respondents would occasionally visit farmers' markets, of which there are an increasing number in this part of Scotland, but most are a substantial drive away and held on Saturday mornings once a month, so are not particularly convenient and can be quite expensive.

like Scotland where most people buy their food pre-packaged from 'faceless' supermarkets, it may be that the process of cooking is not only about 'culturing' these raw materials, but also resisting a feeling of alienation from most of the food that is available, much as Miller (1988; see also Carrier 1990) has observed for council flat tenants in London who claim a sense of personal style, and thus counter alienation, through re-fitting the kitchens they are assigned by the State. Sophie's family have an Organic small-holding in northern England, and she told me that while she did not have an ethical objection to eating meat, she thought it was better to eat locally produced, Organic meat, "where you know where it's come from", suggesting a need to overcome a sense of alienation from what she consumes, but also reminding us of the importance of knowledge in claim-making. As she says, it is pleasing to know the farmer who delivers one's vegetables,⁶⁸ the butcher who prepares sausages from his own recipe and the checkout staff in the local shop, just as it is reassuring to know that the Fair Trade wine one is drinking, while flown from Chile or Australia, did not at least exploit its producers.

British ethical goods, usually produced by small-scale businesses in rural areas, often set up by families or groups of friends, and driven by – and marketed on – particular values, seem to have had the 'taint' of capitalist production and exchange removed. The idea of ethical shopping thereby suggests a need to 'clean up' the process of shopping, echoing what Miller (1998) calls 'the discourse of shopping', according to which shopping is an individualistic and materialistic act. This discourse is implicit in the green movement's critique of consumption:

Here consumerism becomes the primary image for the destruction of the world. Consumption represents a violent rape of "mother earth's" natural resources through mindless destruction, such that commerce itself becomes subsumed by consumption. Indeed in this rhetoric the consumer is no longer the duped victim of capitalism, rather it is the consumers themselves who by their irresponsibility pillage the world and exhaust it in their insatiable desires, thereby conniving with capitalism as the means to their ends. (Miller 1998: 97; cf. Lovelock 2000: viii)

⁶⁸ However, she did report having a conversation with him about a custody battle for his children with his ex-wife when he delivered the boxes one night as "a bit awkward" – ethical shopping may create closer relationships between producers and consumers, but there is a limit to how close they should be and how much knowledge should be shared.

This characterisation is more lurid than anything that respondents ever said to me, though they do generally believe that supermarkets are unethical and are aware of the discourse of shopping. While ethical shopping suggests that standard shopping is unethical, it does not necessarily imply that shopping is inherently unethical. Most do not spend a great deal of money on 'luxuries' for themselves and none of them would be interested in spending their money on items of conspicuous consumption like widescreen televisions. Instead, 'treats' would be a trip abroad, an item of clothing, a weekend in Edinburgh or equipment related to a hobby such as a surfboard or climbing gear. On the whole, they do not spend lavishly, which is no doubt due to the fact that none of them earns enough to amass a great deal of disposable income, but also reflects a general lack of interest in ostentation.

Ethical shopping signals the two-way traffic between supply and demand, as food producers and retailers have come to incorporate ethical concerns into their marketing with increasing frequency in the UK in recent years, so that these goods come pre-ethicised and perhaps, in Carrier's (1990) terms, as ready-made possessions rather than commodities. In this way, the higher cost of Organic, Fair Trade or 'natural' goods is rationalised as a premium for the priceless quality of being ethical. This also points to the importance of choice in the building of the good life. For the respondents here, this is about ethical choices, but as Strathern has argued, choice is also a key component of English contemporary ideas about the individual. Indeed, choice, and particularly consumer choice, is one of the ideas that signals the movement from modern conceptions of the individual, nature and society towards 'postplural' ones. Key to this is her concept of the 'plasti-class', which represents the re-conceptualisation of English society as stratified by socio-economic class to one in which all are assumed to have access to the 'enabling technology [of] financial flexibility' (1992a: 142) with the concomitant view that any difference in perspective is reducible to consumer choice.

As noted in the Introduction, Foucault (1997: 285) suggested that during early Christianity, concern for the self became tainted with associations of self-love. He does not suggest a simple causal relationship between the two, but notes the contrast between Christian models of salvation through renunciation of the self (cf. Cannell 2006: 7) and the Classical ethical edict to care for, and thus know, oneself. In the context Foucault discusses, the work of renunciation is largely done by ascetic specialists, in contrast to the Protestant organisation of labour through the concept of the calling (Cannell 2006: 20; Weber 1992). We

have seen here that it is not always necessary to renounce the self to live an ethical life in the contemporary Western world. For respondents, ethical action is done to and by the self, but with others in mind; it is about the relations between individuals. Further, their ideas about how to live ethically, and the contrasts between these and other more utopian visions of community-building underline the point that even within small areas, people may draw upon rival ideas of renunciation and everyday ethics in structuring their lives.

Foucault's characterisation of Western morality resonates with what Strathern defines as the modernist view, and contrasts with the late twentieth-century in which the dominance of choice creates a sense that morality is personalised (1992a: 152). In this postplural epoch, she argues:

It becomes impossible to invoke selfishness with the same axiomatic condemnation [as in the modern epoch]. Attention to one's own interests is now a virtue. Moreover, since morality is within, then it must necessarily take the form that in turn typifies the individual: the capacity to exercise choice. ... The individual person who is the microcosm of (what was once external) convention is also the individual person who makes his or her own (what was once internal) choices. The individual does not just follow convention or have it imposed but "does" convention, that is, shows his or her capacity for morality, and thus makes explicit the fact that moral behaviour is contingent on the capacity for choice. But what the choice should be between, the norms and canons of behaviour, no longer need lie in institutions outside the individual. The person is his or her own reference point, a position that requires no negotiation or bargaining with others, least of all with a collective will. (1992a: 161-162)

Strathern argues that in the modern period, the environment was thought of as something that affected the individual organism and to which that organism responded. But now, as suggested by Miller's characterisation of green ideas about consumption, society and the individual are seen to be consuming nature by using up natural resources to feed technology and in the consumption of natural resources as food (Strathern 1992a: 173). This has clear relevance for the idea of ethical food shopping, an idea that has become increasingly mainstream since Strathern was writing. Strathern says that in late twentieth-century ideas, bodily functions like eating are no longer primarily associated with nature but with consumer choice. She argues that this goes along with a shift

away from modernist ideas in which nature is capable of combining the diversifying force of the individual and the relational capacity of society, and in which Nature stands as a separate entity that models relations and can be brought into merographic connection but which is also a separate self-regulating phenomenon. This is replaced in the postplural world by the sense that nature itself can be consumed and 'the conceptual collapse of the differences between nature and culture' so that it seems that 'Nature cannot survive without Cultural intervention' (1992a: 174). The implication of such a 'collapse' is, in Strathern's view, the cancellation of the grounds by which English people model relations and think about nature, a point I will return to in the next chapter and the Conclusion.

In the twenty-first century naturalness remains a fundamentally important value in environmentalist thinking and in the conceptualisation of certain foods as better or worse for the environment (James 1993). What has changed since the late twentieth-century, though, is the terminology of the environmental movement and its purchase on popular discourse in the UK as elsewhere (Grove-White 1993; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Milton 1993, 2002). In popular parlance, the 'green' movement and 'greenhouse effect' have been largely replaced with 'ethical living' and 'climate change'. Respondents talk about "being environmentally friendly" and "shopping with a conscience" by buying "happy meat" and "ethical foods". As such, goods are currently presented to the consumer as being better for the environment not only on the grounds of their naturalness but also their ethical status.

In his study of North London provision shopping published six years later than *After Nature*, Miller argues that, contrary to the discourse of shopping, for the participants in his study, 'shopping was hardly ever directed towards the person who was doing the shopping' and concludes:

Shopping is not therefore best understood as an individualistic or individualizing act related to the subjectivity of the shopper. Rather the act of buying goods is mainly directed at two forms of "otherness". The first of these expresses a relationship between the shopper and a particular other individual such as a child or partner, either present in the household, desired or imagined. The second of these is a relationship to a more general goal which transcends any immediate utility and is best understood as cosmological in that it takes the form of neither subject nor object but of the values to which people wish to dedicate themselves.

As we have seen, much of the food and drink respondents buy is consumed in communal settings at shared dinners and parties and has been bought with others in mind. As ethical shoppers, they also consider producers and retailers when making choices about what to consume. Miller's point that shopping for those in his study has a transcendent quality which reflects their values is clearly relevant to ethical shopping, as consumption decisions are self-conscious acts of ethical intention. While for Miller's respondents it was largely conjugal or familial love that characterised this transcendence, for the people in this study, it is the ethics of a good life, relationships with friends and the prevention of harm to the environment and food producers that motivates respondents' consumption decisions.

Miller's observations of shopping in North London illustrate the centrality of ideas of love, devotion and care in family life. In Euro-American societies, love is a grounding concept or 'meta-value' (Lambek 2008). It is readily invoked, holds enormous rhetorical and ethical weight and seems self-evident (Miller 1998: 31; see also Miller 2004; Schneider 1980). The key difference between Strathern's and Miller's theories about English ideas about shopping is the place of meta-value. Miller talks about love as a transcendent goal and cosmological value. By contrast, in Strathern's postplural world, morality is an expression of personal choice manifest as style, so that 'the individual is judged by no measure outside itself' (1992a: 152). There is an underlying implication in Strathern's analysis that the development of consumer choice is a bleak one, which clearly contrasts with respondents' sense that it can in fact enable a good life. In one sense, she seems to agree with Lambek's point about the contingency of ethical judgement when she says, 'moral behaviour is contingent on the capacity for choice' (1992a: 162). For her, what makes the postplural world different, though, is the collapse of stable reference points to inform those choices so that all that is left is the individual.

For Strathern, the tendency towards alimentary analogies in contemporary Euro-American ideas about individuals reflects a current sense that looking 'inside' the person/consumer only reveals what he has chosen to consume rather than any relation to an external context or influence. The question posed by the example of ethical shopping as described here – and how it relates to respondents' everyday lives and ethical claims more generally – is whether these people's choices to consume 'ethically' are construed as just another

example of personal style, or whether the ethics they are consuming are transcendent values existing outside of themselves.

Conclusion

Ethical shopping is a performance of an ethical identity: consumer choices mark the individual's values. For respondents, ethical consumption is not only a concern for the ethical treatment of producers and natural resources, but also for their own wellbeing, based on cultural ideas about the connections between food and constitution (see also Miller 2004: 38; James 1993).

In the Introduction I noted the curious status of freedom in Foucauldian models of ethics and suggested that Lambek's emphasis on conscious reflection is a fruitful way of thinking about the everyday practice and ethical claims of this group of people. Respondents' pursuit of good lives is enabled and structured by choice. This is clear from the way that they have chosen to move to a particular place to build these better lives just as in the decisions they make in the supermarket, how they dispose of rubbish or of what they eat. In attending to their varying consumption decisions in particular, for example in those who will and will not eat meat, we see such conscious reflection in practice. Respondents' consumption, while 'ethical' where possible, is not purely so – they constantly make judgements about when to buy Organic, Fair Trade, local, seasonal and when not to live up to these ideals.

In one sense, respondents' ideas about money and choice seem to be a manifestation of Strathern's ideas about consumer choice reflecting personalised morality, as ethical consumption is seen to reflect the consumer's ethics. The question remains, however, as to whether the assumption that morality or ethics can be expressed in consumer choice, whether buying Fair Trade food or adopting a dolphin, necessarily means that this morality emerges without reference to any external standard or meta-value. It may be that, instead of signifying the penetration of consumer choice into all levels of social life, ethical consumption is a means of subverting dominant ideas about contemporary western political economy towards their own ends for this group of people who have positioned themselves on the margins of the mainstream. As we have seen, even something as apparently mundane as provision shopping can be infused with ideas of transcendent value. In Spey Bay and

Moray shopping reflects love and feelings of responsibility towards friends, community, the environment and the people who have produced the goods that they buy. Since they deliberately structure their lives around relations with others and given the influence of environmentalist discourse, it is difficult to see that they locate such values only within the self.

For respondents, ethical living is practised by individuals who live amongst others and everyday life entails constant, sensitive negotiations between the needs of oneself and one's friends and neighbours. In this way, their experiences are similar to American Neopagans:

For Neopagans, personal autonomy is both a turning inward to one's own moral authority *and* the outward expressions of self that take place in relation to others and within a larger community. Neopagans constantly negotiate between the authority of the self and requirements for community life. The assumption that governs writing about contemporary moral life, namely that personalized religion necessarily means that each self is its "own moral universe," neglects to consider the importance of relational factors to contemporary moral agents. (Pike 2001a: 223; original emphasis)

As Pike suggests, ethical subjectivity concerns individuals, but it is formed in relationships that cross the boundaries of the self as individuals come into contact with others. This suggests, further, that although individualism is very important, respondents may not separate out self and other in a straightforward way. That is, ideas about individual discreteness may be employed at the level of rhetoric to individuate both specific persons and the community, but an image of this group of people as intimately connected and mutually dependent is just as important and just as likely to be invoked.

Images of and ideas about cetaceans have been a recurring theme in this ethnography. This reflects their significance and ubiquity in everyday life in this part of the world, for respondents in particular but also for other local people. As I have argued, the way in which people talk and think about them is an illuminating angle on how they think about themselves, their relationships with the environment, the natural world and each other, but they are also significant in presenting a particular model of ethical action and compelling moral responsibility. The Moray Firth dolphins are in a sense 'totemic' for this group of people, in that they mark out this place (a place, of course, once

organised along clan lines) and its inhabitants, they are a taboo object of consumption⁶⁹ and are venerated as special objects associated with transcendent or cosmological values. For Lévi-Strauss (1962: 16), totemism is the act of relating items that belong to the two fundamentally different 'series' of nature and culture. In paying close attention to respondents' relations with cetaceans, I have aimed to show that, while animals may in one sense belong to the category of 'nature' for these people, they not only have shifting meanings in themselves, but also demonstrate that items that seem to fall into one category can easily slip into another. In this sense, respondents' ideas about dolphins are not only metonymic but merographic – they link themselves and dolphins together in ways that illuminate their similarities while retaining the differences between them.

Respondents talked about fish much less than they talked about dolphins, and when they did it was often in connection with cetaceans, implying that they think of dolphins as consumers of fish before themselves. Clearly, concerns about the decline of the fishing industry and cetacean conservation overlap and their histories are closely linked. Similarly, both the change in attitudes to cetaceans as lucrative resources to be hunted and the tightening up of restrictions on fishing reflect contemporary shifts in Scottish economy which are evident in the new local industry of wildlife-watching as we saw in the Whiteness Head development in the previous chapter.

Both over-fishing and commercial whaling conjure up, for respondents and in wider British culture, images of humans exploiting and plundering natural resources in an unsustainable manner that implies fecklessness and greed in direct contrast to ideals of ethical consumption. Respondents lived through the targeted single-issue Green campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s including the effort to promote consumption of 'dolphin friendly' tuna. Given current concerns about sustainability, it is felt by most contemporary environmentalists that tuna consumption should generally be avoided altogether because it is so over-fished, but this example points again to the close connection between fish and cetaceans. The dolphin-friendly tuna campaign came about as a response to large-scale fishing methods such as using driftnets in which dolphins and other unintended species can be caught as 'bycatch'. As such, it paints a picture of humans acquiring food by means that not only deplete natural resources and

⁶⁹ Though of course this is not unusual, as most British people do not think of dolphins as appropriate for consumption.

put future food stocks at risk but also unintentionally kill valuable non-food species such as dolphins.

Dolphins are largely associated with nature and the natural world, though they seem to display a propensity towards 'social' behaviour that lends itself to anthropomorphism. When people 'interfere' in their lives, they seem, like the environment, to become at risk. In this way there is a parallel with the concerns expressed in the first chapter about the dangers of maternal bonding going awry. These parallels were not made explicitly by respondents, yet we glimpsed them in the case of the minke whale calf stranded in Fraserburgh harbour. One important point in this linkage is the status of nature. While its specificity shifts with usage, it remains as a grounding concept and source of goodness. It is something that can be interfered with or helped, implying that it is a self-regulating, self-evident entity that is both transcendent and vulnerable to human action.

We have seen here that ethical living for respondents is an experience of being an individual with particular values and qualities while living as part of a community of like-minded others. These versions of the good life are centred neither on the self nor on others, but on the proper relations between individuals, who are seen to hold responsibility for the choices they make in defining their lives. As we have seen, these others are not even necessarily other people, but may be other species or the ecological environment. They may also be unknown or anonymous, though at the same time the more personal experiences of shopping locally and buying products that are re-personalised are positively evaluated. In contrast to the idea that morality has become personalised, a matter of consumer choice, their lives are structured around transcendent values and they live in a network of relationships.

**PART THREE:
A STABLE ENVIRONMENT?**

*The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers, older
Than time counted by anxious worried women
Lying awake, calculating the future,
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future*

T.S. Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*

Climate Change

A crisis perceived as ecological contains all

Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature*

Respondents' everyday practice is inflected by a sense of crisis, though they do not straightforwardly 'reject' the mainstream world and focus much more on making a better future than recapturing a golden past. Nonetheless, for the people we have encountered in this ethnography, one of their most important shared beliefs is that the world is facing ecological disaster because of the cumulative effects of human activity, which is creating a surplus of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that will eventually bring about fundamental changes in weather systems with significant, and in many cases catastrophic, effects for habitats, animals and people. In the previous chapters I have focused particularly on their efforts around wildlife conservation, since this is the everyday and public manifestation of these concerns and because it gives their practice a more 'local' flavour. In this chapter I will explore whether they think of the world as mired in crisis and what it means to structure one's life, a life that is ostensibly a 'good' one, around a sense of potential catastrophe.

I have aimed to show the fertile connections that respondents make between different parts of social life in their claim-making and everyday practice. In this final chapter, I return to their interview responses, juxtaposing their ideas about time, nature and ethics in their own reproductive plans with their ideas about assisted conception. As noted in the Introduction, while anthropologists who work on kinship in the UK have engaged productively with Strathern's work, those who work on the natural world and environmentalism have been far more hesitant to do so (although see Berglund 1998). This strikes me as a missed opportunity, which I hope to have gone some small way to addressing here. The examples I present here suggest some of the ways that ideas about reproduction – once the most private and personal part of Western life – seem to reflect much wider ideas, including the status of nature and ethics in contemporary life.

In this chapter I will broaden my consideration of the importance of choice in these people's lives by discussing the plans of the women who work in the wildlife centre for future parenthood. These women are in a sense

representative of contemporary shifts in women's lives, having built careers that offer opportunities to fulfil their interests and which allow them economic self-sufficiency. That the average age at which British women give birth has been steadily increasing over the last generation or so reflects this shift in expectation. Having children is now seen as a conscious choice, something that should properly be planned for. Maternal, and to a slightly different extent paternal, responsibility is now expected to encompass not only the quality of the relationship between parent and child, but also contains an assumption that children will be born into the 'right' conditions. We shall see what those conditions are here and the kinds of deliberations that go into judging how and when this "stable environment", as Erin termed it, has been achieved. After considering respondents' plans for parenthood, I will turn to some additional examples of their ideas about assisted conception in order to reflect further on the role of choice and change in their ideas about reproduction, but also to consider in greater detail how nature works in their claims.

Crisis, change and choice in contemporary Scotland

Those living in marginal and remote places commonly express feelings of impending crisis threatening their community, livelihood or morality (Cohen 1982: 7) and there is a sense in Scottish public discourse that it, like other parts of western Europe and North America, is undergoing a population crisis alongside major changes in family structure. In the Introduction I presented some statistical data on Scotland's contemporary demography. Such data is published by the General Register Office on the Scottish Government's website and so is readily accessible. It is also regularly presented in the Scottish and British media, suggesting that this is a familiar issue, as well as the interchange between popular and media discourse.⁷⁰ Many respondents are aware of Scotland and the UK's declining fertility rates and perceive family structures to have changed.

⁷⁰ A selection of media reports reflecting Scottish demographic anxiety: Breakdown of family 'to blame for all society's ills', *The Times*, 5th April 2008; Minister's concern over rise in number of teenage pregnancies, *The Scotsman*, 31st October 2007; Couples losing out in NHS infertility treatment lottery, *The Guardian*, 30th August 2006; Putting off childbirth defies nature, claim doctors, *The Scotsman*, 16th September 2005; Infertility in Europe to double in 10 years, *The Times*, 21st June 2005; Economy 'needs more babies', BBC News Online, January 13th 2004.

When I talked to Fiona about the low birth rate in Scotland she speculated, like others, that this decline was partly due to increased infertility and partly to individuals choosing to have fewer children. On the former, she said, “I’m absolutely sure it’s biological, it’s environmental. You only have to see all these fish changing sex⁷¹ to see we’re making such a mess of our environment, that we’re also messing ourselves up genetically”. Jenny was similarly concerned about the presence of extraneous hormones in the environment, claiming that oestrogen in water was contributing to a process of physiological feminisation in men (cf. Cadbury 1997), which she linked to the widespread presence of polluting substances in the industrialised world. Pollution suggests specifically anthropogenic environmental degradation and the spectre of gender-bending fish is a particularly rich image for this, metonymic of ‘confused’ gender roles and barren nature. These unfortunate fish are no longer able to reproduce themselves as a direct result of human efforts to control their own fertility; they are the victims of individual choice. This is interesting since we have seen in previous chapters that respondents positively evaluate choice, in enabling them to live good lives and to put their ethics into practice.

The juxtaposition of ecology and demography was not uncommon in respondents’ interview responses. One example of this is Sophie’s response when I asked her whether she perceived a relation between contemporary lifestyles and the recent rise in infertility in Western societies:

I think if you start saying that it’s the way people live their lives it makes it sound a bit like, ‘you’re doing something evil’, it sounds like that. But I do think that, I s’pose I’m a little bit drawn by the fact that when I was at university we had a couple of classes which talked about fertility and we were talking about farm animals, the lecturer was then just bringing into play that actually humans are pretty crap at being fertile if you compare them to the farm animals and the fact that we breed those over the successive generations to be really fertile. And because there are maybe some things that don’t naturally select out because people who can have some help to allow fertility – maybe there is an element of that, that

⁷¹ A series of reports about fish ‘changing sex’ in response to the presence of female hormones from the contraceptive pill and HRT in water supplies have made headlines in recent years, reflecting a mixed anxiety about environmental pollution and infertility. See Fish stocks in danger as males change sex, *The Guardian*, 10th July 2004; ‘Gender-bender’ threat to marine life, BBC News Online, 17th July 2003. Although respondents’ talk was much more likely to be of marine mammals than fish, Willow also connected human reproduction with fish in her comment about egg donation in Chapter Two.

they're all going a bit down the scientific route. So I'd be a bit averse to say, to go down the line that says, 'oh well, we've almost asked for it', but I do think that there are some things that we can't get away from, that probably we are going to find it harder and harder. Then again, I suppose the other part would be from the ecologist's point of view, I might say, well, there's quite a lot of humans and maybe this is just the way it goes, maybe this is the way the cycle goes.

Here, Sophie not only brings together ecology, agriculture and demography, drawing on her own training as a graduate in agricultural and ecological sciences but, in her opening comment, demonstrates her awareness of the ethical implications of judging other people's choices. What is particularly interesting about this response is her reluctance to become pessimistic in predicting the future of human fertility, even though she simultaneously demonstrates her awareness that, compared to farm animals, there may be cause to make quite dire predictions for human fertility and that helping people who are infertile to conceive children may serve to reproduce problems that would otherwise "naturally select out".

Ultimately, Sophie refers to "the ecologist's point of view". This seems apposite not only because of the central importance of ecology to her education and current work but also because this seems to suggest an overarching framework. As such, she is able to suggest with greater optimism than her knowledge of agricultural science might at first suggest that the current decline in fertility in the UK is in fact only the current turn of "the circle". Sophie refers to ecological time as circular here and contrasts it again with the temporality of agricultural science, which she describes using the progressive linear imagery of "successive generations", in contrast to traditional images of the circular agricultural year. This implies not only the significance of ideas about time in people's perceptions of progress, change and crisis, but also perhaps that a cyclical notion of time may be employed to obviate a sense of crisis.⁷²

I have suggested that, in contrast to other British rural communities, and despite the importance of ideas about heritage and tradition in popular images of Scotland, respondents here are relatively uninterested in the past. In particular, they are not nostalgic nor do they express a desire to recapture a bygone halcyon age, and this is true of older as well as younger respondents. It

⁷² Unfortunately, most other respondents did not talk about time in such explicit terms, so I can only suggest that such differences may be pertinent to Sophie.

seems likely that environmentalism is a key influence in this, in its primary focus on the prevention of future disaster in the present. Most respondents have after all moved away from their past connections in order to build good lives. In everyday conversation, they talk about their lives in the present and tend not to plan particularly far ahead, though they do think about the future. The work they do is about arresting the effects of past and present human activity that is harmful to the environment, but they did not speak of this in terms of recreating a traditional era that is more 'in tune with nature'.

We saw in the first chapter that respondents perceive changes in traditional roles for men and women in parenthood, with the assumption of many that men or women may take on the primary care-giving role for a child. While gender equality and respect for the rights of same-sex couples are both important values for respondents in general, a few did voice concerns about the effects of contemporary shifts in 'traditional' roles. As noted, Jenny works as a social care manager and so is repeatedly exposed to 'dysfunctional' families in her working life. When talking with her about contemporary parenting styles in an interview, she identified a tension between the "expectations, hopes ... and dreams" and "reality" of parenthood today:

Jenny: I think [the parenting roles of women and men are] different but hopefully complementary. I think, in our society now, the whole thing is completely – I don't know, I'm probably jaundiced – I think the whole thing is very random, hit-and-miss, there are lots of ideals that people hold in their heads, that people don't know their own roles and identities anymore, in gender. So I think how very difficult it is for people who have all these pre-birth conceptions of what the idealised version of being a parent might be, and whether they're a drug addict or whether they're a middle-class citizen, people are gonna have expectations, hopes for that child, and dreams. Then the reality of, like, perhaps sleepless nights, and a change in their couple relationship if it's their first time – 'cos I think that's crucial – and the stresses on relationships generally that exist in society now, they all impact on that parenting role. So it's highly complicated, very difficult, very challenging, and within societal terms and within couple relationships, on your own emotional level also and also what people externally expect of you. I think there's all this layering that goes on. It's just so complicated now. It was probably a lot easier back, in some regards, back when there were defined gender roles.

KD: Do you think so?

Jenny: I do, yeah. I'm not saying that I think there were necessarily all good things about that, because I can see why society's evolved to the point we have – 'evolved' [is a] questionable word – but there's a huge breakdown in, a gap, I think, between expectation and what is reality for a lot of people.

Jenny expresses here a clear sense of change and even crisis in relationships between people, and especially families, in contemporary life. That she associates this particularly with changing gender roles is interesting, given that she is a woman in her early fifties with a full-time, demanding job, has two adult children whom she brought up by herself and provides her partner Paul with financial support while he is re-training as a counsellor, so in many ways represents precisely the kinds of changes that she is talking about.

Like Sophie, Jenny talks about time here, expressing her sense that society has "evolved" to a point that she characterises as "complicated" and multi-layered. Jenny's contention that "it was probably a lot easier ... back when there were defined gender roles" contrasts with what I have just said about respondents' general lack of nostalgia. However, she says traditional roles made life "easier", not better. Where she distinguishes the current period from previous ones is in a "breakdown", not in 'society' or 'the family', but in the "gap" between "expectation" and "reality".

It is worth recalling that Jenny was one of the respondents with the most 'liberal' views on surrogacy, and seemed to be largely unconcerned by the idea of paying a surrogate mother for her reproductive labour, which some critics have described as making motherhood 'male' (Morgan 1985). Her marked ambivalence about changes in contemporary family relationships here suggests that, while she is loathe to prescribe a universal morality, as we saw in Part One, she does have concerns about how people have children nowadays, which is, I have suggested, also an ethical question. Jenny's response here is not only morally concerned, but also sympathetic and in Chapter One she described her own experience of motherhood as combining difficulties and rewards. Her claims here offer another example of the kind of conscious reflection that goes into ethical claim-making, in that she is expressing the difficulty of balancing ideals or values – individuals' expectations and dreams for the ideal family –

with the realities of contemporary life, which are for her increasing complexity and a sometimes bewildering amount of choice.

The biological clock: Choice, time and money in planning parenthood

In the contemporary British milieu, debates about how people have children are commonplace, reflecting changes in demography, but also in reproductive and sexual practices. With increasing usage of contraception and the development of assisted conception, parenthood has come to be seen as being chosen, or even achieved (Franklin 1997; Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004; Rapp 1999a). By examining some of the deliberations that go into pre-parturient respondents' plans for future parenthood, I will consider how reproductive choice is linked to their expectations and their sense of control over their bodies, lives and futures in a context of demographic and ecological uncertainty, beginning with a reproductive crisis that happened during fieldwork.

Standing with me outside her back door in the biting January cold while her partner Mark watched football inside with Steve and Luke, Charlotte told me that she was going to see the doctor the next day to investigate whether she had polycystic ovary syndrome. She said, "It's like I've said I don't want children too many times and someone's said, 'ok', and now the door might have been shut, I want to have them". The previous summer, I had joined her and ten other friends celebrating her birthday in a pizza restaurant in Elgin. At the time, Heather, like Charlotte, lived in Fochabers with her partner and worked in the wildlife centre. She was just about to leave Moray to start a PhD in marine science at St. Andrew's University. While talking about her career plans, Heather suddenly brought up the subject of when she should start thinking about having a baby. She expressed the difficulty of juggling her enthusiasm about her studies, and the future job opportunities they might lead to, with her desire to become a mother. Willow said quite firmly that she could not imagine herself having a baby without being married first. I asked if this was to do with her religion. She said, "No, I just can't really see one [a baby] without the other [a husband]". She then turned to Charlotte and joked that she would probably be pregnant within the year. Charlotte laughed and admitted that she had been "feeling broody" for about six months. She and Mark were planning to have children and get married within the next few years. But, as noted in Chapter

Three, he ended the relationship the following spring.

Charlotte's main anxiety about her gynaecological problems was not her own health – after all, she was already living with the symptoms – but her future fertility. She expected to be able to make a free choice about when she would become a mother, and when her fertility came under question she felt that she had lost this freedom to choose. The experience of having a crisis in her assumed fertility and then losing the relationship with Mark caused a rupture in her planned life course, leading her to consider herself and her relationships with others in a new light. I had many conversations with her about this over the succeeding months and before she left Moray I interviewed her and asked about her plans for future parenthood. She said, "If I met somebody really quickly it might still be the plan for the next three years, but then comes the scary thought, what if there isn't? What if I haven't met anyone by the time I'm thirty? What do I do?"

While fortunately Charlotte's case is not exemplary of other respondents' experience, it does give voice to the kinds of considerations that go into planning parenthood as expressed by her and others in interviews. These include the assumption that parenthood is something expected, planned for and only appropriate within certain circumstances. Lauren said, "In a lot of ways now, I think parenthood is more of a choice and previously [it's] been more of an expectation". The specifics of reproductive decision-making reflect both demographic change and shifting gender roles in contemporary Scottish society and return us to many of the issues explored in previous chapters. The idea that one can make conscious choices about reproduction reflects expectations about individual autonomy, as well as ideas about the human capacity to control 'nature' and 'biology' (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991: 322). The assumption that parenthood is now chosen and planned rather than an inevitable occurrence suggests that parenthood is therefore properly a site of ethical deliberation. If women choose to become mothers, then they may feel an extra responsibility to ensure that they have properly considered the implications of that choice (Ginsburg 1989; Paxson 2004). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that surrogacy and other reproductive technologies are popularly treated as (bio)ethical issues in the UK.

Respondents believe that children should be born into a "stable environment". The stable environment symbolises the expectation that parents should have secure careers, some financial stability, be in a committed relationship and have fulfilled those aspirations such as travelling or undertaking

further study that they need to do before they are ready to “settle down”. Clearly implicated in this is the assumption that women are more likely to ‘delay’ childbirth in order to establish their careers while in their twenties and thirties. Respondents perceive a clear correlation between lower birth rates and the trend towards having children later in life. Respondents of all ages assumed that the decision of increasing numbers of women to have children later was due to professional aspiration and said that having a career was a valid expectation for young women.

When I asked Sophie if she felt it would be appropriate for the Scottish government to try to actively increase fertility levels in the country, she concluded that the best thing for public bodies to do was provide as much information as possible about risks to fertility so that women could make informed choices about when to get pregnant. Responding to the specific question of whether women might be offered incentives such as tax breaks to have children earlier in life, she said:

I suppose the variety of reasons why people might decide to delay having kids are so vast and it may be something that’s absolutely critical for them to feel like they could support a kid in the future. And in that case, they’re really trying to do something good and I always try and think about the child’s future as well. I don’t know what kind of, well I suppose then we’re talking about money, but it’s not just that, is it? It might be other things that they’re trying to gain experience of. I don’t think so, it goes against the grain a bit for me, that idea [of offering incentives].

Sophie’s point that, in trying to provide their future children with the right conditions to “support” them, women who have children later in life are “really trying to do something good” reiterates the point that planning for parenthood is an ethical, as well as a practical, choice. In Chapter Three I reported Sophie’s sense that, after some years moving around the country and travelling, Spey Bay was the place that had made her want to “settle down” and it seems that the considerations that go into making a home are similar to those that go into preparing oneself for having children. As such, although environmentalist ideas posit a time of climactic chaos and ecological crisis in the near future, this suggests that respondents like Sophie hold a concurrent idea of the future as a time of stability, in their personal lives if not in the wider environment.

I noted in Part One that Nina was typically more rigid than others in her ideas about the ethics of surrogacy. She studied at Edinburgh University and worked on a conservation project in the Pacific before getting involved in the work of the conservation charity in Spey Bay in 2007. At the time that I interviewed her, her older sister had recently given birth to her first child, which Nina described as making her feel “very broody”. She said:

I mean naturally, our bodies are ready to have children when we’re younger and I think women feel this [pressure to have a] career and succeed in the same way that men are and so having children is sort of put on the back-burner, I guess. I think being a young mum is good, I think it can be good for a child to have a young mum. I don’t think being an older mum is bad, that’s not what I’m saying, but I don’t think it’s a bad thing to have your children early and I think a lot people think it is, if you haven’t had a career first and had that sort of achievement in your life, that you’re doing something wrong.

As this suggests, despite the overarching discourse of choice and personal autonomy, having children at the ‘right’ time is actually a difficult balancing act.

I mentioned Charlotte’s concern that she might not have a child by the time she was thirty earlier. Other women I interviewed were similarly precise in the way they linked age to their plans for parenthood, explicitly linking choice and time, like Lauren:

Although I don’t actively plan to have kids, I now have a number of friends who are married and having children, and it does start to occur to you how many years it would take to have a child. Like, best – well, shortest – scenario, you decide today that you want to have a child, you find out you’re pregnant in months, if you’re lucky, and then, so, basically best scenario would be a year until you get [pregnant], until you have your child, and for most people that’s not the case, particularly with the amount of birth control that we’ve all had, sort of – forced down our throats is a little bit violent – but there’s all the reasons why you may not conceive as quickly as you might, and if you’re starting at a later age you might not conceive as quickly as you might so it does start to occur to me, that, ok so if I’m ready in two years and then it takes me three years to get pregnant, it’s suddenly five years away, which occurs to me now,

but not in a way like, 'I want a child at age thirty-one, therefore I should start'. I haven't reached that particular stage in my life.

For Lauren the decision to become a parent is one of deliberate timing that must be reckoned according to age and life-stage. As someone in a long-term relationship she also assumes that until she makes the decision to get pregnant, she will control her fertility through contraception, though there is an interesting ambivalence in her vivid suggestion – though she immediately corrects herself – that it is “forced down our throats”, bringing to mind Fiona's gender-bending fish. In contrast to the overarching discourse of choice, Lauren reminds us that one cannot precisely control the moment at which one will become pregnant, but only set the parameters within which it will ideally occur.

While the number of young male respondents I interviewed was lower than women, those I did speak to were somewhat more laidback about planning parenthood than women, including Jack, Lauren's partner. He drew on his older sister's experience of having an unplanned pregnancy in her late twenties and seemed unconvinced that fatherhood was something that needed a great deal of planning, despite the fact that at the time I interviewed him he was unemployed and Lauren was the sole breadwinner. He said: “maybe when [children] just come along it's the right time, and you can't plan and make it perfect. You just have to sort of deal with it”.

As well as reckoning the right time for parenthood, many women related their own plans for parenthood to the experience of family and friends, suggesting that having children is a stage in an expected life course and that individual lives follow roughly congruent, linear trajectories in line with other cultural ideas about progress (Becker 1994; Franklin 1997; Layne 1996, 2000; Strathern 1992a). Becker found through her study with infertile American couples that they experienced a crisis as they came to terms with the sense that their lives diverge from cultural norms and collective images of the human life course (1994: 386), and specifically the ‘core cultural construct ... that biological reproduction is an automatically occurring event, one that is part of the natural order of life’ (1994: 391). Some respondents expressed concern to me about people being under pressure to reproduce (see also Edwards 2000: 239). Sophie, for example, said, “I do think it's important that life – an individual's life – is not valued purely on whether they can reproduce or not”.

While respondents believe that they possess the autonomy to choose whether to have children, they are aware that this must be weighed against

specific expectations about nature, time, age and the connections between them. Willow summarised these points based on her own experience:

Well, it's difficult because I think our generation is quite lucky in some ways, 'cos we have got all these opportunities. I know that my mum said that when she was at uni., she had a choice of either doing nursing or teaching, and now we've got a lot more choice. So we've ... suddenly been opened up to all these possibilities, but at the same time, we're hemmed in by biology [laughs ironically], so it's really hard. We go and get educated and we think, 'well, hey, we want to do something with that now', but at the same time, you know, you have to start having kids at some point. But I can totally understand why people are having kids later. By the time my parents were my age they were married. I think they would be a bit shocked if I turned round and said I was getting married, you know, they'd be, 'oh, you're far too young!'

Sophie, who is a few years older than Willow, told me that when she was younger she had not envisaged herself having children, but had recently changed her mind:

I think my reasoning at the time would have been quite selfish and I would have said, it just gets in the way of my life, actually, and also I don't need kids to be happy. And it was a bit of rebelling from that which seems to be the norm. And I still feel that I don't need them to be happy, but I just feel like I've changed on the view of whether I could see it in the future and I can now, rather than just me thinking, oh no, I can't imagine such a tie, it would just be impossible, I couldn't imagine a future with that kind of responsibility as well. And, you know, feeling a bit like, well, I can hardly look after myself, I'm not sure I can look after any kids just the way it is. But I think I feel a bit more, now, that what *is* most important is being able to care for them and that's something I feel a bit more able to do. (Original emphasis)

Sophie suggests here that with age she has developed a greater capacity to be responsible for herself and others, implying that she is more mature and less "selfish". This indicates what she feels are the important qualities for a potential mother. It also implies *both* a sense of agency and a feeling that the desire, and

ability, to become a mother was something that came inevitably with age. In this sense, she echoes the tension between choice and expectation suggested by Willow.

I spent some time with Charlotte while she underwent a series of medical investigations into her gynaecological problems, which were later diagnosed as a combination of benign ovarian cysts and endometriosis. I got a sense from talking to her then that, while before she had been concerned about her fertility, the break-up with Mark had made the question of whether she might be infertile if not irrelevant then at least less pressing. This reflects a more general assumption that one cannot start to think about having children if one is not in a steady relationship. Eleanor reiterated this point when I discussed with her the current trend for British women to have children later in life than in previous generations:

I think the trouble is the expectation of a good relationship. And I think that the expectation is there without the practicalities. And when – perhaps, you know, thirty, forty years ago – people expected to get married and not have huge expectations of what they wanted to do afterwards, or that it was all going to be wonderful all the time. I think now there's the higher expectations so you're not quite sure if this is the person you *really* want to settle down with and anyway there are so many interesting things to do that you'd rather do than risk settling down. And then suddenly you find that you're in your thirties – certainly I was – so you've left it late. (Original emphasis)

Embedded in both Charlotte's experience and Eleanor's comments here is the expectation of romantic love between parents, despite their awareness that relationships will not necessarily last forever.⁷³ Eleanor identifies these contemporary expectations as both constraining and liberating, so that she actually describes settling down as a "risk". In settling down with the right partner, young people today, she suggests, face a conflict between an assumption that they will have the freedom to choose their partner and the

⁷³ For both, this is a personal awareness as Eleanor is divorced from the father of her children and Charlotte's parents divorced when she was a child. As noted in the Introduction, 18% of respondents, including Eleanor, are divorced themselves, though only a handful of them have divorced parents, so Charlotte's experience is relatively unusual. There was a general impression amongst respondents and others I spoke to in the area that Moray is a place that some (though not most) people come to after suffering personal crises such as divorce, yet I am not aware of statistical evidence to support this.

weight of their expectations for a relationship so perfect that is better than the many other “interesting things to do”. Once again, she indicates a tension between personal fulfilment and expectation in the decision to have children.

The importance of planning childbirth at the right stage in life reflects a sense that, just as women become fully women through motherhood (Davis-Floyd 1992; Ginsburg 1989; Martin 2001; Oakley 1986; Rich 1977; Rothman 1989; Wolf 2001), the decision to have a child is a milestone of adulthood. Paul found that a new sense of responsibility coloured his experience of fatherhood: “Getting married was like one step on the maturity ladder, actually having a child, it’s like a reality-check and I knew I needed to take some responsibility for the life and chop my hair off and get a job, get a house, and all that. It changed me a lot”. Instead of changing before his first child arrived, Paul realised that he “needed to take some responsibility” once the child was born. This contrasts with the assumption here of younger, pre-parturient women that they will have everything in place *before* they have a child. They want to be adults before they become parents rather than as a result of having children. Many expressed a sense that this was a generational shift and Lauren suggested that people are “probably allowed to be children longer, nowadays”. Younger respondents expect to be able to make their own decisions about when they became parents, not only because of a sense of autonomy, but also because they feel that one should be a responsible adult in order to become a responsible parent.

One important aspect of the stable environment, as suggested by Sophie earlier, is solvency, which Lauren acknowledged when I first asked her if she planned to become a mother, replying, “Financially? Clearly, no!” Laughing ironically, she explained, “I live at the bottom of my overdraft”. Financial stability is a desired and accepted pre-parenthood goal for respondents, enabling responsible parenting (Clarke 2004; Paxson 2004). While house prices and the general cost of living are lower in northeast Scotland than much of the rest of Britain, younger respondents envisaged financial strains when they did come to settle down.⁷⁴ They felt that they should therefore build their careers not only out of personal fulfilment, but also to ensure a certain earning capacity in order to provide for their future dependants. Creating a stable environment is seen to take time and money and children are assumed to need certain things that cost money; if these are absent one risks being labelled a ‘bad’ parent. And yet, while a solid career might be necessary for a young middle-class woman

⁷⁴ It is worth remembering here that my fieldwork ended around a year before there were any major signs of the global recession that took hold in 2008.

wanting to be a 'good' mother, this assumption will be overturned once she becomes a mother because of the expectation that she will provide most of the childcare.

Amy, who is in her early thirties, spent many years travelling and working in conservation projects around the world and tried various different occupations before starting her current job in the wildlife centre. While she clearly enjoyed this exciting phase of her life, she also felt that her decision to have this lifestyle meant she might have missed out on some of the positive aspects of settling down:

I think people need to do what they need to do. But then again, I feel it's a bit of a shame as well, 'cos it's like, I've enjoyed travelling and I think it's taken me a while to get the job I want, but then, kind of, I do think it might have been nicer if I'd settled down maybe a couple of years ago ... But then, it's just kind of what happens in your life.

Yeah, I think when I do have children, I think I'll be ready for them, 'cos I have done what I've wanted to do beforehand, instead of kind of, 'oh, I'll have children' then 'oh my god, but I still haven't done stuff'. 'Cos I have got one friend of mine who, I guess theirs was an unplanned pregnancy and I think, they're not regretting having the child, but I think they're regretting giving up a bit of their freedom.

Like many of her other responses, Amy's comments here are markedly equivocal. Clearly, she can identify both pros and cons to settling earlier and later in life. This implies once again the tension expressed by Willow between having the freedom to choose to go travelling and so on and the assumption that having children is a necessary and inevitable life event. Implicit in Amy's comments also is the sense that parenthood and settling down will entail a loss of freedom (see also Miller 2004: 37). Based on her own experience of motherhood, Erin confirmed this:

I'd lie if I didn't say that there are sacrifices, there are compromises, that come with being a parent and they sometimes can be really, really difficult and costly. They can be costly. I mean, you know, it's not life and death, but sometimes you feel that, whether it's the old you that you don't recognise so much any more, you know, as you change and as you

evolve and become a parent, there are times when you sort of get glimpses of, if I wasn't a parent, I might be doing this, or I might take this opportunity or that opportunity.

As we saw in Chapter Two, many respondents associate motherhood with self-sacrifice or abnegation. Lambek's theory of sacrifice as a 'pure' form of beginning in which intention is cast forward (2007: 30) is congruent with the expectation that motherhood should be carefully planned because of the metaphorical death of the mother's previous sense of self that Erin describes here. As Lambek makes clear, the ritual sacrifices he discusses are literal acts, while here we are dealing with the metaphorical relationship between motherhood and self-sacrifice. This returns us to Miller's (1998) work on the structural congruence between food shopping in North London and ritual sacrifice. Sacrifice marks the intention to destroy and consume that which has been so painstakingly produced, whether the first harvest or the firstborn child. Miller argues that shopping, like sacrifice, 'refers back to all the labour that has gone into working for the money to be spent, which may carry with it the resentments, the achievements and a host of other experiences of work' (1998: 94). This is particularly interesting here given the similarly sacrificial elements of the work that these women who work in the wildlife centre do.

The symbol of the stable environment in planning parenthood condenses both the sacrificial and rewarding aspects of respondents' expectations for parenthood. It contains tensions and contradictions in its own fabric and reveals much about respondents' ideas about what parenthood means and entails. The stable environment symbolises a point at which the main caregiver, which they assume will be the mother, will reorient her focus, reassess her sense of self and rethink her priorities. It suggests that, before becoming parents, both men and women will pursue projects of self-fulfilment and actualisation, which are then re-routed into their child (see also Miller 2004). This points once again to the importance of thinking of others in these people's moral values and in parenthood and reproduction, but also the tacit recognition that their efforts to build good lives are *both* self-interested and other-oriented. The assumption that parenthood is chosen or controlled nowadays implies that how and when one has children is an ethical judgement. In contrast to popular discourse that links greater choice with individualism and consumerism, the act of choosing to become a parent is here linked with a new orientation of the self towards others' needs, though, as we saw in Chapter Two, respondents also feel that having a

child of one's own is, at the same time, inherently self-interested.

Messing with nature

The important link between time and reproduction was also evident when I talked with respondents about assisted conception and particularly their ideas about older women using assisted conception to have children. In the long, hot summer of 2006, the story of Patti Farrant, the oldest woman to give birth in Britain, broke in the British press.⁷⁵ This case provided a useful referent for my questions about this subject, which is an increasingly debated issue in Britain with its ageing population and assisted conception pushing the limits of when women can conceive children ever higher. Despite their general reluctance to prescribe ethics, many respondents were particularly concerned about women using assisted conception to have children late in life and this was linked with their ideas about nature and time.

We saw Lauren's own keen sense of the importance of age in motherhood earlier. When talking about older mothers using assisted conception to conceive children later in life she referred to nature as a limiting factor:

[T]here's half of me that's tempted to draw a very hard line and say, at some point, when you're making choices not to have children – I don't really like that medical science is pushing us beyond sort of natural human boundaries as far as it is. ... I s'pose to some extent, there have to be some lines that you let nature take its course, and, you know, as hard as it is for the woman who doesn't want, choose to have a child 'til she's fifty, there are some natural limits there and there are kind of reasons why your body doesn't want you to have a child when you're fifty, and that partially is because you'll be sixty-five when your child's fifteen and, you know, you are pushing those situations. The sticky point – that men can still conceive at that point in time, so why are we, you know, why can you say that a man can do it but a woman can't? But that,

⁷⁵ For examples of the varied media coverage of this story, see Doctor, 63, is Pregnant, *The Sun*, May 4th 2006; World exclusive: the first pictures of Britain's oldest mum, *Daily Mail* July 8th 2006; Critics attack 'absurd and undignified' pensioner who gave birth aged 62, *The Scotsman*, July 9th 2006; Too old to be a mother at 62? Not if you have a nice house, good looks and a husband who had an unhappy childhood, *The Guardian*, July 13th 2006.

that's the way, I mean, I hate to say it but that's the way it is, is how I think I feel and I think that I quite like that there are some things, I s'pose, that are just, 'that's the way it is'.

Here, Lauren employs nature in various ways to delimit what are appropriate reproductive choices and seems reassured that she can apprehend nature's "limits" and "boundaries" to do so. In this way her response here is reminiscent of Paul's contention in Chapter One that the law should be able to enforce a surrogate mother's promise to waive her parental rights.

Lauren's colleagues, Amy and Sophie, also linked appropriate age for childbirth with their particular conceptions of what is natural and noted the difference in length between men and women's reproductive lives:

Amy: [A]ge is a really tricky one. If they have left it too late, I think sometimes, it's nature telling you that, yeah, you have left it too late. And I, it's really hard, 'cos you want, 'cos it's a big thing, I think, for woman to have children and if they just decide later on then it's kind of like, why shouldn't they have a child? But I think you kind of have to respect nature sometimes as well.

Sophie: Personally, although it goes right against some of my right-on views, I think that that *is* nature, and – unless this is some medical condition which has meant that menopause has come in way earlier in life, if it's natural – no, I don't think there should be any intervention then, especially when there are kids who need homes and all those things. But that's quite a personal view. (Original emphasis)

Amy later told me that she felt uncomfortable with her own censoriousness and it is interesting to note both her and Sophie's discomfort with their views. Sophie suggests that limiting women's choice to have a child after menopause is not "right-on", but it is natural. She experiences a conflict between what she feels is right according to her political self-positioning and what is right according to her conceptions of naturalness. For all three women, this is a clear example of the contingent judgements that go into working out what is ethical in the tricky world of assisted conception. Each balances her idea that men and women should have reproductive equality against her concept of nature and ultimately nature wins out as the meta-value that should be "respected".

In his study of English couples' attitudes to assisted conception, Hirsch (1993: 68) observed that his interviewees accepted the use of these techniques if they could be framed as 'improving upon' or 'helping' nature, as opposed to interfering with it. In talking about assisted conception, Andrew experienced a conflict between sympathy for infertile couples' 'natural' desire to have a child and his concern that in achieving this, science might usurp nature:

I think it's really difficult because I think, in our society, or the human race as a whole, we've evolved beyond evolution. The fact that now, people who naturally can't conceive can now conceive with science. There's huge pressure on this planet in terms of resources for a number of people and so one part of me says, 'if you can't do it naturally, you shouldn't do it at all'. On the other hand, I can totally, entirely understand on an individual level that if you want a kid then you're gonna do everything that you can possibly do to have that child.

Paul echoed Andrew's concerns about scientific progress when I asked him about his views on assisted conception, saying, "I don't think we should necessarily be moving away from nature all the time into some world of science. It just seems the wrong way". Both suggest that, with assisted conception, science may shift from being a tool for understanding and working with nature towards conquering it and diverging from it into, they imply, unknown territory. Key to this perception, also, is a sense of linear temporal progress. Both responses here are quite reminiscent of those collected by Hirsch in England. In particular, we see here not only ideas about protecting nature from science and technology, but also these people's concerns about the proper relationship between individuals and 'society'. This is expressed most clearly in the tension Andrew identifies between sympathy for infertile couples and preventing runaway "evolution" (cf. Hirsch 1993: 69).

When I asked Nina about assisted conception, she said she would "draw the line at people getting picky", such as foetal sex selection or the creation of 'designer babies', explaining that: "[I]t's just playing god, really, and I don't think it's right. I think you should be satisfied with what you get and I think giving them the gift of a child should be enough. ... I mean, if they can't have children, fine, give them help, but then don't start messing with nature more than you already have done". Luke was also concerned about people "messing with nature":

Well, on the one hand, you're inclined to say, 'you shouldn't cheat nature' and 'this is Frankenscience' and 'you can't mess around with the natural order of things', but then on the other hand, we have been messing around with science and the human body and the natural order for a while now and who draws the line at where we stop? And it opens up a whole range of issues on things like cloning, stem cell treatment, who's prepared to be the moral arbiter? I don't think I am [laughs ironically].

... I think people should have as much medical assistance as they need. I don't think you can, but again for me, it comes down to the issue of who decides, I think, or I s'pose there are medical practitioners who would have the final say, but at what point do they start playing god? I think that would be my worry.

Nina and Luke used the phrase 'playing god' to suggest that those who get too intimately involved in determining the particularities of birth and conception are claiming a power which is much greater than them and which should not be awarded to any one individual.

Luke seems in two minds about humans "messing" with nature and biology, but is clearly concerned about who takes the role of "moral arbiter" in deciding how far this should be allowed. He suggests that these decisions may be too important to be trusted to clinicians, as they may end up having control over decisions of life and death, or "playing god". Luke's attitude to nature here, as elsewhere, is more nuanced than Nina's. His suggestion that humans have been "messing around with science and the human body and the natural order for a while now" is somewhat ambiguous. It suggests on the one hand that this "messing" has gone on too long and should be stopped, but on the other hand that nothing catastrophic has happened since people started so perhaps it is not as dangerous as we might fear. Luke's concern about finding a suitable "moral arbiter" suggests he feels a lack formal ordinance on this ethical issue, yet in both his and Nina's responses, as in Lauren, Amy and Sophie's ideas about older mothers and Paul and Andrew's claims about assisted conception, nature remains a constant reference point, however contingently each individual uses the term.

At the risk of repetition, let me recapitulate, then, some of the key phrases from the quotes in this section. In relation to the question of assisted conception

for older women, Amy describes the menopause as “nature telling you ... you have left it too late” and argues that, “you kind of have to respect nature sometimes”. Sophie similarly describes women’s decreasing fertility with age as “nature” and also describes a medical condition of premature menopause as “natural”, and implies that because it is natural, if a woman seeks assisted conception because she has had an early menopause then that is acceptable. This suggests that Amy and Sophie both have a clear sense of what is natural and unnatural, yet they are also keenly aware of the fact that what is natural may not always be fair in terms of their political views. In a sense, then, they point to nature as an unknowable force whose limits can be discerned but whose logic might be somewhat mysterious. This is perhaps why Sophie makes a further reference to the ethical responsibility of people to care for “kids who need homes” to shore up her “personal view” that assistance for older women is wrong.

Andrew also refers to the wider picture, in terms of the “huge pressure” on global resources, as grounds for the view that, “if you can’t do it naturally, you shouldn’t do it at all”. He refers to nature in his formulation, “people who naturally can’t conceive can now conceive with science”, which as noted pits nature and science in dichotomous relation, but also grounds his claim that humans have “evolved beyond evolution”. Lauren similarly claims that “medical science is pushing us beyond sort of natural human boundaries” and describes “natural limits” and letting “nature take its course”. Paul meanwhile describes scientific ‘progress’ as “moving away from nature” and Nina talks about preventing people from “messing with nature”. Amy, Sophie, Lauren and Andrew’s responses are marked by equivocation, as they contrast their knowledge and ‘respect’ for nature with ‘social’ trends and expectations. Luke also does this, contrasting a more ‘hard-line’ view that emphasises “the natural order” against a more ‘liberal’ view that allows for people to have “medical assistance”.

Each of these respondents have slightly different ideas of what nature is, how far it should be “messed” with and what the consequences of ‘interfering’ with it might be. What they hold in common, though, is the sense that nature can be distinguished and characterised, but also that it should be respected and heeded. They also refer to it as if it were a self-regulating whole with discernable limits, boundaries and order, suggesting a mysterious and transcendent essence. Using nature as a reference point here shows the close relationship between ethics and nature in working out acceptable biomedical practice. As

suggested by the dilemma faced by Lauren, Sophie and Amy in the inequality between women's and men's 'natural' reproductive capacities, nature is what must ultimately provide guidance or in Luke's terms act as the "moral arbiter". Despite the fact that these three women, who in some sense represent the successes of feminism as independent, professional and successful women, feel that it is unfair that men can usually conceive children later in life than women, in arguing against medical assistance for older women, they acquiesce to nature and prioritise what they perceive to be the more important need to preserve and protect it from excessive interference.

Conclusion

Respondents expect that young women will want to take advantage of the opportunities that are similarly available to young men, and that this will probably entail 'delaying' parenthood. The pre-parturient women I interviewed expect to be able to choose when and how to become pregnant, just as they feel they can control their fertility by using contraception. Their reproductive capacities, bodies and lives are properly subject to their own control and are an effect of their decision-making capacities. All this implies a strong sense of personal agency in their visions of their own lives, yet because of the sense that pregnancy and childbirth must be fitted into women's careers, as they will be the ones whose bodies and health are affected by it, and the assumption that they need male partners' support to help them achieve this, there remains the sense that women – unlike men, whose reproductive capacities are theoretically endless – are ultimately "hemmed in by biology", as Willow put it. Parenthood comes within a certain timeframe on an expected, universal life course, so the freedom to choose that they appear to possess is in fact limited. This is symbolised in the metaphor of the 'biological clock', which suggests both the ability to plan and control on the one hand *and* the inevitability of time's passage and biological imperative on the other.

The creation of a stable environment signifies an individual's readiness to become a parent, and part of this for women is a tacit acceptance that once they become mothers, their lives as individuals will be eclipsed by their children's needs. The amount of thought and control that is expected to go into becoming a parent, from creating a stable environment, to designing a birth-plan to using

contraceptives, suggests that by choosing to become mothers, women exercise their agency in the knowledge of the kind of changes that this new status will bring about. The concept of 'agency' has recently been criticised for tautologously reproducing particular ideas of what freedom is (Laidlaw 2002; Mahmood 2005). The women here are well-educated, professional, middle-class and financially independent, in many ways the 'daughters of feminism', but seem, by choosing to become mothers, to be submitting to normative ideas of what motherhood is and how it should affect their lives. Yet to see this as a straightforward case of self-subjection would be to miss the subtler picture of what is happening here. Instead, I have aimed to illustrate the tension between ideas of personal autonomy and freedom to choose as responsible adults on the one hand and biological imperatives and cultural expectations on the other. This has an added layer here in that these women are already building good lives and fashioning themselves as ethical people, which also entails certain sacrifices.

In the previous chapter, I showed how choice in many ways makes respondents' lives as ethical people possible. Here, I have presented some of their more ambivalent ideas about choice, from Jenny and Eleanor's ideas about the differences between expectation and reality for parents and couples today, to Willow's sense of being free to choose yet "hemmed in by biology" to Amy's uncertainty about whether she has made the right choice in postponing settling down until her thirties. Just as in Part One we saw respondents making judgements about the ethics of surrogacy by balancing values, we have seen here the kinds of values, ideals and norms that inform the choice to have children, whether 'naturally', as respondents here seem to assume they will have theirs, or through assisted conception.

I have emphasised the point that nature has many meanings for this group of people, as well as its specifically ethical flavour. Respondents' ideas about nature are evidently ethically inflected, and nature is a source of goodness in their thinking, yet it is not only good. That is, as we have seen in their ideas about dolphins and here in the inequalities of women and men's natural reproductive capacities, it may also be unfair, limiting and constraining. After all, while dolphins may signify much that is good, respondents would certainly not suggest that humans should live like dolphins or any other wild animal; clearly their version of nature is not a sanitised one.

Lambek (2008) distinguishes between choice and judgement in contemporary capitalist cultures, noting that the former is linked with economics

and commensurable values while the latter is more appropriate to the balancing of incommensurable ethical virtues. In emphasising judgement in ethical practice, he explicitly rejects obligation, since he says that this obscures the contingency of ethical practice: 'Practice emerges through evaluation, the sizing up and fitting of action to circumstance. Yet judgment selects among alternatives not by means of a binary logic of exclusive acceptance or rejection but by balancing among qualities' (2008: 137). Here, we have seen the importance of choice and judgement in these people's thinking and practice and the difficult balancing acts and ambivalences that believing in the freedom to choose necessitates.

A sense of time and the contemporary epoch are clearly implicated in these ideas about choice and nature and, specifically, in the question of whether respondents perceive themselves to be in a world in crisis. We have seen in this and other chapters that they are concerned about changes in the world, and this is clearest in their thinking about the environment. Bloch (1992: 90) has described Christian millenarianists abandoning sexual and agricultural reproduction in recognition of the futility of earthly concerns prior to the Second Coming. Despite the catastrophic implications of ecological crisis, as well as their awareness of changing demographics, respondents here have not given up their everyday efforts to arrest climate change nor have they decided not to have children. They attribute this to biological imperatives and their sense that humans share a progressive life course. However, this also reflects the fact that, unlike millenarianists, worldly crisis is not mitigated for them by heavenly salvation. While nature is transcendent for them it is also earthly, so any attempt to prevent environmental catastrophe can only be done 'in' nature, since this is the victim of environmental damage as well as the source of future salvation.

Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 143) have shown that in the natural as well as the social sciences it is now accepted that there are many different types of time and that any distinction between 'natural time' and 'social time' is outdated and misleading. While modernity was associated with clock-time, along with the goals of mastery over nature and industrialised work patterns, the contemporary age is characterised by two further experiences of time as simultaneously imperceptibly fast, 'instantaneous time', and unimaginably slow, 'glacial time' (1998: 147). Glacial time is associated with environmentalist conceptions of the world, which also posit a planetary conception of space and appeals to a global citizenship (see also Franklin et al 2000). A sense of time as glacial and culture as global is necessary, Macnaghten and Urry argue, to create the 'imagined

community' that impels people to act in favour of the environment (1998: 152). As such, the environment is no longer an 'other' waiting to be mastered, but more like an intrinsic part of human experience. This has various effects including reinforcing the sense that environmental disasters affect us all; with a longer sense of time this becomes a matter of inheritance for future generations as well as a global commons. It also suggests fluidity in individuals' and communities' attachment to specific places. These ideas have clear relevance for the people we have met in this ethnography as can be seen in the careful planning that they put into their future children's lives and in their sense that cultivating relationship of care can produce real attachments to other people, places and the environment.

Strathern's analysis in *After Nature* is structured around how nature and kinship look in different 'epochs', which are inevitably experienced retrospectively and as crises. In the postplural epoch, she says, this crisis relates to a sense that there is 'less' nature in the world (1992a: 37), which is linked as we saw in the previous chapter with the idea that nature is now, like everything else, inextricably linked with choice and visible only as personal style (Strathern 1992a: 177). Epochs, for Strathern are 'post-eventual' and thus always 'on the brink of collapse', 'for what [the epoch] gathers together in its own apprehension of the world is all those antecedent ideas ... that bring one to the present moment but not beyond' (1992a: 190). As I have already emphasised, Strathern's ideas are inferences based on a 'zeitnosis' of the late twentieth century rather than an empirical description:

Of course, Nature does not "really" disappear. On the contrary, late twentieth-century culture renders it more and more evident. ... But postmodern aesthetics and Thatcherism alike most interestingly pull out from under our feet the grounding or reason for these constructs, and thus an anterior assumption about the conditions on which we so freely play. They take from each its former context in the other. The sense is that context itself has gone. (Strathern 1992a: 195)

Strathern's crucial claim about nature in the postplural epoch is that its 'grounding function' has 'disappeared' and she explicitly links this with environmentalist ideas: '[Nature] no longer provides a model or analogy for the very idea of context. With the destabilising of relation, context and grounding, it is no surprise that the present crisis (epoch) appears an ecological one. We are

challenged to imagine neither intrinsic forms nor self-regulating systems' (1992a: 195).

In the last section of this chapter we have seen, perhaps most forcefully, the potency of nature as a grounding concept in respondents' claims. But my aim has been to show throughout this and the preceding chapters that, in the post-Thatcher early twenty-first century 'epoch' of ethical living and globalised morality that these people live in, nature has not only not disappeared or been flattened, but continues to have a grounding function as well as acting as a transcendent meta-value. Indeed, it seems that their ideas contrast specifically with the notion that nature has lost its ability to provide context. This is not to suggest that ideas about nature now are exactly the same as they were in the late twentieth century or that we have 'returned' to modernist or even pre-modern ideas of nature. What it does suggest, though, is the relevance, power and compulsion of nature in these people's thinking and practice. The idea of nature as sublime is an established one in British thinking, but in these chapters we see a model of nature that is not only sublime, but also transcendent. Using nature in order to ground particular claims entails referring to a realm beyond humanity and for this reason it is perhaps unsurprising that many respondents draw on religious concepts when talking about nature. Respondents' belief that nature has its own order, limits and boundaries suggests that it is something that exists independently of humans. As such, when they refer to nature as a transcendent meta-value, they contest the suggestion that it is a cultural construction or product of human thought.

Surrogacy and the Good Life in Scotland

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning:
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.

T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

Has nature lost its capacity to provide context? Can it no longer ground claims, model relations or reproduce norms? That questions about nature are ones with epistemological, existential and cosmological (amongst other) ramifications demonstrates once more its potency. One of my main aims here has been to give an ethnographic representation of the meanings, value and status of this sticky subject for a group of people living in rural Scotland. Through their claims about the ethics of surrogacy and the ethical choices that structure and inform their everyday lives, we have seen nature's polysemy and its capacity to ground claims, inform knowledge, model behaviour and reproduce norms. I have also argued that it is precisely nature's ability to shape-shift that strengthens, rather than weakens, the concept. A further reason for nature's contemporary power that has emerged here is its close association with ethics.

In building good lives and making ethical claims, respondents in this study draw on nature in contingent and shifting ways that reveal the concept's workings and power. This is one facet of the conscious reflection that goes into ethical judgement. This weighing up and balancing of values alongside personal and relational commitments and beliefs is the second important phenomenon I have aimed to capture here. I have shown that, in their practice and claims,

respondents balance and prioritise values and meta-values and negotiate cultural axioms and dichotomies in order to try and preserve certain principles and respond appropriately and logically to their ethical and relational obligations. It is significant that respondents' nuanced approaches to ethical judgement contrast with public and legal representations of surrogacy, not least since those representations were based on expert interpretation of public opinion. We have also seen the realities of ethical work as well as the caring labour that goes into being an ethical person and how this overlaps for these people with ideas about belonging, community, family and identity. These efforts to live a good life demonstrate the difficulty of separating out self and other in such projects, with consequences for how we think about morality, choice and freedom in the contemporary Western world.

Connecting up a group of people's ideas about an 'extraordinary' subject like surrogacy with their everyday choices, practices and experiences is a response to the point that kinship itself models relations and provides ways for thinking about connections. We have seen that in talking about surrogacy, respondents draw on other 'domains' of life. In particular, I have sought to show here the sophisticated way in which they handle 'given' and 'made' knowledge and I have repeatedly returned to questions of belonging. Belonging is clearly relevant to the ethics of surrogacy but is also a pressing concern for these people in their everyday lives, not least (although not only) because most of them are migrants to the area. We have seen how a cultural model that posits belonging as the interplay between the given and made structures morality, creates and breaks connections and sets up boundaries. One recurring response to the questions of belonging posited here has been respondents' sense that it can be cultivated. These efforts in many ways mirror their work on behalf of the natural world. Cultivating a relationship of care with other people, with one's home or with the natural world not only creates emotional attachments, but also reproduces moral responsibilities and ethical imperatives to continue acting in the same vein.

Feeling for nature

The ethnography I have presented here speaks directly to Strathern's work in *After Nature*, as is clear from the various engagements I have made with

this seminal text in the preceding chapters. Perhaps the most far-reaching implication of the idea that contemporary English society is after nature is that nature no longer provides a model for relations through the making of merographic connections. As Strathern puts it, 'All the English have lost is what they once had, which was the facility for drawing partial analogies between different domains of social life' (1992a: 142). In the modernist epoch, Strathern argues, nature, along with the other key concepts of individual and society, provided the means for making the connections that facilitated understanding and communication, reproduced diversity and generated progress. Nature provided, above all, a model of reproduction, and what it reproduced were relations. As such, postplural nostalgia is 'for a relational view of the world' (1992a: 189, emphasis omitted) that encompasses the connections people make at all levels.

In order to be 'after', nature must lose its relational facility, its capacity to model merographic connections. In this ethnography we have seen that respondents use nature merographically, connecting it up with different domains of social life in a manner that concurrently preserves its individual character and that of the domains to which it is connected. This was perhaps most obvious in Chapter Six, in which they spoke of "messing with" nature, but was also present in their ideas about how best to interact with, work upon and care for the natural world in Part Two and in their ideas about how nature is implicated in kinship and reproduction.

Throughout the chapters, I have described various aspects of respondents' relationships with dolphins and whales as one important angle on how respondents think about nature, belonging and ethics. Cetaceans provide the grounds for relationships with people and place, an impetus for action and a model for ethical subjectivities. As such, it is worth remembering the real effects of this tropic mode of thought: 'while culture is a world of the imagination, it is not a fantasy one whose power lies in the impossibility of realisation. On the contrary, it has its constraints and its effects on how people act, react and conceptualise what is going on around them: *it is the way people imagine things really are*' (Strathern 1992b: 3, emphasis added; cf. Lévi-Strauss 1962: 102).

I noted respondents' reluctance at being prescriptive in their ideas about surrogacy in the Introduction and Part One. One clear way in which nature's relationality has emerged in this ethnography is in the way respondents speak about ethical subjects. Surrogacy involves other people, who cannot be divorced from their own contexts, commitments and moral values. While their motives

can be guessed at, respondents recognise that, as they do not know anyone involved in a surrogacy arrangement, everything they say about the practice is inherently speculative and abstracted from everyday life. This equivocation suggests at once the importance of empathy in claim-making for these people, which resonates with popular ideas about tolerance, individuality and diversity as particularly British traits. The importance of empathy also points to the close relationship between ethics and emotion. We saw this in their ideas about maternal bonding and their fears for surrogate mothers' emotional resilience. We have also seen it in their everyday practice, in the way that people's responsibilities towards their environment are tied up with emotional attachments to place, people and animals (see also Berglund 1998: 172; Milton 2002).

My own attachments to the place I lived in and the people I lived with during fieldwork have, no doubt, been apparent throughout. I formed close friendships with many respondents. During fieldwork, I came to feel at home in Spey Bay, just as respondents do (though of course my reasons for being there were different), and this was no doubt facilitated by the fact that I was doing anthropology 'at home' as I am British (and indeed, half-Scottish, though it rarely brought me any local kudos) (see also Teman 2006). I should also note that, even before setting foot in Moray or conceiving of this project I was politically committed to what I consider to be my own ethical responsibilities towards the environment. I have deliberately left these attachments implicit until now, but I note them here as a means of reflecting on another subject that has similarly remained implicit, the ethics of anthropological fieldwork.

One of my aims in the account I have presented here has been to contribute to the burgeoning field of the anthropology of ethics. In this, I have been led by my experiences in the field and my analysis of my data, but this focus also points to wider currents not only in anthropology but also the cultural milieu in which I am situated. That an anthropology of ethics recognises the inherent connection between people's moral values and how they live their lives seems to me a fruitful, and timely, direction for anthropology. It should also remind us of the (ethical) imperative to re-examine constantly the ethics of the discipline.

In this ethnography I have shown the importance of values such as altruism, reciprocity, love and sharing for the people I met in the field. Such values and attachments are also central to (or at least inescapable in) the ethnographic method. To be a good fieldworker, one must cultivate a 'rapport'

with one's interlocutors and in a sense create an obligation upon them to respond to one's – often intrusive, ill-informed or boring – questions. Of course, particular ethnographers will do this in diverse ways and the balance of power is always somewhat different when one is an anthropologist 'at home'. I cannot offer a solution to this problem since it is, in my view, by its very nature an intractable one, but I would suggest that reflecting on the ethical nature of the relationship between fieldworker and respondent can at least add to our understanding of wider social dynamics. Key to this, it seems to me, is to reflect further on the emotional attachments inherent in the ethnographic method.

An ethical epoch

Respondents see time as inextricably connected with nature and ethics. This was clear from their ideas about age and parenthood and their feelings about the 'progress' of science and technology, as well as the way that they devote time to their attachments to others and to ethical work. Both in their views on surrogacy and in their own cultivation of belonging and connection to others, we saw the importance of making, giving and putting in time in building a good life. This has a further dimension given that their lives are framed by a sense of impending catastrophe. The early twenty-first century has its own particular set of crises, and reproductive technologies may no longer be 'new', but popular and media discourse remains anxious about such techniques. Concerns about anthropogenic effects on the environment have also grown in visibility and force and fears about demographic and social change have not diminished. While the nature of the epoch may have changed since *After Nature*, the sense that this is an age marked by present and future crisis has not.

Implicit in much popular, and some academic, concern about reproductive technology is a sense of moral degeneracy – this is perhaps particularly clear in the debates surrounding commercial surrogacy. As we saw in Chapter Two, one way in which people may express anxiety about surrogacy is in identifying an inappropriate connection between motherhood and money. In talking about a surrogate mother's motives for entering a surrogacy arrangement, respondents made moral commentaries on human nature and choice. But this was not the only context in which they spoke about money,

motive or choice. In fact, we have seen that both choice and money are necessary elements of their everyday lives and ethical work, from fundraising on behalf of cetaceans to ethical consumption and creating a stable environment for future children. This suggests, in contrast to some environmentalist discourse that identifies consumer culture as morally hollow and as the driving force behind ecological destruction, not only that money and choice may be amoral enablers of ethical practice, but also that it is the individuals who make choices and spend money who bear ultimate responsibility for what follows on from that. Here again we see the exercise of conscious reflection in ethical judgement and, with it, a sense that having the freedom to choose – or to make the *right* choices – is an important part of a good life.

In the Introduction I noted the ‘discovery’ within academia that nature is a ‘construct’, so that it no longer makes sense to argue from the position that it is the ultimate dichotomy to society. I have noted the congruence between certain ideas about nature and about god in respondents’ ideas and in the wider culture of contemporary Britain and argued that it is in large part the reconceptualisation of green politics as an ethical movement that has facilitated its increasing purchase in British society in recent decades. This implies that ethical discourse has become intensified in this particular period of history, an argument that seems to be demonstrated further by concurrent debates over reproductive technologies. Indeed, the more journalists, academics and politicians decry the degradation of the UK’s moral fabric and the more laypeople decide to recycle their waste, cut down on foreign travel or shop ethically, the more it seems that this is an epoch in which ethics is at the forefront of people’s minds. These points of course raise further questions: how are current conceptions of ethics related to the decline of institutionalised religion in the UK and elsewhere? And, what, then, is the relationship between god and nature in twenty-first century Britain?

Nature, after all...

Despite their concerns about impending global environmental catastrophe, respondents do not seem at sea in a meaningless world. The data I have presented here suggests, in fact, that nature is their primary moral, ecological and cosmological reference point. Nature acts, for them, as a source

of goodness, a transcendent meta-value with the power to ground claims, model behaviour, create statuses, enact relationships and impel action. In particular, we have seen here a version of nature that has a particularly ethical flavour. When nature emerges primarily as an ethical object that has not lost its grounding function and can still be used to make and model merographic connections as it has here, this raises questions about its relationship to its previous and concurrent versions as a baseline, as bestial or as a boundary. I have aimed to show here that ethical nature is not only a benign, innocent or virtuous reference point; its effects can be repressive, exclusionary and unequal.

I have focused particularly on the way in which respondents use nature as a grounding concept and as a source of goodness. This could be interpreted as a somewhat cynical implication that nature is simply a useful concept that people can refer to in the absence of a strictly defined morality, religious code or legal framework. This is not my intention. It is my view that nature is for respondents a real, tangible thing that exists 'out there' in the trees, birds and seas and which requires conservation and care, but also a vital force, at once benign and dangerous, but absolutely worthy of respect which it is not in anyone's interests to denigrate, ignore or destroy.

While I have argued that nature is not, at least primarily, a spiritual concept for respondents, it does seem to have both transcendent and cosmological properties and a sense of natural order is evident in what many of them have said in the preceding chapters. In Chapter Five, I quoted Strathern's argument that, in the postplural world, moral choices are no longer tied to stable reference points such as nature and that as a result, 'the norms and canons of behaviour ... no longer need lie in institutions outside the individual' (1992a: 162). This assumption that moral behaviour can only be rationalised according to reference points outside the individual opens up a conceptual gap. In the postplural world, she says, the individual looks beyond himself for reference but cannot find anything better than himself in which to locate his desires and choices so this gap is closed. Respondents here do not turn inwards in making moral decisions and find sufficient grounds to support their claims or structure their lives, but instead look out into their environment and see nature. It is this nature – and the elastic gap in between themselves and it – which provides them with a powerful reference point. This idea of nature is not the same nature that Strathern describes for the modern period, though of course that is an important part of its genealogy. This nature is not a historical artefact and

respondents' use of it is not nostalgic. Instead, it is future-oriented, presently active, polysemous, encompassing and transcendent.

I am hesitant to describe respondents' visions of nature as new, but they are clearly related to the particular time and place in which they emerge. In an echo of her ideas about merographic connection, Strathern (1992b: 3) argues in *Reproducing the Future* that for Euro-Americans, 'culture consists in established ways of bringing ideas from different domains together', but 'new combinations – deliberate or not – will not just extend the meanings of the domains so juxtaposed; one may expect a ricochet effect, that shifts of emphasis, dissolutions and anticipations will bounce off one area of life onto another'. In the idea that nature is intrinsically ethical that we have encountered here, we see another twist of the kaleidoscope – nature, rather than society, as the source and arbiter of morality.

I started with an account of going to see a dead whale with some of my friends. That December morning, I found myself on a bitterly cold beach in northeastern Scotland surrounded by people with downcast eyes, huddling into their Gore-Tex jackets and circling an enormous dead body. The weather was so overcast that it was difficult to tell what time of day it was, adding to my sense that this experience of seeing my first, dead and mutilated, sperm whale was utterly strange. I revisited the scene with Luke later that day. Hurrying with a mixture of trepidation and excitement, we came to the bank of sand dunes that overlooked the sandy open grave. The whale's wretched, ransacked body, so lifeless a few hours earlier, was moving. Silenced by confusion and shock, then laughing with a mixture of revulsion and relief at this magical realist sight, we understood our mistake. The tide had come in so that the water was just high enough to almost cover the whale but not enough to wash it away, so that it remained tethered to the beach by its own weight, while its tail and what remained of its head swayed and crashed like a circus animal trying to break free from its cage.

As I have returned to this scene in thinking and writing about my time in the field it has taken on a deep resonance. Most obviously, it says much about respondents' relationships with whales and dolphins and the natural world. But the atmosphere of awe, reverence and mourning, the feeling of being there, compels further reflection. This whale was one casualty of an unstable environment; its death was a real consequence of climate change and human destruction of wild habitats. Yet it also signified something wider than that. It was treated as an object of veneration, so it is apposite that its missing teeth should

have been the subject of so much concern, in that they are perhaps the closest that environmentalists might get to holy relics. This whale represented not only a vulnerable natural world and relationships in crisis, but also a transcendent reality and a reason to make things better.

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