LUND UNIVERSITY

Dances with Deer

The Deadly Entanglements of Becoming Deer in Jægersborg Dyrehave

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Abstract

In the small Danish nature park of Jægersborg Dyrehave, there live over two thousand deer. During their lives, they become encounters for visitors, managers of nature, targets to be culled, meat to be eaten, and more. In this thesis, I explore what it means to be deer in Dyrehaven. By applying a posthumanist iteration of performativity, I argue that we need to consider 'deering' as a verb, an intra-active choreography of which deer, humans and matter are part. Deering, then, should be considered a continuous process of becoming-with. Through analysis of a bricolage of participant observations, interviews, conversations and netnographic research, I reveal how the becomings of the deer in Dyrehaven are always influenced by their relation to death, the materiality of their surroundings, and the power relations in which they are implicated. Additionally, I consider the limits to becoming deer, arguing that being alive or even having a body are not requirements for deering to be possible. Contributions of my work include empirical insights into deer-human-matter entanglements, a theoretical exploration of nonhuman performativity, and a consideration of the limits of the framework of agential realism.

Keywords: deer; performativity; agential realism; becoming-with; human/animal relationships; multispecies ethnography; posthumanism; choreographies; materiality; biopower

Abstract – Dutch

In het kleine Deense natuurpark Jægersborg Dyrehave leven meer dan tweeduizend herten. Gedurende hun leven, worden zij ontmoetingen voor bezoekers, doelwitten om te doden, natuurbeheerders, vlees om te eten, en meer. In deze scriptie onderzoek ik wat het betekent om een hert te zijn in Dyrehaven. Door een posthumanitische iteratie van performativiteit toe te passen, betoog ik dat we 'herten' moeten beschouwen als werkwoord, een intra-actieve choreografie waarvan herten, mensen en materie deel uitmaken. 'Herten' moet dan ook gezien worden als een voortdurend proces van worden-met (becoming-with). Door middel van een analyse van een bricolage van participantobservaties, interviews, gesprekken en netnografisch onderzoek, laat ik zien hoe hert-worden in Dyrehaven altijd wordt beïnvloed door hun relatie tot de dood, de materialiteit van hun omgeving en de machtsverhoudingen waarin ze betrokken zijn. Daarnaast reflecteer ik op de grenzen van hert-worden, waarbij ik stel dat levend zijn of zelfs het hebben van een lichaam geen vereisten zijn om te kunnen 'herten'. Bijdragen van mijn werk omvatten empirische inzichten in de vervlechting van hert, mens en materie, een theoretische verkenning van niet-menselijke performativiteit, en een beschouwing van de grenzen *agential realism* als theoretisch framework.

Sleutelwoorden: herten; performativiteit; agential realism; becoming-with; mens-dier relaties; multispecies etnografie; posthumanisme; choreografieën; materialiteit; biomacht

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1. Introduction

What does it mean to be a deer? It seems like a question that should be simple enough to answer. Deer are hoofed herbivorous animals that make up the family Cervidae, of which elk, red deer, fallow deer, reindeer, roe deer and moose, among many others, are members. They eat grasses, sedges, leaves and shoots of trees and other woody plants, and are themselves eaten by predators such as wolves, mountain lions, bears and humans. The lives of deer and humans have been entangled for thousands of years. From Paleolithic times, deer have appeared in cave paintings. They have played a role in mythology, religion, and literature throughout history and have been hunted since the Middle Ages. Their meat has been eaten, their skins have been used to make leather, and their antlers have been turned into handles for knives.

Arguably, then, what it means to be deer is characterized by fluctuating relations between the Cervidae, the materiality of their surroundings, and other animals. This makes 'deer' not a static essence, but an active becoming (Birke e.a., 2004). Perhaps the question of what it means to be a deer is not as straightforward as it seems. Being deer (or really anything) is characterized by a continuous process of becoming, meaning that to understand what it means to be deer, we should understand the ways in which *deering* can be done. Instead of considering 'deer' as a static noun, looking at 'deering' as a verb opens up for understanding the different ways deer *become* deer in intra-action[1] with their surroundings.

Jægersborg Dyrehave, Denmark's most visited nature park, is an excellent place to study these formative entanglements, as myriad relations between deer, humans, landscape and materiality emerge here. This makes Dyrehaven rich ground for analyzing the different ways in which deering can be done. The park is managed by Naturstyrelsen (the Danish Nature Agency) and is visited by millions of people each year. At just 15km^2, Dyrehaven is home to over 2000 deer: 300 red deer with large, branched antlers - Denmark's largest wild mammals; around 1600 fallow deer, which can be seen in large groups on the hill near the Hermitage, the royal hunting lodge in the center of the park; 20-30 roe deer, Denmark's smallest deer species; and around 100 sika deer – a species that originates from Asia. Considering the modest size of the area (it would take just four hours to loop along the edges of the entire park on foot), it is nearly impossible to miss these animals: they are simply everywhere.

[1] Barad (2003) employs the term 'intra-action' instead of 'interaction', to emphasize how different relata only exist in relation to each other. This concept is part of my theoretical framework for this thesis and will be thoroughly explained in the corresponding chapter.

Each season in the park is characterized by the deer's presence (Naturstyrelsen (a), n.d.). In autumn, the rutting season, red deer stags engage in ferocious fights. Strong stags drive away weaker ones, after which they persuade the hinds to mate. Near the end of autumn large herds of hinds, following the stag they have chosen as their mate, can be seen all around the park. Autumn also signals the start of the culling season, which lasts until late winter. In order to maintain a stable population, Naturstyrelsen shoots nearly a third of the deer living in Dyrehaven yearly – as many as are born.

In winter, Naturstyrelsen supplements food for the deer. With thousands of bags of oats, grains and beetroot, the organization makes sure the animals need not go hungry during the cold months when the leaves are gone and the grass has lost its nutritiousness. In February, the deer begin to lose their antlers to make place for new and bigger ones to grow during spring.

With spring comes new life: around 700 fawns are born each year. Mothers hide their newborns in the tall grass, until they are able to follow the flock of hinds that can range from a handful to hundreds of deer.

In summer, the bones of the deer's new antlers are fully grown but still protected by skin. In preparation for rutting season, they remove this soft, velvety layer by rubbing their new-grown antlers against the trees in the park - at times removing not only the skin on their antlers, but also the bark of the trees. During this time, the stags keep to themselves. They will find the hinds again in autumn, when the cycle will begin again.

The deer are more than just ever-present in Dyrehaven, the area would not have existed if it were not for them: they have shaped the park ever since it got its name. In the 17th century, king Frederick III chose to erect a fence around 3km^2 of Boveskov forest, a few kilometers north of Copenhagen, to create an area where he could host hunting events. Shortly before his death in 1670, Frederick gifted the (unfinished) landscape to his son Christian V. When Christian was a young prince, he had spent time at the court of Louis XIV, the Sun King of France, where he participated - and excelled - in the, then very fashionable, hunt *par force de chien*. In *par force* (French for 'with strength'), dozens of hunters on horseback, accompanied by hounds, would pursue a specifically selected strong specimen of game. The animal would be chased until it, exhausted, would face its pursuers – for a big stag this could take up to three hours. The hounds would then trap the weakened animal, so that a prominent hunter (usually the king) could kill it with a spear or sword (Baagøe, 2015:29).

Christian V's *par force* performance was so impressive that the French king suggested he construct his own hunt in Denmark. The Dane took the king's advice to heart, and soon

after he himself was crowned king of Denmark, he expanded the hunting area of Boveskov to create a *par force* landscape covering 1500 hectares (15km^2). To accomplish this, he ordered the people who lived in the small village of Stokkerup to demolish their houses and move to a different location (Naturstyrelsen (c), n.d.). In addition, he seized part of the common land belonging to the village of Nærum. A fence was built around the entire area, making sure that no game could leave the park. Deer from the surrounding areas were driven onto the new hunting grounds and a number of red deer was moved here from other parts of the country (Baagøe, 2015:69). And so, Jægersborg Dyrehave was born.

Although the *par force* hunt has long since been abandoned and the area is no longer owned by the royal family, the traces of Dyrehaven's history are easily found. For one, many of the hunting rides once created for the *par force* are still clearly visible in the landscape. On top of that, the park is still centered around the Hermitage Lodge, the hunting lodge that was built there in the early 18th century. Moreover, the name 'Dyrehaven' has been continuously used (Naturstyrelsen (c), n.d.). Literally translated, the word means 'animal garden' – or zoo (similar to the Dutch 'dierentuin' or the German 'tiergarten'). Etymologically, the Danish word for 'animal' and 'deer' have the same root: dyr. The animals implied, then, are and have always been deer. Which might be why, in practice, Dyrehaven is most often translated as 'the deer park'.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this research project is to understand different ways in which *deering* is done in Jægersborg Dyrehave, in order to create a better understanding of the interrelatedness of human and nonhuman life and matter. How are the deer in Jægersborg Dyrehave constituted in their relations with humans and other matter? What role do place and power relations play when it comes to becoming deer? And what are the limits of becoming – when does a deer stop being a deer? To answer these questions, I will apply a posthumanist iteration of performativity, to clarify theoretically and demonstrate empirically how discursive practices shape what it means to be a deer in Dyrehaven.

2. Methods and materials

For this research project, I have taken on a bricolage approach: 'a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry' (Rogers, 2012:1). The metaphor of 'bricolage' originally stems from a French expression used to describe crafts-people who use left-over materials they have at hand for new creative projects. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) was the first to employ the metaphor, talking about the underlying structures that govern human meaning-making. In the context of his studies on the ways in which people divide and classify their perceived worlds, he argued that for societies that adopt mythical rationalities, meaning-making processes mirror a bricolage process. These peoples, he argued, "piece together their life-history with artifacts (e.g., texts, discourses, social practices) of their given cultural context to construct meaning" (Rogers, 2012:3).

During the past decades, the piecing-together of methods and theories characteristic of bricolage, has gained popularity within academia as an approach to qualitative inquiry. It is clear to see how for ethnographic work, especially, a bricolage approach works wonders to address diverse understandings of cultures. For this research project in particular, combining different methods and perspectives has provided me with different ways of understanding the deer of Dyrehaven, leading to a fuller (albeit not complete) picture of what it means to become a deer in Dyrehaven.

For me, the usefulness of the bricolage approach can be found especially in applying it to interpretation, narratives and methods as described by Denzin and Lincoln (1999). Concerning interpretation, an interpretive bricoleur is aware of the interactivity of the research process, which is shaped by her own history and relations in the world, as well as by the people (and, arguably, other animals and matter) in the studied setting. From this perspective, bricolage means being reflexive in piecing together the research, scrutinizing my own perspective and how it affects the process (Rogers, 2012:4). Similarly, when considering narratives, Denzin and Lincoln explain how bricoleurs are aware that all research is representation and objective reality cannot be captured.

2.1 Situated bricolage

In her article *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, Haraway argues for a feminist objectivity to avoid the "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (1988:581). With this, she means that as researchers, we cannot ignore that who and where we are influences what we see. We are unable to see everything, everywhere, all at once, and we cannot see it from all perspectives. A feminist

objectivity asks the researcher to reflect on her own situatedness in the field and her ways of being implicated in the research. “Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see”, writes Haraway (1988:583). Feminist objectivity is about acknowledging and emphasizing the limits of your own vision as a researcher, and critically reflecting on what is and is not visible to you – and why. Vision is Haraway’s metaphor of choice here, asking “How to see? Where to see from? What limits vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides vision?” (1988:587).

In large part, what becomes (in)visible to me as a researcher, is based on my own positionality – my identity, personal life-history and experiences. With this in mind, I started my fieldwork by reflecting on how these could limit (or improve) my vision. As a lover of all things outdoors, studying deer was an obvious choice – or at the very least an obvious excuse to spend time outside. I had visited Dyrehaven several times before starting my research and was aware of its origins as a par force hunting landscape, likely making me more attuned to the historicity of the area than the average visitor. Although I enjoy learning about ecology and biology, my familiarity with the area did not extend to critters of all sorts and sizes. I had, however, become familiar with the humans and deer of Dyrehaven, who are the main focus of my current project.

In studying the different ways deering is done, I have tried to follow the deer’s lives and – importantly – their deaths. In Dyrehaven (and in Denmark in general), culling and hunting are commonplace. In my home country of The Netherlands, however, both are fairly unusual and, to an extent, frowned upon. For example, in 2018, culling practices in a Dutch nature park similar to Dyrehaven were cause for some passionate protests (Algemeen Dagblad, 2018, September 30). Moreover, I have eaten mostly vegetarian for the past six years – both for environmental and ethical reasons. Because of this, seeing animals die is a relatively alien experience for me. Of course, this unfamiliarity influences my perspective on shooting, killing and eating meat and it was important for me to address any biases I had ahead of time. Being a relative ‘outsider’, my vision is limited by my lack of experience with hunting and culling practices. This means I had to make an extra effort to familiarize myself with something that, in many ways, was out of my comfort zone. At the same time, this unfamiliarity with (some of) the subject matter has proved to be an advantage in many ways,

as it has helped me observe with fresh eyes, making me more alert to things that might be obvious to experienced hunters.

As a cultural analyst doing ethnographic work, I am destined to have a different understanding of what it means to be a deer than, say, an ecologist would have. Although ecologists also study the relationships between living organisms, I would argue that their field of study is rooted in a fixed understanding of their research subjects. In my understanding, however, there is no ‘deer essence’: deering is a verb, fluid and everchanging. Neither of these perspectives is truer than the other – they simply illuminate different aspects of an ungraspable whole. Although the natural sciences are often hailed as objective bringers of fact, they too are embedded in particular kinds of stories. Like work done in cultural analysis, “any scientific statement about the world depends intimately upon language, upon metaphor” (Haraway, 1989:4). All academic work bears the marks of the histories and cultures of the scholars that carried it out – we see the world not as it is, but as we are. This means that there is value to be found in interdisciplinary work – especially on interspecies relationships, as so many disciplines touch upon them. However, for the time being I have approached this project from the perspective of cultural analysis alone. Partly because I have stakes that I want to make visible. I find cultural analysis, in particular, to be a wonderful tool for illuminating relations between actors in the field. And I believe considering – really considering, deeply – these different constitutive relations between nonhuman animals, humans, and their surroundings, is a vital step in realizing the responsibility we as humans have when it comes to the wellbeing of the species with whom we share this world.

Precisely because of this, it is not my aim to avoid anthropocentrism entirely in this research. To be anthropocentric means to be human-centered, regarding the world in terms of human values. Try as we may, a certain degree of anthropocentrism is unavoidable. After all, scholars are human, so the human perspective can never be removed from the equation (cf. Haraway, 1989). However, although my focus in this thesis is on understanding the intra-action between deer, humans and matter, I strive to decenter the human perspective. Whereas I work from my own, human perspective, then, I do not mean to showcase the ways in which the deer of Dyrehaven have value to humans, as nonhuman animals have inherent value, independent from their relation to humans. Rather, I want to bring attention to the interconnectedness of all things and shed light on the deer's agency. Through the work of cultural analysis, I seek to question the established borders between deer, humans, and matter, in the hopes of contributing to a deeper understanding of their reciprocal influence.

2.2 Methods

Aside from applying a bricolage approach to interpretation and narratives, I have consciously chosen a bricolage of methods that provide me with different perspectives in order to expand my vision as much as possible. Here, contextual contingencies have dictated which data-gathering and analytical methods were best suited for my process (Rogers, 2012:5). Like Lévi-Strauss' bricoleur, I have worked with the methods 'at-hand'. This has been an eclectic approach, in some ways, combining a range of different methodologies which have helped me access the field in various ways and from various points of departure. The combination of participant observation, interviews, conversations and netnographic research has been vital for my understanding of how deering can be done. Each method comes with its own advantages and limitations, shining a light on certain characteristics of deering while keeping others in the dark. By uniting the methods in a bricolage, I have sought to illuminate as many different angles as possible.

2.2.1 Observing on the move

One of my main methods has been (participant) observation, mainly as a visitor of the park but also while going along with employees of Naturstyrelsen. Charlotte Davies explains how participatory observation is an umbrella term for a combination of different approaches to data-gathering, of which "participation is almost certainly not the major data-gathering technique" (2008:81). In this case too, participation should be interpreted more as a means of facilitating observations of specific behaviors and events. It is less about participating in each activity than it is about creating openings for meaningful discussions with informants while they are going about their usual pursuits. Spending time in the park, moving around and observing visitors and employees 'in action' has proved particularly useful for seeing first-hand how humans and deer interact. Through unstructured, albeit thoroughly prepared, interviews and conversations during these outings, I have been able to gain deeper insight into the entanglement of deer, humans and other matter in Dyrehaven that would otherwise have stayed obscure.

Naturally, observing entails more than just looking. Through observations, research becomes explicitly physical. Ribeiro explains how "embodied ethnography involves the use of the body as an actual research tool, that is, one's own body becomes the/one of the medium(s) through which experiences are lived, catalogued, and analyzed" (2017:142). In my experience, movement is a crucial aspect of observing. While moving, I become more aware of how others move with and around me. I understand participant observation as a two-

sided coin: while observing the movements and experiences of others, I also observe my own movements and experiences in the field. Walking through Dyrehaven, positioning myself in relation to visitors, employees, deer, et cetera, has helped me shape my understanding of 'deering' as a dance – a choreography of sorts, in which I have participated too.

Although participant observation can give rich insight into how people behave and move with others, and provides a sense of people's thoughts and emotions at a given time, the method has its limits. On a practical level, one needs to be able to be present in the field. In my case, I was limited by the accessibility of locations by public transport, as I do not have access to a car. Additionally, the availability of participants can pose challenges: participant observation is significantly easier when there is someone (something) to participate *with*. Luckily, in my case, visitors and deer were ever-present in Dyrehaven, and employees of various organizations were more than willing to help me out. On a more fundamental level, there is a limit to how much of people's inner worlds can be understood through observing. This is why, to get a deeper understanding of people's reflections on intra-actions and relations, I employed additional methods such as interviews.

2.2.2 Interviews and conversations

In order to learn more about the rationalizations of – in particular – the people working with the deer in Dyrehaven, sit-down interviews and spontaneous conversations proved particularly illuminating. Interviews ranged from short telephone calls to go-alongs lasting five hours. I have spoken to certain informants multiple times, others I have met just once. Combining different lengths and forms of interviews and conversations has provided me with a myriad of different perspectives – more than I would have gotten from semi-structured sit-down interviews alone. For example, talking to a chef while standing in his kitchen provided me with insight into his practical work that I would not have had if seated at a table, whereas sitting down for an interview with a communication's professional in her office created a quiet atmosphere benefiting reflexive responses. Whenever possible, I have aimed to tailor the place and shape of the interview to the person I was speaking to. However, of course, in certain cases I was limited by both their and my availability and I had to settle for whatever was workable at the time.

During the early stages of my research, especially, a considerable number of my insights were derived from informal conversations and meetings that were initially centered on other topics but significantly contributed to my understanding of the deer in Dyrehaven. I consider this an asset to my work, since informal conversations are often less rigid than

formal interviews. Because of this, they are likely to generate rich data, as interlocutors tend to feel more comfortable sharing when they are not recorded, which in turn helps to get closer to "the reality of individuals' experiences, values and perception" (Swain and King, 2022:2). These conversations were, in part, what drew my initial attention to the different ways the deer in Dyrehaven are constituted and have thus been invaluable in shaping my research.

2.2.3 Netnography

Finally, I complemented observations, go-alongs, interviews and conversations with online netnographic research. Looking at digital conversations, reviews and communication outlets proved especially useful for understanding how deer are perceived by visitors of Dyrehaven, and how they are presented by Naturstyrelsen. Although part of my netnographic research consisted of 'searching the web' to find out how people communicate about Dyrehaven's deer, the bulk of it was comprised of Google reviews people have written about Jægersborg Dyrehave. Reviews are a particularly valuable source as, in just a few words, they make explicit both what people's most powerful associations with a place are, what they believe is worth sharing and what they do and do not appreciate about it. Additionally, reviews can be posted by people from all over the world, which on the one hand could create a more diverse image, but on the other hand means that I have had to deal with automatic translations. The reviews I have read were either written in English or automatically translated to Dutch by Google. I also had access to the original versions. Lastly, anyone can post a review on Google and it is impossible to check whether reviewers are truthful about having visited the place – a challenge I have aimed to resolve through looking at a larger quantity of data. This way, one fake review will likely not cloud my findings.

2.3 Materials

Below, I have listed the different materials on which I have based this thesis. It is important to note that this is a largely artificial distinction – often, interviews and conversations overlapped with or were part of my observations. With observations I mean the moments where my main purpose was not to ask people questions, but to be part of an experience, either at a restaurant, during culling, or as a visitor in the park. During these moments, I have taken extensive field notes which I have elaborated and reflected on as soon as possible after getting back to a computer.

I understand interviews as the possibility to ask an interlocutor more or less prepared questions. These were situations where I knew ahead of time what I wanted to ask. Sit-down interviews were recorded and transcribed. For interviews in other settings (e.g. go-alongs or

while at a restaurant) I have taken notes which I have supplemented with what I remembered as soon as possible after finishing.

Conversations, for me, are more impromptu than interviews. I did not plan to ask about specific subjects ahead of time and in most cases the subject arose organically. In the early stages of my research, these conversations played an important role in drawing my attention to the different ways deering in Dyrehaven can be done. In later stages, I have made sure to reconfirm what I heard in structured interviews. Although they have informed much of my early learnings, I will not be referring to these conversations specifically in this thesis. While I always jotted down notes during and after, it may be challenging to reproduce the interlocutors' exact wording. Quotes that are not verbatim, will not be represented as such. Names of interviewees have been pseudonymized in order to ensure their privacy. Photos are my own unless otherwise specified. All material (interviews, fieldnotes, netnographic material) was manually coded in Nvivo, by assigning labels to words and phrases that represented important and recurring themes.

Interviews (interviews with multiple people at once are counted separately)

- Gamekeepers Naturstyrelsen (3)
- Communication employees Naturstyrelsen (3)
- Butcher (1)
- Waiter (1)
- Chef (1)

Conversations

- Around 8 conversations with various (sometimes recurring) employees of Naturstyrelsen and visitors of the park

Observations (different moments of observation)

- Visiting Jægersborg Dyrehave (5)
- Go-along culling (2)
- Go-along gutting (1)
- Restaurant (1)

Netnographic material

- 250 Google reviews of Dyrehaven
- Online communication materials about Dyrehaven on Naturstyrelsen's website
- Online communication of butcher on both their website and social media

2.4 Ethical considerations

All ethnographic studies – whether with humans or other animals – must always grapple with problems of representation: how can we be sure that we correctly understand and portray thoughts, emotions and experiences? In multispecies ethnography especially, the question of how cultural analysts can speak with and for nonhuman others begs consideration. Obviously, human physiology prevents us from learning or even understanding some of the languages nonhuman others use for communication (Lloro-Bidart, 2018:255). For some scholars, such as Raymond Madden, the fact that we, as humans, are not able to converse with other species, do what they do and learn through shared experience (key components of ethnographic research), is reason to argue that their thoughts cannot be used as a basis for a reliable, trustworthy ethnographic methodology. "There are simply too many "known unknowns" to suggest animals can one-for-one assume the place of humans as ethnographic subjects" (2014:289). The way to solve this problem, he argues, is for ethnographers to cooperate with other disciplines, such as biology, philosophy and zoology. Although Madden has a valid point in saying that grasping the animal as an ethnographic subject poses a significant challenge, I do believe the extent of this being true depends on the kinds of questions asked. For questions about the way other species experience the world, I doubt ethnography alone is the best method. I agree with Madden that interdisciplinary work is needed for that – but even then, I am not convinced that we are at a stage where we can have any real, deep understanding of nonhuman cultures.

However, understanding 'deer culture' is not my aim with this research project. In this case, I focus on the intra-action between deer, humans, and other matter to understand how the phenomenon 'deer' is constituted in different ways. In many ways, I am looking at the spaces between the different actors more than I am looking at the actors themselves. For me, the performance takes center stage, as the performers exist only in relation to it and to each other (cf. Barad, 2003). It is not my aspiration to be able to say anything meaningful about how the deer *experience* this performance or their identities. I merely mean to show some different ways this intra-action plays out, in order to draw attention to the reciprocal affect between deer, humans and other matter.

That said, I do, inevitably, base my argument on interviews and observations that I have done mainly in collaboration with other humans. Because of this, the different becomings of deer in Dyrehaven that I discern will be influenced by the human perspective as well; for example, I doubt the deer would deem themselves 'nature managers'. As explained above, I embrace a certain degree of anthropocentrism in this project. However, I aim to

decenter the human in my analysis, showcasing the interconnectedness between deer, humans, and matter and questioning the rigid divide between these different actors. Nevertheless, my goal is to evoke reflection on *human* response-ability (Haraway, 2008), to consider ways to respond to our existing, irreducibly entangled, relations with (in this case) deer. In my opinion, that goal is best achieved by considering the human perspective, as well as its implications on the deer's becomings.

In general, it should be noted that the becomings that I discern here are the ones that stand out clearest when looking at deer-human-matter entanglements. However, deering is a verb, ever-changing and fluid, thus making it impossible to cover all the ways it is being done – which has also never been my goal. This is also why I feel comfortable combining all deer in Dyrehaven into the general category of 'deer', although I am aware that there are many different ways individual deer become deer (e.g. a 10-year old red deer lives a very different life from a 1-year old fallow deer). Similarly, I am aware that the groups of people who intra-act with the deer are inherently diverse as well, comprised of people of different ages, ethnicities, classes, and social backgrounds. Each individual will have their own particular way of intra-acting with the deer. And each time, a slightly different version of deering is performed. As it is not my goal to be completely comprehensive and my focus is on how deering is done (and not humaning), I will talk generally of 'visitors', 'employees', 'people' or 'humans' throughout my thesis.

Finally, a short remark about my use of 'nonhuman animal' for describing deer and other species. Eduardo Kohn writes: "The goal in multi-species ethnography should not just be to give voice, agency or subjectivity to the nonhuman—to recognize them as others, visible in their difference—but to force us to radically rethink these categories of our analysis as they pertain to all beings" (in Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010:562). Working from this idea, the term 'nonhuman animal' is by no means ideal, as it emphasizes the 'other' as different from the 'human'. Additionally, it is inherently anthropocentric as it takes the human as a point of departure (you are either human or you are not). However, I opt for this labeling because I believe it is the clearest way to show what humans and other species have in common: our animality.

2.5 Overview of structure

This thesis is structured around the concept of death, as in my perception, death is what connects the different ways deering is done in Dyrehaven. In order to maintain a tenable deer population, Naturstyrelsen shoots a third of the deer each year. For the deer, then, life in

Dyrehaven is permeated with death. Considering the deer in both life and death, furthermore, proves fruitful for considering the agencies of both animate and inanimate, living and un-living, matter.

I have found the metaphor of dance helpful for making tangible the intra-actions and continuous movements inherent to my subject matter, as well as for reflections on embodied experience. In a way, then, my thesis has become a *Danse Macabre*, a Dance of Death, in which death and deer sway around with intra-actors from all walks of life.

I will start by sketching the state of current research related to human-nonhuman entanglement and posthuman performativity. After that, I will outline my theoretical framework, which is based mainly on Karen Barad's theory of agential realism, and to a lesser extent on Judith Butler's writings on performativity.

Three analytical chapters follow. In the first, "Life (before death)", I consider how deering is done by living deer. In particular, I will look at the deer's intra-actions with visitors of the park, and their role as nature managers of Dyrehaven. Throughout this chapter, I pay particular attention to the role of materiality, specifically that of the landscape, in becoming deer. The second chapter, "Dying", considers deer-as-targets. Here, I attend to the process of culling deer, reflecting in particular on the role unequal power relations play within intra-active phenomena. In the last analytical chapter, "After death", I follow the deer from butchering process to plate and beyond, wondering: when is a deer no longer a deer?

Finally, in my conclusion and applicablity section, I will provide some insight into the way this research could prove useful for scientists, scholars and professionals working in nature management when it comes to understanding our entangled relations with other animals.

3. Previous research

During the past decades, attention for multispecies relationships has steadily been growing in academic circles, resulting in a wealth of publications from a culturally analytical or anthropological perspective (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010), but also from within the disciplines of sociology, philosophy (particularly ethics) and of course ecology and biology. Although extensive work has been done on this subject, for the purposes of this research project I will focus on the state of the art that my project aligns most with: work on the co-constitutive entanglement of human and nonhumans, and on posthumanist performativity.

3.1 Human-nonhuman entanglement

Donna Haraway developed and popularized the concept of 'companion species', first in *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and later in *When Species Meet* (2008). With 'companion species', Haraway points to the mutual dependence between human animals and certain nonhuman animals. Nonhuman companion species are intensely bonded to humanity's history, as they have shaped humans as much as humans have shaped them. Haraway's example of choice is the relationship between humans and dogs, which she argues should be seen as an instance of co-evolution, as neither species would be what it is today without the other.

Following Haraway, numerous scholars have picked up on the term and applied it to various different relations between humans and nonhumans. Nearly always, the writers aim to move away from the idea of human exceptionalism or animal otherness, focusing instead on the inseparability of humans and other species as a means of deconstructing the nature/culture divide. For example, S. Marek Muller (2020) combines the concept of companion species with that of cyborgs (cf. Haraway 1991) to explain how wolf hybrids (half dog, half wolf) ultimately function as "companion cyborgs", as they are neither wild nor domestic, existing in the liminality of the nature/culture dualism.

Taking a more geographical approach, Jamie Lorimer (2010) outlines human-elephant relationships in Sri Lanka, tracing an assemblage of actors, practices, organizations and legislation that are intertwined with these relations. Lorimer argues that elephants are not the inhabitants of an untarnished wilderness, but together with humans have co-constituted the environments that they live in together, showing how not just companion species, but also landscapes are intrinsically related.

Taking inspiration from Haraway, Anna Tsing (2012) focuses on the fungi without which humans cannot survive. Tsing delves into the biology and history of fungi, showing the

ways in which fungi are entangled in the history of domestication and imperial conquest. This way, she opens up a door for a history of the world in which there is room for nonhuman species to be the protagonists. Through this, she aims to present a “fungal argument” against the ideal of domestication of both women and plants.

More recently, and in a similar vein, anthropologists Anne Aronsson and Fynn Holm (2019) have looked at the 2019 coronavirus outbreak from the perspective of multispecies entanglements, pointing out how humans and their close companion species have co-evolved with a large number of viruses, creating what they call distinct “virospheres”. Relevantly, their analysis opens up for reflection on the *consequences* of increased entanglement of humans and companion species.

3.2 Posthumanist performativity

The framework of performativity (cf. Butler 1988, 1990, 1993; Barad, 2003, 2007) has proven particularly useful for multispecies scholars who want to make clear the social construction of categories such as ‘human’ and ‘animal’, as well as for showing the activeness of the process of *becoming* animal. Simone Abram and Marianne Elisabeth Lien (2011), for example, argue that placing emphasis on performativity and ontology, more than on positionality and representation, offers a new approach to thinking about nature categories. With their introduction to a special issue of the journal Ethnos, they explore how the idea of nature is culturally constructed and demonstrate how nature categories are produced and reproduced through performance. In the same volume, Lien, together with sociologist John Law, explores different ways in which Atlantic salmon is enrolled in regimes of domestication. Starting with the question “what is a salmon?”, Lien and Law approach salmon through its various enactments and practices. Salmon, crucially, is something being *done*, they argue.

Like Lien and Law, Birke e.a. also argue that performativity emphasizes how animality is a becoming and not an essence. Using lab rats as an example, the authors analyze “how we animal the animals” (2004:176). By working within Karen Barad’s posthumanist performative framework, they are able to discern three kinds of performativity: of animality, of humanness, and of the relationship between the two. Likewise, Knight and Sang (2019) also work within a posthumanist performative framework to reveal the complex process of a dog becoming a police dog – a process in which the strict delineation between police dog and human officer is blurred.

Applying the concept of companion species within a performative framework, Maurstad e.a. (2013) show how horses and their riders meet and change as a result of their meetings, shedding light on how horse and human are relational categories becoming through their engagements. Similarly, Geiger & Hovorka (2015) apply a feminist posthumanist iteration of performativity to explore the lives of Botswanan donkeys and their relations with humans. To explore “donkeying” (becoming donkey), they take into account the (animal) body and its performance, and, importantly, also the spatiality of these performances.

Whereas scholars working with performativity focus not on a singular or deliberate act, but on an “ongoing, repetitive practice or process of materialisation or becoming” (Van der Watt, 2017:3), some multispecies researchers choose to focus more on the *performance* of the relations between species, using art forms such as dance and music as a means for understanding species entanglement. For example, Anna Tsing (2013) considers mushroom foraging a form of dance, in order to draw attention to the kinetic knowledge mushroom pickers carry in their bodies. In a similar way, Emily Blair Pfoutz (2016) reflects on the “rhythmic attunement” between horses and their riders, likening this to a dance as well as music. Finally, Andrea Petitt and Keri Brandt-Off (2022) reflect on the choreography of herding cattle across the landscape, arguing that this kind of rhythmic dance synchronizes multiple bodies in time and space, acknowledging the agency of all subjects that together create a moving event.

While much has been written about the entanglement of humans and our close companions such as dogs, horses, cattle and the fungi and viruses that live inside us, there has been less attention for our entanglements with ‘wilder’ species. Notably, Emma Fletcher-Barnes (2020) has explored the life cycle of a captive bred lion in South Africa, analyzing how the lion is remade from a wild animal into a commodity. And Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen (2022) has examined human-muskox relations in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, in order to understand how these encounters shape muskoxen as well as human sociality and Kangerlussuaq as a place.

With this project, I mean to contribute to this strand of multispecies research that focuses not on the animals that live in our homes or in our bodies but on the ones that are seen as ‘wild’. Because, although these ‘wilder’ animals might seem further removed from our human selves, our existence is equally entangled.

4. Theoretical framework

Increasingly, posthumanist scholars have started looking through the lens of performativity when studying non-human animals and their interactions with humans (e.g. Geiger and Hovorka, 2015; Birke e.a., 2014; Lloro-Bidart, 2018; Lien and Law, 2011). Interactivity proves an extraordinarily useful framework both for deconstructing the boundaries between human and nonhuman, and for criticizing essentialism, drawing attention instead to the different ways humans/nonhumans/matter actively *become* humans/nonhumans/matter. I, too, have made use of a performative framework in order to gain an understanding of the different becomings of the deer of Dyrehaven. My analysis is based on Judith Butler's influential work on performativity, and most significantly on Karen Barad's posthumanist iteration of Butler's theories.

4.1 Embodied performativity

Originally, the framework of performativity was mainly used to describe the power of language to effect change in the world. The concept of performative language was first coined by John L. Austin (1962). Austin understood 'performative utterances' as language that *does* something in the world, instead of merely describing it. Speech acts such as promising, placing a bet or saying "I do" when being wed create difference: the world before the utterance is different from the world that comes after it.

Other scholars were quick to pick up and work with the concept – most prominently Judith Butler, with her feminist interpretations and reworkings. Influenced by Austin, Butler has used the concept of performativity to argue that gender is socially constructed. Social reality, she argues, is created in language and signs. This means that language is not neutral: through customary performative speech acts and nonverbal communication, we construct our ideas of what is typically masculine or feminine (Alsop e.a., 2002:103). Gender, then, is a social role that is continuously performed by individuals through speech acts, behaviors and actions. To enact gender, it is required that dominant gender conventions are repeatedly imitated. "This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation", explains Butler (1988:526). The constant (often unwittingly) miming of dominant gender norms both establishes and legitimizes these same norms.

Central to Butler's theory is the idea that discourse creates the subject positions that we occupy: it constructs the self. For Butler, however, discourse is more than language alone. The body and its gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues also inhabit the

structure of discourse. “One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well” (Butler, 1988:521). We perform our bodies in ways that others do not. And in the process of performance, we define our bodies. This way, doing one’s body is an *active* process; gender and the body are not fixed entities.

In her work, Butler reminds us that we are always enacting our genders – we are participating in a play of sorts. Yet there is a difference between gender performance and theatrical performance: the actor on stage requires us to distinguish between what is being staged and what is real. No such distinction exists in gender performances, where the reality is formed by the performance. Although gender is performative, Butler sees no ‘self’ outside the gendered self: “Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an ‘I’ or a “we” who had not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being . . . the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within the matrix of gender relations themselves” (Butler, 1993:xvi). Meaning there is no doer behind the deed – the doer is formed in the doing.

In short, Butler believes we should think about gender not as a natural given, but as something that “(…) proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (1990:33). Her radical social constructivist stance proves useful for understanding how identities are actively performed through discourse, which is always a bodily (inter)action. Butler’s ideas are readily adapted beyond gender and beyond the human. For my understanding of the ways in which Dyrehaven’s deer become deer, I have specifically pulled inspiration from Butler’s focus on embodied action, paying particular attention to how movement and embodied ways of interacting contribute to how deering can be done.

4.2 Agential realism

Following Butler, various feminist materialists have started thinking about ways to bring the material (of the body, but also of our (natural) surroundings) and the discursive-linguistic together, aiming to disassemble the enduring nature/culture divide (notably Haraway, 1991). Around a decade later, the first explicit reconceptualization of performativity within a feminist materialist framework was written by physicist-philosopher Karen Barad.

Basing themselves on Butler, Haraway, Foucault and, significantly, on the writings of quantum physicist Niels Bohr (among others), Barad proposes a specifically materialist,

naturalist and posthumanist elaboration of performativity. "What is needed", they argue, "is a robust account of the materialization of all bodies – "human" and "nonhuman" – and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked" (2003:810). Barad explicitly wants to move away from the linguistic representational understanding of all "things" (2003:801), arguing that not just language and culture should be granted their own agency – matter has agency too. In performativity Barad finds an approach to move beyond the confines of language and representationalism, to focus less on whether linguistic descriptions and reality correspond, and more on "matters of practices/doings/actions" (2003:802). They turn to what they call 'agential realism' to show how matter actively participates in the world's becoming.

Agential realism advocates a causal relationship between what Barad calls the 'apparatuses of bodily production' (with which they mean embodied discursive practices – not what is said, but that which makes (im)possible what can be said and what counts as a meaningful statement) and specific material 'phenomena'. Barad uses the term phenomena to emphasize the inseparability of the observer and the observed: "phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components"" (2003:815), they are the materializations of relationships. The components of phenomena, they explain, exist only in relation to each other - they do not pre-exist as separate entities. Because of this, Barad speaks of 'intra-action' (instead of interaction, which presupposes the prior existence of independent relata). Through the specific agential intra-actions of multiple apparatuses of bodily production, phenomena are produced. This is where agential realism differs from Jane Bennett's (2009) closely related theory of assemblages (Anderson e.a., 2012:30). Although both treat agency not as a property of humans or objects, but as a name for the ongoing reconfiguring of the world, the origin of these agencies is found in different places. In assemblage thinking, the different parts of the assemblage retain an importance as independent actors that might alter the nature of the assemblage. Here, both the parts and the whole are considered as having agency. For Barad, agencies emerge through their mutual constitution in phenomena. Intra-action is a prerequisite for agencies to exist and distinct agencies do not precede phenomena.

Apparatuses, which produce phenomena, are 'material-discursive', meaning that they produce definitive meanings and material beings while simultaneously excluding the production of others. Critically, though, apparatuses are not static. Closure is impossible, intra-activity is iterative and everchanging, making apparatuses open-ended practices. And,

importantly, apparatuses are themselves phenomena. They are constituted through specific practices that can always be rearranged or reworked (Barad, 2003:816).

Crucially, humans are not necessarily involved in agential intra-actions. Discursive practices and meaning, argues Barad, are not necessarily uniquely human (2003:818). On an agential realist account, humans are always already phenomena: we do not exist independently from the intra-actions in which we find ourselves. If we understand 'humans' as phenomena, as constantly changing processes rather than fixed beings with unchanging characteristics, and recognize that our existence is intertwined with the material world that is also constantly changing, then we cannot rely on the idea that there is a clear and permanent boundary between what is human and what is not. The notion of discursivity, then, cannot be founded on an inherent distinction between humans and nonhumans.

Taken broader, matter in general does not exist as fixed substance. Rather, matter is always intra-actively becoming. Echoing Butler, Barad states that matter is "not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency" (2003:822). This iterative intra-activity that makes all bodies (not just human ones) come to matter, is what Barad understands as performativity. It is through the agency of these bodies, these apparatuses-in-phenomena, that reality is constituted, as in their agential intra-action, they produce certain meanings and materials while excluding the production of others: "It is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency" (2003:817). Reality, then, is composed of 'things'-in-phenomena.

Central to Barad's account of performativity is their rethinking of discursive practices and material phenomena and the relationship between them. Seen from a perspective of agential realism, discursive practices are always already material. They are not exclusive to humans, but are the specific material (re)creations of the world through which local establishments of boundaries, properties and meanings are enacted in varying ways. Agency is a relationship, instead of something that one 'has'. Matter is not something fixed, but rather it is always changing and intra-acting with what is around it. And, diverging from Butler's understanding of performativity, Barad understands performativity not as iterative citationality but rather as iterative intra-activity, emphasizing how the performance is done, and done again, *together* (2003:828).

Barad's agential realism provides a framework for understanding the ways in which all parts of the material world (not just humans) are constructed in relation to each other, and how they influence each other. When studying anything, we are not looking at separate 'things', but at intrinsically entangled phenomena. Barad takes Butler's concept of

performativity and turns it into a more all-encompassing approach, emphasizing how all matter is agential intra-activity in its becoming.

Although more far-reaching than just human/nonhuman relations, Barad's perspective on performativity does open up for analyses of the intra-actions between human and nonhuman actors. Their focus on intra-activity in particular has been inspirational for my current analysis, proving itself helpful for drawing attention to the influence that the apparatuses that produce the 'deer phenomenon' have on its becomings. Barad's work is crucial for my understanding of becoming deer as something not just done by the deer themselves, but rather something that is done in intra-action by the deer and the organisms and matter that surround them.

Birke e.a. (2004:168) demonstrate how working within Barad's performativity framework can give insight into nonhuman animal agency and can shift focus away from oppositional meanings of animal/human, showing the intimate choreography of intra-relatedness of *all* bodies. By focusing not on groups or individuals but instead on intra-action and relationships, it becomes possible to focus on the human/nonhuman/matter phenomenon. This way, the notion of performativity becomes useful for making clear the co-construction of human/nonhuman animal relationships. They propose the notion of 'animaling' (parallel to Butler's (1993) notion of 'queering') to shift attention to the material-semiotic performativity of human/nonhuman relationships. Seen in this way, 'animal' is not so much an essence as it is an action, it is something being done. I will apply Birke e.a.'s (2004) concept of animaling within Barad's framework of agential realism to help me understand how 'deering' is done. Applied in this way, Barad's theory is particularly fruitful for moving beyond an essentialized understanding of what it means to be deer, towards a deconstruction of the boundaries between human/other. Combining Barad's agential realism with Butler's embodied performativity has laid the groundwork for my analysis focused on *intra-active, embodied becomings*. This theoretical framework has guided me in my understanding of deering as something not just done by deer, but done by the deer-phenomenon, of which deer/human/matter agencies are all part.

Finally, I want to call attention here to the way in which Barad's agential realism is closely aligned to Donna Haraway's concept of becoming-*with.* Like Barad, I have taken much inspiration from Haraway's work for this thesis (and Haraway, in turn, has also taken inspiration from Barad). "To be one is always to become with many", Haraway writes (2008:4), recognizing that being (human, nonhuman, matter) means being inextricably tied to others, capturing the relationality and interdependence between all matter. These becomings

are not literal transformations, but multiple ways of intra-actively being in the world – in that way, becoming-with is akin to Barad's phenomena (which are always in a process of becoming). I understand deering as a practice of becoming-with, as it is an (intra-)action that provokes change. In discussing these becomings, Haraway regularly employs the metaphors of dance and choreography (e.g. 2003, 2008). In this thesis, too, I will make use of these metaphors, thankful for their graceful expression of the movement inherent to the intra-activeness of the phenomenon 'deer'.

5. Life (before death)

"Simple awareness is the seed of responsibility." - Jenny Odell

Death is central to human-deer-matter intra-actions in Jægersborg Dyrehave. A third of the deer are culled each year, which means that for the deer, death permeates life. Nevertheless, entanglement starts from the moment they are born. Each year, millions of people travel to Dyrehaven to meet the deer. Stuck within the fences of the Deer Park, the deer become the object of visitor's attention. During their lives, then, the materiality of their surroundings, the space in which they live, is thoroughly intertwined in the deer's becomings. But the deer exist as more than just encounters in the park. In life, the deer's movements through and consumption of the landscape is formative of that same landscape. Without the deer, Dyrehaven would not look the way it does. In this chapter, I will reflect on the intra-actions at play in two different becomings of the deer in Dyrehaven: deer-as-encounters, and deer-as-nature managers.

Throughout this chapter, my goal is to make clear the significant role material surroundings play in shaping the deer-phenomenon. Additionally, I want to consider what instigates intra-action between humans and deer, what moves deer and humans to intra-act? Because so many deer are living in a relatively small, enclosed space, becoming deer in Dyrehaven is different from becoming deer in most other places. Although material surroundings play an important role in all deer becomings, their relevance is most explicit when considering how deering is done during life. I argue that, during their lives, the deer influence both the experience-in-place (as encounters), as well as the place itself (as nature managers).

5.1 Encounters: meeting the deer, meeting the people

I can hear the deer before I see them. The sound of antlers crashing into each other is neither violent nor playful. The echoes of bone hitting bone come from between the oaks, as if someone is beating a tree with a large stick. It is a beautiful February Saturday, with winter still in the air but the warmth of the sun signaling spring is almost here. Like usually, I arrive at the park from the southeastern entrance near Klampenborg station. Unlike other days, I am joined by my partner today. We pass through the familiar red gates and take one of the unpaved paths into the woods, walking towards the Hermitage Lodge.

In some ways, walking in Jægersborg Dyrehave is unlike walking in most nature parks. Although the landscape of oak, beech and birch intermingled with grassy hills feels recognizable, the way I move through it is noticeably different. In Dyrehaven, I am constantly scanning the spaces between the trees, looking for movement. My body becomes attuned to that of the thousands of deer walking around. This calls to mind what Csordas calls 'somatic modes of attention', which he defines as "culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (1993:138). With this, Csordas argues for taking the embodied experience as the starting point for analyzing human participation in a cultural world. Although these experiences happen within the body, they start from the interaction between body and world. Or, in this case specifically, from the intra-action between my body and the bodies of the deer. In Dyrehaven, seeing deer is expected. The sheer number of deer living here makes spotting them less of a happy accident and more akin to a (very attainable) goal. Their ubiquitousness in this landscape influences the ways in which I use my body: my eyes constantly dart from fields to trees in the hopes of glimpsing some brown fur, I listen more intently to the sounds that come from the forest and my attention is drawn by any movement in the bushes. I recognize this attentiveness to my surroundings from hiking in places where ospreys, cranes or moose are known to live. However, in those instances luck felt like the determining factor in whether I would see the animals or not. In Dyrehaven, this is different: the park offers a near guarantee of meeting deer up close. I know that if I follow the paths for long enough, I will find them. After all, there are so many here, and there is no other place they can be.

It is no wonder, then, that most visitors are drawn to Dyrehaven by the opportunity of seeing deer, as explained by several reviewers on Google:

> *"This is an unusual type of recreation - walking around the park in search of a flock of deer;) But definitely cool. I recommend to immediately rent a bike (150 Danish kroner or about 20 euros for 3 hours). There are rentals for 1 and 5 hours more. We took the average time - this turned out to be enough. The territory is very large (about 11 hectares) and it takes a long time to walk, especially since you don't know exactly where the deer will graze." (Google review, translated from Russian)*

> *"I recommend taking a bike as the grounds are really large. I personally found it rather difficult to find deer due to the long grass. I only ever saw them when they came really close to the path." (Google review, untranslated)*

These reviewers, like me, have an expectation of how deering is done in Dyrehaven, which is different from the ways it is done in other places – here, the deer live in large groups that are

supposed to be easy to find and meet up close. For the visitors, being a deer in Dyrehaven means being available to be interacted with. In many ways, the deer are like players on the scene or actors on the stage – they are there to be seen, a prize to be found, a sought after encounter. Here, part of the deering choreography starts to take shape: the dance between deer and humans is a game of cat-and-mouse, or human-and-deer.

1: Deer are easy to find in Dyrehaven (a herd of Sika deer eating hay).

In my case, the mice that belong to the sounds I heard when entering the park, are fallow deer fighting to measure their strength. Close to a feeding area, nearby the path, we can see two of them rearing towards each other, seemingly unaffected by the impact of the other's antlers colliding with their own. I gesture to my partner to stop walking and point at the battling deer. This time of year, it is fairly easy to see the deer from up close, as in winter they usually linger around the areas where they get fed. We stand still for a while and watch, joined by a few other visitors of the park, before we walk on.

Before long, we spot a second herd of deer, Sika this time. They are resting by the side of the road, laying in what looks like hay – their lunch, provided by Naturstyrelsen. The ten or so deer are attentive, but mostly seem unbothered by our presence, even though we are standing barely a meter away from them. From gamekeeper Niels I learn how in the wild, this would be rare for these small, spotted deer as they are profoundly shy – so much so that they have been nicknamed 'the ghosts of the forest'. In Dyrehaven, though, visitors can come face-to-face with the Sika, and the people make good use of this opportunity. Many pause their walk to look at them. They stand still, point at the deer to alert their fellow visitors and kneel down to take close-up pictures. Most people seem to not worry too much about scaring

the deer and feel comfortable getting close to them. One rider even halts her horse to take pictures of the herd from atop the horse's back. Online reviews are often accompanied by astonishing close-up pictures of deer that I imagine would be difficult to take anywhere else:

> *"It's a really nice place to go for an evening stroll. Lots of deer in sight and they become really still when you approach them, so it's easy to take good photos. The trees should look much better in the summer. Still, it's really beautiful." (Google review, untranslated)*

2: Taking a picture of Sika deer from horseback.

Like the human visitors of the park are attuned to the deer, so too are the deer attuned to the humans. And like the humans, they spend much of their time looking and listening. With 7,5 million human visitors a year, Dyrehaven is the busiest natural area in Denmark, which means the inhabitants of the park have no choice but to get used to the presence of humans. Although this means that the deer are far less anxious than those one would encounter outside of the fence, they still pay close attention to the movements around them. When people come close, the deer hold still. Usually, they do not run away. In the same way the abundance of deer influences how people move their bodies in Dyrehaven, the abundance of people influences how the deer move theirs.

This way, humans and deer are entangled in a dance, a choreography of observing and being observed that goes both ways. Together with the deer, visitors perform this dance of seer and seen, spotter and spotted. It is a choreography of walking, looking, stopping, waiting, and, for the participating humans, pointing, squatting, pressing the button of the

camera. Technology, then, also makes a few moves in the dance of deer-as-encounter – turning deer into pixels and bytes on cameras and phones.

Although we can point out some of the separate components of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter, it is important to note that when considering this phenomenon, the "observer" and "observed" are epistemologically inseparable (Barad, 2003:815). While the intra-action between humans and deer consists of looking and being looked at, there is no separation between the seer and the seen when it comes to the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter. Following Barad's line of reasoning, the components of phenomena are ontologically inseparable, meaning that there is no observer without observed. The phenomenon of deer-as-encounter, then, can only be done by seer *and* seen, observer *and* observed, as these relata exist only in intra-action.

5.1.1 Deering in place

Although visitors and deer play an important role in constituting the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter, there are myriad other actors at play here. I want to draw special attention to the role of the landscape and material surroundings when it comes to constituting deer-phenomena. "One is not simply a body," writes Butler, "but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, *one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well*" (1988:521, emphasis is mine). Performativity, Butler points out, is rooted in one's personal and social history. Several feminist geographers have argued for the addition of a spatial dimension to this understanding. Geiger and Hovorka, for example, insist that "performativity is the sociospatial process of becoming a particular body in a particular place" (2015:113). They emphasize the spatial dynamics that underlie performative processes, arguing that when considering subjects or experiences, we must also consider the situation in which they occur, as each always, in part, constitutes the other. "To *be* is to be *somewhere*", write Bondi and Davidson (2003:24). Considering performativity as a process of becoming located in a specific space, I would rather say: to *become* is to become somewhere.

The ways in which deering can be done in Dyrehaven are unavoidably influenced by the spatial dimensions of the park and the everyday practices that happen in it. Although, arguably, humans and wildlife find themselves in elaborate choreographies in many different situations, the specificities of this particular dance are tied to its location. The sheer number of deer that live in Dyrehaven, and the possibility for humans of getting close to them, are part of what makes this dance unique. In ways, it is wondrously intimate, involving a

closeness between deer and humans that is hard to replicate anywhere else. The scale of the dance, too, is particular to its location, with millions of visitors intra-acting with thousands of deer on just a small stage.

"On an agential realist account," writes Barad, "discursive practices are not human-based activities but rather specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted" (2003:828). The landscape, then, enacts agency within the intra-action of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter. The encounter between deer and humans is also an encounter with trees, bushes, grasslands, walking paths and feeding lanes. The landscape affords certain movements, of humans following paths and deer following food and vegetation. Moreover, the qualities of the landscape are what makes these encounters possible in the first place.

Crucially, then, not only humans and deer perform the dance of deer-as-encounter, it is also danced by the materiality of the environment. The fence surrounding Dyrehaven, for one, has an important part to play, both in establishing the boundaries of the stage and in creating an uncrossable border for one (or thousands) of the dance partners. Therefore, the existence of the fence is a condition for the existence of the dance. Of course the fence was placed there by humas, meaning that although all parties are equally necessary for the choreography to exist, the power each party has to manipulate the dance is unequally distributed. The humans are the instigators, they decide when the dancing happens. By no means does this imply that the deer enact no agency – they decide in what ways they join in and their actions elicit bodily responses from participating humans. However, their agency is limited in the way that many companion species' agency is limited: they do not have the option to leave, bounded by the affordances of the landscape, which were formed by its human managers. It becomes clear then, that in the dance between humans and deer, the humans take the lead. The power relations at play within different deer phenomena merit deeper consideration, and I will expand on these more thoroughly in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

5.1.2 Paying attention

Importantly, the dance of deer-as-encounter is continuously changing, depending on who joins in and, significantly, how long the dancing has been going on. The more deer and visitors find each other in this dance, the more they intra-act, the less elaborate the choreography becomes. Specific to the space of Dyrehaven, is how used the deer are to being around people all the time, heeding them far less than deer living outside the fence. For the humans, too, the initial thrill of seeing a 'wild' animal wanes after a while. I notice this too

when walking around the park. After an hour or so, I stop pointing and hardly pause to look at the deer. Instead of focusing on movements between the bushes, I start concentrating more on my conversation with my partner.

Not *actively* paying attention to the deer does not mean, however, that I pay no attention to them at all. Merleau-Ponty (2002) discerns between primary and secondary attention. Secondary attention can be compared to shining a spotlight. It is “an act of will undertaken by the subject who, under certain circumstances, can direct her or his gaze toward a particular event, object or person” (D’Angelo, 2020:970). In Dyrehaven, the expectation of deer drives this secondary attention. I know I might see them, which is why upon entering the park, I actively and consciously pay attention to any sign of them.

However, I am not in complete, conscious, control of the way my attention is distributed. The basis of secondary attention is always primary attention, “a previous attentive disposition that opens up the possibility of explicitly directing our gaze towards what is of interest” (D’Angelo, 2020:970). This is an unconscious and embodied attention, activated by our senses. For example, when someone is in the middle of a conversation and hears her name called across the room, she will automatically direct her attention there. This way, the body shapes our field of experience according to its position in space and its position in relation to whatever draws our attention. So although I might not be actively directing my attention to the deer as much as during the first encounters, my body is still attuned to them: movements in the bushes will still draw my eyes.

Whereas secondary attention purely crystallizes what we were already experiencing (we choose to focus on what we are already seeing), primary attention brings about a change in the perceptual field. When our primary attention gets drawn, it changes what we (are able to) see, argues Merleau-Ponty. When we pay attention, it does not mean that we simply discover something that was already there. When our attention shifts sub- or pre-consciously, a new perceptual field, or field of experience, is created (2002:34). D’Angelo calls this the “creativity of attention”, positing that “(…) only through attention do objects acquire a determinate form and structure and thereby take on a determinate meaning in our experience” (2020:975).

Attention, then, is a crucial part of shaping what the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter can be. Of course, this is never a one-way street: attention is always a form of intra-action. In the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter, humans, deer and matter all enact the agency to draw attention, and humans and deer are capable of giving it as well. For the humans, the field of experience is always already shaped by *primary* attention. When the deer

draw the attention of the humans (or the humans of the deer), intra-action occurs and creatively shapes the deer-phenomenon. However, it is worth reflecting on what draws the visitor's *secondary* attention. Because although the dance between humans, deer and matter happens largely unconsciously, many visitors choose to actively interact with Dyrehaven's deer. What is it that instigates secondary attention; what makes humans *want* to dance with deer?

5.1.3 Dancing with difference

D'Angelo (2020:972) explains how secondary attention can only exist when it is triggered by an interest in the things we are attentive to. In Dyrehaven, the visitor's interest in the deer is one of the reasons that the intra-action between the two becomes possible – after all, the presence of the deer is one of the main reasons for people to visit the park. However, as I experienced, my interest in seeing deer wanes after encountering dozens of them. Although my primary, embodied attention will get drawn by their sounds and movement, my secondary attention starts to drift and I stop actively searching for them.

When I ask Maria, a nature interpreter with Naturstyrelsen (a job that entails both guiding and communicating with visitors), what it is that interests people about the deer, she explains that visitors ask about the different species and their different colors. The colors of some of Dyrehaven's deer are unusual: a small percentage of the red deer in Dyrehaven have white fur and some of the fallow deer's coats are black:

> *JB: "Do people ask about the white deer?"*
>
> *M: "Yeah always. Because they ask about what's different. And they think it's an albino. But it's not." – Maria, nature interpreter*

Arguably, then, although the dance of deer-as-encounter is always happening, it seems to be happening with more intensity, or perhaps more deliberately, when humans see difference. Aside from the presence of the fence, the affordances of the landscape, and the embodied attunements of both deer and humans, part of what instigates the dance of deer-as-encounter is the visitor's response to what they perceive to be different or unique. Several reviewers demonstrate this mentality:

> *"This place is great to spend the day, you can walk, cycle or have a picnic. You can see black deer and this is something unique. You can also go horseback riding if you have difficulty walking. Entrance to the park is free, the 30 minute horseback ride was 500 kr." (Google review, translated from Portuguese)*

> *"We got to the park at around 9am this morning (Thursday) and it was practically empty and serene. We rode our bikes around for a good 10 miles and it was lovely - we also found a huge group of deer (including a couple white ones!). Highly recommend if you're a nature lover." (Google review, untranslated)*

In part, the perceived uniqueness of the experience is what draws the visitor's secondary attention and makes them want to actively intra-act withing the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter. This uniqueness, for them, is found on several levels that can be visually experienced. Firstly, in the vast numbers of deer that can be encountered. Secondly, in the amount of different species that can be seen. And finally, in the unusual colors that make the deer stand out.

5.1.4 Becoming wild (1)

Although, for the visitors, secondary attention is mainly drawn by difference that can be visually experienced, it is also drawn by difference on a more fundamental level: getting close to an animal that is perceived as 'wild'. Anna Tsing (2012:144) points out how domestication is often imagined as a hard line: either an animal is part of the human world or it is out in the wild. The dichotomy between wild and domesticated animals stems from an ideological commitment to human mastery, she explains. On the one hand, it supports fantasies of domestic control, and on the other hand, of wild species self-making.

The question of what 'wildness' is exactly, then, is hard to answer. Following Tsing's argument, the distinction between what is wild and what is not is mainly ideological, yet difficult to define (and a question so big it would likely warrant its own thesis). For the time being, I will adhere to Edelblutte e.a.'s (2022) use of the terms wildlife and wild animals to refer to "nonhuman animals that live somewhat autonomously from humans, are self-sufficient, and possess the freedom to reproduce". Seen in this way, wildness is perceived as intrinsically *different* from what humans are. Whether or not the deer of Dyrehaven are actually wild animals does not matter so much. What matters is that visitors perceive them as being part of this 'wild' world that they themselves are not part of. However, within the confines of the park, they have the privilege to visit and see these wild animals from close-up:

> *"A lovely place with lovely nature. A wonderful place for an outing with the family or just a break from the city. The area is very varied, with space for walking, cycling and horse riding. There is real wildlife, so that is only a big plus." (Google review, translated from Danish)*

> *"(…) Nowhere else in the world is it possible to get as close to rutting wild stags as in*

> *Dyrehaven and international nature photographers flock to the park when the stags fight over the hind in the autumn." (Google review, untranslated)*

Together, these reviews show that visitors value getting close to "real wildlife", articulating how they see the deer as different from the wildlife that lives in, for example, a zoo. I want to emphasize here, again, the importance of the material surroundings. The deer live within a fence, in which the humans can also enter. This way, visitors are able to get closer to the 'wild animals' than they would be anywhere else. It is this unique opportunity that Dyrehaven's landscape offers, then, that draws visitors to become part of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter.

From an agential realist perspective, 'deer' are not "independent entities with inherent properties but rather beings in their differential becoming, particular material (re)configurings of the world with shifting boundaries and properties that stabilize and destabilize along with specific material changes in what it means to be [deer]" (Barad, 2003:818). The wildness of the deer, in this sense, is not an essence but a becoming, arising from the intra-action between deer, humans and other matter. The deer act in unpredictable ways, while humans perform a learned reverence when dealing with animals they perceive as 'wild'. This becoming of deer-as-wild-animal is, in its turn, part of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter. Through becoming wild animals, the deer become sought-after encounters.

Being a constitutive part of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter, this intra-active performance of wildness influences our choreography. Employees of Naturstyrelsen explain how being wild, the deer are in some ways uncontrollable and can act in unpredictable, sometimes dangerous ways. Because of this, the organization warns people to not cross herds and to keep their dogs on short leashes as to not come between the calves and their mothers. Deer attacks are uncommon, but when they do happen they can be fatal – although the accidents in Dyrehaven, luckily, have not had fatal outcomes:

> *"There was a woman running and there was a herd standing across the road. In her mind she thought: they will just move when I'm coming. They usually move. So instead of stopping or waiting for them or just taking another way around, she just went through. She got kicked and had a big scar. Very seldom it happens. But usually it's because people don't know enough." – Maria, nature interpreter*

While humans take the lead during most of the dance of deer-as-encounter, in their wildness, the deer become the leading dance partners. The choreography of deer-as-encounter can only function through mutual respect. Would visitors not respect the deer's space, or would the deer not respect the visitor's wishes to come close, dangerous situations could occur and

Dyrehaven would not be set-up the way it is now. Seen like this, being a good dance partner is the deciding prerequisite for the dance of deer-as-encounter to exist. And what being a good dance partner entails, is decided by the wild agency of the deer.

5.1.5 On becoming deer-as-encounter

In this section, I have shown how deering in Dyrehaven is a dance of encountering and being encountered. In becoming deer-as-encounter, Dyrehaven's material surroundings play a deciding role. The way deering can be done is inevitably shaped by the spatial dimensions of the park and the everyday practices that happen in it. The fence surrounding the park, the feeding lanes, and the walking paths are just some of the material aspects of the surroundings that facilitate close-up intra-action between deer and visitors. In Dyrehaven, humans and deer have come to expect one another, becoming attuned to each other's movements. Humans take the lead in this dance and it is their interest in the deer that, for a large part, brings the dance into existence. This interest is guided by what the park's visitors perceive as being different: different colors and different species. Most importantly, the deer offer a different *experience* – the experience of being close to 'wild' animals – a closeness that is, again, facilitated by the fence. Becoming wild, then, is an inextricable component of becoming deer-as-encounter.

3: The entrance to Jægersborg Dyrehave near Klampenborg station. (image: Google Street View)

5.2 Unmanageable nature managers

Although Dyrehaven's deer become sought-after encounters for visitors, this is not the main reason that Naturstyrelsen keeps them in the park. During their lives, the deer play an important role in preserving Dyrehaven's historic landscape. In this section, I will consider the ways in which the deer become nature managers, continuing to reflect on the role of materiality and of their wildness in this becoming.

Jægersborg Dyrehave is one of the most biodiverse areas in Denmark. Besides deer, the area is currently home to wildlife ranging from black woodpeckers and tawny owls, to ravens, kingfishers and medicinal leeches. Although the area is well-known for its ancient oak trees and hawthorns, nearly all Danish tree species can be found here. Dead trees are not removed, but are left to rot, attracting many insects, which in their turn attract birds. Additionally, Dyrehaven has the greatest diversity of mushrooms to be found anywhere in Denmark - perhaps not thanks to, but in spite of the abundant deer. You will not find fungi on the ground in Dyrehaven, but up in the trees, above the reach of the game, more than 300 different species thrive (Naturstyrelsen (c), n.d.).

Although deer might pose a threat to low-growing fungi, they play a critical role in maintaining the semi-open landscape and age-old woodlands of Jægersborg Dyrehave. By grazing the grassland and browsing shrubs and trees, the deer ensure the landscape does not get overgrown with trees. For Naturstyrelsen, this is of the utmost importance, primarily because of the area's heritage status. In 2015, the par force hunting landscape of North Zealand was granted the status of UNESCO world heritage. Encompassing Jægersborg Dyrehave and Hegn, as well as the two forests of Store Dyrehave and Gribskov, the landscape was once worked extensively to make it fit for the par force hunt. Jægersborg Dyrehave was the very first area to be adapted to the par force hunt in Denmark, as its open woodland and flat landscape were perfectly suited for chasing deer unrestrictedly. To facilitate the chase in the entire park, a simple grid of hunting rides was created in the more thickly wooded areas. In Store Dyrehave and Gribskov, more extensive networks of hunting rides were constructed according to the latest mathematical and geometrical principles. Long, straight, intersecting rides created multiple stars that allowed for an almost infinite subdivision of the forest into regular sections. With these transformations, the entire area became emblematic of the power the absolute monarch had in society, and of the influence of Baroque values in Europe on landscape design (UNESCO, n.d.). In Jægersborg Dyrehave, Gribskov and Store Dyrehave, it is still visible how "absolutist rulers of Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries exerted their power physically on the world in which they moved, through the architecture of their castles, gardens and parks, and even through their design of the surrounding landscape" (Baagøe, 2015:10).

Nowadays, it is mainly up to the deer to maintain the look of the cultural-historical landscape of Jægersborg Dyrehave. Perhaps ironically, they are co-responsible for the upkeep of an area that was once created to facilitate the hunting of their ancestors. These days, the

deer serve as a means to an end for Naturstyrelsen: they are nature managers by proxy (Thomas, 2022:8). They act on behalf of humans in managing the landscape.

Nonhuman animals working with or for humans is, of course, common. For example, humans often work with together with dogs (e.g. Haraway, 2008; Knight and Sang, 2020) and horses and donkeys are regularly employed to work the land (e.g. Geiger and Hovorka, 2015), as are cows (e.g. Hansen, 2014). Like these domesticated animals, the deer perform work for humans. But unlike donkeys and horses, they cannot be trained. Although deer can get used to being close to humans, it is difficult (or even impossible) to tell them what to do and where to go. For the deer, this makes their job fairly simple: they merely have to eat whatever they feel like eating and walk where they feel like walking. For Naturstyrelsen, working with undomesticated animals poses a slight challenge. The deer are, in a way, unmanageable managers. The only way to influence their management is by making sure there are places they cannot go and cannot reach – by putting up fences.

5.2.1 Agential fences

For Barad, agency is not specifically human - and not even something specific to human and nonhuman animals. "Agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity (…)", they write. "Agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has" (2003:826). Agency arises from intra-action, and both human and nonhuman actors can enact this agency. Following from this, the material world is an agential component of phenomena. Or simply put: in intra-action, matter has the power to influence other matter.

This becomes especially clear when looking at deer-as-nature-managers. The material surroundings, particularly the fences both outside and within the park, play a fundamental role in constituting the phenomenon of deer-as-nature-manager. Whether humans want them to or not, deer, like many animals, are always shaping their surroundings. They eat, poop, and walk, influencing the landscapes they find themselves in. For the deer living outside of the fence, this is not management so much as it is survival or even simply living. For the deer within the fence, though, this is different. By being kept in and being kept out, they are made into nature managers.

Management can be defined as "the control and organization of something" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), meaning that as nature managers, the deer are meant to control and organize their surroundings. The fence around Dyrehaven creates a boundary, a limit that directs the deer to consume only the vegetation that grows within its borders. Without it

there, the deer would not be managers of Dyrehaven. For one, they would likely move away, as many more deer are needed to maintain the landscape of Dyrehaven than would normally live together in an area of this size. Importantly, the fence ensures that the number of deer needed to control the growth of the vegetation stays within the confines of the park.

On the other hand, the fences within the park are put up to keep the deer *out* of places. They make sure that the deer cannot get to all the greenery they want to eat, steering them instead towards places that are easier reached. Would these fences not be there, the landscape would change completely:

> *"There's a fenced area up by the castle, near the golf court. It's quite interesting to look at what the trees look like when the deer can reach them. And then look at the area that is completely fenced off. If you look at the grazed area, there's no new trees or bushes coming up. So this is not.. this is not wild nature." – Maria, nature interpreter.*

The choreography of deer-as-nature-managers is one of keeping in and, as Maria points out, keeping out. Through having their movements controlled, the deer assist in controlling the landscape. Although it are in effect the fences that guide the deer's movements, these were, of course, put up by the human employees of Naturstyrelsen. By limiting the places where they can and cannot go, bounding them to Dyrehaven and then steering them certain ways by keeping them out of places, Naturstyrelsen, in intra-action with the fences, turns the deer into nature management proxies.

However, the deer still enact agency within this intra-active phenomenon. While they are limited in their options, within those limits, they decide what they do and do not eat and where they do and do not go. Through their actions, they create not only a livable place for a range of critters, but also a place of beauty, hailed by visitors as being "magical" and "beautiful":

> *"It's an very impressive place, with beautiful surroundings and amazing landscapes! A nature reserves park, known also for it's ancient solitary oak and hawthorn and for his population of red- and fallow dear!" (Google review, untranslated)*

In the intra-active dance of deer-as-nature-managers, the deer take the lead on a podium that is too small for them. The deer are both controlled and in control, managed and managing. They move across the landscape, drawn by palatable vegetation. The only way for Naturstyrelsen to control their movements is by putting up fences to guide them. And, significantly, although it is a restrictive dance of erected boundaries, it is one that creates beauty in the end.

5.2.2 Becoming wild (2)

Interestingly, the landscape that is born from this dance, is not only perceived as being "magical" or "beautiful", but also as "wild" nature. As pointed out by Maria above, as by the reviewer below, most visitors aren't aware of the level of management of the area:

> *"A relaxing place for picnic and for kids to explore. If possible, it will be a good place to cycle around as the compound is HUGE! There are options for renting horse carriages too if you want. But great way to unwind your weekend, with some food to snack on. Saw many deers roaming around and they look really free, with no interference from humans. Love it!" (Google review, untranslated)*

The paradox here is intriguing. On the one hand, the deer of Dyrehaven are undomesticated – they are 'wild' animals. And through grazing and browsing the vegetation in the landscape, they contribute to the creation of a park that is, by many visitors, perceived as 'wild' nature. However, as Naturstyrelsen's employees point out, the area is explicitly un-wild – it is a highly managed park, both by the deer and by Naturstyrelsen's human nature managers, who, for example, use dynamite to break down dying trees (blowing up trees makes them look like they were struck by thunder and prevents them from falling on their own, combining safety measures with the image of natural-ness).

Perhaps counterintuitively, the deer play an important part in making Dyrehaven *less* wild – they help control and organize what the area looks like. Dyrehaven is a UNESCO world heritage site, and so needs to be maintained in a way that preserves its history. But it is also an attraction for millions of visitors each year. And of course, for the numerous flora and fauna that live here, it is home. For reasons of heritage, tourism and biodiversity Naturstyrelsen wants to keep the landscape as is. By grazing and browsing, the deer assist in this. Deer-as-nature-managers, then, is a dance that creates a perceived wilderness that is actually a removed wilderness, a dance in which the hard-to-control deer help create a thoroughly controlled landscape. Here, it becomes clear how the phenomenon of deer-as-nature-manager is not only *constituted by* its environmental surroundings, it is itself *constitutive of* these surroundings.

5.2.3 On becoming deer-as-nature-manager

As explained in this section, deering in Dyrehaven means becoming a proxy for nature management. This Naturstyrelsen's main reason for keeping the deer in the park: they help maintain the look of its cultural-historical landscape. However, it is difficult to control where the deer go and what they eat. The only means to influence how the deer perform their

management is by erecting fences. These fences enact agency in intra-action: they guide the deer's movements. In this way, the material surroundings play a fundamental role in constituting the phenomenon of deer-as-nature-manager. At the same time, the deer-as-nature-managers also play a fundamental role in constituting their material surroundings, creating a landscape that is experienced as "magical", "beautiful" and "wild".

Although the deer are responsible for effecting extensive environmental change, and they, in many ways, take the lead in this choreography, humans are by no means absent in this dance. While placing fences is Naturstyrelsen's main means to control specifically which vegetation the deer eat, its employees *can* influence the *amount* of vegetation that is eaten by controlling the number of eaters. For the dance of deer-as-nature-managers to work, around two thousand deer are needed. This means that at any time of year, around two thousand deer can be seen all over the park. This way, the phenomenon of deer-as-nature-managers is an intrinsic part of the phenomenon of deer-as-encounter. Only because so many deer are needed to maintain the look of the park, is it possible to encounter so many deer from up-close.

Yet it is a precarious balance on which the deer's nature management functions. Would there be more deer, the park would be eaten bare. Would there be less, it would get overgrown. Either way, a different number of deer would completely change the landscape. However, deer are notoriously quick procreators. Every year, around seven-hundred fawns are born in Dyrehaven. To make sure the scales do not tip and the landscape does not change, Naturstyrelsen shoots as many deer as are born each year. From September to March, over a hundred deer are shot monthly. The existence of the phenomenon of deer-as-nature-managers, then, is intrinsically related to the deer becoming targets. To become a deer living in Dyrehaven is, for many of them, to become a deer dying in Dyrehaven.

6. Dying

> *"End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take." – J.R.R. Tolkien*

Deering in Dyrehaven is characterized by dying in Dyrehaven. Within the confines of the park, becoming a target is an intrinsic part of what it means to be a deer. To be able to successfully fulfill their role as nature managers, which is itself a fundamental part of their becoming encounters, only a limited number of deer are allowed to live in the park. To guarantee the preservation of the park's cultural historic landscape, Naturstyrelsen shoots a third of the animals each year – the same number that is born.

Throughout this chapter, I aim to reflect on the role power relations play within the deer phenomenon. Although all components of the deer phenomenon enact agency, it is my belief that this agency is not equally distributed. This power imbalance becomes clearest in the phenomenon of deer-as-targets. I will argue that becoming targets is the result of the exercise of biopower (Foucault, 2003), and will consider how the deer-as-targets are made killable out of care.

6.1 Making live and letting die

Six-hundred-and-seventy. That is the number of deer that need to be shot this season, according to the chart I have in front of me. I am sitting at a long wooden table in one of Naturstyrelsen's offices in Dyrehaven, near the northeastern corner of the park close to Kongens Lyngby. The space, which is located in an old farmhouse, has more of a clubhouse than an office feel to it. The southern wall of the long room is adorned with a red deer skull. In the opposite corner, a taxidermy fallow deer solemnly watches over my conversation with Niels and Tobias, two of Naturstyrelsen's gamekeepers.

It is 7:30AM on a Monday in late November. The first snow of the year has fallen the night before, covering the hills of Jægersborg Dyrehave in a white dusting. Embraced by a quiet darkness, the park serves as a beautiful backdrop for my meeting with the gamekeepers. Each year from September to February, one of their main tasks is managing the deer population of the park. Managing, in this case, means culling – Niels and Tobias are responsible for shooting deer. Today, I am joining them.

Up until now, two-hundred deer have been shot, which, according to the chart, means that four-hundred-and-seventy deer still need to be shot before the culling season's end.

These numbers are not randomly decided. The goal with culling is to maintain an equilibrium in the number of deer that exist in the park. Niels explains that the deer's grazing and browsing is necessary to keep the park looking the way it does. The goal is to create an open tree line, where deer eat the trees up to a certain height. To keep the landscape open, around two-thousand deer are needed. However, most hinds will have one to three babies each year, meaning that if Naturstyrelsen would not interfere, the population would soon grow. For the deer, then, being killed is intrinsically related to the successfulness of their job as nature managers. For Naturstyrelsen, culling is a byproduct of nature management. The death of the deer serves as a means to an end: it is deemed necessary for maintaining the landscape.

Importantly, the deer do not get shot at random – there is a rhythm and order to who gets shot when. When the culling season starts in September, fallow deer are the main target. The following months, when autumn is in full swing, red deer calves and hinds get shot – "as many as possible before new year's day", Niels explains. This way, they try to avoid shooting hinds away from their calves in January and February, as that would leave the calves to fend for themselves in winter, which they would be unlikely to survive.

Aside from looking at specific species and ages, the shooters always aim to cull the weakest animals in any group, as shooting the weaker specimen guarantees a strong population. In general, the deer in Dyrehaven are extremely healthy, explains Niels. Moreover, they are well-known for their sizeable antlers. "We shoot the weakest animals", he explains, "we don't just look at antlers, but a young stag with weak antlers usually indicates a weak body". When I ask why they choose to shoot the deer that they deem weaker, he tells me: "To me, it's mainly that that is what a wolf would do. I want to emulate or simulate that."

Like for deer-as-encounters and for deer-as-nature-managers, 'wildness' plays a role in the phenomenon of deer-as-targets. In this case, the gamekeepers themselves try to emulate what would happen in 'the wild' - a wolf would prey on the weakest members of the herd. In reality, Dyrehaven's deer will likely never encounter wolves. Only one wolfpack currently resides in Denmark and it is situated in Jutland, on the other side of the country. Even for the deer's ancestors, it would have been unlikely to be killed by wolves, as before the wolfpack settled in the country in 2017, wolves had been extinct in Denmark for two-hundred years (Barkham, 2021). However, as a frame of reference the wolves still influence what it means to become deer-as-target. Seen like this, the phenomenon of deer-as-targets is constituted in the intra-action between not only humans, deer, and matter, but also ideas. Notably, the relation to an imagined wolf influences who gets shot and who gets to live in order to maintain population numbers.

Although Naturstyrelsen aims to maintain a stable deer population, shooting up to a third of the population each year serves other purposes. If there are more deer than there is food available, their numbers would self-regulate, so to speak. Even though Naturstyrelsen provides additional food for the deer, such as oats, grains, and beets, this is not enough to sustain the entire population throughout winter. Without culling, weaker deer would perish from hunger. Controlling the number of deer, then, has a twofold purpose: it serves as a regulatory mechanism to safeguard the life of the landscape-as-is, while also being a way of making sure the population as a whole thrives. This approach to deer management is a clear example of what Michel Foucault called 'biopower' – a "technology of power" (Foucault, 2003:242), which deals with subjects as a population, instead of as individuals. Although the subjects implied in Foucault's writings and lectures were humans, the concept has absolutely proven itself applicable for multispecies research as well (e.g. Srinivasan, 2013; Wolfe, 2013; Asdal e.a., 2016).

Biopower is the power "to make live and let die" (Foucault, 2003), which is directed at fostering and managing the lives of populations, rather than individuals. Forecasts and statistics such as the ones used by Naturstyrelsen are characteristic of biopower's regulatory mechanisms, as these "must be established to establish an equilibrium, maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis, and compensate for variations within this general population and its aleatory field" (Foucault, 2003:246). The intention with these figures is not primarily to interfere with individual animals, but to influence the broader context of the species as a whole.

Fostering the life of the population has proved successful in Dyrehaven. Because weaker animals get shot, only the healthy genes survive. This is why the deer in Dyrehaven are extraordinarily strong and vital, explains Niels. Additionally, their antlers are award-winning. Shooting the small-antlered specimens has caused the population as a whole to have larger-than-average antlers. According to an internationally ratified system to score the quality and size of antlers, they are world class, he tells me.

This produced vitality makes the deer attractive for other deer parks as well. Although shooting is the main way Naturstyrelsen controls the population, a small number of deer is captured and sold alive each year. Live capture starts in early spring, when the culling season is over. To capture the deer, the gamekeeper shoots them with an immobilization drug. Whereas shooting deer with rifles can be done from dozens of meters away, the immobilization guns do not quite have that range. Because of this, the gamekeepers need to get close to the deer they want to bring in. Feeding is the only opportunity for this. In earlier

days, Naturstyrelsen's gamekeepers would chase the deer with a terrain vehicle. Nowadays, though, they have constructed camouflaged high stands on the feeding lanes in order to limit the stress that is put on the deer. It is still a little stressful for them, Niels explains, "but not as stressful as shooting them and seeing their friends die".

After the deer is hit, it takes five to seven minutes for them to be immobilized. The gamekeeper makes sure to maintain visual contact with the deer the entire time, as to not lose them. The deer is then taken away and treated with antibiotics. Afterwards, they get placed into a box that fits exactly one animal. With nowhere to move, they are given an antidote to wake up. The box is then loaded onto a truck and shipped to the buyer, usually owners of some sort of deer enclosure, for example in other parts of Denmark or in Germany, who usually either want a new population, or want to supplement their population with good genes, explains Niels. Buyers pay 29.000 Danish crowns + VAT for a 3,5 year old red deer. A fallow doe costs 9.000 + VAT. As the deer become targets, then, they become commodities, living goods to be exchanged.

Although becoming a target does not necessarily mean the deer *have* to die, the vast majority of the deer-as-targets *do* die. Live capture accounts for a few dozen deer each year, nowhere near the hundreds that get killed. Although biopower's goal is fostering life, then, its effects are not harmless (Srinivasan, 2014:506) since it legitimizes violence as a necessary means to promote population vitality: "It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed" (Foucault, 2008:137). This entanglement of harm and care is characteristic of biopower's workings. Naturstyrelsen shoots deer to provide them with what they consider both a good life, where the surviving deer can grow into strong and healthy specimens, and a good death, that takes their well-being into consideration – it is better to be shot than starved.

6.2 Becoming killable

According to Donna Haraway, if we want to co-flourish as different species, we should not take seriously the command 'Thou shalt not kill', as it is rooted in human exceptionalism, making humans the sole arbiter of righteousness, the species that decides whether others get to live. Rather, she argues, we should hold to a command that "(…) makes us face nurturing and killing as an inescapable part of mortal companion species entanglements, namely, "Thou shalt not make killable"" (Haraway, 2008:105). Not making others killable does not equal not killing others. It means that killing, if it is deemed necessary (but knowing that it is never necessary enough), needs to be done responsibly. But before we can understand what it

means to kill responsibly, we need to understand how others are made killable in the first place.

8:00 AM. With their rifles slung over their shoulders, Niels and Tobias step into their Jeep to embark on their culling mission. I join them in the front seat of the pick-up truck. Tobias drives through the park at a rapid pace for a few minutes, until we reach a T-junction where Niels and I get out of the car. He and I will proceed on foot, while Tobias will use the car to try to make herds of deer move towards us. While we are walking through the snowy forest, I ask Niels whether he can recognize which deer they shoot – do they know which individual is which? He answers something along the lines of: “You mean if I know that this is deer B522 or something? No, I don’t”.

His statement is telling of how mechanisms of biopower work to make the deer killable, by treating them as a population instead of individuals. As anyone who has ever thought up a name for an insect in their home knows: it is easier to kill someone whose name you do not know. “It is a sign of respect to call a being by its name, and a sign of disrespect to ignore it”, writes biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer. “Words and names are the ways we humans build relationship, not only with each other, but also with plants” (2003:12). Seen like this, naming is an act of care, recognizing the person-hood of other beings. Learning the deer’s names would make them more difficult to kill, which might be why in the culling process, the deer are unnamed and de-personified. Their individual identities do not matter. What matters is whether they check the right boxes: do they belong to the species and age group that needs to be shot today? Treating the deer as a population, as numbers or categories instead of individuals, contributes to them being made killable.

Another important aspect to the deer becoming killable can be found in the language used. Shooting deer to control their population is not called killing, it is called ‘culling’. When it comes to deer, the practice of culling is similar to hunting. After all, both activities have killing animals as their goal and, at least when it comes to culling in Dyrehaven, both involve tracking animals outside and firing rifles. When I ask Niels what he believes the difference between the two is, he finds it difficult to answer, telling me: “You still take a life”. The difference, I believe, is in the way power is exerted. Hunting is aimed at the individual, its goal is to kill one (or more) specifically chosen specimen(s). Culling, however, is always biopolitical in nature. Although individuals are shot, the aim of culling is to make the population as a whole thrive. While hunting and culling can be defined in slightly different ways, then, their goal is the same: killing deer. Trampe (2017) calls words such as ‘culling’ euphemizations: substitutes for words that can serve to block out empathy. This

linguistic shift, he argues, can work as "a barrier in the realization and assumption of responsibility" (2017:335). In a way, euphemizations hide what is actually happening and take away responsibility from the ones actually doing the killing.

Barad urges us to not think of discourse as what is said, but instead consider it as that which constrains and enables what can be said (2003:819). With this, they do not mean that language is not a part of discourse, but instead insist we pay close attention to the *doings* of that language. "Language is the dwelling place of ideas that do not exist anywhere else. It is a prism through which to see the world", argues Kimmerer (2013:258), explaining how the words we have to describe our world influence the way we experience it. Following Barad, we should take this a step further: language is not just a prism through which to see the world, it is a prism that *shapes* the world. This way, something as seemingly small as one word chosen to describe one act can contribute to making others killable.

8:30 AM. We have walked through the forest, making conversation for twenty-odd minutes. Mid-sentence, Niels stops and pivots to face a herd of deer crossing the path behind us. He puts up his tripod and aims, following the smallest fawn with his rifle. He does not shoot – the herd is moving quickly and too many other deer are surrounding the fawn. Following close behind, another fawn, slightly bigger but still young, lingers in the middle of the path. I hear a loud shot, the scurrying of hooves and a body dropping. Then silence. First the deer become killable, then they become targets, then they become dead.

6.3 Dancing with death

The second time I join Niels and Tobias is in late February. The end of the culling season is nearing: this is the last week they will be shooting deer. Niels explains they have shot around five-hundred-and-sixty deer up to now. He wants to stop shooting because he thinks the animals are getting too stressed. However, he is not entirely sure if it will be enough. Tobias thinks that maybe another week of shooting is needed.

This time we are joined by Lars, the third gamekeeper of Dyrehaven. He and Tobias get into one car, while Niels and I get into another. We drive across the park towards the Eastern edge, close by the sea, where we get out to continue through the fields on foot. It is grey today and the February wind cuts through our warm coats. We move quietly, Niels guiding the way towards some fenced in bushes. He peeks around the corner of the fence at a herd of deer standing in a marsh between the trees. He gestures me to walk parallel alongside them, but not towards them. "Be as civilian as possible!", he urges. Amused, I ask what he

means. He explains that moving too stealthily would – quite counterintuitively – alert the animals, as they are watchful of predators sneaking around.

Niels' movements are quick and goal-oriented. We hide behind some birch trees, where we try to stay out of sight of the deer for ten or fifteen minutes. Standing still, I can hear woodpeckers and jackdaws around us. An icy wind blows in from the sea. Niels keeps blowing on his fingers, which are only partly covered by fingerless gloves, to keep them warm. Cold fingers are no good for shooting, he explains.

4: Waiting, looking, aiming. (A herd of deer is hidden among the trees).

In many ways, the choreography we dance today is similar to the one I followed as a visitor seeking to find deer in the park. Like visitors, we are scanning the vegetation for any sign of movement, continuously alert to the possibility of encountering deer. In both cases, a large part of the intra-action between humans and deer consists of both species standing and looking at each other. Crouching, too, is part of both choreographies, albeit with a different goal. Whereas as a visitor, I would crouch to get closer to the deer, today we crouch to stay hidden from them. And although both visitors and gamekeepers 'shoot' deer, the goal of the first shooter is significantly less deadly (and more aesthetically pleasing) than the second. Although there are many similarities, the where and when of the dance of deer-as-encounter and deer-as-target differ. Visitors encounter deer near the paths, especially along feeding lanes, all day but mostly on the weekends. For culling, Niels and I veer off-track and try to move away from other people.

The ways in which the shooters move in the park also stands in stark contrast to the movement of hunters during the *par force* hunt. For the absolute monarchs, the hunt was a ceremonial and extravagant display of power, but for the gamekeepers, culling is simply a job with targets that need to be met. Culling happens in the early mornings – mainly for safety reasons, Niels explains: the safety of the visitors always comes first. But because of this, culling also stays fairly hidden from the public eye. Whereas in the 17th and 18th century, hunting was a grand ceremony characterized by pomp and circumstance, nowadays culling is a quiet business. The dozens of hounds and men on horses have been replaced by three gamekeepers, sometimes in pick-up trucks and sometimes on foot. The horns that were used by *par force* hunters to sound their location across the park have transformed into radios and earpieces, and only the gamekeepers are privy to the communicated information.

Performativity is always sociohistorical, explains Butler: "[t]he act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again" (1988:526). Butler argues how performance is iterative citationality, pointing out how the performance of gender is a citation of all previous performances of gender. However, what this fails to make clear is how, although the script is rehearsed, it changes over time. Barad (2003:828) argues that instead of iterative citationality, performativity should be considered to be iterative intra-activity. From their perspective, phenomena are always intra-actively becoming, meaning phenomena change over time. As long as deer have been living in Dyrehaven, they have been living there as targets. However, becoming deer is not just a process rooted in space, it is also rooted in a particular time: deering in Dyrehaven today is unlike deering in Dyrehaven in 1800, and will likely be different from deering in a hundred years. Seen like this, it is not just matter that makes up a phenomenon, it is matter *in time*.

The where and when are not the only difference between the dance of deer-as-encounter and deer-as-target. The human participants in the dance, too, differ. Instead of hundreds of visitors, we are just four people dancing with this herd of deer. While Niels and I hide behind trees, Tobias and Lars are behind a hill where we cannot see them. The boggy area where the deer are standing lies between us. Niels uses his radiophone to communicate our position with them. The goal is for them to drive the herd our way, and for Niels to drive the herd back in their direction – effectively trapping the deer between the shooters.

The deer start to move towards us and Niels aims his rifle, stabilizing it along the side of a tree trunk. He shoots, and misses – the sound echoing across the landscape. He aimed too far behind the deer, he explains. We move to another tree a few meters away and I can see the herd standing restlessly in the lower-lying marsh. Niels kneels and I follow, hiding from view. After a minute, he rises up, props up his gun on the trunk of a fallen tree, and shoots. For a while, I am unsure whether the bullet has hit. The herd runs back and forth along the road, in and out of view. I hear multiple gunshots behind the bushes on the hill a few hundred meters away – Tobias and Lars. If you hear Tobias fire four shots, Niels tells me, that means he has shot four deer – Tobias is good at his job.

The first shot signals the start of the second part of the choreography of deer as targets. The deer start moving frantically, trying to escape the trap the humans have set for them. The game of hide-and-seek turns into another game of cat-and-mouse. The gamekeepers are not always successful in trapping the deer between them – it is hard to predict which way they will run when provoked. This time, though, Niels, Tobias and Lars have succeeded. The deer are moving back and forth between the cullers, trying to get away from the deathly sounds of rifles fired. Clearly, the humans have taken the lead and have forced the deer into a dance with them. The dance of deer and culler is one of quiet, cautious movement and targeted trapping, of restless watchfulness, panic and then stillness. It starts with both deer and human moving in the hopes of not being seen by the other. And, usually, it ends with death.

A young deer lays in the grassy wetness of the marsh, its fur strikingly white against the mossy green. I never saw it fall, but from our other culling outing I know what its last living steps likely looked like: head shaking, tripping back and forth and then, after just seconds, dropping down. Niels hit it twice – once in the neck and once near the heart. Culling is meant to be a clean death; the gamekeepers always aim for the heart, using an exploding bullet that ensures a quick passing. The deer is small, but at 50 kilograms already quite heavy. His modest antlers reveal his age, explains Niels. He is a yearling, about a year and a half – a little older than what they are usually aiming for at this time of year.

As we reach the top of the hill, Tobias and Lars drive up in their truck, the pick-up filled with dead fawns. When they take the white deer to throw it in with the rest, I notice Lars' hands are covered in blood. We get a ride back to our own car, standing on the bed of the pick-up, towering over the bodies. I try to make sure not to step on them.

5: Niels drags the deer he just shot up a hill.

6.4 Powerful intra-actions

Nowhere do the power relations at play in Dyrehaven become as clear as in the dance of deer-as-target. Although Barad argues that all matter has agency in intra-action, different components of phenomena undoubtedly exert power in different measures. Through this, it seems that certain agencies can sometimes be limited (although they are never absent). The fence that was erected around Dyrehaven, for one, is a clear example of humans limiting the ways in which deer can enact their agency. Although the fence does not prohibit the deer from being full agential beings, it does pose a (quite literal) boundary to how and where they can enact this agency. These power imbalances and limited agencies sit uncomfortably within Barad's framework of agential realism. Braunmühl (2018) shares this concern about the limits of Barad's theoretical framework. In particular, she criticizes Barad for what she perceives as their contribution to the devaluation of passivity. Braunmühl explains how Barad opposes the idea of passive matter, for example in their argument that "[n]ature is neither a passive surface awaiting the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances. The belief that nature is mute and immutable and that all prospects for significance and change reside in culture is a reinscription of the nature/culture dualism that feminists have actively contested" (2003:827). Passivity, argues Braunmühl, is traditionally considered a

feminine quality. According to her, Barad inadvertently reinforces gender hierarchies through opposing the idea that matter is passive in favor of seeing matter as active (traditionally masculine).

Whereas I do not entirely agree with Braunmühl's reading of Barad, I do believe she raises an important point. Where we disagree is that in my understanding, passivity is virtually absent within Barad's theoretical framework. After all, if *all* matter enacts agency - the capacity to actively respond - it follows logically that *no* matter is passive in its becoming. Although Barad mentions the word every now and then, in actuality, they do not devalue passivity so much as they *argue against its existence*. Nevertheless, I do side with Braunmühl in her claim that there is an uneasiness in Barad's framework of agential realism when it comes to dealing with intra-actions in which power is unequally distributed.

This uneasiness has to do in particular with Barad's perspective on agency and causality. According to Barad, all matter enacts agency in intra-action. Agency is not an attribute that something or someone has; rather "[a]gency is "doing" or "being" in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices - interative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetimematter relations - through the dynamics of intra-activity" (2007:178). For Barad, either matter is fully agential or it does not exist. However, when considering the phenomenon of deer-as-target (or deer-as-encounter, or deer-as-nature-manager, for that matter), it becomes clear that the measure in which this agency can be enacted is not equal for all intra-acting matter. When the deer are shot, for example, they are not robbed of their agency, as the inanimate/dead enact agency too. But by being killed, they are robbed of their *choice* of how to enact this agency. They can no longer decide where to go, what to do, how to live (choices that were already restricted in life). This way, the power relations at play within, as well as between, phenomena, can limit the measure in which agencies can be enacted.

As Barad has employed theories of both Foucault and Butler to establish the framework of agential realism, they are, of course, well aware of the influence of power relations in constituting our world. Like Foucault and Butler, Barad understands power not as an external force but as a reiterated acting. However, whereas Foucault and Butler emphasize that power is socially exercised, in Barad's understanding power is neither limited to the social nor the human. Power operates not upon a subject, but through the constitution of the subject, which has implications for what exists as cause and what exists as effect:

> "Crucial to an agential realist conception of power is a reworking of causality as intra-activity. Indeed, what is at issue is the very nature of causal relations: causal relations do not preexist but rather are intra-actively produced. What is a "cause" and what is an "effect" are intra-actively demarcated through the specific production of marks on bodies" (Barad, 2007:235)

Causes, then, are not forces that act upon the phenomenon from the outside. There is no straightforward move from cause to effect. Rather, causes and effects emerge through intra-actions. In the same way that there is no separation between observer and observed, there is no separation between actor and acted-upon, between exerciser of power and exercised-upon. Although this radically holistic perspective cleverly illuminates the entanglement of all matter, I do find it entails a risk of becoming reductionist, of denying or minimizing differences. In alignment with Braunmühl (2018:236) and Lemke (2021:76), I find that in trying to overcome dualisms and binaries, Barad risks overestimating the power of *all* matter to shape *all* phenomena. If the difference between culler and culled exists only in intra-action, who is responsible for killing the deer?

6: Culled calves in the back of the pick-up truck.

6.5 Killing and caring response-ably

In their move to emphasize the agency all matter enacts, it seems that Barad fails to consider fully the differing measures of these agencies and the power asymmetries that can limit them. This does not mean, however, that Barad is unaware of these power asymmetries. In Barad's perspective, "the acknowledgment of "nonhuman agency" does not lessen human accountability; on the contrary, it means that accountability requires that much more attentiveness to existing power asymmetries" (2007:219). This accountability, as well as responsibility, are essential to Barad's understanding of agency. Responsibility is integral to intra-action, as each intra-action becomes a relation of responsibility. Possibilities for intra-action are ever-existing and ever-changing, and these possibilities "entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world's becoming" (2007:178). Ethicality, in Barad's perspective, is part of the fabric of the world. Being (human, nonhuman, matter) means being responsible.

For Barad, this responsibility is not about calculatingly responding in the 'right' way, but about "inviting, welcoming, and enabling the response of the Other" (Barad & Kleinman, 2012:81). Seen in this way, being responsible is about recognizing response-ability – the ability to respond (a concept popularized by Haraway, 2008). In essence, for Barad, responsibility is a continuous process of opening oneself up to, and enabling, responsiveness. What kind of responses are (dis)invited, depend on the kinds of questions asked. These questions, argues Barad, "are not simply innocent queries, but particular practices of engagement" (Barad & Kleinman, 2012:81). Because of this, responsibility continuously transforms what is deemed possible or impossible. It does not arise from prescribed conditions or individuals. Rather, it emerges from the entanglement that binds us all – every single intra-action becomes a relation of responsibility.

As Lemke points out, however, placing responsibility everywhere, seeing it as entangled with all of the world, risks situating it nowhere specific. "What gets lost in this totalizing conception is a sense of particular responses to alternative normative values articulated in materializations" (2021:76). Although within the framework of agential realism Barad's placement of responsibility as entangled with the "fabric of the world" (2007:182) is reasonable, I do not believe it to be sufficiently productive when it comes to dealing with unequal power relations within intra-actions. In my perspective, there is a difference between *being* response-able and *taking* responsibility. Whereas the first simply means having the ability to respond, the second is more abstract and closely related to questions of duty and power. Although all matter is response-able in intra-action, I believe taking *responsibility*

should be expected of the ones who have the power to limit other's response-ability. Being responsible, then, means recognizing our embeddedness as humans in particular relationships, realizing that not all lives are equally valued in that relation and caring for how we are implicated in this. Following from this, considering the ways in which adult human agency is qualitatively different from other kinds of agencies (Braunmühl, 2018:236) can help us acknowledge that within the phenomenon, certain intra-actors have the privilege of limiting other intra-actors' agencies. With this I mean that humans, in particular, have the power to limit not nonhuman agency in itself, but the *ways* in which that agency can be enacted. Critically examining the power relations at play within intra-actions and recognizing the ways in which they influence agencies, then, is one important way of recognizing intra-active response-ability.

Importantly, the unequal power relations I have considered here, are themselves part and parcel to what shapes the deer-phenomenon. Like matter and time, they intra-actively determine the ways in which deering can be done. This does not exclusively apply to the choreography of deer-as-targets – power imbalances are an inherent part of what it means to become deer in Dyrehaven. After all, the deer are not in the park by choice – they were once put there and cannot get out. However, humans limiting deer's agencies is not intrinsically fatal (or even harmful, arguably). The deer are fed *and* shot, healed *and* sold, killed *and* cared for.

This shows how these unequal power relations that privilege human agencies over nonhuman agencies, bring a possibility (or necessity) for humans to be responsible and acknowledge response-ability. While Naturstyrelsen's employees kill the deer and limit their movements, they also take great care to ensure the deer are fed and healthy. And counterintuitive though it may sound, the gamekeepers try to limit the stress the deer are put through as much as possible. For example, Niels explains how they no longer shoot deer close to where they feed, in order to provide them with 'safe spaces' in the park. Additionally, he recently brought in a wounded deer that had gotten hit by another stag. Its wounds would have been fatal, but Naturstyrelsen spent 6000 Danish crowns to capture him and stitch his wounds. "You wouldn't see that anywhere else", Niels explains. It is characteristic of the care that Naturstyrelsen takes of the deer – especially of the older and stronger specimens. It is an imperfect care, rooted in inequality and impossible to be seen as separate from the harm that is also done. Nevertheless, it is a step towards the "vital ethico-affective everyday practical doings that engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existences" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012:199). By caring for the deer in this

way, recognizing the deer's response-ability, considering their ways of showing stress and pain and trying to diminish suffering, the gamekeepers work towards taking responsibility for their own entanglement in this discomfort.

6.6 On becoming deer-as-target

Throughout this chapter, I have aimed to reflect on the role power relations play when it comes to how deering can be done in Dyrehaven, arguing that power imbalances are most clearly reflected in the phenomenon of deer-as-targets. In Dyrehaven, nearly a third of the deer are shot each year, in order to ensure the population as a whole thrives. Dyrehaven's deer are made killable through the mechanics of biopower, which deals with subjects as a population, instead of as individuals. But while the imbalance of power makes the deer killable, this power also brings with it the responsibility of care. The intra-action that constitutes the phenomenon of deer-as-target, then, is not simply that of killer and killed (culler and culled). It is an intra-action of carer and cared-for as well – not between individuals, but between Naturstyrelsen and the deer population. The humans have taken the lead in this dance of deer-as-target. And while it is a choreography of stalking, trapping, shooting and dying, it is also one of careful and deliberate responsiveness. The dance of deer-as-target, then, is a dance of making live and letting die. The analytical tools of agential realism open up for ways to look at life and death not as separated but as intrinsically entangled. In the phenomenon of deer-as-target, killing and caring become one.

7. After death

> *Do I contradict myself?*
> *Very well then I contradict myself,*
> *(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*
> *– Walt Whitman*

Throughout this thesis, I have considered the ways in which the continuously changing agential intra-actions of multiple apparatuses of bodily production contribute to the shaping of different deer-phenomena in Jægersborg Dyrehave. In other words: I have analyzed how deering is done. "Apparatuses have no inherent "outside" boundary", explains Barad. "This indeterminacy of the "outside" boundary represents the impossibility of closure – the ongoing intra-activity in the iterative reconfiguring of the apparatus of bodily production." (2003:816). With this, they mean that apparatuses are not fixed structures. They are dynamic material-discursive practices that can always be rearranged, rearticulated or reworked, meaning that they can contribute to the constitution of possibly endless versions of the deer phenomenon.

This radical open-endedness caused me to wonder: is there a limit to the deer-phenomenon? When does deering end? When does a deer un-become deer? In this chapter, I aim to answer these questions (which are really all the same question), by tracing the deer after their death. I will follow the deer from slaughterhouse to restaurant and beyond, in order to determine if and when deering turns into something else.

7.1 Blood and bowels

The slaughterhouse is across the road from the park's entrance in the village of Hjortekær. It is a small barn-like building, with walls covered in black paneling and red tiles on the roof. A deer skull with impressive antlers hangs above the doorway. The pick-up truck filled with the deer's bodies is parked beneath it. The doors to the slaughterhouse are open and Lars guides me in. There are three spaces: a small office with a computer to the left, the butchering room in the middle, with white-tiled walls and gutters in the floor, and a large freezer to the right.

The deer that Naturstyrelsen shoots are sold to a butcher, who in turn sells their meat to restaurants in the area. Tobias and Lars are responsible for the gutting of the deer. When they are done, the butcher will come to pick up the disemboweled bodies in order to cut them up into separate pieces of meat. Twelve deer were shot today, which means twelve deer need to be disemboweled – quite a lot, so Lars and Tobias decide to divide the tasks, with Tobias

working outside and Lars inside. They put on their work gear: blue sterile gloves and rubber wading pants similar to the ones fishers wear. One by one, Tobias takes the bodies out of the pick-up truck and throws them into the room, while Lars sharpens his knives.

Lars drags one of the fawns to the middle of the room, where he effortlessly punches a knife through its hindlegs. He pushes a metal bar attached to a railing on the ceiling through the holes, so the deer can be strung up for easier access. With a blunt knife, as to not puncture the intestines, he cuts a small hole in the deer's lower belly. He then makes an incision down the chest, after which the guts spill out. He separates the organs from the ribs, then turns the deer around, slicing the intestines loose from the anus and finally cutting the esophagus. He takes out the heart and liver – Tobias wants to take them home to eat. The rest of the intestines fall into a bucket on the floor below the deer, blood dripping on the floor. The process takes just a few minutes.

7 (left): Gutting a deer.
8 (right): Label stating: Fallow deer, calf, she, 20,2kg (in Danish).

Soon, the air is filled with the pungent smell of feces and metal, caused by spilled blood and inadvertently punctured bowels. One by one, the deer are strung up, gutted and pulled along the rails, tongues hanging out of their mouths. Each animal is weighed by a computer system that is connected to the ceiling mechanism. That way, the deer do not need to be detached from their metal bars. Every time a deer passes the scale, the movement stops for a few seconds while Lars checks where the deer was shot. A shot through the heart not

only ensures a quick passing for the deer, it also means that most of the meat is usable (or rather: sellable). A deer with a bullet still lodged inside can only be sold for two-thirds of the price.

Lars pushes some buttons and the machine prints out a label stating the deer's species, age group, sex and weight: fallow deer, calf, she, 20.2kg. For this time of year, they aim to have the deer weigh around 20 kilograms after they are disemboweled, he explains. The white deer Niels shot is on the large side: 35 kilograms. He ties the label around the deer's leg, after which she is pulled onwards, towards the freezer. One by one, the deer drift through the blood-covered butchering room and enter the cool air of the freezer to join the bodies already hanging there. It takes just 45 minutes to gut all twelve deer. When the freezer doors close, Tobias hoses the room down with steamy hot water, red turning translucid pink as blood drains through gutters. The butcher will come to pick up the bodies on Friday.

7.2 Lively bodies

When does a deer stop being a deer? Although the deer have died, they have not un-become deer. While death is the end of life, it is not the end of the deer-phenomenon. The deering choreography, however, changes again, with new dance partners and new moves. Whereas there were many similarities to be found in the dance of deer-as-encounter and the dance of deer-as-target, the dance of deer-as-body shares little more than some of the same participants with these former choreographies.

For one, the location is different. Only as bodies do the deer get to go outside of the fences of Dyrehaven. For the first time, the fence plays no part in this dance. Instead, the white-tiled walls of the butchering building and the heavy door to the freezer create a clinical space for opening the deer up, a space that guarantees the safety not of the deer-as-animals, but of their fleshy bodies. These conditions do not protect the deer, but rather the people who will consume them.

The gamekeepers involved are the same people, but their movements have changed. Whereas during culling, gamekeepers and deer were involved in a game of cat-and-mouse, here, the humans are in full control of the movements that happen. They do not follow, they simply lead. Instead of crouching, hiding and shooting, they move almost mechanically, throwing deer into the room and gutting them one by one. This mechanicalness is found in movement, but also in matter. "On an agential realist account," writes Barad, "materiality is an active factor in processes of materialization" (2003:872). More than ever, metals shape the ways in which the deer materialize. Metal knives punch holes and open up bodies. Metal bars

and pully systems move bodies around the room. Metal doors make sure that the coolness of the freezer is contained where the bodies are. Assisted by the mechanics they intra-act with, computer and pulling system, the dance of deer-as-body is more rhythmic and static than the ones that came before.

The distinction between animate/inanimate might be one of the most persistent dualisms in Western philosophy, argues Barad. “It takes a radical rethinking of agency to appreciate how lively even ‘dead matter’ can be” (2007:419). Although the deer have died, have become inanimate bodies, they still enact agency. The deer have become unwilling (or unconsenting) dance partners, but in this dance they still influence what is happening. If it was not for the deer being there, the movements that are made would not be possible – there would be nothing to butcher. Their blood means that water, steam and soap need to be used on the floors. Moreover, the intra-action between their fleshiness and bodily fluids, and knives, floors and buckets, creates a smell so foul that it deters most of Naturstyrelsen’s employees from visiting the slaughterhouse, Lars tells me. The slaughterhouse itself, is there just for the deer – they are the only animals that move through there. Just as the deer are essential to the existence of the Jægersborg Dyrehave, then, they are essential to the existence of the slaughterhouse.

Becoming inanimate does not even seem to mean that the deer have lost their personhood. The gamekeepers call the deer-as-bodies “he” or “she” – not it. Moreover, their individuality seems to matter more in death than it did in live. Whereas in live, they were considered only as part of a population of which they were the weaker specimen that needed to be culled in order to make the rest of the population live (Foucault, 2003), in death attention is paid to their individual bodies. Each body gets labeled, and the butcher pays a price per kilogram of usable meat. Notably, then, deer bodies, gamekeepers, knives, scales and computers together shape a deer-phenomenon that is not only a dead animal, a deer-as-body, but is also definitively turned into a good with monetary value, something that can be exchanged. And by becoming goods, the deer are instrumental in the financing of Dyrehaven – a large part of the gamekeeper’s salaries is covered by the sale of the deer’s meat.

7.3 Becoming object

While most deer bodies are disemboweled in the slaughterhouse, some of them are gutted within the gates of the park. A few months a year, Naturstyrelsen uses the culled deer to educate school classes or family groups. After shooting the deer, one of the gamekeepers will take it to a predetermined place in the woods. One of Naturstyrelsen’s nature interpreters,

together with a group of visitors, will then meet up with the gamekeeper to use the deer's body as a basis for conversations about animals and biodiversity, but also about larger societal issues, such as eating meat, abortion and death.

> *"Children have lots of funny reactions. "Well, my grandma's just dead as well" or something, that is very human. Lots of interesting things [are] not what happens to the animal. It is what happens to the children. (…) You always have opinions about this. Is this all right? Then you could take it to: what kind of animals do you have in your lunch pack today? Very easy to have lots of good discussions. And if it's in January and it's a grownup female deer, you can open the uterus, you could see a little [fetus] in there with legs and eyes and things like that. Talk about abortion and lots of themes." (Maria, nature interpreter)*

When the deer are alive in the park, they are the subject of education. Regularly, people will ask questions about the deer's age, what kind of things they do in the park, what species they are, et cetera, explains Maria. In death, however, the deer become objectified. They become educational resources, vehicles to talk about different subjects. In life, the deer are subjects to be talked about. But as Maria makes clear in the quote above, in death, they become *objects* to be talked *with*.

Objectification happens when "one is treating as an object what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (Nussbaum, 1995:257). Objectification, according to Nussbaum, means making something that is really not a thing into a thing, that, moreover, lacks agency. Nussbaum departs from the assumption that the world is made up out of things and non-things. Within this context, humans, of course, are non-things – but where do other animals fit in? For years, ethologists, philosophers and animal rights scholars have argued that certain animals, such as apes, parrots and elephants, should be granted personhood and thus be considered persons (e.g. Francione, 2008) or at the very least not be considered 'things' (Korsgaard, 2013).

However, following the framework of agential realism, the world is not divided into things and non-things: "The primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations" (Barad, 2003:818). The world is made up out of agential intra-activity, meaning that things or non-things do not preexist as such. Matter is not a fixed substance but "matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency" (Barad, 2003:822). The relata, the 'things' or 'non-things', exist only in their agential intra-action with each other.

Thus, although I definitely sympathize with the movement for non-human animal personhood from a legal and animals rights perspective, from a posthumanist performativity perspective, the *difference* between persons and things does not matter so much. A phenomenon cannot be turned from a person into a thing, it can only be intra-actively transformed into a different phenomenon. Moreover, it can always enact agency. Seen in this way, objectification cannot turn some-one into some-thing. Rather, objectification intra-actively changes the becoming of the phenomenon. Objectification, becoming object, changes how deering is done. In this changed version of the deer-phenomenon, the deer's body becomes instrumental – it is treated as a tool for the nature interpreter's purposes (Nussbaum, 1995:257). So although the deer become objectified and turn into deer-as-educational-resource, they never fully become 'thing'. Objectification does not stop a deer from deering, it does not make a deer un-become deer.

The choreography of deer-becoming-educational-resource takes shape in two circles. The first circle consists of people surrounding deer body, looking, listening and asking questions. After becoming a vehicle for education, the deer is turned into two separate entities: deer body and deer organs. When the body is taken away, the organs remain in the park. The second circle of the dance, then, is made up of critters scavenging for leftovers on the forest floor. In Dyrehaven, the deer have no natural predators, and becoming food for other forest dwellers is not something they have to worry about. But as organs, the deer dance in circles of foxes, ravens and birds of prey until in the end, worms and insects will consume whatever birds and mammals leave. If the weather is warm, the organs will be gone within days. If it is colder, they might lay in the forest for weeks. This is the only time in the deer's existence that they are food for other inhabitants of the park: when they have become organs after having become educational resources. This is also the only time when the deer are eaten *as deer*. Deer bodies become food for humans – no longer called deer, but venison.

7.4 (M)eating the deer

The day after having joined Niels, Tobias and Lars with culling, I am meeting a friend for dinner at a slightly fancy, but cozy restaurant in Copenhagen. The restaurant, close to Kongens Nytorv in the center of town, is one of several places around the city that serves dishes made with the meat of Dyrenhaven's deer. In general, the restaurants that serve the meat are high-end – Noma and the luxurious Hotel D'Angleterre are among the better-known ones. They buy it directly from the butchering company, which in turn buys the meat from

Naturstyrelsen to process it. “They are restaurants who really want to serve meat that has a story”, explains Oscar, one of the butchers.

After the deer are gutted by Naturstyrelsen’s gamekeepers, they are picked up by Oscar and his colleague who skin and clean them. A veterinarian inspects the meat to ensure it is safe to eat. The number on the label that is attached to the carcasses at Naturstyrelsen’s slaughterhouse, is the same number that the butchers register. “If you’re buying game meat from the big slaughterhouses, they can just tell that it’s from Denmark. They can’t tell where the meat comes from exactly. I can precisely tell the restaurant which animal it is and where it is shot. That’s a huge part of our storytelling. It’s important for the restaurants”, Oscar explains.

The deer become part of a narrative of authentic locality – or at least, their meat does. In being presented as authentically local, the deer’s identities come to matter. On their website, the butchering company explains how part of the experience they provide for their customers, is the story of where the animal was shot, and perhaps even how it was hunted. This way, the butchers want to give consumers the certainty that each animal they eat has a unique history. However, although the butchers highlight how they can follow “each and every animal and get it registered” (butchers website, translated from Danish), it is not the individual’s identities they are interested in. Like Naturstyrelsen’s cullers, the butchers deal with deer from a specific population. The deer from Dyrehaven are healthy and strong, and, not unimportantly, reliably delivered. The story the butchers tell is explicitly not that of long transport times, stressful slaughter sessions and cramped living conditions. Instead, they emphasize how they sell the meat of populations of wild-roaming game, living in large forests and open spaces around Copenhagen.

The stories that the butchers tell contribute to the performance of this authentic locality. Of course, it is not just the butchers telling this story. This narrative arises in the intra-actions between butchers, gamekeepers, landscape, deer, and customers. And through it, an authentic, local, wild kind of deer-as-meat is constituted. Butler understands such “constituting acts not only as constituting the identity of the actor, but as constituting that identity as a compelling illusion, an object of belief” (1988:520). The deer-as-meat are perceived as authentically local, because the performance of authentic locality is believed.

Becoming deer-as-meat, then, does not mean un-becoming deer. On the contrary, when turned into meat, the deerness of the deer becomes, in some ways, especially significant. For Dyrehaven’s deer, becoming deer-as-meat means intra-acting in a performance of authentic locality and wildness. In this intra-action, the deer evoke a sense of

pride with the humans who use their meat. When the waiter comes to take our order, he emphasizes that it is meat from Denmark – he seems delighted to tell us. Later, the restaurant's chef, too, explains that the fact that the meat is local makes it nice to cook – "It's more personal". The dance of deer-as-meat moves from slaughtering houses to kitchens, along knives and from hand to hand, from gamekeeper, to butcher, to chef. In the kitchen, finally, deer-as-meat meets oil, pan, heat and spices to become a dish: venison.

7.5 Becoming venison

Before he uses it to cook, the chef hangs the deer-as-meat in the fridge for five days. This way, the meat can lose some of its moisture, which intensifies the flavors and makes it easier to grill. Cooking with deer meat is different from working with many other meats, he explains. Whereas something like a filet mignon is always the exact same cut for each restaurant-goer, the cut of venison is different for everyone. Each night, the restaurant serves different cuts, and also different cuts to different people on the same night. The venison demands mindfulness when being cooked, the chef explains: each piece needs to be tasted, because each part is different. Whatever part is served that evening, he makes sure to never cook it beyond medium rare, as once the blood starts to cook, the meat will take on an irony flavor that will make it start to taste "too gamy". Venison is fairly unchallenging to cook, he finds. As the meat has little fat, his main concern is making sure the ends do not dry out. The meat browns fast, and the goal is to get it both crispy and rare. Whatever pieces are used that night, nothing goes to waste – the bones are used to make stock, the ends are for the staff's meals.

We have come to the restaurant tonight to try out the venison for ourselves. In choosing to do so, I have put aside some of my own ethical reservation when it comes to eating meat. For the past six years, I have avoided eating meat whenever possible. Normally, I check menus before going to restaurants to make sure there is a vegetarian option available. This does not mean that I have never eaten meat during these years. Traveling outside of western Europe has often meant adapting to whatever is locally available. And I have been known to sporadically opt for a burger after a night out. In this case, my goal is to understand what it means to become deer in Dyrehaven. For nearly a third of the deer in Dyrehaven, part of becoming deer is, I argue, becoming venison. Becoming food, becoming venison, also means becoming a type of smell, flavor and texture, a sensory experience that I would only be able to understand through consumption. In my perspective, then, eating the dish is essential for understanding what becoming deer-as-venison entails.

Thus, I opt to eat meat tonight. Specifically, the meat of a fallow deer turned into a dish of roasted venison with Jerusalem artichoke, lingonberries, black garlic, and pepper sauce (sold at a price of 200 Danish crowns). Eating venison is special, in some ways: our waiter explains how, usually, people do not cook deer at home – not because it is particularly difficult to prepare, but rather because it is seen as "festive". It is also not something that is readily available in many stores outside of the holiday season, which is why people will come to the restaurant to try it, he tells us.

9: Roasted venison with Jerusalem artichoke, lingonberries, black garlic, and pepper sauce.

The specific cuts we are served today are a piece of thigh and two pieces of 'eye of round', a long, cylindrical muscle found in the hind leg. It is a pretty dish. All pieces of meat have a burgundy red center and are nicely browned on the outside. The venison is soft and flavorful, earthy and rich. The piece of thigh is surprisingly tender, the eye of round a little firmer. There are lots of powerful flavors on the plate – the pepper sauce is hot and strong, the lingonberries sour and there is quite a lot of sweet black garlic puree. It is almost too much, the venison has so much flavor of its own that it does not need much else.

I know that the deer on my plate is not one that I saw being gutted yesterday. They will be picked up at Dyrehaven by the butcher tomorrow, on Friday. But the animal whose thigh I am eating has gone through the same process as they have. I might have met them as a visitor in the park, or stalked them together with Niels on one of our culling outings.

However, when looking at the plate, it is surprisingly easy to forget that. This does not look like a deer anymore. It looks like meat. Or rather, it looks like venison.

Whereas we have seen that the deer can become food for animals other than humans (when their organs are eaten by critters in the park), they can only become venison when they are prepared for human consumption. When preparing animal body parts to be eaten by humans, often, new names are thought up for different cuts of meat: roast, schnitzel, eye of round. The English language in particular has various words to designate nonhuman animals' edible states: calf/veal, cow/beef, pig/pork, sheep/mutton, deer/venison (Trampe, 2017:333). Language obscures the relation the meat has to the animal that it came from, making it easier to eat. Similar to how the euphemism 'culling' contributed to making the deer killable, the euphemism 'venison' contributes to making it edible.

Eating animals – making animals edible – is often seen as a natural given, however, arguably, it is more of an intra-active performance. The idea that certain species are simply higher on the food chain than others, for many, is reason to believe that it is both acceptable and unavoidable to eat animals that are lower in the chain. However, species are a construction, meant to simplify the cataloguing of life-forms. This is not to say that species do not exist at all. However, different scientific communities use different concepts to demarcate who does and does not belong within the same group (Rowe, 2011:5). With these boundaries, like with any kind of binary structure, come hierarchical value systems. "Species functions as a way to not only classify and name, but to provide discursive meanings of superiority and inferiority, which then serve as a basis for subjugation" (ibid, 2011:6). The deer of Dyrehaven have become killable as a population. But they have become edible as a species.

Language and structures are part of the social contexts and conventions that do not only make the act of eating animals possible, but conceivable as an act at all (Butler, 1988:525). Sitting in this restaurant, ordering venison from the waiter, a glass of red wine beside my plate, eating deer feels almost unquestionably normal. In the intra-action of deer, biologists, butcher, language, restaurant, kitchen, and chef, the deer has become deer-as-venison, an edible phenomenon. While the animal has become unrecognizable, and language has obscured the animal-relation of the meat on my plate, the deer-apparatus is still very much present in this phenomenon. Becoming venison does not mean un-becoming deer.

As venison, in turn, the deer intra-acts with chef, oil, heat, sauces, vegetables, and salt and spices, to create a dish, which in turn intra-acts with waiter, plate, cutlery, tongue and teeth. In the dance of deer-as-venison, I still move, but my partner has seized to – although

they still enact the agency to move others. The smell, texture and flavor of the deer influences the experience of the other parts of the dish (and vice versa). Pepper sauce without deer would be spicy and creamy but unfulfilling, lingonberries would be tart, black garlic puree would be sweet and strong but unpleasant to eat on its own. Juices and fibers move out of the deer's meat and into the sauces and puree, changing each other and creating something new. In our intra-action, the deer draws me in, moving me to employ all senses. Taste, for the first time, is essential for humans to understand deer-as-venison. The unique combination of chemicals found in the meat of the deer are perceived by nose, mouth and brain as a distinct blend of earthy, savory and gamey flavors. In the choreography of deer-as-venison, deer molecules dance around with tastebuds, nostrils and neurons. To humans, then, becoming venison means becoming flavorful.

7.6 On un-becoming deer/becoming human

Eating is an intimate activity – body entering body, matter entering matter. Even before the meat enters my mouth, it moves my digestive system. My mouth starts watering, saliva forming in anticipation of what will come next. As I chew, the meat softens, moistened by spit, making it easier to swallow. After being pushed down my esophagus, the deer passes into my stomach, meeting the bacteria that live there as part of me and, very quickly, changing them in this encounter. Within hours, the composition of my microbiome will have been altered by the meat (Feltman, 2013). In my stomach, deer mixes with other food and digestive juices and starts to be broken down further until it is no longer recognizable as meat. Moving first through my small and then my large intestine, the deer's nutrients flow into my bloodstream. Before being passed, the deer's nutrients - protein, zinc, iron, vitamin B and many others - help repair, strengthen and fuel my body.

As I eat them, the deer, quite literally, becomes part of my body, transforming my physicality. "As we ingest the other, we effectively eliminate the self/other dichotomy (…) Eating is a profound act because what I am willing to put in my mouth defines a large part of what I am: I know that what I eat will be incorporated into my being", writes food scholar Glen Kuehn (2004:239, 236). By being ingested, the physicality of the deer exists now only as part of my own. When we consider deering as a physical act, then, its limit lies neither in dying nor in becoming venison. For the deer of Dyrehaven, it lies in being consumed. In this sense, deering stops when all that was once deer has ceased to exist.

However, the physicality of the deer has been absorbed by mine, which, in some way, means that the deer is not gone completely. Seen like this, un-becoming deer means

becoming part of something new – becoming incorporated into a new phenomenon: me. In an almost amusingly literal sense, this incorporation is both beautifully representative of the intra-relatedness of all matter, and tragically symbolic of the privileged agency of humans. The deer and I have physically become one, but only because I ate it.

As researchers, we are always implicated in whatever we study. "Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming", writes Barad (2007:185). Being part of the world I have studied, I, of course, have become part of both the deer apparatus and the phenomena I have described in this thesis, intra-acting with the materiality of the deer in countless ways. To begin with, the question of how deering is done in Jægersborg Dyrehave arose from my intra-actions with the deer that live there. Moreover, as a visitor to the park, my body has been attuned to the deer, influencing my movements and the use of my senses. I have looked, stopped, knelt down and taken pictures, encountering the deer and being encountered by them. I have been part of the phenomenon of deer-as-target, following Niels through the park, tracking deer through snow and icy wind, hiding behind trees. When the deer were killed, I have towered over their bodies in the back of the pick-up truck, their blood on the soles of my shoes. I have watched as the deer got gutted, getting guided around the butchering room and freezer, taking pictures of organs spilling into buckets. I have joined Tobias in picking up a deer's body after it was used by a nature interpreter, scaring away a buzzard that was eating the left-behind entrails of deer-as-educational-resource becoming deer-as-food. And finally, I have visited the restaurant where deer had become venison, eating the animal and becoming more profoundly entangled than ever before.

Now we have arrived at the point where, in a physical sense, deering has ended. The deer as embodied being, the materialized deer-phenomenon, has seized to be. However, this does not mean that our entanglement ends:

> "Not only subjects but also objects are permeated through and through with their entangled kin; the other is not just in one's skin, but in one's bones, in one's belly, in one's heart, in one's nucleus, in one's past and future" (Barad, 2007:393).

To be able to intra-act, a deer need not be alive, and it need not even have a body. In the same way that time, social structures and power relations influence what phenomena look like, so too do history, memories and expectations. This means that the deer-apparatus lives on in those who stay behind. "I and all those who lived entangled with him become his flesh; we

are kin to the dead because their bodies have touched us", writes Haraway (2008:163). I have been permeated through and through with the deer, so much so that their physical body has now been absorbed by my own. But existing in history and on this paper, in my memories and in the memories of the humans and deer that intra-acted with it, the deer-apparatus continues its dance. Albeit now bodiless, for the deer-apparatus, deering is perpetual.

8. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have analyzed what it means to be a deer in Jægersborg Dyrehave. I have argued that being deer does not mean having a fixed deer-essence, but is a continuous intra-active doing. Becoming deer, or deering, is an intra-active process in which human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate actors are involved. The deer of Dyrehaven, like everything, are not individually constituted agents or entities (Barad & Kleinman, 2012:77), but as phenomena, are made up out of the entanglement of humans, deer and other matter. Thus, becoming (deer, human, matter) should always be considered a becoming-with.

Deering (becoming deer) is done in countless different and changing ways. What it means to be a deer in Dyrehaven, then, is highly dependent on the specific configurations of agential intra-actions at play. The deer in Dyrehaven are involved in an ever-evolving choreography with all that surrounds them. This dance continuously takes on different shapes, with different participants and on different stages. In other words: the deer-phenomenon, in which these intra-actions are materialized, is constituted in possibly endless ways, of which I have presented a few.

Becoming is always becoming *somewhere* and *somewhen*. Time and place are crucial intra-actors that inform how deering can be done. A deer in Dyrehaven now is different from a deer in Dyrehaven in the 1700s, and is different from a deer outside of the fences of the park. "Agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency cannot be designated as an attribute of subjects or objects (as they do not preexist as such)", argues Barad (2007:214). Agency, on an agential realist account, is enacted by *all* matter. The spatial dimensions of the park, then, inevitably shape the way deering can be done. For example, the fence surrounding the park, the feeding lanes, and the walking paths are just some of the material aspects of the surroundings that facilitate close-up intra-action between deer and visitors.

I have argued that death is always, in some way, present in the phenomenal choreographies of Dyrehaven's deer. Naturstyrelsen, the Danish Nature Agency, keeps around 2000 deer as nature-managers-by-proxy: the deer's grazing and browsing helps maintain the look of the cultural-historical landscape of Jægersborg Dyrehave. With such a large number of deer living in a relatively small park, millions of visitors are drawn to Dyrehaven each year in hopes of encountering wild animals from up-close. However, deer procreate quickly, and in order to keep the landscape looking the way it does, Naturstyrelsen shoots around seven-hundred of them each year – as many as are born. As dead bodies, the

deer become educational resources to be used by nature interpreters, food for critters living in Dyrehaven, and venison to be eaten at high-end restaurants. The reason that so many deer can live in the park, becoming both nature managers and wild encounters, is exactly *because* of Naturstyrelsen's rigorous culling practices. If they would not shoot the deer, the landscape would be eaten bare and the deer might starve of hunger. If they would keep fewer deer, on the other hand, their draw as an encounter would weaken. Much of what it means to be a deer in Dyrehaven, then, is closely related to what it means to become killable.

The deer are made killable, in part, through the relation of biopower (Foucault, 2003) between deer and gamekeepers. This relation causes the deer to be treated as a population, as numbers or categories instead of individuals. In biopower's logic, it is necessary to kill weaker animals in order to make the population as a whole thrive. This shows how although all components of the phenomenon have agency in intra-action, some components have the power to limit other's possible enactments of agency. Because of this, I have argued that it is not enough to only recognize all matter's response-ability. As humans, we must also take responsibility for the ways in which adult human agency is qualitatively different from other kinds of agencies.

Finally, I have considered the limits to deering, wondering: when does a deer stop being a deer? I have found that neither dying, nor being butchered or becoming venison means un-becoming deer. Although the deer become increasingly unrecognizable in the transition from dead body to meal and beyond, the deer-apparatus is still part of all these phenomena. And as a component of these phenomena, the deer continue to enact agency, intra-acting with matter around them. Even after being consumed, the deer continue to be agential beings, filling stomach and fueling body. To be able to intra-act, deer need not have a body: when they have been digested and no physical traces of them exist, they still enact agency as apparatuses, through history and memory. The deer of Dyrehaven are open-ended practices, perpetually rearticulated and intrinsically entangled with all that surrounds them. In a way, then, this thesis has been a *memento mori*. Not meant to remind ourselves that we have to die, but rather a reminder that part of our becoming, of what constitutes ourselves as human-phenomena, has already died or never lived at all.

8.1 Applicability

"We have never been human", writes Haraway, "(…) we are bodies in braided, ontic, and antic relatings" (2008:166). Being/becoming in this world, we are inherently entangled with other beings/becomings of this world. Fostering an attentiveness to the situated connections

through which we are bound into multi-species communities can help us become aware of the ways in which other animals are implicated in our lives, and we in theirs. Importantly, as I have established with this thesis, we are not just entangled with the animals that live in our homes or in our bodies. We are equally bound into communities with species that are often considered ‘wild’.

The framework of agential realism proves useful both for breaking down the boundaries of the nature/culture dichotomy and for thinking about ‘animals’ as a material and discursive product. It shows how there is no essence, for example, to what it means to be deer – it is an everchanging, discursive becoming. I agree with Birke e.a. (2004) that instead of pursuing an elusive (or perhaps illusive) objectivity - the idea that we can objectively understand what a nonhuman animal *is* - it is more productive to consider the situated relationality and performativity of the “human-plus-non-human” (Birke e.a., 2004:177). This approach will proof especially fruitful for interdisciplinary research on nonhuman animals, which actively works on reconsidering the nature/culture dichotomy. Besides for interdisciplinary research, a focus on the situated entanglement of humans and non-humans could prove useful for scholars working with human social issues, such as racism, sexism, and ableism (Lloro-Bidart, 2018:263), as it contributes to making graspable how differences do not pre-exist as such but instead arise from intra-action and are thus performative.

Clearly, questions of ontology are deeply entangled with ethical concerns. “The indeterminacy at the heart of being calls out to us to respond”, writes Barad. “(…) Living compassionately requires recognizing and facing our responsibility to the infinitude of the other, welcoming the stranger whose very existence is the possibility of touching and being touched, who gifts us with both the ability to respond and the longing for justice-to-come” (2012:219). Recognizing that nonhuman animals and matter enact agency in the same ways that we do, can help us grasp how they, like we, are response-able. Nonhuman animals and matter are not passive, they enact agency in intra-action with the world around them, and in doing so, shape that world. At the same time, it is important to be aware of the qualitative difference of adult human agency when compared to other agencies. Humans (not solely, but particularly) can enact the power to limit the ways in which other matter can enact their agency, and because of that, it is our responsibility to reflect on the ways we are implicated in other species’ becomings. In other words, we ought to pay careful attention to where and how we can contribute to a more equal distribution of power in the intra-actions we are part of.

Finally, it is important to recognize that phenomena are constantly changing processes, rather than fixed matter with unchanging characteristics. They are a doing rather

than a being. This means, for example, that countless deer phenomena exist already in Dyrehaven alone. ‘The deer’ does not exist and what would help the deer-as-encounter thrive might not be what is best for the deer-as-target or the deer-as-nature-manager. By acknowledging the various transformations occurring around us and our role as humans in shaping them, we open up avenues for assuming accountability not in a general way, but specifically suited to these ever-changing entanglements. In other words: recognizing that our relationships, our intra-actions, are constantly changing, can help us consider the best ways to be responsible towards the beings-we-become-(with).

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