"*Without the Muslims, We'd be out of a Job*"

Deconstructing Narratives and Hierarchies of Race,

Whiteness, Nation and Class

in England's Sheep Slaughterhouses

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which Whiteness, race, nationhood and class are discursively constructed through narratives which call on purity and morality in Britain. It explores how white British belonging, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and classism are manifest, their intersections, consequences, and shared imperial genealogies. It is based on multi-sited, comparative, fieldwork at three independent sheep slaughterhouses in England, including two sites which practice halal slaughter. The ethnography focusses on an amorphous group of white, British, "working-class" itinerant skilled slaughtermen who labour between them, the white British owners, and their relations with the local white British, British South Asian, Pakistani, and Polish workers at each site. These white British slaughtermen's livelihoods are sustained by mobility, skill, migrations to, and Muslims in, Britain. They challenge media, political and academic discourses which have claimed that white working-class men have been "left behind" through a confluence of deindustrialisation, deskilling, multiculturalism, and immigration. Through a close ethnography which traces their stories, dialogue, and narrative, and then deconstructs them through critical race theory, narrative analysis, postcolonial studies, and feminist approaches to abjection and belonging, I analyse how these workers resist their own classed stigma by asserting their Whiteness, nationhood, and morality into "hierarchies of belonging." These hierarchies are manifest by discursively constructing racialised, national, and moral differences and boundaries in relation to their co-workers, their skill, workers' bodies, the meat they produce, the sheep they slaughter, and the religious and state which laws which govern their labour. Yet, in these fleshy, fluid slaughterhouses, claims of British purity and morality are fragile, imaginative and do not represent stable material, historic or ethical realities. As such, I trouble simplistic analyses which have legitimised white, classed racism as a reaction to socio-economic factors or cultural difference. Rather, I address the status and function of narratives at both national and personal scales and argue that their imaginative qualities are a central modality through which exclusionary forms of Whiteness and Britishness are reproduced as morally superior. More broadly, I connect these moralising narratives to imperial and colonial logics to draw out the long-standing fundamental instabilities of a pure, moral Whiteness or Britishness and the hierarchies which are reproduced through class and race.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

> By using abjected populations as exemplary of all obstacles to national life; by wielding images and narratives of a threatened "good life" that a putative "we" have known; by promising relief from the struggles of the present through a felicitous image of a national future; and by claiming that, because the stability of the core image is the foundation of the narratives that characterise an intimate and secure national society, the nation must at all costs protect this image of a way of life (Berlant, 1997, p.175).

It is the end of Summer in 2019 in an old market town in the East Midlands of England. Along the town's high street, there are scant reminders of its agricultural and commercial past. The pedestrianised high street is now a centre for discount stores selling fast fashion and homewares. Just away from the high street, however, is a weekly livestock auction where sheep are bought and sold for slaughter. In the hour before the auctioneer starts the sale, the cavernous livestock shed fills with sheep and people. From a raised concrete viewer's platform on the periphery, I look out across the floor of this small stadium as it infills with a wriggling homogenous grid of wool, each pen packed with bean-shaped bodies wedged into cellular patterns, interrupted by heads popping up from the crevices where their bodies meet. Sheep farmers in flat caps from across the country herd their sheep into pens. They gossip and exchange news with other farmers about the impending impacts of Brexit, over sausage rolls from a nearby market stall. Outside the auction hall, double-decker haulage trucks await their cargo to be transported back across the country, directly to slaughterhouses, or fields for fattening. From there, the carcasses will be sold to butchers around the country, or to Europe.

I am waiting for Jack, a white British slaughterhouse manager in his late thirties, who comes here every week to purchase sheep for the small halal sheep slaughterhouse he operates a few miles down the road. Like Jack, most of the sheep buyers are white British men, who work for halal slaughterhouses which supply sheep meat slaughtered

through religious methods for largely Muslim consumers in Britain and Europe. Later, the sheep will be transported down the road to the slaughterhouse. The following day, a group of local, young white men from the town; a group of itinerant white British skilled slaughtermen from a city over an hour away; and a British Pakistani halal slaughterman from a nearby city, will convene on the slaughter line. Here, they collectively transform sheep into halal meat. A day later, the carcasses are delivered to high street halal butcher shops in ethnically diverse towns across the country, such as London, Manchester, Leicester, and Birmingham.

As we look out at the sheep, Jack explains, "it's the ethnics, without the Muslims we wouldn't have a business." At the slaughterhouse, the white British skilled slaughtermen who have worked in the trade for their entire adult lives, tell me that "without the Muslims", and the demand for halal slaughtered sheep meat, they would be "out of a job." The auction, then, and the slaughterhouses beyond, are places dense with connections and interdependencies through which the boundaries and binaries which are imagined between: the rural and the urban; Britain and Europe; the public and the private; and the white working-class and Britain's postcolonial diasporas and more recent waves of immigration, become economically and materially untenable.

And yet, phrases such as "without the ethnics" were not expressed with any sense of gratitude or conviviality. Rather, they were narratives through which the owners and slaughtermen invoked their Whiteness and Britishness as morally superior to the "ethnics" or the "Muslims." Jack explains that the sheep he is purchasing are not good quality, and that if "the ethnics" did not eat them, they would end up in pet food. In the slaughterhouse, the white British slaughtermen speak about "the Muslims", whether their co-workers, or the imagined consumers of the meat they produce, as a homogenous group with racialised disdain. While their lives are entangled and dependent on Britain's histories of postcolonial migrations, their narratives implied the disavowal of "ethnics" or "Muslims" in ways which distanced them from a shared local or national belonging.

This ethnography focusses on the white British slaughtermen and slaughterhouse owners whose livelihoods are sustained by the halal sector. It is based on comparative ethnographic fieldwork at three independent family-run sheep slaughterhouses in England, including Jack's, which are located in different areas of the country: the rural

North West; the outskirts of a West Midlands city; and a market town in the East Midlands. The rural slaughterhouse practices "conventional"[1] slaughter for the domestic market. The others practice halal slaughter: one for the domestic market, like Jack's; one for the European market. Primarily, I focus on the narratives of a group of white skilled slaughterman, whose status and skill enables them to move between the three slaughterhouses throughout their working weeks. I follow their everyday interactions with local white British, British Asian, Pakistani and Polish workers, attending to their stories, dialogue, and narrative as they move between sites. Analysing their narratives through critical race theory, narrative analysis, and postcolonial studies, I demonstrate how a "methodological Whiteness" (Bhambra, 2017a, 2017b) is persistently invoked to construct discursive moralised "hierarchies of belonging" (Wemyss, 2009) within their trade, and the nation more broadly. Through the chapters, I trace these racialised narratives as they penetrate into many aspects of slaughterhouse life: the value of sheep and the meat they produce; the respectability of their labour; their definitions of skilled and unskilled labour; the religious and state laws which govern their labour; and their imaginative worlds. Yet, in the fleshy, fluid context of the slaughterhouse, places which are often stigmatised as abject, the white slaughtermen's claims of British belonging and respectability are fragile, imaginative and do not represent stable material or ethical realities. Rather, narrative emerges as the fundamental modality through which difference and belonging are constructed. As such, I trouble simplistic analyses which have legitimised white, classed racism as a reaction to socio-economic factors or cultural difference. Rather, I address the status and function of narratives and argue that their imaginative qualities are a central modality through which Whiteness and Britishness are reproduced as morally superior, and that these are rooted in colonial and imperial ideologies.

[1] The term "conventional" and halal slaughter are the terms used in both academic and policy discourses. Slaughter regulations state that animals slaughtered in the UK must be stunned before slaughter in accordance with animal welfare regulations. Religious slaughter, including Islamic halal and Jewish shechita slaughter can include non-stun slaughter in accordance with human rights to practice religion freely. However, the majority of halal slaughter in the UK includes the stunned method. While these terms are positioned as binaries, these are untenable. Indeed, the term "conventional" ascribes a normative value which implicitly others religious slaughter. In chapter 7, I explore how these distinctions are negotiated by workers.

In this introduction, I first outline the social and political context in Britain of Brexit[2] in which this research took place, through a series of political and media discourses about sheep, migration, Muslims and the white working-class in Britain. Through these, I will introduce key themes of abjection, belonging, Whiteness, narrative, and imagination. I argue that the slaughterhouses where the research is based complicate and challenge the political rhetoric and nationalistic discourses which circulated during Brexit about an anachronistic "left behind" white working-class, and the "death of multiculturalism." I will then introduce each field site, with a discussion about accessing stigmatised spaces, and finally, an outline to the thesis and the main arguments. In the following chapter, I offer a more detailed discussion of narrative research methods, and the ethics of researching racism and Whiteness as a white woman in ethnically diverse, all male spaces; as well as my ethical position on researching animal slaughter.

British sheep and the rhetoric of abjection and belonging

On the 18th of June 2019, a few months before I had met Jack at the sheep auction, there was a televised BBC debate between five contenders for the leader of Conservative Party. The winner would become the next British Prime Minister (BBC, 2019). The leadership race followed a vote of "no confidence" in the incumbent Prime Minister, Theresa May. Since 2016, when the UK had voted to leave the EU, May had been unsuccessful in negotiating an "exit deal" with Europe. The televised debate was structured around questions from members of the public. Abdullah, an Imam from Bristol, asked, "I see first-hand the everyday impact of Islamophobic rhetoric on my community. Do the candidates agree that *words have consequences*?" The host turned towards contender MP Boris Johnson, a Brexiteer and key figure in the Vote Leave campaign, who would eventually go on to become the next British Prime Minister. "Boris Johnson, in the past, you've said that Muslim women who wear veils look like letterboxes and bank robbers, do you accept that *your* words have consequences?" Johnson conceded, defending that if words written in an Op-ed in the right-wing

[2] Brexit is the vernacular term used to describe the UK's departure from the EU.

broadsheet *The Telegraph* with the intention of entertainment had caused offence, he was sorry. He then glorified Britain as an open, generous, and welcoming country, while either awkwardly forgetting, or not knowing how to say, Abdullah's name.

Earlier, the debate had focussed on the impact on the sustainability of British rural livelihoods if the UK left the EU without a trade deal. Jeremy Hunt, another leadership contender challenged Johnson, "what would you say to a sheep farmer in Shropshire I met whose business would be destroyed by 40 percent tariffs on lamb? He would say, you got your dream of getting into Number 10 [the Prime Minister's official residence], but what about my dream to have a family business?'"

In the years since the Brexit referendum, projections about the deleterious impact on the trade of British-reared sheep frequently emerged in news reports. The reports sentimentally tapped into the polysemic significance of British sheep which has been cultivated through their connections to rurality, of their wool as the economic base of British empire and industrialisation, their grazing which shaped the British landscape, and whose droves to markets carved Britain's earliest roads (Franklin, 2007). Politicians across party lines were often photographed next to sheep on campaign trails across Britain's remote hill farms and livestock auctions, earnestly listening to farmers' concerns, or trying their hand at sheep shearing. Visiting a traditional hill sheep farm in the North West of England, Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the opposition Labour party, made a rallying call: "Sheep farming isn't just a job, it's a tradition that is passed from generation to generation. We will do everything we can to stop the Tories' pointless No Deal Brexit damaging it" (Berhe, 2019). Sheep, it was alluded, had a blood and soil connection to the British landscape, as did the farmers to whose family genealogies and traditions they were connected. A threat to the existence of sheep on British hills was a threat to the future and past of the nation. Yet, for the bucolic sheep to have value to the British economy, they almost always have to be slaughtered. This was notably excluded from the reports.

Conversely the tabloid newspaper, *The Express*, reported that "Brexit could save THOUSANDS of British animals from halal slaughterhouses abroad" (Peat, 2016). The emphasis on the volume of sheep in the all-caps headline was juxtaposed with a photograph of two new-born white downy lambs with black legs and pert ears in green fields, looking directly towards the camera. Intruding into this idealised image of

English rurality, was an overlayed circle with a blue background and twelve yellow stars of the EU flag. George Eustice, then Conservative Minister for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), was quoted cautioning that under EU law, Britain was "powerless" to stop the unethical transport of innocent animals, and the "inhumane" methods of halal slaughter abroad. This image of English rurality under attack was invoked to express Islamophobic, nationalist sentiments. While largely focussed on the animal welfare issue of live animal transport, the headline specifically targeted the sheep's destination, halal slaughterhouses in Europe. Without any extrapolation on the practices in halal slaughterhouses, or what halal means, the word was invoked simply as signifying a Muslim-centred threat that connected the fate of British sheep in Europe to a broader political discourse framing Muslims as a danger to Britain and Europe (Abbas, 2004; Fekete, 2004). Brexit supporting politicians positioned themselves as "taking back control" of sheep destinies, the protectors of innocent sheep and British values against an imagined abject Muslim practice and people beyond Britain's shores. These reports echoed the persistent scaremongering about covert presence of halal meat in Britain (Grumett, 2015). For example, *The Sun* published an article which "revealed" the "halal secret of Pizza Express"[3], while the *Daily Mail* announced that "Britain goes halal but no one tells the public" (McGee, 2010). The language in these reports invariably alluded to halal meat as an invasive and violent pollutant masquerading as otherwise "British" meat on supermarket shelves. These allusions to violent agents hiding in plain sight tallied with depictions of Islamist terrorists in Britain and Europe (Abbas, 2004).

As Abdullah had asserted in his question, anti-Muslim rhetoric was a persistent feature of Brexit media reporting and campaigning. The Centre for Media Monitoring (Hanif, 2019) found that 59% of news stories about Muslims during the Brexit period were negative. A Runneymede report (Elahi & Khan, 2017) identified a rise in attacks on Muslims (or anyone presumed to be Muslim) in relation to the increase in anti-Muslim media. For example, Nigel Farage's anti-immigrant slogan "Britain needs to take back control of its borders" was visualised in a now infamous poster with a slogan "Breaking Point" and an image of hundreds of brown men crowded on a path, walking towards

[3] There was a "media storm" following this revelation which comprised of both accusations of anti-Muslim rhetoric and horror at the revelation that people may have unknowingly consumed halal meat.

to camera. In the context of the "migrant crisis", it was alluded that the flow of people trying to get into Britain were Muslim refugees (Miah, 2018). This image existed alongside the flurry of negative media which racialised Muslim men specifically as a threat, whether as terrorists or sexual predators. As De Genova (2018) notes, the anti-immigrant rhetoric was not simply xenophobic, but racialised as anti-Muslim, and represented a racial crisis in both Europe and Britain which was imagined as white, whole, bordered and threatened by the abject presence of Muslims. Muslims were racialised as a homogenous group with negative characteristics, existing as a binary opposite to Europe, framed as the threatening minority and the exception to a majority under attack (Asad, 2003).

The vote to leave the EU was framed in both right- and left-wing media commentary, as a protest by a xenophobic white working-class who had been "left behind". For example, *The Spectator* (O'Niel, 2016) and *Red Pepper* (McKenzie, 2016). The white working-class, it was claimed, had been disproportionately affected and abandoned by the forces of globalisation, deindustrialisation and the cultural, political, and demographic changes instigated by immigration (Ash et. al, 2019). They were constructed as a group who had "been forgotten – their histories silenced and their claims for a redress of the injustices they face ignored" by a cosmopolitan, middle-class elite (Bhambra, 2017b, p.217). This framing built on longer standing claims that the white working-class were suffering at the expense of postcolonial immigrants and their descendants, creating tensions in post-industrial towns, predominantly, with neighbours of South Asian descent (Hewitt, 2005; Kundnani, 2002; Páll Sveinsson, 2009). In particular, it was white working-class men who were said to be retaliating against deindustrialisation and the state prioritisation of multiculturalist policies through expressions of white racial self-interest (Kimmel, 2013; McDowell, 2003). However, as highlighted by Bhambra (2017b) the left-behind white working-class thesis enabled an apparent white racial self-interest to be seen as legitimate and not to be labelled racist. These framings left the possible racisms, xenophobias and Islamophobias of the middle class, politicians, or structural racisms more broadly unscrutinised, while simultaneously stigmatising yet validating the white working-class racism.

Aligned with DeGenova (2018), Valluvan and Kalra (2019) argue that the referendum was primarily framed in the popular imagination by the overdetermined issue of immigration and anxieties regarding racial and ethnic difference in Britain. Muslim immigrants, British Muslims, and the white working-class were homogenised, scapegoated, and stigmatised. However, the white working-class were positioned within a "hierarchy of belonging" to the nation. Wemyss (2006; 2009) uses "hierarchies of belonging", as an analytic framework to map how Whiteness is discursively constructed with a superior belonging to Britain in public discourses. She argues that racialised hierarchies are constructed between white British / English belonging and to withhold or grant tolerance or intolerance to "colonial Others." These racialised hierarchies are intractable from their colonial roots and make claims on who belongs to the nation, and who does not. As Bhambra (2017b) highlighted, claims that the working-class had been "left behind", legitimated their ostensible white racial self-interest because they discursively belonged to the nation, with a history which had been snatched from them. Muslims, whether recent immigrants or longstanding postcolonial British citizens, were positioned as an abject presence that fundamentally did not belong to Britain's past and threatened the future unity of the nation.

1.1.1 Imagining the abject

In the televised debate, and in the media narratives more broadly, British sheep, the "left behind" white working-class and Muslims in, or coming to Britain, were presented as competing in a "hierarchy belonging" to the nation (Wemyss, 2009). The rhetorical effects of these narratives cohered into various "moral panics." For Hall (1978) moral panics constructed often racialised scapegoats to distract from broader economic or social fractures and issues in society. The moral panics invoked in the media reports I have presented inferred a sense of national belonging, purity, and abjection, which are key themes explored through the ethnography. For example, imaginings of a future where sheep suffer cruel deaths in foreign halal slaughterhouses, or where they can inhabit an image of the good life in England's "sunlit uplands." Orgad (2012, p.23) argues that imagination is integral to media narratives which conjure moral panics, especially about migrations and people categorised as Other. These narratives emerge

through "moral scripts" which are "polarised between utopian constructions of 'dream' lives and dystopian accounts of 'nightmare' existences, which are predicated on the logic of exclusion and offer crude and divisive ways of imagining others." For example, a utopia where sheep are representative of natural, rural, and unadulterated landscape against a nightmare of invasive Muslims.

Attention to the status and function of narratives has been pertinent to the ways in which nations have been imagined as unified; and how forms of nationalism are reproduced. Rather than natural, ahistorical forms, nations have been conceptualised as political constructs of modernity, or "invented traditions" which were made real through the repetition of myths and stories (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) defined nations as systems of cultural signification which emerged through the developments in print media and the emergence of common language during industrialisation. This shared discourse created an imagined sense of unity and belonging – nationalism – with those who may be distant or unknown. However, as Valluvan and Kalra (2019, p.2395) point out, this sense of shared belonging engenders nations to be imagined as irredeemably particular by those who believe themselves to be part of the community. Further, this imagined particularity is "an assertion that is intrinsically exclusionary: put simply, to be something particular is to preclude the possibility of being something else". Nationalism, they argue, as opposed to a collective national belonging is expressed through "those moments where political discourse reserves an outsized place for the problems putatively posed by those who do not belong. It is herein less an affirmative politics of strong belonging and more a negational politics of aversion and disavowal". In effect, "imagined communities" are also constructed through racisms, xenophobias, Islamophobias which define the boundaries of the nation and a national identity, in the case of Britain, as white (Anthias & Yuval Davies, 1993; Gilroy, 1987).

As such, constructing "us" and "them" groups through notions of abjection and belonging have been identified as fundamental modes through which nationhood is imagined. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Kristeva (1982, p.2) outlines abjection as a universal response to that which disgusts us. The abject threatens the integrity of the body and self, threatening to blur the boundaries between self and other, where the self is "safeguarded" by abjecting that which disgusts. For example, the rhetorical

threat that the "British public" might ingest halal meat into their inferred white, British, non-Muslim bodies is premised as contamination, that the "alien within" has breached bodily borders where "physical boundaries are transgressed, and bodies rendered potentially impure" (Grummet, 2015, p.212). Abjection is not just a matter of being "out of place", as with dirt (Douglas, 1966). The abject threatens to leak in and unsettle an imagined national or individual bodily integrity.

Developing the psychoanalytic and structural approaches to argue for contingent rather than universal abjection, feminist scholars have attended to how abjection functions beyond the individual psyche to the social body or the nation. These approaches interrogate why some categories of people are socially constructed at national abjects through discourses of stigmatisation (McClintock, 1995; Ngai, 2007). Ahmed (2004, p.2) argues that nationalistic narratives can present the nation as "soft" a metaphor that suggests that "the nation's borders and defences are like skin, they are soft, weak, porous and easily shaped or bruised by proximity to others." Moreso, these narratives then invite the reader to identify with the "you" (rhetorically white and British) who is being harmed by this proximity to connect with feelings of rage that immigrants are taking away what should be theirs. For Imogen Tyler (2013, p.27), abjection is based on "narcissistic hygiene fantasies of a clean, whole, proper self through a performative self/other self/object distinction." She argues that the nation adopts the position of a "self" where national abjects become scapegoats for the harmful effects of neoliberal governmentality. This, she argues, is currently exemplified "by the extreme and fetishist vilification of migrant (and particularly Muslim) populations of Europe and the aversive affects such as revulsion, disgust and fear towards migrant populations" (Tyler, 2013, p.39). For Berlant (1997) in the quote in the introduction, abjection is the force through which nationalistic politics becomes personal and affective: the nation presents itself as a core, stable image, that could be destabilised by anything that has been constructed as abject by creating an image of a "good way of life." In effect, abjection is political force which has been invoked against Othered groups, which is both felt and reproduced in the everyday.

The rhetorical allusion of Britain having a stable, ahistorical core was central to nationalistic rhetoric during Brexit. As Bhambra (2017b, p.214) outlined, the rhetoric of the Brexit campaign and its aftermath were entangled at the intersections of race and

nation, "grounded in conceptions of the past", imagined as white and self-reliant "as the basis for political claims in the present". These discourses enabled arguments that immigrants had taken away a sense of national, unified belonging and the resources of those who believe themselves to be indigenous. This view, according to Bhambra, is cultivated through a "methodological Whiteness", a discursive strategy of "reflecting on the world that fails to acknowledge the role played by race in the very structuring of that world" (2017a, para.6). In the context of Brexit, there was a denial that national belonging and exclusion was rhetorically cultivated through racialised discourses, and the genealogies of these narratives in Empire.

1.1.2 Countering the clashing moral panics

The ethnographic introduction of the market town livestock auction indicates that the imagined boundaries and discourses of aversion, disgust and belonging in the media and political rhetoric did not represent stable material realities or the intricacies and interdependencies of British sheep economies. Similarly, through the words of workers and owners, I have indicated that exclusions were rhetorically cultivated through racialised discourses. However, Britain's sheep industry is commercially dependent on the halal market both within and beyond Britain's borders. 70 percent of domestic and exported British sheep meat combined is slaughtered through various halal methods (DEFRA, 2018a). It is a market which has emerged and grown since the 1960s, following postcolonial migrations to Britain and shaped around the tastes of people from both Muslim majority countries, such as from Pakistan and Bangladesh, alongside Ghana, Nigeria, and the Caribbean. It has continued to grow as markets developed with the EU for Muslim communities from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. It has been supported through "multicultural" policies protecting religious freedoms by permitting various religious slaughter practices, and the emergence of halal accreditation bodies (Lever, 2018; Lever & Miele, 2012).

British sheep slaughterhouses are an essential nexus within the national sheep economies, yet they too were erased in media and political narratives which fretted

about the preservation of rural livelihoods. In Britain, slaughterhouses exist within a topography of different scales and markets, which practice both halal and "conventional" slaughter (DEFRA, 2022). These include small rural slaughterhouses offering services to local farmers and supplying independent butchers and restaurants (Franks & Peden, 2022); large, corporate owned meat processing sites which supply supermarkets; and often medium sized halal slaughterhouses, supplying halal wholesalers and high street butchers in Britain and Europe. Many halal slaughterhouses are owned by white British men, such as the slaughterhouse Jack operates (Miele & Rucinska, 2015). They employ "working-class" white British men who have found employment in their skilled trade despite nationwide de-industrialisation and deskilling, alongside Eastern European, British Asian and Pakistani workers. Or to put it another way, the various sheep slaughterhouses demonstrate that the preservation of white British livelihoods cannot be disentangled from migrations, whether postcolonial or more recent migration trajectories. They are places where the white skilled workers in a traditional trade have not necessarily been left behind; where Muslim and postcolonial diasporic practices and immigration have been integrated into a productive relationship which supports the sustainability of "traditional" or "indigenous" British rural livelihoods.

Most significantly, across the three slaughterhouses, the white British, British South Asian, Pakistani and Polish workers were vicariously and variously implicated in the ethnonationalist, racialised and classist narratives that circulated around the referendum. As I will demonstrate through the ethnography, while stigmatised and silenced from the outside, for those who inhabit their walls throughout their everyday working lives, slaughterhouses are storied spaces where white slaughtermen construct their identities and the identities of others through narratives of class, race and masculinity (Lawler, 2002; I.Tyler, 2013). Bhambra uses the term "methodological Whiteness" to analyse media and political rhetoric. However, I am going to use it in a vernacular sense to demonstrate how there is a "methodological Whiteness" which emerges in the white British slaughtermen's everyday narratives. I demonstrate how they selectively reproduce and erase the nationalistic narratives of abjection and belonging which I have just outlined. Importantly, I argue that the reproduction of a "methodological Whiteness" erased the negative or stigmatising classed associations

of slaughter work. Implicit in Bhambra's critique, is that "methodological Whiteness" has a certain imaginative quality. For example, positioning Britain as autonomous, or the working-class as white, requires both erasure and imagination. In the fleshy world of the slaughterhouse, I argue that these imaginative qualities of narratives are heightened and fundamental to the ways in which workers construct difference. As the itinerant white British slaughtermen move between sites in which the material and demographics conditions change, their constructions of difference and claims of belonging require always shifting and contradictory iterations of Britishness and Whiteness (Fortier, 2008, p.9). Through these details, I argue that the slaughterhouses offer an empirical challenge to the discourses which claim the white working-class have been "left behind" or are anachronistically stuck in the past (Lawler, 2012). Rather, I argue that the slaughterhouses can be framed as a "diaspora space" where identity and belonging are unfixed, shifting, and constructed in relation to historic genealogies of race, nation and class (Brah, 1996).

1.2 Accessing slaughterhouses: Stigma and connection

As I have mentioned, it was unremarkable that in the BBC televised debate, the Conservative leadership candidates made no reference to the connective value of slaughter to the existence and preservation of the British tradition of sheep. Slaughterhouses exist on margins of British ideals of morality and hygiene (Young Lee, 2008; McClintock, 1995). They emerged in the 1860s as part of a broader European "civilising process" (Elias, 1939). Until the 1860s in Britain, livestock animals travelled into cities alive on "the hoof" and were sold at open markets such as Smithfield, in London, and slaughtered in private slaughterhouses owned by butchers who killed, prepared, and sold meat (Geier, 2017). In the preceding decade, the predominantly middle-class Victorian reform movement had rallied against the "noxious business" of live animals and slaughter within the city walls, where abject substances such as blood, guts and faeces, alongside ill-mannered noise and violence were claimed to be a contagion to a civilised, modern city (Maclachlan, 2007; Otter, 2005). Otter (2006, p.32) highlights that the reformists' persistently negative and evocative language

describing the violence and disgust of slaughter, for example, through the "deathcries" of slaughtered animals, the "rivulets of blood" and "dank alleyways", were fundamental to constructing a moral panic. Reformists described private slaughterhouses as infecting and barbarising those near them "mysteriously stimulating fighting and prostitution," in their proximity, while butchers were stigmatised as brutal drunks. The public monotony and repetition of the narratives constructed people and substances as abject, a threat to individual and social integrity (McClintock, 1995). These stigmatising narratives coalesced with concerns for animal welfare and resulted in legal reform, outlawing private slaughterhouses (Geier, 2017). They were replaced with new utilitarian "abattoirs" on the outskirts of cities which mechanised and concealed slaughter and have since been described as the "iconic architecture of modernity" (Geidion, 1948). Their emergence decoupled the slaughtering of animals from the butchery and sale of meat (Otter, 2005; Vialles, 1994). Workers in slaughterhouses were ostensibly recast as "skilled" and "professional" slaughterman (Young-Lee, 2008). The renaming of slaughterhouses to "abattoirs"[4] a French term, acted as a semantic veil to further distance urban dwellers from the proximity of animals and death (Young-Lee, 2008).

While once a beacon of modernity and a civilising city, slaughterhouses are now portrayed as spaces of unspeakable violence: brutal, fleshy, bloody and overdetermined by the practice of professionalised, industrialised animal slaughter at scale (Fitzgerald, 2010). Slaughterhouses have been described as one of the worst crimes in human history where tens of billions of sentient creatures are systematically murdered every year. As such, Noah Harari (2015) has compared them to the Holocaust and the systematic murder of Jews. Media reports invariably take the position of exposing us to the inhumanity perpetrated on both human and animal bodies within their confines, of a cruel "system that is rotten," dependent on overworked and underpaid immigrant labour (McSweeny & Young, 2021), or as spaces

[4] Both the terms "slaughterhouse" and "abattoir" are now used interchangeably in policy, media, politics, and within the trade. I will use the term slaughterhouse throughout the ethnography as a descriptive term. However, when the workers and owners use the word "abattoir" I want to demonstrate that the term which is being used occludes the violent connotations of their labour.

which are a "hiding place for cruelty" unless rigorously monitored and legislated (Gove, 2018).

Through these portrayals, slaughterhouses appear to cultivate the conditions for a "dark ethnography" emphasising the harsh dimensions of social life for suffering subjects against a backdrop of neoliberalism, the ubiquitous force of economic and political power, domination, and inequality (Ortner, 2016). For example, in his ethnography, Pachirat (2014) analyses an industrialised slaughterhouse in the USA through Foucauldian accounts of power, surveillance, and discipline. He describes the industrial slaughterhouse through Bauman's term, as "a zone of confinement", comparable to an execution centre, refugee camp or nursing ward, which is "invisible to ordinary members of society" where "distance and concealment shield, sequester, and neutralise the work of killing" (Pachirat, 2014, p.16). As with other stigmatised institutions, such as the police or prison, Pachirat argues that slaughterhouses are institutions implicitly resistant to the production of knowledge because scrutiny of their practices represents a threat to their legitimacy (see also Fassin, 2013). So much so, that Pachirat resorted to subterfuge and going undercover to carry out his research. While internally, Pachirat describes slaughterhouses as structured around the hyper surveillance of the largely immigrant workers, who bear the physical and emotional costs of violent labour for a consuming public. At the industrialised scale, Pachirat demonstrates that slaughterhouses are places where worker oppression and ingrained racial inequalities stifle the possibilities of workers feelings of a sense of belonging to their workplace.

However, I was not approaching these types of industrialised, corporate-owned meat processing plants, which generally slaughter cattle and pigs, and which are less common in Britain. As I introduce the three small and medium scale independent slaughterhouses which became my field sites, I will highlight the ways in which I did not recognise this repertoire of dark conditions such as hyper-surveillance, overdetermined mechanisation, dependencies on immigrant labour or placelessness which have been expressed in existing slaughterhouse ethnographies (Vialles, 1994; Pachirat, 2014). That is not to say that against the stigmatising exposés of slaughterhouses in the media, I was anticipating that getting access would be easy. Especially so for halal slaughterhouses, which are targets of increased scrutiny because

they sometimes use a method of non-stun slaughter which is condemned by animal rights activists and the British Veterinary Association for causing unnecessary suffering to animals (BVA, 2023). For months, I did not get further than a phone call, regardless of whether the sites slaughtered through non-stun or stun methods. If I contacted a small rural slaughterhouse, I was told I would get in the way. When I tried larger sites, I was told they were too busy. Most frequently, regardless of scale or practice, whether halal or "conventional" I was met with blank refusals that outsiders were categorically not allowed to enter.

Eventually, Robert, a white British owner of a halal sheep slaughterhouse in the South West agreed to an interview on site. He was in the same part of the country as my university, which gave him some assurance that I could be accounted for. He was explicit that I would not be allowed to observe the process of animal slaughter, so my visit had been arranged to bypass the activity of killing and the coming and going of workers. Years before, animal rights activists burned down his barn, and he was taking no risks with outsiders like me. We sat in the boardroom, looking out towards fields of sheep. On the walls were sepia tinted framed photographs of his grandfather, "We are a farming family, an *abattoir* family" he explained, using the semantic veil, "my grandfather, and his father before that were always the local slaughterman." In recent years, Robert had incorporated halal slaughter into the family business, employing two Muslim slaughtermen[5], and exporting the meat to Europe. In the context of Brexit, Robert shared that if the UK left the EU without a deal, he "may lose a third of our business and not even be viable…but I think the biggest problem is the indecision, if we are in or out, I'm not a political person…but I voted to leave." "Even though you could lose the business?" I asked. "Yes", he responded, "but my biggest fear was the talk of Turkey joining the EU and suddenly you've got 75 million people that are on the edge of Europe coming in, and I think, what is life going to be like for our kids?"

In 2016 A UKIP party-political broadcast had made a disingenuous claim that Turkey was imminently joining EU. It described Turkey as a country on "the edge" of Europe, against a montage of footage depicting Islamophobic tropes; Muslim women cloaked

[5] While there is no singular consensus among Muslim scholars, halal accreditations agencies, or Muslim consumers as to whether halal slaughter must include non-stun slaughter, it is considered essential that a practicing Muslim slaughters the animal, in the name of Allah.

in hijabs, Iman schools being enforced, and ISIS fighters flowing in from Syria. As Valluvan and Kalra (2019) highlight, anti-immigrant political claims that Turkey was joining the EU were framed specifically through the threat of Muslim immigrants and an unwanted "Islamification of Britain." Robert's fears about open borders with a Muslim country, of Muslims taking over the "British" culture, education and freedoms of a rural area, surpassed his fears about the loss of his rural family business. He explained, "that is the one reason I voted to come out." His livelihood was dependent on trade with Europe, and of Muslim consumers within Europe for the halal meat he had produced in Britain, from British-reared sheep. There was a disjuncture between his economic reality and his discursive imaginative worlds. Similarly, Hochschild (2018) identified in *Strangers in the Their Own Land*, white working-class Americans appeared to be voting against their own economic interests for the reproduction of a White nation in which they could again feel a sense of belonging. As with the nationalistic Brexit rhetoric, there was a vision of Britain imagined as if it could, and should, be disconnected from immigration and a Muslim presence, despite the economic consequences.

I did not meet with Robert again. I asked whether he would reconsider letting me spend time with the workers in the slaughterhouse. On an interpersonal level, he had been open and honest discussing his life and concerns. I too, felt as though I had proved I was not a threat. I spoke about slaughter functionally, not emotionally. I dropped in as much detail as I could about the meat sector, and knowledge of the concerns – rather than judgement – of those whose livelihoods are dependent on meat production. I had explicitly stated that I was not an animal rights activist and that I ate meat. "I believe you are who you say you are," he affirmed, "but you *could* be anyone." As with the use of the word "abattoir," the site of slaughter was to remain linguistically and spatially distanced. In an ethnography of French slaughterhouses, Vialles (1994) argued that slaughterhouse owner's and worker's internalised knowledge of the disapproval and stigmatisation of slaughter, often meant outsiders were met with suspicion. This seemed to be partially the case with Robert. Denying me access into the slaughterhouse protected Robert and his workers from the anticipated judgement and possible violence of others, or more precisely, me. However, the encounter raised an important theme of the research. My lack of entry was not

hindered because I was trying to enter an anonymised, placeless, corporate killing machine. Rather, it was hindered by Robert's personal fear of the effects of being stigmatised. Further, his sense of belonging to the nation was entangled in the decisions he made about his business. In effect, the slaughterhouse was a place where the everyday politics of belonging, and abjection coexisted.

North Hills slaughterhouse: The rural North West

I had planned fieldwork in the assurance that there was at least one slaughterhouse I would be able to visit. In the summer before, I had conducted fieldwork with a group of generational hill farm shepherds who rear a "native" sheep breed on common grazing lands in the North West uplands. Indeed, these were the kinds of traditional farmers which Jeremy Corbyn had expressed an urgent need to protect in the context of Brexit. The area was overwhelmingly white, British, and rural, with minimal immigration. It is, however, heavily visited by tourists, and increasingly by middle class, largely white urban dwellers relocating to this idyllic rural patch of England. One of the shepherds had introduced me to the owner of a small, rural, mixed species[6] slaughterhouse where he took his sheep. The slaughterhouse, which I am pseudonymising as North Hills, was nestled on the side of a winding B-road which cuts through a quiet road in a small village, just inside the boundary line of a National Park. It had been in the owner, Ian's family, for over century. Since the 1960s, small rural slaughterhouses such as these have been in fast decline, a combination of the effects of centralised, intensive production; the dominance of supermarkets and the crippling costs of slaughterhouse legislation (Broadway, 2002).

On the morning I arrived, Ian walked me around the site, nostalgically pointing out his family home, and the original slaughterhouse from the early 1900s. The slaughter unit – a brick building with a metal corrugated roof - is set just back from the narrow fern flanked lane that snakes up between the slaughterhouse, the farmhouse where the

[6] Mixed species slaughterhouses generally slaughter pigs, cattle and sheep. As slaughterhouses have increased in scale and species specificity over the past 50 years, mixed species slaughterhouses are less common. At this slaughterhouse, they predominantly slaughter sheep, reflective of the farming practices in the region.

owner Ian lives, and a towering hill covered in heather. In the yard, a small tractor is perched next to a heap of manure, and a mound of hay. Apart from the pile of fresh sheep skins which are stacked on a wooden pallet you would be hard pressed to distinguish this collection of buildings – a farmhouse, a barn, and a lairage - from any other traditional hill farm in the area. The nearest town is over fifteen miles away, and uninterrupted fields and mountains stretch in every direction, dotted with the local, "native" sheep.

Ian's survival had been secured through his adaptability. Working collectively with the local shepherds and their breed society, which protects the authenticity of the breed, he had started marketing the sheep meat as an "authentic", "local", "heritage" or "native" sheep meat. As opposed to concealed, this slaughterhouse was written into the place-based narrative of the meat's provenance. So much so, that as I have used pseudonyms and not identified the slaughterhouse, I cannot name this breed as their connection to place will reveal the area. As such, I am pseudonymising the sheep breed as Fellgraze. Like Robert, the slaughterhouse owner in the South West, Ian was worried about the impacts of a looming Brexit. Conversely, Ian had voted to remain in the EU. He was concerned about the impacts on the local tourist industry and the broader implications for the hospitality sector in the absence of EU workers, as well as the local shepherd's economic dependency on EU farming subsidies.

There was no alarm or resistance when I asked to spend time with the slaughtermen as they worked. Ian would often invite chefs to come and visit the slaughterhouse to understand the provenance of the meat. Though Ian could not quite understand why researching the slaughtermen would be more pertinent than the story of the sheep and their connections to the land, there appeared to be no internalised stigma about their practices. Ian regarded himself, and the slaughterhouse, as integral to the local rural community. While Ian ran the business, the slaughterhouse was the domain of a group of trusted skilled slaughtermen. "Philip the foreman is in charge, his bark is worse than his bite," I was warned. "He'll take care of you." At this site, there were four slaughtermen: Philip and Rob, who are white British, Ben, the apprentice, who was also white British, and Antoni, who was white Polish, and had been settled in the area for over fifteen years. All the slaughtermen lived in towns an hour or so away from the slaughterhouse. As this small site is only open for a few days a week, Rob and

Antoni also travel to two halal sheep slaughterhouses in other parts of the country throughout the week.

Eastewes halal slaughterhouse: A rural market town in the East Midlands

After a cold call to a small halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, Jack, the manager who I introduced earlier, agreed to meet me at the livestock auction. He agreed to then take me to the slaughterhouse to meet the owner, Ray. Jack had no idea who I was when I first called, I *could* have been anyone. On the phone, I tried to anticipate Jack's concerns about letting an outsider into a halal slaughterhouse: I acknowledged that the halal market was a vital part of the national sheep economy; I shared that I was already visiting another slaughterhouse. Eastewes slaughterhouse was located just outside the town and nestled down an unpaved path that cut into flat fields of wheat and barley. After we arrived from the auction, Jack herded the heavy white sheep he had purchased into the lairage, a large barn where sheep are kept. This leads into the modern white brick building of the slaughterhouse. Ray was sat in the office, doing paperwork and fielding orders. Ray has supplied halal butcher shops in ethnically diverse cities – London, Manchester, Leicester, and Birmingham – for over 20 years. He had worked with sheep all his life as a farmer and had become frustrated with the supermarket dominance of the sector, and the closure of local slaughterhouses. Simultaneously, he had seen the market for halal slaughtered sheep meat increase and decided that it would be an economically viable business venture, while also offering a local service to farmers. As I sat with Ray on my first visit to the slaughterhouse, we were at points interrupted by the occasional local farmer dropping off sheep. Ray had chosen to supply stunned halal meat; he found it more ethical, and it meant that local farmers, who might be opposed to the non-stun method of halal slaughter, would still use the premises. Likewise, the slaughterhouse could offer employment opportunities for young men in the local town, which is predominantly white, British, and has limited employment opportunities.

Eastewes slaughterhouse also operates only three days a week. On the day we met, the workers were absent. Ray walked me around the washed white walls and shining metal equipment of the empty slaughterhouse. I asked if I could spend time with the

workers. He looked at me like I was mad, "well, we've got nothing to hide, so if that's what you're interested in seeing it's not a problem for us." He explained that there were four skilled slaughtermen who travel to the site, and group of ten local workers from the town, who carry out "factory work"; and two halal slaughtermen, who travel from a nearby city, and who have worked at the slaughterhouse since he first purchased it. On my visits over the following months, I met Cliff, Matt, and Doug, white British skilled slaughterman in their forties and fifties, who have worked as slaughtermen since they left school at sixteen, and who travel from a city two hours away. Wayne, another skilled white British slaughterman in his thirties, travels with them; Hashir, a British Pakistani halal slaughterman, who travels from a nearby city, and a group of younger white British local men in their twenties, who live in the nearby town.

More recently however, Ray has been feeling ambiguous about supplying the halal market. He tells me the high street butchers that he has supplied for over twenty years, and who supply meat to Caribbean, West African and South Asian diasporas are not ordering as much as they used. He takes issue with both the butcher shop owners, and how the demographics and tastes are changing, with a younger generation who prefer to buy online or go to supermarkets. "I don't know whether you know this…but I'm sure you do," he says,

> Muslims [the high street halal butchers] are not very good at paying, they're not very good payers, it's very hard work. They're always off back to Pakistan. The easy part is killing the sheep, the difficult part is getting your money for them. It's a cultural thing.

As with Robert, Ray's feelings about working within the halal trade were expressed through racialised narratives of disavowal and claims cultural differences with his Muslim customers.

Westlambs halal slaughterhouse: The outskirts of an urban West Midlands town

As mentioned, the three slaughterhouses were connected by a group of skilled, white British slaughtermen. For the first few months of fieldwork, I moved between the two sites I have introduced, Eastewes and North Hills, getting to know the slaughtermen

and local workers. I would visit each site for a few days, return home and write fieldnotes. I had told the slaughtermen at each site that I was looking for another site to visit. Rob, who worked at North Hills, and Cliff, who worked at Eastewes, offered to introduce to me to the owner of another halal slaughterhouse in the West Midlands, where they both worked together. "Let me have a word," Cliff offered, "I'll tell him that you're not an animal rights activist, you're just nosey!" When I spoke to the owner, Adam, on the phone, there was no vetting process or arrangement for a sanitised walk around an out-of-action slaughterhouse. Whatever potential outsiderness I may have had, was neutralised by the assurances of slaughtermen. Instead, I arrived at six in the morning in darkness as the slaughterhouse was already fully into action.

The slaughterhouse was located on the outskirts of a West Midlands town which bleeds into a large ethnically diverse city. The site was set back on a residential A-road, which cuts between an out-of-town retail park and a motorway. On one side, Victorian terraced houses line the road, on the other, what appeared to be an underused recreational ground. At the far end of the grassy patch, a line of Cypress trees obscures the metal industrial units and barn which are barely visible behind the branches. The local town is classified as "culturally diverse but ethnically segregated" in local demographic reports. Most residents are white British, but there are increasing numbers of people identifying as an "ethnic minority," with the highest rise in people identifying as Muslims of Pakistani heritage.

The owner, Adam and his father, both white British, purchased the slaughterhouse a decade ago to export halal lamb to European wholesalers. On the morning I arrived, we sat in the portacabin on site as haulage drivers checked their orders and routes to Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, while their lorries were loaded with carcasses. The market for halal lamb, I was told, was sustained by Algerian, Turkish, Moroccan communities in Europe. Adam had decided to provide non-stun halal meat on economic grounds. He described the sheep meat sector as a "free market" and that "the Muslims will always want meat, and non-stun sells better." As I watched the vans leave on their journeys towards the port in Dover and onto Europe, I bought up Brexit, and was abruptly shut down by Adam: "Brexit, what about it? It didn't make financial sense, we put in way more than we get out, for every pound we put in, we only get 40

pence out, all the while French farmers are getting fat and drinking wine on it. It's like anything, you need to look at the costs." As with the other slaughterhouse owners engaged in the halal trade, there was a disconnect between the economies on which Adam's business depended, and his desire to create distance from his customers based on racialised or nationalistic difference.

Adam then walked me around the site, to introduce me to workers, and explain to them why I was there. It was the largest of the sites, with around 30 workers: Four itinerant white British skilled slaughtermen, including Rob and Cliff, who had introduced me. They were joined intermittently by Dennis, Doug and Alex, who also sometimes worked at Eastewes. Two halal slaughtermen, Guz and Ahmed, who are British Asian of Pakistani and Gujarati descent respectively, were in their late twenties and also travel to the site from a nearby city. The rest of the workforce were around twenty local workers who were white British, British Asian of Pakistani descent, or Pakistani, ranging in age from seventeen to their late 60s.

While access into slaughterhouses was denied more often than not, these smaller, independently owned sites were not impenetrable. Entering their doors did not require subterfuge to bypass their intentional anonymity and concealment. On the contrary, access was shaped through the ways in which each site was connected and embedded in a network of social and economic relations, whether to the farmers who use them, a livestock auction, or the slaughtermen who move between them. Furthermore, the slaughterhouses were distinct from each other. They supplied different markets, with different types of sheep meat, slaughtered through different methods. These markets had in turn been shaped by postcolonial or more recent migrations to Britain and Europe.

As I was planning my fieldwork, and before entering the slaughterhouses, I had assumed that most of the workers would be Eastern European. Pre-Brexit, overall slaughterhouse workforces were predominantly European migrant labour, around 70%, largely from Poland and Romania (BMPA, 2020). More explicitly, the *Farmer's Weekly*, claimed slaughterhouses employ foreign workers because British people do not want to do this type of dirty work (Meredith, 2018). At larger meat processing facilities (which are not represented in this ethnography) the volume of workers required (500-1000 or more) exceed being sustained by local more permanent

residents (Halliday, 2020). In media reports, these sites have been depicted as the apex of neoliberal markets, capitalist profit and worker alienation, where a placeless, classless, migrant, lumpen proletariat suffer structural violence, at the mercy of precarious episodic labour (Molè, 2010; Sennet, 1998; Standing, 2011). Sociological research also largely focusses on the dependencies of slaughterhouse on labour from Eastern and Central Europe and the structural violences endured through physically exhausting, precarious labour, limited rights and access to welfare in Britain (Lever & Milbourne, 2016).

And yet, between the three independent slaughterhouses I only met one Polish worker, who had lived, and was settled, in Britain for over fifteen years. The demographics of the workers were shaped less by the transnational movement of an immigrant workforce, than the local demographics of the rural areas and towns where the slaughterhouses were located. As such, the workforce at each site was distinct and included shifting configurations of white British, Polish, British Asian and Pakistani men. These demographics were in turn related to postcolonial migrations to Britain from Pakistan, or more recent migrations from Pakistan, and Poland.

The amorphous group of itinerant skilled white British workers were not labouring in their local towns. They worked in higher paid positions than local workers. These white slaughtermen, ostensibly categorised as "the white working-class" did not express that slaughter was "dirty work." On the contrary, they constructed white, British/English moral identities through their labour and expressed a strong sense of belonging to their trade. They were explicit that postcolonial migrations and the growth of the halal market for British (and European) Muslims consumer for halal slaughtered sheep meat had sustained their livelihoods. In effect, the global phenomena through which the "white working-class" have been positioned as "left behind", and which have been invoked as legitimising racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia: neoliberal globalisation, deskilling, de-industrialisation, immigration and multiculturalism, have not neatly left these workers behind. However, as I will explore throughout the thesis, the absence of these ostensibly causative political and economic reasons did not result in an absence of racism, Islamophobia, or xenophobia among the white slaughtermen. Rather, an everyday "methodological Whiteness" emerged through their narratives, where their dependencies on immigration and Muslims in Britain were disavowed.

Before starting the fieldwork, a PhD colleague suggested that all slaughterhouses would likely be the same, "I imagine if you've seen one, you've seen them all." The homogenising narratives that slaughterhouses are alienating, violent, oppressive, and concealed had infilled their imagination. Vialles (1994, p.4) argued the emergence of slaughterhouses created an ellipsis between animal death and meat, where the "stylistic neutrality" of slaughterhouses was not a matter of expediency: it reflected a cultural choice to remain blind to its implications". As such, slaughterhouses became a "conceptual place that is no place." This is a phrase repeated in Pachirat's (2014) ethnography. While the term is invoked to analyse how the bloody realities of meat production are concealed and ignored by consumers, these ethnographies make claims about slaughterhouses in general terms. They analyse slaughterhouses in relation to neoliberalism, globalisation, and placelessness, even when their analyses also imply the particularities of place, for example, of racism and immigration in the USA. To challenge such approaches, Blanchette (2020, p.27) argues that both ethnographers and media discourses should move away homogenising slaughterhouses through repeated tropes of placelessness or as sites of deviance. The types of slaughterhouses researched should "affect how we write about them." Through this lens, Blanchette argues that the "pork town" he researched in America, is a place which expresses American norms, rather than deviates from them. Similarly, through this ethnography, I will demonstrate how each slaughterhouse is distinct and fundamentally placed. As I will explore in chapter 3, each slaughterhouse is located within a complex sheep farming system in Britain which has been shaped by histories of Empire and Imperialism. The legacies of postcolonial migrations are present both in the types of sheep meat being produced, and the demographics of the workforce. Furthermore, the Imperial genealogies of Whiteness, race and class are reproduced by white slaughtermen in each slaughterhouse to structure the workforce within each site. Through the narratives of workers, the slaughterhouses are places which reveal the hierarchical and exclusive ways in which Whiteness and Britishness/ Englishness are discursively produced, in ways which can be ethnographically compared to expose both their persistence and fragility. As I will discuss, they are spaces in which ethnographic encounters can complicate the narrative about the "death of multiculturalism" in Britain. First, however, I will contextualise the definitions, practices and complexities of halal meat production in Britain.

1.3 Halal slaughter: context and definitions

As discussed, the presence of halal slaughter in Britain has been described as an invisible, invasive contaminant hiding in plain sight on supermarket shelves. So potent is the invocation of halal meat in Islamophobic tropes, that the term "halal" has been used as a racial slur (Sian, 2018). Grumett (2015) argues that the moral panic about halal slaughter is framed around the fears of the increasing power of Islam in Britain and the allegedly corrosive moral effects of its purportedly barbaric, violent practices, casting religion as uncharacteristically amoral. Media reports which centre on halal slaughterhouses specifically, include sensationalist tabloid headlines, such as *The Sun's* "Halal horror house as undercover video exposes cruel abattoir filled with terrified animals" in which a slaughterhouse is described as "awash with blood" while "a frightened bullock's eyes widen in fear as the machinery it is trapped in raises its head so a knife-wielding butcher can hack open its neck" (Panther, 2016). Far-right political parties also target halal slaughterhouses: the leader of the Britain First party filmed a protest at a halal slaughterhouse, where she shouted (at both the white and South Asian butchers, and the Black and South Asian customers), "My grandfather fought for this country and he didn't do that for you people to turn it into little Pakistan by carrying out these barbaric practices for a disgusting, vile ideology" (York, 2016).

The media and political polemics are not representative of the complexities of halal meat production and legislation in Britain, nor the meaning of "halal" to Muslims. Halal is an Arabic word which is translated as "permitted" or "lawful." Haram foods, meaning "unlawful", are those which Muslims have been prohibited from consuming, for example, blood, pigs, carrion, and alcohol. Islamic dietary laws are deduced from Quranic verses, the hadith, and their explanations and commentary by Muslim scholars (Chaudry & Riaz, 2019). In the Qur'an, there are detailed verses which relate to animal slaughter. These include instructions that a competent Muslim – like Ahmed, who works at Westlambs, and who will be introduced further in the following chapters – slaughters the animal in the name of God, alongside instructions for the sharpness of the knife, where to cut, and how to bleed the animal (Haleem, 2008).

The often Islamophobic associations of halal slaughter with violence and cruelty to animals are centred on whether animals are stunned before they are slaughtered.

Indeed, Grummet (2015) describes the translation from the Arabic word meaning lawful to one associated with violence as a "terminological confusion" fuelled by broader Islamophobic sentiments. Further, both state and religious slaughter laws are ambiguous about the legitimacy of stunning. In the EU (and following Brexit, UK law), animals need to be stunned prior to having their throats cut, as a welfare regulation to minimise cruelty and pain. The requirement to stun animals was introduced in the UK through the implementation of the Slaughter of Animals Act 1933. It followed a campaign by the Humane Slaughter Association which – with the exception of religious Jewish kosher and halal meat production – made stunning mandatory for cattle, sheep and pigs (HSA, 2011; Lever, 2018). Religious non-stun slaughter is permitted as a derogation. While Jewish slaughter practices never incorporate stunning, there is more uncertainty as to whether stunning can be included in halal slaughter. Some halal accreditation agencies and Muslims permit stunned slaughter, while others do not. These differences are based on interpretations of whether stunning is regarded as killing the animal. If so, the meat would be haram, as consuming carrion is not permitted within halal dietary laws (Chaudhry & Riaz, 2019). However, in EU and UK law, religious slaughter singularly refers to non-stun slaughter as the distinctive difference. Not included in state legislation are the complementary aspects of the production of halal meat with EU welfare regulations, such as the care of animals and farming practices (Fuseini, 2017). Further, according to a recent survey carried out in the UK by the Food Standard Authority (FSA), 80 percent of all animals slaughtered for the British and European halal markets are pre-stunned (DEFRA, 2022). As such, the widespread condemnation of halal meat is more evocative than the actual prevalence of halal non-stun slaughter.

The derogation to permit non-stun slaughter in EU law was included to avoid conflicting with Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which protects the inalienable freedom to practice, observe and teach religion (Miele, 2016, p.49). However, the derogation has been mired with antisemitic racism since its inception. When the Humane Slaughter Act was initiated in the 1930s, banning non-stun slaughter was primarily focussed on Jewish religious slaughter. The campaign to ban non-stun slaughter in Britain and Europe was appropriated by antisemitic groups, and the prohibition resulted in further discrimination against Jews as barbaric and

backward (Lerner & Rabello, 2006). The derogation therefore occupies a contradictory position in terms of being inclusive of religious differences. On the one hand, it is an act of liberalism, permitting Muslims and Jews to practice religion freely. On the other, it marks difference and places religious slaughter into a negative relationship with the law (Razack, 2022). As Bergeaud-Blackler (2007) highlights, the derogation benefits from a statute of exception, it is defined as outside of EU (and UK) law on animal welfare. Non-stun slaughter is positioned as an exception or outsider to the moral majority in which Muslims are a discursive partner against whom conventions of Britishness/ Europeaness are constructed.

In effect, when permitted, the derogation exists as a form of "tolerance." As Wemyss (2009, p.131) highlights in *Invisible Empire* tolerance unites those who are doing the tolerating: "Discourses in which 'tolerance' is used always include the idea of 'our' superiority, 'our' rightness, as opposed to the wrongness of others whom 'we' nevertheless are sometimes prepared to put up with", and through which racialised hierarchies of belonging are constructed. Indeed, some EU countries have opted out of the derogation and heeded animal rights protestations and banned religious slaughter without stunning, including Denmark, where campaigners argued that "animal rights come before religion" (Miele & Rucinska, 2015). As such, within a context of already heightened Othering in media and political discourse, the derogation both protects and disavowals Muslims.

The ambiguities about stunning are further mediated by halal accreditation agencies. Prior to their emergence, the production of halal meat was based on trust or personal connections. For example, a British Pakistani wholesaler who purchases meat from Eastewes, remembers mosques liaising directly with local slaughterhouses in the 1970s, for a halal slaughterman to use the facilities. Alternatively, species eligible meat was sometimes accepted as halal if it was killed by "people of the book", a reference to Abrahamic religions (Lever, 2018). In the UK there are two primary halal accreditation agencies, the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC), which only permits non-stun slaughter and the Halal Food Authority (HFA), which will accept both stun and non-stun slaughter. Both operate to authenticate meat as halal. While accreditation offers assurances to Muslim consumers in the absence of clear state legislation, their co-existence simultaneously creates confusion for slaughterhouse owners, retailers, and

consumers (Miele, 2016). In chapter 7, I will explore how Ray, the owner of Eastewes navigates these ambiguities.

The HFA was launched in 1994 to accredit butchers as compliant with Islamic principles in line with UK and EU regulation on pre-stunning animals (Ansari, 2004). Their emergence was in part, a response to anti-Muslim discourses which circulated during the Honeyford Affair. In 1984, Honeyford, a Bradford headteacher wrote an article for a right-wing magazine in response to parents campaigning for the provision of halal food in schools. His article claimed there were a "growing number of Asians whose aim is to preserve as intact as possible the values and attitudes of the Indian sub-continent within a framework of British social and political privilege, which produce Asian ghettoes" (Parkinson, 2012). While Honeyford claimed his intention was to assimilate Asian pupils into British ways of life, he was simultaneously expressing that Asian (read Muslims) were incompatible with British values. As such, it was a pre-cursor to the narratives which emerged in the 2000s about the "death of multiculturalism" and the segregation of Muslim communities. Simultaneous to the publication of his article, animal rights and far-right groups had campaigned to revoke the derogation. They described halal as cruel and claimed that its availability in schools promoted racial segregation (Ansari, 2004, p.354). As Klug (1989, p.20) has identified, the emotive language of animal rights campaigns was appropriated by the far-right as a "rhetorical ensemble" in which religious slaughter was moralised through racialised and national logics of us and them, "we who are humane, civilized, progressive and modern" versus "outsiders whose standards and practices are retrograde by comparison". Indeed, they were repetitious of the campaign to ban non-stun slaughter in Britain and Europe in the 1930s. In response to the Honeyford Affair, and the protection of Muslim rights and identity, Muslim campaigners organised a national body of halal butchers to be accredited by a new organisation, the HFA (Ansari, 2004).

The HMC was launched in 2003 by a group of Muslim scholars and jurists (Lever & Fischer, 2018). The HMC positioned itself directly in competition with the HFA, with the claim that authentic halal meat must not be stunned. They argued that as Britain was becoming less religious (Christian and Anglican), Muslims could no longer be assured that animals had at least been slaughtered by "people of the book", especially within the context of industrialised production (Lever, 2018). The HMC adopted direct

marketing strategies with butchers and slaughterhouses to sell their accredited non-stun meat exclusively (Lever & Miele 2012; Lever & Fischer, 2018). It also certifies multiple points in the production and distribution of halal, including slaughterhouses, butchers, and restaurants (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2015). As with the HFA, the HMC emerged during a global context when Muslims were being stigmatised and attacked – for example, the war in Iraq - and acted to bolster Muslim identity and rights in Britain (Lever, 2018). As such, the emergence of halal accreditation agencies has been acknowledged as a gain for "multicultural" policies which support the rights and freedoms of Muslims in Britain (Miah et. al, 2020).

Clearly, the production of halal meat in Britain is a contested terrain for both Muslims and non-Muslims. However, I want to highlight that both halal non-stun slaughter and "conventional" slaughter are commonly condemned in media and political discourses which associate violence with, and displace violence onto, Others. There are connections between the ways in which both halal slaughter practices, meat, and Muslims, and slaughter workers more generally, are framed as in need of surveillance, pre-disposed to violence, lacking in morality and humanity. Slaughter regulations and political rhetoric stigmatises both slaughter workers and halal slaughter implicitly and explicitly. These contemporary discourses reproduce longer standing discourses of the civilising process and modernity from which both are tolerated and distanced from national belonging. Both are placed outside an imagined moral majority in ways which reproduce classed and orientalist classifications repetitious of Imperial discourses about the morality and hygiene of the nation (McClintock, 1995).

1.4 Challenging the "death of multiculturalism"

The Brexit referendum came almost two decades after claims that the state project of multiculturalism, which embraced and protected ethnic and religious diversity and rights had failed, was in crisis, had died, or had been met with a backlash by a white majority culture (Hewitt, 2005; Kundnani, 2002; Lentin & Titley, 2011; Meer & Modood 2009b). In the aftermath of violence and unrest in Northern towns between white British and British Pakistani and Bengali Muslim men in 2001, the Cantle Report (2001)

claimed that multicultural policies supporting ethnic and cultural diversity through places of worship, language or social and cultural networks had segregated communities into series of parallel lives with their white neighbours. These discourses extended towards *blaming* Muslims for the "death of multiculturalism" due to their perceived failures to assimilate into British society because of ingrained cultural and religious differences (Heath & Demireva, 2013; Kundnani, 2002). These combined with assumptions that Muslims were afforded more state help than the white working-class, exacerbating existing racial tensions (Kundnani, 2002).

Despite these more recent moral panics, there is a long legacy of research detailing how Muslims are crudely represented as "nightmare existences" (Orgad, 2012) which threaten idealised portrayals of the "the West." Said's *Covering Islam* (1981) shows how media in the West selectively narrates Islam and "The East" as oppressive, outmoded, violent and irrational through a comparative and binary positioning against the "the West" defined by objectivity, liberalism, freedom, democracy and progress. In effect, media discourses filter out positive and particular stories about Islam and the heterogeneity of Muslim lives and practices (as is the case with halal meat) in favour of representing Muslims as intractably culturally Other, yet at the same time, presenting Muslims as collectively undifferentiated. Paradoxically, this is through "Western" media discourse which is stylistically passionate and emotional (that is, not rational) in its construction of threat. Others have argued that the tensions between Islam and Europe have pre-colonial roots: there is an intrinsic clash of civilisations between Islam and Judeo-Christian Europe, where inherent difference is not related to discourse, but on intractable, real cultural difference and the propensity of Muslims to be violent (Huntingdon, 1998). In both takes, notions of civilisation and civility have been persistent – Muslims are framed as an uncivilised and violent presence who threaten Europe from its exterior, the alien outside that threatens to come in (Sayyid, 1997).

These negative media representations of Muslims were reignited after 9/11 and the Salman Rushdie affair (Poole 2002; Runnymede, 1997) through which Muslims were discursively constructed as an alien *within* Britain (Phillips, 2006; Saeed, 2007). In 2011, following a series of terrorist attacks in Britain, in which British Muslim men were held accountable, then Prime Minister David Cameron made a speech focussed on radicalisation and the causes of terrorism. He declared that "under the doctrine of

state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the *mainstream."* More specifically, he announced that "we have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to *our* values" (Cameron, 2011). Cameron framed multiculturalism as a social and state phenomenon that pulled people away from a unified sense of nationhood (Fortier, 2008), where preserving Muslim communities' religious practices was incompatible to British values (Lentin & Titley, 2011). Cameron was critiquing practices such as the production of halal meat which ostensibly run counter to idealised norms of British morality and civility. However, as I have outlined in the introduction to each of the slaughterhouses, it is impossible to disentangle the production of halal meat in Britain from the livelihoods of white British men, or from the preservation of rural livelihoods. Halal meat does not exist in isolation or belong to a discrete fixed "cultural other", and in most cases, is slaughtered through methods technically identical to "conventional" slaughter.

There have been numerous critiques both of multiculturalism as a term, and its purported death. Critics have highlighted that multiculturalism is a contested term, described as "a floating signifier" which can variously refer to lived, political or state endorsed multicultures (Fortier, 2008; Lentin & Titley, 2012). Stuart Hall (2000) identifies the awkwardness of the concept of multiculturalism, highlighting that it has implicitly separatist tendencies which position "cultures"– for example, white English, or Muslim – as discrete, distinct, fixed and essentialised. Instead, Hall (2000, p.3) argues that multiculturalism should be used "adjectivally, rather than substantially" to enable space to account for how cultural practices remade in changing contexts rather than essentialised. In this vein, there is acknowledgement of an "everyday multiculturalism." For example, Valluvan (2019, p.25) argues, "everyday multiculture" represents the banal, casual "interactive practices that emerge in spaces characterised by ethnic and other diversities" which are more resistant to reproducing nationalist discourses. Similarly, as Werbner (2013, p.402) highlights, everyday multiculturalism can reflect the "the routine, unreflective, inter-ethnic encounters and interactions occurring" between immigrants and their descendants.

The most fervent critics of multiculturalism's death, however, are those who focus their attention on Whiteness and racism. Kundnani (2002, p.68-70) argues claims that

multiculturalism has died, screen out the persistence of racism, by overly focussing on the purported "cultural" differences of racialised minorities, where "racism is understood as the outcome of cultural segregation", not its cause. This distinction could be applied to the emergence of halal accreditation agencies in response to Muslims coming under increasing racialised attacks and the resultant demand for religious cultural protections. Further, he argues that the concept of "culture" became a "straitjacket" in which people were negatively fixed and through which politicians disingenuously present Britain as multicultural and open, while proceeding with punitive immigration policies. Lentin & Titley (2011) argue the "recited truth" that multiculturalism has died screens out every day lived multicultures, while feeding into false claims that Muslims are Europe's irreducible, incompatible other. That is, claiming the death of multiculturalism perpetrates anti-Muslim racism. Most significantly, because these irreducible cultural differences are purportedly constructed around religion, that they do not count as racism at all. Throughout the thesis, one of my main concerns is to demonstrate how the construction of absolute cultural and religious differences are undeniable as forms of racism.

This brings us to a central concern of the thesis: how do white British slaughtermen navigate living and working with difference in relation to the stigmatisation of their labour. I have introduced slaughterhouses as sites with numerous multicultural potentials and practices, not least the production of halal meat, enabled through ostensibly inclusive legislation, by multi-ethnic, mobile, and local workforces, who are collectively stigmatised for their labour. However, I have also indicated that they are places in which racisms and racialised differences are constructed. In this sense, I echo what Back (1996, p.10-11) has described as the "metropolitan paradox." That is, in places of "complex and exhilarating forms of transcultural production exist simultaneously with the most extreme forms of violence and racism." Back argued that this paradox persists through everyday interactions which construct inclusionary and exclusionary identities and belonging, in places where – like the slaughterhouses – binaries are untenable. Difference emerges through the complex interplays of everyday social life and dialogue where forms of social exclusion and inclusion work through notions of belonging and entitlement in particular times and places. Rogaly (2020) has advanced Back's positioning of the metropolitan location as a

fundamental component of the paradox and extended it to an intimate portrait of a smaller city, Peterborough, which has long been dependent on both inter-and intra-national multi-ethnic labour migrations. As a challenge to the divisive political rhetoric invoked in relation to migrants and natives throughout Brexit, Rogaly argues that everyday convivialities and non-elite forms of cosmopolitanism emerge between multi-ethnic residents and workforces. These are forged across racialised and national binaries in relation to shared histories of fixity, mobility and labour conditions, even if these co-exist alongside racisms. I too, move beyond the metropolitan, and apply Back's approach of investigating the "paradox" as white slaughtermen move between "urban" and "rural" spaces. Like Rogaly, I argue that the binaries espoused during Brexit (between migrant/native, us/them) do not stand up to empirical interrogation. In contrast to Rogaly (2020, p.7), who argues that there is a progressive potential whereby (quoting Gilroy) race can be "stripped of its meaning" in these contexts, I demonstrate the opposite: The connections between specifically white and British South Asian and Pakistani Muslim workers were denied, resisted, and obfuscated, by the white slaughtermen. Rather than being stripped of its meaning, racialised differences were persistently and variously given meaning which interrupted, from what I could see as a researcher, multiple possibilities for solidarities and non-elite cosmopolitanisms. This, I will argue, rested firstly, on the relative positions of power of the white skilled slaughtermen and their own resistance to classed stigmatisation, and secondly, on the specific dynamics of anti-Muslim racisms which are constructed precisely by making conviviality or non-elite cosmopolitanism appear impossible.

As such, this thesis offers a grounded, ethnographic account to enrich the critiques of the "death of multiculturalism" by alerting us to the persistence and changing forms of racisms in Britain, and the ways in which racisms emerge alongside the construction of white classed identities. It asks, if across the slaughterhouses, white slaughtermen were not living "separate lives" to Muslims in Britain, if their livelihoods are sustained by the production of halal meat (a substance invoked as a motif of irreducible cultural difference and abjection), what logics remain for the persistence of racialised, xenophobic, and Islamophobic narratives, which reproduce division, hierarchy, and

exclusion? In what ways do these racisms shift between "cultural" and "biological" registers? In what ways did a "methodological Whiteness" persist in spaces where people, sheep and meanings were always on the move and what purpose did it serve? How are broader narratives about abjection and belonging in the national context reproduced in the everyday by those who themselves are stigmatised?

In this thesis, I specifically focus on how difference is constructed through narratives of abjection and belonging in relation to class, Whiteness, race, and nation. I argue that expressions of Britishness and Whiteness which are formed through moralised, classed and racialised differences reproduce colonial and imperial essentialised notions of respectability and purity. I propose that these need to be accounted for as components in the purported death of an everyday multiculturalism. However, despite this claim, I also argue that reductive simplifications of white working-class men as anachronistic need to be nuanced. Rather, a focus on narrative simultaneously reveals the imaginative, shifting, yet persistent work that goes into constructing and resisting white working-class identities, even in places in which connections and possibilities for conviviality and everyday multiculturalism are undeniable.

1.5 Thesis Outline

As I hope to have demonstrated, a comparative ethnography of three slaughterhouses in England offers a multilayered space to explore how classed, racialised and national differences are reproduced in different contexts through narratives. In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Brah (1996, p.16) argues against nativist discourses ascribing true origins to people, information, commodities, and cultures, as they are slippery and context specific. Instead, she proposes a "historicised analyses of contemporary trans/national movements of people, information, commodities, cultures and capital." Brah conceptualises the analytic category of "diaspora space" as one 'inhabited' not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as "indigenous". As such, the concept of diaspora space foregrounds the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of "staying put". Explaining the analytic category, she writes:

> Diaspora space is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed, or disavowed, where the permitted and the prohibited perpetually integrate; and where the accepted and the transgressive imperceptibility mingle even while these syncretic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition. (1996, p.16)

Brah proposes that attention needs to be paid to how narrations of difference shift over time and context through regimes of power – race, nation, class, gender – through which belonging is ascribed. As I will demonstrate, narrations of class, race and gender were not fixed across the slaughterhouses. Brah (1996, p.14) posits that "exploring the interconnections between different axes of differentiation and social divisions is not a onetime task." Instead, the intersections of race, gender, class and nation should be approached as a repetitive act, in different contexts like "a mantra." She explains that "mantras are designed for repetition precisely because each repetitive act is expected to construct new meaning." In this vein, each chapter is a "repetitive act" in which I focus on the ways in which narratives construct racialised, classed and gendered difference, hierarchy and exclusion framed around ideals of national belonging and morality. I attend to the ways in which these racialised differences are constructed through strategic equivocations between race, nature and culture (Wade, 2002).

In **chapter 2**, *Narrative research methods: Slaughterhouses as storied spaces*, I will outline my approaches to narrative research and the theoretical frames I am using to conceptualise identity and belonging. I introduce the slaughtermen and the workers, and outline how my positionality as a white, British, middle-class woman shaped differential access to the diverse workers across the slaughterhouses, the ethical issues this entailed, and how I navigated them. I discuss the ethical position I took researching racist views and dialogue, highlighting the entwined issues of duplicity and complicity in this endevour. Similarly, I discuss my ethical position regarding animal slaughter and outline why my attention for the ethnography was drawn to racism, rather than a critique of slaughter or violence inflicted on animals. Finally, I outline how I approached issues of consent with research participants.

Chapter 3, *The invisible Empire of sheep: The myth of "British" purity* serves to contextualise the connected historical and contemporary complexities of British sheep

economies in which the ethnography takes place. Fundamentally, I explain the significance of sheep in an ethnography on the constructions of race and class in Britain. As discussed, sheep are rhetorically claimed to be "British" in nationalist rhetoric, in ways which are entangled with discourses of abjection and purity. However, through the narratives of the slaughterhouse owners, and by making connections to a diachronic history encompassing Empire, Industrialisation and Enclosure, I will argue that the Britishness or purity ascribed to sheep is a fluid construction, which is both historically and contemporaneously invoked through the classed and racialised disavowal of "national abjects" (I.Tyler, 2013). By analysing the ways in which sheep come into and out of national identities, I will highlight the strategic equivocations between race, nation and culture in narratives which make these claims (K.Tyler, 2005; Wade, 2002).

In the following ethnographic chapters, I focus on the relations between the white British itinerant slaughtermen and the local workers through the lens of Whiteness, class and race. In **chapter 4**, *Whiteness, class and respectability,* I explore how the itinerant white British skilled slaughtermen navigate the respectability of their labour across the three slaughterhouses. Attending to the function of different types of narrative and dialogue (for example, banter and reflexive comments) I analyse how slaughtermen discursively construct "hierarchies of belonging" in relation to their trade, skill and the nation through narratives centred on their own respectability, and the racialised lack of respectability of their co-workers. I argue that imaginative nostalgias are integral to claims of respectability through which race, class and nationhood are relationally invoked. Through a comparison, I demonstrate how Whiteness and class emerge as flexible, negotiated identifications for the slaughtermen, while their Asian co-workers are racially essentialised as negatively fixed identities. I connect both class and race to imperial and colonial genealogies and demonstrate how stigmatised classed identities are rejected, while Whiteness and racialisation are reproduced.

Chapter 5, *You need to have a thick (white) skin to work here: Learning to labour* builds on chapter 4. I focus on the relations between bodies, knowledge, and racisms to complicate notions of "skilled" and "unskilled" labour. Here, I compare the "apprenticeships" of two young British workers, one Asian, one white, who are

imagined as unevenly "fixed" and malleable by the older white slaughterman. I argue that racialised, gendered, and classed narratives are inscribed onto the young workers' bodies prohibiting or enabling them to become enskilled. For the young white worker, apprenticeship reproduces a relatedness and kinship with the white slaughtermen. Comparatively, the young Asian worker is denied any acknowledgement of being skilled. Following Wade's (2002) call to attend to the overlaps and inconsistences between "biological" and "cultural" racisms, I outline the strategic equivocations that emerge in slaughtermen's narratives in relation to race, nature and culture. My intention is to demonstrate that words and narratives matter in a quite physical sense in the work of boundary maintenance.

Chapter 6 *Telling stories in slaughterhouses: The intimacies and distances in narrative imagination* refocuses on the overarching methodological and theoretical approach of this thesis: narrative. Combining the concepts of "narrative imagination" (Andrews, 2014) and "situated imagination" (Stoetzler & Yuval Davies, 2010), I analyse a series of conversations in the slaughterhouse, in which the slaughtermen imagine their co-workers. Firstly, I explore how storytelling emerges as a means to construct intimacy and belonging in spaces where slaughtermen are transient. However, through a series of dialogues between the white slaughtermen, a British Asian slaughterman, and a Turkish female vet, I demonstrate that the white slaughtermen's imagined ideas about Muslims act as a border to forging I intimacy with their co-workers.

In **chapter 7** "*Doing things by the book": Violence, the rule of law and the imaginary Muslim*, I focus on the topic of halal slaughter and the annual Islamic festival of Eid Al Adha at Eastewes halal slaughterhouse, when Muslim visitors attend the slaughterhouse, as part of a religious sacrificial slaughter of sheep, Qurbani. Drawing on Asad's (2003; 2006) conceptualisation of the "religious" and the "secular," I explore how slaughtermen navigate the associations of violence with their labour through notions of morality and the "rule of law." I argue that the slaughtermen have a fluid and negotiated approach to naming violence and subtly resist drawing hard moral differences between non-stun halal and "conventional" slaughter. However, in dialogue with the previous chapter, I demonstrate how the imagined figure of the threatening Muslim Other (Goldberg, 2009; Razack, 2022) permeates their constructions of Muslim consumers, accreditation agencies and visitors at Qurbani,

which emerge as racisms, fracturing what could otherwise be a moment of "everyday multiculturalism". Further, I propose that it is this imaginative figure pushes at their threshold of tolerance for "living with difference."

Chapter 2: Slaughterhouses as storied spaces: Narrative research methods, ethics, and positionality

A focus on narrative, identity and belonging might not seem an obvious methodological approach for an ethnography of slaughterhouses. As I have discussed in the introduction, for those who do not enter their confines, slaughterhouses have been conceptualised as "place that is no place" creating an ellipsis between animals, death and edible meat (Vialles, 1994). Young Lee (2008, p.3) has influentially described slaughterhouses as places "without narrative" because what goes on within their confines is intentionally un-storied. She proposes that by "its twentieth century incarnation, the slaughterhouse system was completely modern, a gigantic machine without *narrative* or *history*, perpetually regurgitating a product issued inside a moral vacuum", a "service structure" which was "culturally repressed as an embarrassing necessity, massive in scale and without symbolic monumentality". Architectural historian Seigfreid Geideon (1948, p.221) describes slaughterhouses as iconic modern spaces which manifest "perfect neutrality in the face of so much killing, the machine has no emotion."

Imagining all slaughterhouses as if they are social voids without narrative or emotion inherently forecloses their ethnographic potential. It erases the unremarkable empirical reality that where there are humans who can speak, narratives are omnipresent and inescapable. As Barthes (1977, p.79) claimed, "narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself". The stories of participants are fundamental to anthropology and the ethnographic encounter to understand how people interpret the world and communicate meaning (Geertz, 1973; Ortner, 1991). Through their own narratives, people interpret their experiences in ways that complicate or reproduce binaries, essentialisms and reproduce difference (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Back, 1996; Brah,1996; Ortner, 1991; Rogaly, 2020). As Kathleen Stewart (1996, p.4) has argued, in spaces on the margins, like the "concealed" slaughterhouse, which have been decentred or side-lined through meta narratives about the modern nation, stories and narratives are resistant social processes through which a "local, cultural real emerges; dense with tensions and desires". More

significantly for this research, I argue that narratives are fundamental to the construction of identities, belonging, hierarchies and exclusion. In this methods chapter, I will outline my approaches to narrative research and the theoretical frames I am using to conceptualise identity and belonging. My intention is to demonstrate that identities and belonging are not fixed, rather, they are shifting and emerge through narratives. I then discuss the ethical issues and implications of researching racism as a white woman, and animal slaughter. Finally, I outline how I approached issues of consent with research participants.

2.1 Narrative identities and belonging

For the all the workers and owners who inhabit their walls, slaughterhouses were storied spaces of mundane and imaginative chat, banter, political opinion, singing, gossip, intimate advice, nostalgic recollections, racist and xenophobic jibes, and sharp insults. Like anywhere that is social, they were generative spaces where people tell stories to make sense of and construct their worlds (Reissman, 2002; Rosaldo, 1989; Somers & Gibson, 1994). As an ethnographer, I was often prompting participants for these stories, for recollections of life histories or feelings about something that was going on in their trade – labour shortages, a pandemic, Brexit or the price of sheep. Other times, I would dip into conversations already in motion, which had nothing to do with our surroundings or the intensely physical labour of animal slaughter that occupied our bodies: the first Michael Jackson record a slaughterman purchased, and whether he can still like it after the superstar was accused of child abuse; or a television programme that another had watched the night before about 9/11 and how much he admired George W. Bush; a joke repeated that a slaughterman made in 1980; or a nugget of gossip about one of the workers which was carried from North Hills, the rural slaughterhouse in the North West by an itinerant slaughterman, to tell the slaughtermen at Westlambs in the urban West Midlands.

Through every day and instigated conversations, workers were reflexively interpreting their life histories and experiences, and their material and social realities. They communicated with both conviction and subtlety a sense of their identities, the

identities of others, where they felt they belonged, or who they felt disconnected from. These emerged through the social locations of class, race, Whiteness, and gender. Following feminist approaches, which account for how identities are dialogically inhabited and contested (I. Tyler 2022; Lawler, 2002; Skeggs, 1997), I focus on the ways in which narratives both construct identities and communicate a sense of belonging, whether to the nation, a trade, or a local town. First, I introduce the concepts of identity and belonging in relation to narratives and the methodological approach of narrative ethnographic research. Here, I am combining and comparing theories, definitions and methods from both sociology and anthropology to ethnographically ground how social categories such as "race", class or nationhood are reproduced and lived in practice (Degnen & Tyler, 2017).

Philip and Rob are both white British skilled slaughtermen. They work at the rural slaughterhouse in the North West, North Hills, and live in neighbouring towns a short distance away. As they were working together on the slaughter line, they were having a debate about who lived in the best town. Philip described an ideal day in his hometown, "you could be anywhere in the world, it's as good as anywhere in the world down on the beach on a sunny day, sitting there with a bag of chips. People go off to Spain for it, but everything I need is here." Rob, reflecting on his hometown, added, "when I go out on the pier and all the lights are on over the harbour, it's nice isn't it? It's a great place to be." Philip then replies, to me, "Rob doesn't live in a nice area, he's got a P*** to the right of him, a P*** to the left of him, smells of curry all the time. And they've just built a new mosque." Rob then conceded, "It's true, there are a lot of Asians" in reference to the racialised slur (an abbreviation of Pakistani) Philip had used. After the exchange, Philip smiled victoriously, expressing that he had won their competition over who lives in the best town.

I include this conversation to illustrate how I am conceptualising firstly, identity and secondly, belonging. Identities have been conceptualised as narratives (Lawler, 2002; Yuval Davies, 1999). Somers and Green (1994, p.2) propose that "people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or *being located within a repertoire o*f emplotted stories. Lawler (2002) emphasises that narratives are not simply interpretations of facts or transparent carriers of experience. For example, Philip was not simply telling us that he ate a bag on chips at the seaside. Rather, as

Lawler suggests (2002, p.2) narratives "are interpretive devices, through which people represent themselves, both to themselves and to others" and through which people connect their past and present, self, and other. As such identities are social products which "emerge in the context of specific social, historical, and cultural locations." She continues,

> Not only do people often produce 'storied' accounts of themselves and their relation to the social world…but also the social world is itself 'storied'. That is, stories circulate culturally, providing a means of making sense of that world, and also providing the materials with which people construct personal narratives as a means of constructing personal identities (Lawler, 2002, p.2)

Building on Paul Ricoeur (1991), Lawler argues that narratives are a specific form of discourse which create a sense of coherence between heterogeneous elements through emplotment. These heterogenous elements (be they people or events) are sequenced and related into an overall "plot" to create the meaning of the narrative, as if they seem to be inevitably connected. For example, in Philip's narrative about Rob's town, he bought together heterogeneous elements: a British seaside town, a new mosque, Asian neighbours and the smell of curry. It was a plot which centred on communicating a meaning of invasion and an unwelcome, or abject presence. The reference to curry (not as an appetising aroma, but a miasma taking over Rob's home) drew on already circulating racialised narratives of Othering Asians in Britain (Rao, 2020). By emplotting both Rob and himself into the story, he was communicating his identity as a local, British, white resident that could be threatened or disrupted by the presence of Asian neighbours. Rob and Philip were expressing their identities, not simply as a fixed social location (for example their race, gender, nationality or class) but as an affective attachment to place. As Werbner (2013, p.409) identifies, when social locations are fixed through the terms white, Black or Asian for example, they can be presented as "neutral analytic terms" which indicate closing off possibilities, rather than an opening out. As such, the terms "white" of "Asian" reveal little about how these social locations are inhabited, remade and contested. Fixed social categories are rather, "narratives of failure."

This conversation related not only to identity, but to belonging. Belonging can refer to solidarity, commitment, and connection between people, places and values; simultaneously, belonging can also be discursively denied by claiming fixed, stable boundaries between people and place (Antonsich, 2010). Belonging has been conceptualised as desire for attachment and a longing to connect to people or place (Probyn, 1996); a performance in relation to localised places (Fortier, 2000) or to the nation, real or imagined (Anderson 1983; Skey 2013). In terms of people's identities and social locations, claiming belonging has also been a fundamental means through which boundaries and hierarchies are constructed between groups who are then constructed as not belonging (Wemyss, 2009; Yuval Davies & Anthias 1993; Valluvan and Kalra, 2019). Yuval Davies (2006, p.199-202) makes an important distinction between belonging, and the "politics of belonging." She offers three levels through which belonging can be approached: social locations (such as race, class and gender), identifications (which emerge through narrative) and emotional attachments, and ethical and political values. Belonging can be "concrete or abstract, an act of self-identification or identification by others, stable, contested or transient." However, belonging (unlike identities) "cannot and should not be seen as merely cognitive stories…they reflect emotional investments and desire for attachments." For example, Philip and Rob both express emotional attachments to place, their coastal towns; and to an ethical value system, of appreciating the place they were from.

Yuval Davies (2006) argues that "belonging" and a "politics of belonging" are distinct but interrelated. The politics of belonging is centred on "boundary maintenance" through imagined "them and us" boundaries and "comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways" (Yuval Davies, 2006, p.197). Through Philip and Rob's exchange, I argue that their affective attachments are expressed through narrative as an "everyday politics" of belonging. For example, as Philip implied, an affective and emotional attachment of belonging to place can be contested. His allusion that Rob does not belong in his hometown is articulated through the presence of other people, buildings and aromas, Asian neighbours, new mosques, and the smell of curry. These affective attachments

of belonging were related to social locations, for example, Rob's Whiteness against the racialisation of his neighbours. As Antonsich (2010, p.644) argues,

> Belonging should be analysed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion／exclusion (politics of belonging).

Throughout the ethnography I show how slaughtermen expressed both an affective belonging, whether to the slaughterhouse, or each other, and an "everyday" politics of belonging, by discursively maintaining and reproducing racialised, classed and national boundaries. I will argue that belonging and a politics of belonging are entangled, where affective attachments are *expressed* through narratives, while the exclusions and "hierarchies of belonging" are *constructed* through narrative.

Narrative Research Methods

Narrative identity research has often asserted the primacy of interviews, as a reflective space where both the researcher and participants are intentionally dislocated from the everyday. In this way, researchers can access how people construct their "narrative identities" and express their belonging through their oral life histories, or racial consciousness biographies (Reissman, 2002; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). For example, in his detailed study of Peterborough, Rogaly (2020) uses oral life history interviews to draw out multi-ethnic and multi-national residents' shared histories of mobility and fixity in relation to place. The narratives which emerged challenge divisive racialised binaries invoked between those constructed as native or immigrant. It is in the context of interviews that Lawler (2002, p.3) positions that "narrative enquiry is marked by defining itself against positivism, that the only social facts worth consideration are phenomena which are observable and, in some sense, measurable." In narrative inquiry, "a much more interesting issue is that of interpretation - how social actors interpret the social world, and their place within it." Although Lawler is troubling the fixity of social categories of gender and class by accounting for how people inhabit these categories through their narratives, what is observed through being present in their everyday social life – and the tensions between what is said by participants and

observed through thick ethnographic research is necessarily pushed to the background.

Over the course of fieldwork, there were only a few informal, semi-structured interviews conducted away from the activity of the slaughterhouse. The general consensus of the skilled British white workers was that if I was going to get to get to know them and what they do, it was while they were working. By far, all the dialogue, between myself and the workers, and the workers with each other, emerged on the slaughter line, in the break rooms, the back rooms skinning sheep heads, hanging out by the ventilators in the yard smoking cigarettes, clearing hay from the lairage, or moving waste bins in alleyways. On the drives home or between the slaughterhouses, I would perform the conversations, I which I had been an interlocutor, or overheard at the slaughterhouse, back to myself and my Dictaphone. It was as if I was gossiping back to myself, "he said" and then "I said" and "then he said" capturing the tone, cadence and emplotment. I would then transcribe these recordings into "scripts" including my interjections, responses, and recollections of the scene and activity. As I remembered these verbal exchanges and spoke them out loud, I was constructing my own narratives and making connections between things said and done. It is likely that this approach rendered jumbled syntaxes and absent words. Most importantly, however, these remembered conversations retained their narrative form of emplotment, capturing how workers were creating coherence by connecting moments from their past, present, future, or between themselves and others. For example, a nostalgic remembrance of bag of chips, the seaside and being British.

There were benefits to a fieldwork approach which was almost entirely based within the activity of the slaughterhouse (bar a few visits to sheep auctions and a few telephone interviews). It enabled me to focus on the ways in which narratives were a fundamental modality through which belonging, and identity were constructed in the workplace. I could see, and sometimes feel, the tangible impacts of workers words and tone, whether through whispers, banter, or outright racist slurs. As I moved with the itinerant slaughtermen between the slaughterhouses, I could map the ways in which their narratives invoked classed, racialised, gendered and national differences between themselves and their co-workers. Most importantly, I could identify the ways in which these "narrative identities" shifted as they moved between sites. As I will explore in

chapter 4, the white British itinerant slaughtermen constructed their identities through narratives about themselves and their co-workers through notions of race, class, nation, and gender. These identities were discursively positioned into "hierarchies of belonging" in which their local co-workers were either tolerated, or did not belong. However, as slaughtermen moved, and as these narratives shifted, I could see what narratives were doing in different contexts to draw out the unstable, fragile, relational, and imaginative qualities of identities, belonging, and hierarchies.

Terminology

At this juncture, I want to explain the terms I am using to categorise identities and social categories. In the introduction, I have included the terms "white British", "British Asian", Pakistani and Polish. My intention is not to reify or flatten people into these categories or suggest that they are fixed. On the contrary, I demonstrate how classed, racialised, gendered and national identities are contingent, fragile, inhabited, resisted and context specific (Lawler, 2002; Skeggs,1995). However, I want to be clear about my intention using these terms, and their limits. The terms British and English were used interchangeably by participants, or were implied, such as through statements "our country" and "their country." It was ambiguous whether they were referring to England, Britain, or most likely, both (see Watt, 2011). While all the slaughterhouses are located in England, I have chosen to describe workers through the term British rather than English. I want to highlight the political and civic connections to place between British Asians and white British workers, even if these connections were denied by the white British workers. While I am referring to people who live in England (rather than Scotland or Wales), the term Englishness could be associated with nativist claims to a white national ethnic identity[7] (see Evans, 2012; Gilroy 1987; Hall, 1991; Yuval Davies, 2007), whereas British is a term which can be both racialised, or recognised as a nation where "multiculturalism" is a fundamental constituent of national identity (Fortier, 2008; Lentin & Titley, 2011). Through the slaughtermen's dialogues, key concepts of "Englishness" and English identity such as "respectability"

[7] English as a claim to an ethnic white identity has been challenged and resisted, for example, Black MP David Lammy, argued it is a civic identity and not to be policed through racialised boundaries.

emerged (Strathern, 1992); as did references to the histories of the English working-class. While English nativist ideas were expressed by white British slaughtermen, I will illustrate this through participant's words. As such, I will demonstrate when identities were constructed around Englishness or Britishness-as-Whiteness (Fortier, 2008)[8]. When I refer to the "nation" I use the term Britain, rather than England for the same reasons.

This thesis considers race as a social, cultural, discursive construct which is strategically deployed to (re)produce differences, whether through bodies, labour, sheep, meat or laws (Hall,1997; Goldberg 1993; M'charek, 2010; Wade, 2002). In chapters 4 and 5, I will engage with a more detailed discussion of racialisation and Whiteness. I am using the word Asian[9] by which I mean South Asian of Pakistani and Indian descent in the context of these slaughterhouses. When I use the term British Asian, I am referring to workers who were born in the UK, of Pakistani and Indian descent. I am using the term British Pakistani for workers who have been in the UK since the mid-twentieth century arriving as postcolonial British citizens. When I use the term Pakistani, it is to refer to workers who were born in Pakistan and have arrived more recently. As far as I know, the Asian workers were Muslim, although their religious beliefs, or ethno-religious identifications did not emerge frequently in conversations. While I am capitalising Asian, I am not going to capitalise white[10] when I am referring to a perceived racial identity. I follow Fortier's (2008) adoption of Seshadri-Crooks'[11] (2000, p.97) distinction between "White" and "white", in which Whiteness is "a discourse of difference which institutes a regime of looking" and ordering racialised hierarchies, and "white" as "a property of particular human beings", that is, their skin colour. As such, a lower case

[8] In using the term British, rather than English, I am aware that as Hall suggests (1991, p.22), "It was only by dint of excluding or absorbing all the differences that constituted Englishness, the multitude of different regions, peoples, classes, genders that composed the people gathered together in the Act of Union, that Englishness could stand for everybody in the British Isles". As such, I am aware that Scotland and Wales are reduced into this definition. However, this is not my intention, and, in this instance, all slaughterhouses and workers lived in England.

[9] "Asian" is unsatisfactory to refer to either a place or ethnicity in the British context and against complex colonial histories (Brah, 1996). In America, Du Bois (1935) argued that "Black" deserved a capital letter: a mark of legitimacy encompassing transatlantic slave trade and recognising Black as part of an African diaspora.

[10] White nationalists have embraced the capitalisation of the term White to claim it as a fixed, racialised identity which contests that race is a social construct. However, anti-racists in the USA have also argued that White should be capitalised so that it does not get represented as a neutral category (Pika, 2021)

"w" is used, unless specially referring to Whiteness (or White) as a hegemonic regime of ordering, sifting and dividing the world. As Fortier identifies, maintaining the distinction between skin colour, and a hegemonic regime of looking and ordering the social world was hard to achieve in practice, without it appearing as a reification of the category "white" as a fixed, non-relational and ahistorical. Importantly, as I use these words to describe workers, I am not implying that they would always meld onto participants' own self-identifications.

Most importantly, the racist slur P*** was used by participants. Throughout this thesis I screen out a word that is obviously there. Many write the word in full, whether to critique it (Ahmed, 2004; Brah 1996) or to include the words of participants (Back, 1991a; Sian, 2018). Throughout the ethnographic chapters, I look in more detail into the ways in which this term was used in different contexts. I am aware this erasure is perhaps a meaningless gesture. Firstly, the narratives which I do include are also harmful. Secondly, I demonstrate the multifarious ways in which racist narratives, rather than singular slurs are potent strategies in constructing division and hierarchies. I am also aware that by screening the word out, it may appear that I am neutralising or "whitewashing" my participant's racist language (Perez, 2020). It was a personal decision, the slur was frequently said by the white slaughtermen, and as a white woman, writing it again and again felt flippant, uncomfortable, and gratuitous.

2.2 Ethics, access, and positionality

As a white British woman, I was positioned positively into the slaughtermen's racialised and nationalistic "hierarchies of belonging" across the slaughterhouses. There were also many ways in which I could have been variously categorised as an "outsider" to the diverse workers in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class. I was almost always the only woman in an all-male space, I was white, I was university educated, and from London; someone who might moralise workers practices and perspectives on the world. However, if identities are produced through narratives about oneself and others in the context of social relations and social locations, the ways in which I was

emplotted into narratives about my identity both by myself and by participants cannot be assumed as stable or fit into neat insider/outsider categories. Further, my methodological focus on narratives as constructive of both identity and belonging entails various issues of positionality, access, consent, duplicity, and complicity. In this section I focus on positionality in a broad sense to encompass my gender, "race," and class, not simply as social locations, and their intersections, but as they were narrated both by myself and participants and the impact this had on the shape and limits of this research.

As an ethnographer, I too was a speaker and a listener. With a focus on the construction of racialised "hierarchies of belonging" through often explicitly racist talk, this thesis could be framed as an ethnography of "societal extremes" centred on stigmatised participants who might hold objectionable views or do distasteful things (Faust & Pfeifer, 2021, p.86). At times I was complicit (through my silence) in the racist or xenophobic stigmatisation of British Asian, Pakistani, or Polish workers. I also got my hands bloody in the contentious issue of animal slaughter. Very rarely while doing fieldwork, did I explicitly disagree with, or moralise these physical and discursive practices, regardless of how they variously challenged my own beliefs or made me feel. These negotiations were more complex than simply stating positionality through social location and ethics: that I am a white British middle-class woman who considers herself anti-racist and who does not have a strong ethical position against killing livestock animals for meat. First, I outline the ambivalence and contradictions of fieldwork encounters, reflexively accounting for my emotional responses to the violences of slaughter, racism, Islamophobia, classism and xenophobias. In so doing, shall identify how my responses (or lack of responses) shaped issues of consent, complicity, duplicity and access within an ethnically diverse workforce.

Being emplotted into classed, gendered and racialised narratives

Access and consent to visit and return to each slaughterhouse was not simply resolved by owners *letting* me in. It was the white skilled British slaughterman, those already in a position of power, who endorsed my return. They had fed back to the owners that I was "alright." The owners, for example, Ray, in turn, told me "The guys are happy

having you around, you know how things work, you didn't get in the way." However, it was not just white British skilled slaughtermen who laboured in the spaces. In what ways was I "alright" and for whom? In this section, I look first at how I was made "alright" through narrative for some of the workers, and not others and how these were shaped by my Whiteness.

Over the course of fieldwork, workers got to know me through our conversations, in which they would emplot me in a repertoire of narratives in the registers of class, gender and regionality (Lawler, 2002). For example, when a new vet arrived to work on the slaughter line at Eastewes, the halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, he asked if I was from the local town. Wayne, a skilled itinerant slaughterman responded, before I could, "As *if* Jess is from round here! If she was from round here, she wouldn't be at university, she'd be walking around with four babies in a pram from four different daddies!" Wayne was reproducing a stigmatised narrative about single white working-class women (Skeggs, 2005), as an example of a narrative I did not fit, while at the same time stigmatising the local workers. At North Hills, Philip, the white British foreman often marked my difference as being from London, "I know what *you* like, you're from London, you like a big fat one" leaving enough pause for me to get that there was a gendered double entendre, before adding, "a big fat line of cocaine!" Here, he was fitting me into a narrative that Londoners are hedonistic, rich, snorting drugs and promiscuous. My accent would be mocked, for example, the way I had said goats as "gowts" (imagine the Queen of England) rather than "gurts" in his thick northern accent. Or, my requests, such as "where's the shovel" would be repeated back to me in the accent and catchphrase of Frank Spencer, a sitcom character from the late 1970s with a whining cockney accent: "Ooooh Betty, where's the shovel!" That I knew the programme he was talking about reflected our relatively shared age. Or, as I was elbow deep in a bucket of hearts, livers and lungs, itinerant slaughtermen Cliff and Doug at Eastewes joked that I was a secret agent working for the government, and that was what my research was *really* about: "You could be a secret agent, but then you wouldn't say it, or maybe you would! Double-double bluff!" These were divergent narratives which played around with the possibilities of who I might be in ways which were classed and gendered. These narratives were frequently performed in the register of humour, to know that whoever I was, I did not take myself too seriously.

A question asked on every visit, at every slaughterhouse, was "do you want babies?" "Have you decided to have babies yet?" The persistence of the questioning was that I had just turned 40, and I was told that I needed to make my mind up "before it's too late." Although a question which I was uncomfortably undecided about, it was strangely caring. The white British slaughtermen identified themselves as "family men", and often spoke about their children as "the best thing" in their lives. They were concerned I would miss out on experiencing this emotional fulfilment. These comments were also shaped around their expectations of women which were as much about understanding what kind of woman I was, as telling me about themselves. These exchanges revealed that the dynamics and potential of developing relationships with participants which were not premised on shared social locations of class and gender, or insider/outsider binaries as stated as facts. Being different, a potential "outsider" was not an issue in curtailing dialogue, sharing opinions and interpretations (Pasieka, 2019). I was open, often discussing personal details about my life, emotions and relations when asked, and within boundaries I felt comfortable with. It was the openness in participating in dialogue and not resisting when participants tested out scripts on me which created intimacies. I did not need to be a white British slaughterman to be accepted, rather, just to allow myself to be known in some measure.

That the above examples all relate to white British men, is reflective of the role that Whiteness had in shaping the fieldwork. As a white woman, I was positioned favourably within the slaughtermen's racialised hierarchies, and maintained access to their workplaces through their mobilities and status. When two white British slaughtermen, Rob and Cliff, acted as gatekeepers to the third slaughterhouse, Westlambs, Rob warned that it was, "proper halal" non-stun slaughter. I was told, "it's alright though, it's still English guys that own it", inferring the owners were white and not Muslim. When I asked Cliff if he had any connections with a British Pakistani owned halal slaughterhouse I wanted to visit (and which Cliff had worked at before), I was told sternly not to go. "I wouldn't feel safe with you going there without me, the men are not nice to women." Although Cliff had introduced me to the Westlambs site where many of the workers were Asian men, he said he would be there to "protect

me." His masculinity was expressed through the protection of me as a woman but more specifically, a white woman.

From its earliest conceptualisations in critical race literature, Whiteness has been understood as more than a skin tone, a biological fact, or a fixed, bounded racial group. Yet, it remains an ordering racial formation connected to power and privilege (Omi & Winant, 1986). How, then, to study Whiteness and the power that it can exert? Frankenberg (1993) defined Whiteness as a structural position of power, a standpoint from which white people view themselves and others, and a set of cultural practices which were unmarked, an "empty category". Frankenberg argued that white people could imagine themselves as neutral or racially unmarked, even though Whiteness both materially and discursively shaped their lives. They too are "racialised," because "race" structures their lives and their constructions of Others. Whiteness, while unmarked, remained potent through the paradox of its invisibility. Critics have argued that through making Whiteness visible, it becomes reified as a fixed identity. This further imbues Whiteness with power, suggesting white people have a shared culture creating the potential to feed into discourses about a white, ethnonationalist belonging and indigeneity (for example Chen, 2017; Twine and Gallagher 2008). As Hartigan (1997) highlights, claiming the "fact" of Whiteness (i.e. identifying its existence and dominance) runs counter to theorists who have shown that "race" is a social construct rather than a biological fact. Hartigan proposes this risks of claiming the "fact" of Whiteness can be mitigated by not fixing it as an identity, with a homogeneous cultural core. Rather, critical race research should interrogate how Whiteness intersects with, and its privileges can be destabilised by, other social categories such as class, gender, nationality, sexual orientation and migration status.

While my gender and class were tested and given meaning against a repertoire of narratives, never once was me being white explicitly referenced by workers – for example, my white skin, or blonde hair. However, the gendered and classed narratives in which I was emplotted were implicitly ones in which I was racialised as a white woman (Frankenberg, 1993). As Yuval Davies (2007) articulates, there is no concept of "woman" as an identity which is not already loaded with associations of class or ethnicity. Back & Solomos (1993, p.186) suggest that in research settings, alertness to the ways in which Whiteness is deployed enables white researchers to seriously

consider the "implications for the shape of research and dilemmas which occur in the research process" to avoid "reify[ing] Whiteness as a fixed identity." That my Whiteness was not reified was evident in the ways that it was not deployed in the same way across sites: While at North Hills, where all the workers are white, my racial identity was unspoken and unfelt; at Westlambs, the slaughterhouse with both Asian and white workers, I could feel the discomfort of "protective" eyes from the white slaughtermen when I spent too much time speaking to an Asian worker. That this was specifically about Whiteness, and not xenophobia, for example, was evident in the ways that no tension emerged when I spoke with the white Polish worker, Antoni, in the Northwest (which I explore in chapter 4). As Ahmed (2004, p.9) describes in her phenomenological approach, Whiteness is "an *effect* of racialisation which in turn shapes what bodies can do" and through which Whiteness becomes "real" material and lived." Ahmed focusses on how non-white bodies experience the tensions of not being able to pass without friction through white spaces. In my case, at Westlambs, a space of heightened racial tension and hierarchy between workers (which I also explore in Chapter 4), I could feel and hear when I was in the "wrong" place. Whiteness emerged as a "a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented" through me (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p.5). Whiteness shaped the slaughterhouses I maintained access to, as well as the people I felt comfortable researching once inside. To be clear, this was not a reflection of any personal discomfort on my part of speaking to men because they were Asian, or that I was unsafe, but that I was made to *feel* uncomfortable by the white British slaughtermen who made it clear they did not think I should be speaking to Asian men.

I did not plan this research to focus specifically on white British men. The concealment of slaughterhouses and the uncertainties of access meant that I had only speculated that there would likely be some white British workers, some EU workers, and halal slaughtermen who would be a practicing Muslim. I had assumed that my gender, perceived racial identity, class and language might shape uneven access. Perhaps both naive, and with an unaccounted-for entitlement, I had not anticipated the impact that being white would have across diverse spaces. Sociologists and anthropologists who study race and racism have discussed the complexities how "racial symmetry" or "ethnic matching" shapes the knowledge which participants might share (Archer,

2001; Back, 2002; Back & Solomos, 1993; Phoenix et. al. 1994; Twine 2000). The arguments for ethnic matching highlight the potential limitations of white researchers to understand the racialised experiences of Black or Asian participants. Further, that researchers of same ethnicity may be more trusted (Twine, 2000). Based on understandings that researcher knowledge is situated, that is, we know what we know because of who we are and how we experience the world, Phoenix (1994) proposes including researchers of the same and different ethnicities of participants. It is a move which turns the analytical lens back onto the researcher to show how *their* knowledge is situated. However, as I was the only researcher, in slaughterhouses already dense with racialised hierarchies, ethnic matching was not something I actively pursued, rather, I was "matched" by participants.

Back and Solomos (1993) highlight that being "ethnically matched" by participants entails its own problems and raises ethical issues in terms of access and consent which can create a persistent sense of ethical ambivalence for the researcher. For example, a white researcher might be seen as someone to whom participants would express racist sentiments towards (as the slaughtermen did to me) that they would not otherwise feel comfortable expressing to a Black or Asian researcher. Further, that I was racialised as white created an unwanted (on my part) distance from Asian workers. I never felt trusted in the same way by either British Asian or Pakistani workers. For example, at Westlambs, white and Asian workers separate into kitchens at break time. After a shift, once most workers had left, I asked one of the younger British Asian workers if I could come into his kitchen. He responded, "Nah! You're white!" This was said as banter, but it felt unethical to cross into a space which I was told was not for me, especially in the context of this slaughterhouse where Asian workers were persistently the targets of racialised abuse. So, while I had many conversations and interactions with Asian workers, these mostly took place in back rooms, outside, in spaces where the white slaughtermen could not see me, or spaces which had not been delegated as "not white" because I did not want to be a conductor of more racist abuse.

Who I spoke to, and who was both willing and able to speak to me as part of their working day, was heavily dominated by Whiteness. However, age and the type of labour workers were employed in were also important factors. There were instances

where the imposed white and Asian boundaries shifted. Ahmed, the halal slaughterman at Westlambs, a British Asian of Gujarati decent in his early twenties, was one of a few participants who agreed to do a phone interview. Likewise, when speaking to the halal inspector from the halal accreditation agency, Abdul, I did not pick up on any tension from the white workers. Both Ahmed and Abdul had a higher status at Westlambs slaughterhouse, which I assume the white slaughtermen were less confident about contesting. Ahmed and Abdul explained in detail the process and meaning of halal slaughter along with their own interpretations shaped around assumptions that I would not know about Islam, as opposed to the often-assumed agreement from the white workers when they expressed racist or xenophobic views. As Phoenix (1994) notes, my situatedness as a white researcher who was not Muslim shaped the kinds of knowledge which participants shared. Age also shaped which workers were comfortable with openly speaking to me. Younger local white workers across all sites were more hesitant about speaking to me, in part because they were aware that the older skilled itinerant slaughtermen were monitoring their work. As Ben, the apprentice at North Hills explained, "they've all got their eyes on me" and "I need to keep my focus on work so I don't mess up." However, older local workers at Westlambs, Jeff and Eddie, employed in the fiddlier repetitive work of organ sorting were comfortable and open speaking with me at length. The nature of their labour and the back rooms in which they worked, created spaces for conversations away from the throng of the slaughter line and the heightened narratives of racialised difference expressed there.

Researching objectionable views: racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and sexism

Across all three slaughterhouses, the skilled white British slaughtermen expressed racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic and anti-Muslim views. Often, these were presented as "banter", directed towards Asian workers or the Polish workers under the veil of being "just jokes." But these expressions also occurred in more reflective conversations at break time, or during work with myself or between the white slaughtermen. In chapter 4, I argue that both "banter" and more reflective racist narratives constructing racialised hierarchies. Back (2002, p.34) proposes that "being in dialogue with racist views posed a whole series of questions about the ethical terms of

such a conversation and the politics of assimilating those who espoused racism into the realm of understanding, which is what social researchers do." In this section, I outline the methodological, ethical and emotional issues and negotiations that emerged.

Statements were often made in ways which assumed my agreement because of my perceived racial and national identity. For example, Ray, the white British owner at Eastewes, was expressing his perceptions of the halal butchers he supplies. He asked, "you *must* know already that the Muslims are terrible at paying." I didn't want to affirm the statement, neither did I want to say, "that is generalisation that sounds racist to me" because I thought it would alienate me from him. Instead, I responded by saying that I imagined lots of high street butchers were struggling, offering an alternative point of view that was not racialised. However, in the thrust of dialogue between workers in the slaughterhouse, offering alternative views was not possible. For example, while Cliff was speaking to me during a shift, he looked over to a group of Asian workers who he thought were looking at him, and shouted over, "I'm speaking to Jess, she's from a nice area, not like you lot." Firaz, a Pakistani worker shouted back, "White men are bastards. White women are nice but white men are bastards." Both had invoked me as a respectable white woman to make their point. I was central to the exchange, but I said nothing, not wanting to interject with anything that might fuel the fire.

Through my responses during fieldwork, and the writing beyond, I have been both complicit and duplicitous in researching racism. Complicit because I only gently challenged, if at all, racist comments and my silence could have been read as an agreement (Back & Solomos, 1993). At the same time, I felt duplicitous that while I disagreed, I did not make this clear in my conversations with white slaughtermen. Fassin (2013) engages with the reproduction of racism within the French Police. Pilkington (2016) has researched racism in the English Defence League (EDL). Both share insights on being a white researcher in the presence of racisms directed towards people who are also part of the ethnographic encounter. Fassin (2013, p.29) opted to not react to racist dialogue, positioning himself as a "non-participant participant-observer." Pilkington sat in discomfort during incidents where participants expressed racist views publicly, but then brought them up later for discussion. Central to Fassin's

and Pilkington's methodological approaches were ethical decisions to refrain from moralising or stigmatising their participants as racist, even though they found the expressions objectionable.[12] Rather, they chose to understand participant's logics and sentiments. As Harding (1991) outlines in her work on Evangelical Christian fundamentalists, constructing people as "repugnant others" because of their beliefs and actions, assumes a homogeneity within these groups. It also obscures how stigmatising discourses construct "repugnant others" as backward and ahistorical which enables those doing the judging to feel secure, progressive, and moral. Building on Harding, Pasieka (2019) argues that there is no prerequisite to study people you agree with, and that having things "in common" is not necessary for insightful dialogue. Further, framing people as "repugnant others" constructs them as wholly shaped by a belief, rather than being people with "unlikeable beliefs" and this belies the elements of the relationship that were developed through care, humour and intimacy. As this thesis focusses belonging and identity as shifting, contextual and discursive, to "Other" and fix participants based on their narratives would be antithetical to the overall argument. In the context of my research, I did not want to enforce the stigmatisation of the white working-class as emblematically and homogeneously racist (Lawler, 2012; Ware, 1992). This would not be representative of either the shifting and intricate constructions of race, nation, Whiteness and Britishness, nor the relations I had with workers which were also shaped by kindness, care, intimacy and humour. As Back (2002) articulates, when researching racism as a white researcher, encounters with participants exist in a "grey zone" of complex relations which are shaped by both difference and familiarity.

Pilkington (2016, p.14) suggests that "ethnography demands neither sympathy nor empathy". However, this balance between accepting that participants had racist beliefs with which I did not sympathise nor empathise, yet which I would not moralise, was challenged one morning outside Westlambs, the halal slaughterhouse with a

[12] Hayes (2018) has critiqued Pilkington's approach of finding sameness and familiarity with participants, rather than focussing on the broader social impact that the EDL has in promoting anti-Muslim and Islamophobic racism. Further he suggests that she screens out the presence of fascism within the EDL movement. As such, his issue was not so much with the methods, but the analysis. I hope to demonstrate throughout the ethnography the impacts that these racist views had on Asian workers through their access to labour.

racially mixed workforce. Workers were standing in a circle, drinking tea and smoking after a shift. On one side of the circle, were a group of white British slaughtermen, who travel to this site from their hometowns. On the other, a group of local Asian workers. The conversation was loud and characterised by the usual racialised "banter" which circulates during a shift, as workers exchanged insults about each other: "you fat white pig", "you smelly P***", delivered in the tone and facial expressions of a playfight. Alex, a white British slaughterman, then made a quiet comment (which I overheard) to Dennis, another white British slaughterman: "Let's go P*** bashing on Friday night." He followed this with a comment about "tightening the laces on my DM boots" which I interpreted as a reference to a racist far right group. I could feel a rage bubbling in the pit of my stomach and flooding into my cheeks. It was not the same as the simultaneous discomfort and interest I felt listening to racialised comments and banter. The reference to bodily violence and the physicality of the word bashing, the under-his-breath side remark felt both viscerally sinister and scary. My mind was racing: Are *they* joking? Are *they* National Front? Are *they* fascists? What if *they*'re neo-Nazis?

It is possible the statement cut deeper because it felt personal. My grandmother, a Czechoslovakian Jewish immigrant, was the only member of her childhood family to survive Auschwitz. Although not practicing, my maternal and paternal family heritage is Jewish. When my grandmother came to Britain, she did not feel safe to bring her Jewish identity with her. As a white woman in rural Norfolk, she could just about hide it. No one in the slaughterhouse knew I had Jewish heritage or guessed because of my Jewish surname. I had not said anything when workers had described Jewish shechita slaughter as barbaric and backward, discursively positioning Jews as a "them" to an "us" in which I was firmly assumed to be in the "us" category. In an instant, I was thinking about this group of white workers who I knew as individuals through their narratives, as a homogenised "*they*". Had the white British slaughtermen known about my Jewishness, on refection, I do not think it would have been an issue for me or them, rather, another "difference" to play around with through narrative as they had with my gender and class. But in the moment, and the immediate aftermath, I felt rage. I left that morning seething, ranting into my Dictaphone on the drive home. I felt betrayed, "of course the banter isn't jokes…they *would* violently attack their co-

workers." This was in the context where I already felt sure that the "banter" was not just jokes. I felt guilty and complicit that I had not challenged their words as racist. For a moment, and for the first time, I worried whether I was safe in the slaughterhouse. Perhaps I was not the kind of white woman they thought I was. Regardless of not *needing* empathy or sympathy to understand workers' worlds, I did not want to be anywhere near the slaughtermen. I felt a force of abjection, of wanting to create distance.

Why was it that I could tolerate Islamophobic, racist and xenophobic sentiments, whereas the allusion to the far right and physical violence made me want to create distance? Away from that moment, I thought about how through one muffled phrase I emplotted the slaughtermen into a narrative in which they were violent, dangerous, racist and immoral. I pieced together other things the slaughtermen who made the comment had also told me, "We're all friends outside" even if they participated in racism inside. He rather prophetically had explained that in the "future the human race will all be one colour" a mix of white, brown, black and that it would be a hopeful future because we would not be bogged down by difference. I tried to reassure myself the bashing comment was made in jest, even if I felt discomfort that they would joke about such violence. Seeking reassurance that the racism was only verbal and not physical would have been contradictory. Throughout the thesis I demonstrate how racial hierarchies are reproduced through narrative, not physical force. To say one is unrelated to physical violence, or more valid to count as racism would be to deny the potency of narrative which I argue constructs identities, access to labour, bodies and reproduces inequalities.

Moreso, it was a moment to interrogate my positionality and situatedness. Firstly, I was trying to excuse or deny a form of violent physical racism so that *I* could feel safe again as a white researcher who had not been identified as Jewish. I wanted to excuse what I overheard so that I did not feel complicit in enabling violence. In the following chapter on the colonial histories of sheep and meat, I use Wemyss' (2009) concept of "invisible empire", to explore how White Britishness is constructed as morally superior by actively forgetting and denying histories of violence. In this instance, I was the one reproducing Whiteness by suppressing the possibilities of violence. It was easier for me to be silent, or deflective during racist banter or more reflective comments. While this

was in part shaped by distinctions between a threat of physical violence and verbal degradation, my Whiteness enabled me to tolerate, to hear, and to analyse the racist, Islamophobic or xenophobic comments directed at Asian workers without feeling them as an embodied threat. It marked the limitations of my situated knowledge; of not knowing how racist narratives made the Asian workers feel. As such, I am ambivalent to Pilkington's suggestion that researchers can compartmentalise and control emotional and moral responses to participants' racist narratives and yet engage emotionally in their everyday experiences. My experience was that my perceived white racial identity was a vector through which Whiteness could be reproduced, and which enabled me to navigate the racisms towards Asian workers. Unlikeable beliefs are not just logically encountered as unlikeable, they are felt as unlikeable. These emotional responses were situated and contextual.

To be clear, while I was uncomfortable with the racisms (some more than others), I decided to centre race and racism in the research, because to me, race was a dominant modality through which identities, belonging and hierarchies were constructed across the slaughterhouses by the white slaughtermen. When slaughtermen made racist or Islamophobic comments, these were the moments my ears pricked up, and I would make mental notes to memorise them. I would speak these words back to myself on my Dictaphone, write them in fieldnotes, and analyse them. This of course weighs heavily on the direction and content of the thesis which as a result does not include many moments in which racialisation was not dominant. In comparison, in Rogaly's participant's stories about working in multi-ethnic workplaces, namely large scale, mechanised warehouses and food processing factories, he highlights that he "listen[ed] out for an anti-racist, non-elite cosmopolitanism" through which participants formed solidarities across ethnic differences with co-workers (Rogaly, 2020, p. 4). In particular, he suggests that solidarities emerged as resistance to supervisors and managers in workplaces where they were demeaned and treated as disposable. My choice was reflective of experiencing the slaughterhouses as dense with racialised hierarchies, whereby the white slaughtermen had positioned themselves as elites in relation to the local workers: if effect, the slaughtermen were the supervisors and managers. Based on the dynamics of access which they enabled, it was these men on whom I focussed my research. However, if I had focussed more

closely on those who were not in positions of power – such as the multi-ethnic local workforce at Westlambs and the context of the West Midlands town in which they were based, the convivialities and non-elite forms of cosmopolitanism that Rogaly argues for, would not have been hard to encounter. Throughout the thesis, small moments such as these between local workers will be acknowledged, if not robustly analytically engaged with.

Despite this focus on their racisms, I did not encounter the slaughtermen as "repugnant Others", but with familiarity, a "condition of looking into the face of racism and seeing a trace of oneself reflected in its eye" (Back, 2002, p.59). My Jewishness was perhaps a moment when that trace of myself blurred, rather than disappeared from view. Throughout the ethnography, I have attempted to be transparent about the reflexive processes and consequences of researching racisms, xenophobias and Islamophobias as a white British woman. As Back and Solomos (1993) highlight, to have one approach to researching racisms would be anathema to a methodology in which identities, racisms and xenophobias are not stable or reified but reproduced in context. In the "delicate balance" of maintaining relationships I was both intimate and distant (Faust & Pfiefer, 2021, p.84). I could share my thoughts about whether I wanted to have children, but I did not want to share my Jewish ancestry; I could develop deeper relations with white workers than Asian workers, because of the racialised hierarchies already in place. To be clear, this ethnography is written with the explicit acknowledgement that it reproduces and analyses the voices and interpretations of those who are in relative positions of power in slaughterhouses, who claim their Whiteness and Britishness as a hierarchy of belonging. As discussed, it is less detailed on the experiences of Asian workers, of younger unskilled white workers: those who across the sites were in a position of less power. My ethnography does not include their interpretations of Britishness, Muslimness, Whiteness, respectability and belonging. As Wemyss (2009, p.13) posits, white discourse "makes the voices of what it sees as "ethnic" passive as they become the subjects of measurements and categorisation." While I acknowledge that the silence of Asian workers reproduces the exclusions and hierarchies that exist in the slaughterhouse, my intention is to critically challenge these hierarchies which are constructed around race, class, nation and Whiteness by decoding them, revealing how they work, and exposing their fragility.

Doing dirty work

As soon as I was allowed into the slaughterhouse by the owners, I asked the owners and workers if I would be able to get involved in any of the slaughter work. I wanted to understand the labour through practice and make myself useful rather than awkwardly standing around and getting in the way. The jobs I could help with were usually those categorised as "unskilled" such sorting offals or mopping the floor. Most importantly, I wanted to lean into the practices through which all workers were stigmatised. I especially asked to do jobs I thought might be the dirtiest, for example, cleaning guts or emptying the blood pit. While it was entertaining for the slaughtermen and workers at first, my participation was appreciated, "I like having you here Jess, getting help with all the extra work" Rob shared. Moreso, I could demonstrate that I was not judging workers through my bodily interactions and the intimacy of touching the substances workers felt others tainted them for. Trying out different aspects of the slaughter process was also a small way that I could bypass some of the racialised divisions in the slaughterhouse. It was an opening, albeit limited, to spending time with Asian workers, like Firaz as he cleaned guts, or Omar as he burnt the hairs off sheep feet once they had been removed. Whereas my Whiteness had created obstacles developing relations with all workers, doing "dirty" work was a leveller.

Being a slaughterman was a deeply gendered role. In these all-male spaces, workers had only ever worked with men. Cliff recalled having heard about one woman many years ago who worked on the slaughter line, and who was described in masculine terms, "she was built like a brick shithouse." West and Zimmerman (1987) refer to gender as a situated "doing." Sex and gender roles are learned and enacted – such as the association of the dirtiness of slaughter work with masculinity - creating what appears as naturalised differences between men and women which are interpreted as essentialised gender traits. As such, the workers assumed that my female gender would naturally cause me to be disgusted by the effluvia of slaughter. In "doing" I was able to challenge these narratives, or as Risman (2009) highlights, if gender is done, it can also be undone.

I was frequently told that "some people can't hack slaughter work." In chapter 5, I explore how white slaughtermen are trained to develop a "thick skin" to work as slaughterman, but for now, I want to highlight that workers inferred an embodied or

essentialised capacity that enabled some people to cope with the proximity to abject substances and death without giving rise to emotional responses that would make the work unmanageable. It seemed as if I was one of those people who *could* hack it. I got a buzz of endorphins from the solidarity of working physically hard alongside the slaughtermen. While I was silent in my disagreements with the racist and xenophobic narratives, I was not feigning a lack of disgust or ethical disagreement in slaughter. I was not repulsed by the flesh and the blood and viscera. I enjoyed the tactile sensation of squidgy textures between my fingers, the warmth of sheep flesh on my cold hands, or how the gelatinous texture of congealed blood made it easier to scoop with a bucket. Maybe, as Miller (2009) proposes, disgusting, slippery, visceral things also fascinate us. However, Miller also claims that disgust is not a weak emotion: you know when you feel disgusted. I appreciate that my experience and the privilege of curiosity as a researcher wandering around small slaughterhouses and trying different jobs, may not evoke the same feelings for a worker fixed to one position all day, especially for a worker in an industrialised slaughterhouse. However, it did bring to bear a question: What was it that enabled me to find some enjoyment in this work, rather than wanting to create distance?

In Kristeva's (1982) psychoanalytic framing of abjection, particular bodily substances are universally encountered as abject: faeces, blood, mucus, corpses and orifices, because they unsettle the sense of a bounded, protected self. These substances are everywhere in slaughterhouses, always emerging and being cleaned, yet impossible to avoid. Yet they were all encountered by moving towards them, rather than aversion. Miller (2009) articulates how disgust enables a strange kind of sociability where the avowal of disgust expects concurrence. In the *Politics of Emotion* Ahmed (2004) challenges Kristeva's framing of the psychoanalytic universality of abject substances. She proposes that objects are intentionally constructed as abject through moralising cultural discourses to create feelings of aversion and disgust. In all of the slaughterhouses, days were spent sticking hands and arms in various orifices, with splashes of blood on your cheeks without collective discursive expressions of disgust or revulsion. As an example, there was one shift where I happened to have my period. Wearing the genderless white overalls which we would all wear, I looked down at my thighs and saw they were covered in blood. I panicked, thinking "oh god, I've leaked in

front of all these men," before remembering where I was, and how I had wiped bloodied hands on my overalls. In that moment when I remembered, it felt liberating. No one would have known, precisely because the borders between self and these otherwise abject substances that should make us feel disgusted or ashamed had dissolved. I felt no shame in having a leaky woman's body, because everything and everyone around me was leaky (Grosz, 1994). It was only at the end of the shift, driving home and getting a waft of sheep lanolin that I got a sense that these objects, fluids or miasmas were what Douglas (1966) describes as "matter out of place."

While they are interrelated, it is important to separate feelings of possible disgust at bodily substances, from the ethical implications of killing and the violence animals endure. Making a statement that I accept that animals are killed for meat is not necessarily reflective of being able to cope with the cuts and convulsions of slaughter on a physical, intimate daily basis. In large, industrialised slaughterhouses (which I did not visit) the moment of death is concealed even from those who work within them (Pachirat, 2014). In smaller slaughterhouses, such as the ones I was in, this concealment was less pronounced. The slaughter line was usually visible to all workers, from the blood gushing from just-cut throats to the viscera being pulled out of carcasses, and the faeces which fall on the floor. However, the moment of killing was largely unseen by most of the workers – whether that occurred through stunning or a knife. At North Hills, the smaller rural slaughterhouse, and Eastewes, the East Midlands halal slaughterhouse which both practice stunned slaughter, sheep would arrive onto the slaughter line through a plastic curtain having already been stunned. Their throats would then be cut, before travelling down the slaughter line and into the hands of all workers. Vialles (1994) identifies that the introduction of slaughter practices such as stunning minimised force and physical violence. Yet, they have amplified the ambiguity if death, where animals are between states, life, and carcass, which enable workers to either disengage or not feel individually responsible as the perpetrators of death. At Westlambs, which practices non-stun slaughter, Ahmed, the halal slaughterman, was separated in a partially concealed room at the front of the slaughter line. He would place sheep into a metal cradle to minimise their movement, and quickly cut their throat. Here, the moment of death was less ambiguous, but I could not draw hard distinctions between life, death, and who was responsible for it by observing the two

methods. I did not spend long in either the stunning rooms, or with Ahmed as he worked, mostly for practical reasons. They were small spaces in which the sheep had limited movement and which fitted only one worker, so would have taken me away from the social life of the slaughterhouse.

Much literature on slaughterhouses is deeply critical of the violence perpetrated on both human and non-human bodies through the production and consumption of meat (Broadway & Stull, 2013; Pachirat, 2014; Williams 2008). Williams (2008) describes slaughterhouses as places that we would rather not know about, enabling an "affected ignorance", whereby a choice is made not to investigate whether a practice one is involved in is immoral. Pollan (2006) argues that if slaughterhouses had glass walls, and we could see the scale of death, we would no longer eat meat. The a priori assumption here is that slaughterhouses are immoral and revolting. I did not feel those moral judgements or negative emotions. I have wondered, if I had observed every sheep death during my fieldwork, whether I would have felt distress and trauma. I think that could be the case. I could remember every racist comment, but I cannot remember all of the sheep which were slaughtered, there were too many. Whether it was the scale, inevitability, ambiguity, my anthropocentric species biases, or a combination of all these, what I saw of slaughter did not overwhelm me. When I observed killing, whether through cutting, bleeding or stunning, I did not recognise an absence of feeling, or a denial of death, nor did I recognise such responses by participants. Rather, I knew I was watching life slowly disappear, I accepted it was happening. These observed moments of animal death did not linger with me in the way that hearing the muffled comment about P*** bashing did.

To be clear, this ethnography does not engage with questions about the ethics of producing and consuming meat, the impacts of animal agriculture on the environment, hierarchal relations, or relations of care between human and non-human animals. As I have explained above, this was partly a situated response, shaped by my own ethical position. However, I want to attend to why I did not focus on slaughter and killing as primary topics. Firstly, my curiosity in researching halal and "conventional" sheep slaughterhouse was instigated by a political context in which sheep, Muslims and the white working-class were being pedalled against each other in ways which made claims about national belonging. As discussed in the introduction, the slaughterhouses

which I focus on in this thesis challenged these dominant academic, political and popular narratives. My interest centred on why, in these spaces in which the purported reasoning and legitimation for white racism was absent, racisms persisted.

My main contention to the slaughterhouse research and commentary I have outlined above is that a priori assumptions of disgust become a repeated trope which homogenises all slaughterhouse and overdetermines interpretations of the social life inside them. For example, in the USA context, ethnographies draw direct links between the violence of slaughter, and the structural violences suffered by already vulnerable and economically excluded Black, Latino and Asian often migrant workers who labour there (Broadway & Stull, 2013; Pachirat, 2014). In effect, racial and animal violence are analogous and overlapping. While this research is essential to expose the impacts of structural racism and meat production in the USA, it tells us little about what life might be like for workers in other contexts. I did not recognise the hyper surveillance of workers, and the deeply oppressive labour conditions exposed elsewhere. On the contrary, I met a group of white British workers who expressed pride and belonging to their trade, and who were protecting their dominance by excluding Asian workers. Rather than places of disgust of abjection, they were sites where workers – who knew they were stigmatised for their labour – expressed a sense of their own morality, and respectability of belonging to the nation through slaughter work.

My lack of disgust or emotional distress towards slaughter enabled me to focus my senses and emotions on the workers and their expressions of belonging and abjection. How these workers felt about killing animals, and the impact it had on them – to me – was not of as much importance as their sense of belonging to nation or Whiteness. Indeed, as I will explore in chapter 7, the only time that workers referred to slaughter as violent and distressing was when they were discussing halal slaughter methods in ways which they interpreted violence through Islamophobic narratives. That is, I am not thinking analogously about racial violence and animal violence. I am certainly not using animal slaughter as a metaphor for racial violence. Rather, I want to demonstrate that racial violence and Whiteness, in the form of narratives, whether loud or hushed, were the dominant modes structuring relations in the slaughterhouse, and that these did not map neatly onto the associations of violence, disgust or stigma in slaughter labour. I appreciate that what I have written about the lack of disgust and emotional

toil for both myself and the workers affirms that slaughterhouses are sites which turn animals into absent referents, where the death of a being is not felt in its killing (Adams, 1990). I have written about a highly contentious and for many people, distressing issue without attention to animal suffering. This may position me as a repugnant other with unlikeable beliefs who participated in objectionable practices, without the critical reflections that I have taken in my approach to racisms. But, as I hope to have elucidated, I found the narratives about race, identity and belonging to be more potent in terms of shaping the lives of slaughter workers, and my ethnographic encounters in these spaces.

Consent

In these spaces dense with racialised hierarchies, consent was both an ongoing and ambiguous process. All the slaughterhouse owners signed consent forms and had information sheets about the project. All workers were introduced to me by the owners as a PhD student who was researching sheep slaughterhouses and who wanted to understand their labour and lives from their perspectives. This was reinterpreted by the skilled white British slaughtermen, who rephrased, that "Jess is researching the life of a slaughterman," which I found to be a fair assessment. In the rural site, North Hills, where there were only four slaughtermen, and all gave verbal consent. In this small space, where we were working closely together, I would update workers on some of the themes that had emerged which we could discuss collectively. Similarly, the skilled itinerant white British slaughtermen at Eastewes and Westlambs, and Ahmed, the halal slaughterman gave verbal informed consent. However, for the local workers at the two halal slaughterhouses, Eastewes and Westlambs, gaining informed consent from all workers was more fragmented. At Eastewes, the younger local white workers were less forthcoming speaking with me, they knew I was a researcher and what I was researching, but I did not have sustained conversations with them about their lives, or interpretations of the work, so I have not included their words in detail, or details about their lives, in the thesis. Similarly, at Westlambs, the racialised divisions meant that I spoke less with Asian workers and did not feel trusted in the same way, so I have not included their words in detail either, if I did not have informed consent. I have, however, included their presence and the ways in which they were discursively

constructed by their white co-workers, because I cannot explain the racialised hierarchies without acknowledging the presence of who was there. I explained to all local workers, slaughtermen and owners that I would give them pseudonyms, and not identify the location or name of the slaughterhouse. While one slaughterman was displeased with this, "What do you mean anonymous?" I explained that I needed to protect slaughterhouses from being identified by animal rights activists or DEFRA, for example. I explained that as a rough rule, anthropologists often write in ways so that people and places are not identifiable. "We don't want to cause harm to research participants, I need to make sure that what I write won't get you in trouble." "Trouble? What for? I've done nought wrong. Why can't you say who I am?" He then demanded I tell him exactly what it was that he had done wrong that required a cover-up.

The issues of consent were further complicated because I was not explicit that racisms and Whiteness were a central theme. While racialised, classist and anti-Muslim statements were explicit in many of our conversations, I was persistently told by the white slaughtermen that they were not racist, which was regarded as a stigmatising accusation. The slaughtermen have not consented to being represented in ways which would associate them with this label. I was clear about my feelings about slaughter, which all workers could validate through my embodied participation and curiosity. They felt safe with me, I believe, because they wanted to be represented as men who were not violent barbarians, but who were proud of their work. While I sat in the discomfort of objectional narratives (mostly) in the field, in writing I am explicit in naming racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia or anti-Muslim narratives. In effect, a risk that I have taken the workers off one hook of being violent, emotionless, uncaring slaughtermen, and then strung them up as holding racist beliefs on another.

Fassin (2013, p.32) states that the writing of ethnography "always sets up a tension between complicity and duplicity: on the one hand, the anthropologist is seeking to induce an artificial proximity that eventually becomes real; on the other, [s]he strives to maintain a degree of distance with regard to an intellectual project that itself develops as the research. Writing is a form of betrayal". Pilkington (2016) expressed a tension between duplicity and ethical research when interpreting and writing her participants' narratives. She describes a pull between either uncritically accepting their stories, which could lead to accusations of condoning racism, and of avoiding

approaching her participants' narratives with scepticism. Or to put it differently, between catching participants out for racism, or understanding their worldview. My approach to this duplicity is to focus on the impacts of the white British slaughtermen's narratives in the everyday life of the slaughterhouse. By interpretating their narratives, I hope to reveal the tensions and fragilities between things said and done, to demonstrate how classed, racialised and nation-based differences are narratively constructed in shifting contexts. I am searching for tension rather than whether claims are true or false, right, or wrong. Rather than framing the white working-class as homogenously racist because they have been "left behind," I focus on the intricacies, imaginative qualities, and contradictions of how these racialisations are connected to their own sense of fractured British/ English belonging rather than being stuck in an ahistorical, backward moment (Lawler, 2012). I hope that I have presented the slaughtermen in a holistic sense, while simultaneously remaining attentive to how racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic narratives were deployed in context, and to demonstrate how those who are stigmatised, become the perpetrators of stigmatising others (I. Tyler, 2022). I have not withheld on including all the forms of expressions of racisms, Islamophobias in detail, in calling them what I believe them to be, or attempted to make them more comfortable. Rather, to sit in the discomfort. It was both comfortable and uncomfortable, and I am not pretending otherwise.

Chapter 3: The invisible empire of sheep: The myth of "British" purity

3.1 Introduction

> The cultivation of sheep from the earliest period have formed the most important branches of the agriculture and commerce of Great Britain. Sheep and its wool were early and unequivocally acknowledged to be the foundation of national prosperity and wealth (Youatt Smith, 1837).
>
> As an ensemble, these sheep offer images of nature, culture and industry woven together in sheep's wool to suggest the fabric of a nation in which even the animals are manmade. (Franklin, 2007).

At Westlambs slaughterhouse, I am sat with Adam, the owner, in a metal portacabin in the yard which acts as the slaughterhouse office. Local workers occasionally knock on the door, asking for replacement aprons, or to check the quantities of hearts or sheep heads they need to pack for an order, or to ask for an advance on their wages. Tony, the slaughterhouse administrator, is fielding calls from customers in Denmark, France or Belgium. White boards on the wall are scribbled with orders: "50 x lamb, no testicles attached!" Outside, Asim, a young local British Asian worker is helping to pack a hefty arctic lorry from the loading bay, sliding carcasses down metal rails. The loading bay leads into the slaughterhouse, where the white British slaughtermen, who travel to this site, and local white, British Asian and Pakistani workers are deep into a shift. I asked Adam why there was such a buoyant market for British sheep meat in Europe. "British sheep are the best!" he explains. And yet, across the three slaughterhouses, it was only Adam, at this halal slaughterhouse in the West Midlands, who described the sheep slaughtered here as British animals, which produced British sheep meat. In tension with rhetorical claims that halal slaughter is an abject, foreign practice at a distance from moral Britishness, Westlambs is the only site which practiced non-stun religious halal slaughter.

As I moved between slaughterhouses, the unifying claim that sheep born and reared on British land were British, began to disintegrate and fragment. At Eastewes, the smaller halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, the owner, Ray, supplies halal

mutton, meat from older sheep to high street halal butchers in ethnically diverse cities across the country. Both Ray and Jack, the manager, described the older sheep they slaughtered, and the meat produced as either "Muslim" or "ethnic." Unlike Adam at Westlambs, these identifications emerged between the age of sheep and *who* consumes them, discursively screening out their Britishness. At North Hills, the small, "traditional" mixed species slaughterhouse in the North West rural uplands, the owner, Ian, shirks national British classifications all together, in favour of a regional localism. The Fellgraze sheep slaughtered at this site, are described as a "native" breed, both unique to the region and an expression of an English rural idyl. The meat is considered to have a *terroir* quality (Trubek, 2008), through which tight connections between shepherds, the sheep and land, are said to be essentialised in flavour and texture of the meat. Across the three sheep slaughterhouses the owners' shifting narratives variously embraced and resisted simple national identifications of sheep as British. Rather, these identifications – ethnic, British, Muslim, local, heritage, English – were invoked to construct moral and qualitative differences and hierarchies between meat, sheep, people, and place. Or, to put it another way, sheep were discursively herded into various identity-based categories, despite all being reared on British soil.

The contingent Britishness of sheep expressed by the owners, was in tension with the ways in which sheep *are* frequently invoked to symbolise British morality, purity, rurality, and traditional farming livelihoods in media and political discourses (Franklin, 2007). As discussed, during Brexit, both the Leave and Remain arguments implied that sheep were British by invoking notions of a "blood and soil" belonging to an idealised English rural setting, in which long genealogies of farming and grazing on the landscape were implied. These media and political reports connected to longer histories of moralising discourses about the Britishness/Englishness of sheep. Sheep have been credited as "the animal that built the modern world" in which England was claimed to be the global centre of morality and progress (Butler, 2006). British sheep have been celebrated as the animal whose wool was a material base of British industrialisation as the land was rationalised through enclosure (Trow Smith, 1957). During the British Empire, as Britain's borders expanded, sheep were "hoof soldiers" a vital technology of settler colonialisation in Australia and New Zealand (Woods, 2017). Their flesh fed labouring workers in Britain's industrialising centres (Otter, 2020). Despite being

stitched into a national story, sheep are not autochthonous or particular to Britain. Rather, sheep are one of the most widely dispersed global livestock species (Hedge, 2019). Sheep are distant immigrants, who over time and through agricultural and social transformations, human interventions in breeding and migrations, have become both materially and symbolically entangled with claims of Britishness (Franklin, 2007; Woods, 2017). Furthermore, the economic and cultural values of sheep have been shaped by both forced and voluntary migrations – whether intra-or-international – of sheep and people, which disrupt the rhetorical claims of essentialised national purity and belonging. The Britishness of sheep and meat has therefore always been fluid and troubles the notion of a bounded nation. As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the British sheep sector, and the economies of the slaughterhouses, have been shaped by Empire, Britain's colonial histories, and postcolonial migrations. However, these are selectively erased in the construction of sheep as both signifiers and embodiments of a unified and timeless Britishness.

This chapter serves to introduce the socio-historic and ethnographic context in which the slaughtermen labour as intractable from Britain's Imperial and colonial histories. In the following ethnographic chapters, I will then demonstrate how slaughtermen obscure these interconnections by constructing racialised and classed divisions, exclusion and hierarchies within their trade, and the nation more broadly. First, I trouble the ideals of Britishness and purity, by locating their practices and narratives within longer genealogies of classed and racialised abjection in Britain. In this chapter, I analyse the slaughterhouse owners' narratives against a partial diachronic history of sheep which includes Empire, Industrialisation and Enclosure. Through this, contradictions emerge about how the nation has been imagined through sheep, as well as classed and racialised Others. I argue that colonial histories, postcolonial presents, and the long-standing connections between Britain and those who were colonised are erased, while only celebratory histories are remembered. Wemyss (2009) conceptualises the simultaneous remembering and erasure of colonial histories in the present, as an "invisible empire." Wemyss (2009, p.25) proposes that "the exposure of the invisible empire necessarily requires the mobilisation of contesting histories that tell the stories that have been buried." That is, interrogating constructions of Whiteness and Britishness require making visible the hidden histories

through which place and nation have been hegemonically constructed as White in both public and everyday discourses.

As such, I unearth a selection of histories about people, place, and sheep, and put them into dialogue with personal and public narratives to demonstrate the fluid and relational ways in which the Britishness of sheep has been claimed over time. Through this, I show how the rural is imagined as White[13] and English in comparison to "ethnic" others; how meat produced for postcolonial diasporas is denied Britishness, and finally, how Britishness is claimed as an embodied exceptionalism which is retained even when sheep cross borders. I propose that fragile, changing equivocations of Britishness or Englishness emerge which are circumscribed by classed and racialised abjection and belonging in ways which reproduce colonial and imperial histories. In so doing, I present a provocation: a moral and unified "Britishness" is fundamentally unstable. Britishness is instead discursively constructed through Others and political and ideological agendas which erases and conceals its own violence (Gilroy 1987; Stoler, 2006; Wemyss, 2009). Indeed, it is the instability and fragility of Whiteness and Britishness which I continue to explore throughout the thesis through the everyday narratives of white slaughtermen about their co-workers, their skill and the laws which govern their labour.

3.1.1 The integrated sheep system

Before I move into the ethnographic and historiographic analysis, it is necessary to introduce the ways in which sheep are farmed in the UK. This is to initiate a provocation about the national or regional boundaries constructed around sheep based on simple territorial dichotomies, as expressed by both slaughterhouse owners, and broader media and political discourses. Britain is renowned for one of the most diverse populations of sheep breeds in the world (AHDB, 2020a). These are farmed through a uniquely "stratified" or "integrated" breeding system designed to utilise the

[13] To return to my previous comments on the capitalisation of White when referencing a hegemonic regime of seeing, in this instance, I am referring to the ways in which the rural is hegemonically imagined as White to the exclusion of others.

qualities of the diverse breeds (such as their wool, morphology, hardiness or mothering qualities) and the variation of the topology and climates in which they graze through crossbreeding and movement (AHDB, 2020). Briefly, to imagine the system, visualise Britain as a topological map, with horizontal slices cut into the earth to separate the hills, the uplands, the lowlands, with different sheep breeds suited to each stratum. On the top stratum, pure bred "native" hill breeds, such as the Fellgraze sheep slaughtered in North Hills, withstand the otherwise inhospitable environments of Britain's wilder uplands. They often graze freely on common land or national parks and are described by shepherds as "knowing" the landscape in which they graze and to which they belong: a knowledge which mothers pass on to their offspring. These sheep are cross-bred with larger sheep from the next stratum down - the central uplands, which are then cross-bred with often European breeds in the southern lowlands, to produce fast growing lamb. The system is designed as a "practical and environmentally sustainable way" of extracting value from different environmental conditions and breeds (Duchy College, 2018). It is a system which has adapted to extract valuable products from sheep, such as mutton (meat from older sheep), lamb (meat from sheep less than a year old), and wool. Since the post-war period, the focus of the integrated system has been on the production of lamb, as consuming mutton has fallen in popularity, and wool has plummeted in value. This outline is a simplification of a system which in practice will be shaped by localised nuances, farmer agency and experimentation. At its core, however, it reveals a sheep sector organised around the logics of movement, hybridity, transference and the interdependency of farmers and sheep at each stratum (Franklin, 2007). It is a system where any biological, or geographical claim of purity or fixed origins become untenable as a representation of either material or economic realities. It gains its coherence as a national whole.

Westlambs, Eastewes and North Hills slaughterhouses are on the peripheries of the production of sheep meat for supermarkets, and the explicit logic of producing lamb. Fundamentally, however, each of the slaughterhouses intersects at different points in the system, extracting value in ways which make the whole British system valuable. Or, to put it another way, while the slaughterhouse owners describe each of the meats they produce and the sheep they slaughter as belonging to different places (the nation, a specific locale, an ethnic elsewhere), or to different imagined groups of

people (British, English, Ethnic, Muslim), they are all dependent on each other to survive. Throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate how these intersections cannot be understood without attention to the British, place-based histories of Empire, Imperialism, class and the postcolonial present.

3.2 Essentialising the English rural: Recreating natives

At North Hills, Philip, Rob and Antoni, the slaughtermen, are inside the slaughterhouse, working through a batch of Fellgraze sheep, which had been dropped off by one of the local shepherds at dawn. I looked at the slaughter line, as the fleeces were removed to reveal deep red carcasses, with thick lines of fat visible on their back as if they were wearing their rib cages inside out. In the cavities of their bodies now cleaned of guts, globules of hard, saturated yellow fat dripped down inside the spine, and hugged against the hanging organs like melted candle wax. I ask Rob about the colour of the fat, "it's what the sheep eat out on the fells, all the wild grasses and stuff." Indeed, Fellgraze sheep meat is marketed with these distinctive qualities: dark meat acquired from their muscular bodies which have been roaming on the mountainous common grazing land; and yellow fat, from the berries, grasses and heathers they have grazed on. Fellgraze are slaughtered when they are over a year old, as mutton, meat derived from older sheep. In this context, ageing is regarded as a way for sheep to become more valuable, allowing their small bodies time to mature, and ingest the wild plants which transfer their aromas into the meat. In this section, I argue that the production of Fellgraze mutton is also dependent on narratives which essentialised place reproducing ideals of an untouched, White English rurality.

For over a decade, Ian, the owner, has produced Fellgraze mutton as a protected, trademarked brand, which celebrates its "heritage."[14] Ian's efforts are supported by

[14] In the UK and Europe, there are a variety of schemes which protect the brand of "local", "authentic", place-based foods (see Cavanaugh, 2007, West & Domingos, 2011, Leitch, 2003). These include "Slow Food", an EU-based Protection of Designated Origin (PDO), or Protected Designation of Indication (PDI) among many others. These accreditation schemes variously protect producers and their food products with trademarks and can stipulate the region or ingredients with which foods can be produced, for example, Cornish Pasties cannot be made outside of Cornwall and Parma Ham can only be produced in

local tourism websites which celebrate the area as the "true English countryside" in which Fellgraze are described as "irreplaceable", "wild", and indigenous to this patch of England. Promoting the indigeneity and uniqueness of Fellgraze has been vital to the preservation of his business and the livelihoods of the slaughtermen. Over the past decades, small rural slaughterhouses such as these have been beset by the impacts of national crises (Sustainable Food Trust, 2018). In the late 1990s, the BSE crisis led to the closure of many small, local rural slaughterhouses, after a prion disease in cattle was discovered to be causing fatal Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in young adults. The costs of a raft of new legislation to prevent its transmission was unaffordable for small slaughterhouses (Broadway, 2002). Then, in 2001, the spread of Foot and Mouth disease in the British sheep population, lead to the cull of over six million sheep. Many of the local shepherds lost their flocks and with them, long genealogies of flock bloodlines, passed down through generations. Other shepherds were too traumatised to continue farming. Ian explains that in this context, "It would cost millions to set up an abattoir like this now, you just couldn't do it."

Since the turn of the twentieth century, mutton, meat from older sheep, has been falling from popularity, as post-war consumers shifted to consuming lamb which was quicker to produce and cook (Blythe, 1981). For much of the past century, Fellgraze were not valued as a meat producing animal, but one which could "transfer" the value of the otherwise agriculturally unproductive rural uplands through cross breeding with larger sheep in lowland areas, through the stratified sheep system. For the past 60 years, Fellgraze shepherds have been economically dependent on EU subsidies, as the location of their production in upland areas categorised in EU policy as "less favourable" farming land was resistant to expansion and intensification (Angus et al, 2009). "You have to adapt and change" Ian explains, you need to find the restaurants and chefs that are interested in this quality." He proudly tells me that he was in discussion to sell Fellgraze meat to a Sheikh in the United Arab Emirates, and a high-end butcher in Hong Kong. Conversely, he explains that,

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Parma, Italy, with a specific breed of pig. I have decided not to include the specific accreditation scheme through which Fellgraze meat is protected and registered, as it would compromise the anonymity of the slaughterhouse and participants

> The lamb from supermarkets, it all comes from New Zealand these days. You know they actually breed sheep to certain size so that a lamb chop fits perfectly on a plate? That's not what we do, the heritage mutton isn't like a Cadbury's chocolate bar you pick off the shelf and it's the same thing every time, so you need to find the people who will appreciate and pay for these unique qualities.

In a promotional video for Fellgraze sheep meat, which Ian commissioned, the camera focusses on a local shepherd against a backdrop of hills and mountains. "People are proud of what they produce", the shepherd says. Looking over to his flock of Fellgraze, he explains that by consuming Fellgraze mutton, people are helping to preserve a native breed, and then, that "if people do not eat these sheep, these fells [hills] would disappear." The video then cuts to a high-end restaurant, with a chef plating up Fellgraze mutton. In the narrative of the video, the slaughter and consumption of Fellgraze is moralised as supporting shepherds' livelihoods. Moreso, that consuming Fellgraze mutton directly maintains the English landscape, which has been shaped over centuries through sheep's grazing patterns.

The production of Fellgraze as a "native" meat in which place is essentialised is aligned with the concept of "terroir" (Paxson, 2010), which has been "glossed as the taste of place" (Trubek, 2008). As Paxson (2010, p.444) articulates, the ascription of terroir alludes to the centrality of place, "with place referring to the material conditions of a locale – soil, topography, and microclimate—and also to the cultural know-how behind agricultural products". In the wake of transnational, anonymous, industrialised food chains there has been an increase in foods in Europe and the USA which are celebrated, and produced as uniquely place-based (Weiss, 2011). Paxson (2010) argues that dependent on context, these connections to place can either be backward looking, for example, the production of Fellgraze as a traditional, native meat; or based on idealised future imaginaries about how connections could be reforged in food systems. Largely, anthropologists have critically explored the concept of terroir as a social construction (Demossier, 2011; 2018). As West (2020, p.1) notes, for those who endorse the place-based values of foods, "Product, people, place – this is the terroir triad, and the concept asserts a profound and enduring relationship between these elements." The uniqueness of Fellgraze meat is expressed as a profound and enduring

relationship between shepherds, the landscape, and the sheep breed, which is encapsulated in their status as native and indigenous. For example, for much of the year, Fellgraze roam freely on the common grazing lands. Shepherds explain that only Fellgraze can survive here, because they are native to area, and can cope with the harsh climate. The shepherds practice traditional farming methods, often working collectively gathering in groups with sheep dogs. Each shepherd's flock is considered an expression of their own family's long genealogies of farming, each rearing their own particular style of Fellgraze.

Arguing that the concept of "terroir" needs to be "denaturalised" because it occludes as much as it essentialises, West (2020, p.2) highlights that foods valued with a terroir quality tend to "accentuate linkages, not only through production, but to bring these linkages together in effective narrative, or discursive constructs which cohere to create a sense that of durability, stability and fixity in these relations." For example, Ian's efforts have been part of a broader "mutton renaissance campaign", supported by Prince Charles, and the Royal Culinary Institute to restore high quality, heritage mutton from native breeds, while helping British sheep farmers to find a market for their older animals. The aim of the campaign was to *reintroduce* mutton to British diets. In a book accompanying the campaign, *Much ado about Mutton,* farmer and activist Bob Kennard (2014, p.12) writes that "the story of sheep and mutton is very much part of the story of the United Kingdom, and indeed of our Empire. Mutton fed *our* people through the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution." In effect, creating a narrative which links people, product and place. The phrasing of a "renaissance" has connotations of progress and creativity that pulled Europe out of the dark ages, a celebration of a past epoch, emerging to reshape the present. Kennard argues that "we" need to *re*-educate our palettes to appreciate this lost cultural product, to relearn how to be traditionally "British." Guy (2010) has articulated that the terroir concept, especially in Europe, romanticises the nation as an essentialised, natural state. Kennard nostalgically invokes Empire and Industrialisation to signify national traditions and heritage. Somewhat paradoxically, a rural idyll is also central in this narrative. As Neal (2002, p.444) argues, the countryside can be invoked to represent the English nation, or an ideal of what it should be, where "the rural becomes associated with seemingly "timeless and quintessential national values."

In the Country and the City, Williams (1973, p.40) has influentially argued that a persistent nostalgia and longing for a rural "golden age" has taken various forms in public imaginaries over periods of social, political, spatial, and economic change in England. The rural is presented as uncomplicated, natural, and organic, through a "recurrent myth of a happier and more natural past" which is just out of reach. This myth of the past functions as a form of memory, dependent on imagination which shifts between the present and an imagined past. He argues that these myths conceal the gritter realities of British rurality, such as conflict, oppression, and industrialisation. As Guy (2010) similarly argues, in Europe terroir narratives can occlude colonial histories to essentialise place as ahistorical and natural. Likewise, Neal and Agyeman (2006, p.2) argue that "seeing that nation through the rural is problematic, because the rural is inherently unstable and is constantly open to contestation and change". In this vein, Demossier (2011) suggests that ethnographers should gauge the "historical depth" of the terroir concept; or as Wemyss (2009) asks in relation to constructing place as White, which narratives are reproduced in claims of a White superior belonging, and which are occluded in this construction of nationhood?

To explore the "historical depth" of Fellgraze's terroir value, reveals a history of displacement and stigmatisation in the connections between people, product and place. Additionally, it reveals an exploitative relationship between industrialisation and the rural. Prior to the eighteenth-century and the emergence of modern breed classifications, a wide variety of different types of sheep grazed throughout Britain, recognised as native regional types (Trow Smith, 1957, p.385). Types of sheep were believed to be "indigenous to [their] place of origin, and able to retain [their] characteristics only if kept in its ancestral environment" (Orel & Wood, 1981, p.147). The type of sheep, its characteristics, morphology, and survival were intimately connected place, encapsulated in the moniker, "every soil has its own stock." So intense was the belief that place and type were intractable, some agriculturalists feared that if sheep were transported to different environments, they would degrade or metamorphose into the breeds in that locality (Orel & Wood, 1981). As a "type" sheep intimately belonged to place with an impermanent symbiosis, where they literally embodied the land where they were deemed to belong.

In the early 1700s, new ideas about bloodlines, and hereditary transmission disrupted the connections of sheep "blood" belonging to "soil." Entrepreneurial breeders experimented with transforming "native" sheep through crossbreeding different native types (Orel & Wood, 1981). Celebrated as a pioneer of sheep improvement, Roger Bakewell is credited as the creator of the first "modern" sheep, the New Leicester. It was designed to supply fast growing mutton to the increasing number of wage dependent workers in industrialising towns (Trow Smith, 1957, p.69). The emergence of modern mutton breeds rendered the native "blood and soil" types to be negatively described as "backward." A hierarchy emerged whereby sheep who had strong linkages to the land were regarded as a hindrance to capital accumulation and the requirements to increase sheep meat production (Woods, 2017). The new breeds of sheep were regarded as an embodiment of British prosperity by industrialists and agriculturalists, through a process of disavowing the "native" sheep. In 1912, an agriculturalist described Fellgraze's native area as "one of the last counties in England to receive improvements in husbandry," worse still, that Fellgraze "look like the last remnant of, we won't say barbarism, but of very ancient and primitive sheep breeding." (Youatt- Smith, 1837, p.23). As Woods (2017, p.11) argues, "assigning someone or something to this category [of native] could either justify or delegitimise its presence in a particular place." In effect, the term "native" is a fluid, rather than fixed term which has been invoked in narratives of both place-based, national belonging and disavowal over time. The re-emergence of "native" as a signifier of a traditional rural idyll, erases these histories in which Fellgraze were considered "barbaric." Likewise, they celebrate an industrial history of nation building which historically left Fellgraze behind.

While shepherds are now celebrated as custodians or guardians of the land and essential to the patrimony of local, cultural knowledge, the stigmatising discourses which emerged about the backwardness of native sheep, were also imposed onto shepherds. The demise of native breeds and the emergence of modern breeds was intractable from the removal of peasants from common land through enclosures, which began in the 1500s (Williams, 1963). As Imogen Tyler (2020) notes, during Enclosures, the commons were described as dangerous and barbarian. The transformation of common land into private, controlled, commercial property was

intended to civilise both land and people. The physical removal of people from land was supported by a "moral machinery" which stigmatised peasants and tenant farmers. In Scotland, the moralising discourses of landowners described "highlanders were depicted as primitive, savage, and illiterate tribal people in need of rescue and improvement" because their farming techniques were unproductive and irrational, so that "ironically it was more "natural" for imported new breeds of modern sheep to inhabit the highlands than the highlanders themselves" (Franklin, 2007, p.111). These were discourses which constructed people as abject and unnatural to distance them from the land.

These grittier histories are occluded in narratives put forth by the "mutton renaissance" through which Fellgraze re-emerges as a superior national meat. However, the most striking factor of the mutton renaissance campaign, is that mutton *is* already widely consumed in Britain. It is predominantly slaughtered through halal methods, and sold in independent butcher shops, for Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Ghanaian and Nigerian customers. Ian describes the "ethnic" market for mutton as distinct to the Fellgraze meat he produces. He says that ethnic mutton is either used for "kebabs" or "dog meat," and that the halal sector is "run by the Irish and the Pakistanis these days." Similarly, the mutton renaissance campaign specifically marketed itself as distinct to "ethnic" mutton, describing it as poor-quality meat. The Royal Academy of Culinary Arts, who supported the campaign described "ethnic mutton as meat from "unfinished ewes (older female sheep) and slaughtered in line with religious beliefs, most mutton is sold to the "ethnic" meat market, is lean and inexpensive" (2023, para 3). Therefore, Kennard's claim that the British need to "rediscover our history," was a narrative that was directed towards an audience who it had already demarcated as people who were not "ethnic", and who would have a shared "culture and history" which is implicitly inferred as white, English and/or British.

Critical race and Whiteness scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which the reproduction of rural spaces as White requires an erasure of both the rural connections to Empire, and the presence of postcolonial immigrants and their descendants (Agyeman & Neal, 2006; Brooks, 2019; K.Tyler, 2012). For example, Neal (2002, p.444) argues that an "urbanized country using rurality as a pervasive

representation of its identity is significant because it is based on a de-racialized nostalgia for a pre-multicultural Britain." What is particular about the re-signifying of mutton as White and English by marking its distinctions to "ethnic" meat, is that this is narratively constructed by invoking its imagined consumers. Neal (2002, p.444) suggests that "nostalgic notions of rurality reinscribe and treasure hyper-whitened and thereby exclusive versions of Englishness". Ethnic mutton is signified as a cultural outsider, despite its popularity as the most widely consumed mutton in Britain. In so doing, "native" mutton is signified as White, English, and an essentialised embodiment of English rurality.

3.3 Narratives of reject sheep

In the introduction to the thesis, I began with an ethnographic vignette of meeting Jack, the manager of Eastewes at the livestock auction, which he visits every week. At the auction, sheep are separated pens, organised into zones based on their sex, age, and purpose. The majority of the auction hall is filled with sheep known as "cull" or "cast" ewes, female sheep which have come to the end of their breeding lives, and which are being sent to slaughter as mutton. Before the auction starts, Jack passes each pen, eyeing up the sheep, sometimes jumping over rails to press his hands firmly down on their backs, lift their lips to inspect their teeth and feel their muscle and fat distribution. We pass by a pen with older Fellgraze sheep, which he ignores, moving on to some chunky white ewes. "What breed are these?" I ask, pointing to a pen. "Crosses…mules." Jack explains, "Texels, or Cheviots, or Suffolks and something else…." Jack tends to not expend too many words, and by eye alone, he has no definitive answer. These sheep have been extracted from different points along the integrated sheep system. The breed is not a concern for him, he is looking for sheep with firm, muscular, lean bodies. "The ethnics want old, lean sheep" he explains, "not like the commercial lamb market, these are rejects, for mutton. If it wasn't for the ethnics, these would have ended up as pies or pet food." Sheep farmers across the country are dependent on the market for cull ewes, so they can acquire some economic value when they come to the end of their breeding lives in the stratified system. As one farmer points out, "it is the Asians who keep me in business."

While the language of rejection was invoked, the auction indicated that such narrative claims did not represent economic realities. Indeed, at the end of summer, the market was full of lambs and fattened ewes – too fat, it turned out, to meet Jack's requirements for the leaner sheep preferred by the halal butchers he supplies. This knowledge is sector wide and woven into advice from the National Farmers Union (NFU) to not fatten cast ewes up too much. It is a waste of money and effort as they would not be suitable for the domestic halal market. In conversations at the market, the category of "commercial" would be smoothly swapped for "English" or "British." The category of "ethnic", for "halal", "the Muslims" or "Asians," depending on who was speaking or listening. Through their narratives, the farmers and buyers were suggesting that as sheep age from lambs into ewes, they shift from being English, or British, and become Muslim or ethnic sheep. The association of Britishness – and implicitly Whiteness – with lamb, and of cull ewes with "the ethnics" was invoked as a firm binary, even though the distinction between lamb and cull sheep is imminently undone – one produced the other, and over time, if not slaughtered, one becomes the other.

In the previous section, I interrogated how the value of Fellgraze mutton was expressed through tight, enduring connections between people, place and product. These connections were expressed as essentialised in the tangible textures and flavours – the nature – of the meat. I argued that the narratives which linked people, product and place invoked nostalgic claims of an idealised English rurality which occluded histories of displacement and class oppression. In this section, I will explore the ways in which Jack, and the slaughterhouse owner, Ray's narratives resist claims of Britishness or Englishness in the sheep they produce through the disavowal of ethnic or Muslim others. As such, I argue that their narratives set up contradictory relations between people, place and product; nature and culture, to essentialise sheep and meat. Here, it is not the place in which the sheep are produced which is claimed as essentialised, rather, racialised discourses about who consumes the meat.

Ray's business is dependent on the integrated sheep system and the production of lamb, because it also produces female sheep, cull ewes, that have come to end of their breeding lives. He explains,

Without the Muslims, we'd be out of a job

> The Muslim trade, they like leaner, older sheep, more...nearly the reject end. Without the Muslims eating all these old ewes, they wouldn't have the value...I know for a fact when I had my sheep many years ago, I might cull ewes for sort of 12-15 pound, but now you can be getting 70 pounds.

He describes the sheep that he now slaughters as simultaneously "reject" and those that have acquired value. Moreso, the value of old or reject is positioned in relation to the production and value of lamb: "We've got some farmers, that supply us with their cull ewes. They mostly do lambs for supermarkets…they are doing the job properly." Ray is invoking entrenched classed narratives about the consumption of less valuable meat, where those of lower classes eat the foods rejected by the middle class (Bourdieu, 1984; Fiddes, 1991). He explains, that for "the ethnics" the quality of the meat is irrelevant, "as long as it's cheap, it doesn't matter as long as it's cheap." As such, Ray constructed a moral hierarchy of value, through which lamb is associated with Britishness, and mutton is associated with "Muslims" or "ethnics." Whereas age was a means through which Fellgraze acquired value from the land, and could be essentialised as English, in this narrative, ageing was a pathway through which meat was discursively constructed as distanced from Britishness. This binary distinction was made, despite the consumption of lamb in Britain as a relatively recent, invented British tradition, which emerged in the 1950s.

A new market for mutton re-emerged following postcolonial migrations of people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Nigeria and Ghana, invited, as citizens, to sustain the British labour force. The demand is in part related to the preferences for meat from older sheep or goat meat in these countries, to which cull ewe mutton is texturally similar. It is a market which is intractable from the countries which Britain colonised and encompassed into its Empire. As Ansari (2004) points out, the vast majority of Muslims in Britain, from Pakistan and Bangladesh, are in some way related to Empire and Imperialism, whether Bengali Lascars who arrived in British ports during the 19th century, or the larger waves of postcolonial migrations in the twentieth century. Citizens from Jamaica and Trinidad arrived between 1941 and 1978 – the Windrush generation – invited by the government to work in transport, the postal service and health service to boost the British economy. Nigerians and Ghanaians arrived as British citizens to work and study before their countries gained

independence, and after independence, escaping the economic and political turmoil in the aftermath of British rule. So, although the distinctions between renaissance mutton and "ethnic mutton" were constructed by claiming the sheep slaughtered for ethnic mutton are "unfinished," and un-fattened, they are finished for the "goat" market, when their bodies are both muscular and without significant fat deposits. "Ethnic mutton" is instead a re-making of goat meat in a British, postcolonial, diasporic context. As such, the halal market for mutton is not only reflective of preferences for methods of religious slaughter, but it is unified and directly relational to Britain's former colonies, and is made up of both Muslims, and non-Muslims, whose place-based tastes have intersected within the British integrated system.

Unlike the centrality of place in the valuing of Fellgraze, place is persistently erased in Jack and Ray's descriptions of the meat they produce. The terms most frequently used to categorise the meat were either "ethnic" or "Muslim." As Hage (1998, p.5) identifies, the term "ethnics" (as it was used in Australia) was invoked to describe all people imagined as immigrants, not citizens, in a White nation. "Ethnics" simultaneously homogenised outsiders, while converting them into a category to be collectively "welcomed, abused, defended, analysed, measured." Similarly, Sayyid (1997) argues that when the word "Muslim" is used as a term to collectively describe people while simultaneously erasing any acknowledgment of nationhood or ethnicity, it serves as a mode of homogenisation which represents Muslims as placeless and unanchored to a state or nation.

Significantly, these placeless descriptors were used in ways which obscured Ray's detailed knowledge of the halal trade, and the preferences of the Ghanaian, Pakistani, or Nigerian shoppers who visit the halal butcher shops he supplies. He explains, "a lot of the lean ewes that we take to Peckham [in London], they sell them as goat, they call them goat meat... Because the Africans want goat meat and shaki, the stomach". As Daya (2023) argues, when racialised categories are invoked in relation to assumed knowledge about the meat people eat, for example "white people eat this; Muslims eat that", it is the consumers themselves who are constructed as essentialised or fixed. Daya describes this as racial discourses "spilling" onto meat. The erasures of place simultaneously distanced "ethnic" mutton consumers from "proper" British or English

tastes and flattened and homogenised them into placeless "ethnics" and "Muslims," representative of a politics of national belonging demarcated by "them" and "us" categories (Yuval Davies, 2006). In her ethnography on a suburban village, Katharine Tyler (2012) argues that the rural is actively constructed as White through or an amnesia about rural connections to Empire, and South Asian residents who live there. Similarly, Neal (2002) has argued that processes of erasure have persistently denied the history of Black, South Asian and minority ethnic people's relationship with the English countryside, where the countryside is invoked to represent timeless national ideals. In the context of both the production of Fellgraze and "ethnic" mutton, there is a persistent obfuscation and of the postcolonial and colonial legacies which are sustaining rural livelihoods.

The denigration of cultural practices – such as foods that people consume – has been identified as a form of "cultural racism." Gilroy (1990, p.115) argues that cultural racism is premised on,

> A reductive, essentialist understanding of ethnic and national difference which operates through an absolute sense of culture so powerful that it is capable of separating people off from each other and diverting them into social and historical locations that are understood to be mutually impermeable and incommensurable.

Pertinent here, is that both "ethnics" and "Muslims" are categorised as a singular collective in relation to white Britishness. As such, there is a fundamental difference in the ways in which people, product and place are discursively constructed as being essentialised in the meat in comparison to Fellgraze. Advancing Gilroy, Wade (2002, p.14) argues that racialised discourses "enable strategic equivocation between nature and culture" in ways which essentialise ideas about biology, hereditary and blood to "fix" race on a substance which is fundamentally unstable and processual. Whereas Fellgraze mutton was said to express enduring connections between people, product, and place, in the case of "ethnic" mutton, it is a homogenised ethnic/Muslim other who are essentialised in the meat.

The instabilities of these racialised narratives was visible when I compared the material differences between Fellgraze mutton at North Hills and "ethnic" mutton at Eastewes.

Without the Muslims, we'd be out of a job

At the end of summer at Eastewes, the carcasses of cull ewes destined for halal butcher shops in urban diverse highstreets were hanging on the slaughter line in various states of undressing. Just as with Fellgraze, their bodies were a deep maroon, with white marks of fat visible on the flesh on the back of the carcass, which followed the lines of the rib cage. By January, these white lines had faded, replaced by a layer of stickier translucent fat over the skin which had lost some of its tautness. The flesh was paler in colour in the absence of summer fields to roam and grasses to eat. Noticing the physical differences, I commented to Ray that the carcasses had changed. He responded,

> That's what the Muslims want, that's how they like them…Muslims don't like fat. At all. Just with a wash of flesh on them, that's what the Muslim trade want. The English trade want lamb with a bit of fat on.

This sentiment of old, poor-quality sheep which had expired their value was repeated by Cliff, an itinerant slaughterman, when I mentioned the seasonal changes to the carcasses, "yeah, shit sheep, it's for the Muslims." The physical natures of these winter sheep were devalued by categorising them as aligned with "Muslim" preferences. This categorisation obscured a remembrance or reference to the plumper, darker sheep the same hands had slaughtered and prepared in the Summers before. These differences were of course not absolute, but, as Gilroy identified, they were expressed as absolute and exclusive differences. Hall (1997) argues that this is how "biological" racism works, whereby subtle natures of people's physical appearances are narrated as significantly prescribing their characteristics. Hall (1997, p.13) requests that we pay attention to "race" as acting like a language. He explains that "biological" racism functions by connecting nature to culture, where external bodily differences are imbued with notions of absolute moral and cultural difference – seen as fixed and immutable. In this way, "nature and culture operate as metaphors for one another." M'charek (2010, p.307) builds on Hall's conceptualisation and proposes that racialised differences are not always marked on the body. She asserts that "differences are not given entities, out there awaiting discovery, rather they are effects that come about in relational practices." Their racialised meaning is therefore fragile, made and unmade in different contexts. For example, to my novice eyes, at different times of the year, I could see no differences between the Fellgraze mutton at North Hills, and the "ethnic"

mutton at Eastewes, yet, they were persistently discursively constructed through essentialised, racialised categories.

Significantly, the inverted relations between nature and culture which emerged in the discursive valuing of Fellgraze and "ethnic" mutton selectively reproduced the histories of consuming mutton in Britain. As celebrated in the mutton renaissance campaign, mutton was the meat which fed workers during the industrial revolution. At the time, new modern breeds were designed to supply fast growing mutton to the increasing number of wage dependent workers in industrialising towns (Trow Smith, 1957, 69). The development of these mutton breeds was regarded as a form patriotism enacted by agriculturalists, who were celebrated for feeding the working classes in urban centres and supporting the growth of national prosperity (Woods, 2017). However, some agricultural writers at the time claimed the meat was grainy and tough, and that no discerning table would eat it (Trow Smith, 1957). Despite classed distinctions, mutton consumption was tied to symbolic and material connections to Britishness, where "national and indeed nationalistic appetites fuelled this process as a growing population demanded more meat" (Woods, 2017, p.5). Woods outlines how mutton emerged as a substance which had both rhetorical and material potency: the rhetoric of nation building, and the raw nutritive value of meat to feed undiscerning masses. Meat was valued through its significations of stamina and virility, and the supremacy of Britain as an imperial power (Guerrini, 2012).

There are echoes of the ways in which "ethnic" mutton has been described as "poor quality" by the slaughter workers, owners, and food media more broadly, which reproduce the classist narratives which circulated around the production of mutton for industrial working classes. However, the denigration of "ethnic" mutton combines classed and racialised disavowal. As Britain industrialised, the consumption of British reared sheep was framed as literally and figuratively feeding the bodies of British, white, classed workers whose labour was in demand to feed the growth of a modern Imperial nation. Put simply, consuming mutton made people "British." The absence of narratives which acknowledge the complex values of "ethnic" mutton as entangled in Empire, bring to a bear a series of contradictions in the ways that nationhood has been ascribed to people. This connection between place, meat and people is not replicated in the current portrayals of the halal market, where postcolonial immigrants and their

descendants are positioned as outsiders to Britain, whereby eating British meat does not make British bodies.

3.4 The Nation's meat

On a morning in January, I am with Adam, the owner of Westlambs. We are at a sheep auction in the middle of the country, in what looks like an industrial estate. It is cold and frosty, but buyers are out in force waiting for the auction to start. Some are perched on railings under the single ray of sunlight which is breaking through the barn roof. Adam has purposefully escaped from me, so he can walk around the pens and check out the sheep without the risk that I might draw attention to the ones that he wants to bid on. He is after big, meaty bodied prime lambs, not the cull ewes which Ray and Jack purchase. Prime lambs are hard to come by at this time of year, and Adam has been visiting every auction with a 300-mile radius to try and find them. He has already shifted the days he is slaughtering because he cannot find enough sheep. "It's a hustle at this time of year," he confides. The auctioneer takes his position, side walking like a crab on the railings while he holds the attention of eager buyers: "90 pound, 90 bid, 91, 91 bid, 92, 90 bid, ... 54 kilos at 105! 50 kilos start at 100 42 kilos started at 90 46 kilos at 95 38 kilos at 84! Boys, Boys, Boys, look at this proper lamb, £100 a bid…If you want the good lambs you have to bid for them".

The value of "British" sheep meat is invoked by Adam in its singularity as a premium commodity. Adam is resolute that British sheep, in all their guises, are the best in the world. There is no mention of breed or location, simply that the sheep are farmed on British soil, by British farmers. He explains that the customers he supplies in Europe want "good quality lambs" and that "Ours is better, in both quality and quantity". Adam explains that British farmland is naturally suited to sheep; British sheep breeds are meatier, and British farmers have better practices than their European counterparts, in which he directly referenced the integrated sheep system. He tells me that there will always be a market for good quality halal sheep meat, and that, unlike the overall decline of meat consumption in the UK, "Muslims" are a safe bet in terms of growing a meat processing business.

By focussing on the European market, Adam is following many British farmers and producers who have shaped their practices and production around the European demand for sheep meat. This has been the case since the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1968, and then through its enlargement in 1973 (Blythe, 1981). The increasing demand was in part relational to "migrant workers and other ethnic groups throughout the EEC who often have strong preferences for sheep meats and are regular consumers of mutton and lamb." (Blythe, 1981, p.68). In the 1970s, farming trade media and the government appointed Meat and Livestock Commission attributed the growth in France, Belgium, and Germany to "some migrant groups, particularly those from North Africa" (Blythe, 1981, p.30). As within Britain, a major factor in the increase of demand for sheep meat has been from postcolonial migrations, who were connected to Europe through its imperial past. In France, immigrants from former colonies of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco arrived both during colonial rule of their countries, and in the 1960s, in the aftermath of colonialism. In Germany, Turkish citizens were invited as "guest workers" through formal labour agreements to build the country post-war (Aydin, 2016). As in Britain, the markets for sheep meat are related migrations of people invited to boost economic growth. The British sheep farming system has been shaped around diasporic tastes for 60 years and continues to be supported by more recent migrations from Muslim majority countries.

Adam implies the Britishness is a value which is instantiated into the sheep meat he sells, and as such, remains even when sheep meat travels across borders. This is a notion that has its roots in Empire. In 1860s and 1870s, at the height of Britain's Empire, consumers were warned of a looming Victorian "meat famine" (Otter, 2020). The domestic production of mutton and beef, which had boomed in the preceding century with new improved breeds had plateaued. Farmers could no longer keep up with population growth in urban centres, or the increased demands supported by workers' rising wages (Perren, 1978). In 1873, the *Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette* argued that Britain's "meat supply is becoming the most important problem of the day, mediated as a "serious national concern", with fears that meat was inaccessible to "our teeming poorer population" (quoted in Woods, 2017, 54). The primary concern for policy makers was that if British workers could did not eat enough meat, the nation would be weakened.

To solve the deficit, New Zealand, already colonised by the British (alongside Australia) was refashioned as a "colonial no-place of British meat making", where "British meat" could be produced "in the absence of British pastures" (Woods, 2015, p.154). This strategy was dependent on the existing presence colonial racialised discourses and the violence of settler colonialism. Wolf (2016) defines the settler colonisation of Australia through colonial claims that the land was "terra nullius," an unoccupied wasteland which could be claimed as British. Through historiographic research, Woods (2017) demonstrates how the Britishness of sheep and meat was not an essentialism rooted within the borders of an imperial centre, or a "British" native type. Rather, it was a value which could be reconstructed at a distance in a place that was described as unoccupied: colonial settlers developed a new breed of sheep, the Corridale, to cater to British tastes, where "Britishness" became instantiated in breeds and flesh. The connection to Britishness was manifest through attempts to breed a sheep which satisfied British tastes. By the end of the nineteenth century, New Zealand excelled in producing meat for export to Britain, supported by developments in refrigerated shipping which enabled frozen meat to be transported over long distances. Britain, meanwhile, had fallen from its position of dominance as the centre for sheep production.

3.5 Conclusion: The Invisible Empire of Sheep

The Brexit claims of "protecting" British sheep from un-British Others, occludes swathes of history, from enclosure to Empire, periods in which claims of a contradictory "Britishness" and national belonging were being disseminated through a moral machinery (Tyler, 2022) which narratively constructed classed and racialised others as having a precarious belonging to the nation or its Empire. Even a cursory history mapping how sheep have been adapted and transported as a strategy for the dispossession and appropriation of land, both within British borders, and in Britain's colonies, exposes this symbolic representation of sheep as a purer or uncomplicated signifier of the past as a "myth" acting as memory which obscures violent pasts. Instead, sheep are instruments of redesign and re-conception (Franklin, 2007). In this

contextualising chapter, I have focussed on sheep to explore the how claims of Britishness or Englishness – much like sheep – have many potentialities and are always on the move. National aspirations and the growth of the British economy have emerged through the moveability of sheep – whether regional or international – and their adaptability, to be moulded into different types to service the economic and imperial needs of nation building. Through the histories of "British" sheep, persistent but irrational narratives make claims about national belonging, which contradict themselves over time and obfuscate shifting and unstable realities. In both the contemporary and historical examples, "hierarchies of belonging" have been constructed through the abjection or stigmatisation of racialised and classed others. To return to Bhambra (2017a) the persistence of claiming the Englishness or Britishness of sheep today requires a "methodological Whiteness" which erases the colonial and postcolonial connections through which British sheep have come into value.

In relation to notions of terroir, exploring the "historical depth" of the Britishness of sheep, reveals the ways in which the imperial histories of Empire and Industrialisation are materially, economically, and rhetorically connected. Yet, away from rhetoric, Marxist, postcolonial and feminist analysis centred on the uneven dynamics and effects of power have engaged with how most sheep breeds on British land are "modern inventions" which have been folded into essentialist ideas about the nation (Franklin 2007; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Woods, 2017). These inventions are entangled with formations of British civility and respectability which were co-constructed through discourses which positioned racialised and classed "Others" as abject or stigmatised populations. Through these perspectives, it is not just sheep which were transformed through industrialisation and Empire as embodiments of national progress, but racialised and classed categories of people who were stigmatised as national abjects. Imogen Tyler (2022) highlights the ways in which classed and racialised stigmatisation has been central the construction of Britishness. Moreso, she draws attention to ways in which stigmatisation connects the histories of land enclosures in Britain, to the colonisation of land during Empire. That is, Empire was not something that happened elsewhere, it was fundamental in the reconstruction of British land and labouring bodies in urban centres. Britain was narrated as a modern, rational, white civilised nation spatially and affectively distanced

from modes of pre-modern intimacy and classed and racialised people categorised as uncivilised under the rubric of progress (McClintock, 1995).

For Stuart Hall (2017), the rhetoric of an autonomous "island nation" was foundational to the myth of an essentialised English national identity, rather than one constructed relationally against others through Empire. He challenges this dislocation, through associations of tea and sugar as symbolic of white "English identity," against the material and environmental realities that tea and sugar do not, and cannot, be grown in England. They are colonial productions enabled through the labour of colonised and enslaved people in the Caribbean and India. As a postcolonial immigrant from Jamaica, Hall (2017, p.5) asserts that he existed in England before his arrival, symbolically, but also materially, in the stimulants which fuelled labouring bodies. The absence of acknowledging this presence and connection marks a "profound historical forgetfulness" of the outside histories which are always inside the history of the English, that there is no history without that other history." Contemporary narratives about national belonging which claim Britain can return to a state of being a coherent whole are repetitious of imperial discourses and practices, a continuity of an "invisible empire" which can be made visible by identifying the "discursive and material processes whereby dominant discourses work to retain dominance" (Wemyss, 2009). Throughout British history, it is a futile endeavour to consider sheep as having originated in Britain, or as having a shared belonging with people in Britain. Indeed, Britishness has been applied with more fluidity to sheep than people. Britishness was variously claimed on material, territorial, and racialised variables, yet always positioned to fabricate a moral hierarchy and claim to rightful belonging through shifting narratives of intimacy and abjection in changing geographical, economic, and moral contexts.

In the following chapters, I focus on more ethnographic detail of the narratives of the white British slaughtermen, and their relations with their co-workers. I continue to interrogate how claims of whiteness and Britishness construct imagined moral hierarchies of belonging through the lens of race and class. More specifically, I attend to the fragilities of these claims as slaughtermen move between the locations.

Chapter 4: Whiteness, class and respectability

4.1 Introduction

On a wet afternoon at Westlambs, the halal slaughterhouse in the West Midlands, the throng of labour on the slaughter line, in the gut rooms and loading bays which have been in motion since 6am slows. It has been a busy morning. By 5am, huge, refrigerated lorries had already collected scores of pink lamb carcasses, which were now on their way to the port of Dover. Arms have been scrubbed, faces splashed, and workers have changed from their uniforms of now wet and bloodied overalls, wellies and aprons into tracksuits and trainers as they emerge in the yard outside.

Eddie and Jeff, who work in the gut and offal rooms huddle outside under a plastic awning, talking about Jeff's upcoming retirement. He is rubbing his papery hands like he is hatching a plan, "this time next year, I'll be hanging up my knives." Eddie sucks on a roll-up and pulls a packet of sunflower seeds from his pocket, to feed a robin that visits him on this bench. We wait for the bird, which does not come, "probably been put off by the rain", Eddie guesses, watching a tractor across the muddy yard deposit scoops of the digested grass they have been emptying from sheep stomachs all morning. If you focus on it, you can smell the work that has taken place – lanolin, faeces, guts and blood wafting into the air, but no one, including me, seems to register it as an infringement on their senses anymore. We are only moments from the main road which leads into town where the local workers live; we can see the red paint of double-decker buses dappled through the towering cypress trees which screen the slaughterhouse from the residential houses on the opposite side of the road.

Zaf, who is in his early twenties, is shouting at his brother Asim from the front seat of his car, "Hurry UP bruv! I ain't no taxi driver fam…." Asim has been slow to leave. He was hiding behind the slaughter unit from his dad, who works here as a cleaner for a discrete after-work smoke. Max and Zha are still in their overalls, playfighting, as Zha aims his fist towards Max's belly, knowing that he has been complaining all morning about a hangover. They have been offered extra hours – an occasional perk meted out by the owner – packing up bags of hearts for delivery to France tomorrow. These local slaughterhouse workers, white British, British Asian of Pakistani decent, or more

recent immigrants from Pakistan, aged 18 to 65, live in this ethnically diverse town. They are employed by the white British owner, Adam, as line workers, offal sorters and fridge loaders, ostensibly unskilled but pay-rolled, some for a decade, some for two months. They have been waiting until the clock hits 2.31pm so they can log out on the digital reader at the slaughter unit entrance, to get a full hour's pay.

Across the yard, Dennis, the foreman[15], calls out from a caravan parked by the tractor, "fancy a brew before you get going, Jess?" I regret having already changed from rubber boots into trainers as I trudge across the sludgy ground, and perch myself on a wonky fold-up chair outside the caravan, next to Rob. Unlike the local workers, Rob and Dennis are self-employed itinerant, skilled slaughterman who travel to different sites throughout the week. They command double the rate per hour of the local workers[16]. They both live over three hour's drive away, but each week will stay overnight in an old caravan wedged in the mud next to the pile of sheep manure in the shadow of the slaughter unit, and away from their families. Dennis, who is white British in his late forties, sleeps here from Monday to Friday, and sometimes bring his small dog for company. Rob, also white British, is in his late thirties. He arrives at Westlambs late on a Wednesday evening, after a full day working at North Hills in the North West. He spends two nights here, before driving back on Friday evening, and then starting again on Sunday evening at close to midnight at a third halal slaughterhouse, working overnight, before heading directly to a second shift at North Hills. "It can't be good for you, can it?" he reflects on his exhausting schedule, "always moving, not having proper homecooked hot food, I won't be able to do this moving around forever, but I can do it for now." "It's all changed now," Dennis says, "this used to be a respectable job."

The phrase "this is used to be respectable job" was expressed alongside the phrase, "if it wasn't for the Muslims, we'd be out of a job." The former a statement of decline, the latter a statement of opportunity, made without any sense of relief or gratitude, rather, a reluctant acceptance. In effect, the two global phenomena through which the "white working-class" have been positioned as being "left behind": neoliberal

[15] The foreman is the head slaughterman, who manages the speed of the line, and the position of the workers.

globalisation and immigration have not neatly left these workers behind (Bhambra, 2017b). It was between these allusions to post-industrial decline and a "multicultural" Britain, that the itinerant slaughtermen have chosen to work either in medium-sized halal slaughterhouses or the remaining smaller traditional mixed species slaughterhouses (of which there are few left). They resist working at larger sites, the labour here makes them feel anonymous, "just a number on a line", doing the same thing all day "like robots." There is such a site in Rob's hometown, but for these reasons, he chooses not to work there. While the vignette I opened with infers slaughterhouses are a site of classed, unrespectable, dirty and precarious labour for anyone whose days are spent here, it is in these slaughterhouses on the margins, where white slaughtermen connected to positive, classed registers about the value of their labour as "skilled", "respectable" and "real" work. From here on, I will refer to the white "skilled" itinerant slaughtermen as "the slaughtermen" and the local "unskilled" white British, British Asian and Pakistani as "the workers" unless extra explanation feels necessary, such as when introducing participants, or describing interactions between workers.

In this chapter, I move through the three slaughterhouses sequentially and comparatively, creating a coherence out of worker narratives which emerged through multiple visits to each: the medium sized halal slaughterhouse in the West Midlands, Westlambs, the traditional small rural slaughterhouse in the Northwest, North Hills, and the small halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, Eastewes. Across the sites, the white, skilled slaughtermen frequently spoke towards their own white British or English identities and belonging, expressed through attachments to their trade and the nation collectively. As the slaughtermen moved around the sites interconnected through their mobility, and as I moved with them, their identities and claims of belonging were discursively constructed through shifting associations of the respectability of their labour. These co-existed with negative sentiments about their fellow British Asian, Pakistani and Polish co-workers, as well as the younger white British men in unskilled, local positions, through classed, racialised and nationalistic narratives.

These sentiments emerged through workplace banter and more reflexive, nostalgic conversations with me and with each other, where workers would interpret the

everyday, or imaginatively dip back into various moments in the past, a "golden age" which they claimed as more respectable (Williams, 1973). I argue that the slaughtermen's claims of belonging to class, nation, Whiteness, the present and past, were negotiated and contested in each place, and moulded around the contingencies and demographics of each site (Brah, 1996; Twine & Gallagher; 2008). In so doing, the slaughtermen constructed unstable, fragile yet persistent "hierarchies of belonging" through which they always claimed their place at the top of the ladder through their identification as respectable British white men (Back & Sinha, 2012; Wemyss, 2009). These narrative formations of class, "race", nation, and gender mapped onto the already uneven stratifications between workers and unequal access to resources (Skeggs, 1997). These exclusionary narratives of not belonging, or a "politics of belonging" were most fervently targeted at the workers identified as "P***s", even though their livelihoods depended on Muslim consumers in Britain, and even though in one slaughterhouse, there were no Asian or Muslim men.

4.2 Theoretical frames: Whiteness, class and respectability

First, I expand on my theoretical framings of Whiteness, class and respectability. The skilled white workers connections between respectability and slaughter work both challenges and reaffirms the positioning of their labour as classed, gendered, white and British. In the 1860s, slaughterhouses emerged alongside gendered and classed formations of industrial manual work and the long-standing associations between British imperial power and the consumption of meat, as explored in the previous chapter (Otter, 2020). Feminist approaches to British / English class formations have highlighted how men have historically been positioned as the holders of class power, because classed positions were constructed in relation to men's labour (Skeggs, 1997). Studies of the construction of classed masculinities have positioned labour as central to providing men with independence, economic and symbolic power, and status (Nixon, 2017). Gendered approaches to class formations have highlighted the often contradictory yet relational forms of respectable masculinities which emerged during industrialisation and Imperialism. For example, the colonial, manly Englishman; the

moral autonomous artisan and the hardworking, wage-earning man in new industrial trades (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Carrigan et al. 1985; C. Hall et. al 2003; Sinha, 1996). The latter were associated with heavy, hard, physically demanding and dangerous labour, alongside men's position as stable wage earners and breadwinners (Nixon, 2017). On the one hand, slaughter labour could be considered a trade through which slaughtermen benefit from the associations of respectable, hard work, along the symbolic value of bodily, meaty labour, valuable to the growth of the nation; the epitome of (once) respectable "working-class" masculine identity which emerged through industrial occupations (McDowell, 2003).

However, slaughter work has most prominently been culturally classed as an unrespectable, dirty job because it deals with death and abject bodily substances (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999; McCabe & Hamilton, 2015). Slaughter has been stigmatised since the inception of the first slaughterhouses through registers of disgust and abjection distancing slaughter workers from the two sides of the same Imperial coin: Britishness and Whiteness (Bonnett, 1998; McClintock, 1995). Through this logic of abjection, anyone who works in slaughterhouses is in theory, at a distance from belonging in Britain, ostensibly "classed", doing unrespectable, dirty manual work on the margins (Skeggs, 2005; Thiel, 2007; Willis, 1977). There is a persistent media narrative that slaughter workers are positioned as a "them" to a national us, described as work that "British" people don't want to do anymore because it is dirty and poorly paid (for example, Meredith, 2016), compounded by reports which frame slaughter labour as immigrant work (McSweeny & Young, 2020). These contradictory and ambiguous readings reveal how respectability, labour and gendered and national class formations are not fixed, but are abstract, relational, and contingent. As Skegg's (1997) has outlined in her work on the relations between class, gender and respectability, while respectability is a ubiquitous signifier of class; being respectable is not fixed. For example, she highlights in the context of post-industrial decline, white working-class male bodies previously perceived as respectable, have been recast as lacking in moral integrity. Similarly, Webster (2008) argues that white working-class men are perceived as an anachronistic remnant of an industrial culture blocking a full move to modernisation and progress (see also Lawler, 2012).

Tensions between instability and fixity have also been central to both the theorisation, and the critiques, of defining Whiteness in relation to labour and class. For Du Bois (1935), Whiteness was embraced as a racial identity by white immigrant groups in America, to benefit from the psychological and social privileges, which he described as "the wages of Whiteness." He argued that being part of a white racial collective offered more privilege than class solidarity between white and Black workers. Following Du Bois, Roediger (1991) argued that Whiteness was contingent and could be claimed and withheld from white others who had previously been excluded on account of their class, nationality, or religion. As Bonnett (1998, p.316-318) highlighted, in nineteenth century Britain, the working-classes were "marginal to symbolic formation of Whiteness." Bonnett argued that the white working-class were able to dip into a white identity which previously had only been available to the bourgeoisie. For the latter, Whiteness was regarded as an innate property, and a natural order between classes. Yet, the white working-class were eventually able to draw on the social symbolism of Whiteness from which they had been excluded. Whether at Westlambs, Eastewes, or North Hills, and between the changing national, racial, and classed compositions of the local workforces, Whiteness emerged as a privileged position in terms of pay and status. It was always white men who made the most assertive claims to their superior belonging in the slaughterhouse, to the trade, and the nation. Further, claims of white superiority were often not invisible or unmarked, as suggested by Frankenberg (1993). Whiteness was most visible and ferociously articulated as a superior racial and national identity in the racially mixed slaughterhouse. However, articulations of Whiteness were not absent at other sites with only white workers, but were policed, performed, and reinvented in relation to the nationality and the classed constructions of co-workers (Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

As discussed, slaughterhouses have been conceptualised as a "place that is no place." However, I will suggest that the localities of slaughter, and in particular the demographics of the local workforce, were constitutive of the different ways in which Whiteness was deployed. Knowles (2008, p.170) argues that approaches which make Whiteness visible, "reconstitute its singularity, and reveal the superficiality of place, rather than an active constituent in Whiteness's reproduction." Place, such as Knowles' example of rural South West England, was conducive and well-matched to the re-

inscriptions of an Imperial Whiteness through everyday actions, dialogues and performances. She argues that Whiteness is already inscribed into the fabric of rural places, through their connections to Empire. Twine and Gallagher (2008, p.5) argue that Whiteness is made "conscious" through ideological narratives even when the "prerogatives to Whiteness are challenged." They propose that Whiteness emerges in nuanced and locally specific ways. As such, I will draw out the ways in which local geographies and demographics of each slaughterhouse, and the proximity to racialised workers were integral to the various formulations of Whiteness and the slaughtermen's discursive hierarchal constructions of belonging.

It is in this context, that I argue that structural and cultural classed classifications of slaughter work were not adequate to understand workers' sense of belonging to their trade or their identities. Instead, I explore how slaughtermen were active in producing the meaning of the positions they inhabit (Skeggs, 1997). All workers and slaughtermen alike were potentially stigmatised and constructed as abject because of their labour. However, Imogen Tyler (2013, p.38) argues, it is "only through the empirical focus on the lives of those *constituted as abject* that we can we consider the forms of political agency available to those at the sharp end of subjugation within the prevailing systems of power". I am focussing on white slaughtermen because while they are on the sharp end of subjugation in terms of an idealised, moral, national belonging because of their labour, through their claims of Whiteness and respectability, they become the perpetrators of stigmatising others. This configuration of stigma and belonging revealed comparative questions to analyse the narratives across each site: how do the white workers imagine the past to reproduce Whiteness in the present? In the following section, I explore the coherences and contradictions which emerge through the slaughtermen's narratives through which their respectability is contingently claimed. In so doing, I raise questions about the relational fixity and fluidity of social categories. More broadly, I aim to nuance connections that have been articulated between the negative impacts of immigration and multiculturalism and the left behind white working-class as discussed in the introduction.

4.3 Westlambs: Constructing White "hierarchies of belonging"

How many sheep are left? Usman! How many sheep are left? Its mid-December, and despite the workers at Westlambs being told by the owner that it was going to be a quiet day, it was 4pm and sheep are still coming through from the lairage, when shifts usually finish around 1pm. An unexpected order had been received from Belgium, and the workers and slaughtermen are exhausted. Dennis, the foreman, is hollering at Usman, who is British Asian. Usman works at the weighing scales at the end of the slaughter line, matching the weights of the fresh pink carcasses to the orders. He is the only person who *might* know how long this shift will endure. "Maybe 50" Usman shouts back. The number trickles down the line and through the back rooms, and amidst the groans, Dennis tries to make light of situation, "even Dave is wasting away!" directing his words towards a local white British line worker, who is somewhat overweight. The workers are annoyed, but this is not an uncommon occurrence. They rarely start the day knowing what time they will finish. After the shift, Jamie a younger local white worker was so hungry, and had no money in his pocket, that he had to ask the owner for a Pot Noodle from the office. Or worse, orders may not come through at all. During periods where the price of sheep is high and orders are thin, days are short and local workers' weekly wages can drop by £200, amidst warnings from the owner to "stick with me now, so that there is a job to come back to."

Throughout the day, Dennis, Rob and Alex, the white slaughtermen, had been at the start of the moving slaughter line, with Cliff and Doug where they are primarily employed to remove the fleece from a sheep's body. Known collectively as the "fronting crew," their job is ostensibly the last skilled, in-demand process on the slaughter line, dependent on intricate knife work and knowledge of the specificities of sheep; their size, breed, gender and age, and for which they earn double the hourly rate of the local "unskilled" workers. Further down the slaughter line, and in the offal rooms and fridges, local workers are positioned at various points in what the owner describes as mechanised and unskilled "factory work." Unskilled work includes chopping hooves with electrical clippers, eviscerating carcasses with knives, tugging out organs with gloved hands, removing spinal columns with a suction hose, organising offals into boxes and bags, and skinning sheep heads. The local workers are either

British Asian, like Asim and his brother Zaf, or more recent immigrants from Pakistan, like Zha, or white British workers, like Jeff and Eddie. In chapter 5, I will look in more detail into the blurred and contingent categories of skilled and unskilled labour and the stratifications of slaughter work, mapping how racialised narratives are reproduced on white and Asian bodies. But for now, I want to acknowledge that the fronting crew are in a position of material power in a context where all workers are vulnerable to precarity, and the impacts of an unpredictable market.

Once the shift finishes, I ask Dennis why he felt it had gone on so long. "It's the P***s, they've all gone home for Christmas, we're down men and doing their work." The precarious structural model of last-minute work, and the potential organisational failure of the owner was largely ignored. This racial slur was frequently used by the fronting crew, which included any of their co-workers who had brown skin, whether local British Asian of Pakistani heritage, Pakistani or Afghan, whether British born, or more recently living in Britain. The "P***s" were homogenised into a category narrated as singularly oppositional to the white workers. I was told that such racial slurs were simply "banter" in a space that was filled with endless jibes and retorts between workers. I was told that banter formed the collective, convivial atmosphere of the place: "It is a bit racist here" Rob admits, "they call us white bastards, we call them P***s." He then backtracks, "but it's all just for a laugh," legitimising racist slurs as part of a shared masculine workplace culture, presented as part of the same repertoire directed towards white workers, such as Dave for being overweight or a "chicken shagger," or Daniel for having cranky knees. Sometimes, in a double hit, Dave would be asked if Daniel was his dad. To belong to the slaughterhouse meant being able to take and make a joke, to take abuse and not take offence. Alex, a white slaughterman in his early fifties, explains,

> The banter, I think it's because of the *nature* of the job, you have to lighten the mood a bit…We just seem to get away with a bit more in the slaughterhouse, I dunno why, some of the things that are said, if you worked at a car factory or somewhere, they'd get the police involved, it's just not done *these* days, especially the racism side. But it doesn't matter what colour or creed you are, you're still as welcome as the next man, but in work you'll be having a laugh names and things.

For Alex, slaughterhouse workers and slaughtermen alike, were expected to participate in name calling to have a laugh. This convivial sociality of banter is highlighted by Smith (2014, p.161), who frames its intention to "elicit amusement between participants," where the "meaning of the language is figurative and that the speaker's intentions are not to offend, but rather to maintain and push the sensitive lines of significance in friendships". However, Alex is also alluding to the importance of the slaughterhouse as a remarkable place which amplifies and legitimises racist banter and abusive "jokes." He connects the specific nature of the work: the meat, the death, the bodily substances, to language which he admits is unacceptable and anachronistic. Particularly in "working-class," masculine, manual trades, banter, and aggressive language has been framed not just in terms of social bonds, but power. Through banter and abusive language, men whose labour is stigmatised as dirty and unrespectable can construct autonomous workplace cultures by participating in bodily centred, sexualised, racist, and scatological humour as resistance to authority, and the monotony of dirty, repetitive work (Ackroyd & Crowdy, 1990; Theil 2007; Willis, 1977). As such, the intention of banter in these analyses is to dismantle hierarchies by those whose classed positions have been constructed as abject. It enables subordinated men to rewrite and invert ascribed identities – dirty, violent, racialised – against the hegemony of their particular social positioning and the abjection of their labour. As Limon (1994, p.125) suggests during degrading masculine talk, "men mean something other than what is denoted by their aggressive language. It becomes a "playful nips rather than a bite." For Thiel (2007) banter was interpreted as a way for construction workers to negotiate intra-work power dynamics, for example, between managers and workers. In effect, banter, both as a form of friendship building, and a leveller, is a convivial verbal degradation which depends on knowing the intention of the speaker, a way through which workers could play around with their collective unrespectability and dismantle hierarchies between each other, and against the normative, often classed judgements of others.

This interpretation of the connection between remarkable dialogue and the slaughterhouse as a unique place was in part shared by the Asian workers to whom it was largely directed. While Asim explained the racist banter was "all just for jokes," when I asked, "what would happen if you got called that word on the street?" he

proudly asserted "I'd thump them! That's if my mates didn't get to them first." He gives as good as he gets, calling Liam, a younger slaughterman, "ghandu" (gay) in Urdu, or a "white pig." When I asked Ahmed, the halal slaughterman, how he felt about the banter, he explained,

> You do get your racist remarks, you've heard them, a lot of it tends to be more *banter racist*, if you know what I mean. Myself, I'm not too fussed, I'll take it out from one ear to the other, I'll give it back as good as *they* give it.

Attention to banter in ethnically diverse contexts has highlighted how it reproduces already existing racialised stereotypes, rhetorically claiming that racialised Others' belonging to place is contingent (Back, 1991; 1996). Indeed, Asim and Ahmed expressed that the banter was a thin form of sociality or bonding with their co-workers. Instead, it was tolerated, ignored, or allowed to pass through them, but only in this space. In effect, all the workers were identifying racist talk but telling me that it was not racist *here*. Further, I was being told that racial difference, and racist talk was so prolific that it was almost "post-racial" (Goldberg, 2015), implying that racism was not a structuring force of inclusion and exclusion between workers, rather it was a way for workers to be welcomed into the space, or belong to the culture of the slaughterhouse.

Roxana Willis (2023) analyses banter in her ethnography of working-class residents in Corby: a town which has experienced high rates of immigration, deindustrialisation, an absence of state support which had been framed in public discourses as voting to Leave the EU based on racist, anti-immigrant beliefs. Drawing on both Smith's work on friendship building, and notions of mutuality, she interrogates whether racist banter should be legitimately understood as racism. Primarily, Willis (2023, p.258) argues that the motivation behind banter needs to be understood in relation to "the wider context and the broader character of the person involved in the practice." For example, her participants work towards a framework of mutuality, where there is little opportunity for individualistic self-interest or personal advancement. Rather, immigrants and long-term residents alike are perceived based on their contributions to the collective, where hierarchy, and individual characteristics, such as race, were not prioritised or valued. Willis (2023, p.164) proposes that racist jokes firstly enable her participants to "carve a space to express anxieties about change without being dismissed as being called

racist." Further, that attention to the content of banter shows how racialised and classed differences are pitted against each other, though a dynamic of "punching up and across," in which race, and class are challenged as markers of distinction with a view to the potential for mutuality. Similarly, banter is well-documented as a long-standing social feature of traditional working-class, masculine trades as a means to level hierarchies (Lawrence, 2019). As such, racialised banter in the slaughterhouse context could be considered as a contribution to the codes and performances of slaughterhouse labour to challenge distinction.

I want to acknowledge the capacity of banter for sociality, mutuality, and connection. However, there was a fundamental difference in the rhetoric of the jibes shared between the white slaughtermen amongst themselves, or as directed to the local white workers, which centred on often gendered or bodily deviance (chicken shagging, shitting yourself, masturbating, cranky knees), and the white slaughtermen towards the Asian workers: that they were deviant because they did not belong, affectively or geographically to either the nation, the trade, or this slaughterhouse in their hometown. For example, Asian workers were described as odorous and animal like; "smelly monkey", or of being an "illegal" refugee, for example, by being told to "get back in your dinghy." Perez (2022, p.38) argues that racist jokes, unlike other forms of humour "are fundamentally constructed through social divisions created by historically defined racial ideologies of Whiteness as binary to racialised others and as such reproduce the hegemony of Whiteness." Drawing on Mill's (1997) concept "white epistemological ignorance" Perez argues racist jokes are legitimised through a denial of racism, and the harm it inflicts. This ambiguity between denial and admission was evident when speaking to Liam, a younger skilled white slaughterman. He asked me over a tea during a break, "are you writing about racism?" I said I was going to include racism and asked how he felt about it. He shrugged, "well if you look like shit and smell like shit…", came the retort, which he shouted over my head, towards an Asian worker, teetering between the admission of racist abuse, while claiming it as banter. And yet, no one, including me, ever seemed to be laughing at these racist jibes and retorts. Cliff, a white British slaughterman asserted, "it's a good job you can have a laugh Jess, otherwise you wouldn't have lasted two minutes in here." While it was acknowledged that I could take a joke – I did smirk at a worker being called a chicken shagger because

it was so juvenile and absurd, and at story about one worker defecating themselves for example, but the use of the word of P*** was uncomfortable. Taking a joke included both laughing at myself and at others, but also not responding with judgement to racism. I would instead go quiet or try not to react even though doing so made me feel complicit in its use. If I had pushed back, I would have been the only person in the space doing so. I was being told that racism was so visible that it was invisible, and that the demarcating of Whiteness as binary to "P***" was so audible, that it did not represent a position of power.

This claim that it was all just jokes which levelled everyone as part of a masculine, workplace narrative culture, a free for all carnivalesque space where any offence or degradation goes was contested. Firstly, racist sentiments emerged in more reflexive narratives by the white slaughtermen which reproduced a pool of negative constructions about Asian, and specifically Asian Muslim men. Indeed, as Willis (2023, p.258) cautions, understanding the motivation of banter requires consideration of the broader social context in which it takes place,

> [If an] individual only uses banter towards racialised persons within their friendship group or more broadly, and whether banter tends to be used among relatively positioned equals or against those in less advantaged positions. When banter is consistently used against persons with less power, this perhaps indicates it does not operate as a levelling force but is rather a smokescreen covering abuse or bullying.

As I will explore in the following chapter, the racist banter directed at a young Asian worker, Asim, who was in a less advantaged position, was not dissimilar in content to the racist beliefs expressed by the slaughtermen which blocked him from progressing in the trade. Secondly, in more reflective conversations, the slaughtermen did not regard *their* labour as being unrespectable: they regarded themselves as in elite positions in the slaughterhouse. I will consider the former in more depth in the next chapter. First, I compare the rhetoric of the slaughtermen's racist banter, with the more reflexive interpretations about their co-workers to illustrate their shared intentions. Both fed into processes of racialisation which reproduced Whiteness as a localised position of power.

Miles (1982, p.79) defines "racism" as the negative "signification of some biological characteristic(s) as the criterion by which a collective may be identified… as having a natural, unchanging origin and status, and therefore as being inherently different." He defines "racialisation" as "a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically" (Miles, 1989, p.76). Further, he argues that racialisation does not always lead to racism. Importantly, Miles reductively argued that "race" emerged as an ideological construct of class competition in the labour market following postcolonial migrations to Britain, such as the relations between skilled "indigenous" workers, and unskilled "immigrant" workers in traditional working-class trades.

At points, the slaughtermen's comments alluded to negative symbolisation of physical traits: for example, the connection of brown faeces and skin colour. At others, they were specific to the practices of Islam as a religion, and specifically halal slaughter, as "cruel", and "barbaric", and through which Ahmed was cast as "not a real slaughterman." At other times, the negative constructions centred on claims that the Asian workers were not British, because they belonged to Pakistan. For example, there were some workers who were away for the long shift. Sajid, who was born in Pakistan, has lived in the local area, as a British citizen since the 1960s. He had used his holiday allowance to go and to see family in Pakistan. As a local pay rolled worker, he was entitled to take a holiday. Reece, a local white British worker who cleans the intestines for sausage casings was also absent. He had enough of the unreliable hours and had gone to look for work elsewhere. His absence was not acknowledged. Instead, Sajid's absence was framed as a manipulation, laziness, and poor workmanship, as if he was playing the system and not committed to working in Britain. Moreso, he was accused of taking what should be Dennis's – Christmas. This in turn, was narrated as negative characteristic attributed to all the Asian workers, whether they were from Pakistan or Britain, and whether they were working that shift or not.

At other times, I would be told that the Asian workers were immoral, "not nice people," and that I would not, as a white woman, be safe around them, reproducing the anti-Muslim narratives which have circulated more recently around "Asian grooming gangs" targeting white women with sexual violence (Elahi & Khan, 2017).

However, some gendered and racialised narratives were absent here. While the slaughtermen never explicitly sexualised or flirted with me as a form of banter at this site, they would when we were at Eastewes, where all of the workers were white, apart from the halal slaughterman. But here, they told me that their Asian co-workers were sexually dangerous, especially to white women, and that as white men, they were my protectors. There were also absences of any mention of the stereotype of Muslim men as imagined Islamist terrorists or fundamentalists in this site – though there were in others. My sense was that reproducing this narrative of a threatening, violent presence would have awarded their co-workers *too* much power.

In both reflexive comments, and in banter, the slaughtermen's rhetoric was clear: Asian workers' belonging in Britain was contested. Kriakrides et al. (2009) have mapped the shifts from anti-Asian racism centred on postcolonial immigrants, to the racialisation of Muslims as a threatening enemy within Britain and Europe, marking a shift from biological racism to cultural racism centred on religious beliefs. In this shift, "cultures, or ethnicities have similar values to race as qualities which can be racialised" where "any nationalist appeal to cultural or ethnic origins in legitimation of sovereignty claims can covertly exclude racialised individuals from imagined national boundaries" (Kriakrides et al, 2009, p.209). While acknowledging these shifts and overlaps, I want to identify the potency of the word "P***" in this context, despite being told it was a harmless and convivial term. It was an umbrella term, that could at once be deployed to refer to "biological", cultural, *and* religious difference interchangeably, encompassing a pool of racist narratives, both in the registers of banter and reflexive narratives, from Empire to the present day: the lazy oriental (Said, 1978), the taking of "white" resources in the 1960s (Anthias & Yuval Davies, 1993; Miles, 1982), to the threat of Muslim men as violent and lawlessness, especially against white women (Alexander, 2000; Bhattacharyya, 2008). It was less important to identify what "type" of racism this was because the rhetorical effect was the same: P*** fixed their co-workers in a permanent, irredeemable state of not belonging, an unrespectable and unwelcome presence. Or, to put it another way, it was not none of the racism; it was all the racisms yet legitimised as convivial. Whether banter or more reflexive comments, these narratives fed into a dialectical process of racialisation which affirmed boundaries between the white and Asian workers skilled and unskilled

work, whether British or Pakistani, through which they were claiming their own white British respectability, rather than playing around with it. The claim that banter was a form of sociality, a tactic to "live with" difference, and create convivial relations elided its effects of reproducing a hegemonic white British belonging in a place where the white workers were already in a position of economic power. As such, the banter did not dispel hierarchies between white and Asian workers, or between skilled and unskilled work. Rather, the banter polices the boundaries of national and local belonging.

The reproduction of a hegemonic Whiteness was further evident, as the expressions of racist banter emerged at the intersection of skill and race. The local white British workers and the local Asian workers did not engage in the explicit racialised abuse with each other. These local workers were employed in equivalent "unskilled" ostensibly less respectable positions, and all lived in the same town. Away from the slaughter line, where the skilled slaughtermen are located, Westlambs unfolds into warren of rooms, corridors, and fridges where workers process edible parts for the halal markets such as offals, sheep heads, feet and doner kebab meat. In the gut room, Faisal, from Pakistan, pulls off the webbed caul fat, separates the intestines and slides them to Reece on his left to empty out and wash, over a conversation between what films they have seen, or Reece's extensive Lego collection, which admittedly, no one seemed particularly interested in. In the "foot room," Jeff, an older white worker, works with Mohammed, from Pakistan, burning the hairs off sheep feet, largely through mime and careful instructive words between them to counter language differences. As such, there is a shift in tone and speed in these back rooms, the shouting and thudding on the line dissipates into chat and handwork characterised by washing, sorting, cleaning, counting, and packing. Chris, who is white British, works alone removing the skin from sheep heads while he listens to George Michael, of whom he is a massive fan. In part, so he can get on with his work in peace. These white local workers would explicitly challenge the racist talk: "I really think it would be nice if we could all just get along," Chris exasperated one morning. And for the most part, the white local unskilled workers were able to get on with their work without verbal degradation. Despite the differences in their status, there was no collective noun for the local white workers as

there was with the term "P***." None of the Asian workers had a choice about whether they were recipients of the "banter" whatever positions they were in.

Post-industrial decline and the nostalgia for respect

Away from the thrust of the slaughter line, the ferocity with which the slaughtermen claimed their superiority in relation to Whiteness and skill, a nuanced and negotiated account of their own sense of respectability and national belonging emerged. Indeed, there were multiple disruptions to slaughtermen's claims of belonging to ideals of British respectability. In this section I want to further complicate the assertion banter was a shared form of collective unrespectability or a dismantling of hierarchies between white and Asian workers. In this section, I consider how claiming respectability served as a discursive means to shirk the stigma of slaughter work. Respectability was central to the slaughtermen's narratives about their trade and how they constructed their identities. Notions of respectability shaped where they worked, and how they have navigated changes to the trade, from post-industrial decline to the emergence of halal slaughterhouses. They worked in smaller halal slaughterhouses because they were spaces where they felt more respectable.

Back in the yard by the caravan, Dennis brings out a cup of tea, and a biscuit from his stash of weekly snacks. Dennis has worked as a slaughterman for over 30 years, starting in the late 1980s. I asked Dennis whether he minded sleeping in the caravan:

> Thing is Jess, this used to be respectable and well-paid trade, one where we were earning over a thousand pounds a week, and the fellas that came before us, in the 1970s, they were earning £700 a week even then. We set ourselves up, mortgages, cars, families. My son, he's in the army, for seven years, he's on 38k already, around the same as me. He's in Russia, on the border, they need to do night runs, like obstacle courses in rivers and woods. And I'm in a caravan spending the night here with Rob!"

As a reminder, I am including these conversations from memory, rather than verbatim. I asked Dennis what had changed: "the main thing, it was after the job became mechanised, this job became manual labour. It used to be considered, well, I think it still is, this is a skilled job, but when the line became mechanised,

the job became manual labour." Alex is also a skilled white British slaughterman, who has worked in slaughterhouses for 30 years. For Alex, the transformation from skilled to manual work was compounded by the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001. Many slaughterhouses closed as there were restrictions on moving sheep around the country.

> It messed up a lot of the industry, a lot of people left, then when it was over it was hard to restaff with men of that skill level, and it's the same kind of thing now, difficult to find staff, people are not coming into it, the money's not very good for young people, they put them on minimum wage, and for that kind of job you could be working in a supermarket stacking shelves at Tesco for the same amount of money. Young people don't want that, they just don't want this kind of work anymore.

Both Dennis and Alex are constructing a coherence of decline in which they narratively connect the structural changes of the mechanisation of slaughter work, and the impacts of a national epidemic as causative of why slaughter labour is regarded as less respectable than it used to be. Dennis explains that his wages per hour have reduced, and he feels he is not being compensated for his commitment, experience, or the toll of staying away from home. The job that had offered him social mobility and respect had plateaued. After years of work, he now earns the same amount as his son. The toll of staying away from home was keenly felt when this slaughterhouse closed for three months during the pandemic. It coincided with the UK's departure from the EU, which created friction and delays at the border when exporting sheep meat to Europe. The owner, Adam, decided to temporarily shut up shop. For the first time in Dennis's working life, he had spent months at home not working. "My wife was in tears when I had to leave again to come back to work, I felt terrible about it, but if I got a job in my village, I'd be on minimum wage." The cost of being away from home was also a concern for Rob. He felt his itinerant lifestyle was unsustainable with a young family, "but I need to move around, to get the wages. The most I can really earn is around 35 grand a year, and that's working six days a week."

Alex, Rob and Dennis are partially echoing broader narratives about the impacts of national post-industrial decline and the deskilling of the labour force in the 1980s and 1990s. It was a period of large-scale male job losses in trades considered "manual

labour" in the manufacturing and extractive industries, especially in the industrial former powerhouses in the West Midlands and the North West, where we were located, such as coal mining, textiles and steel (Kalra, 2000; Miah et. al., 2020; Nixon, 2017; Strangleman, 2007;). There has been a wealth of research outlining how these structural transformations and closures created a sense of a loss of identity for men in once respectable manual work and the shift towards labour in the "feminised" service economies for which manual workers were not well equipped (McDowell, 2003; Nayak, 2006,). Indeed, slaughterhouses did transform during this period due to the impacts of supermarket dominance, the BSE crisis and Foot and Mouth. Many smaller slaughterhouses closed or scaled up into larger meat processing plants (Broadway, 2002). Yet, unlike steel and textiles which were largely outsourced to production in the global south, the production of sheep meat in postcolonial Britain – as explored in the previous chapter – was revitalised as a national endeavour.

Neither Dennis nor Alex's situation melds easily with these broad narratives of national transformation and the attendant losses of masculine and respectable identities. In the period of post-industrial decline in Britain, Dennis and Alex were, and still are, gainfully employed, even as the conditions and locality of their labour has shifted. Their recollections support critiques that there has never been a homogeneous "working-class", constructed through industrialisation which severed autonomous workers from their means of production. Rather, that "working-class" jobs have, since their inception, been fractured with internal and relational hierarchies between skilled and unskilled or mental and manual labour (C. Hall et al. 2003; Hobsbawn, 1983; Theil, 2007; Thompson 1963). Further, that skilled workers have historically assumed positions of relative intra-class respectability (Haylett, 2001). As such, the sense of decline is premised on a transformation of kind, *becoming* manual labour and the classed interpretation that "manual" labour is not respectable. As skilled workers, they are making classed judgements about the fragmentation of the trade, while asserting that these classifications do not apply to them. They are the ones who remained, the last bastion of skilled respectability in a trade which has changed around them.

Being respectable was central to the slaughtermen's identities. Strathern (1992) conceptualised respectability as central to the notion of Englishness. Respectability was understood as a key characteristic of what it meant to belong to an English

identity and be a worthy, autonomous individual who can claim a moral authority. Skeggs (1997) builds on this nationally generalised definition of respectability, proposing that respect is central to cultural framings of the working-class specifically, because it is this group who are persistently described as unrespectable: dirty, threatening, polluting, abject and pathological. Less so for middle classes whose respectability is already assured. As such, respectability is an affective and narrative means through which people inhabit, interpret and resist class stigmatisation. Skeggs' outlines how white working-class women are aware of how they are represented as unrespectable and classed. They shape their actions in avoidance of being stigmatised, because there is a discomfort inhabiting such narratives. Respect, Skeggs (1997, p.15) argues is therefore "a dialogic form of recognition", where the working-classes "recognise the recognitions of others" and this "is central to processes of subjective construction." Skeggs argues that white men have historically been the holders of respectability. While she acknowledges that this is not fixed, I want to demonstrate that these processes of inhabiting and resisting stigma, and an awareness of how others might judge them, were also integral to the ways in which the slaughtermen constructed moral identities.

What is notable about the slaughtermen's recollections is that they do not present slaughter work as objectively dirty work. They do not invoke or claim awareness of the longer standing imperial associations that their labour was already stigmatised through registers of disgust and abjection, and spatially distanced from the ideals of national respectability. Rather, they are nostalgic for the respectability of the recent past, the 1990s, a time before the fragmentation wrought by Foot and Mouth and mechanisation. Up until the late 1990s, they regarded slaughter work as a remarkable, elite trade in terms of pay, a sector in which they were mobile, skilled, and autonomous, "We were in a league of our own", Dennis says, distinct from Fordist factory workers in other sectors. These recollections of the trade do not tally with frequently asserted analysis that slaughter work became Fordist, fragmented and manual in the early part of the twentieth century (Giedion, 1948; Vialles, 1994; Young Lee, 2008). Their narratives create a coherence by selecting some respectable associations of their labour and silencing others. The only moment when Alex expressed that *he* did not feel his labour was respectable was during Foot and Mouth.

He was working at a slaughterhouse as part of the government's contiguous cull policy initiated to prevent the spread of the disease in the national flock:

> We were destroying animals and throwing them away…they were all healthy animals…It was that bad, I mean we were burning piles of bloody animals in a field, it was all being televised. That didn't help the trade either, you know what I mean. Saying that we are all cruel bastards who just want to kill, it's not the case.

Alex, Rob and Dennis were aware people might regard their labour as violent, cruel, polluting and pathological; that people who work in slaughterhouses are perceived as inherently "cruel bastards" but they are resistant to inhabit these classed categories. In contradiction to Skeggs' female participants, who bear the weight of stigmatisation, the slaughtermen did not associate themselves with the stigmatised categories they could be ascribed, even if they acknowledged them. Rather, they select narratives about a moral, hardworking masculine respectability. Other people might stigmatise their work, but they feel other people have misunderstood who they are and what they do. For example, Alex recalled a time when someone asked him what he did for living:

> I said I work in the meat sector – not because I'm ashamed, I'm not, this is good legal work, but you never know where someone is coming from. Like, if I was speaking to an American, I might not say that I think Trump is an idiot, because you never know, they might have voted for him, and I wouldn't want to offend them. Each to their own, as they say.

The slaughtermen communicate a strong sense of respect for the individual, through a moral authority which is embodied in them, *they* make the work respectable. The relational aspects of respectability are denied, in place of a self-respectability which is fixed in them. This sense of innate respectability also emerges through the values they ascribe to the itinerancy of their labour. The period of post-industrial decline in Britain was one in which skilled slaughtermen were able to retain employment through their mobility to work in different sites. They had bargaining power for their labour: They were in demand because there was a deficit of people coming into the trade. To not have to belong to one place offered these slaughtermen a form security and

respectability. Alex tells me, "It's a slaughterman's market." When Foot and Mouth hit, or as local, rural slaughterhouses were closing in the aftermath of BSE, the slaughtermen recalled earning significant amounts of money as they were acutely in demand, either killing in fields to cull animals, or working in welfare slaughterhouses. If Cliff feels disrespected by the working conditions, or the unreliability of hours or pay at a particular slaughterhouse – as he felt about Westlambs, towards the end of my fieldwork – he refused to work there. Dennis, likewise, recalls, "I was working at an abattoir nearer home…I was there for ten years, but I didn't like the way the guy was running the place, so I told him to get fucked, and well, he told me to do the same." They seek out spaces where they feel respected, and since the 1990s, these have largely been halal slaughterhouses, providing halal slaughtered sheep meat to British and European Muslim consumers. In a telephone interview, Alex explained,

> I'd started in building work, on construction sites, but that was in the late '70s. But it sort of slacked off, the Thatcher government, she put all her eggs in the financial basket and the construction industry was sort of going downhill at that time. It dried up, the building work in the recession, so I got a job cleaning at an abattoir, and I sort of went on the line, and that's what I did. That was in 1983. Sometimes I'd do other things, working in factories and what not, but then you always seem to drift backwards, because there was always work in slaughterhouses. If you've got a knife skill, you can get a job in a slaughterhouse. Whenever there was a recession, people still want meat, especially the Asian community. I'm skilled in that halal way so there was always work, that's why I've managed to stay so long.

As smaller slaughterhouses closed, the growing demand for halal slaughtered sheep meat was creating new opportunities for employment where skilled, white British slaughtermen, who had spent much of their careers working as slaughtermen, could find employment away from the larger sites where they felt disrespected as skilled workers. Through their recollections about their trade, the slaughtermen present various articulations of a fractured belonging both within the trade in which they have spent their careers, and against national narratives about respectable labour more broadly. They frame themselves as between temporal places: the past, in this instance, imagined as the 1990s, where they were respectable workers in a respectable trade,

and the present, as respectable workers in a now unrespectable trade; subjectively between their awareness that their labour is stigmatised, yet which they do not experience as abject; and geographically between home and work.

Conversely, Asian co-workers were discursively constructed as the embodiment of these negative impacts, where the unskilled classification of their labour was connected to their racialisation as an abject, immoral, lazy, unreliable, and unrespectable group, because they were perceived as not "from here." Unlike the mobility which legitimises the white slaughtermen's respectability, the imagined mobilities of the Asian workers, whether British or Pakistani, are constructed as always being from somewhere else, that their belonging cannot be remade in this slaughterhouse, town or country. These stigmatising narratives map onto existing material inequalities in the division of labour, but only for the Asian workers. That is, they are racialised. Ortner (2006, p.72) suggests that class stigmatisations can be *hidden* in other divisive and stigmatising narratives for example, race and ethnicity. Making connections between the cultural stigmatisation of the working-class, and the economic realities of an unequal access to resources, Skeggs (1997, p.11) argues that "the historical generation of classed categorisations provide discursive frameworks which enable, legitimate and map onto material inequalities". In this slaughterhouse, however, is it the historical and contemporary generation of racialised categories that are mapped onto the material inequalities of skilled and unskilled labour constructed in the registers of respectability to assert claims of national belonging. It is less that racism is hiding classed stigmatisation, rather, that classed stigmatisation is enabled by racialised categories.

Bonnett (1998) challenges Miles' analyses that the emergence white working-class racism was directly related to the arrival on postcolonial Black and Asian immigrants as it presupposes that the white working-class were always white or considered themselves as such. At Westlambs, Whiteness *is* articulated as on the one hand, decent and ordinary; and on the other, elitist and extraordinary through the slaughtermen's skill and rarity. Or, to put it another way, the white slaughtermen dip back into an imperial narrative that connects their Whiteness with elite, innate respectability while constructing Asian workers as irredeemably other. It is a reproduction of an imperial narrative, and one from which slaughter workers would

historically have been rejected. They create a coherence by selecting positive narratives across time to construct their respectable white identities and select negative imperial and postcolonial racist narratives about their co-workers, so that respectability in this site gets coded as white; even though slaughter work was not historically coded as such in any uncomplicated way.

4.4 North Hills: The respectability of the moral artisan

At North Hills, the small traditional slaughterhouse in the North West rural uplands, the slaughtermen are taking a break outside in the yard. They have just finished slaughtering 40 Fellgraze sheep, which were dropped off by the local shepherds earlier that morning. It is early spring, and Rob, who also works at Westlambs (where he stays in the caravan) has got his coat wrapped over his overalls, while he drinks a mug of tea. Antoni is telling Rob about someone he has been chatting to on a dating App, while Ben, a seventeen-year-old apprentice moves the waste bins around, likely in anticipation that he will be told off for slacking. Philip, the foreman, is pacing down the alleyway looking for Ian, the owner, to complain about a broken trolley. Below us are green fields with sheep which stretch all the way to the horizon, and the roofs of the nearby village popping up from a valley.

Phillip is in his late forties and has worked in slaughterhouses since he left school at sixteen. He describes himself as "one of the last real slaughtermen", a "rare breed", like the heritage hill sheep they kill. "These are my men" Philip will proudly proclaim towards the crew. Rob, Philip and Ben are white British and from the same county. Antoni is white Polish and has lived in the county for fifteen years. On Sunday evenings, Antoni and Rob travel to a halal slaughterhouse further North, and later in the week, Rob will travel to Westlambs, while Antoni delivers meat or labours on a local farm. At the weekend, Ben works at his grandfather's butcher shop in the local town. At this site, all workers are engaged in every moment of the slaughter process, from the arrival of sheep, cattle, and pigs from farmers, through to delivering meat to butcher shops in the county. Throughout the shift we would drag unforgiving cow hides and sheepskins out into the yard, scoop buckets of blood from a blood pit, insert

forearms into blocked drains, empty bins, salt hides, hose down the slaughterhouse, and clean the lairage.

At Westlambs, the slaughtermen, including Rob, constructed their classed and racialised identities, and those of their Asian co-workers around the fragmentation of slaughter labour into skilled and unskilled work. At this site, however, the workers were explicit that such a fragmentation into skilled and unskilled labour was absent. Philip, Rob and Antoni all describe themselves as skilled slaughtermen. They work together as a close-knit crew, alongside, Ben, a skilled slaughterman in training. "I don't understand when people say they've had a hard day at the office, and they whinge about it," Philip says, "I'm physically and mentally exhausted. I do the mental and the manual!" Labour here is not stratified through the ostensible decoupling of "mental" and "manual labour" which have been attributed to industrialisation (Thiel, 2007). At North Hills, "skilled" workers carry out the "unskilled" labour which local white and Asian workers complete in the Westlambs. Yet, here, it is not categorised as unskilled. Similarly, this small team all shared a connection and sense of belonging to each other and their skilled trade as moral, masculine labour. In this section, I will explore how hierarchies of belonging were still wrestled over in relation to Whiteness and nationhood.

Inside the slaughterhouse, Philip, the foreman is darting between a bunch of sheep hanging upside down over the blood pit which have just been stunned, swiftly sticking a knife to their throats at one end of the slaughter line, and leaping to the back of the slaughter line, where he scrutinises a bunch of freshly pink carcasses for imperfections. Antoni is by the lairage, stunning sheep, and Ben is by the scales weighing and ticketing carcasses with the shepherd's name. Rob, stands next to the blood pit, throwing the full force of his body removing a fleece, singing along to Heaven 17 "don't you want me baby" booming from the radio. A news bulletin then comes on, reporting that there is a backlog of 120,000 pigs awaiting slaughter, left stranded on farms because of the shortages in slaughter labour due to the absence of EU migrant workers in the aftermath of Brexit. Philip intervenes with one of his frequent monologues about the state of the nation, which I include here from memory:

> It's the Poles and Romanians, they flooded the industry, they came over here, and they reduced the wages because they would work for less. So now, those

> larger pig slaughterhouses, they function at a lower cost, the Poles, and the Romanians, they degraded the value of the job. They've all gone back now, so there is a labour shortage, but British people don't want to work for that amount of money. And the ones who stayed, they've all got *westernised* and now they expect higher wages too. They've got greedy. We were up there with oil rig workers in terms of pay, but the Romanians and Poles reduced the wages, and now the kids don't want to do this type of work anymore, but it's alright for *us,* there is always work.

"I'll tell you what the problem is…" Rob interjects, "Britain doesn't have any power anymore, we don't produce anything. It's all Australia and New Zealand and all those bilateral agreements, we import everything, no one's standing up for people like us who produce in this country." "Margaret Thatcher!" Philip shouts out, "We need Margaret Thatcher, she had balls, she stood up for the country!" "What about the miners?" I asked. To which Philip responded,

> Fuck the miners! All they had to do was dig a bloody hole. If they didn't like where they worked, go and work somewhere else. Me and Rob have been up and down this country, if someone pays us, we will do the work. I've gone and slaughtered and butchered two sheep on a farm for 20 quid. My mate said, why are you driving 20 miles down the road, to kill two sheep for 20 quid? I said, well, that was 20 quid I didn't have.

At this point, I interjected and suggested to Philip that "you probably spent that money on petrol getting there." "You're probably right", Philip conceded, "but it was 20 quid I didn't have." I was surprised by Philip's lack of association with the miners. I had picked up that Philip was patriotic, but I had made clumsy assumptions that as someone working in an industrial "manual" trade, especially in slaughterhouses, spaces which were constructed to separate the manual work of slaughter from the skilled work of butchery, would not have been a fan of Thatcher, and her legacy of the privatisation and deregulated markets that had threatened his own trade. He made it clear he did not feel a form of shared classed identity with the miners. Instead, he presented himself as oppositional to them, comparatively hardworking, independent and respectable. Rob then interjected, in agreement, "and when you write this bit up, Jess, this

conversation between me and Philip, I know what you should call it, *there's men and there's real men*."

At North Hills the narrative culture was shaped more by conversation, rather than banter. The slaughtermen would discuss their families, social lives, and politics. I could challenge and prod in these conversations, in a way that banter did not enable at Westlambs. Yet, through these narratives, as with banter, workers were constructing their identities as respectable and British/English, weaving together disparate elements, such as a news story emitting from a radio, Margaret Thatcher's metaphorical manliness, and a recollection of driving around the country. These connections were woven together to create a sense of coherence and their belonging to, and identification with, their gendered and national identifications as real, hardworking, and moral slaughterman. At the same time, both Rob and Philip expressed a sense of disconnection. The trade was changing, they felt it had been devalued by EU migrant labourers, and a government that was not standing up for hardworking, moral men like them. It was a nuanced and contested national belonging that simultaneously constructed Polish workers and miners as less respectable.

All the workers here, however, expressed that their skilled knowledge was an act of resistance to the mechanisation of slaughter labour. This included Antoni, the Polish worker. This was especially the case when they slaughter cattle. "I bet you haven't seen this in the other places" Philip bragged, using a traditional technique of knife work to skin a cow, laying a stunned and bled body on a cradle on the floor, as Rob and Antoni move their own bodies and knives around the contours of the bones, cracking off hooves, before hoisting the carcass to hang from chains. They circle the cow, and carefully slice the hide off so that it drapes around them like fabric, taking instruction from Philip about how to cut, where to exert pressure with their arms, and distribute the weight on their legs. There is a silent focus, interrupted by Rob and Antoni vying for the trickiest cuts and slices. Rob quips in, "did Philip tell you about the time he skinned a tiger?" "I skinned a tiger once, and a rhino…." Philip responded. "A rhino? I asked, "Are you pulling my leg?" "No, I skinned it, and a tortoise, and a snake," as he mimicked his hands unrolling skin off a long tube. He continued,

> And a lion! When I was working in a knacker's yard. Whenever an animal died at the zoo, they'd bring them to the knacker's yard. They can't just

> bury them. They have to send them somewhere to be disposed. I sent the fur off to get cured, but it never came back. Someone probably nicked it…And an alpaca, and a llama, but they came from a farmer. I didn't *have* to skin any of them, but it's because of the *type* of person that I am, I want to know how things work.

Philip describes the value of his labour as an archetypal masculinity, of man's power over nature (Bourdieu, 1984; Fiddes, 1991; Sobal, 2005). There is sense of pride between these workers, and a collective celebration of their skill which is not constrained by species or dulled by mechanisation. They express their labour as timelessly valuable.

After the kills finished for the day, I went to help Antoni salt sheep skins in a corrugated iron shed in the yard. We rolled out the fleeces one-by-one on a plastic crate, shovelling mounds of damp coarse on salt onto their pale undersides, rubbing the crystals between our palms and skin. It is slow methodical work and creates a space for one-on-one conversations, such as how Antoni entered the slaughter trade. Antoni grew up on his family's pig farm in Poland. He explained, "my grandpa, he was a proper butcher, he'd travel to people's farms to kill pigs, you know, the old-fashioned way. He'd do everything." Antoni used to accompany him, and through these early childhood experiences, learnt about collecting blood, making sausages and knifework. His grandfather would save the pig's bladder for him, which he would blow up like a balloon and dry, transforming it into a makeshift football. When he was eight, he picked up a knife and had wanted to be slaughterman ever since. "My grandfather, he told me that there would always be work, because people always need to eat." When we are on the slaughter line, Antoni will poke around the waste bins, saving caul fat from pig's stomachs, or beef cheeks if they are going spare, lamenting how "the meat in supermarkets is shit, people in this country eat such bad meat." Sometimes he will share the beef cheeks with Rob, to take with him when he travels to Westlambs to cook in the caravan. "I couldn't believe it when I got here, I was working at this big slaughterhouse, they were throwing everything away, they could be killing 100 cattle a day, and all those heads would be thrown away, with the cheeks, everything. I said to the owner, my god if my grandfather could see this, he would die!"

Without the Muslims, we'd be out of a job

Both Antoni and Philip describe their histories in the trade and their practices in the present as resistant to, and superior to, the fragmentation of slaughter work into mental and manual work, slaughter, and butchery. Both are expressing what they value – traditional techniques, "good" meat and independent thought as comparatively moral and respectable. In effect, they are tapping into associations of both the pre-industrial labour of artisans, which pre-date the shift of slaughter work into "manual labour," and the hardworking, moral classed associations of the manual worker. They also pre-date the era which is longed for by the slaughtermen, Dennis and Alex at Westlambs, the 1990s. In both Thompson's (1963) and Hobsbawm's (1984) Marxist accounts of the emergence of the English working-classes, artisans retained a moral superiority and independence to the newly emergent manual workers. Articulations of classed manual labour and of the moral artisan were emergent in Imperial England. They represented different forms of respectable masculinities in the formation of a new classed structure (Connell, 1995). These class formations were often in opposition to each other: the manual worker who was hardworking with a dependable wage, and the moral artisan whose skilled trade awarded them with respectability and independence (McCellend, 1989). In his ethnography of construction workers, Thiel (2007) draws on the bifurcations of labour which emerged through industrialisation, between minds/bodies, mental/manual, and clean/dirty work. Theil presents a broader statement about the shortcomings of analysing class through occupation. Rather, cultural approaches which centre on how, or whether, workers inhabit these categories reveal how classed categories and stigmatisation can be resisted. He suggests that construction work was resistant to full mechanisation, much like slaughter. This resistance enabled workers to shirk stigmatisation and personal identifications as working-class and its attendant significations of lacking respect and autonomy. Central to Thiel's analysis is that workers shirk classed associations through bodily capital. While Philip, Rob and Antoni are explicit about how physically demanding their labour is, especially when comparing themselves to slaughtermen at Westlambs and Eastewes, the most pertinent narrative of resistance is the respectability and autonomy of their labour.

While the Philip and Antoni value their labour by connecting it to pre-industrial techniques and a nostalgia for the past, they were both at times explicit that neither

had been immune to the spatial and technological changes to the slaughter trade. When I asked Philip about broader changes to the trade which have impacted him, he explained:

> It was Foot and Mouth, that's what changed it all. I was working in an abattoir in another town when it hit, but they had to close it. I got moved to an abattoir down the road. It was the only place to stay open, and I was the only one to keep my job. Lots of skilled men lost their jobs. Lots of people made a lot of money too, going and slaughtering on farms. I didn't do that, but I kept my job, I was the only one, so it worked out in the end. But I've never asked to move, it's because people wanted me.

Antoni explains that his decision to move to Britain was based on external factors too:

> I didn't want to come to Britain. All my friends moved over, but I didn't want to. The way it works in Poland, the longer you work at a slaughterhouse, the more you get paid. It was just me left and all the older guys, they were getting paid more, but they were old so they couldn't do all the heavy work. So I had to do it all, but I wasn't getting paid as much. If there's lots of younger workers then its fair, because the older guys worked all their lives, its *respect,* but when it was just me, it's too much. So I decided to come.

Antoni makes the point that, "when I came, we were asked to come, they said come and help with work, we need you, there are jobs." Whether national or international moves, both men have travelled to where their skills were needed, both had avoided places where they feel like their labour is not valued. Their mobility may have been reluctant, but they legitimised it through the fact they were in demand. Both of their lives have been rooted and uprooted through the trade, and through a shared historical moment, the loss of skilled workers in British slaughterhouses in the aftermath of the Foot and Mouth crisis. Both maintained their connection to their trade because their skills were valued, they had labour and expertise to sell." It's alright for men like us", they say, "there's always work."

New hierarchies of belonging

One morning, Antoni had requested to leave early for a doctor's appointment, after hurting his foot while on a farming job. Philip and Rob started a loud conversation, clearly about him. Philip noticed his attention and shouted over "You are using the NHS, taking the place of a British person." Antoni shouted back, "I'm not! I pay my taxes!" Rob then turns to me, "*They* are using *our* country, aren't they?" I try to deflect the question with a statistic, though in retrospect it was a provocation, that 69% of slaughterhouse workers are EU nationals and they are vital because there is a shortage of workers. Rob then turns to Philip "Did you hear that? 69 percent of abattoir workers are *Polish*". He translated what I said. EU nationals became only Polish, recentring Antoni as an overwhelming problem and one that marked him as using the country and not giving back. Rob's translation affirms his point of view. "Yeah, you are using our country." Philip then adds, "England helped Poland win the war and now they are over here taking over our country." Antoni quips back, "It's not your country anyway, it's the P***s." He's delighted with the comment and looks to me with a victorious grin on his face.

Antoni shares a deep-rooted sense of nostalgic pre-industrial, independent and artisanal masculinity with Philip and Rob, through which they express a shared sense of identification as respectable "real slaughtermen." All their working lives have been shaped by their mobility and their skill. However, Antoni's place in Britain remains open to contestation. Philip and Rob reframe Antoni as morally distanced from a British belonging and his right to resources by emplotting him into a negative story about Eastern European migration. The immorality of Antoni's presence was magnified by Philip claiming that England had won the war for Poland – a sentiment that Polish people owe their freedom to England; and yet Poles are here, taking more, and being greedy. In this regard, they were reproducing media reports which constructed a moral panic following EU ascension, that Poles were "taking jobs" and "abusing British social benefits" and "lowering wages" (Fitzgerald & Smoczynski, 2015). These narratives echoed the moral panics about racialised postcolonial workers in the 1960s overconsuming resources, taking jobs and working for less (Anthias & Yuval Davies, 1993; Virdee 2000). Both exclusionary and stigmatising narratives rested on assuming that neither Polish nor postcolonial immigrants were rightful citizens of either Britain

or a shared EU, despite their legitimate (if uneven) legal status. It is worth noting that other narratives about the perceptions of Polish workers as "good workers" were wholly ignored (Parutis, 2001). In effect, Antoni becomes homogenised, stereotyped and pathologically "Polish." It is a moment in which their otherwise shared identities forged through their tight knit, skilled and respectable team fades into insignificance. A "politics of belonging" emerges alongside the "dirty work of boundary maintenance" (Antonsich, 2010) that separate populations into 'us' and 'them'.

Philip and Rob expressed their "hierarchy of belonging" to Britain in which Antoni was tolerated, but in which it would be immoral for him to behave like a member of a national collective. As has been explored in literature on both contemporaneous and historical migrations of foreign white workers in Britain, processes of racialisation are not negated by having white skin. Virdee (2014) argues that white Irish Catholics were a racialised minority in nineteenth-century Britain, regarded as an inferior Celtic race as colonial subjects through attendant discourses of racialised ape like features. In the wake of EU Ascension, white European immigrants were "racialised" through discourses which presented national or cultural difference as reason for exclusion. However, a shared Whiteness has offered the potential, for some, especially Poles and Latvians, to fit in with the hegemonic white majority (Fortier, 2000; Parutis, 2001; Yuval-Davies et al, 2019). In these terms, racialisation does not permanently determine the attribution of negative narratives centred on the construct of race. As Fox et al. (2012, p.685) highlight, "racialisation can degrade and upgrade." However, as Mills (1997) outlines, the racialisation of white immigrants should not be equated with the racialisation experienced by Black and Asian people. The possibility to "upgrade" to Whiteness exists only when people have potential to ever be considered white. Mills argues that this potential to eventually shirk racialisation is drawn from having a whiter skin tone. In these instances, Whiteness remains a mode of hegemonic belonging to Britain. However, Sivanandan (quoted in Fekete, 2001) has argued that Whiteness is no longer a singularly organising logic of belonging in Britain. Rather, hierarchies of belonging are constructed against "foreignness" a "xeno-racism, that bears all marks of the old racism except that it is not colour coded. It is racism in substance, so not simply a xenophobia, a natural fear of foreigners, but a

stigmatisation and pathologizing through which people are excluded from national belonging." It is racism, "though xeno in form" (Sivanandan 2001, p.23).

Antoni's retort disrupts the connection between Whiteness with Britishness, while reaffirming the assumption that Whiteness is a hegemonic form of belonging, by stating that Britain is no longer a white country anyway, and neither is it British, or even English, because it belongs to Pakistanis. Roxanna Willis (2023) proposes that banter can encompass tit-for tat responses to being hurt, and saying something hurtful back to restore the balance. However, it is important to acknowledge how this balance is restored, and against whom. Antoni embraces that he is not British, and in so doing, claims he is closer to Whiteness than the white British slaughtermen. His Polish nationality and racial identity are invoked as "a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented (Twine & Gallagher, 2008) to jostle his way further up in the hierarchy by invoking the imagined presence or takeover of Pakistanis. Building the concept of "hierarchies of belonging", Back, Sinha and Bryan (2012) propose that against new waves of migration shifting racisms, and "hierarchies of belonging" are being constructed. For example, the tolerant and intolerant forms of colonial and postcolonial racisms outlined by Wemyss (2009) have transformed into new racisms against EU migrants since EU ascension in 2004, and the cultivation of fear of a Muslim presence in Britain following 9/11 and 7/7. These new hierarchies account both for the legacy of Empire in constructing racisms, as well its shifting modes, such as forms of xeno-racism, Islamophobia, or moments where people can escape racialisation. Back et al. argue (2012, p.140-143) that these are "new forces that divide, rank and order" in terms of their belonging to the nation which "marks an important breakpoint in the politics of [colonial and postcolonial] racisms in Britain". However, in the localised context of North Hills, I would argue that these "new forces" are emboldened by colonial and postcolonial racisms. Antoni is resisting his own exclusion by invoking both anti-Muslim racism as well as the colonial and postcolonial racisms of Pakistani immigrants taking over the country. There is less a break point from colonial racisms as such, or a reordering of hegemonic Whiteness, rather there is an additive reproduction which is centred on the colonial coordinates of racialised others as binary to Whiteness (Wemyss, 2009).

One of the significant shifts in the formations of racisms that Back et al. highlight is towards the racisms constructed around the fear of a Muslim (rather than a homogenous Asian) presence in Britain. This anti-Muslim sentiment was more prevalent North Hills than Westlambs, despite the slaughterhouse not practicing halal, and despite there being no Muslims, or Asian men for that matter, present. Antoni and his co-workers frequently shared conversations in which their Whiteness and Europeanness is positioned in a hierarchy of belonging to Britain in relation to Muslims. Antoni told me that even though he is an immigrant, he works hard, expressing that he was a "good immigrant" to differentiate himself from Muslims. He said, "Muslims say their houses are for praying so they don't have to pay taxes. They have too many children they can't afford. I always paid my taxes." He says that in *their* "bible" Muslims are permitted to kill anyone who is not Muslim, and that one day, we will all be white Muslims, forced to convert through threats of beheading with a blunt knife. Antoni is connecting Whiteness with morality, and Muslims with an immorality that is a threatening presence. Further, these are gendered notions of violent domination, expressing that it is particularly Muslim men who are a threat. Fortier (2008) describes this as a shift towards a "moral racism", the consolidation of religion as an absolute difference which overrides differences constructed through "race" or nationhood. For Antoni, this moral racism is invoked by imagining a threat of white people becoming Muslim. While Whiteness is positioned as a binary to Muslim, Whiteness is not regarded as an absolute difference, on the contrary, it was vulnerable.

Philip also expresses anti-Muslim sentiments. He suggested that Muslims are escaping oppression in Muslim majority countries because they want the freedoms of Britain.

> That's why people are coming over here, in boats, because they want *our* lives, they want what we've got here. That sharia law, you wouldn't like it Jess, you'd have to walk behind your husband, the only thing you'd be told to do is take your knickers off. You won't like it Jess, you won't have any rights.

While he frames Muslim asylum seekers as escaping the oppressive regimes he is stigmatising, and wanting a "British" life, he too positions himself as protecting me as a white woman from the imagined threat of Muslim men. While these white

slaughtermen compete over who has the strongest claim to Whiteness, they collectively reproduce the most sensational of gendered anti-Muslim tropes of terrorism, barbarity, and violence. These stigmatising narratives are premised on imagining a threatened white, moral, future. They are marking clear demarcations between white people and Muslims, where anti-Muslim sentiments offer pertinent narrative for a shared white belonging to the nation, constituted by a set of moral beliefs that are the antithesis of supposed Muslim values and beliefs.

After the exchange between Antoni, Philip, and Rob about "using the country" I asked Rob how he felt about Brexit:

> I didn't vote in Brexit, I don't know enough about politics, but I think we should have remained, we are better as a whole, if we are all in it together, but Nigel Farage manipulated everyone and made it a vote about immigration.

I suggested that immigration from Poland was not the only argument that Farage put forward, but that it was primarily about Muslim asylum seekers and migrants from outside Europe. "That's what I mean, because they breed more than we do, the Asians, and so we are going to be overpowered. If it's the Poles coming over, then at least we are the same, still white and from Christian countries." Like Philip and Antoni, Rob expressed a fear of being overpowered and dominated. It was a sentiment which Rob had expressed before. He feels that his family no longer belong in his hometown. While he sees investment into the Asian Muslim community, who are largely of Pakistani descent, with new mosques and schools, he feels there are no new schools for his children. He had started visiting a church so his children could attend a Church of England school. Conversely, Antoni's Whiteness is connected to an assumption of shared beliefs and a potential for shared belonging, softening the potential of boundaries of national difference. In effect, they express that Muslims are not tolerated in Britain through a "politics of belonging." Muslims are not positioned within a hierarchy of belonging at all, but an abject presence which threatens the moral White future of Britain.

In summary, at this rural site all the slaughtermen are resistant to negative classed narratives about their labour. As with the skilled slaughtermen at Westlambs, their

sense of belonging and connection to the trade is premised on respectability, independence, and skill through which they present themselves autonomous rather than affected by the neoliberalism and mechanisation of slaughter. Here, slaughtermen recall a different imagined past by affiliating themselves with the pre-industrial moral artisan. This connection to an idealised past crosses the potential boundaries of belonging based on nationality between the white British and white Polish workers. However, hierarchies of belonging do emerge in this site between Whiteness and the threat of an absent but imagined Muslim presence. The sense of fear of Muslims is most pertinent in this site, in which there are no Asian or Muslim men. In the absence of presence, the potency of sensational and imaginative anti-Muslim narratives as a threat to a nation emerges the slaughtermen's contests over Whiteness with each other. In effect, this white space engenders different forms of racism, belonging and shifting constructions of Whiteness.

4.5 Eastewes: The rough and respectable working-class

At Eastewes, the halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, the local workers are taking a break outside in the yard, where they are joined by Wayne, a skilled slaughterman who travels from a city a few hours away. Local workers, Callum and Ross, are standing by a ventilator in the yard to keep warm, smoking cigarettes and talking about an evening in the pub in the local town the night before. Wayne is sitting on an old office chair which he spins around on, while eating crisps. He has just had a baby and did not sleep well the night before. Regardless, he seems to be enjoying living vicariously through the gossip of his co-workers. Hashir, the halal slaughterman, is sat in his car alone eating a sandwich. While this slaughterhouse is set back from the main road down an unpaved path and surrounded by fields, it is only a mile away from the town where the local workers live.

Once the break is over, workers return to the slaughter line. Cliff, an itinerant slaughterman, is the foreman at this site. He is positioned at the front of the line, as he always is, skinning sheep with his crew of slaughtermen: Alex, who also works at Westlambs, Wayne and Matt. Cliff has one eye on his knife as it whips through a

fleece, and one eye on the slaughter line and the local workers, who he watches like a hawk. Each week, Cliff will travel to this site as well as Westlambs, and a mixed species traditional slaughterhouse in the home counties, which I did not visit. "I prefer it here though," he says. He says he does not enjoy working at Westlambs. I asked why, and he explained that there are, "too many of that lot", in a hushed tone, flicking his eyes towards Hashir. Apart from Hashir, and his son-in-law Zabid, who are employed directly by the slaughterhouse and take it in turns slitting sheep throats so that the meat produced is halal accredited, the local workers are all white men, aged between eighteen and 35.

At Westlambs and North Hills, I have explored how the skilled white slaughtermen expressed their belonging to the trade, and to the nation, in relation to each other and their co-workers through racist and xenophobic narratives. I have argued that these narratives take shape through nostalgia for different pasts. In both the urban setting of Westlambs and rural setting of North Hills, Whiteness emerged at the top of a "hierarchy of belonging." Here at Eastewes, the racial and national composition of the local workforce shifts. In this section, I will explore how these hierarchies emerge in relation to classed notions of respectability and roughness with regards to the local white workers, and the exclusion of Hashir and Zabid.

Cliff is in his early fifties and has spent his working life in slaughterhouses. "I couldn't wait to work in an abattoir" he tells me.

> When I was fifteen. I used to bunk off school on a Friday to work with my dad and my brother. Guess how much I got? Three quid a day!" "I've always had a good name for myself in this trade, been respected. That's how I got into the international work.

Cliff was a key gatekeeper for my fieldwork, and I often asked him to tell me about his years in the trade.

> Oh, I could tell you some stories…there was this one time, prison workers were drafted in to work at a slaughterhouse in the nineties, they were good lads, but then we got to end of the day, and one of them had stolen my shoes! I had to drive home in my socks!

"None of those lot want to hear my stories" he shouts out over the clang of metal and Fleetwood Mac blasting on the radio, gesturing to seven local workers further down the line. On a different morning at break time, Cliff and I are sat in the small workers' kitchen, so he can have his breakfast, a still-warm jar of porridge which he has bought from home. He usually sits here alone, while the younger workers smoke outside. Alongside travelling between slaughterhouses each week, Cliff has travelled extensively to slaughterhouses abroad as a consultant. "I was over in Chicago, they needed help setting up a slaughter line and training all the workers over there." In Autumn he would travel to Iceland and Norway, as a seasonal, skilled worker, and during the Islamic festival of sacrifice, Eid Al Adha (which I will explore in chapter 7) he would travel to Paris, working with a large halal slaughterhouse which offered a Qurbani service. These experiences were filled with recollections of adventures, "in Norway, it was so expensive that the local workers, they'd share their homebrew, like moonshine, we'd look at the Northern Lights and then we'd go out clubbing." In Paris, he would go out after work with the local Algerian workers and have hazy nights in bars,

> It was different in those days, always an adventure, we used to have loads of fun. You wouldn't be able to get away with that stuff now, too much red tape. There was one time, I was working at a slaughterhouse, it was roasting outside, and so after work, we all stripped off and jumped in the water tank!

He too expresses a nostalgia, though for Cliff, it is more explicitly about youth and adventure, and the absence of bureaucracy, rather than a moment in the past where he felt respected. While Cliff's days are largely spent working on the slaughter line, he set up a contracting business, supplying workers and consulting on the design and labour requirements of slaughterhouses. As such, he is a skilled "manual" worker, a manager, a consultant, and a business owner, all of which have provided a lucrative career. He tells me, "I grew up on the roughest estate," in what is now one of the most diverse towns in Britain. "I'm not there anymore though, my mum still is but I moved out to the suburbs." His children went to university, and now work as lawyers. He can afford to take time off to go away, either golfing in America with his friends, or at his second home in Spain. At the previous sites, the skilled white slaughtermen resisted

the negative classed associations of their labour by reframing slaughter work as respectable and skilled against racialised and xenophobic constructions of their co-workers as unskilled. Cliff is more explicit that he had *shifted* class positions through the material rewards garnered through his autonomy and entrepreneurialism. In some senses he embodies the labour and ideological shifts espoused by Thatcherite governance, in force when he started in the trade in the 1980s promising the possibilities for the working-class to aspire to escape their class positions through self-made entrepreneurialism enabled through the deregulation of markets (Hall, 1988). He mirrored the move away from industrial trades into professionalised service and managerial economies. He has not abandoned working as a slaughterman, but he has transformed with his trade, initially following patriarchal lines through his father and brother into an industrial trade, to a consultant and business owner within it.

While he has enjoyed socialising with people from other countries while away for work, he says he rarely goes into the centre of his hometown anymore, because he feels it has been taken over by immigrants, echoing Sibley's (1998) findings on classed constructions of the safe white suburbs and the racialisation of multicultural cities as dangerous. Yet, for much of his working life, he, like all the other skilled slaughtermen, has worked in halal slaughterhouses. He is benefitting from the presence of Muslim communities in Britain, while distancing himself from racial diversity or multicultural spaces. This social mobility – which in theory, but not in practice enabled all working-classes social mobility (Edwards, Evans, Smith, 2012) has materially, spatially, and culturally enabled him to move away from people he sees as immigrants, largely British Pakistani Muslims, in his hometown. His shift towards a suburban middle-class lifestyle, is one that he associates with moving into a whiter space (Tyler, 2012).

Further down the slaughter line, in the gut rooms and in the lairage, the unskilled work is completed by local British white men. Callum, who works in the stunning room, Ross, who cuts feet and eviscerates carcasses pulling out the digestive tract, John, on the fleece puller, and Duncan, who works in the gut room, emptying the contents of sheep stomachs. Cliff describes the local workers as disinterested in slaughter work, or invested in becoming skilled slaughterman like him, because they are too interested in chasing women, and drinking: "You give them their wages on a Friday, their straight down the pub, and they're skint by Monday." The owner, Ray shares these

judgements, describing their labour as unskilled "factory work", and the workers as unreliable, often cancelling work at the last minute, and then spending their wages on alcohol: "you might as well just put the wages straight into the pubs in town, and just tell them to stop serving when they have run out." "They're all a bit weird", Cliff says. "Why? I asked, "I think it's this town, everyone here is not right in the head."

Cliff and the owner, Ray, are alluding to these workers as "rough", an entrenched classist distinction constructed against, and by, those who consider themselves as respectable. Skeggs (1997) and Imogen Tyler (2013) identify these distinctions of roughness and respectability as grounded in the judgments of the middle classes who regard the working-class as pathological, polluting, and abject. Watt (2006, p.778) highlights the classifications of "rough" and "respectable" are also an intra-working-class distinction, which has a long historical pedigree in English working-class neighbourhoods where "social distinctions take on a spatial form" as people organise themselves into comfortable spaces with others like themselves. On council estates, maintaining a sense of respectability allowed the tenants to symbolically distance themselves from others who were considered to have a lower status but shared the same physical space as themselves. Watt highlights that respectability is becoming increasingly ambivalent and hard to maintain as the material basis for the distinction narrows against decreased housing and precarious employment. However, Koch (2018) has argued that residents on a council estate construct their own understandings of what counts as a "good person", in resistance to media and state discourses which claim they are defined by lack.

Social theorists have highlighted that media and political narratives have focussed on the "roughness" of a "white underclass", especially the youth, such as "chavs" who are blamed for the decline in respectability of the working-class (Nayak 2006; Jones, 2020; Rhodes, 2011). In these instances, young working-class white men are stigmatised as pathological masculinities, backward, degenerate, criminal and feckless (Webster, 2008). Being located in an "underclass", can, like ethnicity, be marked on the body through clothes, posture, and habits (Lawler, 2012; Skeggs, 1997; K. Tyler, 2011). These approaches have reconsidered how Whiteness is understood as a form of negative racialisation. For example, Haylett (2001) proposes that the stigmatisation of the white working-class has resulted in a culturally burdensome and abject Whiteness, described

as a form of class racism. Significantly, for Haylett, the confluence of being white and being stigmatised is a threat to the broader hegemony of Whiteness as respectable or morally superior. As such, political representations of this "white underclass" centre on their potential for redemption so as not to threaten the symbolic hegemony of Whiteness for the middle classes.

While Cliff makes discursive distinctions between himself and his employees, he does not fully distance himself, or regard their "roughness" as fixed and irredeemable. He attaches their "roughness" to the temporary coordinates of age (they are young) and locality (they are from a weird town). The local workers are treated with a combination of disdain and humour by Cliff. However, this is also combined with paternal care. For example, during one shift, Callum, marched up Cliff on the slaughter line, and kicked a bin across the floor because he was angry about having his wages docked because he had been late. Cliff did not respond, allowing Callum to let off steam, even when he called him a cunt. Cliff is aware if "the lads have been out on the piss" the night before, and come into work having not slept, but he does not prevent them from working. Instead, he experimented changing the days that he pays them so that they do not get all their wages on a Friday and come back on Monday with bleary eyes asking for an advance. If one of the workers expresses an interest in learning more about being a slaughterman, the opportunity is there for them. Wayne, who is now employed as a skilled slaughterman, remembers how Cliff, who he knew as his friend's uncle, took him under his wing when he was younger and unemployed:

> I wanted to be a footballer, I was good when I was younger, but I was too interested in chasing fanny. Then I had a bad breakup, I was getting in trouble, and Cliff asked if I wanted to come and work with him.

For Wayne, Cliff's guidance into slaughter work was his redemption and stability. There is an accommodation for these young men. In part, Cliff justifies this, because he identifies with them. He explains that he also used to spend all his wages and chase women when he was younger.

In this site, hierarchies are constructed between white skilled and local unskilled workers through registers of respectability and roughness. These classed associations do not explicitly invoke "race" or "foreignness" as they do in other sites. Through Cliff,

the person with the highest status in the slaughterhouse, respectability is framed through his own life history of social mobility and entrepreneurialism, and it is against these values which the younger local workers are measured as unrespectable or rough. The roughness of the local white workers is regarded as redeemable and temporary: the young men have the potential to move away from the stigmatisation of their town and generation. Their youthful behaviours are tolerated and accommodated. The workers are not stigmatised because they are white, indeed, discussions of race are absent. Yet, through the comparison of how these same skilled white itinerant slaughtermen discursively constructed their Asian co-workers in equivalent workplace positions elsewhere, it became visible to me, that it was the local workers' white, British racial identities which protected them from being cast as irredeemably abject. They are not framed as the embodiment of the negative impacts to the slaughter trade, rather, as individuals in need of reform.

This rigidity of the distinction between the "rough" and the "respectable" working-class is unsettled further by the narrative culture in this slaughterhouse. As with Westlambs, work shifts at Eastewes were filled with banter, but there was an absence of jibes which invoked racial difference. Here, the banter shifts between schoolboy pranks and sexual innuendos, with the intention of making co-workers, across the local and itinerant divide, and me, laugh. For example, Matt, a skilled slaughterman was skinning a sheep, and shouted out, "oh my god, Wayne, you've got to come and see this" as he stared inside the obscured rib cage of a carcass. Wayne ran over to see what Matt has discovered inside the carcass before Matt pulls out a very slow and affirmative middle finger in Wayne's face. They were both delighted, holding their bellies with laughter and I got a severe case of giggles. It is tacit that the intention of the workplace banter in this site is to create intimacy and friendship and a sense of collective belonging for all workers (Smith, 2014). Further, the young workers are comfortable teasing Cliff and mocking his authority. As Callum explained, "the thing about Cliff is, everyone says they respect him, and they'll shake his hand, but they'll call him a cunt behind his back!"

Workers were more explicit here in making me part of these innuendos. I was included in the narrative culture of sexualised banter. As a white woman, I could play around with the otherwise "masculine" culture, even if the boundaries of acceptable conduct

were sometimes blurred. Using a hose one morning to clean the floor, I was met with roars that "Jess is a squirter!" in reference to female ejaculation. Even as the only woman in the slaughterhouse, with a group of men referring to my genitals, I laughed it off and rolled my eyes. I genuinely was not offended, rather, it did feel like a kind of acceptance by the group, as if the gender differences between us melted away into a free for all of squirting liquids. Moreso, the jokes at my expense were made in the context where I already felt cared for by the slaughtermen, and in which intentional sexual passes were absent. Indeed, if the banter became too intimate of suggestive, it could lead to embarrassment and awkwardness. For example, one morning, I spotted Wayne pretending to give cunnilingus to a sheep carcass, before he realised I was looking at him, immediately stopped and looked mortified. In another instance, the banter was unsuccessful: I had not understood a joke about me having made the "water run cold", I still do not know what the innuendo alluded to. I got flustered. I understood the tone and the intention, I knew it was sexual, but I did not understand the content. The more it got repeated, the more embarrassed I got, until my cheeks gave me away to a chorus of "Jess is going red"! I made up a lame excuse that it was because I was standing near a steaming water bath, which made it even worse.

Comments from the white slaughtermen and local workers about "that lot," referring to Hashir and Zabid, were uttered in hushed tones. Hashir has, in fact, worked at this slaughterhouse long before Cliff arrived. Over the course of two years, I only heard sparse and instructional dialogue between them. As opposed to the explicit racisms in the other slaughterhouses where racist narratives were loudly expressed, here, Hashir and Zabid are ignored as if they were not there at all. There was no attempt to include them in the banter, which at Westlambs was claimed to be a collective expression of belonging, even though I have argued it in fact galvanised existing inequalities at the intersection of class and race. Admittedly, both Hashir and Zabid appeared to be disinterested in participating in the raucous conversations.

4.6 Conclusion: Class, nostalgia and re-making of Whiteness

Anthropologists and sociologists have demonstrated how racialised struggles to belong emerge in local areas and neighbourhoods in which Whiteness is mobilised around a "defence of the local" (Watt, 2011). Katharine Tyler (2012, p.427) shows how Whiteness in an East Midlands suburban village is reproduced by white residents through nostalgic discourses about village life. She argues that this reveals an "amnesia" about the colonial past and its implications for the postcolonial present, in ways which contest the national and local belonging of fellow British Asian residents. Similarly, Wemyss (2009) has demonstrated how the East London Docklands are imagined as white in public discourses, by erasing the long presence and colonial connections of Asians. For the white slaughtermen who move between these spaces – in which they are not local – their defence of the slaughterhouses was deeply connected to ideas of a rightful white belonging to the nation. Yet, as they moved between sites, and as I moved with them, the narratives which constructed these "hierarchies of belonging" were rendered fragile and revealed as imaginative.

In each of these three slaughterhouses, slaughtermen discursively constructed "hierarchies of belonging" through narratives centred on their own respectability, and the lack of respectability of their co-workers. Rhodes (2011, p.361) highlights how the notion of respectability "alerts us to the interactions between race, class, and gender in particular, but also because it highlights the inherently relational nature of identity". Despite these contingencies, Whiteness was persistently assumed or invoked as respectable, the "wages of Whiteness," (Du Bois 1935; Roediger 1991) through which slaughtermen claimed their superiority. White slaughtermen were always at the top of the hierarchy of belonging, and those who they classify as the "P***s are at the most distant, at times, intolerantly excluded or completely ignored from any possibility of belonging. What was persistent, however, was how Muslims and Asians, whether present or imagined, were always included in these imaginative narrative constructions, even though their livelihoods depend on Muslims in Britain and Europe.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the persistence in which the slaughtermen's connection to respectability emerged through nostalgia, a narrative mechanism which

connected a sense of belonging to a moment in the past when things were remembered as better. At Westlambs, slaughtermen were nostalgic for the 1990s, a time before slaughter became mechanised. At North Hills, slaughtermen were nostalgic for the pre-industrial past of the artisan. At Eastewes, Cliff was nostalgic for late 1980s, for his youth filled with adventure. Strangleman (2007) argues that nostalgia is a persistent feature in the narratives of workers who have remained in manual trades which experienced significant changes from industrialisation to post-industrialisation. Further, that such narratives romanticised the realities of traditional industrial trades. This persistence could be evidence of the relentless chipping away of traditional industrial jobs from meaningful, stable, and respectable employment to precarious and impermanent employment (for example: Sennet, 1998). Strangleman, however, challenges this meta narrative suggesting that a nuanced approach to nostalgia is required to avoid idealised and uncritical perceptions of the past. Building on Raymond Williams work on nostalgia and the "structure of feeling" for imagined "golden ages" which have only just disappeared in recent memory, Strangleman (2007, p.94) argues that "nostalgia is in part an attempt to make sense of the fragmentary present by its juxtaposition with a seemingly stable, intelligible past" that is just within reach. It is more important to question the structure of feelings that "backward references ignite," rather than regard nostalgic representations of the past as objective fact. Indeed, within the same trade, and even amongst workers who have laboured together for decades, their "golden ages" were not the same. This could of course be related to worker subjectivities and their individual life histories, but I want to point out that there was not a consensus about the idealised past, or what is framed as respectable. More importantly, it was to these imagined moments in the past through which slaughtermen expressed their superiority.

As such, while expressing racist opinions and racist banter, the slaughtermen push against narratives which have claimed that white working-class men are anachronistically stuck in the past or stuck in place as a simplistic causative reason for racism. As Lawler (2012) states, white working-class men have been cast as the bearers of a problematic and unreflexive form of Whiteness that has come to be located in the past. Rather, I argue that the slaughtermen are expressing complex and imaginative connections and disconnections to the past and their Whiteness, which are not

immediately rooted in local places. However, in the context of the slaughterhouses, these affective longings emerged in relation to a racialised or xenophobic "politics of belonging" in ways which could not be easily disentangled from their own fractured claims of nationhood.

Chapter 5: You need to have a thick (white) skin to work here: learning to labour

5.1 Introduction

"One who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but – a hiding." Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* (1867)

At North Hills, the traditional slaughterhouse in the rural North West, a shift is in full flow. The slaughter hall is no bigger than 10 meters squared, so all the slaughtermen, Philip, Rob, Antoni and Ben, the apprentice, can see each other. When Philip or Rob, talk loudly, everyone can hear. "Ben, what do you tell people when they ask where you work?" Rob taunts across the room. Ben keeps his glare fixed on the carcass he is slitting open, shakes his head and mutters, "I dunno, I work in a slaughterhouse." Rob persists, "Why don't you say that you're a slaughterman?" Ben, who is seventeen, from a town in the same county, has been training under the guidance of the three experienced slaughtermen, Philip, the foreman, Antoni and Rob, who make up the tight-knit crew. "That's what you should say. You need to own it." Ben is flustered at being goaded into claiming this identity. All morning, he had been criticised for not emptying bins (or, because he had mistakenly emptied the bins), getting greasy fingers on the weighing machine, standing in the wrong place, ripping flesh, asking the wrong question, working too hard, and not having a social life (because he works too hard). It is noisy and relentless, evidence of what I had frequently been told by the slaughtermen who had worked in the trade for the entire careers, "you need to have a thick skin to work here."

"I haven't got my license yet, I can't stick or front yet", Ben defended. Sticking is the action of cutting the throat; fronting is the intricate, initial knife work of skinning which removes the fleece from a sheep's breast and legs. "*I* could front after my first year" Rob bragged back. Rob knocked Ben down for not being as fast and naturally gifted a learner as he was, then demanded that he claimed their shared identity. It is a persistent, but purposeful state of ambiguity for this young man as his mentors coax

him forward with the same verbal strikes that knock him back. The message is clear: You're not one of us yet, but you're becoming one of us.

On a different morning, I am at Westlambs, the halal slaughterhouse in the West Midlands, again standing with Rob, who travels every week to this halal sheep slaughterhouse to work on the days when North Hills is closed. The main slaughter hall is also no bigger than ten meters across, but there are sixteen workers tightly packed here, and another fifteen or so in the packing rooms beyond. Here, Rob is self-employed to work at the beginning of the moving, partially mechanised slaughter line, with four slaughtermen skilled in fronting work. Asim, a worker from the local town, who is eighteen, walks over to help hoist sheep hooves into the hooks hanging from moving slaughter line. "We call him smelly monkey, Jess!" Rob shouts out. Unperturbed, Asim spreads his arms presenting himself, flashes a smile back, picks up a rogue sheep hoof from the floor and goes back to his position at the end of the line. Here, he threads string through slits in the Achilles tendons of a hanging carcass. He might swap jobs with his brother Zaf, to suck out spinal columns with a vacuum, or with his friend Adil, who is stamping the carcass sides with red-inked Halal accreditation logos. He rarely moves beyond this point at the end of the line unless a bottle neck of bunched carcasses need a temporary extra pair of hands. Sometimes, the owner offers him overtime loading the export vans at 4am before the slaughterhouse kicks into action, or he stays late to help his father, who is one of the cleaners. Asim has worked at the slaughterhouse for a year, but he is not being trained to become a slaughterman, or how to practice the fast and intricate knife work of fronting. Like the majority of the other fifteen workers on the line, in the processing and packing rooms he has not completed any approved slaughter certifications. He has learnt on the job, from his co-workers, some of whom are family or from chance moments. Asim is persistently confronted with racist banter in which the white workers express that he is not "one of us."

The white slaughtermen and owners tell me that "you can't get the men anymore." The slaughter trade is framed by media narratives as paralysed by labour shortages of both skilled and unskilled labour (Hardwick, 2021). British and EU migrant workers are either leaving or not entering the trade because of decreases in wages, the devaluation of slaughter work as dirty, or because of uncertain visa rights. Asim and

Ben have worked in a slaughterhouse for roughly the same amount of time. Asim is British Asian, of Pakistani descent, and Ben is white British. These young British men *are* entering the trade. However, I argue that their progression is unevenly enabled and constrained by the white British slaughtermen who withheld or shared access to learning or denied the presence of their slaughter skills. This gatekeeping was shaped by the ways that their white and Asian bodies were imagined through discursive constructions of race, Whiteness and gender and the maintenance of racial hierarchies by coding skilled work as white.

In this chapter, I focus on the narratives which circulate around practices and articulations of "skins" (which I will unpack shortly) and skills in the slaughterhouse to comparatively interrogate Ben and Asim's uneven treatment. Firstly, I focus on how the removal of sheep skin, known as "fronting", has been isolated as the last remaining domain of skilled work and is only carried out, and policed, by the white British slaughtermen. In the detail of the slaughter process, however, demarcations between skilled and unskilled labour are less easy to distinguish. I then focus on Asim at Westlambs, through the racialised discursive constructions of his South Asian appearance and the phenotype of brown skin, among other racialisations of his character. Asim's "race" is invoked as determining his potential to learn through the white slaughtermen's claims that he is racially fixed as legitimisation for withholding access to knowledge and skill. I then turn to Ben, the white British apprentice at North Hills. Ben's apprenticeship is described as a process through which he will develop a "thick skin", as a metaphor for his progression to become slaughterman. Ben's potential was based on a metaphorical thickness of his skin – his mindset, character, and resilience – through which his body and mind were regarded as unfixed and processual. The slaughtermen with the knowledge and skills to teach Ben and Asim to skin sheep imagined these two young not-yet-slaughtermen in ontologically different ways: The relationship between what Fanon identifies in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as their epidermal schema (whether metaphorical or through skin colour as a signifier) to their corporeal schema (what their bodies can do in relation to the environment). The relation between the two were unevenly fixed for Asim and processual for Ben. These constructions in turn shape the trajectories of Ben and Asim's progression and presumptions of whether they can be acknowledged as skilled.

In effect, I argue that the potential for Ben's skin to become "thick" it already had to be signified through its unsaid Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993). In the previous chapter, I argued that racialised, gendered, classed and nostalgic narratives discursively constructed workers' identities as moral, respectable slaughtermen. I demonstrated how in the slaughtermen's narratives, belonging to the trade, and a politics of belonging to the nation, were entangled with each other. I this chapter, I argue that these racialised, gendered, and classed narratives were inscribed onto Ben and Asim's bodies prohibiting or enabling them to become enskilled. As such, my intention is first to demonstrate that words and narratives matter in a quite physical sense in the work of boundary maintenance.

Secondly, I aim to build on literature on apprenticeship, demonstrating that there has been an absence of inclusion of critical race studies. Learning skills has been described as a process through which bodily and cognitive capabilities are unfixed and processual (Marchand, 2010). Ingold (2000) proposes that knowledge emerges through embodied skills in relation to environment. As such, body, mind, and environment are mutually constituting and unfixed. Through apprenticeships, or learning from others, acquiring knowledge is shaped through interactions with others, in social, national and political contexts and power dynamics (Lave & Wegner, 1991). Simpson (2006) argues that through apprenticeships, the skills learnt from mentors encompass not just the task – for example slaughtering – but moral identities and worldviews. In the context of the slaughterhouse, these were identifications with masculinity, Whiteness and respectability. Further, apprenticeships in male-dominated trades and crafts have been associated with bullying and abuse (Back, 1991; Marchand, 2008; Simpson, 2006; Willis, 1977).

As Iskander (2021) critiques, however, theoretical frames of apprenticeship which focus on the mutually constituting relation between body and environment, assume the learners are *already* imagined with some potential to become enskilled, moral or agentive. Likewise, apprenticeships which focus on abuse as a form of social reproduction, have paid less attention to the impacts and intentions of racialised abuse. Race, like skill, is imagined in various ways in and through the body (Alexander & Knowles, 2005). Fanon (1952) argued that for Black men in America in the 1950s, their racial epidermal schemas, such as skin colour, interrupted their corporeal

schema. In this sense, racialisation 'interrupts' how a body acts within a white environment which is hostile to those who are racialised (see also Ahmed, 2007). When racism constructs bodies as ontologically different with uneven potential, processes of enskillment, definitions about what skill is, and what abuse does, need to be challenged. As Wade (2002) argues, understandings of how inequality is reproduced – such as access to labour and knowledge – can be enhanced by a nuanced grasp on how nature, the body and culture are strategically invoked in relation to each other through racialising discourses.

In the quote which introduced this chapter, Marx (1867) invoked skin as a metaphor for workers' oppression. He lamented the degradation of workers selling their labour for wages as part of a capitalist system. It was, of course a metaphor. Unlike arms, legs, brains and muscles, skin as an organ has no real bearing on physical or mental ability to carry out slaughter labour, as long as you have one. In the slaughterhouse context, skin was not invoked in terms of its physiological function. Rather, skin – specifically skin colour – has long been associated as one of the primary sites of identifying and visualising phenotypical, "biological", or essentialised racialised difference (Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1952). Historically, notions of race were linked to biology, phenotype, blood and epidermal shades. More recently, racism has emerged as coded through cultural difference, which makes no reference to biology (Gilroy, 1987; Goldberg, 1993). For example, anti-Muslim racisms have been described as "cultural" and not "biological" or not really racism at all (Meer, 2008). Abbas (2004) claims that "new" cultural racism differs from the "old" biological racism in that it is more subtle. Even though scientific or biological racial difference is discredited with general understandings that race is socially constructed, it still works in and through the body and makes its claims on visible differences (Hall, 1997).

In response to unresolved and shifting understandings of the relationship between the social construction and the biology of "race", M'Charek (2013, p.427) argues that skin colour is enacted as a fragile relational materiality in different contexts. Race, she argues, "does not materialise in the body, but rather in relations established between a variety of entities, including bodies." As such, skin colour is not always racialised. However, as Wade (2002, p.5) proposes, if phenotype persists as an important feature of knowing what the concept of "race" is, it is important to ethnographically

interrogate how biology, nature and culture are constructed in different contexts. By focussing on the shifting constructions of "thick skin" and "brown skin", I argue that the metaphorical, biological, and cultural meanings attached to "white" and "Asian" as racial constructs reveal the instabilities of racialised discourses. This in turn raises a discussion between the biological, natural or essentialising constructions of race, and its cultural or social constructions. Following Wade (2001, p.14), I focus on how racial (and gendered) narratives "enable [a] strategic equivocation between nature and culture." I propose that the strategy is the reproduction of skilled slaughter work as a white domain.

5.2 Removing skins: skilled and unskilled labour on the halal slaughter line

As introduced in the previous chapter, being skilled was central to the white slaughtermen's sense of respectability and belonging to the trade. Skill enabled mobility and employment between different slaughterhouses in a sector impacted by deskilling and mechanisation. But what exactly counts as skilled work in the slaughterhouse, that holds such value for the white workers' identities? First, I offer a close ethnography of the process of slaughtering at Westlambs, the halal slaughterhouse in the urban West Midlands to describe the practices involved. As such I write in detail about the slaughter process in ways which I hope are read as "sensory, but not intentionally sensational" (Pachirat, 2014, p.19). I also write about explicit racial abuse between workers which stretched any claim of being recognised as banter. My intention here is to interrogate the boundaries of "skilled" work. Working in a slaughterhouse requires intricate, processual, and collective labour to transform a live sheep into meat and organs. As with classed and racialised identities, categorisations of skilled work are contingent, unstable, and often hard to demarcate. The inclusion of the detail is to demonstrate the intensity with which this skilled work as a construct is policed in terms of racial exclusion.

It is 8am on a Thursday in mid-January at Westlambs, two hours into a shift. I am standing at the front of the slaughter line filled with hanging sheep bodies at progressive states of disassembling. Thick wool, strips of fat, hooves, heads, and

organs are successively removed to reveal smooth, pink, empty carcases. 100 sheep have been killed, there are another 600 to go. Everyone's overalls – including mine, the slaughtermen, and the local workers – are well-smeared with blood. There are fifteen workers on the line, and everyone is moving in their fixed positions on the soggy floor, to meet the next carcass and repeat their allocated practice of slicing or pulling. Metal hooks scrape on overhead rails, chains drop to the floor, sheep parts thud and reverberate as they land into metal bins.

Behind me, Ahmed, the halal slaughterman is obscured in a walled off room where sheep are led through from the lairage onto metal cradles, one at a time, constraining their movement. He cups their face, waits for stillness, and cuts swiftly across the sheep's throat releasing a gush of blood. The sheep's eyes close and their legs curl up towards their breast. Ahmed identifies as Muslim and is accredited in halal slaughter. According to the accreditation agency for this slaughterhouse, he must recite "Bismillah-Allahu Akbar" with each single cut to the sheep's throat, so that the slaughter is practiced in the name of Allah. He does not say this out loud, but in the moment that he pulls the neck taught, tells me that he will think it. It helps him to get into a rhythm and stay focussed. He sharpens his knife, ready for the next arrival. Guz, who is also a halal slaughterman, loops a heavy hooked chain around one of the sheep's back legs, to hoist it onto an overhead rail. The involuntary movements of the sheep's nervous system in spasm, the motion of the chain and the weight of their bodies flicks warm blood on your face and arms. Guz and Ahmed are both itinerant halal slaughtermen, who also travel between different sites throughout the week. They work for an agency which negotiates a day rate for their work with the slaughterhouse owner.

The rail follows the circumference of a blood pit, collecting the blood as it seeps from the sheep's body. To my left, Dennis, the itinerant foreman of the slaughterhouse, pulls a sheep away from a bunch that has accumulated at the end of the blood pit, stretches his hands around the neck, and snaps it back, cracking the skull from the vertebral column. He runs his knife through the fleece along the contour of the skull, removing it completely. Legs are hoisted onto metal hooks on the line, as Alex begins the initial "fronting" cuts. He uses the bone of the legs to guide his knife, slicing the

skin off just below the hooves and then follows the contours of the shoulders, towards the belly.

"Everything we do here is an "ing" …killing, skinning, fronting, bleeding, punching, eviscerating, cutting, hanging," Cliff explains. He is standing in front of the headless body of a large lamb, stretched from its front hooves which are wedged into a thick metal double hook on a rail above our heads, as he lists off the processes of slaughter work. One back hoof is wedged into another double hook on a parallel rail in front of us, suspending the upside-down sheep with its legs spread upwards, exposing the cut flesh of the neck, which tilts towards me. He bends down, pulling the cut fleece with his left hand away from the breast and shoulder, then punching his wet right fist into the expanding warm pocket between exposed deep pink muscle tissue of the carcass and the slippery white underside of the skin. The left back hoof has been cut at the bend of the tarsal bone, and the amputated tibia sways as Cliff works the fleece away from the left forequarter. He lets go and the sheep swings back towards me. "Mind yourself Jess!"

"Complaining, swearing," Alex interjects, then turns to Rob and adds "wanking! Rob already knocked one off in the caravan this morning didn't he, Dennis?" "Fucking right I knocked one off, that's why I was late!" Rob owns the accusation, sharpening his knife on a steel rod in the seconds long gap until the sheep moves along the line to his position. He slices skin from the right side of the shoulder, pulling at the fleece, using the weight of his body to create tension with the rail until the fleece releases and opens out like drawn curtains, revealing the muscle of the breast and belly. He slips his curved skinning knife into a metal bath of boiling water and back into a plastic scabbard hanging from his waist, swapping it for a knife with a ball on the tip. He tugs the knife up between the ribs as his left-hand dips into the newly opened cavity and pulls out the oesophagus and clips this pink corrugated tube which then flops down towards the neck.

Fronting refers to the combination of knifework and physical tugging and punching of the fleece from the front of a sheep; the neck, ribs, belly, and legs so it can be removed in one piece, without cutting or ripping the valuable muscle underneath. Think of the curved outline of a sheep skin rug, these are the lines their knives have followed. Across all sites, fronting is the task which is consistently categorised as "skilled." The

meaning of fronting, derived from the site of labour on the front of the sheep's body – the breast and belly - comfortably slips towards the position of the workers on the line, physically and in terms of the hierarchies of their labour; the most skilled, and those paid the highest wage per hour. Those employed in fronting, include Cliff, Alex, Dennis, and Rob, who I introduced in the previous chapter. This group of slaughtermen can change members depending on the day. Sometimes Doug will be here, or Liam, the deputy foreman. Apart from Liam, who is the youngest in his early twenties, all are in their forties and fifties, and have been working in slaughterhouses together in shifting assemblages in the UK and beyond since they left school.

The rail curves around and the labour shifts from knife work and brawn to operating machinery. Daniel, who is white British and in his mid-fifties, takes a pair of electric metal clippers, grasps a shin in its wrench, pulls a trigger and chops the remaining back hoof. The carcass swings back down, now suspended. Daniel was previously the foreman at this slaughterhouse, as well as travelling to other sites, but his knees have become painful, and he cannot bend comfortably to do the fronting work for a whole shift. At points, Daniel will move across the room and further down the line to operate a large bandsaw to cut the carcass in two down the spinal column. The carcass moves on to Dave, one of the younger white British workers who is in his twenties. He is stationed at the "punching down" machine, a metal fist-shape powered by a pneumatic cylinder which pushes water and air down the metal arm to lubricate its entry into the flanks.

The carcass moves along with the fleece now draping down from the back legs as the line ascends to a raised platform to Jamie, who is stationed at the hide puller. He sometimes works as Eastewes, in the East Midlands and travels Westlambs, sometimes staying in one of the caravans. The loose fleece is folded into a vice, operated with a foot pedal. The carcass is raised up further, the tension finally separating the fleece completely from the back legs. He hooks the back legs through their Achilles tendon. Daniel, Dave, and Jamie are white British. Their jobs are mechanised and do not depend on intricate knife work. They are not categorised as "skilled" workers, but they are proximate to the skilled workers, and are self-employed, or contracted by Cliff. Whether through age or youth, they do not have the combination of skills, stamina, and strength to join the fronting crew. Daniel's body can no longer do the work, and

Jamie and Dave have not invested the time into learning although Cliff has offered to train them if they express the desire and ambition to do so.

The carcass descends back to floor level, and knife work comes back into play. Abdul takes a knife and runs it around the anus, then removes the two remaining front hooves with a smaller electric clipper. The line ascends to a platform, where Zhi pulls a knife up the taught thin skin of the belly, which opens like curtains. He puts both hands into the cavity and tugs to pull out the digestive tract as one contained unit and hurls it into the window of the gut room behind him. It is slippery work, but the weight of the bulbous grey rumens filled with digested grass, reams of coiled intestines and webs of caul fat offer enough weight to gain some hold. The carcass moves along to Farzad, he pulls out the organs, so they hang from the opening at the neck, dark mahogany livers, spongey pale pink lungs and purple hearts. Both these jobs require precise cutting, physical strength and knowledge of the sheep's body to avoid ripping or splitting the messy digestive system or tearing the organs. Zhi scrapes the length of his knife along the outside of the carcass, removing any stray hairs, or cutting excess fat. Abdul, Farzad, and Zhi are from Pakistan, but they have all lived, and settled in the West Midlands for some years. This is the first job that these men have had in a slaughterhouse. They have learnt the skills of line work here on the job, but they have experience of slaughtering cattle and goats in Pakistan and Kashmir with their families, during Eid Al Adha. They are employed by the slaughterhouse as "unskilled labour," and on lower wages than the contracted fronting crew.

Past the vet, who inspects the organs and carcass, Daniel has jumped in from the front of the slaughter line to operate the most powerful tool, an electric saw, to split the carcass. The separated sides move along the line to Asim. He spins the first half of the carcass, which curls from the neck down to the leg guiding the metal nozzle of a suction hose down the split spinal column, sucking out the white, soft tube of spinal column. He runs his finger in the clean bone cavity, then checks the other half for any remaining spinal residue. The carcass moves along, and Adil, who is seventeen, British Asian and from the local town, ties a white string into the two slits in the Achilles tendons, which will hang the sides together as they are transported to customers in Europe. Zaf, Asim's older brother, stands next to us with a pot of red ink and stamps the halal accreditation logo on the top and bottom of each side. Asim, Adil, and Zaf will

move around different jobs depending on where they are needed, or if someone has not turned up for work. They never move up the slaughter line, rather, to the fridges, or the weighing machine, the gutting room, or loading the vans. From here, the carcass is again inspected by the vets, then weighed and tagged by Usman. The carcasses are pushed into the fridges by Abdi, who is in his early twenties from Pakistan. He got the job through family connections and has come to work in the UK for a short time but plans on returning home soon.

Slaughter work is manual, bodily labour wherever you are standing. At the end of the shift, everybody aches, whether they have been pulling guts or a fleece. There are claims the slaughter line was the first industrial production line which emerged in the slaughter yards in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century and inspired Henry Ford in his conception of assembly plants (Sinclair, 1906). These regimented approaches obscure the slaughter line is a flow of multiple forms of labour by design, and an intricate collaboration where each task makes the next worker's job possible. The line undulated from knife work to machine work, back to knife work, to the fiddly work of tying, and the clerical work of weighing and stamping. The heterogeneity and unpredictability of the contours and material states of sheep bodies constrains sheep slaughter from being fully mechanised and predictable; different textures of fleece, an unexpected abscess, or a diseased liver require all workers on the slaughter line to engage their senses and judgements with the object on which they labour. In her ethnography of French abattoirs, Vialles (1994, p.51) similarly identifies that deskilling and the substitution of hands for machines is partial – the heterogeneous nature of animal bodies demands an engagement from workers that interferes with simple repetition where the "contingency and individuality of the biological sphere resist the formal rigour of technical organisation".

The categories of skilled and unskilled labour have emerged during the slaughterman's years in the trade. When they refer to "unskilled" tasks, they are referring to labours which they themselves used to be employed in before labour got stratified. All labour requires a knowledgeable engagement with the environment of the slaughterhouse, from the speed of the line to the movements of co-workers, and the intricacies of sheep bodies. Further, it was often jobs further down the line which caused the most disruption: If Jamie was slow in using the hide puller – a machine – the whole line

would stop. Observationally, the distinctions between skilled and unskilled are difficult to distinguish. I could not see why skinning was "skilled," whereas the removal of organs was not. Yet, there was a clear separation on the line between white and Asian workers which mapped onto these articulations of skilled and unskilled labour.

As discussed in the previous chapter, "working-class" jobs have, since their inception, been fractured with internal and relational hierarchies between skilled and unskilled labour. Following postcolonial migrations to Britain, these hierarchies of skill coalesced with racial discrimination. Since the 1950s, competition over resources in the workplace has been central to analyses of the constructions of race and racism towards Black and Asians in Britain. As already discussed, Miles (1982, p.16) proposed that "race" as point of difference and discrimination emerged in relation to competition for capital and resources. His interest was in "why the category of 'race relations' came to be used to categorise a certain group of social relations which, once examined from a different perspective, cannot be shown to be essentially distinct from any other social relations". Race, in effect, was a manifestation of class struggle. The sentiments of white workers in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, who felt that Asian workers did not belong in an imagined white British workplace are well documented. These fears were centred on a belief that foreign, postcolonial workers were taking jobs from "indigenous" white British workers (Alexander et al., 2000). In the workplace, Fevre (1984) revealed how white workers liaised with bosses to prevent Asian and Black workers from accessing skilled jobs. In a sector where there is demand for skilled labour, and especially in halal slaughterhouses, sites which emerged following postcolonial migrations, claims of "taking what is ours" are untenable. I demonstrate how this segregation persists through the racialisation of skill. In so doing, I argue that hierarchies are produced through more complex narratives which entail connections and disconnections between nature and culture in the ways skill and race are reproduced in and through bodies. More importantly, I demonstrate how slaughtermen's narratives simultaneously undermine ideas of biological purity through which they claim their superiority and connection to each other, while reproducing racialised hierarchies (K.Tyler, 2005)

5.3 Racialising Skill

At the end of a long shift at Westlambs, workers were cleaning the slaughterhouse. Congealed blood on the floor was pushed towards drains, while aprons and knives were washed in hot water baths to melt the hardened fat on their plastic handles. A last-minute order for 40 more lambs had come through from a European customer. The slaughtermen had already changed into their tracksuits and were in their cars, ready to drive to their hometowns. Ahmed, the halal slaughterman, who was always the first to finish because his job is the first in the slaughter process, had also left. Only Liam, the younger slaughterman and Dennis, the foreman remained from the "fronting" crew. Covering the absence of workers, Dennis moved into the slaughter room to shackle sheep once they had been slaughtered. Abdul, who was normally further down the line in an unskilled position joined him, where he took on Ahmed's job of throat cutting. Daniel moved over to the fronting section and shouted out to me, "we are a few men down Jess, put your apron on!" This was a joke. He knew I could not skin a sheep. Cliff and Rob had both showed me where to cut and how to pull the fleece. When I tried, much to everyone else's amusement, I could not find the right angle for my knife which slipped in my hands already covered in lanolin and fat. I was closer to lifting my feet off the floor than pulling the fleece away from the carcass. It was physically impossible for me at five foot, four inches, and half their weight. Cliff affirmed that my size was the issue, "even if you learn the cuts and lift weights, it won't help. You need to weigh more" to offer enough tension on the fleece. Indeed, these slaughtermen were willing to train me, and did not regard my gender – being a woman – as an impervious or immediate barrier to learning slaughter skills, rather, it was my (albeit gendered) size and strength.

Farzad, washing his knives and scabbard spotted the gap in the fronting section, and ran over, followed by Asim. Asim bent down by the blood pit and started cutting the heads off the sheep. Farzad and Asim wasted no time in stepping into the fissure of the white stronghold upfront. Farzad got straight to work on fronting. He is tall, strong, and has the physical attributes that I was told prevented me from being able to front. He was working fast and knew exactly the cuts to make into the fleece. Adil and Zaf came over and nestled themselves close to the corridor near the fronting section so

they could watch until the first carcasses arrived at their section, as Asim talked them through the movements of holding and inserting knife to cut off the sheep's head.

Dennis came out of the slaughter room, tutted at Asim and Farzad and inserted himself next to Farzad to cut the fleece along the belly. He looked over to Zaf and shouted, "what are you doing here?" Zaf shouted back, "I'm watching him!" pointing to his brother, as his eyes followed the movements of Asim's hands. Dennis quickly told him off, "Don't watch him, if you're going to watch someone, watch me!" Liam then arrived back at the fronting section. He marched over to Farzad, who was in his position and mocked his knifework by laughing and pointing out a scraggy edge of fleece near a hoof, which would soon be chopped off anyway. Liam would not let the irrelevance of the scraggy end go, shouting, "Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!" Farzad continued regardless. Liam exploded, "you *brown* cunt, get back over there, you fucking rat!" pointing to the eviscerating platform further down the line. Farzad ignored him. He was resilient, dancing as he sliced, and it wound Liam up even more. Liam was not going to win this battle. He was outnumbered, and the sheep needed to be processed so they could all finish. He stormed off and positioned himself in Abdul's now empty spot, to cut anuses and feet.

Asim followed the last sheep carcass as it moved along the line, as others were distracted tidying up. He cut feet off, split open the belly, pulled out the digestive tract, and loosened the offal. He moved with the carcass, permeating the boundaries structuring the division of labour on the line between skilled and unskilled, white, and Asian, local and itinerant workers. He had flair, the swift, controlled, even movements that characterise the repetitive, embodied knowledge of slaughter. His body "knew" how to work on the slaughter line, and to move around the flesh, bone, fleece, and blood. Watching him, I commented to Dennis that Asim appeared keen to learn. He lowered his voice to a hush, "Yeah, but *you* know…" Do I"? I asked. "The P***s, they don't really have the stamina to be up at the front. You don't get any of *them* up at the front. It's just the breeding, isn't it? It's in *their* nature. Where *they* come from, they just sit around all day." Unlike the performative banter, this comment, in its hushed tones, was a sincere disclosure. "*You* know" was already an assumption of my agreement. "I don't know, I haven't been to Pakistan", came rushing out, as if having been to be Pakistan would have justified the statement. I was positioned in the unsaid

but inferred white, British category that indicated, to Dennis, that I would implicitly agree with this racialised perception of this young man, that I would share this statement as if it were a reality.

The constructions of Asim and Farzad by the slaughtermen bring to bear how their bodies are racialised through both biological and cultural registers related to assumptions about their physical and cognitive ability. In *Race, Nature, Culture*, Wade (2002) argues that discourses which invoke nature, biology or culture in relation to the concept race, and practices of racism, cannot be disentangled. Further, that to construe nature or biology as fixed, misunderstands nature and biology because they are impermanent and processual. Indeed, the conflations between biology, nature and culture in Dennis's discursive renderings attest to the difficulties in ascertaining what exactly is being racially essentialised in Asim. Pushing beyond conceptualisations that racial discourse builds solely on fixed phenotypical difference, Wade suggests that attention also needs to be paid to how blood, hereditary, bodily substance, relatedness, biology, and genes enter into discourses about race.

In both Liam's racist verbal attack, and Dennis' hushed comments, the slaughtermen refer to various racialised bodily differences. Skin colour forms part of this racialisation, for example, the slur of "brown bastard", or references to the colour of faeces. As Wade (2002) highlights, only some aspects of appearance are worked into racial signifiers, and they are the aspects that were originally seen to be the ways of distinguishing between Europeans and those they encountered on their colonial explorations and as such are rooted Empire. Likewise, the term P*** is a racialised term, and often used without intended reference to its etymological root of Pakistan, despite being rooted in postcolonial histories. As Brah (1996, p.10) identified, in the 1970s, the discourse of "Paki' as a racialised insider/outsider was *marked* and loaded as inferior postcolonial other. Anyone who appeared visibly South Asian was vulnerable to the term.

While the racialised term has persisted, Asim's difference was also articulated specifically in terms of a country, Pakistan. Dennis implied that all of the Asian workers were from Pakistan, even if they were born in England, like Asim. Dennis connects being Pakistani to laziness, implying that culture shapes what the body can do. Pakistani heritage in a cultural sense was imagined as hereditary and somehow rooted

in biology, where Asim was culturally determined to be lazy because his parents were born in a country that he has visited but never lived in. In contention to claims of cultural racism not requiring biological logics, Anthias and Yuval Davies (1993) argue that for racism to be differentiated from other discrimination, there has to be some notion of stock or collective hereditary traits that are part of the construction of race. Despite Asim and Farzad being born in different countries, their Pakistani-ness was described as being embodied in them: as such, cultural differences and hereditary traits are blurred. Other times the racist slurs referred to animalistic comparisons, of monkeys and rats. These too slipped between cultural and natural logics of difference. "Rats" could be a cultural metaphor for being conniving or unwelcome vermin, references to a monkey could be a suggestion of primitivism and not being biologically and culturally evolved or less-than-human (Virdee, 2014). Collectively, these narratives are pooled together to falsely legitimatise why Asim and Farzad cannot undertake skilled work, nor learn skills. In both cultural and biological renderings and their overlaps, Asim and Farzad are essentialised through notions of fixity.

While Asim is not being formally trained, he has learnt various slaughter skills by being situated in the environment of the slaughterhouse. When new workers join the slaughterhouse, he will show them how to do the jobs he has learnt, in the same way that Zaf taught him, when he first got him the job. He will teach me to tie elastic bands around feet or suck out spinal columns and laugh at my poor attempts, instructing me to "spin it, spin it, don't let Adil show you, I'll show you!" letting me know if I am not doing things right: "hurry up we'll be here all day!" He likes to show his know-how of the physical tricks of the labour. Anthropological approaches to skill and knowledge focus on the relations through which people learn, categorise, and acquire skills, through various forms of knowledge and cognition. Lave and Wegner (1991, p.33) propose the concept of "situated learning" through "legitimate peripheral participation" in a "community of practice." Their project is to demonstrate that people learn more successfully when situated in an environment, such as a workplace. When situated, there is an emphasis on comprehensive learning involving the "whole person" rather than a "receiving" body of factual knowledge about the world. The "whole person" and the environment mutually constitute each other. They argue that being peripheral to the knowledge and skills of more skilled workers eventually leads

to the acquisition of knowledge and skill, and legitimately being part of a community of practice.

Asim had demonstrated his ability, but this observable action did not alter Dennis's claim, neither was it acknowledged. Similarly, Farzad had successfully skinned a sheep, but Liam belittled his efforts. Superiority over Farzad's labour was claimed, ultimately, on the granular detail of a scraggy bit of innocuous sheep skin. In her ethnography of migrant constructions workers in Doha, which does connect racialisation and skill, Iskander (2021) shows how racialised migrant workers' observably skilled work is fictitiously categorised as unskilled by their employers. The demarcations of skilled and unskilled labour instead functioned to maintain racial, gendered and national hierarchies. Iskander (2021, p.14) proposes that,

> [Migrants] skilful embodied practice is not skill at all in these representations; it is just raw corporality, being a particular type of body is associated with being unskilled….By subsuming skill in the body in this way, burying it beneath racialized and gendered descriptions of physiques and biology, denying its existence and value, these social discourses make it possible to shunt groups of people into the category of unskilled based on markers of social difference that have no relation to actual competence or expertise.

Significantly, Iskander identifies that migrant wokers were treated as ontologically different humans to their employers through the denial of their skill, and ultimately, personhood. While Lave (1996) has acknowledged that "communities of practice" will not be evenly accessible based on racial or gendered exclusion, this denial of skill brings to bare questions about a different kind of situatedness. Firstly, Lave and Wegner (1991) propose that being physically situated within an environment can be beneficial to learning, so that learners are not simply receivers of factual information, but embodied responders and practitioners. However, feminist approaches to situated knowledge emphasise the locations from which we know and its attendant limitations, boundaries, and biases (Haraway, 1988). If knowledge is situated, what kind of "knowledge" about the world is Asim a receiver of? I am not suggesting that Asim does not have the bodily knowledge to slaughter sheep. His situated learning has occurred in spite of the white slaughtermen. Rather, the white slaughtermen denied Asim's

ability to be a functioning body which learns and transforms. They already regarded Asim as fixed through their narratives about both cultural and biological fixity.

Like me, Dennis has never been to Pakistan, but he claims knowledge about how men in Pakistan behave. The paradox here, is that to deny the bodily competence and knowledge of Asian workers, Dennis has employed various tactics which call on the interplays of knowledge and ignorance. In *The Racial Contract*, Mills (1997) highlights that ignorance can include both "false belief" and that absence of "true belief" about racialised minorities. He conceptualises this as "an inverted epistemology" where feigning to know or not know something presents a falsehood as a truth thereby distorting reality. Advancing Mills, Sullivan and Tuana (2007) conceptualise "epistemic ignorance" as a way in which racial hierarchies and inequalities are reproduced by those in relative positions of power. They propose that white people intentionally cultivate or *allow* gaps in their own knowledge about racialised minorities. For example, the claim that Asian bodies cannot be skilled, even when there was observable evidence an Asian worker was skilled. Rather than simply a process of moral and technical knowledge, apprenticeship, or lack thereof, demonstrates how Whiteness, as a fiction, becomes a fact inscribed and embodied (Hartigan, 1997).

On the basis that Whiteness, racialisation and masculinities are not fixed but enacted or "done" in context as a means of creating hierarchies (Ahmed, 2004; Connell, 1995; Risman, 2009), they can also be interrupted, resisted, or ignored. Indeed, there were interruptions to this White hierarchy. Ahmed, the halal slaughterman, who is British South Asian of Gujarati descent, is regarded as a skilled worker (of sorts) by the white slaughtermen. He too is an itinerant worker, who moves around different slaughterhouses with his skill. He entered the trade through a route which was not policed by the white workers, his faith. Further, the white slaughtermen cannot do his job because they are not practicing Muslims. Ahmed explains that he became a slaughterman by chance. After spending six years studying Islam, he took on a job with a halal accreditation agency as a slaughterhouse inspector (which I will look at in more detail in chapter 7) to make extra money alongside working as a private tutor, teaching children Arabic. He was dissatisfied with the inspection work as it felt like an exercise in bureaucratic box ticking. He explained his sense of connection to working as a slaughterman, during a telephone interview:

> For me, it's the personal aspect, it is a way for me to practice my religion. for us who like to eat halal, it's a religious action if you know what I mean, because it's an Islamic law for us that we eat halal specifically. To make something halal for others, in a way it's a good deed you are doing, because you are providing for the community…so I thought well, rather than doing the inspecting, because with inspecting, you're only looking at the job, I became a slaughterman.

He trained on the job, learning from another halal slaughterman and through an halal training agency. He is now licensed to kill both stun and non-stun religious slaughter. This skill has enabled him to travel for work both nationally and internationally. Like the white slaughtermen, Ahmed expresses a strong connection and sense of morality to his labour, where his faith and his skill are co-constituted. Moreso, in this slaughterhouse he is one of the most important workers, because it is him who legitimises the meat as halal through the method of slaughter, and his faith. While the slaughtermen treat Ahmed with some respect, they do not consider him a real slaughterman, because he does not work in the fronting line. However, Cliff will share advice with him about different slaughter techniques, there is a conviviality between them.

As discussed in the description of the slaughter process, at Westlambs there are local white workers who are not in the fronting section. Daniel is a trained "skilled" slaughterman, however, his body has physically aged, and he aches if he spends too long on his feet, his knees can no longer take the strain of bending to front sheep. Dave has not yet learnt the skills of slaughter and is frequently teased by the fronting crew for being slow and overweight, but he has been offered the opportunity to progress. Daniel "knows" what to do, but he physically cannot manage the work anymore. If skill, as Ingold (2000) claims, can only ever be present in the moment that a body acts in the world, Daniel, and Dave are less or unskilled, but they are placed proximate to the skilled section, and are paid in this regard. Bodily assessments therefore play out in uneven ways on white workers, with emerging or depleting potential. They still experience frictions – for example, Cliff is frequently annoyed that Daniel does not "pull his weight", and Dave is bullied for being overweight, but these are based on unfixed bodily qualities or impediments and expressed as individualised

faults, for example, "he *should* know that", "he *could* if he wanted to." Having white skin did not afford all white workers immediate access to being acknowledged as skilled, but the limits of their bodies were not pathologized or regarded as fixed. As such, there is a shift from the assessments imposed on Asian workers, who the slaughtermen described as fixed and unable to do the work.

Sara Ahmed (2007) elaborates how Whiteness functions as a habit to become the background to social action making visible the invisible marks of privilege that renders white spaces and white bodies as oriented to each other. She focusses on how non-white bodies experience the tensions of not being able to pass without friction through white spaces. She frames Whiteness as an ongoing process, or an "unfinished history" which continues to reproduce racialised hierarchies in which attention needs to be paid to what Whiteness is "doing" in particular spaces and the ways in which it shapes lived, material realities. For example, in the slaughterhouse, this "doing" of Whiteness was reproduced by slaughtermen policing the acquisition and presence of skill by categorising bodily potential for knowledge and skill as only accessible to white bodies. The skilled white slaughtermen have created a small island where they retain privileges related to the constructed boundaries of skill in a specific aspect of sheep slaughter. The slaughtermen police these boundaries through an epistemic ignorance about Asian bodies and Pakistan. In effect, the fictions of white skill and the lesser physical capabilities of Asian workers becomes a social fact, real material and lived; it structures the space and the work which men can do.

During fieldwork, I too was learning skills in the slaughterhouse. As a woman, the slaughtermen made assumptions about my physical bodily abilities, and my gendered sensibilities about slaughter work. My white, gendered body was initially met with some tension, surprise and amusement. However, at no point was I told that because I was a woman, I was fixed into a category of not being able to ever learn the skills and knowledge of slaughter work. This was in stark contrast to ways in which the fixity of "race" was constructed. Admittedly, the intention was never for me to become a slaughter(wo)man, so the slaughtermen did not have to take my labour too seriously. However, slaughtermen and workers alike invested time teaching me the right ways to do things, with attentive techniques to accommodate what I lacked in comparative

strength and weight. My gender did not constrain me in the way that "race" constrained Asim.

My gendered size and weight were not my only limitations. I am left-handed. While at most, this has caused issues knocking elbows with someone when sitting at a table, or smudging my own writing, in a slaughterhouse it was a problem. On noticing that I was left-handed, Cliff yelped out "are you cacky handed Jess?" I was told that "you don't get many good slaughtermen that are cacky-handed, there's just things you can't do." Left-handedness is a bodily orientation that is rarely acknowledged. It felt unfamiliar to be identified, and judged, by my left-handedness. But, on the slaughter line and in the gut rooms – as right-handed workers taught me how to skin sheep heads, spinal columns, or chop feet – it became visible. The slaughter line works on the assumption that everyone is right-handed, and workers understood their own movements in relation to each other and the sheep bodies through this orientation. As Dennis was teaching me how to remove heads, we both struggled. He was unable to work in the opposite direction, and I was unable to follow the movements of his right hand with my left. Daniel, who is left-handed, was called over to teach me. Daniel had trained himself to work with his right hand, and he too struggled to re-orient his knifework "it's all back to front", he explained. Eventually, I was given the time to develop my own movements, get a feel for the knife on bones, and on finally removing a head, I was met with cheers.

Training oneself out of left-handedness to work on a slaughter line where right-handed labour was dominant, was an example of what Ingold (2000) described as learning or adapting with environmental and social conditions. In these instances, biology (hands and brains) and culture (the orientation of the line) were mutually constituting. At points, the slaughterman would adapt around what is understood as "nature" (bodies) or "culture" (skills), demonstrating that neither were regarded as discrete, fixed categories. My gendered, white, left-handed body was regarded as having the potential to adapt. In terms of my capacity to work, slaughtermen were not reproducing gendered boundaries rooted in ideas of naturalised difference on what I was able to learn and do, even though being slaughterman is a highly masculine trade. However, this was not the case for the ways in which "race" was negotiated. To the white slaughtermen, Asian bodies were not treated with the potential to adapt or

challenge assumptions of fixity. Racialised bodies were imagined by white workers to have ontologically different relations between biology, nature and culture. These shifting gendered and racialised constructions revealed the instability of narratives which centre on about biological and cultural fixity, fixability, permanence and impermanence (Tyler, 2005; Wade, 2002,).

5.4 "Serving time": Becoming thick skinned

At North Hills, in the rural North West, Philip, the foreman stood at the end of the slaughter line, running the side of his knife along a carcass, carefully removing stray black hairs and trimming excess fat whilst keeping one eye on the rest of the crew. Suddenly, he roars. "Do as I say! If I tell you to do something, it's because it's the right thing to do." He has spotted Ben go into the gut room and this is not where he wants Ben to be. Ben should be at the weighing scales at the end of the line where sheep carcasses are bunching together. Ben runs out, nods, and does as he is told without contestation. A few minutes later, Philip is still glaring at him as he weighs and tags fresh carcasses. "Alright?" Ben asks Philip. "What do you mean, am I *all right*? You'll know if I'm not fucking *all right*, there will be an explosion." I'm wondering if this is not an explosion, then what is. I try to catch Ben's eye, but he won't look up. It feels like everyone has been berated by a furious headmaster and we descend into awkward silence. Philip shakes his head and mumbles a comment about the ills of "society" and the youth of today, of which Ben is a product. I notice the carcass Philip is working on has the testicles attached. Wanting to break the tension, I ask if a butcher has requested them, adding that sheep testicles are known as "mountain oysters" hoping that by sharing obscure meat facts, he might soften. He takes his knife, whips off the testicles, and at the same time as he asks whether I want them, plops them in my hand and carries on cutting. My questioning is met with a pair of slippery white balls in outstretched palm.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Philip, Rob and Antoni collectively refer to their labour at North Hills as "real slaughter" work which has not been fragmented into categories of skilled and unskilled labour or become dependent on machines which

mimic or aid human labour. As Philip explains, "all I need is a knife, a hook and something to hang it off." Rob admitted that "we've got one of those metal punching down machines. It's in the cupboard, we've not bothered with it." Being a real slaughterman is an expression of having multiple skills, which enables a competency to jump positions on the line, in the lairage, in the stunning room, out in yard, emptying bins, or salting hides to keep the momentum of the whole slaughter process. While it is acknowledged that "fronting" is one of the most technically accomplished aspects of slaughter it did not define skilled work. As Iskander (2021) argued, skilled work is a constructed category that exists to reaffirm power dynamics, and here, it reaffirmed the workers as a collective of "real slaughtermen." No doubt Philip is the foreman and in charge, but they work as a team. Rob will jump from "punching down" to stunning, Antoni will shift from fronting to sticking. Ben, from eviscerating to the weighing scales. These shifts in labour are usually carried out without instruction, instigated by the slaughtermen watching each other and the progression of the carcasses. When Ben was reprimanded for being in the wrong place, he had not been told *not* be in the gut room, he had made the wrong assessment. In effect, slaughtermen were a collective of autonomous workers, and this enables them to work as a dynamic collective. The owner describes them as "choreographed" they work as a wave because they know each other so well, as if they are working as one body.

Training Ben: Intimacy and abuse

After Rob had confronted Ben about whether he identified as a slaughterman, I turned the question back to him, "when did you start calling yourself a slaughterman?" He did not give me a direct answer, but he intuitively knew I wanted to ask about Ben being bullied. "We are cruel to be kind, that's how he's going to learn…it's what was done to us. Thing is you need to have a thick skin to work here." Ben is in the process of "serving time" or "earning his knives", idioms that slaughtermen invoke to describe the three-year period (although Rob and Philip were both quick to let me know it took them less than three years because they were "naturally" gifted slaughtermen), in which they were taken on as apprentices by mentors, "a gang" of experienced skilled slaughtermen.

Training Ben to be a real slaughterman by "serving time," encompassed an amorphous toolbox of both tangible skills, and perhaps, more importantly, intangible factors. These included building Ben's character, his autonomy and resilience; his ability to find solutions to unpredictable problems; and a metaphorical thickening of his skin. However, Ben does not need to "serve time" to work in a slaughterhouse. These kinds of apprenticeships, which were once a pathway into an industrial trade, for example in shipyards (Lawrence, 2019) are now dwindling. As industrialised trades have become increasingly mechanised, deskilled and compartmentalised, the holistic approach of such traditional apprenticeships is no longer required (McDowell, 2003). Training to become a slaughterman is now regulated through an accredited apprenticeship comprising modules and practical assessments which have been fragmented in synthesis with the expectations of the slaughter line. For example, there are distinct modules to learn about how to manage the lairage, animal welfare, cutting and sticking. Learning, however, is still situated in slaughterhouses under the mentorship of a skilled slaughterman. Philip does not approve of compartmentalising slaughter skills into modules and is instead working around and through the modules to teach Ben the old way.

Apprenticeships, in their historic meaning in England, were part of the patriarchal organisation of artisan guild systems for pre-industrial labour and the moral associations of artisanship (Thompson, 1963). Apprenticeships in industrial masculine trades have similarly been understood as processes in the reproduction of classed, moral, respectable identities (McDowell, 2003; Theil, 2007). For example, In *Learning to Labour,* Willis (1977) proposed that apprenticeships cemented the reproduction of the working-class, which started in school through resistance to authority, before young men even entered the shop floor. In the previous chapter, I proposed that the slaughtermen at this site do not regard their labour as working-class. Through "real slaughter work", the slaughtermen dipped back to pre-industrial moral values of artisanal labour such as autonomy and independence. It begs the question, what is the value of Ben serving time *now* in a social and economic context where slaughter labour is increasingly deskilled, poorly paid and precarious; of training his body and character towards what is described as a form of masculinity and physical ability which belongs in the past? In what way does his "skin" come to matter? First, I will identify the

different aspects of Ben's training, and then I will offer an analysis through literature on apprenticeship, masculinity, and race.

Ben watches his mentors closely, and mimics their physical form and pose, down to techniques of flinging strips of fat into the bins. Just like Philip, he will fold his forearm towards his shoulder and uncurl his hand from his elbow and flick strips of fat backwards, hand following through, so it extends out in the air. I asked Philip if he had taught Ben to throw the same way, and he looked at me with the same disdain that he dishes out to Ben. He was flummoxed and said he never thought about it much "I'm on autopilot, I'd be halfway across the Atlantic before realising what I was doing." What Philip is describing, is that learning is about close observation, a non-verbal being-in-world to produce bodily knowledge (Ingold, 2000; Marchand; 2008; 2010). It was an approach that Ben mirrored. He did not want to talk while he was working, because "they've all got their eyes on me, I need to focus." Verbalising skill, or asking too many questions was an irritation, unless there was a joke to be made, or someone needed to be corrected. For example, as I was attempting to drag a cow hide into the yard, Philip offered, "can I give you a bit of advice? You need to stick your finger up here" smirking as he stuck his finger into a cavernous hole at the rear-end of a cow hide where the tail had been removed, so that I could drag it with just one finger into the yard.

Explicit verbal forms of knowledge sharing, conversely, revolved around tasks which were not directly related to slaughter. During the after-slaughter tasks, Philip marched down the yard, shouting at Ben, "Get me a hose! Ben, get me a hose!" Philip needed diesel and was going to syphon it from the forklift truck: a rusty yellow contraption at the back of the yard with a registration plate from 1984. Philip called me, Rob, and Ben to "watch and learn" as he cowered over the tank with a dirty hose in his mouth, and sucked. Nothing happened. Noticing that the end of the hose was frayed, he turned it around, and put the end that he been submerged in diesel into his mouth, then sucked again until the diesel filled his mouth. He spat it out and continued relentlessly until the liquid flowed. Rob, Ben, and I watched, squinting at the performance, casting bemused glances at each other. Ben may never need to know how to syphon petrol, but Philip wanted to give him an example of how to be autonomous and always find a solution to whatever unexpected event the slaughterhouse throws at him. He was not teaching Ben a specific skill or technique, but an ethos. Ben must find the balance

between using his initiative, and not asking for help when the act of doing so would render him as dependent on the others.

The moments where Ben received the loudest barks from his mentors, were also for tasks which were marginal to the practical skills of working on a slaughter line. For example, once removed, sheep fleeces are rubbed with salt and stored in a shed to cure. These by-products are now of such negligible value that the slaughterhouse owner, Ian, pays more for the fleeces to be taken away, than he can sell them for. Ben was told to salt the fleeces and pile them up in the yard, on top of a pile that Rob had already started. I helped. Rob came over, looked at the pile and barked at Ben, "what have you done, can you see what's wrong here? Look at the ones I did, look at ones you did." I said that I could not see anything wrong. Neither could Ben, and although it was both of our mistake (whatever it was) Rob's aggression was fully directed at Ben. "Look at it, just look at it!" Rob continued, incensed. Eventually Ben realised that a very small patch of the skin side was exposed. Rob went to find Antoni and Philip, to tell them what Ben had done, so that he would get the telling off all over again. By this point, Ben had corrected his mistake. Philip marched up to him, "why did you do that? do you want me to drag you over there by your earhole, sort it out. Now!" Philip, Rob and Antoni then stood, watching as they drank cups of tea while Ben performatively corrected his corrected mistake again. It was demeaning that the smallest, least valuable tasks were the ones Ben would get in the most trouble for. There was a knowing absurdity to it, but the intention was for Ben could show his resilience and not crumble, regardless of the aggression directed towards him.

The biggest mistake I saw Ben make was with a stunning device which fires a bolt against the cow's head, rendering it unconscious. Standing on a platform above a cow constrained in a cage, Ben leant over with the captive bolt device in hand, waiting until an agitated cow stayed still for long enough for him to get a direct shot. His first attempt failed and distressed the cow further, which was now thrashing around and rearing its head above the cage. It was stressful to watch. Ben looked back, flustered, at his mentors. "No problems just solutions!" Rob yelled, who had been watching him. Ben tried and missed again, yelling out, "It's still alive!" It was too much for Ben, and he asked Philip for help. Ben had lost his confidence, but he got sent straight back up to platform for the next cow, "Get back on the horse Ben!" If he needed support, his

mentors would come to his aid, but they pushed him to build his confidence. Philip told me that "I know you shouldn't be like this with people, but you've got one chance with me and if you mess it up, that's it." But this was not completely true. Ben has the space for error and correction, to prove that he can learn.

Developing a thick skin

While "real slaughter work" is connected to the values of pre-industrial artisanship by Rob, Antoni and Philip, the necessity to have a "thick skin" is also repetitious of longstanding associations of hard, white, male working-class bodies and "tough" characters in industrial trades (Kimmel & Messner, 1991). Baron (2006, p.146) argues the idealised hard white male figure emerged during the period of industrialisation, through which working-class men could claim respectability in relation to artisans: "a hegemonic masculinity emerged that emphasised toughness, physical strength, aggressiveness, and risk taking." However, developing a thick skin was not synonymous with developing a hard male body. Explicit references to Ben's physical strength were rare. At the same time, his mentors frequently acknowledged that their own physical strength was temporary. Rob was concerned that he would not be able to work this relentlessly forever, as his body will suffer. Philip's knees are causing him pain, and he struggles to bend down. The slaughtermen do not fetishise the idea of bodily strength. They regard their "biological" bodies as temporary, unfixed, and processual (Wade, 2002). They can be slaughtermen now, but they cannot be slaughtermen forever.

"Thick skin" is a bodily metaphor for a psychic approach to the world, which is developed through contact with abrasive social environments; a weathering that builds up a desensitised, protective layer; of not being porous to negative social interactions or displaying emotional reactions. "Thick skin" is a paradoxical notion: it indicates that there is something soft and vulnerable to protect (Ahmed 2004, p.2). When I asked the skilled slaughtermen who had served time – Cliff, Rob, Doug, Philip, Daniel – why they needed to have a "thick skin" to work in this trade specifically, I never got a clear answer. Some told me that it was a necessary resilience to the types of men who work in this trade – that is, to each other. For others, the root was economic. When they entered the trade in the early 1980s, and until the late 1990s,

slaughter work was a highly paid, closed shop. Cliff, who works at both Westlambs and Eastewes, and Doug who works at Eastewes, entered the trade through their uncles or fathers and would bunk off school to work in the slaughterhouse. Rob, who had no familial connections to the trade, had to prove his worth to the slaughtermen who trained him, working as a cleaner for two years before being taken on as an apprentice. The importance placed on "serving time" as a period in which skins were metaphorically thickened, nuanced the slaughtermen's other statements that "you need to be a certain type of person to work here" or that Philip and Rob were "naturally talented." Their narratives combined ideas of fixity (being naturally gifted or being able to "hack" working in a slaughterhouse) with ideas of impermanence: that skins could be thickened, and skills could be acquired. "Thick skin" as a metaphor, therefore, implied that neither the slaughtermen's "nature" or "culture" were perceived as fixed, but processual.

The first time Philip used the phrase "serving time", I naively asked if he was referring to a prison sentence. "I'm bad but I'm not that bad!" was the response. Beyond the shared idiom, he was describing a period of punishment, discipline, and reform. Slaughtermen shared visceral memories of their treatment by mentors: they were demeaned, shouted at, their lunches were stolen leaving them exhausted and hungry, they were given sloppiest jobs cleaning offal, blood and excrement, and denied breaks while their mentors drank tea and ate biscuits in front of them. Some recalled physical violence for making mistakes, others of verbal abuse and getting "a serious, and I mean serious bollocking." Their recollections, and some of the treatment of Ben, chimed with how abuse is frequently observed in apprenticeships in male-dominated trades and crafts as a means to reinforce hierarchies. Marchand (2010, p.144) describes abuse as "a potent disciplinary tool" in which mentors controlled both knowledge and therefore power. Whether abuse was related to the actual practices of skill and labour or not, it served to reinvest authority and power in the mentor. Furthermore, Marchand (2008) proposes that apprenticeships are about the formation of the person in which the performance of skills become inextricably tied to the apprentice's emerging social identity. Simpson (2006) similarly argues that abuse was a way for a mentor to retain power and knowledge, and the authority to discipline minds and bodies. In these readings, abuse as part of an apprenticeship is less about the

transfer of knowledge, or the acquisition of skill per se, but as a form of social reproduction. In effect, mentors shape social and moral knowledges, views on society, the value of labour and masculinity.

The repetition of abuse was in part, a way to reproduce performances and practices of a type of hegemonic masculinity so Ben would become tough and resilient. In many ways, he needed to have a thick skin to be able to cope with his mentors, more than the nature of the labour. Slaughtermen would share stories of being abused as evidence of their own "real slaughterman" status. The concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; 2005) took Gramsci's concept of hegemony to articulate how dominant power is maintained through coercion rather than force to study the patterns of practice that reproduced the oppression of women. The concept has since been applied to consider embodiments or expressions of power in any given context such as the workplace, and the oppression of men by other men. In particular social formations, certain masculinities are more dominant, more valued, or more persuasive than others (Morgan et. al, 2004, p.172). I was told by the slaughtermen that their mentors "were brutal in those days" when they were being trained. There was always the implication that the cruelty which they now perpetrate as mentors is comparatively softer, because "you wouldn't be allowed to get away with it these days, they were different men, and different times." While serving time was framed as a repetition, "it was done to us, that's how you learn," Ben's mentors often told him that he had it easy and was getting off lightly. Moreso, I got the sense that they did not want to be that cruel.

Herzfeld (1996, p.2) argued the infliction of pain and abuse as part of an apprenticeship emerges as training in "cultural intimacy", of "a cultural identity that is considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality." In particular, for those who might be distanced from national belonging, or progress, such as artisans. Slaughtermen refer to themselves as a "dying breed." They see the sector and public attitudes towards meat changing. Antoni told me that soon all slaughter will be illegal, and that we will need to buy sausages from someone on the street like drugs. While the reproduction of discipline, hierarchy and skill were all part of the process of thickening Ben's skin, I propose that the process was also shaped by intimacy and belonging. Those who

served time spoke about their apprenticeships with nostalgia, a drama with a hero narrative of transformation, where their minds and bodies were reformed. Paul, a now-retired slaughterman in his late sixties, who I met while he was visiting Eastewes, recalled his period of serving time 40 years previous, with such immediate detail and fluency that it seemed impossible that this story had not already been frequently shared. Likewise, Rob knew all Philip's stories about serving time, and vice-versa. As such, stories of serving time were shared between workers within the trade, reproducing their own mythology.

When I asked Paul about the relationship that he had with his mentors, he said he "had the upmost respect for those men, whatever they told me to do, I did it." Once in a slaughter gang, they were a "band of brothers." Paul explains that "for life, I have had their support whether it was financial issues, romantic issues, they were always there for me." Mentors invested in the future of their apprentices with a commitment that they would be part of that future. By serving time and proving themselves, apprentices worked themselves into kinship groups. Patriarchal kinship is one way into the slaughter gang, but it was not a necessity. Wade (2002, p.15) argues that there is movement "between the biological and the social, the given and the developing, the permanent and the changeable, in ways that blur the boundary between them." Similarly, Strathern & Edwards (2000) argue that the divides which have been constructed between social and biological kinship do not represent the complexities of "relatedness" and belonging that emerge between people. They suggest that they are less interested in "what is counted as "biological'" or as "social" than in the power of imagining their intersection" (Strathern & Edwards, 2000, p.225). They propose that the biological and social can merge into each other and create chains of connections and kinship. While "serving time" is ostensibly anachronistic, it creates new relationships of belonging between mentors and apprentice. The reproduction and re-telling of the slaughtermen's own narratives of serving time, and the continuation of this process through Ben, emerge in chains of connection and relatedness between them.

5.5 Conclusion: Learning to Labour

The white slaughtermen told me that "you can't get the men" to work in the trade anymore, but this oversimplified the racial politics and exclusions within the slaughterhouse. What seemed truer, were the subjective perceptions of not being able to get the *right* kinds of men anymore. Through the comparison of two young workers entering the trade, this perception of "right" was constructed in contradictory ways: For Asim, his rightness (or wrongness) was constructed around ideas of essentialised racial difference. However, for Ben, it was only by being in the slaughterhouse that he could *become* the right kind of man.

In the previous chapter, I articulated how white slaughtermen claimed their racist banter was just jokes. I challenged this. I am challenging this again. Racist banter indicated no real difference between the verbal abuse that was invoked in terms of bodily abilities which shaped access to higher wages. Bullying reproduces hegemonic forms of masculinity, and functions to welcome some into positions of dominance, while excluding others. Racist abuse in apprenticeships is qualitatively and affectively different when biological reasoning is given to why racialised bodies cannot do things, cannot share knowledge, and are not physically capable of the work. For both these young men, abuse maintains the existing hierarchy. Ben's abuse was always with a future potential to be someone different. The abuse Asim receives limits his access which maintains a small, but meaningful section of the slaughter line as white and retains the supremacy of white slaughtermen in these positions. As such, my intention has been to demonstrate that words and narratives and the ways in which they imagine and shape bodies, matter in a quite physical sense in the work of boundary maintenance, and in terms of belonging. In the context of an industry that was fragmenting, policing the acquisition of skill protects Ben and his mentors to maintain a hierarchy in the trade.

Willis (1977) presented the social reproduction of classed jobs as a self-reproducing teleology. He asked, "why do working-class boys get working-class jobs?" His answer, "because they want to." Willis argued a continuation of disdain for authority in school, was preparation for the culture of the shop floor or factory, which reproduced the

"working-class," even if the ending was unsatisfactory for the young men he researched. Many of the older slaughtermen were school leavers in the late 1970s, close to where Willis was researching "the lads." Like Willis' lads, the slaughtermen who followed patriarchal lines into the slaughterhouse also misbehaved at school, bunked-off and chased girls, with the promise of work in through their fathers and uncles. Rob struggled at school, he could not settle and misbehaved. Asim did not enjoy school either, he had messed up his exams. However, Rob could forge a path into the trade. Willis has been critiqued for overlooking the gendered and racialised abuse meted out by "the lads" as "banter." For example, "the lads" white masculinities were constructed in relation to, and through the exclusion and abuse of, their Black student peers, Asian co-workers, or their girlfriends (Dinsmore, 2018). Asim and Ben's uneven access to labour, and the fundamentally different intentions of the abuse they received, means that attention to race and gender must be taken seriously. Neither Asim nor Ben's processes of learning to labour, from what I observed, were related to the social reproduction of "the working-class" in a direct sense. However, Asim's exclusion policed his access to labour, and within the slaughterhouse, inequality.

The fact that I can include the variety of Ben's work and the facets of his development in ways that I cannot for Asim, is indicative of how they are treated in the slaughterhouse. Before I met Ben and Asim, both had cut their hands while working. Asim had cut his while eviscerating and been told by Dennis and the owner that he would not be allowed to work with knives again. When I first visited North Hills, Ben had been off for a month. He had sliced right through his thumb while accompanying his mentors to a larger halal slaughterhouse with a moving line during the busy period of Eid Al Adha. He had a wire in his hand and a wonky thumb, but he was adamant that it would not hold him back. He showed off the scar and told me he had ripped up a doctor's note which justified him taking time off to heal. On my last visit to North Hills, Ben had passed all his modules. He was an official slaughterman. His mentors commented that his confidence had grown and that his body had changed as he developed the broad shoulders and arm muscles of a slaughterman. He had shifted from being the embodiment of everything Philip thought was wrong with society into his image of an autonomous, strong, moral man. On my last visit Westlambs, Asim, Adil and Zaf had left. They had been working erratic hours in the aftermath of Brexit and

lockdowns. Zaf had saved up enough money for a new car, and Asim had got a job at a retail park. I do not know what happened to Adil. Asim expressed that working in a slaughterhouse did not offer him any prospects. It was a way of making money for the gym to work on his six-pack or for holidays to Barcelona with his friends. He was amused that I was researching the slaughterhouse, "Like, why would you want to research this? You're researching us lot?! Only people that are here are mental or couldn't get a job anywhere else, you actually want to research this shit? Ya mad?" That I was potentially going to become of "doctor" of something by researching his workplace was almost absurd to him, rejecting any status to the labour and those who do it.

Asim's cut was used as evidence to prove a fallacy reproduced by the white slaughtermen, that his body was never going to be capable of slaughter work. Ben's cut was an obstacle for him to overcome, to prove his resilience. It reflected more broadly the ways in which white skilled slaughtermen invoked their metaphorical and phenotypical "skins." The metaphorical thickness of Ben's skin as a marker that he has weathered the storm of his apprenticeship. Ben was treated as a young man who could be emptied out, broken down and filled back up in the image of the men who trained him. In comparison to Asim, Ben was imagined as an unfixed, malleable mind and body by his mentors, through which moral and gendered social values of how to be real slaughterman could be reproduced. Asim's skin was a fabricated marker that his body was already too overstuffed with narratives of biological and cultural fixity to be unfixed. Both of their skins were injected with metaphors and narratives. While it was never explicitly said, it was implicit, for Ben's skin to become thick, it already had to be white.

As discussed, literature on apprenticeships generally positions that bodies arrive to be inculcated with social, moral, and skilled knowledges through being situated in their environment or through "communities of practice." I have argued that the transfer of social and skilled knowledges needs to be rethought if the bodies and minds of workers are imagined as ontologically different, and the "communities of practice" are segregated across racialised lines. If becoming enskilled is policed or enabled through racialised discourses, the assumption that nature and culture mutually constitute each other as bodies learn and change, erases the potency of racialised discourses in

shaping bodies. In contradiction to the fixity with which the slaughtermen at Westewes communicated and reproduced ideas of essentialised natural and cultural difference between themselves and Asim; Ben's apprenticeship emerged as a more fluid equivocation between nature and culture, where his body was imagined as unfixed and processual. Wade's (2002, p.122) main intervention into the unresolved understanding of race as either bodily and natural or cultural and social, is that bodies are not stable, fixed entities. He contends that claims that race is fixed in the body as natural misrepresents biology – both as a discipline and a phenomenon. Biology is fundamentally about processes and development.

Ben's apprenticeship reproduces a sense of relatedness between him and his mentors. For Asim, the racialised discourses constructed both his imagined culture and nature as permanent, more so, they were described as fixing each other. Wade (2002, p.15) argues that "if permanence is involved in racial identifications, perhaps we should look more at social processes, how these notions of permanence came about rather than assuming it is automatic result of a reference to biology. The slaughtermen's narratives erase Asim's as socially, and biologically part of the slaughterhouse environment, as if he cannot be shaped by it. Conversely, through the thickening of Ben's metaphorical skin, he is inculcated into a kinship group which is not dependent on biological reproduction, but social ties. Fictions, narratives and re-told stories about white and Asian bodies and minds become social fact. In the next chapter, I will focus in more detail on "imagination" as a fundamental modality though which difference and belonging are reproduced.

Chapter 6: Telling stories in slaughterhouses: The intimacies and distances of narrative imagination

6.1 Introduction

It was the twentieth anniversary of 9/11, and for a week there had been countless programmes and news reports revisiting and re-telling the events that transpired on the day that four passenger planes were hijacked by terrorists in America. A political documentary on the BBC called *9/11 Inside the President's War Room,* showed the behind-the-scenes of footage of then President George W. Bush, as he first heard that a passenger plane had crashed into one of the World Trade Towers in New York. The documentary then followed the next twelve hours of the President's life "as it happened" infilled with commentary from the now older Bush, Military Commanders, and once-Secretaries of State. That week, I was visiting North Hills, the rural slaughterhouse in the North West. Both Philip and I had each watched the documentary earlier in the week, and it emerged as a topic of conversation on the slaughter line.

"George W. Bush!" Philip proclaimed, putting on a loud Southern drawl. He had been utterly fascinated by the programme. "I'm going to watch it again; I want to make sure I didn't miss any of the military detail." Even though he knew I too had watched it, he was telling me scene-by-scene what happened, which I recall here through his emplotment and tone, if not concretely verbatim:

> The two planes had hit the towers, right, but there were two more they didn't know about yet. Bush was taken to the White House in Air Force One, to address the nation. America was under attack! By this point, they knew there was another hijacked plane, the one that got overpowered, and they thought it was on the way to the White House. So, they took him to a bunker somewhere in Nebraska or Kansas. But Bush said, 'No way. As the President of America, I am not addressing *the nation* from a bunker.' Then he went straight to New York – Ground Zero – and got his hands dirty, he got involved on the front line, the President! He said he was going to

> Kick *their* Ass. It was meticulous, the planning was meticulous, how they handled it all. They must have been prepped, of course, best military in the world, but to have put an operation into action at a time like that, was outstanding. *Imagine* how you'd feel, just *imagine* that. Well, it puts tingles down my spine, the buzz of it. I can feel them now, just thinking about it. Being in Air Force One, the most powerful man in the world. George W. Bush.

I had not paid attention to the military detail in the documentary. I was absorbed by how meekly Bush came across now, as he reflected back on the emotional turmoil ignited by the events that transpired that day. I saw someone who looked weighed down by the decisions they had made. Ashamed, I thought, for making a rash rallying call about "Kicking their Ass," announcing a "War on Terror" and transforming global politics for my lifetime. To me, as it became apparent that Bush had no idea what was going on that day, his decisions seemed even more reckless. I remembered where I had been on 11th September 2001, backpacking in Vietnam with friends, and finding a TV in a hotel lobby so we could watch the news. Outside the world continued as normal, and we wondered how we were going to get home safely. I remembered being at the Stop the War Protest two years later with a sense of dread about the future, before the UK and America invaded Iraq as part of a "War on Terror," and how I felt hatred towards this man who had bombed civilians. And now, he was a softly spoken Grandpa in an armchair, a fallible human. It disarmed me, and that annoyed me. I thought about telling Philip that I had been at the protest but decided against it. So, I stayed mostly silent with my alternative interpretation, as he took the floor.

Philip was telling me a story about a story. The documentary makers had constructed a narrative combining old footage and commentary: the paralysis on Bush's face as he sat in front of a classroom full of children as the news was whispered in his ear; the morning jog that had started his day when his biggest concern was how fast he had run 4K; killing a fly that buzzed around him that seemed to frazzle his last nerve, before he addressed the nation. It was a "narrative", as Ricoeur (1991, p.21) would define: it contained emplotment, "a synthesis of heterogeneous elements", and this synthesis formed "the plot [which] serves to make one story out of the multiple incidents or…transforms the many incidents into one story." Further, as Ricoeur (1991, p.22)

alerts us, as a narrative it had a dual temporal identity, "characterised as something that endures and remains across that which passes and flows away". We were no longer watching the documentary, but the narrative had endured within our imaginations, we were both talking about it (some more than others) and from which spoken, silent and imagined retellings and new narratives emerged.

Philip and I had *imagined* a different meaning to the plot by stitching ourselves into the sequencing. We had embellished it with our own stories, memories, fears and desires. These in turn were related to our subjective, gendered, classed, national and political identities and our experiences. Or to put it another way, the narratives we had imagined were situated: Philip connected to values of masculinity, the nation, heroic presidents, and military activity. I had connected to questions about the legitimacy of the War on Iraq, and suspicions about men in power. As Somers & Gibson (1994, p.2) highlight,

> People make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

This was not simply hermeneutic variation, that we had different interpretations of an event, which emerged as a web of meanings (Geertz, 1973). We had each "anchored" and "transported" ourselves to different places, past, future, and present (Andrews, 2014). Philip imagined how it would have felt to be a passenger on Air Force One; and even of how it would have felt to be the President. He imagined it so intensely that simply re-invoking the narrative, could render tingles to travel down his spine, as he was otherwise occupied skinning a sheep. I travelled into my own past, to a place where I felt fear, dread, rage and irritation.

I introduce this vignette and brief discussion of narrative to bring to the fore the significance of imagination in the narratives we tell ourselves and others, about ourselves and others (Andrews, 2014). Further, how our imaginations are shaped by our own situatedness (Stoetzler & Yuval Davies, 2010). These are the central themes

for this chapter. In particular, I address the ways in which narrative, imagination and situatedness relate to the discursive constructions of Whiteness, Britishness and Muslimness; and how these in turn shape the potential and limits for dialogue between workers and slaughtermen to resist or reproduce racialised hierarchies and difference. Narrative, imagination and situatedness matter, because through Philip's mediation of the scenes of the documentary and how they had affected him, and against a comparison with my own and how they had affected me, it was as if we had not watched the same programme at all. His retelling was not my retelling, and neither would match neatly onto the film. And yet, as I have shown in the previous chapters, these discursive, imaginative narratives create racialised hierarchies, whether based on the value of labour, respectability, or the abilities of worker's bodies. Exploring the ways in which imaginations are situated, brings to bear both the potential and limitations for ways in which both intimacy and distance is reproduced between slaughtermen with each other, with me, and with local workers.

Molly Andrews (2014, p.1) takes imagination as the central focus on her analysis of narratives. She argues that narrative and imagination are "integrally tied to one another; that they are so is immediately clear to anyone who stops to think about stories real and imagined, about the past or in a promised, or feared, future" where "the coupling of narrative and imagination brings into focus: (1) the salience of, and dynamic nature of, the temporal; (2) a mediation between the real and the not-real; and (3) the complexity of the construction of 'the other". That is, she moves beyond an analysis of narrative as a form, towards a framework which encompasses how we construct ourselves and others through imagination. As such, narrative imagination "both anchors and transports us" between ourselves and others, past, present, and future. It is a form of "time travel." Through Philip's retelling of a narrative, and, in comparison to my own, the temporal space of the slaughterhouse was dynamic, we travelled elsewhere; we mediated the real events of 9/11 through our own situatedness: knowledge, experience, desires and memories. Moreso, in Philip's retelling, he was inviting me to "anchor and transport" into *his* reading, so that I could engage with how he felt, and for him to express his values associated with nationhood and masculinity. It was an invitation to a kind of intimacy, to see through and with his perspective. Further, we had each constructed Bush as a particular type of person, an

"Other" and that person was fundamentally not the same in each of our imaginings: he imagined a hero, I imagined a criminal. At the same time, as I was there in person, and in writing and analysing this conversation, I am constructing self/other boundaries between myself and Philip and specifying the gendered, political, and moral differences between us. I have made explicit that we were not imagining from the same place, and that my recollection will always be based on a partial connection (Strathern, 1991). As Nussbaum (2008) argues, narrative imagination can engender an empathetic ability to imagine others and places not travelled and empathise with difference. But, narrative imagination can also shore up borders and boundaries.

Stoetzler and Yuval Davies (2010, p.315-316) argue that imaginations are situated. They build on the feminist concepts of situated knowledge and standpoint theory, which both challenge "the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere." Rather, we all see from somewhere, a situatedness, which shapes what we know. As such, situated knowledge – what we know and how we know – cannot simply be reduced to our social locations of "race," gender, or class. As Yuval Davies (2006) expresses elsewhere, our identities are forms of narrative, they are not fixed. For example, the differences in the ways Philip and I had experienced and retold the narrative was not simply explained through the situatedness of knowledge based social location: that I am white, middle class, a "lefty", the kind of person who travelled Vietnam on my gap year. Or, that Philip is a man, who lives in a rural area, works in a skilled manual trade, the kind of person that is into military operations. Furthermore, Stoetzler and Yuval Davies (2010, p.320) argue that standpoint theory and situatedness do not explain "the transitions from positionings to practices, practices to standpoints, knowledge, meaning, values and goals, actually take place". Just because we fit certain types, or have done certain things, does not account for how situated knowledges transform into actions and values. They offer "situated imagination" as the missing link. Situated imagination has "two seemingly contradictory relationships with knowledge; on the one hand, imagination constructs its meanings while, on the other hand, it stretches and transcends them" (Stoetzler and Yuval Davies, 2010, p.316). Importantly, for all these theorists cited, imagination is envisaged as a modality through which radical possibilities for transformation and connection, and the shoring up of borders and boundaries co-exist.

In this chapter, I focus on a series of monologues and dialogues between the slaughtermen with each other, or with me, such as the example I opened with. In the first section, I focus on a series of conversations between white slaughtermen in which they are telling and retelling stories: monologues shared around a kitchen table, or singing songs to each other on the slaughter line. I argue that though sharing and repeating stories with each other, they transform the slaughterhouses into densely storied spaces to create intimacies with each other (Stewart, 1996). Slaughtermen imaginatively "anchor" and "transport" into each other's present, past and future to construct a sense of shared belonging within the ostensibly functional slaughterhouse, and to each other. While these are imaginative, these destinations of "time travel" are collectively known, comfortable and repeated.

In the second section, I focus on moments of dialogue between the white slaughtermen or workers with people they have Othered. In the two previous chapters I have demonstrated how racialised, classed and gendered narratives structure the workforce. However, what the slaughtermen "imagine" about the "Other" has rarely been discursively challenged through dialogue by either myself, or the other workers. On the contrary, words have mattered to the extent that they reproduce uneven racialised and classed inequalities. During fieldwork, I only occasionally offered gentle challenges to these othering narratives. Occasionally someone has spoken back to a way they have been abjected, for example, Antoni contesting that he is "using the country", in chapter 4. But these were infrequent, and in the example of Antoni, othering Muslims facilitated his challenge. Retorts most commonly existed within the register of banter. In this section, I include two dialogues which interrupted the trajectories of white slaughtermen's narrative imaginations about the Other: a British Asian slaughterman, Ahmed, who has been called "P***", but replies that his parents are from Gujarat; and a Turkish Muslim vet who does not fit the white slaughtermen's narrative of an oppressed Muslim woman. By analysing each of these conversations, I highlight the tensions which emerge through the ways in which imagination can prohibit intimacies emerging from dialogue. Even when the white slaughtermen express care and interest in their interlocutors, there is a blockage in negotiating what is heard, with what they already imagine about them.

In the introduction and methods chapter, I challenged the analysis that slaughterhouses can be homogenised as "places without narrative." On the contrary, in chapters 4 and 5 I have demonstrated how narratives are fundamental strategies through which the white slaughterman express both their sense belonging to the trade, each other, and the nation. Simultaneously, they construct their identities as respectable white slaughterman through narrative, in which their Asian and Polish co-workers are positioned in co-constituted classed and racialised hierarchies. In this chapter, I therefore build on these analyses, to demonstrate how imagination is a fundamental component of how narratives are told and received.

6.2 Intimate monologues

Once they have finished slaughtering sheep in North Hills, Philip, Rob, Antoni and Ben step outside into the yard, and head to the kitchen, with jackets pulled over their overalls. It is in a small container perched on the edge of the slaughter unit, next to a small country lane which runs past the slaughterhouse. Philip and Rob are usually the first inside to heat up their porridge in the microwave. Antoni hangs around outside for a few minutes inhaling his vape. Ben, ever the apprentice whose work is never done, fills the teapot and puts the toast on. Ian, the owner will bring cooked bacon from the butcher shop. The clanging and shouting of the last few hours of work in the slaughterhouse descends to the silence of hungry people and the polite noises of crockery and cutlery. On my first morning, I was not sure where to sit, or if I should sit down at all. The silence felt heavy and awkward as heads and bodies settled into the etiquette of asking to be passed the butter. In the slaughterhouse I would never dare ask Philip to pass me anything, but here, I might need to ask him to pass me the ketchup. His authority was still tacit in this communal break out space.

Talk would slowly start up, about orders or who was bringing in sheep the next day, gossip about local shepherds, or something about the world outside that needed to be put to rights. On the first morning Philip had asked,

> You're not one of them vegans then? They're everywhere. It's the internet and social media…It's given people a platform to share ideas, they share

> these ideas and then they get momentum. Like, that Jamie Oliver is a prick, telling people not to eat meat…Now, if you say anything against the vegans, everyone calls you a racist.

He quickly realised the conflation between racism and meat eating did not make sense. "I'm using the word racist as an *example,*" he corrected himself. It was a slip, but for Philip, vegans, anti-racists, and social media users, were evidence of a society that was changing for the worse. They were combined into a narrative which made sense to him. It was an inverse of Anderson's (1983) "Imagined Community", where people imagine and invent national togetherness through a standardised language and media images. The new standards, images and discourses did not celebrate who he was – a British, white slaughterman. He felt he no longer belonged to an imagined national community.

This sense of being both out of place, while moralising perceived social changes in Britain was expressed through retellings of events when Philip had been confronted with someone, or something, that had outraged him. While at the kitchen table, Philip remembered there had been a time he had shouted at someone in a shop. He went quiet, wracking brain for the next story as evidence of the failures of the modern world. "Where was I? Where would I have been?" Finally, he shouted out, "mobile phone shop!" He then continued, "I got this new phone, with 100 gigabytes on it. I didn't want 100 fucking gigabytes, but this smelly 'rag head' told me that *I had to*, to get this deal." There was some discomfort across the table when Philip said "rag head" – a derogatory term for someone wearing a headscarf or turban. I looked at Rob and Ian, who gave me a look back to acknowledge that they knew Philip had used a racial slur, and shook their heads, while they simultaneously smirked. Philip carried on, "so I get back from holiday, opened the post and got my first bill and it had two fucking phone numbers on it. They'd also given me this free...laptop, you know one of those…." miming the shape of square with his hands, "that you can text off." "A tablet?" Rob offered. Philip continued, "why have I got two fucking numbers?... I couldn't sleep I was so angry…I was there at 9 o'clock the next morning knocking on the door." When the shop opened, Philip explained that he demanded to speak to the manager, and then said that the "smelly P***" should get reprimanded. He was even more infuriated when he was told that he was given the laptop as a "fucking goodwill

gesture, but they had done wrong, so they needed to make it right." He was irate at the use of customer service language, of deals and gestures and the woman that had tied him up this deal. Philip knew he was stretching his own story as he was re-telling it, embellishing with racial slurs which he admitted he did not say at the time.

Salmon, Reissman and Tamboukou (2013) argue that stories require the consequential linking of events connected by "and then" moments. This "narrative shaping" entails imposing a meaningful pattern and a temporal ordering on what would otherwise be random and disconnected. Philip's holiday, the phone deals, and the Asian woman were all presented as meaningful pattern. As such, the "ands" in Philip's story not only connected a sequence of events, and how he reacted in each moment, but that an Asian woman, represented through a slur, a term of abjection, was stitched into the meaning of the story through emplotment. It was as if Asians in Britain were part of an unwanted change, like vegans, anti-racists, mobile shops and being coerced into a phone deal he did not want. They were part of the same narrative, a society that does not make sense to him, but which he can moralise, by framing them as unwanted or in need of correction, punishment, or control.

Philip was performing this narrative to people he knew, and who knew him. Rob, Ben and Ian were all laughing in response. It was easy for those of us at the table to imagine the scenario because Philip was performing towards his character. We had all seen Philip "go off on one" in the slaughterhouse. Philip was also mocking himself; he knows he has got a short fuse. The relationship between speaker and listener has been central to analysis of how meaning is constructed through language and narrative. For Bakhtin, "language always ultimately orients to the other, it is primordially dialogical" (Robinson, 2012) and depends on a relation between speaker and listener existing in the context in which they are communicating. Bakhtin categorises speech as spheres of human activity with innumerable but known types, known as speech genres. Speech genres are chosen by the speaker, depending on the conditions of their environment, and the context of who they are speaking to (Bakhtin, 1986). In this instance, Philip had chosen a "speech genre," a monologic rant. He had done so in the knowledge that in this context of breakfast at the kitchen table, and with this audience, he could express his disenchantment with the "modern world" and the presence of Asians in Britain. It was a practice of shared intimacy with his co-workers, through which his

story was received in a way in which it was intended. As listeners around the table who knew Philip, we could imagine – anchor and transport – into his narrative. Hornsby (1995, p.134) argues that,

> When there is reciprocity among people, they recognise one another's speech as it is meant to be taken: An audience who participates reciprocally does not merely (1) understand the speaker's words but also, in (2) taking the words as they are meant to be taken, satisfies a condition for the speaker's having done the communicative thing (s)he intended.

It was implicit that Philip could say these things in this kitchen with only white people, where he would not be explicitly moralised or censored. Bakhtin (1986, p.60) deciphers that utterances are spoken and learnt in context and particular historical moments and carry with them "utterances of others." We can use words because they have been given to us through dialogue, and because we speak with addressivity to another. Language, therefore, only has meaning in action where "the speaker's evaluative attitude towards the subject of his speech…determines the utterance" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.84). This was made clear by Philip, who admitted he did not use the racial slurs in the shop. Ian and Rob's side glances acknowledged that using such terms is not acceptable beyond the slaughterhouse. It is a place where what Philip constructs as the hegemonic discourse of political correctness can be talked back to or disobeyed.

6.3 Narrative imaginations as everyday intimacy

At Eastewes, the halal slaughterhouse in the East Midlands, the white slaughtermen and white local workers are deep mid-shift, and the line is in full flow. Sheep hang at every point on the line, and plastic bins are filled with organs and heads. Wayne, a skilled white slaughterman was at the front of the slaughter line. The local white workers were further down the line. We were chatting about our plans for the evening, my drive back to London and whether I was going to get a takeaway, and his plans to see his family. A couple of piano notes from the start of a ballad came on the radio, and Wayne turned his head with a grin to face the fronting crew, and started singing along, "*Somebody said you got a new friend, does she love you better…than I*

can?" He abandoned the sheep he was skinning, and stepped into the middle of the room, and started mimicking the movements of a conductor, to encourage the local workers to join him, "*Yeah I know it's stupid, but I've just gotta see it for myself*…." I turn to see two of the local workers take his lead and join in. Three of them were now in chorus, "*I'm in the corner, watching you kiss her, oh ohhhhhhhhhh…I'm right over here, why can't you see me, oh oh ohhhhhhhhh…*" Wayne, was clutching his fist to his chest, and dropped to his knees. "*And I'm giving it my all, but I'm not the guy you're taking home, ooh...I keep dancing on my own*" Wayne sang from his belly, seemingly emotionally invested in every word and note. By this point, the slaughtermen and local workers were collectively in full song. Only two men were silent, one of the slaughtermen who was shaking his head, and Hashir, the halal slaughterman who was looking on bemused. I then realised that Craig was in fact being serenaded by his colleagues. Unexpectedly, the whole performance affected me, and I got choked up.

Once it had quietened down, I asked why Craig had been serenaded. Wayne leaned in closer, and shared, "Basically, Craig was seeing this woman…He spent the weekend at her house. He had gone home to get some things and when he came back, there was no answer at the door." Unable to get into the house, he decided to get on a ladder to go through a window, at which point he saw the woman in bed with another man. "He'd only been gone for a couple of hours; he was absolutely gutted." Wayne was shaking his head in empathy at the scenario. There was a shared humour with the empathy, too. In knowledge of the event, some workers had taken to calling Craig Fireman Sam, a children's TV cartoon character, who saves the day in each episode, often with the assistance of a ladder.

A similar performance happened in North Hills. In between my visits, Antoni's relationship with his partner had broken down. However, Rob, who also works at North Hills, had told me about this, during a visit to Westlambs. The breakup had been messy, I was told. When I arrived at North Hills, I was anticipating Antoni might be having a hard time. A song came on the radio, opening with the lyrics "*to love, to love*" and Antoni started singing the two words, "*to love*" loudly, on repeat, while looking over at Rob and Philip. Philip took the cue and shouted back, "I told you; I told you should have left her in December." The song came on the radio frequently during the

shift, and each time we heard the words, Antoni sang along, while looking at Philip and Rob to see if they had acknowledged his call for attention.

Like the stories shared around a kitchen table, these singing performances were moments through which the slaughtermen were "anchoring" and "transporting" into each other's worlds. In an ethnography of the relationship between popular music played in factories, Korczynski (2014, p.7) challenges previous analysis that pop music in the workplace is played firstly to instrumentalise workers and increase their productivity, and secondly, that engaging with pop music with co-workers by singing along, is a false type of sociality. Through Small's (1998) concept of "musiking", which refers to the social practices invoked and shaped around music, Korczynski proposes "multinous musiking" as a way in which workers prevent their senses from being dominated by the monotonous and alienating nature of repetitive work. However, in the examples I have given, engaging with pop songs on the radio went beyond sensory distractions, or background sounds lubricating productivity. It was the narrative in the song lyrics which offered moments of personalisation by connecting them to intimate stories which local workers and slaughtermen had already shared with each other. It was a localised form of addressivity, where *only* these men would know what was meant through the language and speech acts of singing songs. Homogeneous, impersonal, globalised pop songs became locally storied. For Andrews (2014), narrative imagination enables us to imagine other's present, past and future. These interruptions into song might not seem imaginative, because they are repetitive, every day and mundane. Yet, through them, co-workers are anchoring and transporting into each other's affective worlds. As such, I argue that imagining does not need to be fantastical, or unreal. It can be predictable. Telling the same stories repeatedly created an intimacy between workers.

However, these intimacies between workers did not occur in the same way at Westlambs where the workforce was racially mixed, and the slaughter line was segregated between white and Asian workers. For example, one morning, Dennis was singing along to a pop song on the radio: "*I'm too sexy for my shirt, too sexy for my shirt so sexy it huuuuuuurts*" Dennis's arms were flapping by his side, his feet sliding along the slaughterhouse floor. Rob joined him with a bum wiggle. Both were old enough to remember the chart-topping hit, "*too sexy for Japan, New York and*

Milaaaaan!" I looked to Farzad, further down the line, who was laughing, stamping his feet, and shouting whoops of encouragement in approval. Asim and Zaf looked on with the horror of seeing uncles dancing at a wedding. Liam, the youngest slaughterman, was also looking on judgementally as Dennis tried to get him to join in, to which he responded, "before my time, I'm not old like you." It was a rare moment at Westlambs where age-based popular culture references emerged as a stronger point of both difference and connection between the slaughtermen and workers than racialisation. But, this moment of fraternisation passed as soon as the song finished, the conviviality did not linger.

Building on the previous chapters, where I demonstrated that narratives construct identities, belonging and hierarchies, I now extend this framing. Stories, and more specifically, repeating stories which were already known, enabled slaughtermen to "localise" the slaughterhouses, their relations with other slaughtermen, and sometimes local workers, as they moved between sites. In *A Space on the Side of the Road*, Stewart (1996) focusses on the telling and retelling of stories, as both an ethnographic practice and a way in which people narrate localised spaces to create meaning. Stewart's ethnography takes place in the Appalachian hollers, a place marginalised and abandoned through post-industrialisation which she calls a place "on the side of the road." In places on the margins, Stewart argues that the telling and retelling of stories form a lived, cultural poetic. These localised stories are differentiated from the monolithic, overarching narratives of nations – of progress, modernity, industrialisation – where for Stewart there are no stories. She tells us that meaning passes through narrative – whether dialogic or monologic – through stories people tell themselves and others. Stewart (1996, p.10) argues that the practice of telling and (re)telling stories is:

> Not as representation of a purely objective linguistic reality but an ideological strategy…which traces forms in their social and political use. It is an effort to evoke some of the density and texture of expressive forms that voice a cultural poetic embedded in a way of life and the politics of its constant subversion and reproduction in the face of national and transnational forces.

Stewart moves beyond formulaic analyses of narratives, such as identifying emplotment and sequencing between heterogeneous elements, towards an analysis of how places and things become "storied." This storying constructs localised places and culture in ways that is always unfinished and unfixed. Stewart (1996, p.205) argues that spaces become dense with stories, "in which people can make something of things through mimesis, remembrance and desire. This is because places are fundamentally a re-telling that carries the weight of all the previous re-tellings and begins again."

Slaughterhouses, it could be said, are literally places on the side of the road, marginalised and intentionally often erased in monolithic narratives of the nation, civility and morality. They are places constructed through progress, civilising missions and nation building as a cultural "Other." However, the "cultural poetics" of these spaces, like the hollers, is not shaped only in relation to being constructed as the Other to modernity's binaries. For the slaughtermen who spend their working weeks at slaughterhouses, they become places layered with stories. Though, in this instance it is the slaughtermen who themselves who are "storied." Strathern and Edwards (2000, p.226) propose that "constructing chains of association" such as long histories of connections to a place, or the people who live there can "enlarge their own sense of belonging." For example, a retired worker visited Eastewes, and shared a story about when Cliff had run over a muntjac on the way to a slaughterhouse twenty years ago, and they retell the story back to each other. An older meat inspector, working at North Hills remembers a slaughterman Philip used to know at a knacker's yard. They both a recalled a story this slaughterman had told them about a white horse which had been sent to slaughter, and how this slaughterman had started singing a song about a white horse. Philip and vet both sang the song about a white horse back to each other, even though neither of them had been there when this incident happened 40 years previously. These narratives shared between the slaughtermen, who have moved around throughout their careers, had as Ricoeur (1991, p.22) defined, a "dual temporal identity", "characterised as something that endures and remains across that which passes and flows away." These stories remain as the slaughtermen move around, or even retire, through the re-tellings of others. Collectively, as a mobile amorphous crew these stories bind them to the past, the present, the future and each other. These

moments of storytelling resist and subvert the framings through which slaughterhouses have been constructed as "placeless" or "without narrative."

6.4 Dialogic Interruptions

"Actually, my family are from Gujarat"

At break time in Westlambs, the white and Asian workers and slaughtermen separate into two kitchens. The white British slaughtermen crudely called these the "white kitchen" and the "P***" kitchen, telling me, "They've got their own kitchen," a move of Othering and segregation that denoted I, as white woman, belonged in the we/our category in the "white" kitchen. In the "white" kitchen both the slaughtermen and the local white workers sat together and ate their lunch. At the end of one shift as the slaughterhouse emptied out, I went to say bye to Asim and Zaf, and found them alone in the kitchen I had been told was not for me. As I stood at the door, Asim told me, "This is our kitchen! You need to go to the white kitchen!" with a smirk. "Am I really not allowed here?" I asked, hovering by the door, "Nah, you can come in" and offered to roll me a cigarette. "So, who makes the rules then?" I asked. Asim explained that "they've got their own kitchen, so we've got ours." At break time, the segregation is adhered to almost without resistance. I never left the "white kitchen" worried that I would make a scene by crossing over the corridor. When I asked the owner, Adam, he told me that the workers had "naturally organised themselves like that." My experience was that this was no natural organisation, but one which was continually reproduced through active exclusionary dialogues and interactions that marked the "white kitchen" as a hostile space for Asian workers (Ahmed, 2007)

The "white kitchen" is the access point to the toilet, lockers, and overalls, so all workers have to pass through this space. The slaughtermen would use these moments as opportunities to reassert the racialisation of the space. One morning as Zaf walked through the kitchen, Doug flapped his ham sandwich in his face and bragged "nice bit of pork", took a bite and chewed into a fixed grin. Zaf nodded and carried on walking. On another morning, Liam had been given a birthday cake by the owner, which he was

sharing out with the local white workers and slaughtermen. The owner had written Liam's name on the box, with some x's for kisses, which all the other workers were teasing him about. He cut the cake open, and inside coloured chocolate sweets spilled out to a chorus of "oohs" and "ahhs." Asim walked through the kitchen, curious to see what all the fuss was about. Liam looked up, "do you want a bit of halal cake, no pork products", with a smirk. Cake, as a food, is not associated with religious dietary laws. Liam's comment felt spiteful – turning something both celebratory and innocuous into an object through which to mark difference. Asim laughed it off and left, without any cake.

One breaktime, Ahmed, the halal slaughterman, disregarded this segregation. Ahmed starts his break earlier. His position at the front of the slaughter line means he is usually the first to finish when break time is called. He walked into the "white kitchen" and sat down on a chair by the lockers. Ahmed is already treated with an inkling more respect by the slaughtermen, because of his position as an itinerant, skilled worker. I was already in the kitchen, taking a break. Ahmed and I chatted about how many sheep had been killed already, before the other workers and slaughtermen began to filter in. Doug walked over and squared up to Ahmed, towering over him, and shouted "that's a seat for white people" smiling as he bought his face closer to Ahmed's. Ahmed sat, looking at Doug, but not moving. "It's not for P***s, you need to go to the P*** kitchen." Doug was smirking. The outburst was performed in the register of banter, as if it was "just for jokes." Ahmed didn't flinch or appear threatened, reciprocating the performance as banter. Ahmed laughed and responded, "I'm not a P***, actually, my family are from Gujarat." Doug was taken aback and did not respond. Ahmed stayed on the chair, and everyone got on with their lunch in the same space. I sat next to Ahmed, and Cliff then asked me, not Ahmed. "You don't mind if we say P***, do you Jess?" It was not a question that I was comfortable answering, neither was it a question that I felt gave me much choice about how to answer. "I've heard you say all sorts of things." My response was an attempt to save myself from conflict, I did not say, yes, so I was complicit in the continued repetition of this racialised slur. Ahmed, like me, did not obstruct the use of the term P***, he bypassed it. Perhaps he accepted it as "banter." It was only me, the white woman, who got asked if she minded.

The term P*** is a specifically British term, connected to Empire and the racisms encountered by South Asian immigrants following postcolonial migrations to Britain. The term P***, I was told by the slaughtermen, was just banter. As discussed, this racial slur was frequently used by the white slaughterman for any of their co-workers who had brown skin, whether local British Asian of Pakistani heritage or Pakistani. The "P***s" were homogenised into a category narrated as singularly oppositional to the white workers. The term was not necessarily used to refer to Pakistan. When Ahmed had arrived in the kitchen and been told "this is for white people," P*** was used as a catch all racialised term to express that he did not belong in the white space. Brah (1996, p.10) recalls the moment that she arrived in Britain in the 1970s, as a student from America, and before that, Uganda (and importantly, not from Pakistan) and the first time she was called "P***", she writes,

> Britain's imperial history had already 'situated' me…I was now constituted within the discourse 'Paki' as a racialised insider/outsider, a post-colonial subject constructed and marked…The discourse of Paki echoed colonial encounters. But it was not a narrative about 'natives' out there, as it had been during the British Raj, but rather it signified the inferiorised Other right here at the fountain head of 'Britishness.'

Brah refers to P*** as a racist discourse and a narrative, yet it is simultaneously a lazy term; one that is historically rooted in Empire and remade in a "diaspora space." It is a term which erases South Asian's complex lived realities or how identities change over time. Rather, the term transforms those to whom it is ascribed into "an inferiorised collective subject" (Brah, 1996, p.10). Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that there is a "stickiness" to the word P***. Sticky signs accumulate narratives of abjection associated with outsiders and immigrants. Ahmed the slaughterman had challenged Doug on the etymology of P*** as relating to Pakistan, rather than a generic racialised slur for South Asians in Britain. His response implied that there was a history to this word. Further, Ahmed subtly mocked and belittled Doug's ignorance, and "unstuck" himself from the slur. "He speaks four languages" Cliff chimed in, again speaking through Ahmed, to me. "Which languages do you speak" I asked, directing the question back to Ahmed. "I speak Arabic, Urdu, English and Guajarati" Ahmed explained. "Urdu and Arabic are the same though, aren't they?"

Cliff asked Ahmed. "No, they are not", Ahmed gently offered: "Urdu isn't really from any place, it doesn't have a country, it comes from lots of places. And Arabic is like Latin, it's not the spoken language so much as the classical written language." Ahmed's explanation was eloquent and analytical. He looked for comparisons which he thought Cliff would know, to make a clear, measured point. "Yeah, but can you write them all?" Cliff persisted. Ahmed again graciously treated the knocking down of his capabilities as a neutral question. "I can write Arabic, English and Urdu, I'm not so good at writing in Guajarati, that's the mother tongue." "They don't all have a proper alphabet though", Cliff told him. Ahmed again corrected Cliff, clarifying that the languages do have alphabets, but the characters, the script, is different to English. Cliff lost interest at this point, he had attempted to discredit Ahmed on the most granular form of written language, characters, and that had not worked. He did not seem to know how to continue the dialogue, so he changed the subject.

Cliff's version of a proper alphabet denoted the Roman/Latin alphabet related to the English language. He was persistent in trying to explain the languages which Ahmed spoke through the perceived order of the English language. Cliff's testing of Ahmed emerged as a form of "orientalism," defined by Said (1978) as the ways in which western discourse imagined and constructed the East as lacking the order. Said argued that these discourses were rooted in colonial ideologies which constructed binary differences by "orientalising" – stigmatising, eroticising, or infantilising Others in the East as medieval, backward, and timelessly stuck in an uncivilised past. Cliff was imposing this imagined strangeness onto Ahmed. That he speaks more than one language with "unreal" alphabets casts the languages, and their speaker, as irrational. That there were so many languages, it seemed, made each one less legitimate for Cliff. Being able to speak four languages is an asset, but Cliff treated it as a cause for curiosity and strangeness. The dialogue between Ahmed, Cliff and Doug could have been an exercise in challenging their assumptions about Ahmed. In this exchange, there was no real shift in the negative associations of the word P***.

Cliff was attempting to understand Ahmed's multilingual capabilities back through the register of English language as orderly and proper. Cliff's imagination was "situated" through British colonial constructions of "the East" as irrational. As Stoetzler & Yuval Davies (2010, p.324-325) argue, "imagination, like knowledge,

does not come out of nothingness, but is a creative synthesis which emanates from a location" and as such our situatedness is fundamental in shaping what we are able to experience, perceive and know in the first place. As such, they assert that imagination is "Janus-faced: The imagination that allows for emancipation and border crossing is the same faculty that constructs and fixes the borders: the faculty itself is bordered." Further, this was curtailing the potential for Cliff to imaginatively "anchor" and "transport" into the narrative which Ahmed was sharing. For Cliff, envisaging Britain/England as the centre congealed into a blockage, a bordered imagination which rendered him silent. The irony was not lost, that this whole dialogue was of course, in English.

Fundamental to Said's Orientalism (1978) was that Western discourse shaped the boundaries through which those who had been Orientalised could imagine themselves in relation to the West. Ahmed, in contrast, was talking comparatively about both European and South Asian languages. He translated his multilingual capabilities against European comparisons so they would be relatable for Cliff. It was an attempt at inclusion – albeit one where he did not buckle or deny his intelligence and capabilities. In referencing Latin, which has associations with the middle-class and private education in the UK, his reading of his interlocuters may have been off the mark. There was, however, a generosity in Ahmed's explanation. He thought *for* Cliff, he imagined the contours of Cliff's situated knowledge. In *The Souls of Black Folk,* Du Bois (1935, p..2) influentially argued that as a Black person, America was:

> A world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Du Bois argued that the desire for Black Americans was to eventually inhabit both American and Black consciousness. My intention here is not to invoke Du Bois as relativism. These are different moments in time, and different processes of racism

and racialisation. I did not spend enough time with Ahmed to speak with him about how he imagined himself and Others as I have with the slaughtermen. However, through the ways that Ahmed responded to the attachment of stereotype and interrogation by the white slaughtermen, it seemed to me that he was having to imagine for his interlocuters, to try and find ways of explaining in which Cliff or Doug might understand through comparison. Ahmed was resilient, he was not looking for approval from the slaughtermen.

In Spivak's famous essay, *Can the subaltern speak*? (1988) she argued that colonial discourses subjugated the knowledges of those cast as subaltern: men and women of the illiterate peasanty. The subaltern, subordinated, colonised native could only be heard by the colonisers by speaking in the hegemonic language of Empire, rendering them silent or silenced. For Spivak, this silencing was a form of epistemic violence. Spivak draws attention to the epistemic violence encountered by those who were subjugated. However, central to this subjugation was the failure of European discourses and intellectuals "to *imagine* the kind of power and desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe" (Spivak, 1988, p.25). She asserts that subalterns were imagined through narrative, which simultaneously constructed a version of reality which acted as a border to the European imagination. I am not proposing that anyone of the participants – Cliff, Philip, Ahmed, or Asim are subaltern. As Spivak had articulated elsewhere: "everybody thinks the subaltern is just classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie" (De Kock, 1992, p.45). She asserts that while the working-class are oppressed, they are not subaltern. "Everything that has limited or no access to cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference" (De Kock, 1992, p. 45). Rather, I am using the concept of subaltern as a heuristic to think through the relations between knowledge, power, and imagination in the slaughterhouse. Spivak argues that "when you say you cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening, this possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the subaltern's sphere" (De Kock, 1992, p.46). Ahmed accommodates not being properly heard by his interlocuters. And yet, Ahmed cannot speak in a way in which he is heard by the white slaughtermen: Cliff and Doug hear him through a lens of difference rather than empathy. Spivak (1998)

suggests that the subaltern is caught in translation and always already interpreted. Spivak was referring to the colonial period. However, the exchange between Ahmed, Cliff and Doug, reveals that there is a persistence of a situated, British, bordered imagination which continues to silence a young British Asian man, in a halal slaughterhouse, on the outskirts of an ethnically diverse town. Ahmed is British, speaking in English and still cannot be fully heard.

So, do you not wear a hijab?

Back at North Hills, on the anniversary of 9/11, the conversation about the documentary had extended into a conversation about the military. Philip and Rob were discussing a recent report Philip had seen online which listed countries in order of which one had the most powerful military. The UK was low down on the list, which both of them thought was terrible, and the result of state underfunding. I interjected that I thought it was good that the government spent less on the military because resources would be better spent on public services. "No, we need the army, because of what's going on in Afghanistan at the moment." Philip told me. The Taliban had just taken back control of Afghanistan, and the news was full of reports of Afghans, especially women and those who had worked with the British military, trying to escape and come to Britain. Philip explained that "we need the army to protect us, from people coming over, terrorists, suicide bombers." I challenged him and said people who were coming to the UK were trying to escape the Taliban, as their safety had been compromised by working with the British military. "Exactly," Philip responded, "that's why we need the military to keep you safe. You won't have any rights with that Sharia law, Jess." Philip continued:

> Something else must be going on, there is something in that book that is making people want to do that [become a suicide bomber]. That's what they believe...there's got to be something in that book that isn't right, that would make you blow yourself up. I understand that we need to have faith. We all need to believe in something, I don't care if what you believe in is a bag of flour, we all need something. But that, believing in that, what they

> believe. What would you want 72 virgins for? You'd want someone who'd be around and had done 'owt, not a virgin!

Philip was describing his interpretation of Islam, shaped around suicide bombings, misogyny, male violence and martyrdom as incompatible with British values and beliefs. I offered that the Taliban were controlling people and that they have perverted Islam for their own gain, to which Philip responded, "well, exactly, and that's why the P***s are coming over." I then interjected that people are not coming from Pakistan, but Afghanistan. The stickiness of the word P*** was again imposed on to any racialised Muslim immigrant. I felt like Philip could not hear what I was saying. Nothing I said shifted the view that Islam and Muslims were implicitly violent.

Goldberg (2009) argues the "idea of the Muslim" has haunted Europe since the earliest moments of modernity. While this ideation has shifted in racialised signification, the Muslim as an imaginary figure conjures fears of destruction. Goldberg (2009, p.165-166) writes,

> Not individual Muslims, not even Muslim communities, but the idea of the Muslim himself – has come to represent the threat of death, where the Muslim image in contemporary Europe is overwhelmingly one of fanaticism, fundamentalism, female (women and girls') suppression, subjugation and repression. The Muslim in this view foments conflict.

Razack (2022, p.14) reiterates this imaginary status of the figure of the Muslim, "entrenched in popular culture as backward, uncivilised people of a religion that is antithetical to Christian and Western traditions….the Muslim is a phantom, an imaginary figure…who haunts the white imagination". Indeed, it was the imaginary threat of the Muslim figure, expressed through the slur P*** which Philip was invoking.

The conversation between myself, Philip and Rob had been loud. When one of their customers arrived to collect some sheep skins, he walked in announcing, "bloody hell, I can hear you two yelling all the way down the lane." That morning, a new vet, a young woman, had started working at North Hills. During this exchange, Philip and Rob had been at the front of the slaughter line working on sheep, away from the vets. A few hours later, they had moved closer. Philip had not spoken to the new vet yet. "Where

are you from then?" Philip shouted over, as he was on the stool with a bandsaw, slicing a cow into sides. She looked up, and responded, "Turkey." She was shy, and looked like she did not want the slaughtermen's attention to be centred on her. "Turkey?" Philip repeated the word and went quiet for a minute. I could feel what was coming. "So, are you Muslim?" She looked up and smiled, "Yeah?" Rob's face dropped, remembering the very loud conversation we had just had. I wanted to disappear into the floor. "What's your name then?" Philip carried on. She replied, "Zehra." Philip came off the stool and went over to her. "Zehra?" he repeated. "Tell me again, I want to make sure I've got it right" He then repeated her name again and again. "See, if I repeat it then I'll remember it." It was awkward, but it was also an effort to make sure he had understood, and he wanted to start a conversation with her. Philip asked Zehra what town she lived in, what other slaughterhouses she had worked at, and how long she had been living in Britain, and then, "do you know there's a new mosque being built in your town?" At this point, Rob protectively interjected, "She's only just moved here!"

Rob then began questioning Zehra: "So, do you not wear a…" and started miming the contours of wrapping a head covering around his own head. He seemed unsure what word to use, or what would be appropriate. Zehra, who was wearing a white hardhat because she is a vet, and it is regulatory, tapped the plastic, looking at Rob confused. "No, I mean like a hijab?" he clarified. "No, only sometimes", Zehra responded. Rob then warned her that they would be slaughtering pigs later in the day and asked her if that would be acceptable for her. Philip also posed more questions, asking if she ate pork; then if she drank alcohol, to which Zehra did not give a clear answer. "I bet you like a drink! How can you be Muslim if you like a drink!"

It was an awkward exchange, shaped by a combination of curiosity, being welcoming, and judgemental. As Barbules & Bruce (2001, p.112) highlight, difference which emerges through conversation "does not only create a set of possibilities and opportunities; it also constitutes a potential barrier – for it is these very same differences that can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, or speaking at cross-purposes". Philip and Rob were curious, because Zehra did not fit their idea of the imaginary "oppressed" Muslim woman. She was a professional, who worked with pigs, who may have tried both pork and alcohol, and does not wear a headscarf on a regular basis. The exchange echoed the dialogue between Ahmed, Cliff and Doug. The

questions which they asked were based on their "situated imaginations" which already imagined Muslim women through negative stereotypes: Philip had already expressed that he thought Muslim women were oppressed by Muslim men. Rob expressed that he thought all Muslim women wear veils. As Goldberg (2009, p.166) suggests the imaginary figure of the Muslim as "traditionalist, premodern, in the tradition of racial historicism is difficult if not impossible to modernise, at least without ceasing to be 'the Muslim.'" The imaginary figure of the oppressed Muslim woman was so potent, that when Zehra did not match their expectations, Philip questioned whether she was really Muslim at all. He was policing the boundaries of who can and cannot be legitimised as a Muslim based on his imagination.

6.5 Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have explored how identities are constructed through narrative, and how they are also a medium through which slaughtermen and workers express a sense of belonging. In this chapter, I have extended my framing. My intention has been to demonstrate the values of imagination, narrative, and their interplays in the slaughterhouse as they emerged through dialogue and storytelling. Here, I have made a two-sided argument: firstly, storytelling is a way in which the itinerant white slaughtermen create intimacies in the places they work and with each other. Stories were the very fabric of their belonging to each other, their past in the trade and the otherwise marginalised spaces of the slaughterhouse. These stories travelled with them as they moved between spaces. There was an intimacy to storytelling anchor and transport into each other's pasts, present and future. Aligned with Antonsich (2010), slaughterhouses were places where the white slaughtermen could reproduce a sense of being connected to place.

Secondly, however, the situatedness of their imaginations, rooted in ideas about Britishness as superior, and through stereotypes of Muslim others, creates a border to hear their interlocutors. As Stoetzler and Yuval Davies (2010) have described, imagination is "Janus faced." Imagination and narrative were the routes through which persistent practices of racialisation and othering were expressed. As such, I

have juxtaposed these monologues and dialogues to demonstrate how imagination anchors and transports down racialised tracks. In each of the dialogues, the white British slaughtermen are challenged with a way in which they have imagined or claimed to know their interlocutors. Cliff constructed Ahmed's multilingual capabilities as an orientalised irrationality; Zehra challenged Philip and Rob's assumptions that Muslim women are oppressed, have no agency or freedom. Each of these imaginings were shaped around stereotypes, a fabrication which claims knowledge of who someone is. These invoked imaginary figures were not always the same – the terrorist, the oppressed woman, the irrational man. These Muslim stereotypes have emerged over long periods of time, as Razack asserts (2022, p.10), "the figure of the threatening Muslim has shifted with political imaginaries." Yet, each stereotype is homogenising. While these figures were imaginary, they are all "narratives of failure," in that they didn't enable any space to tell complex stories about the various ways that people inhabit and remake identities (Werbner, 2013). Mills (1997) argues that Whiteness is a "cognitive dysfunction," which sees itself through a lens of superiority in which racialised others are uncivilised, where intentional ignorance emerges by erasing knowledge of the effects of racism. As explored in chapter 4, this denial of the impacts of racism chimes with the ways in which banter is legitimised as "just jokes." Bailey (2007, p.90) argues that "white ignorance" is amplified when people racially segregate themselves, creating a distance which enables ignorance to flourish. However, the slaughtermen are not racially segregated. Yet, in each of the dialogues I have presented, the white slaughtermen end up in something of a cul-de-sac, either of silence or changing the subject.

While I would agree that there is an epistemic ignorance which emerges in these conversations, what seems more pertinent here, is that there is an overload of imagination which is shaped by stereotype. As Andrews (2014, p.1) argues narrative imagination enables the "trafficking in human possibilities." However, in these instances, workers were trafficking in stereotypes with little currency to enable them to anchor and transport into the present, past or future of the interlocutors. As Collins (1990) has identified in her work on Black women in America, they are not taken as legitimate or credible speakers because of the prevalence of negative

stereotypes. As such, I hope to have demonstrated less an absence of imagination, more a bordered imagination which persistently hears through Britishness and Whiteness, in which the radical potential of narrative imagination is dampened. In the final chapter, I position the slaughtermen in dialogue with the "moral panic" about halal slaughter. In so doing, I thread the practices and narratives within the slaughterhouses back into contemporary debates about the "death of multiculturalism," the Islamification of Britain and the purported incommensurable cultural differences between the white British and British Muslims. Here, I continue to explore imaginative qualities of narratives, both political and personal.

Chapter 7: "Doing things by the book": Violence, the "rule of law" and the imaginary Muslim

7.1 Introduction

Eid Al Adha is the annual four-day Islamic festival of sacrifice, when Muslims in Britain might practice, in some form, the ritual slaughter of a goat, sheep, or cow, known as Qurbani. Ray, the owner of Eastewes has offered a Qurbani service at the slaughterhouse for over a decade. Over two days of the religious festival, Muslims from cities around the country, including Manchester, London and Birmingham, arrive at Eastewes to choose a sheep, have it slaughtered in their name by the halal slaughterman, Hashir, and take the meat home to share. It is Eastewes' most profitable week of the year when skilled itinerant slaughtermen are in the highest demand. It is also one of the busiest weeks in the British sheep sector more broadly (AHDB, 2020b). Qurbani creates a peak in national sheep sales, to the extent that one livestock buyer tells me: "If you look out over the fields of England over that Qurbani week, you won't see sheep anywhere."

By six in the morning on the second day of Eid Al Adha, the dawn sun was already belting down on the unshaded yard at Eastewes. A trickle of cars wobbled down the potholed lane towards the lairage, with St George's Cross flags still flapping from their windows, after the disappointment of the England football team losing in the Euros final. The lairage was teeming with sheep. Jack, the manager, had been scouring livestock auctions for the past month to purchase enough to cover the festival. Callum, a younger local white British worker, leaps around arranging wayward sheep into pens. The heat has already got to him, and he has removed his regulatory uniform of overalls exposing his bare torso. The sheep bleating outside blends with the sounds of metal scraping from the slaughter unit, and the muffled break of Phil Collins belting "Easy Lover" from the radio. Inside, Doug, Cliff, Wayne, and additional itinerant slaughtermen have been called in from slaughterhouses around the country to manage the numbers of sheep that will pass down the slaughter line.

Parents, children, and groups of friends gather by the lairage, chatting and wishing each other Eid Mubarak. Children are lifted up to perch on the railings, to see the sheep in their pens. They giggle at a lone rowdy goat poking its head above the wool. As the group grows, Ray's son, Peter, rearranges the metal sheep hurdles into a make-shift queuing system for the visitors. Marcus, who works as a sheep buyer at the livestock auction (where he would normally be silently, stoically nodding at an auctioneer) is collating people's individual orders for sheep. He appears intermittently at the lairage, speaking in a slow, loud voice, "Yes sir, you take your ticket, do you understand?" Visitors take it in turns to enter the lairage and to choose their sheep before it disappears into the slaughter hall. Ray is sat in the office, taking orders from butcher shops on the phone, "Hello, salaam alaykum, yes, how many?" Peter overhears his father speaking Arabic, and smirks. An hour later, there are around fifty people by the lairage, with camera phones out taking selfies with the sheep behind them. I never took photographs of the slaughterhouse or its location in case it seeded suspicions that I was an undercover animal rights activist and implicated me as a threat. I asked once, but Ray was uncomfortable, "only after we've cleaned, and everyone has left." But today, arms are stretched out to capture smiling faces without causing alarm. There is a celebratory feeling, and many have dressed for the occasion.

I introduce this ethnographic vignette at Eastewes as a provocation. For the slaughtermen, workers, owners and visitors, Qurbani is variously a moment of adaptation, intense labour, income, sociality, celebration, piety, connection, and ambiguity. It is a rupture in the social and spatial boundaries which normally conceal slaughterhouses. The private has become public as the slaughterhouse transforms into a place to socialise; a process structured around ostensibly rational, regulated slaughter becomes a location for a collective and individual religious ritual. The slaughtermen are re-connected to consumers from whom they are otherwise distanced. A rural field on the outskirts of an English, majority white market town becomes a destination for British, Pakistani, Indian, Tunisian and Nigerian Muslims to momentarily practice their faith. Qurbani could, therefore, be a moment where cultural, national, and religious differences are embraced and incorporated; where an "everyday multiculturalism" or conviviality in Britain is thriving on the margins (Gilroy, 2004; Rogaly, 2020). It could be a moment where slaughter workers and Muslims in

Britain, both frequently constructed as national abjects in media and political discourses, create positive, if fleeting, connections, or forms of non-elite cosmopolitanism with each other (Rogaly, 2020). However, as I will explore in this chapter, the positive multicultural or convivial potential of living and working with difference was interrupted. I argue that frictions emerge in and through the religious and state animal slaughter laws and regulations which govern their labour, and the ways in which violence in interpreted and displaced through classed and racialised discourses. Developing on from the previous chapter, I demonstrate how the imaginary figure of the violent Muslim Other pushes at the owners and slaughtermen's threshold of tolerance of accommodating Muslims and halal slaughter (Goldberg, 2009; Wemyss, 2009).

In the first part of this chapter, I re-focus on the religious and state laws which govern both "conventional" and halal slaughter that I outlined in the introduction. Slaughter workers and halal slaughter are represented in state slaughter laws through the assumption, and then regulation, surveillance, or dispensation of their *potential* violence. Putting animal slaughter in the historical context of a moralising European "civilising mission" (Elias, 1939), modernity, and secularism (Asad, 2003; 2018), I argue that historically and contemporaneously, slaughter workers have been persistently stigmatised by politicians and media discourses as "socially appointed agents of abjection" (McClintock, 1995); and by a state which displaces and regulates the violence of slaughter. In this context, I explore how slaughtermen and owners construct moral identities in relation to these often-punitive legislations and embrace "the rule of law" as a means of claiming respectability (Koch, 2016; Skeggs, 1997).

As discussed, halal slaughter is frequently invoked in moral panics claiming the barbarity and innate violence of Islam as a religion, and specifically of Muslims (Grumett, 2015; Lever, 2018). These moral panics are invariably based on the assumption that halal slaughter includes non-stun slaughter methods. In practice, however, the slaughtermen offer nuanced and subtle negotiations of violence, through which they do not draw hard boundaries around stun and non-stun slaughter methods. I also explore how Ray, the owner of Eastewes, displaces any association of the violence or cruelty of slaughter onto Muslim halal accreditation agencies which he imagines through the figure of the threatening, violent, Muslim Other.

In the third part, I return to Qurbani at Eastewes, a moment which could be interpreted as spatially transcending the binaries of the religious and the secular. Here, I include my observations and conversations with both the white British slaughtermen and the Muslim visitors to the slaughterhouses. For the Muslim visitors, Qurbani is a moment of connection to both place and faith, in ways which could be embraced by slaughter workers as de-stigmatising their labour. Conversely, the white British slaughtermen express sentiments that essentialise Muslim visitors through purported culturally incommensurable practices, even though these claims do not relate to stable material, historic or ethical realities. Rather, these assertions are based on how the white slaughtermen and owners already imagine Muslim as Others through long held Orientalist narratives of being underhand, immoral, conniving, lawless, and innately violent (Goldberg, 2009; Huntington, 1998; Said, 1978) in relation to the racialised boundaries of the nation (Anthias & Yuval Davies, 1993). Fundamentally, I argue that despite their otherwise nuanced and negotiated interpretations of the violence of slaughter work, the slaughtermen and owners persist in homogenising and essentialising Muslims as violent (Lentin & Titley, 2011). I argue that the imagined figure of the violent and invasive Muslim pushes their threshold of tolerance for living with difference (Goldberg, 2009; Wemyss, 2009). The persistence of imagining and essentialising Muslims pushes against rhetorical claims that the "death of multiculturalism" in Britain has emerged through the incompatibility of Islam, rather than racism. On the contrary, the potency of anti-Muslim racism is a dominant modality though which the multicultural potential of Qurbani – and the halal trade more broadly – is diluted.

7.2 British morality and the "rule of law"

"We do things by the book," Ray, the owner of Eastewes tells me. Despite running a halal slaughterhouse, the book he is referring to is not a religious text but a mass of state legislation and regulations pertaining to the surveillance and control of human, animal, and microbial life in the production of edible, disease-free meat and the welfare of animals. These include: checking the movement licenses of sheep; assessing the welfare and health of sheep before and during slaughter; the separation and

disposal of various categories of edible and inedible waste; the safe disposal of "specified risk materials" (SRM) which are categorised as harbouring diseases potentially fatal to human health; monitoring HACCP plans (which identify points of potential contamination between safe and unsafe substances); the storage of meat at specific temperatures; and recording workers with CCTV as both a deterrent, and to collect evidence, of any *unnecessary* or gratuitous violence towards animals during the slaughter process. Workers and owners are legally responsible for ensuring the meat they produce is safe, edible and "humane." As individuals, they are subject to penalties, fines, or closure if these regulations are not met (Millstone & Zwanenberg, 2001). It is the regulation of unnecessary violence on which I will focus.

One winter morning at North Hills in the rural North West uplands, a complaint had been made by a farmer who had sent his sheep to the slaughterhouse. When the carcasses had been returned to him, the farmer noticed some bruising on the meat, and had accused the slaughterhouse – or more specifically Philip – of rough handling his animals. Philip was informed about the complaint when he arrived early in the morning. He was livid: "How dare they tell *me* I've done something wrong? I bet *they* did it and they're blaming me." Philip follows slaughter regulations to perfection. As a foreman and skilled slaughterman, he too, lets everyone else know if they have deviated from the rules. As soon as the vet arrived, he ran down the lane in the snow to interrogate him, in case he recalled anything untoward with the sheep on the day it had been slaughtered. The vet, unsurprisingly, could not recall exactly which one of the 60 sheep they had slaughtered a few days earlier that Philip was asking about. However, the vet checked his notes and confirmed that all the sheep had passed their pre-slaughter veterinary health checks. All morning Philip was seething, waiting until he had finished the days kills to check the CCTV recording of the lairage. Once the slaughterhouse had been cleaned, we all crowded into the office, where the monitors and video recordings are housed. Ian, the owner, carefully rewound the footage until he found the moment on the grainy black and white film where Philip entered the frame. The suspense was tangible, but nothing out of the ordinary happened. Philip herded the sheep into a pen with minimal physical contact, closed the gate behind him, then walked away with the sheep settling into the hay. There was a collective sigh of relief. Partly, because there was no evidence of "gratuitous" cruelty, also, because I

had no idea how we, or Philip, would cope if he had done something unacceptable. Philip was victorious, "Shit stirrers, I knew it, I knew I did nothing wrong." Vindicated he marched out of the office to phone the farmer up, with the rallying call, "Right. Let's go to war!"

In 2018, a new legislation was passed in the UK making it mandatory for all slaughterhouses to install CCTV. Guidelines from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rurals Affairs state that cameras should cover the "unloading, lairage, handling, restraining, stunning, bleeding and killing areas," whereby the position of the camera should "ensure there are no blind spots" (DEFRA, 2018b). The new legislation was initiated in response to an animal rights activist group filming undercover in slaughterhouses and finding numerous instances of cruelty where workers were inflicting excessive or gratuitous violence on animals, such as stubbing out cigarettes and stamping on pigs (Smithers, 2017). The new legislation was supported by supermarkets who wanted to distance themselves from any associations of violence. When the legislation was passed, the government shared a press release with a quote from Lord Gardiner, the Animal Welfare Minister: "We are a nation that cares about animals and these strong measures will ensure all animals are treated with the utmost respect at all stages of life and allows us to continue to lead the way to raise the bar in high welfare standards" (DEFRA, 2018b). In a rallying post-Brexit speech, then Minister for DEFRA, Michael Gove (2018), in support of mandatory CCTV, proclaimed "exploitation, callousness, and cruelty are never acceptable...And that is why this Government is acting today to protect and enhance animal welfare…to ensure that CCTV cameras are installed in all abattoirs so there is *no hiding place for cruelty*" (my itals). The implication was that Britain had higher welfare standards than the EU, where cameras were yet to be legislated as mandatory.

Concealment and surveillance are an integral facet in the design of large-scale modern slaughterhouses. As discussed, Pachirat (2014) argues that the interplays of surveillance and concealment are indicative of a Foucauldian biopolitical governmentality which both controls workers, and enables consumers avoid moral accountability of eating meat. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1975) follows the genealogies through which the public spectacle of sovereign violence on the body was replaced by surveillance to discipline docile bodies in prisons. Thierman (2010) in an

article, *Foucault Goes to the Slaughterhouse* argues that the conditions of surveillance and *docility* within slaughterhouses makes it impossible for slaughter workers to engage with a sense of morality through their labour. This interplay between concealment and surveillance is evident in the examples I have given from British political figures. However, Gove's phrase "hiding places for cruelty" questioned the morality of workers implying that there was a need for punitive laws to monitor them. In this narrative framing, those who work in slaughterhouses are portrayed as pathologically violent, irrational and in need of surveillance to regulate their callousness and cruelty. Gove displaced the associations of slaughter work as fundamentally against an animal's welfare per se, by pinning violence on slaughter workers. Cohered within a narrative that Britain is a nation of animal lovers, he discursively constructed slaughter workers as abject others at a distance from national codes of moral belonging. As Imogen Tyler (2013, p.11) notes, national abjects are "disenfranchised to the degree they are disinherited from the possibility of being human."

Firstly, I want to draw attention to how Gove's stigmatising narratives are deeply repetitious of imperial, classist discourses which led to the emergence of industrialised slaughterhouses, before moving on to an analysis of how Philip embraces these punitive measures of surveillance which stigmatise his labour as a means to claim his moral identity. As discussed, historians have attended to the construction of slaughterhouses as part of the European "civilising process" (Otter, 2006, Young-Lee, 2008). Following Elias's (1939) conceptualisation, the "civilising process" was an integral component of modernity through the development of social norms of manners, hygiene, and distance from bodily matter and sensations such as hunger, sex and violence. These were deemed abject, through an increase in emotions of shame and disgust. In this context, slaughterhouses marked a transition from the individualised violence of butchers in private slaughterhouses, to institutionalised and legitimate violence in new utilitarian municipal slaughterhouses. For Elias, the shift in the location of violence from the individual to the state through the "rule of law" was a means through which Imperial European powers positioned themselves as morally superior to colonised Others. Nader (2018, p.382) similarly argues that "Western countries identified themselves as civilized because they were governed by the "rule of

law", no matter what the actual history of a present situation might be", for example, their own violent colonial endeavours. Colonised Others were conversely described as lacking rational laws. Asad (2003; 2018) has also drawn attention to the ways in which the interrelated projects of secularism and modernity were differentiated from religious societies by the regulation of violence through the "rule of law", rather than the elimination of violence. As with the Imperial histories of sheep explored in chapter 3, the regulation of violence through the "rule of law," draws connections between racialised and classed stigmatisation. Indeed, as McClintock (1995, p.72) has expressed, those constructed as abject in both Britain and its Empire were a formative aspect of modern industrial imperialism, where,

> Some groups were expelled and obliged to inhabit the impossible edges of modernity; the slum, the ghetto, the brothel, the convent. Abject peoples are those whom industrial imperialism rejects but cannot do without: slaves, prostitutes, the colonised, domestic workers, the insane, the unemployed. Certain threshold zones become abject zones which are policed with vigour.

Slaughterhouses map well onto this formulation. Fundamental to McClintock's analysis, is that those constructed as abject were not hidden, rather, that by "inhabiting the cusp of domesticity and market, industry and empire, the abject returns to haunt modernity and its constitutive, inner repudiation: the rejected from which one does not part" (McClintock, 1995, p.72). Through the contemporary political rhetoric, slaughter workers are still pathologised as violent individuals haunting the edges of civility. While slaughterhouses were intended to professionalise killing and shift violence away from the individual, claims of violence have been reinscribed back onto individual slaughter workers. Otter (2005, p.48) posits that "the abattoir, invisible but not secret, may have been built in response to concerns about civility, or feelings of deep repulsion, but it in turn created the conditions under which true disgust can be felt". Here, he is referring the well-reported conditions of killing at scale within industrialised slaughterhouses (see Broadway & Stull, 2013). However, I want to draw attention to the language of classist abjection which continues to haunt political rhetoric. Building on McClintock, Imogen Tyler (2013) identifies how the paradoxical nature of modernity's abjects has persisted in the classist and racialised construction

of "revolting subjects", pathological, classed, stigmatised others who are scapegoated in a project of neoliberal governmentality. For example, Gove advertises the global primacy of the British meat industry, while stigmatising and displacing violence onto those whose labour is fundamentally required to produce meat, while simultaneously claiming the morality of the state in regulating violence.

As I have discussed in chapter 4, Imogen Tyler argues (2013, p.38) that it is "only through the empirical focus on the lives of those *constituted as abject"* that we can we consider the forms of political agency available to those at the sharp end of subjugation within the prevailing systems of power." I explored how Whiteness and respectability emerged as a form of power through which workers shirked negative classed associations. However, in this instance, I argue that Philip embraces the punitive measures of CCTV which have been installed to monitor him, because they will prove that he has followed the "rule of law." As Koch (2018) elucidates in her ethnography of an English council estate, working-class, often stigmatised residents personalise laws and policing that otherwise cast them as in need of surveillance and punitive punishment, to mediate disputes with each other. Similarly, Philip utilises the CCTV footage required by a state department, to mediate a dispute with a farmer, and ultimately pass blame back onto them for mistreating their own animals. Therefore, what is lost in the Foucauldian accounts of surveillance and discipline as a form of biopolitical control, is that following the rule of law is embraced as part of Philip's moral identity, rather than a docile body. The CCTV protected Philip, he had not done anything that could be classified as gratuitous violence. He embraced the technology as a means challenge his customer's accusations of him. To return to Skegg's (1997) approach to respectability, being respectable is particularly a concern those whose claim to it is contested. By following the rule of law, he is moral, even if that law stigmatises him. He did of course, eventually slaughter that sheep.

7.3 Slaughtermen's interpretations of the stunning uncertainties

Having offered an analysis of the ways in which following the rule of law is fundamental to a slaughterman's moral identity, I now return to the divisive issue of

halal slaughter in relation to the themes of violence and the rule of law. In the introduction to the thesis, I outlined the legislative ambiguities surrounding halal slaughter. Legally and in practice, distinctions between stun and non-stun slaughter act as proxies for the association of gratuitous violence with Muslims, and of the British nation with the regulation of violence; between the "religious" and the "secular." Asad (2006, p.16) defines the secular as "a concept that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life." These include the regulation of violence, a belief in the rule of law, liberalism, and the universal freedoms of citizens. The regulation of violence, (for example, through the emergence of Victorian abattoirs), was integral to claims of a secular modernity as morally superior to religious societies (Asad, 2003). However, Asad (2006, p.8) argues that these were discursive claims, as in secular societies "the law never seeks to eliminate violence." Some violences (like stunned animal slaughter) are permitted and regulated, while others are cast as irrational (for example not stunning animals) because they are categorised as "unnecessary cruelty" or "disproportionate violence" (Asad, 2018, p.42). In this sense, Asad argues that the construction of a European identity requires marking differences with Others whereby Muslims and Muslim traditions within its borders are envisaged as an affront, where "Europe is ideologically constructed in such a way that Muslim immigrants cannot be satisfactorily represented" (Asad, 2003, p.159).

As discussed, there is a derogation which permits non-stun slaughter in the UK for religious communities. However, while the derogation was enabled through the secular value attached to equality and the liberal freedom of all citizens, it is in tension with the secular premise of the "rule of law" (Asad 2006; Nader, 2018; Das, 2008). This tension persists in casting non-stun slaughter, and Muslims more broadly, within a moral hierarchy. Asad (2006, p.504) articulates these tensions between a liberal framing centred on the freedom to practice religion as an inalienable right, whereby withholding or demeaning that right on the grounds of morality then marks Muslim practices as alienable. Similarly, Razack (2022) argues that Muslims are currently subjected to laws, especially anti-terror laws, which are not rational, but shaped by *feelings* about Muslims such as disgust, fear, and abjection. She suggests that these laws are based on assuming that Muslims have a different type of "outer determined" mind – which she describes as not rational, and therefore dehumanised – to an ideal of

a white secular self-determined European. Further, Razack (2022, p.3) posits that "to stand in a negative relationship with the law is to occupy the space reserved for others to be the targets of violence." In the context of Britain, where animal welfare regulations are a moral endeavour connected to national identity, non-stun is positioned, albeit by default, as immoral and un-British. As I have explored, halal slaughter is a key practice invoked in expressions of anti-Muslim racism.

However, an ethnographic focus on how both the Muslim halal slaughterman, Ahmed, and the white British slaughtermen interpret issues of stunning and violence in relation to their own moral identities, reveals a more nuanced interpretation of how binaries between the secular and the religious are navigated. All of the slaughtermen, whether white British and not Muslim, or Muslim, are working in spaces where religious and state laws co-exist. They are transcending, in practice if not always in belief – the ostensible binaries of the religious and secular. In a rigorous article which brings together much of Asad's work on secularism and religion, Bangstad (2009) argues that Asad overly emphasises the cultural distinctiveness of secular and religious categories though the binary separation of western and non-western locations. He proposes Asad's definitions need to be advanced to analyse how secular and religious identities are inhabited, contested, resisted, or embodied, for people whose lives transcend the boundaries of the religious and the secular. Instead, he calls for an "anthropology of the secular as a vernacular practice." Through everyday interactions, he suggests attention should be paid to when articulations of convergence or the incommensurability between what is defined as 'Islamic', the secular and secularism emerge. While Bangstad is referring to Muslim subjectivities, I am adopting it to analyse how the slaughtermen find convergence and incommensurability in slaughter practices. Unlike the slaughter regulations which present the distinctions between stun and non-stun as binaries, for slaughtermen, these differences are more subtle. What emerges through slaughtermen's ambivalences are the ways in which workers are navigating their own moralities. In particular I question in what ways the practice of non-stun is encountered as an immoral practice which uses "gratuitous violence" by the white slaughtermen, or whether the constructions of immorality are informed by their imagined ideas about Muslim consumers and slaughtermen, in which racialisation is a dominant modality for constructing difference

Without the Muslims, we'd be out of a job

I will first turn to one of the few telephone interviews that I conducted as part of the research with Ahmed, the halal slaughterman at Westlambs. He explained that with halal slaughter, "the main purpose, rule *number one*, it's got to be hand-slaughtered by a Muslim." He then describes the technical process, "you need to cut the main four veins, the jugular vein and the arteries." He then explains that there is some uncertainty as to whether animals which have been stunned are acceptable as halal meat,

> The main difference tends to be people who agree with stunning the animal or not stunning it. The reason behind that is whether the animal is still alive at the time you are killing it, whether it's died from the actual shock of the stunning or from the knife… that will put you into doubt whether it would fall into halal or not. I am not too fussed with whether it is stunned or not. The thing is...I'd say in *this* country, 60 to 70 percent of people are inclined to accept both, they are not too fussed whether their lamb or beef is stunned. You do get some people who are very strict and it's understandable why they will only eat non-stun meat.

Ahmed defines halal slaughter as a hierarchy of related rules which incorporates a technical process and his embodied faith. He highlights that in contexts where halal slaughter could include stunning, such as Britain, where it is the standard legal practice, this can cultivate doubt for Muslims. However, Ahmed also suggests that most Muslims in Britain will accept either stunned or un-stunned meat as halal. He explains that Muslims have different interpretations of their faith and that these intersect and adapt with state laws, to avoid uncertainty. Further, uncertainty circulates more with some species than others. But, rule number one is centred on his physical presence and action, a man who identifies as a Muslim, and who is self-assured of his beliefs and intentions. He says,

> The actual person doing it, you want them to have some care for the job, you could have anyone in there really, you'd want the person to have some consideration towards the animal, to do the job properly, kill it quickly, swiftly, get it over and done with in a proper manner rather than being careless with it. So vice versa, you look to do the same for others.

For Ahmed, slaughtering sheep is moral act, and one that does not rest on a technicality, but, like Philip, depends on his self-belief that he is a moral person. While I have focussed on Philip, all the itinerant white British slaughtermen were adamant that they "do things by the book," in reference to following the rule of law. Through this, they can construct respectable, moral identities as slaughterman. In halal slaughterhouses, as non-Muslims, the white slaughtermen are never the person who cuts the sheep's throat. They were, however, proximate to non-stun slaughter, either working on the line, skinning, or dressing carcasses. At North Hills, which practices conventional slaughter, I asked Philip what he understood of halal slaughter. He has worked in halal sheep slaughterhouses throughout his career, especially during the busy week of Eid al Adha.

> *They* [halal slaughtermen] still need a slaughter license. They need to not touch the animal until it has fully bled out…. Actually, that's the same as *us*, we do that too. I've never done it myself, I wouldn't want to, it's cruel. You're not allowed to do it anyway if you're white, so it's racist!

Philip begins by describing similarities between halal and "conventional" slaughter. He acknowledges that halal slaughtermen need a license through which the state permits them to do something that would otherwise not be legal. Similarly, he acknowledges that sheep need to bleed out before being handled for skinning. Both criteria are written into the "conventional" regulations stipulated in the Slaughterhouse Act of 1974. Central to his definition, like Ahmed, is *who* is doing the slaughtering. Because he states that halal meat can only be slaughtered by Muslims, he articulates it as a category constructed around ideas of "them" and "us." Further, as Whiteness and Muslimness are incongruent binaries for Philip, the requirement that halal slaughter needs to be carried out by a Muslim, is described as racist: it discriminates against him because he is white. As Lentin (2020) has argued, claims of "reverse racism" detaches Whiteness and racism from its Imperial, historical specificity, and feeds into claims of unfairness. Halal slaughter emerges as a point of moral and racialised difference through which Philip's distances himself from cruelty. Philip makes this statement without the explicit reference to whether halal incorporates stunning or not. As with the state legislation and media discourses, he assumed I was asking about non-stun slaughter in a question where I only used the word halal. However, in the detail of his

definition of the actual practice, he was describing difference as a matter of degrees, rather than binaries.

Cliff works at both Westlambs and Eastewes, where they practice non-stunned and stunned halal slaughter methods respectively. When Cliff describes stunned halal slaughter, he suggests, "the thing is, it's not any different to what *we* do, it's exactly the same." However, he then explained that,

> I used to work at a slaughterhouse in Manchester, a Kosher one. Jews won't ever stun, not like the Muslims where some might. And it was cattle. I put my foot down. I told them [the Jewish slaughtermen], I'm going to stun at the same time as you cut the throat, it's my way or the highway. If they want me to work, that's the only way I'll do it. With sheep I don't like non-stun, but I don't *mind* it. When you're standing behind the sheep, either with the bolts or with a knife, it's so quick, they really don't know what is happening. Even when their throats are being cut, it is over quite quickly. But with cattle it was too slow. It's barbaric.

As with Philip, Cliff describes the differences between non-stun and stunned slaughter methods as a matter of degrees rather than binaries. Cliff explains that with sheep, non-stun slaughter is tolerated. As with the example of Philip when he was accused of gratuitous violence towards a sheep, Cliff engages with slaughter as a moral endevour. He takes "the law" into his own hands, to intervene with religious Jewish slaughter at a point where he regards the violence as intolerable.

Rob works at North Hills, the traditional slaughterhouse which practices "conventional" stunned slaughter, and Westlambs, which practices non-stun halal slaughter. At North Hills, Rob is often the person who would both stun and cut the sheep's throat. He explains that:

> The one bit I don't like about this job is the killing, being nice to the animal to coax it in, and then you kill it…but the thing is, we do it properly, and carefully, we do it in the best way possible. It's important that it's *us* doing it…we all have wives and children, you know, we're not monsters.

Rob explains that he makes the work respectable because he has a moral authority, connected to his skill, to "do it properly." When he refers to "us," he is referring to the

skilled white slaughtermen. He asserts that he is not drawn to gratuitous violence like a monster, and that his life outside the slaughterhouse involves intimacy, love, and care. Conversely, he disapproves of non-stun slaughter as a practice. "It's just not right to do that to an animal, it's disgusting, when they put the knife in you can see them tense up and shudder. It's more stressful." He then expanded, however, that "for sheep it doesn't make too much difference, but for cows, you can see that it is more stressful for the animal."

Antoni, who works at North Hills with Rob, and also at a non-stun halal slaughterhouse which also sometimes practices Kosher slaughter says that,

> The Muslims don't care, their knives are not sharp enough, and they rip through the throat, the artery, and the muscle. But Kosher, the knives are so sharp, they sharpen them every time they use them. They cut the artery and only the artery, so the sheep don't even notice. The sheep could still be chewing grass and not even realise that they had been cut!

He went on to tell me I *had* to see Kosher slaughter because it was fascinating. He described the theatre of the Kosher slaughterman arriving with a case of knives, and how, once the carcass had been opened, he would be instructed to blow up the lungs with air to look for imperfections. But halal slaughter was described as barbaric because the people who carried it out were careless, with unsharpened blunt knives playing into Islamophobic narratives about Jihadi terrorists. In all these interpretations, stun and non-stun are not regarded as firm moral binaries.

Das (2007) has articulated that narratives about violence are not stable but shaped within the everyday. As such, it is important to identify which types of violence are acknowledged, which are silenced and why. Similarly, Bourgeois and Scheper-Hughes (2003, p.2) articulate the instabilities in naming an identifying violence: they argue that "violence is in the eye of the beholder. What constitutes violence is always mediated by an expressed or implicit dichotomy between legitimate/illegitimate, permissible or sanctioned acts." In the slaughtermen's negotiations of the distinctions between the technical processes of stun and non-stun and their comparative cruelties, these are mediated through racialised narratives about Jews and Muslims. Asad argues (2003, p. 106) that "the modern conscience regards the inflicting of pain 'without good reason'

(to perform a medical operation, say, or to slaughter animals for meat) as reprehensible, and therefore as an object of moral condemnation. It is this attitude to pain that helps define the modern notion of cruelty". The slaughtermen's narratives offer a more nuanced approach to violence than these binaries between gratuitous and regulated violence. They initially demonstrate these moral distinctions between cruelty with good reason and without good reason, repetitious of the stigmatising narratives about Muslims. Indeed, these were the only times I heard the slaughtermen talk viscerally about the process of slaughter – the shudders, the pain – that an animal experiences. Stunned "conventional" slaughter, however, was never described as a violent, visceral act. At most, they expressed that killing animals was not a nice thing to do, but their skill and experience meant that it was done properly. However, the narratives do not end here, they shift. Firstly, non-stun slaughter was morally negotiated around *who* was doing the slaughtering, rather than simply through the act itself. Jews and Muslims were variously pitched against each other: as barbaric or meticulous to discern who was more or less cruel. Secondly, the issue of stunning was negotiated as more or less of a violence based on species: Non-stun slaughter of cattle was regarded as cruel, whereas non-stun slaughter of sheep – the slaughter which fills their working weeks – was regarded as a lesser cruelty, and not too dissimilar in relation to animal suffering as practices of stunned slaughter.

Significantly, throughout this thesis, I have shown how the racialised stigmatisation of Muslim South Asians is persistent in the slaughtermen's narratives. Yet, a focus on non-stun slaughter, perhaps one of the stigmatised aspects of British Muslim practices, reveals there is flexibility in the slaughtermen's interpretations. However, these negotiations of violence were inflected with racialising discourses about who was doing the slaughtering. Non-stun slaughter, like the wearing the veil or building minarets, is positioned as one of the defining practices through which Muslims are abjected as incompatible with secularism, modernity, and British morality (Lentin & Titley, 2012). Such clarity in these assertions would presume that their alternatives: not wearing the veil or "conventional" slaughter would be ferociously protected by those who construct Muslims as Britain's essential other. But, in the sites where non-stun is an everyday practice, slaughtermen have a fluid and negotiated approach to naming violence. They resist drawing hard moral differences between non-stun halal

and conventional slaughter. Rather it is cruelty and violence envisaged as a matter of degrees.

7.4 Accreditation Agencies and conspiratorial narratives

Ray, the owner of Eastewes, operates a halal slaughterhouse which practices stunned slaughter as a negotiation between the market for halal slaughtered sheep meat in Britain, and his ethics in terms of animal welfare. He explains, "me personally, I think non-stun is barbaric, you know I've seen videos and I've seen it live, they bleed to death, they go unconscious slowly…stunning is a sort of epileptic fit, [sheep] don't know what's happening, they don't feel the pain." Aligned with "secular moralities" he believes stunned slaughter is comparatively more ethical because it avoids inflicting pain on animals. However, he feels this approach is under threat, as an accreditation agency, the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) which allows only non-stun halal meat to be certified is gaining market prominence. "You have more of a market if you go non-stun, I know that for a fact." Indeed, Adam the owner of Westlambs, which does practice non-stun slaughter shares this sentiment. However, Adam avoids any ethical discussion about the comparative cruelty of each method and legitimises the production of non-stun as a shrewd economic decision.

Ray expresses that the derogation to permit non-stun slaughter, on the liberal grounds of equality, has been exploited by the HMC accreditation agency: "Other European countries have stopped this non-stun now. Like technically, some [halal meat] is stunned. So why is it OK for some and not OK for others?" Ray believes that the HMC are simultaneously manipulating the derogation in the law, and coercing British Muslims who might otherwise be more "moderate." He discusses an article he had read, written by a British Muslim: "He won't eat pork, obviously, but if he eats any other meat when he goes to a friend's house who isn't a Muslim, and they have cooked him a meal, all he basically does is say grace, he does the little prayer over his meal and thank you very much."

Part of Ray's frustration could be explained as a moral discomfort with the intermingling of religion within state animal welfare laws. The derogation to permit

non-stun slaughter was based on equal rights of a religious *minority*. However, he feels that the derogation is no longer the exception to the rule, but that under the influence of the HMC has now become the rule. It is as if religion has entered the state through the back door. Because he is morally opposed to non-stun, he feels like he is being penalised for being moral. As Lever (2018) has identified, the increased presence of halal meat in supermarkets, restaurants, and in media rhetoric has seemingly breached the boundaries of the permissible to challenge "civilised values." For Ray, the shift from a practice which was tolerated for a religious minority, to market standard for the majority of halal slaughterhouses, is disrupting his liberal belief that "the rules" needs to work for everyone equally. In terms of toleration, it is important to note that the rules worked for him when his consumers could be accommodated as a moderate minority. As Wemyss (2006) identifies, hierarchies of belonging are constructed when those who feel they have a moral, national or racialised superior right to place subject Others to being tolerated. They are tolerated only so long as they do not disrupt the existing power dynamics. His main issue, however, is the distrust of people who run the accreditation agency.

> They all drive around in Bentleys. They use their religion to manipulate shops and wholesalers to pay them. Religion is a powerful tool. They use it to make other Muslims feel guilty for not having 100 percent halal meat...or what they classify as halal meat, that stunned isn't 100 percent halal, though a lot of people do think stunned is still halal. But, that's just sort of what frustrates me a bit really, it's the religious side of it, they are *using* their religion to get their own way and unfortunately our government are never strong enough, they'd rather have the easy approach.[17]

While Ray finds non-stun slaughter immoral, his frustration is not based solely on cultural difference, religion, or the use of gratuitous violence, but that Muslim men do not belong in positions of power and influence, and that they have coerced their way there. He is expressing frustration with "multiculturalist" policies which he articulates as having been exploited and abused (Fekete, 2004). In particular, he suggests that the

[17] The narratives which I am including in this section from Ray, were recorded during an informal interview at the slaughterhouse, and were transcribed. As such, they are included verbatim, unlike the narratives in the previous chapter.

accreditation agency's actions are not shaped solely by Islamic beliefs. He describes these Muslim men as using religion as tool, rather than a belief or an identity. "Even in Saudi, they accept stunned meat," he says, as an example of a conservative non-secular state. Rather, this is about another type of power, capitalism, and who is getting rich: Muslim men who have infiltrated the sheep sector and who are muscling him and other white British non-Muslim slaughterhouse owners out who refuse to practice non-stun. The image of Muslim men driving around in Bentleys which are associated with the British aristocracy, attests to an idea that Muslim men have embedded themselves into heart of an established British hierarchy.

There are also echoes in the ways that Ray describes the emergence of non-stun accreditation agencies with conspiracy theories about the "Islamification of Britain." Pertwee (2017, p.57) identifies the rise of conspiracy theories amongst far-right groups in Europe, relating to fears about the Islamification of Europe. He suggests conspiratorial narratives have different weights. At the most ferocious, Europe's white, secular population will be "reduced to the status of second-class citizens, living under sharia law." In weaker versions of the narrative, *Eurabia* – a term which provocatively merges Europe with Arabia – "is brought about through the short-sightedness and naivety of Western political elites and their excessively liberal immigration policies." As Pertwee identifies, these narratives are not isolated to far-right groups but filter into the narratives of those who do not consider themselves Islamophobic. For example, in 2014 reports erupted in the British media about the "Trojan Horse" scandal, that Islamic faith schools in Birmingham were radicalising students. While since outed as a hoax, Abbas (2017) argues that the moral panic that ensued both within government and the media was rooted in the idea of the Islamification of Britain whereby purported Islamist Muslim teachers had infiltrated both the state education system and young minds. As Goldberg (2009, p.163) highlights, moral panics about Islamification are not new. Muslims have long been the targets of suspicion of Europe, where the "Muslim came to be read as inevitably hostile, aggressive, engaged for religious purpose in constant jihad against Europe and its secularist leanings…these are the prevailing dispositions that continue to dominate contemporarily".

While halal accreditation agencies are ostensibly centred on transparency, Ray regards them with suspicion. West and Sanders (2003, p.2) ask how, in an age of transparency,

enlightenment, and secularism, that conspiracy theories are on the rise. Framing a conspiracist through the heuristic of "a person who attributes the unexplained or an unaccountable event to a sinister plot," they propose that the increase in institutions which purport transparency, has been coterminous with an increase in the opacity of power, in which suspicion is conversely, rational. Ray perceives the accreditation agencies as sinister because what should be transparent, is opaque. That is, religion is framed as a ruse performed by Muslim men to disenfranchise him from the sheep sector. His suspicion is amplified because he feels he cannot express these frustrations,

> You need to be politically correct…. It's a sensitive thing with the religion isn't it, I mean I'm not racist at all, but when it hinders your job or your industry it is difficult…People like me are not big enough to have a word, to make any move. But that's a religious thing which is a shame - because it's like anything, isn't it, my kids, they are singing these songs [with the "N" word], and it's horrible, they shouldn't be saying that word but if it's a Black person saying it in the song…you know if a white person sung it in a song, they'd be shot down, took off the air. To me, everyone should be equal. Whatever colour, race, creed. Unfortunately, it's how much noise people make.

Ray is expressing "secular moralities," a belief in equality, liberalism and the regulation of violence. In these terms, he believes that legislation is supposed to enforce fairness, but it becomes unfair when it is enacted to accommodate difference. Here, Ray is making distinctions between racism, which he expresses as using racialised slurs based on someone's racial identity, and his concerns about Muslim men in positions of power who he believes are coercing moderate Muslims into unethical practices. Similarly, he is not speaking about "all Muslims" as "a threatening enemy within Britain, based on incommensurable beliefs" (Kriakides et. al, 2009). However, this is only if Muslims are considered by him to be moderate. Yet, as Fortier (2008, p.6) highlights, "moral racism" functions by setting the criteria for citizenship and the limits of civility. Moral racism centres on exclusions based on different "values", where religious belief becomes the primary marker of difference, however "the focus remains the same – ethnic minorities and the maintenance of white hegemony, the form of which is changing in relation to the particular historical conditions" and in which the definitions

of racism therefore also shift. While Ray is asserting the limits of civility, there are nuances in his response which reproduce on longer standing, Orientalist discourses, in which Muslim men are considered underhand and conniving.

Ray has of course run a business and developed longstanding relationships with halal butcher shops, and as I will explore in the next section, with visitors at Qurbani. He is not actively segregating himself from Muslims. However, there were conditions to these relationships. He is planning to leave the halal market: "That's it, I'm getting the Muslims out and the pigs in" he explained, in reference to shifting from producing halal sheep meat, to pork. Ray has shaped his business around the halal market in an assimilationist sense: he has worked towards "difference" because it was an economically sound choice, and because he could practice stunned slaughter. His frustration reveals that the conditionality through which his participation in the production of halal meat was premised on Muslims who were "recognised as 'deserving', 'moderate' and 'integrated' – or at least as not dis-integrated and dis-integrating" (Lentin & Titley, 2012, p.124) As Hage (1988, p.96) argues, "those who were asked to be tolerant remain capable of being intolerant….the advocacy of tolerance left people empowered to be intolerant." Ray expresses that his tolerance has reached its threshold, and the dominance of Muslims seeping into power has tipped the balance (Goldberg, 2009). Most significantly, these feelings of being dominated emerge in part through him imagining the threat of a Muslim other who is ungovernable. As Razack (2022, p.5) articulates, "the Muslim evokes fear of an ungovernable other, but crucially, it is a fear that Europe is losing its grip over those it has historically dominated." However, what I want to draw attention to, is that these are not directly related to Islam as a "backward" religion, or its incompatibility with "British" values. Rather, a claim that religion has been manipulated as a form of economic power.

7.5 Qurbani: Contested hierarchies of belonging

In the previous sections I have outlined the ambiguities in the legislation and accreditation of the production of halal meat. I have analysed how these practices are

discursively constructed by workers in relation to their own moral and racialised identities, in ways which express both tolerance and intolerance. As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, Qurbani at Eastewes is a day which slaughtermen and owners interpret as interfering with the normal spatial and temporal rules of a workday. Here, the ostensible binaries between secular "rational" killing and religious "ritual" slaughter are entwined. In Britain, it is only legal to slaughter livestock outside a slaughterhouse under strict conditions including holding a slaughter license (FSA, 2020). As with halal slaughter, Qurbani is lawful in both a state legislative and Islamic sense and (re)made through – not against – national state regulations and laws. Further, at Eastewes, all sheep are slaughtered with the stunning method. In this section, I explore the discursive and imaginative ways in which the slaughtermen and owners navigate Qurbani. Through an ethnographic account of the day, including the slaughtermen and visitors, I argue that the slaughtermen's frustrations with the intensity of the labour are expressed through the racialisation and homogenisation of the visitors. Muslim visitors, who are working within the regulations, and purchasing stunned halal meat, are the targets of conspiratorial claims of being underhand, secretive, or prone to violence.

First, I introduce some context to Qurbani practices. Qurbani is the ritual re-enactment of Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail to Allah, as an act of devotion. However, Allah miraculously replaced his son with a ram at the last minute. Making Qurbani is part of a Muslim's Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, to give a proportion of wealth to charity: a third of the meat is kept, a third given to friends and family, and a third to those in need. During the Eid Al-Adha pilgrimage in Mecca, this annual sacrifice forms a part of the Hajj rituals during the final three days (Masud-Elias, 2015). In Britain, where livestock are largely confined to rural areas, and slaughterhouses are mandated as the only place where animals can be slaughtered for human consumption, religious practice has been shaped in dialogue with local laws and farming systems. The Slaughter Act (1995) specifically states that religious slaughter is not permitted outside slaughterhouses, as it works with the reductive definition that religious slaughter equates to non-stun, and through an incision to the throat, rather than a shot to the head. Qurbani practices have also been shaped by postcolonial migrations and shifting identities. In Werbner's (1988, p.94) ethnography

of Pakistani Muslim immigrants in Manchester, she finds that through practicing Qurbani in new towns, recent immigrants formed relations with other Pakistanis living locally. Making Qurbani enabled immigrants to stake a symbolic claim in a new, permanent home. Practices were adapted both symbolically and materially where the distribution of a third of the meat to the poor was omitted because no one wanted to identify as in need of charity. In Muslim-majority South Asian and Middle Eastern counties, families may themselves purchase, live with, and slaughter sheep, camels, goats, or cattle. For example, in Karachi, Saba Imtiaz (2017) evokes the sensory overload of public slaughter. In her study of Qurbani in France, Brisebarre (1993) outlines how Qurbani practices were shaped by urban and rural locations and localised legislations. In the USA, Masud-Elias (2015) reflects how urban dwellers – who feel that industrialised animal agriculture is not compatible with Islam – sacrifice something else of importance to their livelihoods, such as money, or time.

Today, if Qurbani is practiced as an animal sacrifice in Britain, it can be arranged through various routes. Agencies offer a service for people to order their animal sacrifice online, with the meat either distributed to locals, family, or in areas of need, such as Yemen or for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Alternatively, Qurbani can be ordered through high street butchers who liaise with a halal accredited slaughterhouse. Some slaughterhouses open to the public, like Eastewes, so that people can visit in person, choose a sheep and be present as the slaughter is carried out by a halal slaughterman in their name. Yet, issues of fraud and illegality circulate every year in the British media around the time of Eid al Adha, reporting instances of sheep theft and illegal mass killings in fields. In 2015, *The Daily Express* headlined "*Muslim men illegally slaughtered British sheep as SACRIFICE for Islamic festival*", describing how headless, tied up animals had been found in a farmer's field (Campbell, 2015). While acknowledging that the men had been unaware of national regulations, the report stated how in *their* country, this kind of conduct is normal. The language highlighted the Britishness of the sheep and the foreignness of the Muslim men as moral and cultural outsiders. The *Evening Standard* (2012) warned farmers to be "vigilant" not to sell their sheep to Muslims who might knock on their doors and ask to purchase sheep to protect their sheep from being slaughtered through illicit religious sacrifice. The requests of vigilance in terms of threatening outsiders leans into narratives about Islamist

terrorism. These media narratives imply that Muslims are backward with brutal traditions which break national laws.

Qurbani Labour

The build up to the two-day Qurbani service over Eid Al Adha at Eastewes starts months in advance. Cliff has recruited slaughtermen from other slaughterhouses around the country, and everyone is staying locally, either in their cars or with Ray or Jack. On the first day of Eid al Adha, Ray supplies butcher shops who have collated orders from their customers. Drivers from butcher shops arrive early in vans from cities and towns around the country. Cliff, the other slaughtermen and line workers have already been working over the weekend. Eid Al Adha, like Ramadan, creates increased demand for halal meat, alongside the Qurbani ritual slaughters (Eblex, 2010).

According to Islamic scriptures, slaughter can only begin after the first prayers after sunrise. Cliff is irritated by this, and adamant this is *his* slaughter line to operate, as it is near impossible for them to get through the numbers of sheep if they start late. "The thing is Jess, they wouldn't do this for me in *their* country, if we went to their country, they wouldn't do things our way, so why should I be doing it for them? What we should be doing is killing them all before, show them a load of [live] sheep in the lairage and be done with it." His irritation with what he believes to be irrational and unfair, is compounded by who he imagines these rules are being set by – people who are not from here, are not British, and who would be resistant to incorporating the values of others.

Inside the slaughter hall, the workers and slaughtermen were frantic, as Hashir, the halal slaughterman, ran back and forth between his post by the blood pit with a knife, giving tickets with the names of those who had ordered the sacrifice to a local worker at the weighing machine, to label the carcasses with the time of death. The labels are requested by the accreditation agency, to assure people that the slaughter has been conducted at an acceptable time. Usually, Wayne would shift between the bandsaw, splitting carcasses, and removing spinal cords, but the line had been sped up to get through the numbers, and he could not move between the two positions without buckling the progression of sheep carcasses on the line. Doug was going to move away

from the front of the line to step in, so I offered help. The difference in speed was a shock and I struggled to keep up, especially in the heat. The workers wear overalls with just boxershorts underneath, but I was never comfortable having just underwear beneath my overalls, and the extra layers were now suffocating. Wayne, looked concerned at my red shining face, and offered "I'll get you some tissues." Every time he looked at the drips down my forehead, he instinctively had the urge to wipe his own. I felt like he was imagining my sweat on his face. Cliff had bought three pairs of wellies with him, knowing he would have sweated into the first pair a few hours in. For the workers, Qurbani is an endurance test.

Despite – or perhaps because of the intensity of the labour – there was a more celebratory and social feeling inside the slaughterhouse. Cliff, extending his foreman duties to keeping the morale up, was performing for the workers. A song came on the radio and he broke into a warble, "Wayne! I've made love to this!" "Nah, you shagged to this!" and everyone incorporated some dancing moves into their cutting and pulling. Retired workers, like Paul, who now works as a sheep buyer, have come to help out for the day, telling me, "I only come back for Qurbani, for the crack,[18] there's no other job like this where you can have a laugh and work at the same time. I miss it." At break times, taking advantage of the multigenerational crew, Paul and Cliff regale younger workers with stories about their years in the trade.

On the second day, when the people arrive to choose their own sheep, Marcus, who is collating orders, is trying to remember who arrived first. Slowly people are taken into the lairage to choose their sheep. Marcus needs people to make a quick decision, which is hard for parents with excitable kids looking at a lairage full of sheep. He scribbles names onto tickets, so Hashir knows in whose name he is slaughtering. People waiting are unsure about the process because no one seems to have told them. There is nowhere unshaded to wait, which was uncomfortable for visitors, especially those with children. Back inside the slaughterhouse, the workers are already exhausted. Their work is now temporally responsive to the selections of the visitors and the organisational skills of Ray and Marcus. Sheep arrive on the line with numbers

[18] The term crack in England, is an iteration of the Irish term craic, and in this context is used to describe fun, banter, and gossip.

spray painted onto their fleeces, and matching tickets with people's names. Some groups were ordering more than one sheep, others only one, so they came through in dribs and drabs and interrupted the consistent speed of the line.

By three in the afternoon, the slaughter line had come to a standstill. Carcasses were hanging mid-flow and Cliff was getting increasingly annoyed. He marched into the lairage to find out what the hold-up was. He had warned everyone that he was going to lose his temper at some point in the day, and that time was now. For the fourth time in as many hours, he announced that this was his last Qurbani. The workers took a break in the alleyway outside, waiting to be called back in, as Ray's wife offered ice lollies to cool everyone down. Wayne sat on a chair, making his way through a tube of Pringles. Doug came outside, and in the hope of an update on when the line would start up again, asked, "what's the rumour then?" Without an answer, he sat down next to Wayne to wait and eat crisps. One of the local workers was walking around in his pants while his shorts dried by the ventilator; another was napping on a chair, his head lulling backwards and forwards. In the 40-minute break outside, only ten sheep had been picked. In terms of the demands on their labour, and the structure of the slaughter line, Qurbani causes frustration, exhaustion, inefficiency, and a lack of control. Doug gestured over towards the direction of the lairage. "Bastards, if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have to be working!" One local worker peered around the corner towards the crowd near the lairage. "Oh my god, they've put a tent up, it's like a refugee camp out there." Another made a "joke" about throwing a grenade over towards to the visitors.

While the workers were exhausted, their frustrations were expressed through narratives which inferred the unwelcome presence of Muslims at the slaughterhouse, and more broadly, in Britain (Fekete, 2004). This narrative echoed the racialisation of Muslims as a threatening enemy within Britain, based on incommensurable beliefs in which "cultures, or ethnicities have similar values to race as qualities which can be racialised" (Kriakides, Virdee & Modood, 2009). This was acutely emphasised through the reference to refugee camps and their association with illegal migrants and asylum seekers, rather than longstanding citizens of Britain, trying to create some shade on a hot day. When the slaughtermen talk about changes to the trade, and how it used to be a respectable job, it was in a context in which they had retained their respectability

despite the impact of deskilling. Qurbani was the only time I heard workers express that they felt exploited and disrespected for their labour. While working in halal slaughterhouses has sustained their employment, Qurbani was a tipping point in their "tolerance" because they no longer felt they were in control of their labour, and the hierarchies within the slaughterhouse. As the slaughtermen moved around, they maintained the hierarchy through racialised narratives and dialogue with their co-workers. During Qurbani, they express that the local has been invaded, and they have no way of controlling the boundaries between "us" and "them" (Yuval Davies, 2006).

Qurbani as a living tradition

I was the only person who had the time and freedom to move between the slaughter hall and the lairage. On the first day, whenever I was able to leave the slaughterhouse, I would go and chat to the delivery drivers waiting by the loading bay for their orders. Mostly, these were young men with jobs elsewhere, or who were studying at university, and were helping out family members who owned butcher shops. They waited in the sun for hours, with no communication from the slaughterhouse about when their orders would be ready. Instead, they chatted to pass the time, about whether Priti Patel, the then Home Secretary, was a moron for condemning the England Football team for taking the knee (as part of an anti-racist protest); or whether it makes sense to do Qurbani in England, "because no one is really in need or in poverty here." Occasionally, someone would go on runs to McDonalds for cool drinks and burgers. On the second day, I spent more time outside to speak to people who had come to make their Qurbani. When I first went to speak to the visitors, I was in my overalls and mistaken for a worker who had come to help out – they too were eager to know what was going on. As I spoke to people individually, I explained who I was, and asked whether, verbally, they consented to me including their thoughts about Qurbani as part of the research. In return, I tried to give them a better idea about why it was taking so long, and the processes inside.

Nadif, an engineer from a Midlands city had arrived at seven in the morning, with his eight-year-old son, who he is holding up on the railings to look at the sheep. In Bangladesh for Eid al Adha, where Nadif was born and grew up, he would have

slaughtered a cow himself. He described the public square where everyone would slaughter together outside, immediately after morning prayers. Afterwards, everyone would share already prepared naan and biriyani to eat with the cooked meat. The cattle, he explained, came from India, exported somewhat covertly to supply the demand in neighbouring Bangladesh. He wanted to make sure that Hashir was inside slaughtering, who he remembered from years previous when he was able to enter the slaughterhouse unencumbered by Covid social distancing restrictions. I told him that Hashir was present, but mine was the only assurance he could get.

Deepa, from North West England, who was of Gujarati descent, had come with her husband. She has come here every year for the past decade and spoke warmly about Ray, the owner. In Gujarat, her family would slaughter animals themselves on her husband's family farm. She was nostalgic about the farm, which they had not been able to visit this year because of Covid: "We grow everything there, potatoes, aubergines, runner beans. We've got goats and chicken…We like giving back over there, and bringing things for the villagers to help them out because they are very poor. It feels good and satisfactory to do it." In the absence of being close to rural life, coming to Eastewes every year has become part of their family tradition, but she feels she is missing out on practicing the charitable aspect of Qurbani.

Ash from Nottingham, of Pakistani heritage, has also been coming here for years. She had already organised her Qurbani with family in Pakistan, wanting to give something to her family there. She wanted to bring her sons today, who were in their late teens, to have the experience at least once. Ash liked coming here because she wants to know where her food comes from, and she can see the sheep are healthy before they are slaughtered. "In Mecca, it's terrible", she says, "people go on Hajj, and then each person would have to sacrifice an animal – but there were so many of them they couldn't do anything with the meat, everyone's away from home, so it would all get buried in a big hole. Ridiculous." She asked me about what was happening inside, I explained Hashir was there, and that the sheep were stunned. She was surprised at the comment, "Isn't everywhere? I didn't realise, I thought they had to stun everywhere in the UK."

Kasim, a scientist from Nigeria, had come with two friends. Like Nadif, in Nigeria, Kassim would slaughter either a goat or cow himself. He explained how he learnt

slaughtering and butchery skills from his father "You start doing small bits when you are young and build up to it." He describes the repertoire of dishes that would be part of their Eid meal: the heads, feet, and tripe used for a stew. He wanted to retrieve the tripe and organs from the slaughterhouse to make a stew that evening but knew that might not be possible. Instead, he is going to have a barbecue with his family. He misses the holistic aspect of killing and having access to the offal, but he does not feel a big pull to return to Nigeria to make Qurbani there, having lived, studied and raised his family in the North West of England.

Riz is a lawyer from London, of Pakistani descent. This year, Qurbani has particular sentimental attachments for him. His father, who used to bring him along when he was younger, had recently passed away. "I'm not gonna lie, the first time my dad took me with him when I was a kid, I was upset. I balled my eyes out." He now appreciates doing it. "I'm missing him today, I really am, I always am, we were really close, but it is good to be here carrying the tradition on, it makes me think of him." Waiting his turn, Malek, is from Tunisia. He has only recently moved to the UK for work and has come to Eastewes for the first time. He was amazed that a slaughterhouse in Britain would be open to offer this service to Muslims. He expressed that having the option to visit a slaughterhouse made him feel more welcome the country.

Socially, and temporally, the slaughterhouse does transform for the day. This rural patch, a node in a network of moving sheep, meat and people, becomes a destination where people can be physically present: it allows them to know in some measure, the animal being slaughtered and who is doing the slaughtering, and to be close to others after eighteen months of isolation due to pandemic lockdowns. It is a place to connect to individual pasts, to memories of communal slaughter in public squares in Bangladesh; for a recently bereaved son to remember his father, a place to remember feeling close to nature in a rural family home in Gujarat, of cooking meat on an open fire in Tunisia, of being taught by family members how to slaughter in Nigeria; and a place where people can shift out of the binary formation of being neatly categorised as either a rural producer or an urban consumer. Significantly, for almost all the visitors I spoke to, their family histories were shaped by postcolonial migrations from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Ghana.

Asad (2009, p.7-10) proposes that Islam "as the object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves." He claimed that Quranic text should be central to the anthropological study of Islam, but that these texts should be regarded as enabling difference and disagreement amongst Muslims. He proposes that Islam should be studied as a "living tradition," in which differences in the practices of Muslims should not result in claims of inauthenticity. Desjardin & Mulhern (2016) build on theories of ritual and Asad's work on Islam as a "living tradition" and frame Eid al Adha and Qurbani as a "living sacrifice." They propose that it is a "polythetic model" which acknowledges fluidity and complexity. I want to highlight the concept of living tradition, or sacrifice, and of the national and ethnic diversity of the visitors, precisely because it is the flexibility within this concept that the slaughtermen and owners struggle to accommodate into their narratives about Muslims. They invariably categorised the visitors as "P***s", a generalised racialised slur that erased national and cultural differences. They repeated Orientalist discourses which filter out the heterogeneity of Muslim lives (Said, 1978). Moreso, there was no acknowledgement that Qurbani was a practice that was being (re) made within slaughterhouse regulations, and within Britain, and that these were in turn connected to genealogies of Empire and postcolonial migrations. Rather, it was interpreted as an invasion of the slaughterhouse, and a manipulation of the slaughtermen.

Transferring violence – The racialisation of Qurbani

After I had spent a few hours at the lairage, I returned to the slaughterhouse to find Doug, one of the itinerant skilled slaughtermen who works both here and sometimes at Westlambs, sitting outside in the yard. The line had come to a standstill again, so I joined him on a chair. "Where have you been, I thought you'd gone home?" he asked. "No, I've just been speaking to people by the lairage." "What, *that lot* over there?" he asked, nodding his head towards the lairage. I explained that I wanted to speak to everyone who was here, so that I could get a holistic sense of the day. Doug seemed surprised but intrigued. He has worked during Qurbani for the past decade at least, but had not spoken to any Muslims about the significance of the day, and so asked me: "What did they say?" I explained that I had asked people what it means for them to

come here and what kinds of sheep they are looking for. "I bet they are just looking for the prettiest sheep, that's why it's taking so long" he suggested. I explained that one woman had told me that the sheep is supposed to choose them, but that mostly people were choosing sheep based on how many people they were sharing the meat with. I suggested that "Qurbani means different things to different people, for some, it was important to come with children so they can share the tradition." Immediately Doug weighed in, "I bet they think it's all not been stunned, don't they? They shouldn't be doing that anyway, bringing kids, I've seen them shove the kids into the lairage when they are crying, they don't want to be here, it's not nice."

I then asked whether he thought there was a benefit in people coming to the slaughterhouse, seeing the process, and knowing where meat comes from because so many people do not know or want to ignore the realities of meat production. Doug agreed, "yeah, they think it's from a supermarket…they don't understand the process, the labour." "You're the process!" I offered. "I am, yeah!" "So, it's good that people are here?" I asked. He did not want to concede, "well, slaughterhouses don't want open doors, they want to be able to get on with the work, especially with animal rights activists."

Even through Doug is "the process" of slaughter – the person on the slaughter line, skinning and stunning, if not cutting the sheep's throat – there was a persistent discursive transference of violence onto who he imagined the people attending Qurbani were. Our dialogue was shaped through Doug trying to find a point to pin cruelty onto the Muslim visitors: whether through suggesting that they wanted to kill the prettiest sheep; that the sheep were imagined as not stunned; that children were being forced to experience slaughter; that "sacrifice" was implicitly violence for the sake of violence. As discussed in the section on their interpretations of stunning, the slaughtermen expressed a nuanced approach to naming violence, it was not something that was essentialised. However, the dialogue with Doug revealed the ways in which *Muslims*, if not slaughter practices, were essentialised as violent, in ways which were imagined, rather than founded. Admittedly, Doug did not have the same freedom and time to move between the slaughterhouse, and the lairage, should he have wanted to. In this space of simultaneous distance and proximity, the conspiratorial narratives persisted. However, I want to highlight that Doug already imagined Muslims in a

particular way, and that was shaping his interpretation of the day despite some proximity. As Asad (2003, p.11) articulates "it is not always clear whether it is pain and suffering as such that the secularist cares about or the pain and suffering that can be attributed religious violence because that is pain the *modern imaginary* conceives of as gratuitous." Elder et. al (1998) identify that framings of ritual killings as gratuitous and unnecessary violence are invoked to Other immigrants as backward, claiming they possess violent tendencies. This occurs even when practices are not so distinguishable from what is accepted, for example hunting in the US. In this instance, "Muslim" violence was imagined as gratuitous, even when it was Doug, and his colleagues, who had skinned and stunned sheep. This imaginative leap went as far as to equate Muslim visitors at the slaughterhouse with the actions of animal rights activists who are morally opposed to the claimed violence of Doug's labour. Any possibility for convivial solidarity was dampened by the potency and persistence of conflating Muslims with violence. Doug went quiet for a moment. "I'm not racist, Jess, I'm not. My partner is Black. My children aren't white. It's the Pakistanis, they've taken over the industry. We've got no control. This stunning thing, it's a way for them to have control."

7.6 Conclusion

There have been popular claims that Islamophobia, understood as "an unfounded hostility towards Islam" (CBMI, 1997), is not a form racism, because Islam is a religion, not a "race" (Toynbee, 2003). As Meer (2008) has demonstrated, the denial that racism operates against Muslims because they are Muslims is framed around essentialising suggestions that race is involuntary, whereas religion is voluntary. Similarly, Lentin and Titley (2011, p.63) argue that "race and culture work in the same way when applied to the problem posed by Otherness in society. The formal distinction made between race and culture is that the former is immutable while the latter can change." Such distinctions screen out critical race scholars who have adeptly demonstrated that race is constructed, and that racisms can shift. Razack (2022, p.14-15) identifies that "anti-Muslim racism" has been called an "imaginary racism." She argues that this claim has been used as a "weapon to silence legitimate criticism of Islam as a religion that is fanatical, given to violence and impervious to change." In this context, "when Muslims are regarded as a religious group to whom one might feel a

natural cultural antipathy, they are not regarded as the targets of racism." Rather, as Modood and Meer (2009a, p.324) argue, Muslim's are targets of racism for their perceived "Muslimness" in which the "overlapping and interacting nature of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic prejudice is invoked through the racialisation of Muslims."

The slaughtermen and owners express that they are "not racist", because they are not judging people on their racial identities, but their beliefs and moral values. Indeed, Islamophobia is justified as "post-racial", because what is claimed to be at issue are incommensurable cultural practices, such as wearing the veil, building minarets, or non-stun halal slaughter, which are an affront to European secular sensibilities (Abbas, 2017; Ahmed, 2004; Goldberg, 2009; Lentin & Titley, 2012). As discussed, halal slaughter is a practice which is repeatedly invoked in media and political discourses as a means to rhetorically construct Muslims as essential others with incompatible, backwards, and violent tendencies. Indeed, conspiratorial narratives about the Islamification of Britain are centred on the fear that the nation, its laws, schools and supermarkets, for example, are being infiltrated by an incommensurable Islam that wants to destroy it (Pertwee, 2017).

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Muslims are the targets of racisms, because they are racialised. These racialisations emerge through claims that only moderate Muslims can be tolerated; or that Muslims are essentialised as violent; or of not belonging in Britain, because they are either regarded as immigrants; or because of fundamentally incommensurable cultural practices. As Lentin and Titley (2011, p.62-63) argue, "the generalising conflations and homogenising stereotypes derived from culture belie this distinction [between race and culture] and reveal how race thinking can equally be applied to the contemporary fixation with culture… Cultural attributes just as much as physical ones, can come to be associated with particular groups of people." Through the short descriptions of Qurbani, and the visitors, I have offered just a few vignettes to hint at the fluidity of the culturally and nationally inflected Muslim practices, and the diverse histories – and not least the connected histories of Empire – of the Muslims who attended the slaughterhouse. Regardless, the visitors were still imagined as those with fixed cultural practices, or as a homogenised group referred to through a racial slur. As such, the stereotypes derived from ideas of fixed cultures were invoked into essentialising racisms.

For the slaughtermen and owners, the production of halal sheep meat can be an ambiguous and often frustrating space to navigate. However, while non-stun slaughter is certainly a moral issue for them, in their narratives, it is not always acts of violence to which they are opposed. In my analyses of the slaughtermen's responses to non-stun slaughter, and Qurbani, I have argued that neither are easy to classify as "culturally" or legally incommensurable in relation to the practices through which they claim their own moral identities. Rather, the tensions that emerge are fundamentally about racialised hierarchies. As discussed, Wemyss (2009) argued that hierarchies of belonging are shaped around tolerance. Implicit in the idea of tolerance, is intolerance. To be tolerated already indicates that you are potentially intolerable. In this vein, what emerges as most significant are the ways in which the white slaughtermen and owners feel they have lost control. As such, I have identified a series of what Goldberg (2009) defines as "tipping" points: moments where the slaughtermen and owners express that they have lost their sense of control over how they run their business, or their labour. These are moments where Muslims are imagined as too present, too populous, or too influential in Britain.

Razack (2022) uses the term "imagined racism" to articulate the ways in which anti-Muslim racism is delegitimized. However, I want to adopt it to highlight the ways in which incompatible cultural differences are imagined by white British men who are expressing anti-Muslim racisms. What I hope to have made clear, are the discursive ways in which legitimate concerns – whether about non-stun slaughter, or being overworked – are mediated through an imaginary figure of the threatening Muslim who is fundamentally positioned as a threat to British moral standards. Throughout, I argue that white workers and owners moralise their labour by displacing associations of violence onto Muslim others, whether the accreditation agencies, Muslim consumers, or Qurbani visitors. They construct Muslims as threatening boundary crossers: underhand, immoral, violent, manipulative, and irrational, even when Muslims are working within the lawful system. It is this imaginative figure which pushes against workers threshold of tolerance.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that classed and racialised histories are connected in the construction of moral, white, Britishness. Both slaughter workers and Muslims in Britain are stigmatised as innately violent and at a distance from a moral

national belonging in media and political discourses, and even implicitly within the law. These ideals of British civility and respectability were co-constructed through Imperial and colonial discourses which positioned racialised, classed, and Orientalised "Others" as abject or stigmatised populations (McClintock, 1995; Said 1978). In this context, the language historically used to stigmatise classed national abjects – such as slaughtermen - as at a distance from British belonging bear striking similarities to the anti-Muslim and orientalist language used to disavow Muslims from belonging in Britain – irrationality, violence and backwardness. However, whereas the moral machinery of utilitarianism which constructed slaughterhouses argued that people could be "civilised," the persistence of Orientalist discourses position Muslims as inherently culturally different, and unable to be "civilised."

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Imagining Whiteness and national belonging

"You know she's remembering everything you say, she's writing it all down…The life of a slaughterman, that's what Jess is writing, and we are all going to be in it", Cliff declared as I was sat with the slaughtermen in the "white kitchen" during breaktime at Westlambs. As he was slicing the hide away from the back of a cow, scowling with concentration at North Hills, Philip, asked, "So who is going to have the starring role in this book then?" He proceeded to tell me that he would be number one, the protagonist, Rob could be number two, the sidekick, and Cliff, who works at Eastewes and Westlambs and who Philip knows through their years in the trade, could be number three. Antoni, the Polish slaughterman, and Ben, the apprentice did not get offered roles in his version of my book. Rob overheard these instructions and laughed. Philip had swiftly knocked down his peer, Cliff, and expressed his arrangement of the hierarchies of the slaughtermen at North Hills. At Eastewes, Wayne instructed me to give him a beef-related pseudonym, which I said I would not do. He reminded me of the memorable conversations (or banter) we had shared and told me that, "you need to put in that everyone calls Cliff [his superior] a twat behind his back!"

I have only partially written the thesis which the slaughtermen requested. I have included the hierarchies between workers, and I have included the type of talk: the banter, the gossip, the relationship advice, the racism, xenophobia and the Islamophobia that goes on in slaughterhouses. I have, as Philip instructed, probably given him a starring role, because he had the loudest voice. I hope I have demonstrated that the conversations and dialogue in slaughterhouses are fundamental to an imaginative sociality and collective belonging, for some workers. However, these collected narratives have not amounted to an account of the life of a slaughterman. Instead, I chose to confront the ways in which these slaughtermen's stories about themselves and others were the dominant modality through which hierarchies, division and belonging emerged across three distinct, but interconnected slaughterhouses. As outlined in chapter 2, the dominance of some slaughtermen's voices and the hierarchies and division they reproduced, combined with my racialised,

classed and gendered positionality, and my choice to focus on the construction of white hierarchies of belonging, lead to many voices being silent: the local workers, especially the local Asian workers.

These sites are of course already connected by the itinerant slaughterman, but it is through the narrative of the thesis, which follows how white men construct their identities and the identities of others, that they have been cohered together. For me, this was important, because to be a white slaughterman, dependent on the halal market, distanced from ideals of British morality because of the stigmatisation of their labour, revealed the imaginative and fragile qualities of these white hierarchies of belonging. These fragilities were made visible through a comparative methodological approach.

Rather than writing the life of slaughterman, I have presented a narrative which has woven together heterogeneous elements into a plot: a series of slaughtermen's stories, events, and observations, in ways which I am sure they would not have imagined, and which they might contest. As discussed, our situatedness, shaped by social location, identity, and imagination, matters both in the stories we tell and the stories we can hear. My intention has been to focus on the function of narratives about race, class, and nationhood in the everyday, to reveal how racism works in relation to the construction of Whiteness at both the local and national scale.

In the introduction, I outlined the context in which this research took place through a series of media and political narratives in which various claims about national belonging were rhetorically claimed: Sheep had a native blood and soil belonging; slaughterhouses were abject zones where "British" people did not want to work, and halal slaughter was an abject foreign practice, rendering Muslims as culturally incompatible to civilised "British" ways of life. These narratives were accompanied by claims of an angry "left behind white working-class" who were pushing back against multiculturalism, deskilling, deindustrialisation, and immigrants, who had prospered at their expense. My question centred on why these narratives of division and difference persisted, when economically and materially, a closer view of slaughterhouse and sheep economies revealed nuances and challenges to these claims. Sheep slaughterhouses – stigmatised spaces expelled from national imaginaries – could be places where an "everyday multiculture" or conviviality was thriving on the margins.

They were places where white skilled workers in a traditional industrial trade had not necessarily been "left behind" and where postcolonial immigrants, their descendants, and Muslims in Britain, were sustaining the British sheep sector, and livelihoods of those who work within it. However, throughout the thesis, I have demonstrated that potential for an "everyday multiculture" or conviviality was dampened in these sites, by the reproduction of an everyday "methodological Whiteness." Across the slaughterhouses, some of the media and political narratives about national belonging were reproduced, while others were occluded. I asked a series of questions: What logics remain for the persistence of racialised, xenophobic, and islamophobic narratives, which reproduce division, hierarchy, and exclusion? In what ways did a "methodological Whiteness" persist in spaces where people, sheep and meanings were always on the move and what purpose did it serve? How were broader narratives about abjection and belonging in the national context reproduced in the everyday, by those who themselves are stigmatised? In what ways do these racisms shift between "cultural" and "biological" registers? Throughout the thesis, my intention has been to argue that the imaginative qualities of narratives link all of the answers to these questions, as I will outline in this conclusion.

Why do narratives matter?

During the Covid pandemic in 2020, the British government instructed the Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) to produce a report into institutional racism in Britain in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests. It was known as the "Sewell Report," after the chair of the commission, Tony Sewell. Broadly, the report denied that there was evidence of unchanging institutional racism in Britain. This claim was heavily critiqued by anti-racist groups such as the Runnymede Trust. While everyday racisms, rather than institutional racism, has been the focus of this research, I want to draw attention to the recommendations that the report gave in terms of how a future Britain should *imagine* itself. In particular, because the report centred on "narrative" as a fundamental modality through which Britain could create a more equitable society.

The report suggested that more celebratory narratives needed to be shared about British history, Empire, and the successes of British Black and Asian people in British society. The Sewell Report (2021, p.7-8, 27-31) claimed that people from "ethnic minority backgrounds absorb a fatalistic narrative that says the deck is permanently stacked against them" and questioned whether "a narrative that claims nothing has changed for the better, and that the dominant feature of our society is institutional racism and white privilege will achieve anything beyond alienating people." It also claimed that the "pessimistic narratives about race have also been reinforced by a rise of identity politics, as old class divisions have lost traction," while simultaneously constructing the "white working-class as stuck." The report concluded that if there were more positive repertoires of narratives about race, and the British Empire, that people who suffer classed or racialised inequalities could imagine themselves, and others, differently.

On the one hand, then, the report identified a key argument which I have made throughout the thesis, that narratives *do* matter: it is through narratives that people construct identities, intimacies, and a sense of belonging. Similarly, the report identified that negative narratives could reproduce division, and inequality. As I have shown, it is through the slaughterman's racialised and classed narratives, that their co-workers were imagined as having a contested belonging in Britain, and at times, this had real material effects in terms of access to labour. However, the report occluded that the re-telling of British histories, or nostaligias for a celebratory British past, already re-emerge in the everyday. I have explored how the repetition of narratives, rooted in the Imperial and colonial histories of class, race, and Whiteness, create national hierarchies of belonging and exclusion. While my research has been based on slaughterhouses – and therefore is not speaking broadly about societal inequalities at large – I contend that the slaughterhouses are places in which the claims of The Sewell Report can be complicated and challenged. They are places in which all workers are at a distance from national belonging, and yet for the white slaughtermen, they emerge as places where that belonging is ferociously claimed.

Narratives are not just "absorbed." This implies a lack of agency. Rather, narratives are connected to other narratives, retold, erased and selected. As I explored in chapter 4, the white slaughtermen select narratives from their pasts, real or imagined, to

construct a nostalgic sense of morality and respectability to their trade and each other. Similarly, at the level of public and media discourse, as Bhambra (2017a, para 6) has claimed, Whiteness is methodological, it imagines a self-reliant white past, which "fails to acknowledge the role played by race in the very structuring of that world". Likewise, Wemyss (2009, p.3) articulates how white discourse "consistently asserts particular narratives of Britain's past while suppressing alternative histories, especially about the British Empire and its histories of violence." Slaughtermen work in spaces where their livelihoods are dependent on the legacies of postcolonial migrations and Empire, yet these connections are persistently erased in their narratives. As explored in chapter 3, digging even further back into the Imperial and colonial histories of sheep exposes an unsettled terrain in which racialised and classed Others have been denied proximity to British belonging. It is exactly within this terrain of interconnected classed and racialised histories through which slaughtermen stigmatise their co-workers, the sheep they slaughter, the meat they produce and the laws which govern their labour, through narratives of racialised, classed, and xenophobic disavowal. Whiteness and Britishness are not "real" things with stable claims, but they are discursively deployed and reconstructed with real effects by making claims about pure and essentialised difference (Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

Fundamentally, The Sewell Report occluded the ways in which racisms are not static. It claimed that the narratives that "nothing has changed for the better" and that "White privilege" dominated society were unfounded. In contrast, throughout the thesis, I have explored how racisms shift dependent on how Whiteness and Britishness are reconstructed in different contexts. These included anti-Muslim, xeno, moral, biological, and cultural racisms. As Goldberg (2009, p.156) tells us, "Race refuses to remain to silent because it is not just a word. It is a set of conditions shifting over time. Never just one thing, it is a way (or really ways) of thinking, and way(s) of seeing." Significantly, the report did not account for anti-Muslim racism, echoing the claim that anti-Muslim racism is an issue of cultural difference. As I have demonstrated throughout the thesis, anti-Muslim racism combines the "overlapping and interacting nature of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic prejudice" (Meer & Modood, 2009a, p.324), alongside "older" colonial and postcolonial racisms (Back et. al, 2012).

Imaginative narratives

In chapter 6, I argued that imagination is a fundamental component in how narratives are told and received. I demonstrated how the imaginative qualities of narratives create both distance and intimacy between slaughtermen and workers. Indeed, the imaginative qualities of narratives about people's classed, racialised, gendered and national identities have been a theme which has flowed throughout the thesis. If "race" is a floating signifier, as Hall (1997) defines, then characteristics are imagined and imposed onto people, meat, and sheep to construct racialised differences. For example, there is an imaginative approach to claiming that British meat which changes through the seasons is persistently poor quality and "ethnic." Likewise, Dennis imagines that Asim's racialised Asian body will not be able to become a slaughterman's body. In dialogues about the value of skilled labour, the nostalgia for a respectable past, imagines the past as better than now. While working in halal slaughterhouses, imagining a Muslim Other always as the location of violence, keeps white British, non-Muslim workers' sense of respectability and morality intact. These narratives construct discursive hierarchies of belonging in the slaughterhouse which persist despite material, economic or moral contestations, enabling difference to be reconstructed even when empirically, these differences are unstable. It is the shifting nature of narratives – how they are repeated, rehashed, elaborated on and obfuscated – which enables them to be continuously re-imagined or repeated if shifting contexts.

Class, Whiteness and race

As Bhambra (2017a) argued, the discourse that the white working-class had been left behind positioned the white working-class against Black and Asian communities, denying the presences of Black and Asian workers in the workforce over the past century. As such, the working-class were imagined as white, through a "methodological Whiteness" which emboldened claims that they had been left behind. I proposed that I would adopt this concept to explore its vernacular manifestations, to interrogate the ways in which classed and racialised stigma, abjection and belonging overlap and intersect. Because these narratives of classed and racialised abjection and

belonging shifted across the sites, it enabled me to focus on their relational constructions.

In chapter 4, I argued against easy classifications of slaughter work as "working-class." I mapped how Britishness and Whiteness; class and respectability were not fixed or essentialised categories. These identifications were discursively redeployed across sites in relation to the classed, racialised and national constructions of co-workers. White skilled slaughtermen claimed an unstable and shifting hierarchy of belonging to shirk the classed stigma which could be associated with their labour. That is, constructing classed identities and the racialisation of Others were co-constituting. Implicit in the claim that the white working-class have been left behind, is that they are anachronistic and have collectively been left *somewhere*. However, the slaughtermen's imagined nostalgic visions of the past were not a shared, specific moment. Yet, these nostaligias all shirked inhabiting the stigmatisation which has accompanied slaughter labour since the Victorian reform movement. Through their narratives, they disregarded stigmatised working-class identities, by reproducing their Whiteness. As discussed, Tyler (2013, p. 38) argues, that attention must be paid to the political agency and forms of available to those who have been stigmatised. My argument has been that the imaginative constructions of Whiteness and respectability are these forms of power.

Throughout, I have connected these classed and racialised discourses to Imperial and colonial genealogies, demonstrating how these are simultaneously reproduced and erased in the everyday. I have argued the slaughtermen's narratives which claim a moral, national belonging have long genealogies in Empire, Imperialism, and Colonialism, race, and class. Interrogating how there is a persistent "elision of race and its colonial coordinates" in the continued stigmatisation of postcolonial immigrants, Stoler (2016, p.170) pushes the idea that histories are simply forgotten. Colonial histories instead have "unruly qualities" they can remain on fringes of national narratives, or they can be "rendered to the present as vestiges, or pressingly at hand." As such, these histories do not simply disappear as part of a "colonial amnesia" or get lost in a "memory hole." To forget is not a passive activity, it is active and selective. It is this "unruliness" and imaginative qualities through which division and belonging are reproduced. McClintock (1995) argued that categories of gender, race, and class

emerged alongside each other during colonialism and imperialism, through ideas of national purity and abjection. Through the comparison and connection of "colonial" and "metropolitan" abjects, she argued that distinctions can be made about forms of abjection, and how they intersect through class, race, and gender. As such, the abjection of slaughterhouses is not the same as the abjection and expulsion of unruly peasants from their land, for example, but through them, class, race and gender emerge as related "articulated categories in the sense that they come into being in historical relation to each other and emerge only in dynamic, shifting and intimate interdependence" (McClintock, 1995, p.61). Being abject is not something intrinsic to others, whether sheep or people, but distancing and abjection has been intrinsic to constructions of an imagined British national identity. As I hope to have demonstrated, these narratives of abjection and belonging are reproduced in the slaughterhouse in the everyday, in ways which undo and remake constructions of the fixity of classed and racialised identities.

Race, nature and culture

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that imaginative narratives invoke strategic equivocations between nature and culture in the construction of racialised difference and claims of white, national purity (Wade, 2002). In chapter 3, I focussed on deconstructing and challenging the rhetorical claims about the "Britishness" or purity of sheep. I proposed that meat and sheep were variously essentialised as "British", English", "ethnic", "Muslim" through unstable equivocations between nature and culture. For example, native British sheep essentialised British soil and land, whereas "ethnic" mutton (also fed on British soil) essentialised its consumers as from elsewhere. These ostensible binary differences were untenable and constructed around impermanent values such as age and place. Importantly, the racialisation of sheep and meat echoed in the racialisation of workers. In chapter 5, I turned my attention to the ways in which discourses of nature and culture shaped two young workers' access to labour. Identifying the ways in which both "race" and skill are mediated through the body, I argued that white slaughtermen's imaginative narratives deployed uneven constructions of fixity and permanence onto racialised bodies. In both these examples, racialised differences emerged as fragile. Indeed, my intention

has been to demonstrate that if racialised discourses can construct both a young British Asian man, and a sheep which has been farmed and reared in the English countryside as un-British, they are imaginative, and play around with ideas of nature and culture to construct difference. In so doing, any stable claims of British purity disintegrate.

Articulating the slipperiness with which nature and culture are invoked in racialised discourses is fundamental to challenging claims that anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia are not forms of racism. Throughout the thesis, I have included references to media and political discourses which espouse the incommensurable cultural differences of Muslims, while denying that these are forms of racism. Similarly, the slaughtermen felt that they were not expressing racist beliefs, because their discontent was levelled at Muslims or Pakistanis because of cultural differences. Indeed, the denials of anti-Muslim racism are centred on positioning nature (biological race) and culture (religion) as distinct categories. As discussed in the final chapter, imagined cultural differences in slaughter methods are invoked to essentialise Muslims as innately violent, and in working through the logic of fixity, they follow the logics of "biological" racisms. As Lentin and Titley (2011, p.62) state, "a language of culture and values has almost completely supplanted one of race, but the effects of such a language, couched though it is in often relativist terms, produces racial dividends: division, hierarchy, exclusion."

The "Death of multiculturalism" vs. White hierarchies of belonging

In the introduction to the thesis, I proposed that a grounded ethnographic account could enrich the critiques of the "death of multiculturalism" by alerting us to the persistence and changing forms of racism in Britain, and the ways in which they emerge alongside the construction of white classed identities and hierarchies of belonging. There were of course moments of conviviality or an "everyday multiculture" across the slaughterhouses, which have been less attended to. Gilroy (2004, p.xi) has defined "conviviality" as the "processes of co-habitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain", which occur in urban areas and postcolonial cities. As with Rogaly (2020), who drew on Gilroy's definitions,

Gilroy argues that conviviality does not imply an absence of racism or a triumph of tolerance, but a moment where notions of fixed identities and cultures become untenable. Through my focus on the ways in which white hierarchies of belonging are constructed, I have not included those for whom the persistence of constructing racial difference, or awarding tolerance, was not fundamental to their sense of belonging to the slaughterhouse. For example, at Westlambs, there was solidarity between the local white British, British Asian and Pakistani workers, both in their labour, and their shared locality. Here, in the back rooms, chat was centred around banal moments of everyday life, films that had been watched, plans with families, or local news. Jeff, a white British local worker in has perfected the art of preparing sheep feet for halal butcher shops, which will make their way into Pakistani recipes. He says, "I don't fancy them myself", but he explains they are no different to pigs' trotters that he ate when he was younger. He and Sajid, who are both in their early seventies share their plans and excitement for their upcoming retirements. Younger British Asian workers would bring in food their mothers had made to share with Jeff, and Eddie, another local white worker. At Eastewes, one of the local white British line workers would collect sheep testicles for Hashir, the halal slaughtermen, to take home and cook. In North Hills, Antoni would prepare sausages and fermented cabbage and share them with Rob and Philip, who both expressed how delicious these Polish foods were. There were moments, as Hall (2000, p.3) suggests, where a multiculturalism existed "adjectivally, rather than substantially", where cultural practices were remade in changing contexts rather than essentialised. The banter, which was also part of the "culture" of the slaughterhouses. As explored in chapter 4, I was told that this was a convivial, shared culture between all workers. But, as I have argued, this conviviality sat closely beside the racist narratives which slaughtermen expressed in more reflexive moments. Further, the local workers did not engage in banter with each other which was racist, if at all.

Throughout the thesis, I have focussed on the ways in which white hierarchies of belonging were constructed in relation to the nation and the slaughterhouse by white slaughtermen, which dampened moments of solidarity. Guided by Wemyss (2009) these hierarchies were understood as being constructed around the premise of tolerance. They emerged in relation to workers, to skill, to meat, to labour and to slaughter practices. In chapter 7, however, I focussed on instances where these white

hierarchies of belonging were challenged, and it appeared as though the threshold of tolerance had been breached. Through the analytic frame of secular moralities as shaped around the regulation of violence, I argued that white British slaughtermen displaced the perceived violence of their labour onto Muslims others – whether consumers, slaughtermen, accreditation agencies or visitors to Qurbani. Specifically, I argued that this displacement did not emerge as an issue with religious difference per se. Rather, moral judgements were ascribed to people in which postcolonial racisms and anti-Muslim racisms intersected. I intentionally left this chapter until the end of the thesis. As explored in the introduction, the practice of halal (which invariably assumes non-stun slaughter) is frequently invoked, like women wearing the veil, to construct Muslims as incompatible with British standards of morality and civility and legitimise Islamophobia. In placing this chapter towards the end, I hope to have demonstrated that racisms towards Muslims and Asians in Britain are not dependent on moral or cultural differences with regards to animal welfare. They emerge in relation to bodies, through the textures of meat and in the coding of respectable labour at white, which included both continuities and discontinuities with older colonial racisms. Returning to the themes of tolerance as integral to the construction of hierarchies of belonging, I argued that through a sense of a loss of control, white slaughtermen and owners expressed that they were being displaced from their hierarchy which tipped the balance of their ostensible toleration (Goldberg, 2009; Wemyss, 2009).

I have argued that all racism has an imaginative quality, by strategically connecting nature and culture in unruly ways. However, I hope to have demonstrated that the persistence of anti-Muslim racism has a particularly heightened imaginative quality. As Somers & Gibson (1994) articulated, narratives do not appear out of nowhere. In the moments where slaughtermen and owners are expressing that their threshold of tolerance of has been breached, are moments when they are re-hashing stereotypes, about violent Muslim men with blunt knives, oppressed women, asylum seekers and extremists, or moral panics about the Islamification of Britain. The "imaginary figure" of the Muslim Other, as Goldberg (2009) posits, is so intense that it legitimises claims of incommensurable cultural and moral differences, and the "death of an everyday

multiculturalism" even when these are not grounded in the slaughtermen's and owner's material and ethical realities.

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