

5.1 Animals

Chair: Janken Myrdal

5.51 Inja Smerdel – What images of oxen can tell us: metaphorical meanings and everyday working processes

The author first briefly presents some relevant historical, geographical, social and cultural data relating to the draught ox in Slovenia. The findings are based on her ongoing research into the cultural aspects of working oxen in pre-industrial farming, during which some thematic issues have been already addressed (e.g. working with oxen in the Pivka region; ox diseases and treatments; communicating with working oxen; possible parallels between training oxen and children). She then focuses on reflections of the material world in the spiritual domain – in art – discussing the eloquence of some relevant Slovene pictorial sources (mainly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries): either relatively realistic genre scenes depicting oxen at pasture and at work, or those revealing their metaphorical, symbolic meanings. The author analyses the reasons for the appearance of oxen in such works of art and folk art, also attempting to explain different attitudes on the part of painters or sculptors towards oxen. In her further analysis of the selected works of art she then focuses on the ‘everyday reality’ of the depicted agricultural processes in which oxen were involved, on their social and material cultural aspects – such as people working with oxen, various types of harness and tools of communication. Her findings are comparatively substantiated by analogous documentary photographs, related foreign pictorial sources, oral testimonies from her field research, and by other relevant sources and literature.

Inja Smerdel, MA, is a museum consultant with the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. She was curator of rural economic activities at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum from 1980 to 1995, editor-in-chief of the scientific periodical *Etnolog* from 1991 to 1995, and director of the museum from 1995 to 2005, since when she has once more been curator of subsistence and agriculture. After returning to research she contributed to the EARTH programme of the European Science Foundation from 2006 to 2009. The theme that has animated her most throughout her research activities are the relations between man and animal. Her current research work focuses on working oxen.

5.52 Carl Griffin – Agrarian capitalism, animal maiming, and human desire

The everyday lives of many farm workers in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England were intricately and often intimately bound with the lives of animals. Even in market towns and cities the ebb and flow of human life was inseparable from that of animal life. Market places, streets, fields and barns were all spaces where animals transcended being the mere applicators of capital to instead being obvious co-constituents of the rhythms of existence. Not too surprisingly, as Keith Thomas has suggested, living and working in such close proximity meant that animals were often thought of as individuals. Whilst the psychological and physiological boundaries between humans and animals very rarely ever meaningfully broke down, the relationship, the engagement, was often expressed in complex psycho-sexual ways. Utilizing the archive of malicious attacks on animals, this paper explores the ways in which fondness, attraction, sexual desire and antipathy between humans and animals played out. Not only will it be shown that many cases of animal maiming invoked both tenderness and brutality but also that some cases involving attacks on the sexual organs of animals represented complex statements about the ways in which agrarian capitalism regulated labourers’ bodies as (after Foucault) ‘bare life’.

Carl Griffin is a Lecturer in Human Geography at Queen’s University, Belfast. He trained as a historical geographer at the University of Bristol, and held post-doctoral positions at the universities of Bristol, Southampton and Oxford. His research embraces studies of popular protest, as well as cultures of unemployment, human-environment interactions, and the history of political economy. He has published papers in, amongst other places, *Rural History*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, *International Review of Social History*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, and *Past and Present*. As well as finishing writing a book on the Swing quasi-insurrection of the early 1830s, he is starting a research project on labour regulation and proto trade unionism in the early nineteenth century English west.

5.53 Laura Hollsten – Domestic animals on early modern Caribbean sugar plantations

European animals brought into the Caribbean islands played an important part on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sugar plantations. They were used in the production of food, as draught animals, and as producers of manure. According to contemporary observers, the successful running of a sugar plantation required cattle, donkeys, horses, sheep and goats. All these mammals, together with others, were initially brought to the islands from Europe. Although some failed to thrive, most species of domestic animals adapted themselves well to their new surroundings and became important ‘cogs in the of the protoindustrial machinery’ of the sugar plantation. Like imported humans (European contract workers and African slaves), imported animals were cruelly exploited. The straining labour of turning the rollers of the sugar mill killed many horses and oxen. In consequence, it was necessary to keep as large a number of mill animals as possible. At the same time, animals were highly valued, not least as producers of valuable manure.

The proposed paper looks at how European animals contributed to the rise of the wealth creating sugar plantation complex and how their contribution was viewed by contemporary observers. The paper takes its departure from discussions of co-operation between humans and animals in the fields of environmental history and animal studies. The study draws from travel accounts, sugar planting manuals natural histories of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Caribbean islands.

Laura Hollsten is an amanuensis and postdoctoral researcher at the Department of History at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland. Her research interests include Environmental History, Atlantic History, Caribbean and Latin American History, History of Science, and, lately, the relationship between humans and domestic animals.

5.54 Ted Collins – Animal power in European agriculture in the twentieth century

Until very recently animals – and not tractors – were the chief source of traction power in European agriculture, supplying in 1939 over 90 per cent and in 1970 still about one-half of the continent’s needs. The persistence of animals at so late a stage of industrialisation is puzzling, given the much earlier and rapid uptake of motor vehicles in towns and cities. This paper tries first to explain the limited use of steam and electricity for farm traction, and the delay in the start of the tractor revolution until 1950 or later. The primary concern is animal power. The size and composition of the draught herd in the inter-war and post-Second World War periods in the various zones and selected countries will be mapped and quantified. Also examined is the relationship between power availability and utilisation, and the work output and efficiency of the different types of animals, to conclude that the European farm power economy was energetically very inefficient and power usage highly wasteful.

E. J. T. (Ted) Collins was Professor of Rural History, and from 1979–2000, Director of the Rural History Centre at the University of Reading. He was editor of and principal contributor to volume VII of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales* (2000), and of an acclaimed report on traditional rural industries in England and Wales published by the Countryside Agency in 2004. His published works extend over many aspects of nineteenth and twentieth century agricultural and food history, with notable contributions on practical farming, farm labour, tools and machinery, energy use, cereal foods, and rural crafts.