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“What a Thing, then, is this Cow . . .”: Positioning Domestic Livestock Animals in the Texts and Practices of Small-Scale “Self-Sufficiency”

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the positioning of animals other than human in the texts and practices of two versions of small-scale food “self-sufficiency” in Britain. The paper discusses the writings of Cobbett (1822/1926, 1830/1985) and Seymour (1960s/1970s) on self-sufficiency, suggesting that livestock animals are central, in a number of ways, to the constitution of these modes of self-sufficiency. First, animals are situated in both the texts and in the practicing of self-sufficiency regarded as essential parts of the economies and ecologies of small-scale food production. Second, animals’ parts in these authors’ criticisms of wider social, economic and political conditions supplement their role in small-scale domestic food supply. Animals become associated with a morality of human behavior and lifestyle and are part of the broader social critiques that the writing and practicing of these modes of self-sufficiency imply. These historically and geographically specific versions of self-sufficiency are valuable in defining and enacting possible alternative modes of human-animal relation in the context of food production.

Cobbett (1822/1926), ostensibly a practical guide to the attainment of a degree of self-sufficiency in food by laboring cottagers in rural England, also is both a moral framework for individual conduct and a critique of processes of enclosure and the capitalization

of agriculture, which, it is argued, deprived the English peasant class of land and liberty. Cobbett can be understood as part of a romantic tradition in post-enclosure England. With various others, he “yearned for a golden past and wrote in idyllic terms of what life was like before enclosure” (Beckett, 1991, p. 50). Woodcock (1967/1985) characterizes Cobbett as a “conservative-hearted rebel”, simultaneously radical in his struggle to improve the lot of an impoverished and dispossessed agricultural laboring class and reactionary in his nostalgic memories of an independent peasantry who had been able to “live simply but well” by “honest and independent toil.” (p. 21). Woodcock argues that hoped for a “renewal” (p. 21) of peasant self-sufficiency, maintaining the ideal of a cottage-agrarian, decentralized society based largely on subsistence farming.

A century and a half later, Seymour’s books on self-sufficiency (1961/1991; 1975/1996, 1977; Seymour & Seymour, 1973²) emerged as similar criticisms of an urbanized, industrialized, large-scale social order. As guides to individual self-reliance, they envisioned lifestyles based on the small-scale and on intimate relationships between individuals and the land and locality from which their food and other resources were derived. Thus, there is an association between Cobbett’s idealization of a peasant past and Seymour’s vision of a new, independent peasantry. In Pepper’s (1993) terminology, Seymour can be seen as a “Traditional Conservative,” a term that (ironically) incorporates a radical desire for fundamental changes to society. This perspective evolves through Seymour’s books as their scope widens, beginning with an account of his development of a self-sufficient lifestyle in East Anglia and becoming a political agenda for widespread social change. Seymour’s work was associated with an enthusiasm for self-sufficiency in 1970s Britain, reflected in many attempts to “return” to the land in search of an idyllic self-sufficiency. Small-scale farming was depicted as key to the “good life” and was reflected in other publications including *Rivers*, (1977); *Practical Self Sufficiency*, a magazine launched in 1975; and popular cultural forms—in particular, the BBC television situation comedy, *The Good Life*. Seymour’s books became emblematic of the discursive ideal of self-sufficiency; their association of practical advice with a particular philosophy of life and vision for the re-organization of society and landscape was seemingly attractive to many urban-based people.

Common to both these modes of self-sufficiency is the significance of livestock animals. This paper examines the positioning of such nonhuman animals within these frameworks for—or visions of—better, more ethical relationships between people, animals, land, and food production. In contrast to much ethical debate that concentrates specifically on the social treatment of animals, the focus is on the ways nonhuman animals are implicated in particular debates about *society*. The paper aims to demonstrate the importance of animals to these modes of self-sufficiency as both corporeal and meaningful, to explore the discursive and geographical placing of animals in relation to humans and notions of self-sufficiency, and to draw comparisons between the historically separate versions of self-sufficiency and their placing of animals. The emphasis is thus not on developing a critique of the foundations of these ideals but on looking at how, in different ways, animals are important to their constitution.

Animals, Ethics, and Reconstituting “Authentic” Human-Animal Relations

Debates over the ethics of human-animal relations have a long history. Such debates often have distinguished between notions of absolute ethics, prescribing normatively right and wrong relationships, and descriptive ethics, exploring the conditions under which certain values and practices become accepted as moral or immoral (Kean, 1998; Tapper, 1988). These concerns recently have emerged into culturally informed animal geographies (Emel & Wolch, 1998; Lynn 1998a; Philo & Wilbert, 2000; Philo & Wolch, 1998; Wolch & Emel, 1995), particularly in relation to what often are described as “moral geographies.” Here, the notion of geographically “situated moral understanding” (Lynn, 1998b, p. 237) indicates the significance of spatial particularity to moral frameworks. The notion of a moral geography implies that specific moral frameworks, judgments, and relationships emerge and are situated in particular spaces or places.

The ways in which people understand and use different spaces and places influence their relationships with the various others (including animals) encountered there. Thus, the always complex moral relationships between humans and animals might be expected to be different on a farm (where

animals are raised for food) from a domestic setting (where animals might be seen as companions). Similarly, the ways in which “wilderness” spaces are imagined might lead to particular moral judgments being made about the treatment of “wild” animals, which would differ from those made about animals encountered in “cultural” spaces such as the home, farm, or zoo. As an example, Lund and Röcklinsberg (2001) examine the ethical status given to animals on organic farms, demonstrating animals’ ethical positioning within an ethically charged mode of agriculture. Here, a moral code about how livestock animals should be treated is associated with particular places—organic farms—with implications for the human-animal relationships occurring in those specific places.

Geographers have begun to discuss the situated moral human-animal geographies associated with particular places and spaces and have described how social debates and conflicts have evolved around notions of animal rights, the presence/absence of particular animals in particular environments, and the inappropriateness of the human-animal relationships in specific contexts. Animals are shown to be interwoven through discourses and practices in many and complex ways. As Philo (1995, p. 677) suggests, “animals become inserted into human discourses . . . in a diversity of ways which have commonly had spatial implications for them.” Given the significance of both discourse and practice to the treatment of animals in specific contexts, it is important to understand their simultaneously symbolic and corporeal presence.

Baker (1993, p. 5) argues that animals have a “symbolic availability” allowing them to be drawn upon in the construction of meaning. He discusses how Berger (1980) uses animals to exemplify the sense of loss or separation that people feel from a (perhaps quite distant) rural past. The assumed “closeness” of human-animal relations in “peasant” farming is symbolic, for Berger, of a more “authentic” lifestyle.

From the early nineteenth century, animals progressively have become part of a system of capitalist agriculture that objectifies them as raw material, or “sites of accumulation” (Watts, 2000, p. 295). This transformation of animals into industrial objects has entailed a physical and affective separation of most humans from livestock in Western societies. While Berger is criticized for romanticizing peasant lifestyles and their “closeness” to animals, Baker argues that nevertheless there is a pervasive desire for many to recreate “authentic”

relationships with animals; symptomatic of this are zoos and natural history documentaries. Arguments for small-scale self-sufficiency also draw on representations of particular forms of human-livestock relationships' being authentic and associated with morally better ways of life than dependence on purchased food and urban, industrial lifestyles.

Alongside their symbolic significance, animals' corporeality and capacities need to be considered (Wolch & Emel, 1995). What animals can *do* and *be*, as well as how they are represented, is important in examining their positioning within self-sufficiency. This need to understand animals as both symbolic and corporeal is recognized in recent studies. Marvin (2001), for example, focuses on the physical "presence" of foxhounds in England as well as on how they are represented. In a different sphere, Brownlow's (2000) analysis of debates over reintroducing wolves to the Adirondacks, suggests that "restoration" of animals into particular places has both theoretical and material dimensions. The "project of 'bringing the animals back in' presupposes *necessarily* an *appropriate* (ecological, social, political) place for animals to be brought back *into*" (p. 141). Similarly, Proctor (1998) argues that spotted owl conservation in the Pacific Northwest has interlinked symbolic and ecological dimensions; "the threads of biology and ideology are intertwined . . ." (p. 193). In both Brownlow's and Proctor's examples, the focus is on the provision of appropriate ecological, social, and political conditions for the restoration or conservation of specific wild animal species. Again, in the modes of self-sufficiency discussed here, similar sets of conditions are important. "Self-sufficiency" implies ethical commitment to particular lifestyles and relationships between humans, nature, society, and animals. This requires organizing small-scale farming places, equipment, people, and livestock into particular networks of relationships.

From here, the paper examines Cobbett's and Seymour's books to illustrate the complex roles of animals in these versions of self-sufficiency, concentrating on both the texts and the practicing of different modes of self-sufficient food production. For Cobbett, this tended to be the cottager implementing his advice. Seymour's writing drew on his own corporeal engagement in self-sufficiency in East Anglia and Wales.

The paper looks at the ethical positioning of animals within politicized social ideals that are at least partly constituted around animals' bodies, capacities,

and symbolic value. Animals have had simultaneously symbolic and corporeal roles, evident at different geographical scales. These include, at the smallest scale, the body (increasingly seen by geographers as a key site for the production of meaning as well as a corporeal presence); at medium scales, the farm holding; and at larger scales, the nation. Animals have had simultaneously symbolic and corporeal roles, working at scales from the body to the nation. In these particular cases, the writing and small-scale practicing of particular ideals involves emplaced (situated) human-animal relationships entwined with broader notions of social change and moral improvement through participating in specific forms of human-animal relation and self-sufficient food production.

These case studies are interesting for two reasons. First, they involve modes of small-scale food production that are “alternatives” to “conventional” farming. The positioning of animals in these alternatives is of interest in their supposition of human-animal relations different from those of conventional farming. Second, they involve a search for reconnection with something felt to have been lost. In this sense, a desire for more “authentic” social relationships and lifestyles (e.g., the “peasant” lifestyle) also involves a sense of reconstituting authentic relationships with animals and the food they produce.

Cobbett, Animals, and the Cottager

Cobbett’s championing of those victimized by oppression included the cottager, “evicted from his holding in the great enclosure of the common land, the farm laborer living on potatoes while he grows beef and wheat for city dwellers” (Woodcock, 1967/1985, p. 8). Cobbett’s sense of injustice centered on a decline in the position of rural laborers in relation to the increasing wealth and status of their farmer employers and on the loss of independence entailed in their loss of access to land (Mingay, 1989). His vision for rectifying this injustice had a long-term, idealized dimension involving “the re-establishment of the old cottager class as the foundation of a rural society” (Woodcock, p. 23) and a short-term, practical dimension, expressed in Cobbett (1822/1926). Here, according to G. K. Chesterton’s introduction to the 1926 edition, the cottager was regarded as the “master” of at least the small piece of land attached to his rented cottage. Cobbett is thus devoted to instructing cottagers how best to manage an assumed 40 “rods” (approximately 0.25

acres) of land.³ It also, however, is a morally weighted text, defining the “good” cottager and appropriate domestic life. Animals are important to this in simultaneously corporeal and symbolic ways.

Cobbett (1822/1926) makes a moral case for self-sufficiency. Economy—meaning good management and providing for you as much as possible—is given moral value, while shopping for food is presented as immoral:

How wasteful then, and indeed how shameful, for a labourer’s wife to go to the baker’s shop; and how negligent, how criminally careless of the welfare of his family, must the labourer be, who permits such a scandalous use of the proceeds of his labour. (p. 54)

His alternative is that cottager and family produce their own food, keeping a cow and pigs and making bread and beer. Home-grown and home-made food are seen as healthier and cheaper than adulterated and expensive shop food and necessarily involve keeping animals for provisioning the household.

Animals, in their corporeal capacities (e.g., milk production) and potentials (e.g., to become meat) are thus of great importance. The cow, with her specific capacity of milk production, is positioned centrally within the cottage economy and her value compared specifically to the human capacity for labor:

And what a produce is that of a cow! I suppose only an average of 5 quarts of milk a day. If made into butter, it will be equal every week to two days of the man’s wages, besides the value of the skim milk; and this can hardly be of less value than another day’s wages. What a thing, then, is this cow, if she earn half as much as the man! (Cobbett, 1822/1926, pp. 95-96)

A specific set of relations is envisaged around the cow, intended to achieve intensive fodder production from a small area of land and maximize use of manure in a cyclical small-scale ecology. Animals’ needs and capacities are tied to specific practices and material conditions; they are placed within an emplaced network of land, crops, humans, buildings, and economy.

I should now proceed to speak of the manner of harvesting, preserving and using the [fodder]; of the manner of feeding the cow; of the shed for her; of the managing of the manure; and several other less important things. . . . (Cobbett, 1822/1926, p. 86)

Another animal, the pig, is closely tied to this network. Again, the animal's body is a focus of attention. Pigs are valuable in making use of spare milk in converting their bodies into meat. At the same time, the pig's corporeality is related to a morality of domestic life that pays attention to both the importance of economy and the moral character of the cottager. The living pig's physical capacity to eat and become fat is associated with both the cottager's ability to undertake labor and a morality valuing human sobriety and work:

Make him quite fat by all means . . . Lean bacon is the most wasteful thing that any family can use. In short, it is uneatable, except by drunkards, who want something to stimulate their sickly appetite. The man who cannot live on solid fat bacon . . . wants the sweet sauce of labour, or is fit for the hospital. (Cobbett, 1822/1926, p. 109)

In a similar way, the pig's dead body associates the material and the moral. Here, the heterogeneous materials of the disassembled animal are central to the cottage economy. They are combined with a moral injunction to women and an economy of domestic provision. Thus, after slaughter,

. . . the inwards are next taken out, and if the wife be not a slattern, here, in the mere offal . . . there is food . . . for a large family for a week . . . The butcher the next day cuts the hog up, and the house is filled with meat! Souse, grishins, blade-bones, thigh-bones, spare ribs, chines, belly-pieces, cheeks, all coming into use. . . . (Cobbett, 1822/1926, p. 111)

The value of the animal body and the animal's positioning inside specific cottage economies are made conditional on certain human-animal relationships and human qualities. Specifically, particular types of human are regarded as suitable for entering into a relationship with livestock. Cobbett (1822/1926) is concerned with defining particular kinds of human subjectivity in relation to the keeping of animals. On the one hand, this again involves a morally weighted requirement for a "good" cottager and (in this case) cow-keeper to be skilled in particular tasks:

To pretend to tell a country labourer how to build a shed for a cow . . . would be useless: because a man who, thus situated, can be at any loss for a shed for his cow, is not only unfit to keep a cow, but unfit to keep a cat. (p. 91)

On the other hand, it also involves an attitude toward the treatment of animals. Cobbett (1822/1926) consistently writes about the need to treat animals well, implying that the “good” cottager is kind to animals. Here again, the specified good human-animal relations are as much about constituting the good human as they are about concern for animals. This argument can be extended by looking at Cobbett’s injunction that children’s education should involve caring for animals in the domestic context. Such an education is to be valued over schooling as it prepares children for paid work, indeed increasing their potential value and earnings as future laborers. For Cobbett, relationships with animals are important in the constitution of the good laborer, and in the reproduction of a valued laboring class. He argues that,

... to give [children] the early habit of fondness for animals and of setting a value on them ... is a very great thing ... (Y)ou will find that a labourer is, generally speaking, of value in proportion as he is worthy of being intrusted with the care of animals ... And, mind, for the man to be trustworthy in this respect, the boy must have been in the habit of being kind and considerate towards animals. (pp. 138-139)

Aside from animals’ educational significance, their placing in the domestic sphere is presented as central to human health and domestic stability. The cow’s capacity to produce milk gives her great value because this food flows through other components of the system: nourishing children, enabling the laborer to work, improving bread, and assisting the fattening of pigs. Similarly, fat bacon, the corporeal product of the pig, contributes to the domestic stability and moral behavior that Cobbett (1822/1926) values. He argues that, more so than religion and law, “Meat in the house is a great source of harmony, a great preventer of the temptation to commit those things which, from small beginnings, lead, finally, to the most fatal and atrocious results” (p. 119). It is in this sense, making animals central to domestic social order, that Armstrong and Huzel (1989) suggest the pig is “in Cobbett’s view the very measure of the cottager’s felicity” (p. 737).

We have discussed the animal body, individual morality, and the domestic context. Yet, changing in scale from the individual cottage economy and its assemblage of animals, land and people, Cobbett’s (1822/1926) use of animals extends to a critique of wider society. Animals and domestic economies, therefore, are embedded in moral discussion of social relations at the national

scale. Human-animal relations become a mechanism for criticizing wealth, inequality, enclosure, the Church, and immoral human behavior. A number of illustrations can be given. The first relates back to the importance of contact with animals to children's education. Cobbett insists he would never employ on his own farm somebody whose father had no animals, but that this was increasingly common. Those who grow up with animals, "will all learn, from their infancy, to set a just value on dumb animals, and will grow up in the habit of treating them with gentleness and feeding them with care" (p. 96). But here, Cobbett links potential employees' lack of experience of animals to processes of social change:

They were formerly the sons and daughters of small farmers; they are now the progeny of miserable propertyless labourers. They have never seen an animal in which they have an interest. This monstrous evil has arisen from causes which I have a thousand times described; and which causes must be speedily removed, or, they will produce a dissolution of society. (p. 96)

Cobbett (1822/1926) places contact with animals at the center of a morality that acts to hold society together, so that enclosure, dispossession of the peasant class, and the creation of a class of landless (and animal-less) laborers, threaten social order. At the same time, the wealthy—including those farmers who increasingly aspire to the status of gentlemen—are criticized for their wealth and preferences for fashion and refined foods. Again, animals are used in simultaneously corporeal and symbolic ways. In instructing how to feed pigs, Cobbett writes, "You will soon learn how much the pig will require in the day, because pigs, more decent than many rich men, never eat more than is necessary to them" (p. 199). The pig is at the same time a body both to be fed and held in figurative contrast to the wealthy. Cobbett recognizes that his cottager readers might question his extended criticisms of wealth and fashion. He writes, "'What,' says the Cottager, 'has all this to do with hogs and bacon?' Not directly with hogs and bacon, indeed; but it has a great deal to do with your affairs . . ." (p. 118). The implication is that the cottager's impoverished position relates directly to the accumulation of wealth and privilege in the city and the upper classes. A moral distinction, with animals at its crux, is made between the virtues of independence, simplicity, hard work and pig keeping, and urban greed, dependency and fashion.

For Cobbett (1822/1926), animals are significant in his version of self-sufficiency in a number of ways. Their bodies' capacities and products play a central role in the cottager's economy. At the same time, they are bound up with notions of human morality and domestic stability and become part of a "radical-conservative" social critique. These ideas emerge from the text. Yet, Cobbett practiced the instructions and theoretical human-animal relations they contained on his own land, as did cottagers who read and implemented the text (and whom Cobbett met during his famous *Rural Rides* (Cobbett, 1830/1985; Woodcock, (1967/1985). The paper moves now to consider Seymour and the ways in which animals feature in his vision of self-sufficiency, this time for a "new" peasantry consisting of escapees from urban, industrial life.

Animals and "Post-Industrial" Self-Sufficiency

Full coverage of Seymour's writing about, and practicing, self-sufficiency is not possible here. Instead, the paper pays attention to some ways animals feature in his discourse and practice. Seymour's notions of self-sufficiency are defined in terms rather different from Cobbett's and clearly are situated in a very different historical context. Yet, a number of similarities are evident; indeed, Seymour frequently and approvingly cites Cobbett's writing. In Seymour and Seymour (1973), he describes his interest:

... the sort of self-sufficiency which I wish to treat of in this book is not the old, pre-industrial self-sufficiency . . . What I am interested in is post-industrial self-sufficiency: that of the person who has gone through the big-city-industrial way of life and who has advanced beyond it and wants to go on to something better. (pp. 8-9)

Seymour's new peasantry, then, is to emerge from a largely urbanized population, implicitly with little experience of farming and livestock. Animals enter into this version of self-sufficiency in corporeal, symbol, and moral ways. First, like Cobbett (1822/1926), animals' bodily capacities are seen as essential to self-sufficient lifestyles. Unlike Cobbett, however, emphasis also is placed on the sensuality and pleasure of working and being with animals. Seymour's self-sufficiency is associated with a multi-dimensional enrichment of human experience. The possibility of rich relationships between humans and animals is evident. Considering hand-milking, Seymour (1965/1991) writes:

There seems to me to be a friendliness between the cow and me, I put my head in her old flank and squirt away, and there is a nice smell, and a nice sound as the jets hiss into the frothing bucket, and I can think. . . . (p. 42)

Here, a sense of affective relationship and the senses of touch, smell, and hearing are combined in the experience of working with an animal. The working relationship also is made part of a morality that links the discipline and close human-animal and human-food relationships necessary to self-sufficient food production for the improvement of the individual human—Seymour suggests that it is good for him to have to milk a cow. However, sensuality in human-animal relations—although still focusing on animals' bodies—may take very different forms. Thus, although the work of slaughtering, gutting, and dismembering an animal is described in detail, it is placed in the kind of romanticized discourse or "bucolic fiction" recognized by Shepard (1996, p. 244). "Pig killing may seem to the townsman to be a brutal and grisly business, but in fact the occasion can have a kind of boozy, bucolic, charm" (Seymour & Seymour, 1973, p. 83).

As with Cobbett, the placing of animals within networks of farming relationships is central to Seymour's writing. Seymour (1961/1991) celebrates their physical capacities and their effects on the health of humans, crops and land. As a peasant, life is reoriented around a dairy cow, the basis for self sufficiency:

But what else does Brownie give us? Pleasure, for she is one of the family . . . Fertility—for her dung is the basis of all our husbandry. She is the cornerstone of the arch of our economy. Everything we eat is enriched by either her dung or her milk. Our crops flourish because of the pump-priming effect of her manure. Our animals—and she herself—flourish because of the flourishing of the crops. She is the prime-mover of a beneficial circle of health and fertility. (p. 46)

Here, Brownie's affective presence and bodily capacities are made, through the use of metaphor, architecturally central to the economy and ecology of self-sufficiency. Similarly, the corporeal capacity and agency of pigs is made explicit through their relationships with soil and with the various things that flow through self-sufficiency networks. Land that has been dug and manured by free-range pigs is described as "well pigged" (Seymour & Seymour, 1973,

p. 79), and waste food is put “through a pig” (p. 177) to produce manure. Such corporeality, however, is simultaneous with constructions of animals as figures signifying a morality of self-sufficiency and having wider effects on the dynamic of self-sufficiency. Thus, pigs are attributed with human qualities associated with their ability to utilize waste products and perform work: “The pig is a noble and magnificent animal” (p. 22). Similarly, cows are credited as a driving force within a self-sufficient economy; “The cow should be absolutely central to the economy of a smallholding. When you get a cow you immediately find the pace of all your other smallholding activities will be forced on” (p. 42). Taking these ideas into account, the notion of self-reliant or self-supporting humans perhaps is called into question. Clearly, humans are reliant on, and supported by, their animals. Or, rather, both are seen as sustained within a network of relationships.

For Seymour, this network extends beyond the human-animal relationship, placing both in a wider ecology. Self-sufficient farming is defined in terms of flows of energy and nutrients, binding people and animals to soil, climate, and plants in an “ecologically sound holding” (Seymour, 1975/1996, p. 15)—an organic rurality of livestock, landscape, and the traces of labor as illustrated in Figure 1⁴. Such a holding mirrors a “natural order” and is associated with a morality of human behavior and social-spatial organization (the small-scale settlement and farm) that produces balanced relationships with wild and domestic animals, plants, and the ecological system as a whole.

The good husbandman is not the tyrant of his piece of land, but should be the benign controller—and *part of the biosphere himself*. He is an animal, and the fellow of his sheep and pigs—and of his grass and cabbages too . . . Give five acres to a true husbandman, to live and rear his family on, and you will soon find it supporting a very rich flora and fauna. The application of the intelligence that only man has is beneficial to the other life forms, but for this man must be free to harvest and control, not only among the plants, but among the animals too. (Seymour & Seymour, 1973, p. 21)⁵

Here, animals, humans, human-animal relationships, and farming practices are embedded in a natural, holistic, and domestic order. Cobbett (1822/1926) focuses more on animals in a domestic order, with more implicit notions of nutrient cycling. However, Seymour’s and Cobbett’s conceptualizations in

Self-Sufficiency

John & Sally Seymour



Figure 1. Livestock animals in the self-sufficient holding. Dustjacket of Seymour and Seymour's (1973) *Self-sufficiency: The science and art of producing and preserving your own food*. The illustration was drawn by Sally Seymour, John Seymour's wife.

effect produce similar results, that is, an understanding of a self-sufficient lifestyle as situated in a system of relations and flows. For Seymour, this is seen more explicitly in terms of an ecological philosophy. Here also, alongside the notion of ecological symmetry, Seymour places humans in a dominant position over animals, suggesting that it is for the human to control and manage the self-sufficiency ecosystem.

In defining the ecologically sound holding, Seymour (1961/1991) also develops his critique of modern society, focusing on large-scale industrialized farming. Seymour criticizes the use of large machinery, agricultural chemicals, and styles of farming that dispense with livestock and are ecologically unsound. Animals and their relative positioning inside different styles of farming are fundamental to his critique, being used in contrasting self-sufficient smallholding with industrial agriculture. As well as Seymour's moral criticisms of intensive, indoor, livestock production of any sort on animal welfare grounds, three points can be briefly made in relation to animal bodies, technology, and knowledge. First, Seymour makes a morally weighted contrast between the type of animal suitable for self-sufficiency and pedigreed animals. He describes the latter as needing a whole supporting apparatus of specialist feed, buildings, and veterinary science, which makes their owner dependent on a range of external actors. Hence,

... a pure-bred animal is not necessarily "better" than a mongrel. For our purposes it is generally worse. It is probably too specialised ... If it has been bred to give milk, it will give too much milk. And cost too much to feed, and have to be molly-coddled. ... (p. 30)

There is a moral value, then, placed upon animals who are, in their bodies and care requirements, suitable for the particular purpose of self-sufficiency. Similarly, Seymour (1961/1991) criticizes an over-dependence on technology if it unnecessarily replaces "natural" processes. Chickens are used to exemplify the distinction between commercial agricultural practices and the ecologically sound methods of self-sufficient smallholding.

I am often amazed when I see the complicated apparatus that is made, and sold for enormous sums, for hatching eggs and rearing chicks. For all you need is a hen ... And the chicks she rears will be much stronger and healthier than the poor little orphans that come out of a machine. (p. 31)

Seymour and Seymour (1973) again makes the case by referring to the animals' capacity to do things and the fitness of the animal bodies produced under "natural" conditions. Overall, in Seymour's practice of self-sufficiency is a lack of desire to control production, coupled with avoiding unnecessary equipment that would necessitate trade with the industrial world. Here, he locates egg production and his (naturally healthy) chickens in a natural cycle rather than in an industrialized process. Finally, the science of animal nutrition, as practiced in conventional agriculture, is contrasted with an approach to feeding animals that emerges from long-term relationships with them, from being with and observing them.

All this business of feeding animals is common sense really. You can find pages of complicated instructions and tables and starch equivalents and all the rest of it in the text books but if you just keep animals, and watch them carefully . . . you don't need a whole lot of scientific gobbledegook. (p. 81)

Animals here exemplify the moral value Seymour and Seymour (1973) attaches to close relationships between humans and the beings and things (animals, plants, and soil) that provide their food. The contrast is with the distancing of these relationships in modern, urban society. The self-sufficient animal keeper gains particular sorts of knowledge of animals through experience; the importing of scientific knowledge becomes unnecessary. Further, Seymour uses animals figuratively, as Cobbett 1822/1926) used them, in order to develop morally weighted contrasts between self-sufficiency and modern society.

Just as we cannot, for ever, go on keeping hens in wire cages, or pigs in total darkness . . . so we cannot go on for ever ourselves living in human battery cages and more and more distorting our environment. (p. 246)

The treatment of animals in modern agriculture corresponds to modern society's treatment of people; humans and animals together are seen as deprived of liberty and the potential to "become" themselves to their full capacities (Seymour (1961/1991). A reconnection between humans and animals, a replacing of animals in human lives, associated with a freedom from regulatory interference, is part of a situated morality that suggests benefits for individual, family, and nation.

Certainly far more country people would keep a pig or two in the backyard, as they nearly all used to do, if it were not for all the silly laws. And if they did—we would have a happier and healthier nation. (p. 77)

Seymour's books describe a vision for a future society based on self-sufficiency and a change in how the countryside is imagined, used, and lived in. Large-scale industrialized agriculture changes to small-scale peasant farming coupled with a craft-based, local economy in which the health of the land and the health of people are organically bound together in ways that implicate animals. An important part of this vision is an imagining of a new rural landscape in which animals and humans contribute to visual diversity and ecological integrity. Seymour (1961/1991) describes an alternative future for a 10,000 acre barley farm:

Cut that land up into a thousand plots of ten acres each, give each plot to a family trained to use it . . . The motorist wouldn't have the satisfaction of looking over a vast treeless, hedgeless prairie of indifferent barley—but he could get out of his car for a change and wander through a seemingly huge area of diverse countryside, orchards, young tree plantations, a myriad of small plots of land growing a multiplicity of different crops, farm animals galore, and hundreds of happy and healthy children. (p. 169)

This vision represents an idealized moral geography, a redefinition of the appropriate way to use rural space. Value is attached to diversity, to the presence of animals and children, and to small-scale farms and the skills and knowledge to farm them. This is opposed to the values of commercial agriculture and its associated landscape. In order to achieve this vision, Seymour (1977) argues that "You must get men and women back on the land, and animals too" (p. 112).

Conclusions

A case has been made through the exploration of two studies that nonhuman animals have been central to historically situated versions of more "authentic," "self-sufficient" relationships between humans and food production. The case study material presented above maps out some of the key dimensions of the positioning of animals within such modes of self-sufficiency.

It is suggested that animals are present here in different ways. First, they are present within texts, as they are drawn upon in discussing the theory of food production. They act as figures in the development of specific moral frameworks concerning what are taken to be appropriate human-nonhuman relationships (here, the nonhuman includes land, nature, and animals) and appropriate human behavior and lifestyle. Second, during the practicing of cottage economy or self-sufficiency, animals are present as embodied agents whose capacities and potentials are central to the working of situated, emplaced farming economies and (explicitly or implicitly) to small-scale ecologies. In Seymour's case, the inter-subjective, affective, and tactile aspects of human-animal relations also are significant. These texts and practices are important in demonstrating alternative possibilities for more authentic relations between humans and their food and humans and animals, in situations where people have felt alienated from the land and the production of their food: They involve reconnections of humans and, *inter alia*, animals. Although Brownlow (2000) considers the restoration of animals to the "wild," the focus in the cases discussed above has been on restoring animals to a domestic economy, with an implied sense of both restoring "authentic" human-food relations and constituting morally "better" human individuals and lifestyles in relation to animals. Similarly, although Proctor (1998) has argued that the presence of certain species is understood to indicate the health of "natural" ecosystems, Cobbett and Seymour seem to imply that the presence of livestock animals in close human-animal relationships is associated with human physical and moral well-being.

Further, although animals in both these versions of self-sufficiency are key to a domestic, small-scale organization of food production, again in both versions they are placed, in their relations with humans, within a much broader moral critique of society, large-scale economics, and political structure. Although there has been much discussion of the political conflicts surrounding the treatment and significance of wild and domestic animals (Wolch & Emel, 1995), animals in these cases are, to an extent, mobilized as parts of broader politicized projects, playing embodied roles in the realization of such projects at the domestic, small scale. Thus, although the animals in this discussion are historically and geographically situated in the early nineteenth century and 1960s/1970s United Kingdom, they all are placed in specific small-scale real and imagined sites for a supposed self-sufficient lifestyle and are positioned

within a broader spectrum of relations extending into national debates over the organization of (especially) rural space.

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Notes

- ¹ Correspondence should be sent to Lewis Holloway, Geography Subject Area, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, United Kingdom. Email: l.holloway@cov.ac.uk. I would like to thank the referees of an earlier draft of this paper for their helpful comments.
- ² This volume was written by John Seymour and illustrated by Sally Seymour.
- ³ The figure of a quarter of an acre has wider significance. For example, it was the maximum amount of land permitted as a “field garden” to be allotted to the rural poor as part of nineteenth century Enclosure Acts (as formalized in the General Enclosure Act of 1845) (Crouch & Ward, 1997). An area of this size would allow the laboring poor to produce enough food to subsist on low agricultural wages but not enough to prevent them from needing paid work. Thanks to one of the referees for pointing this out.
- ⁴ Thanks to Dorling Kindersley for permission to reproduce the cover of *Self-Sufficiency* by John and Sally Seymour, originally published by Faber and Faber, 1973. I have been asked to point out that a revised paperback edition of John Seymour’s *Complete Book of Self Sufficiency* is currently available from Dorling Kindersley at www.dk.com.
- ⁵ Seymour’s language is clearly gendered here, and in other places he does seem to associate very different roles with men and women, sometimes implying different sorts of relationship with animals. However, he also notes in one text (Seymour, 1977) that words such as ‘he’ and ‘man’ should be understood as referring to both men and women. Clearly, the animals are gendered too, and it is frequently female animals (e.g., dairy cows) who apparently have the “closest” relationships with humans.

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