Cycle XIII: Moo-Point, Cow and Auroch Chew the Cud

*Box 3. Cattle Talk: A Glossary*

*Aurochs—wild ancestor of taurine as well as zebu cattle1*

There are two, two places and one, one feeling. These places are all I inhabit. Like the dichotomy of body and mind, out and in. The out: temperate, changeable, wild. The in: tropical, never changing, sanitary. I define these two by the actions that happen within them. The out: eat-graze, a constant job, munch, munch, munch. The in: rest, eat, hands grasping—tugging.

*Ayrshire—a red pied Scottish dairy breed exported to Finland and*

*used extensively for upgrading of Scandinavian breeds1*

One feeling, I associate with both out and in: loss.

*Banteng—Bos javanicus, Southeast-Asian cattle species, the wild*

*ancestor of Indonesian Bali cattle1*

My heritage is gone. Any hope of passing on anything. Any hope of inheriting anything. Removed at birth, given as an offering for my commodity—milk. Cattle heritage is just a moo, a calf-shaped-hole, a call: for a calf—always taken, never returned.

*Black-pied—the black-white coat color [sic] typical of Holstein Friesian*

*and related dairy breeds1*

I have never known anything better, or worse, or other. A part of me remembers. Still knows what it was like, what my body was built for, how it survived. My body needs food, Sapiens give food. My body needs rest, Sapiens give rest. My body wants more, Sapiens are silent.

*Busˇa—Balkan breed of ancient origin1*

We went through cycles, in the past, not a Cow word, a human word, there is no cow-story, only human-story. Cow is cyclical, we exist, that is all.

Cycle 1: kill, old, weak, aggressive

Cycle 2: protect, win trust

Cycle 3: enclose, trick, breed

Cycle 4: repeat…

There is a cyclical repletion to my existence, my Cow-ness. Birth, loss, fertilisation, birth, loss, fertilisation, birth, loss, death. It’s like I’m bred for it.

*Chianina—white beef breed from Tuscany, of ancient origin1*

In between these cycles I rest, when I rest, I dream.

*Creole, criollo—Central or Southern American cattle of mixed zebutaurine*

*origin1*

In dreams my heritage returns, a line of ancestors, each similar, leading back to the ancient Auroch: the last. Who perished alone, in 1627. A legacy, a heritage richer and older than Sapiens.

Cow sleeps. Auroch speaks. Auroch dream whispers, Cow hears, a bond, a link, a heritage is restored. Auroch lectures, Cow listens, remembers, forgets: remembers again.

*Gir—Indian zebu breed exported to Brazil1*

Auroch begins, *“Humans, as they call themselves must call everything something. Place it in its place, create a taxonomy of cruelty. Say to themselves, ‘I can do this, I can define something, call it something, it can’t define me. It can’t call me human, or Sapien, or man, or woman. This means I’m better then it. It’s only an it, until I say otherwise.’”* Auroch laughs her bovine laugh. “*Auroch was Auroch before humans said so. Auroch was alive before human.*”

*Guzerat—Brazilian zebu breed derived from the Indian Kankrej1*

Auroch looked annoyed, her bovine features contorting into a grimace. “*See, always defining, always interrupting with their words, Guzerat, and descriptions, Brazilian zebu breed derived from the Indian Kankrej.”* Auroch shook her head, her great ears flapping from side to side like swinging doors.

*Holstein-Friesian, Holstein—highly productive black-pied dairy breed,*

 *descending from Friesian cattle and developed in America. It has been named after the northern German region of origin of the Dutch black-pied cattle1*

Auroch continued, “*Bovine life with humans has been… interesting. Numerically they have helped us out, we are numerous now. But many have been lost along the way, lineage dyeing out, replaced by better bigger stronger and more productive breeds. Our self is defined by its use to them. Bovine life before humans, before they showed an interest in us was different. We lived and died together, a group, a herd, a family. Calves staying by our sides until they were ready to join the herd. We were killed, hunted, but never conquered. We fought back, we stood a chance, we were born of winners, survivors. Now Cow culture is destroyed. Heritage destroyed. Proud bulls, castrated, turned into obedient plow-beasts. Calves taken young, why waste food when it can become food-beef-steak-burgers.”*

Cow would sit and nod, her ears would nod in agreement as well, as if to say, “yes we hear, yes we agree.” Somehow Cow knew this was right and true, like her body, her inner self, had this information stored away, deep within itself. Cow had been holding it and would keep holding long after she had gone. Cow had needed Auroch to find it and release it, but it had been there, and with this, Cow knew it to be true.

*Maremmana—semiferal cattle from the Maremma, a coastal region in*

*southwestern Tuscany related to the Grey Steppe cattle1*

“*They transported us. We were taken with them across the globe, new places, but for Cow, always the same: same in, same out. Same life, same death. Same meat.*”

*Nelore—Brazilian zebu breed, derived from the Indian Ongole1*

“*While human language, that which they hold so dear, has stagnated, Cow has changed: getting bigger, being cross bred to fit their whims, their needs and wants.*”

*Ongole —white zebu breed from India1*

Cow would listen, Cow would remember, and Cow would feel the loss building. The needs and wants that had been hard wired for the wild.

*Retinta—Andalusian brown cattle1*

Sometimes, Auroch would be silent. In these times Cow and Auroch would stand, nose-tip to nose-tip. Cow reaching up to the big kindly face looking down. They would stand and be. Cow feeling like the calf she never knew. Auroch feeling like she had the calf she’d never had.

*Rinderpest—cattle plague, an infectious viral disease with high mortality*

*in cattle1*

Cow wakes.

*Sanga—original meaning, as used here: Southern African cattle of*

*mixed zebu-taurine origin; sometimes also used to denote any zebu-taurine*

*hybrid breeds1*

Cow sleeps.

*Shorthorn—British dairy breed used extensively for improving continental*

*dairy breeds. In older classifications, in combination with*

*‘‘longhorn,’’ used to denote two separate types of taurine cattle1*

Cow dreams.

*Simmental—spotted (red on white) mixed-purpose cattle originating*

*in Switzerland1*

Cow imagines all the others like her, her bovine cousins. Imagines them all meeting in a field, but their forms are blank, blank bovine shaped holes in reality.

*Swiss Brown—brown dairy cattle originating in Switzerland1*

Cow dreams and in Cow’s dream Cow sees Cow’s-self. Cow thinks, is this Beef, or Cow? Is this Leather, or Cow? Is this Burger, or Cow?

Cow moos to herself in her dreams, a poem. A piece of prose she has stolen from humans, about the pieces of Cow they have stolen from her.

**Cow’s Poem: A Party Piece (To be Performed Pre-Meal)**

Female dairy—milky cow

Born, of “good” parents, raised, dies 5 years, tops

For Sapiens, milk, calves, meat, leather, for it? Moo

Is it a boy?

If so, chop-chop, 18 months

Then it’s meat, Bull to table, meat to meat,

Leather for the boot, stamping on a Cow for ever

Cow stamping herself

Oppressed and oppressor, in harmony, in unison, united

Cow is winning

Reproducing

That’s the point, right?

More Cows good, less Cows bad?

Female born to Dairy

Whisked away. The milk on her lips turns to latte froth, *mmm*

Life expectancy, couple of weeks, tops

Produce, better leather, meat

Male calf of “good” parents

Life expectancy, natural, varies

Products

Sperm

When the sperm is dried up, Bull goes to meat, goes to the grill

Ashes to ashes, meat to meat

*Taurine cattle—Bos taurus, the common cattle in temperate regions*

*around the world1*

In a way Cow always dreams.

*Yak—Bos grunniens, domestic cattle species from the Tibetan plateau17*

In a way Cow never wakes.

*Zebu—Bos indicus, humped cattle well-adapted to tropical climate. Although cross-fertile with taurine cattle (Bos taurus) from temperate regions, it is considered to be a separate species1*

Cow wakes.

Cow looks around, somethings off, somethings changed. While Cow slept, she changed, grew to Auroch size, almost Auroch size. Not on her own, not alone. Cow has lived-died-again-again-again: bred big. The grasping hands replaced by clean clinical steel. The in and out replaced by in, lots of in, with lots of Cow, but still no calf. Cow tries to think, to call out. To repeat all she has been told by Auroch, but it won’t work. It all comes out as a jumble, a sound, a noise, a “moo”.

Text Used

1. Ajmone‐Marsan, Paolo, José Fernando Garcia and Johannes A. Lenstra, ‘On the origin of Cattle: How aurochs became cattle and colonized the world’, *Evolutionary Anthropology,* 19 (2010), 148-157 <https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/evan.20267>(p. 152)