

# Meat Culture

*Edited by*

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BRILL

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## With Care for Cows and a Love for Milk: Affect and Performance in Swedish Dairy Industry Marketing Strategies

*Tobias Linné and Helena Pedersen*

### Prelude: An Afternoon in the Countryside

When we arrive, half an hour before the start of the event, there are already people walking from the field temporarily turned into a parking lot up the small hill slope to the farm. We park the car and begin making our way up to the farm. As we approach it, the narrow road is getting more and more crowded with people. There are school children in yellow vests with their teachers, elderly people in wheelchairs with their assistants and families, mothers, fathers and children of different ages. Groups of teenagers, some from the agricultural school that the farm is affiliated with, are laughing, shouting and screaming. Along our way large signs and banners hang, advertising *Skånemejerier*, the dairy corporation behind the event. By the signs tables have been arranged where visitors are offered free chocolate flavoured milk along with a cinnamon bun. The queues in front of the tables are long with children eager to get some free food and drink.

Suddenly we have to move to the side as we hear a truck approaching from behind us. It is driving slowly and carefully up the road. On the back of the truck, three people are standing, tampering with a speaker system. Soon country music, a big Swedish hit song from the mid-1980s, begins to flow from the speakers. It feels like a carnival: the music, the sun shining, hundreds of people talking and laughing, spreading out blankets and eating picnic food.

As we approach the barn where the animals are kept, the sounds of human voices and laughs are mixed with the cries of calves. When we get nearer we see a small enclosure, 2×2 meters, in which two newborn calves have been placed. The calves cram together in the middle of the enclosure, looking around at what is going on. They seem stressed about the attention they are getting from children standing along the fences trying to pet them. Right next to the calves is another enclosure, where a family of sheep is showcased. The sheep seem somewhat more comfortable with the situation; at least the lambs are there with their parents. The calves are by themselves, disoriented and frightened.

There are no signs telling us anything about the animals, no representatives from the farm there, just the animals behind bars in the middle of a lawn with hundreds of people running around them, looking, pointing, laughing.

We stand there for 20 minutes, listening to people talk about their weekend plans and watching the place getting more and more crowded. The best places along the fence are filling up fast. Suddenly the music is silenced and a voice is heard in the loudspeakers; it is the headmaster of the school that runs the farm. "Welcome everyone to our school on this beautiful day, and to our annual release of the cows". In her speech, the headmaster especially addresses the children as she talks about how important it is to learn where food comes from. She mentions how many litres of milk a cow produces every day, and that the cows live for approximately seven years (she leaves out the fact that they could have lived to at least 20 years of age had they not been exploited for their milk and killed).<sup>1</sup> She continues by saying that after the cows have been released into the pen we are welcome to take a look inside the barn to see what it is like for the cows in there. "Now I can hear that the girls are really excited to come out" she says, pointing towards the barn from where an indistinctive sound is heard. "They have been standing inside all winter, and are really really longing for some running. So help me with the countdown now; ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, open the doors!"

The doors open, the audience gasps, and then the cows start running out. Some are running fast, straight into the enclosure and as far away as they can get. Some run for a little while, then stop, turn around and look at the other cows, and start running again. Others walk rather than run, as if their legs are too weak after having stood inside a barn for more than half a year with little or no exercise. A woman beside us is talking to her friend about how the cows must feel running out in front of so many people. "Maybe they don't want to come out" she says, "maybe they are afraid and feel uncomfortable in front of so many people, I know I would be". Some of the cows seem rather uncomfortable with the attention from the more than 2000 people that have come to look at them. Some even refuse to leave the barn, and have to get pushed out by the staff.

Within a few minutes the cows are all out of the barn and walking around in the pen. People start to make their way back towards the cars. As we leave we

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<sup>1</sup> See the next chapter in this volume, Melissa Boyde's "Peace and Quiet and Open Air": *The Old Cow Project*.

get a last glimpse of some of the cows that are approaching the fences where people are taking pictures of them.<sup>2</sup>

### Aims and Objectives

In this chapter we explore the marketing strategies of the Swedish dairy industry, especially the so-called pasture releases and open farm events at Swedish dairy farms that have been a great success during recent years. These events are presented to the guests as learning opportunities about milk production, farm life and the animals' everyday lives. Families with children and school classes are targeted for the events, and the latter especially invited. The activities are designed to let the children follow the way of the milk, from the moment of arriving at the farm where calves newly separated from their mothers are showcased, to the end where visitors are invited to taste the final products.

Our chapter will give a guided tour through these events, exploring how the pasture releases and open farm events embody, shape and legitimize certain values and ideals of human-bovine relations. The analyses follow two trajectories of scholarship in critical animal theory. The first of these trajectories draws on Foucauldian analyses of the production of farmed animal subjectivities in meat and dairy industry settings (Cole 2011; Holloway 2007; Thierman 2010). The second is related to what has been called the 'new carnivore' movement (Gutjahr 2013; Parry 2010; Potts, Armstrong and Brown 2013) and the 'happy meat' discourse (Cole 2011; Gillespie 2011; Stănescu 2014), referring to the frequently expressed idea that meat produced at small scale organic farms, where the animals are slaughtered more 'humanely', represents a more ethical way to consume animals, than the consumption of industrially produced meat.

We argue that, in the pasture releases and open farm events, the production of bovine subjectivity and new carnivorism/happy meat should not be seen as separate phenomenon; rather, they are intimately interrelated by educational elements relying on bovine emotional labour. These educational elements take on certain performative dimensions (*zooësis*) that are integral parts of the success of the new carnivore and happy meat regimes.

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<sup>2</sup> The opening to this chapter describes a public so-called pasture release event, taking place on the 23rd of April 2014 at an agricultural school in Svalöv, a rural municipality in the southernmost part of Sweden. The event was attended by Tobias Linné together with two animal rights activists and film-makers working on a documentary project on the living conditions of cows in the Swedish dairy industry.

The chapter relies on two interconnected methodological approaches. First, ethnographic field studies and observations of pasture releases and open farm events were carried out. Between spring 2012 and spring 2014, six different farms were visited on nine separate occasions, during both pasture release events and open farm events. The events were visually documented by camera and the images were analyzed using an open-ended qualitative approach focusing on reoccurring themes relating to the values and ideals of human-bovine relations represented. Twenty-one brief on-site interviews were also conducted with visitors to these events. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six farmers on the respective farms, as well as two interviews with representatives of the Swedish dairy industry and two interviews with representatives of the Swedish dairy lobby organizations *Swedish Dairy Association* and the *Association of Swedish Dairy Farmers*. In addition, printed promotional material from the Swedish dairy industry has also been gathered at the events and analyzed.

Before engaging in more in-depth analysis of the pasture releases and open farm events as sites that shape and legitimize certain human-bovine relations, we first provide a brief overview of the Swedish dairy industry and its marketing strategies.

### The Swedish Dairy Market and Industry Marketing

The Swedish dairy industry is the most economically significant branch in the Swedish agricultural sector, accounting for a fifth of the total production worth in 2013 (Statistics Sweden 2013). During recent years, the Swedish dairy industry has become increasingly intertwined with the global animal economy. Merging, where larger dairy corporations have taken over smaller ones, is a strong trend (Jönsson 2005), as is the replacing of smaller farms with larger ones. The number of farms delivering milk to dairy processing plants has for example decreased by half since 2002 up until 2013 (from approximately 10 000 farms to approximately 5 000 farms), while the average number of cows per farm has increased from 42 to 71 cows per farm. There has also been merging with global dairy corporations and increases of the export of milk and dairy products in recent years. For instance, the export of non packaged milk increased from 37 000 tonnes in 2009 to 67 000 tonnes in 2013 and the export of non packaged cream from 924 tonnes in 2009 to 5774 tonnes in 2013 (Statistics Sweden 2013).

The two largest dairy corporations, *Arla* and *Skånemejerier*, have both entered the international milk market, beginning to sell their milk to new

developing markets (such as China and India) and merging with other dairy companies from multiple other countries (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2012; Ekoweb Sverige 2013). During the same period, the Swedish dairy industry has also gone through a crisis. The crisis, a result of declining milk consumption in Sweden and an increasing international and national competition of market shares, has led to a decrease in the number of dairy farmers by 50 percent during the last ten years (Statistics Sweden 2013). Fears have been raised that in a few years Swedish milk production might be outcompeted altogether (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2012; Jönsson 2005). These tendencies all provide a background to the importance for the dairy industry to promote itself to Swedish consumers through pasture releases and open farm events. There is a need for a nostalgic counter image to the processes of globalization, rationalization and effectivization that the industry is going through. The release of the cows onto pasture provides an image of a local and organic dairy production. It responds to larger societal debates about sustainability in the production of food and to the demands of concerned consumers (Stănescu 2014).

According to Swedish animal welfare legislation, dairy farmers must let their cows out on pasture for at least six hours a day for two to four months (depending on where in Sweden the farm is situated) during the period of April 1st to October 15th (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2014). For the remaining part of the year, the cows are kept inside barns in different housing systems.<sup>3</sup> The legislation has often been pointed to when the dairy industry is trying to promote itself as environmentally and animal friendly. During the last decade, the pasture releases have been increasingly framed as entertaining events, directed to the public and presented as a perfect summer outing for the whole family. Starting off with 50 or 100 people in the audience the pasture releases have grown and are now given much attention in the dairy industry marketing efforts (on webpages, social media and in advertising dispatched to schools). During the spring of 2013 an estimated 140 000 people attended the pasture releases at the Arla dairy farms alone, and the events that we visited all attracted more than 2000 persons each (Arla news 2014). Apart from using the events in their image and brand building on webpages and in social media, dairy company representatives are also present at the pasture releases, offering visitors free milk among other things.

The open farm events bear many similarities with the pasture releases. At a number of dairy farms, many of which also organize pasture release events, it is possible to “come and say hello to the cows” and watch them getting milked

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3 Approximately 55 % of the cows are kept in free stalls, and 45 % are held tied up in the stalls (Dairy Sweden 2014).

(Skånemejerier 2010). The open farm events are especially offered to schools that have the opportunity to book a farm for a whole day to see how milk production is carried out (Arla minior 2011a). Usually however, these events are open to the public, and like the pasture releases they are attracting many thousands of people out to the country to have a look at the cows and the farmers' work.

The pasture releases and open farm events continue a tradition of dairy promotion that in Sweden is almost 100 years old. The dairy industry has historically occupied a special position in Swedish society, and is still often not viewed as other commercial actors, but rather like a semi-authority in which people report to have very high trust (Jönsson 2005; Sydsvenskan 2012). One example of this is the fact that dairy companies are allowed to display advertisements in school facilities where other commercial actors are banned. In addition, schools and pre-schools receive teaching and learning materials from the dairy industry, materials that have been tailored to fit with the school curriculum. Teachers are presented with complete pedagogical plans to fulfil learning objectives. A visit to a dairy farm is often an element in these plans (Arla minior 2011b).

### **“The Way of the Milk”: Short-Circuiting the Dairy Production Process**

We start “The way of the milk tour” at the open farm outside one of the barns. In a small temporary confinement two young calves have been placed. They have been separated from their mothers just two days ago the farm employee informs us, as she is bottle-feeding one of the calves. Children are invited to go into the confinement and pet the calves whilst the woman is talking about the handling of the milk, how often the trucks come to the farm to pick it up, and how much milk is produced every day. She is using a neutral and technical language; it is presented as a process of logistics and automation, as if it were machines producing the milk. No violence, no conflict, despite the fact that the whole process is a result of a forced separation of calves from their mothers.<sup>4</sup>

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4 To produce milk, cows need to give birth to calves. Therefore, the cows of the dairy industry are inseminated about once a year. Normally, the calf is taken from the cow either directly or 2–3 days after birth. Cows are maternal animals and both the mother cow and the baby calf suffer from being separated at such a young age (Lidfors et al. 2004). Half of the calves born

Later on during the tour we are shown how the milking machine works. What is striking about this presentation of the milk automation system is how little attention is actually given to the cows as animals, despite the fact that they are central to the production of milk. It is the milking machine and how it works that is the prime focus. The animals seem secondary to the process, and we only get a small glimpse of the cow being milked from our view in the control room where we watch a dairy industry representative present the milking system.

The relationship between the cows and the milk taken from them is reimagined at the open farm events. The visitors are offered the possibility to watch the cows being milked, but this view is controlled in various ways, and the visitors guided in their interpretation of what is going on. During the open farm and pasture release events the cows are mechanomorphically referred to as 'milk machines' when presented to the children (cf. Crist 2000). Similarly, in the interviews, one of the farmers uses the image of the cow as a factory and a machine for yielding an economic gain:

They are like a living biologic factory, it is like you put something in one end, grass, and out comes this fantastic product, that is both cheap and nutritious, one of the best things you can drink [...] And I think that our cows, when you have them on pasture like this, the animal lasts longer too, and then you get a much better economic result than if you have to send it to slaughter prematurely. [Farmer 4]

At the entrance to the barn where visitors are invited to enter and look at the cows being milked a milk automat has been placed. The idea seems to be that visitors can have a glass of milk before they enter the barn to look at the cows being milked. The milk is of course not directly from the cows at the farm, but has been produced at some undisclosed dairy farm, then sent to the factory processing plant and subsequently sent to the farm. By the milk automat in front of a milk barrel and alongside some boxes of milk, bundles of green grass and clover have been placed.

This presentation of processed milk in automats and the way the milk is symbolically connected to the green grass, represents a mix up of the production cycle and hence an educationally questionable version of the way of the

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are male and since they do not produce any milk most of them are killed for meat at about 18 months of age. The female calves are either selected as dairy cow replacements for their mother, or sent to slaughter (Svenskt Kött 2014; Arla 2012).

milk. The reality of the process by which cows are farmed and bovine lactation is managed is short-circuited. Nowhere on the tour are we informed about or allowed to see the separation of the calves from their mothers, the forced impregnation<sup>5</sup> of the cows or animals being sent to slaughter.<sup>6</sup> The open farm presents the milking process to the visitors reimagined as idyllic and happy; much like how the lives of animals in zoos are presented to give the visitors a positive experience. The way of the milk is reduced to a simplified, clean and morally unproblematic process of grass in-milk out, hiding the exploitative practices at work when the cows 'give' their milk to humans (Molloy 2011).

At the final stage of the way of the milk tour, when we have arrived at the yard in front of the farmer's mansion, dairy industry representatives have put up tents and offer free dairy products for all visitors. In one of the tents, two cooks are performing a cooking demonstration with dairy products. Walking around the yard is a human dressed up in a black and white calf costume with a giant smiling head on top. This false calf with a human inside is Calvin, the Skånemejerier company mascot.

Again, the production cycle is short-circuited; the milk seems to have just passed from the barns and the milking machines into these final products, with little mention of the processing plant that the milk has to go through to be made into the 'delicacies' that the visitors taste in the tents. Cutting out the plant from the production cycle underscores the naturalness of the milk, while paradoxically at the same time the animals themselves are represented as machines and factories.

### **Animal to Drinkable:<sup>7</sup> From Bodily Fluids to Chocolate Drinks**

To follow the tour of the milk at the open farm is to witness the transformation of animal to commodity. At the beginning of the tour the milk-baby animal connection is highlighted in a morally neutral way and the animals are the centre of attention. Then gradually, the animals and the animal origin

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5 The majority of dairy cows in Sweden are impregnated by artificial insemination, from when they are about 15 months of age. Bulls are used for breeding and a single animal can father many thousands of calves each year by artificial insemination (Djurens rätt 2013).

6 The dairy industry and the meat industry are closely connected. Approximately 65 % of the total amount of beef produced in Sweden comes from either 'spent' dairy cows who are not producing enough milk to be economically efficient, or from their offspring (Svenskt Kött 2014).

7 With this subtitle we paraphrase Noëlie Vialles (1994).

of milk are erased. The milk is turned into a cultural commodity. The cooking demonstrations using dairy products at the end of the open farm tour is one example of this transformation. Another poignant example is that both at the pasture releases and open farm events, children are given chocolate milk to drink. Instead of a drink that tastes and looks like the milk coming from the cow's body, they are offered a culturalized version of milk, a product that tastes quite differently, and does not even resemble milk in colour. At the end of the way of the milk tour that started with real calves, we also meet Calvin, the company mascot, telling children it is okay to drink milk, thus redirecting the consumers' affective sentiments from real animals to a fake calf (Stewart and Cole 2009).

While in one sense the pasture releases and open farm events are hiding the real animals, transforming them into the absent referents (Adams 2010) of dairy production, these events are also connected to the new ideals of visibility and transparency with regard to the production of food that are central to new carnivorousness. These discourses function as a refutation of the critique against animal farming. One of the farmers explains how she sees the open farms as an opportunity to argue for her way of working with dairy production:

I love this chance to meet the consumers, and argue for my sake, my way of doing things [...] people come up and talk to me, and the children are here asking questions and we explain things to them, about the machines and the animals. And we want to show what our everyday situation is like, what life on the farm is like, and I think that is the most important part of it. [Farmer 3]

These discourses also ensure that consumers of animal products cannot be accused of hypocrisy for being disconnected from the reality that brought animal food products to their table. This is one of the core themes of the pasture releases and open farm events. One of the interviewed farmers explains:

We know what the consumers want, and what they want is honesty, because many doors to food production are closed, people don't have a chance to see what it is like, and we have had this discussion too, how much can we really show? Maybe the consumer will be shocked because they don't know what the production is like for real? [Farmer 2]

While the open farms and pasture release events seem to be about making the dairy production visible, this visibility also functions as concealment. Partly it seems to have to do with the potentially disturbing effects the witnessing

of what the dairy production really looks like might have on people. Instead of presenting a real image of cows' lives in the dairy industry, the pasture releases and open farm events continue what Jönsson (2005) describes as a fetishization of the cow in dairy industry marketing. The cows are being used to evoke a certain image of reality by simulating it, representing a yearning for the authentic, the pure and the real, an idealized version of an agrarian context that has never actually existed. The happy cows running onto green pastures are assigned visibility and subjectivity for the purpose of communicating their happiness to the people watching them. And the visits to the cow stalls are mostly, it seems, about refuting what is believed to be a false image of how dairy production is carried out, as one of the farmers explains:

And so they can also see that the new stables are nothing like what they used to be, dark and without windows, and with bad air, but if you go to the new stables, it is light, open and, it is almost like being outside, almost like you wouldn't need to let the cows out, so the cows are much more happy, and they can be more together with their calves. [Farmer 2]

### **A Fantastic Spectacle: Bovine Emotional Labour**

When talking to people during the pasture releases many mention how good they feel watching the cows, how they are becoming less stressed and learning to live more in the moment. The excerpt below taken from Skånemejeriers' webpage shows how the pasture releases are marketed to cater for these feelings, how they function as entertainment events, and how the cows are the stars of these events:

Just like us, the cows are yearning for the sun, the scents and the green grass. And they know when it is time to be let out. So when the dairy farmer opens the cowshed door, they take off. The cows jump and dance of happiness. Some rush with speed all the way out to the green pastures. It is a fantastic spectacle. Come and visit one of our pasture releases. We guarantee that you will feel the spring in the air. (Skånemejerier 2013)

As the involuntary stars of these events, the cows are acknowledged as subjects as they transcend their species-being; more specifically, if they attain human-like qualities, and when they are anthropomorphized as "characters" (Stewart and Cole 2009). The excerpt from the field notes below provides an example of this:

Just outside the barn is a sign that reads “The cowwalk”, playing with the appearance of the whole scenery as a catwalk and then some images of the cows accompanied by their names. “Look at that one, she looks just like you”, shouts one of the onlookers in her teens while laughing at her friends. “No, that is you and that is me” the friend replies jokingly pointing at the images.

The cows are not the only entertainment at the pasture releases and open farms. The events that we visit offer a bewildering array of other activities, such as live music, quiz walks, petting zoos, and rides on a mechanical bull (an activity reminiscent of cruel rodeo entertainment), all transforming the scene into something resembling a carnival. At the pasture releases and open farms, the cows are made to work for the industry that exploits them not only as food animals producing milk. Being used as entertainment, the cows are rendered *affectively useful*. This is underlined by our observations where people are cheering, laughing and shouting in awe looking at the cows. We argue that the cows’ affective usefulness constitutes an articulation of bovine emotional labour (cf. Hochschild 1983), and that emotional labour turns the cow commodity herself into a performer; a spectacle (cf. Debord 1983). This bovine catwalk becomes, in the pasture release and open farm events, an arena of *zooësis*. Una Chaudhuri (2007a) has proposed the notion of *zooësis* in order to conceptualize how human culture uses ‘the animal’, as trope and as body, in meaning-making practices. *Zooësis* does not only refer to the entire Western tradition of animal representations, but also to all culturally contingent human-animal practices such as dog shows, zoos, animal experiments, hunting, meat consumption etc.—each practice carrying its own history and its own repertoire; its own actors and its own audience (Chaudhuri 2007b). The pasture release and open farms events are, in this analysis, another manifestation of carefully choreographed *zooësis*, with its own history, its own repertoire, its own actors (the cows), and its own audience (ourselves and the other visitors with whom we share this experience). It is the affective quality of bovine *zooësis* that has such powerful educational appeal in these events.

The dairy industry takes great interest in how the spectacle of the pasture releases and open farms represents a possibility of emotional connection between humans and cows, a promise of an interspecies encounter with humans in harmony with animals and nature. One of the dairy industry interviewees claims that the perceived similarities between bovines and humans as experienced when watching the release of the cows—an experience apparently facilitating anthropomorphic identification with them—is key to the success of the pasture releases:

I think the reason is that link back to nature, we need to have animals surrounding us, we need to have something like this to balance our stressed everyday life that gets more and more stressful all the time . . . we have to start breathing and we have to start caring more about the food we eat and the animals [...] so I think we can relate to this, that the cows need to go on pasture these months, just like we need a vacation sometimes, just like we need the sun. [Dairy industry representative 2]

Although the events can be understood as a kind of light entertainment, they also carry a spiritual dimension. One of the farmers tells about the emotions that the pasture releases bring out:

Cows are special animals, if you have ever looked into the eyes of a cow, you know, it is like, they have a special wisdom [...] And this is part of that, taking care of nature, having animals around you . . . for sure, it is also about spirituality, we have no religion any more so that's why I think nature is becoming more and more important as a way for people to heal, so it is contemplative, it is like yoga. [Farmer 3]

While the cows, according to the farmers, evoke emotional responses in the people watching them being released (an emotional response both recruited and exploited by the industry to promote its self-image of caring for the animals' wellbeing), this form of visual consumption does not actually bring 'us' closer to 'them'. Instead of bridging the species gap, and giving a deeper understanding of the cows, humans are further distanced from the animal (cf. Desmond 1999). The pasture releases and open farms reinscribe the very same human-animal species boundaries that they on a superficial level seem to be challenging. During the pasture release events, the animals are *almost* human, *but not quite* (Pedersen 2010). So, on the one hand, the events rely on humans identifying with the cows, seeing their emotions reflected in the presence of cows. On the other hand, the pasture releases position the cows as different from humans. The visual arrangement of the open farms and pasture releases is organized as an agri-industrial zoo or circus, with the occasional information sign by the fences telling us strange facts about the cows. This exoticizing of domestic animals further underscores the moral logic of a speciesist sociocultural order. One of the farmers talks about the amazement of the strange creature that people experience when coming to the pasture releases and open farm events:

Many of the kids coming here, and many of their parents too it seems [laughing] they have never seen a cow before, they don't even know that . . . They are totally amazed, the children coming here, "Oh, they are so big [the animals]" and they can pet them, and I ask them [the children] "How often do you think we milk the cows?" and they reply "Once a month". [laughing] [Farmer 1]

The ironic outcome of this pseudo-intimacy with cows in the countryside is that the human separation from the cows is further reinforced. This is also emphasized through the more educational parts of the pasture releases and open farm events, which are explored in the next section.

### **Educating the Masses: The Pasture Releases and Open Farms as Arenas of Child-Animal Relations**

As we stroll around the open farm listening to people's conversations, it is evident that the events present an opportunity for parents to educate their children about animals and farming practices. This is also officially one of the ideas behind the events, according to one of the interviewed dairy industry representatives:

We want it to be an occasion where children can learn about nature, to care for nature and to feel responsibility for nature and for the animals. And together with LRF [The Federation of Swedish Farmers] we invite all the schools in the region to the farms, and then we have a schedule so that when the schools arrive we show them around according to this schedule. And we have a very good learning material about "Life in the countryside". It tells about what you eat and what's the difference between a heifer and a cow . . . and food has become an important topic, what we eat, that milk is nutritious, and some teachers say that they need to learn more about this, and so they come here, and when they do, they get educated here so that they can pass it on to the children. [Dairy industry representative 1]

However, despite the focus on the care for nature and the animals that the interviewee talks about there are hardly any ethical issues brought up during the events. Neither is there any problematizing of the dairy industry's environmental impact. These educational events are focused on *anything but* ethical

and/or environmental problems. By the closed confinement of the calves at one of the pasture releases a sign is posted with information about the cows and dairy, which in tone and style is typical for the kind of knowledge offered at these events. It is the anthropocentric neutral knowledge of the human observer over the animal other, the kind of knowledge of the animal other that translates into power:

Did you know that:

A cow can drink more than a 100 litres of water every day

A cow will eat on average 50 kilos of feed a day

Cows don't like changes. The same routines and same food every day is what they like best

A cow from our farms gives 30 litres of milk a day, year around

A cow is pregnant for 9 months

Heifers have their first calf at the time of their second birthday. After having their first calf, the cows start to produce milk

A calf should have raw milk as soon as possible after its birth. The raw milk is the cow's first milk, and it is full of nutrition<sup>8</sup>

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8 An alternate sign with information about cows and dairy might look something like this:

Did you know that:

- Cows don't have to be milked. Cows, like other mammals, only produce milk after they have had a calf. We humans have the habit of taking the calf from the cow immediately after birth and then take the milk for ourselves.
- Most calves are taken away from their mother within 24 to 48 hours. The calf is fed milk replacers before early weaning at around 5–6 weeks. Calves would naturally suckle for 6 to 12 months.
- There is a strong bond formed between the mother and her calf in the first few hours after birth; enforced separation is therefore a very traumatic experience for both.
- Many cows are sick and injured. The cows are pregnant and lactating almost continuously throughout their lives. This is hard on the cows' bodies and causes many to become ill.
- It is hard to separate the milk industry from the meat industry. The majority of all beef sold come from animals in the dairy industry.
- Organic dairy is not much better than conventionally produced dairy. Organic cows are often outdoors more, and get more roughage, but apart from this there are no big differences between organic and conventional production of dairy.
- In the name of increased milk production and profit, in countries such as the USA, dairy cows are repeatedly injected with bovine growth hormone, a genetically-engineered hormone that has been shown to increase the risk of health problems like mastitis and lameness.

The cows at the pasture releases and open farm events hybridize two categories of animals: they are objectified as invisible food animals, and subjectified and anthropomorphized animals with personal names, a narrative and a history (Stewart and Cole 2009). This ambiguous position creates a need and a challenge to negotiate and draw the boundaries between the different positions of the cows to not make it normatively threatening to consume dairy products. This boundary is drawn by the neutral language used to describe the cows and the calves as they 'give' their milk to humans, and by avoiding any ethical discussion about the production and consumption of dairy.

It could even be argued that the real cows and calves are not present at the pasture releases and open farm events. The animals that are actually there are rather signifiers, with functions to entertain, educate and promote the consumption of the real cows' bodily fluids. They are kept behind bars for children to look at and pet, turned into teaching material for parents to point at, and laughed at as they run out to escape their half year long confinement. They are constructed as if they were natural resources with their only purpose in life to fulfil human desire to consume dairy, like the fieldnote excerpt below shows:

When we get closer to the confinement where some calves have been placed there is a tree with a sign on it telling children to "Leave your dummies here for our animal babies". We hear one parent talking to his child about the animal babies saying "they need their dummies just like you do" and "they drink their milk just like human babies". He goes on to talk about the milk and how the cows give their milk to us so that we can drink it.

In the formal education system, a regulation of eating habits takes place. This can, as Pedersen (2010) argues, be understood as an effect of power that actively produces reality and rituals of truth. To extend this Foucauldian analysis, we argue that the regulation of eating habits also produces both human and animal subjectivities. The tens of thousands of Swedish school children who are taken to open farms and pasture releases to see the cows and calves, and offered food products from cows as part of their visit (they are even reminded in notes not to bring food of their own but rather taste the things that the dairy industry is offering [Stockholms Fria 2014]) are subjected to food advertising and socialization, presented as entertainment and education. For the dairy industry, it seems to be a crucial event in the school children's education. One of the interviewed dairy industry representatives describes her reaction when hearing about a school class that cancelled their visit to the farm:

Last year, there was this class from [city] that had miscalculated and that didn't have enough money to rent a bus to go here, they lacked 3000 kroner so they informed us about this the day before, and I, I felt like almost going there and getting them myself, because, now those kids weren't able to come out that year, and who knows, they might never be able to come out to the country to see the cows, and they lose this whole thing... I think it is important, to keep this connection, because, like in Australia, in Sydney where I have been a few times, everyone drinks soy milk, because, they have no connection to the dairy industry, the land is so huge and there are no Australians working in the dairy industry, so the kids, they have no connection any longer to the milk. [Dairy industry representative 2]<sup>9</sup>

During the visits to the farms, children are taught to approach dairy as something with an animal origin, but still something that is there for human use. They are taught to conceptually distance the animals they eat from those with whom they have an emotional bond or for whom they feel ethically responsible.

### Concluding Discussion

In the autumn, when the cows after a few months on pasture are locked in again, there are no school children coming to see them returned to incarceration in order to get educated about how the production of dairy is carried out. In contrast to the boisterous spectacle of the pasture release, the re-confinement of cows is invisible and silent to the public. The cows at the pasture releases are 'feel-good cows', as one dairy industry representative notes, and this is the role they play in the dairy industry marketing image; cows who are happy and content with their place in the production processes.

Ironically, the problem that the open farm events and the pasture releases claim to be addressing in these events—how the production and consumption of dairy products have become separated to the point that, as one of the interviewees puts it, "people don't know any more where their food is coming

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9 These claims about the dairy industry and milk consumption in Australia are however incorrect. Australian fresh milk consumption has been steadily increasing during recent years. Also, the Australian dairy industry is still typified by relatively small producers and many herds are family owned (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2011).

from”—is reinforced in these staged events. The affectively useful, feel-good cows of the pasture releases are caricatures of themselves. They are spectacular products of *zooësis* composed of a number of other hybridized entities such as the fake, bipedal calf Calvin; a bovine ‘catwalk’; and a mechanical bull. This agri-industrial performance masquerades as education in a bizarre carnivalesque mode, while producing human and animal subjectivities that fit seamlessly within the ‘happy meat’ and ‘new carnivore’ regimes driving the dairy industry’s promotional machinery.

However, if the desire for human-animal intimacy and identification—a promise delivered through the pasture releases, but one that the dairy industry will never be able to fulfil—is powerful enough to draw a crowd, it could also be redirected into a potential political force for change. This redirection would require a profound unsettling of the pasture release scenario; a violent disruption of the images and emotions it skilfully produces; in short, a ‘disturbing’ education (Rowe 2011) confronting the manipulative hypocrisy of dairy. Study visits to animal sanctuaries may offer a contrasting educational complement to the ‘edutainment’ of dairy production sites, inviting children and adults to deep reflection on what relations humans and animals may form outside regimes of commodification. To extend dairy counter-education into the classroom, we follow Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (in press), suggesting critical pedagogical activities such as mapping one’s own school’s place in the animal-industrial complex; delineating a fuller and more accurate ‘way of the milk’ by mapping all phases an animal individual goes through in the dairy production system from inception to slaughter; exploring the vested interests and expansion strategies of the dairy industry that connect animal, human, and environmental exploitation; and comparing the dairy industry promotional narratives with the materials provided by animal rights organizations.

Most of all, we would like to see battalions of guerrilla teachers co-opting the pasture release and open farm events, turning them into sites of critical counter-education by exposing the inner logic of the dairy industry system as well as the histories of individual animals exploited therein.

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