



A gluttonous man thinking about the food and drink he will consume at Christmas! From "The Comic Almanack for 1839: An Ephemeris in Jest and Earnest, containing 'All Things Fitting For Such a Work' by Rigdum Funnidos, Gent." Illustrations by George Cruikshank. Published by Charles Tilt, London, in 1838.

Call for papers

"Eating or not Eating Animals. Sociability and Ethics around the Table"

Organisers: Florence Magnot-Ogilvy (Laboratoire CELLAM, Rennes 2) and Sophie Mesplède (Laboratoire ACE, Rennes 2)

Date: Thursday 13 March 2025

Location: Université Rennes 2

This study day is supported by the GIS Sociabilités/ Sociability.

Since the non-human turn of the early 21st century, numerous critical works have examined the animal question in the 18th century, a time when humanity's place in the world, the relationship between human beings and non-human animals, the latter's sensibility and debates on the sensory soul were at the heart of the reflections of philosophers, physicians, naturalists and educationalists.¹

¹ See in particular *L'animal des Lumières*, Jacques Berchtold and Jean-Luc Guichet (eds.), *DHS* n°42, 2010; *Bestiaire des Lumières*, Anne Richardot (ed.), *Revue des sciences humaines* 296, 2009; *Figures animales*, Annie Duprat (ed.), *Sociétés et représentations* 27, 2009; Jean-Luc Guichet, *Rousseau, l'animal et l'homme, l'animalité dans l'horizon anthropologique des Lumières* (Cerf, 2006) ; as well as the works of Pierre Serna, *L'Animal en République* (Anarchasis, 2016) and *Comme des bêtes* (Fayard, 2017)

Few studies, however, have explored the question of meat- and non-meat-eating patterns specifically from the point of view of sociability.² Yet the issue formed one of the dividing lines in sociability, between men and women, young and old, people from different backgrounds, but also, in a new way, between humans and non-humans, in a century in which pets were playing an increasingly important role in human sociability.³ As more and more human beings developed unique emotional relationships with cats, dogs, monkeys and birds, to name but a few companion species, the question arose as to whether or not the bodies of animals credited with sensibility should be consumed. Some naturalists and writers, such as the Englishman Lord Monboddo and the hunter-philosopher Charles Georges Leroy, author of *Lettres sur les animaux*, recognized the ability of these animals to aggregate into communities that they felt were close to human societies. The tradition of the metempsychosis narrative, revived by the vogue for Orientalism, was then articulated in an unprecedented way with reflections on point of view, sensibility and individuality.

In the 18th century, the abstinence from meat practiced for religious reasons⁴ and that driven by medical concerns (in George Cheyne's writings, for example, where the question of diet was also linked to an imagination of power) was joined by that born of ethical considerations regarding the duties of humans towards other animals. The latter would profoundly question the dividing line between humanity and animality in European cultures won over by the imperatives of sensibility. The philosophical writings of Voltaire, Diderot, Condillac and Rousseau on the nature of this boundary and the consequences to be drawn from it in terms of food were to be read throughout Europe. Meanwhile, their fictions were supported by a food imaginary weighed down by moral and political values, from *Zadig's* supper to the gendered eating habits of Clarens as set out by Saint-Preux in one of the letters of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Across the Channel, it was often men of faith who spoke out against the cruelty inflicted on other species, and called for reflection on the modalities of their killing as much as on its finality. If the barbaric treatment of certain animals jeopardized the moral fiber of human beings, as William Hogarth's series of engravings entitled *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751) helped to bring to light for a large English audience, what about the consumption of their flesh? "Vegetarianism", a term that did not appear until the middle of the 19th century, seemed to an increasing number of men and women to be a virtuous option that, although not always practiced, provided a subject for reflection and discussion in the context of enlightened sociability.

This study day, devoted to the debates surrounding the consumption of animals during the Enlightenment and the reconfiguration of positions that took place at the time, invites us to examine the question of a meat-eating habits insofar as these intersected with the emergence of new forms of sociability in Europe. It will look at how discussions about the ontological

² With the notable exception of *Le Végétarisme des Lumières. L'abstinence de viande dans la France du XVIII^{ème} siècle* by Renan Larue (Garnier, 2019), which sets out to explore the roots of vegan and vegetarian thought in the writings of the Enlightenment. Renan Larue founded a vegan studies programme at the University of California where he teaches, broadening the perspective to current debates on vegetarianism and eating patterns as political stances.

³ See the PhD thesis recently defended in 2023 by Tomohiro Kaibara under the supervision of Antoine Lilti: "Le Grand sacre des chats: l'invention d'un animal de compagnie en France (1670-1830)".

⁴ The case of Thomas Tryon springs to mind, as do the dietary prohibitions of all religions, which attracted the attention of philosophers such as Voltaire in France.

status of non-human animals helped redefine European sociability, where flesh-eating was a regular practice encouraged by the commercial adventures of the long 18th century.

Current debates around vegetarianism, veganism, anthropocentrism and the gendered nature of food invite us to go back to the origins of modernity, and to re-interrogate the Enlightenment on the place and role of non-human animals in what constitutes society. With this in mind, we will look at the many representations, both textual and pictorial, evoking the consumption of animal bodies in various social and literary contexts.

- The visual arts: representations of animals killed or fattened for human consumption (hunting pictures, portraits of livestock, still-life paintings), market stalls and kitchen tables, the presence of animals around the table, scenes of animals being fed, visual associations between femininity and animal flesh, caricatures and satirical representations, illustrations for fables, educational texts or scientific publications, etc.
- Literature: representations of discussions about food and drink (table discussions, the material conditions of debates on the issue, the modalities of conversations, arguments and debates), hygiene-related considerations about children's diets, the influence of flesh consumption on human morals, the link between what people ate and who they were, whether and how this type of discourse was influenced by the different literary genres, etc.
- The periodical press, essays, political writings and pamphlets: how and when was the issue used to support a particular argument?
- Scientific writings (naturalist, veterinary, and medical writings): to what extent did they take the ongoing changes in morals and attitudes towards animals into account.
- Gastronomic literature and menus: what traces are there in such texts of debates on the consumption of animal flesh?

Proposals (with a provisional title, a 250-word summary and a brief biobibliography of the author) for the study day should be sent before **15 Decembre 2024** to

Florence Magnot-Ogilvy florence.magnot-ogilvy@univ-rennes2.fr
&
Sophie Mesplède sophie.mesplede@univ-rennes2.fr

Papers may be presented in French or English.

Indicative Bibliography

- Arena, Francesca, Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, Irini Papaikonomou et Francesca Prescendi (eds.), *Allaitement entre humains et animaux : représentations et pratiques de l'Antiquité à aujourd'hui*, *Anthropozoologica* 52/1, 2017
- Berchtold Jacques et Jean-Luc Guichet (ed.), « *L'animal des Lumières* », *Dix-huitième siècle* 42, 2010
- Blackwell, Mark, *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth Century England* (Bucknell University Press, 2007)
- Burgat, Florence, *L'humanité carnivore* (Seuil, 2017)
- Guerrini, Anita, "A Diet for a Sensitive Soul: Vegetarianism in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23.2, May 1999: 34-42

- Guichet, Jean-Luc, *Rousseau, l'animal et l'homme. L'animalité dans l'horizon anthropologique des Lumières* (Cerf, 2006)
- Guichet, Jean-Luc (ed.), *De l'animal-machine à l'âme des machines : querelles biomécaniques de l'âme XVIe-XXIe siècles*, Paris, éditions de la Sorbonne, 2010
- Larue, Renan, *Le Végétarisme des Lumières. L'abstinence de viande dans la France du XVIIIème siècle* (Garnier, 2019)
- Magnot-Ogilvy, Florence, « Instabilité énonciative et hiérarchie des valeurs dans l'*Histoire véritable* : l'effet-personnage et la projection sensorielle chez Montesquieu », *Montesquieu et la fiction : autour des Lettres persanes*, Aurélia Gaillard (dir.), *Lumières*, 2022: 145-159
- Morton, Timothy, "Joseph Ritson, Percy Shelley and the Making of Romantic Vegetarianism", *Romanticism* 12.1, 2006: 52-61
- Page-Jones, Kimberley, "From Buffon to Coleridge. Sociability and Humanity in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Comparative Anatomy", *Literature & History* 32(2), 2023: 110-128
- Puskar-Pasewicz, Margaret, *Cultural Encyclopedia of Vegetarianism* (Greenwood, 2010)
- Richardot, Anne (dir.), *Bestiaire des Lumières*, *Revue des sciences humaines* 296, 2009
- Serna, Pierre, *L'Animal en République* (Anarchasis, 2016)
- Serna, Pierre, *Comme des bêtes* (Fayard, 2017)
- Spencer, Colin, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (UPNE, 1996)
- Strivay, Lucienne, « Manger juste. Les droits de l'animal dans les encyclopédies de 1750 à 1800. De l'éthique au politique », in Bodson, Liliane, *Le Statut éthique de l'animal : conceptions anciennes et nouvelles* (Université de Liège, 1995): 61-99
- Stockhorst, Stefanie, Jürgen Overhoff and Penelope J. Corfield, *Human-Animal Interactions in the Eighteenth-Century. From Pests and Predators to Pets, Poems and Philosophy* (Brill, 2021)
- Wolloch, Nathaniel, *Subjugated animals. Animals and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern European Culture* (Humanity Books, 2006)
- Gregory, James, "Vegetable Fictions in the Kingdom of Roast Beef: Representing the Vegetarian in Victorian Literature", in Tamara S. Wagner and Narin Hassan (dir.), *Consuming Culture in the long Nineteenth Century. Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900* (Lexington Books, 2007): 17-34

Scientific Committee

- Jacques Berchtold (Sorbonne Université/ Fondation Bodmer)
- Valérie Capdeville (Rennes 2)
- Émilie Dardenne (Rennes 2/ IUF)
- Jean-Luc Guichet (Université de Picardie)
- David Mc Callam (University of Sheffield)
- Florence Magnot-Ogilvy (Rennes 2)
- Sophie Mesplède (Rennes 2)
- Kimberley Page-Jones (UBO)
- Sophie Vasset (Université Paul Valéry)
- Phil Withington (University of Sheffield)