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TO THE FAITHFUL DECLASSED: HEALTH RISK AS SPECIESIST CAMOUFLAGE

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Abstract. The concept of "declassified" usually refers to human animals in a marginal situation, this is, it is a lexical item with the [+ human] feature. Western dominant discourse does not use the term "marginal" to refer to nonhuman animals because it integrates them into a lower category: they are objects or belongings with no resemblance to a live being. So, their identity is denied and they become entities without needs or abilities of living beings, unless their representation refers to something risky or dangerous for humans. In this case, they seem to be a risk because they are alive.

The present work aims to analyze the construction of speciesist representations in graphic press speaking about homeless dogs. We will take as a starting point the hypothesis that these representations construct the concept of "homeless animal" as a sanitary risk for the human species and, therefore, nonhuman animals are described as the enemy and their resemblance is not the resemblance of a live being. We will analyze three texts, extracted from the digital versions of three different newspapers, published in different countries and written in different languages.

We will adopt *Social Semiotics* by Hodge and Kress [1988] as the main theoretical framework. In order to cover both verbal and visual material, the development of the analysis will adopt the tools proposed by Hodge and Kress [1993] for the assignment of thematic papers and description of processes in the verbal material together with the elements systematized by Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] for image analysis and Ekman [2003] and Kendon [2004] for gestural analysis.

Key words: Speciesism; CDA; Social Semiotics; social representations.

1. ECOLINGUISTICS: SPECIESIST DISCOURSE AND COGNITIVE STRUCTURES

The term "speciesism" first appeared in 1970 in a pamphlet written by Ryder [1998], a philosopher belonging to the Oxford Group, and from then on has been used to refer to discrimination based on species. But discrimination against other species can be traced back to classical antiquity. Aristotle, in *Politics* stated:

Plants exist for animals, and other animals, for the benefit of man; The domestic ones for their use and their food, and the savages – if not all, at least most of them – to serve as food and other purposes, to offer both clothing and other utensils. Therefore, if nature does nothing imperfectly or in vain, it is necessary that all such beings exist naturally for the benefit of man [1999, p. 13].

Judaism and Christianity maintained the same status for animals, granting them a place of simple service to man. Then the automatism of Descartes removed their soul and consciousness, transforming them into robots. This perspective, whose reminiscences are still felt, considers them totally devoid of understanding and incapable of

experiencing pain, pleasure or other sensations or emotions.

On the other hand, in the late 1990s, Ecolinguistics made its appearance as a new paradigm of research, taking into account not only the social context in which a language is embedded but also the relationship societies establish with the natural environment. This approach can be characterized as a form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) committed to the study of the verbal connection between humans and other animals. It explores the role of language in the interaction among the human species, other species and the environment in which they develop. Although these analysts start from the theoretical framework provided by CDA, their perspective is broad, including proposals from other disciplines that take, with a critical view, the relationship between language and biodiversity as object of study. As an analytic perspective, Ecolinguistics seek to deconstruct the speciesist representations in order to dismantle the automation their meanings provoke, to show that these meanings are not natural but the product of particular power relations.

In Western world, speciesist representations are a part of the dominant discourse [Raiter, 2003,

P. 167], which imposes its discriminatory logic by turning them into objects, denying them identity, and not recognizing them as a living beings. Social representations in the common sense of a given society circulate meanings that are considered absolute and indisputable for the members of that given society [Raiter, 2003, P. 140]. In the minds of speakers these representations are completed in a consistent whole [Raiter, 2003, P. 141] and form cognitive structures, belief systems, which shape their worldview. In other words, mental representations provide the framework to constitute the stories that order and guide the way we live:

The stories we live by are different, however. We are exposed to them without consciously selecting them or necessarily being aware that they are just stories...Importantly the stories-we-live-by influence how we act in the world – if nature is seen as a resource then we may be more likely to exploit it, or if economic growth is seen as the primary goal of politics then people's wellbeing and the ecosystems which support life may be overlooked. The role of the form of ecolinguistics ... is to analyze texts to expose the underlying stories, and then consider carefully how they encourage us to act. [Stibbe, 2015, P. 9-10].

Although Ecolinguistics is much more than animalistic studies, these have experienced a significant growth during the past decade. The so-called "animalistic turn" in academic research has managed to move between humanistic disciplines, fine arts and social sciences, even reaching fields such as psychology, philosophy, anthropology, political science and sociology and literature, history, critical and cultural studies, as well as on geography, feminism and The Queer theory. [Best, 2013, P. 3].

2. THE DECLASSIFIED

The concept of "declassification" implies an individual not included in any class. When there is no will of the individual to self-exclude, that non-inclusion is constituted as a prejudice: the individual does not meet the characteristics that power requires for inclusion. According to Bourdieu there are different types of capital, social class is defined by the capital accumulated by individuals. Thus, capital is understood by Bourdieu as a force that determines what is possible and what is not. The distribution structure of the different types of capital, at a given point in time, corresponds to the immanent structure of the social world, that is, to the totality of forces inherent to it, and by which the social reality functions [2000: 132-133].

Nonhuman animals are inserted into capitalism as commodities, they have exchange value. They cannot accumulate capital: they are something to be accumulated. A given number of cattle means wealth. Dogs or cats of a certain pedigree go hand in hand with social status. And so forth. But a possibility of agency is contemplated for them: they can adopt the characteristics of live risk. They can move and act as something dangerous, as something that mines human security. They can attack, transmit diseases, eat our food or drain our resources. So, when they cannot be accumulated they need to be controlled or destroyed for human safety.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research will take as a theoretical framework *Social Semiotics* proposed by Hodge and Kress [1988]. According to these authors, meaning resides in different systems, in several codes, so the analysis of the verbal dimension is not enough [1988, P. vii]. A theory about verbal language must be placed in the context of all socially constituted systems of meaning. Thus communication must be seen as a process rather than as a cluster of meanings. These meanings are produced and reproduced in the context of specific social conditions through different means and by different agents. They exist in relation to concrete subjects and objects and can only be explained in terms of the relations they contract with each other.

Society is typically constituted by structures and relations of power, exercised or resisted; it is characterized by conflict as well as cohesion, so that the structures of meaning at all levels, from dominant ideological forms to local acts of meaning will show traces of contradiction, ambiguity, polysemy in various proportions, by various means. So for us, texts and contexts, agents and objects of meaning, social structures and forces and their complex interrelationships together constitute the minimal and irreducible object of semiotic analysis. [Hodge & Kress, 1988, P. viii].

In this context, communicative practices are defined in terms of their linguistic resources, that is, sound, spatial and visual elements. In order to cover both verbal and visual material, the development of the analysis will adopt the tools proposed by Hodge and Kress [1993] for the assignment of thematic roles and description of processes in the verbal material together with the elements systematized by Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] for image analysis and Ekman [2003] and Kendon [2004] for gestural analysis.

4. CORPUS

The analysis will be carried out on three graphic press notes, belonging to three different newspapers, from three different countries and written in three different languages:

- *Callejeros con seguro médico* (stray dogs with health insurance). This story appeared in the digital version of the Argentine newspaper *Página 12*, on 11/29/2016 and were signed by Nicolás Romero. It is written in Spanish.

- *En France, une législation stricte gère la population des chiens errants* (In France, strict legislation manages the population of stray dogs). Appeared in the digital version of *L'Express*, France, on 03/01/2017. It is an editorial note, no sign, and it is written in French.

- *India has 30 million stray dogs. In one state, vigilantes are being pushed to kill them.* It was published by *The Washington Post* website, USA, 01/21/2016. Signed by Rama Lakshmi, text in English.

The selection of the corpus was made taking into account the need to inquire about the way in which different western societies construct speciesist representations using the resources provided by three Indo-European languages. Having in mind the common origin and the relationship among this three languages (that, on the other hand, are the most widespread European languages) seemed useful to understand the use of resources in this languages to build up discriminatory representations.

Actors in actional processes

Actor

Berazategui
La clínica veterinaria

Los vecinos
Fernando Gherzinich, médico veterinario y coordinador de los consultorios de la clínica
El municipio
cualquier vecino
El médico

El municipio

process

controlará
Comenzó a implementar
alimentan
explicó

monitorea
Pueda reconocer
Resaltó

Vacuna, desparasita,
castra, registra

Affected

Perros vagabundos
El registro de perros comunitarios
Aquellos [perros]
Lo ideal es que no haya perros

Al animal
La caravana
La necesidad del control de la población canina
A los perros

Entities in relational processes

Entity 1

Los perros sin dueño
Cada uno
Los perros callejeros
El número de identificación

relation

Serán
tendrá
son
está

Entity 2

Desparasitados, vacunados y castrados
Su historia clínica
Un problema sanitario
Asociado a una historia clínica

5. HYPOTHESIS

As mentioned before, this paper aims to analyze the construction of the speciesist positioning in a corpus of journalistic notes on homeless animals. We will start from the hypothesis that the speciesist representations prioritize the position of threat or sanitary risk in the discursive construction of nonhuman animals, granting them the place of affected within the eventual structure. They will be constructed as passive objects, with no possibility of choice or action, unless they are considered a health risk.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. STRAY DOGS WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

The story appeared on November 29, 2016 in the website of the Argentine newspaper *Página 12*, in the section *Sociedad* (society), column *Derechos de los animales* (Animal Rights). It is signed by Nicolás Romero. Next, we will describe the conformation of its actional and relational systems.

Table 1

Actional and relational systems

Processes		
Transactive	Non transactive	Relational
65	26	26

La caravana	es	Un dispositivo liviano
La población	es	Demasiado grande

Dogs as actor

Actor	Process	Affected
Un perro callejero	Victimizó	Al intendente Patricio Mussi
<i>Un perro callejero</i>	Mordió	Lo
Los perros	actúan	Como barrera biológica
<i>Los perros</i>	impiden	La difusión de enfermedades

Two classes of dogs are represented as actors in the story: 1. Dogs that go to resorts and restaurants, 2. The others, the declassed ones that represent a sanitary risk. Under the category "affected" are represented the stray dogs that are took by the program of the municipality, which puts them in treatment and release them with a mark in the ear. These also appear involved in relational processes. They are only agents in two cases: 1. Attacking the intendand Patricio Mussi, and 2. Being used to fight dogs from other municipalities, that is, as a sanitary barrier.

In addition, when participating in relational processes, their identity is subsumed by some element that classifies them, either associating them with a brand (the mark, the caravan) or integrating them into a collective group (the population).

According to the text, unowned dogs are presumed of carrying diseases and pose a health risk. Under this logic, actions are not carried out for the welfare of street dogs but because they represent a risk to the human population: they transmit diseases. But this central idea is camouflaged as a charitable action towards stray dogs.

The following quotation from Fernando Ghersinich, taken from the text, shows that the intention behind the program is not to benefit animals but a sanitary measure in relation to the human population:

lo ideal es que no haya perros en la calle, pero la realidad es que hay muchos y son un problema sanitario, por eso desarrollamos el programa que consiste en la colocación de una caravana (un botón plástico) en la oreja del perro, que es como el que se utiliza en grande animales, pero más chicos. Es un dispositivo liviano, para que no le moleste, redondo y de color amarillo, que tiene un número de identificación que está asociado a una historia clínica... se decidió el uso de una caravana y no de un chip –aclaró el veterinario– porque la idea es que cualquier vecino pueda reconocer la caravana, que significa que es un animal monitoreado por el municipio, ver el número que identifica al animal, y llamarnos. En cambio, el chip se implanta bajo la

piel, y se necesita un lector para accederlo... la población es demasiado grande y no hay espacio físico para albergar a todos, por eso la castración”, remarcó y explicó que “al estar vacunados y desparasitados, como son territoriales y compiten con otros perros que vienen de afuera, actúan como barrera biológica impidiendo la difusión de enfermedades.

The best scenario would be no dogs on the street, but the reality is that there are many and they are a health problem, that's why we developed this program that involves the placement of a caravan [a plastic button] in the dog's ear, which is Like the one used in large animals, but smaller. It is a light device, not to disturb, round and yellow, which has an identification number that is associated with a medical record ... it was decided to use a caravan and not a chip, said the veterinarian, because the idea is that any neighbor can recognize the caravan, which shows that it is an animal monitored by the municipality, you can see the number that identifies the animal, and call us. Instead, the chip is implanted under the skin, and a reader is needed to access it ... the population is too large and there is no physical space to accommodate everyone, that is why castration is performed, he remarked and explained that being vaccinated and dewormed, as they are territorial and compete with other dogs that come from outside, they act as a biological barrier preventing the spread of diseases¹.

In addition, some lexical pieces deserve particular attention: *declassed* and *Community dogs*.

The concept of declassification gives the dogs the [+ human] feature, but in a negative way. It involves a process in which one participant loses its status, what is to say, an agent "declasses", removes the class or status to another. In this way, stray dogs are homologated to the situation of the lower class of human animals. But, on the other hand, as we have seen, these dogs are not themselves agents in processes involving them, unless those processes have negative consequences on human animals. This

¹ Translation mine.

would justify its treatment in terms of human benefit and its use as a sanitary barrier. Also, the dogs that entered in the municipal program are called *community dogs*. But this status is related to the neighborhood identification, to the fact that each neighbor can identify the “caravaneados” and remain calm because they do not represent a risk for health. So, in the end, it is more a question of political claimings than of public service.

Image Analysis



Image 1. A sad dog on white background

The picture that illustrates the text shows a sad dog on white background. The dog seems abstracted

from the context to highlight a sad facial expression [Darwin, 1872, P. 53]. He/she is looking down to front camera. Picture focuses on the face, most of the body is out of focus. He/she shows signs of scabies on ear and nose. The image tries to humanize the image of the dog, at the same time interpellating the reader with the mix of illness and sadness showed. The process represented by the image [Kress and van Leeuwen, 2005] is given established between the dog and these traits of illness and sadness, forming a symbolic process.

6.2. IN FRANCE, UNE LÉGISLATION STRICTE GÈRE LA POPULATION DES CHIENS ERRANTS.

Editorial note appeared on 3/1/2017 on the website of *L'Express*. It is not signed.

Table 2

Actional and relational systems

Processes		
Transactive	Non transactive	Relational
40	10	17

Actors in actional processes

Actor	Process	Affected
Jean-François Legueulle, délégué générale de la Fondation 30 millions d'amis	répond	Cette question
Jean-François Legueulle, délégué générale de la Fondation 30 millions d'amis	présente	Un état des lieux de la situation ainsi que des solutions
La mairie ou la municipalité	Prise en charge	Chien errant signalé
La mairie ou la municipalité	Transfert	L'animal
La mairie ou la municipalité	Recherche	La fourrière de son propriétaire
Certains refuges	euthanasier	Les chiens
Notre fondation	Aide	Les 300 structures d'accueil ou refuges
Le gouvernement	euthanasies	Les chiens errants

Entities in relational processes

Entity 1	Relation	Entity 2
Le nombre de chiens errants	oscillerait	Entre 100 et 150 millions
La situation	Est	Alarmante
Les chiens errants	représentent	Une menace
Leur surpopulation	Est	Évitée
Les seules méthodes efficaces	Sont	L'identification, la stérilisation et la vaccination des chiens
l'éducation des propriétaires	Est	Primordiale également

In this case, stray dogs do not perform agentive functions in the text. These functions are granted to participants with the [+human] feature (Jean-François Legueulle, les propriétaires) or to entities also conformed by humans [the mairie, the municipalité, l'Union Européene].

There are a few relevant grammatical metaphors to be considered: *une menace*, *le bien-être animal*.

Image analysis



Image 2. Five sad dogs in a low neighborhood

Five sad dogs in a low neighborhood. Photo without marked effects. Looking to portray the urban context: dogs living in a poor neighborhood. Grey Sky. Suggestive symbolic process [Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, P. 85]. Symbolic processes show what a participant means. The suggestive symbolic processes have only one participant and represent the meaning and identity coming from within, deriving from the participant itself. In this case, the five dogs function as a single participant, representing the situation of poverty and marginalization in a city context.

The concept of threat (menace) implies a process in which one participant with the feature [+agent] threatens another with the [+affected] feature. This nominalization is the only mention the text makes to the agentivity of stray dogs. Again, as in the previous text, when dogs are agents they harm humans.

6.3. INDIA HAS 30 MILLION STRAY DOGS. IN ONE STATE, VIGILANTES ARE BEING PUSHED TO KILL THEM.

Note signed by Rama Lakshmi, appeared on October 21, 2016 in the digital version of *The Washington Post*.

Table 3

Actional and relational systems

Processes		
Transactive	Non transactive	Relational
93	12	23

Actors in actional processes

Actor	Process	Affected
The dogcatcher	tightens	Its neck
He	Pulls out	Five puppies
Mobs	hire	Professional catchers

He	Will kill	All the animals
A group of men	killed	Several dogs
The dog	killed	Half the ducks
Jose Maveli	thinks	Roaming strays endanger public safety
Anti-dog activists	show	Snarling canines and gruesome images of people with bite wounds
A medical student	Flings	A stray puppy
A dog	bite	7-year old Ayoos Sajimon
A street dog	Pressed its paws on	His chest
The neighbors	killed	The dog
Kerala	sterilize	Street dogs

Entities in relational processes

Entity 1	Relation	Entity 2
India	Has	30 million stray dogs
Widesprad killing	Is	Un acceptable
Jose maveli	is	Founder of the stray dogs eradication society
The roaming strays	Are	About 250000
Street dogs	Are	A common nuisance
Animal lovers	Are	On the defensive
Dogs	Are	In an absolute state of fright
My son	Is	So traumatized
The only scientific thing to do	Is	Sterilization
An average of 11 per dog	Is	Inadequate
Poor collection of garbage in the cities	Is	The main reason

Dogs as actors

Actor	Process	Affected
The dog	killed	Half the ducks
The dog	Has been growling	At his 10-year-old-son

Dogs	bit	Young children and elderly people
A pack of stray dogs	attacked	An elderly woman
A dog	bite	7-year-old Ayoos Sajimon
A street dog	Pounced on	Him
A street dog	Pressed its paws on	His chest
A street dog	bit	His face and eye

In this story, the actors come from the various sectors involved: citizens, government, activists and dogs. Although again, dogs only show the [+ agent] feature when they participate in processes that harm humans.

A relevant grammatical metaphor to consider: Euthanasia for dogs.

This concept appears here associated to the idea of threat. Again, it involves an agent participant who would act upon an affected one euthanizing him/her. In any case, the text fails to specify sanity reasons

that motivate euthanasia, but rather poses a war between the citizens of Kerala and stray dogs in which all other description seems marginal. Even the determinations of the authorities or the actions of the animal activists.

Image analysis

The text is illustrated with three images:

1. A dogcatcher with the three puppies.



Image 3. A dogcatcher with the three puppies

The dog-hunter holds his prey. IN terms of Kress and van Leeuwen [1996] this is an analytical process. If the photograph would not illustrate a note about the hunting of dogs in Kerala it could be granted a totally different meaning. Because of this, it must be considered that the relation with the verbal text is essential for the assignment of meaning to this image. Taking into account the above mentioned, we can consider that the photograph presents a process

of classification from the category of opposites: hunter / hunted. The position of the camera and the size of the shot establish a relationship that does not imply remoteness with the viewer, although they do not question it either, since the hunter's gaze does not seek the camera. According to Rulicki and Cherny [2011], the face of the hunter manifests a neutral expression, without movements of emotion.

2. An attacked kid with his mother showing wounds.



Image 4. An attacked kid with his mother showing wounds

Ayos Sajimon and the wounds caused by the attack of a dog. This picture shows an attributional symbolic process: what an element is or means and consists of two participants: 1. The relational entity and 2. The participant that represents the meaning of the identity itself (the symbolic attribute). The wounded child is the element that carries meaning and his mother is the one who is showing it. In this case, both the child and his mother function as meaning-related entities wounded by dog attacks. Human participants in attributive symbolic processes pose for the viewer. They are there for the sole reason of being shown to the public. In addition, the child looks at the camera, establishing with the viewer a relationship of closeness, interpellating it, forcing it to take part in the meaning. On the other hand, and consequently with the display rules for Hindu society [Rulick and Cherny, 2011] the faces of Ayos and his mother manifest the seriousness of the subject: Ayos manifests a neutral expression, without facial movements of emotion. Her mother also does not display any expression of emotion, although she is not the focus of the camera but, as mentioned before, she is presenting her son.

3. Map of Kerala.

This picture represents a suggestive symbolic process in terms of Kress and van Leeuwen [1996, P. 85]. Symbolic processes show what a participant is or means.



THE WASHINGTON POST

Image 5. Map of Kerala

Suggestive symbolic processes have only one participant (comparable, sometimes, to existential processes in verbal language). They cannot be interpreted as analytical because the details are not often emphasized, but something that we can call "humor" or "atmosphere." This is what gives the suggestive paintings their generality, their quality of showing not a specific moment but a generalized essence.

The suggestive symbolic processes represent the meaning and identity coming from within, deriving from the entity's own qualities, while the attributive symbolic processes represent the meaning and identity being conferred on the entity.

In this case, the map not only indicates the geographical position of the situation but also its socio-political context. Given that this is probably a place unknown to the Washington Post public, geographic identification is more than useful. But, at the same time, it activates the representations associated with India in the common sense of the newspaper readers.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It must first be noted that non-human animals never have access to a social class comparable to human classes. They are considered inferior in all cases, being objects or risks. And when some kind of identity is restored, it is done in a negative way, associated to negative features. They represent the difference, something that puts us in danger because of its very existence. They don't think, they don't act but to harm us and, therefore, rights mustn't be granted.

It seems essential to remember that problems related to nonhuman and human animals do not arise from the coexistence but from the change man makes in the environment and the place given to other species. To presume that problem situations arise from the coexistence involves an erasing of man's responsibility in modifying the environment without considering the consequences. Looking at things this way we can say man is creating a problem that today continues to be solved by sacrifice, euthanasia and (in the best of the cases) treatment programs. They have been colonized. Moreover, it should be noted that, dogs and cats, like many other animals in urban environments, are dominated by the human race. They cannot exist outside of human rules. They cannot walk alone down the street without being considered overpopulation or risk. They need a guardian or legal representative to not be considered marginal, just as women and black persons did until not long ago (Forte, 2015, P. 13).

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