



PANDEMICS AND NON-HUMAN ANIMALS IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS: EXTENDED CARNISM AND INDUSTRIAL FATALISM

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Abstract: The present work is part of a research dedicated to the construction of the carnist discursive identity in Argentina. Our aim in this paper is to analyse the way in which Argentine press constructs non-human animals during COVID-19 pandemic in the news. We will analyse three different news taken from two major newspapers from Buenos Aires with national editions. We'll adopt as main theoretical framework Ecolinguistics as proposed by STIBBE (2012, 2014). From this perspective, neoclassical economics discourse builds a destructive relationship between humans and non-humans through language. We will apply theoretical tools provided by HODGE & KRESS (1993) for verbal analysis, and KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) and HART (2014) for image analysis.

Our working hypothesis is that just three positions are allowed to non-human animals in these papers: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008), granting non-human animals places of subalternity (SPIVAK, 1988).

Keywords: COVID-19; Non-human animals; Discourse; Ecolinguistics.

Resumo: O presente trabalho faz parte de uma pesquisa dedicada à construção da identidade discursiva carnista na Argentina. Nosso objetivo neste artigo é analisar como a imprensa argentina constrói animais não humanos durante a pandemia de COVID-19 nas notícias. Analisaremos três notícias diferentes tiradas de dois grandes jornais de Buenos Aires com edições nacionais.

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Adotaremos como principal referencial teórico Ecolinguística, conforme proposto por STIBBE (2012, 2014). Nessa perspectiva, o discurso da economia neoclássica constrói uma relação destrutiva entre humanos e não humanos através da linguagem. Aplicaremos as ferramentas teóricas fornecidas por HODGE & KRESS (1993) para análise verbal e KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) e HART (2014) para análise de imagem.

Nossa hipótese de trabalho é que apenas três posições são permitidas a animais não humanos nesses trabalhos: supressão, fundo e presença ornamental (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008), concedendo lugares de subalternidade a animais não humanos (SPIVAK, 1988).

Palavras-chave: COVID-19; Animais não humanos, Discurso, Ecolinguística.

1. Introduction: discourses and environment

Since the decade of 1990, discourses about climate change have adopted many forms. Anshelm & Hultman (2015) classify them in four: Industrial Fatalism, Green Keynesian discourse, Eco-socialism and the discourse of Climate Skeptics (2015: 15). The discourse of Industrial Fatalism is presented as some kind of “capitalist official discourse”, in which climate change is considered as a modern problem for actors that propose marginal changes to save the old structures. What this discourse proposes, according to Ulrich Beck, is that the same industry that provoked the crisis must be used to control it. Large-scale technological development and more efficient innovations can solve environmental issues. This is traditionally the dominant view in most countries in the Western world and it is embraced mostly by right wingers everywhere (ANSHELM; HULTMAN, 2015: 19).

As a dominant climate change discourse, Industrial Fatalism has become the most widespread view for natural sciences, and therefore, also for governments and the media. Once this view reaches any government level it becomes the law and, thus, the social behaviour it establishes gets harder to change, even in emergency times such as the current pandemic (WHORF, 1956; RAITER, 2003; LAKOFF, 2004). Discourses of the leftish populisms in Latin American countries tend to be more kind to people, including references to subaltern groups like aboriginal people, women, African origin people, immigrants, non-human animals and environmental issues, even though when they keep many destructive representations towards all of these groups and topics.

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In Argentina, the dominant discourse about climate change is, as in the rest of the Western world, Industrial Fatalism. This discourse has been supported by governments of different ideologies. They all tried to reconcile the concepts of *environment*, *job positions* and *economy*. But in this equation, environment always lose. In the context of the current outbreak of COVID-19, a huge development in the mass media coverage has been generated and, since a wild animal has been blamed in the news for the disease, non-human animals were in the front page of every newspaper.

2. Carnism and the Story Argentines Live by

According to Lakoff, our minds store meanings in a certain way: creating frames of related meanings that set cognitive patterns. When one of the meanings in the frame is brought to attention, all the meanings in the frame are activated.

One of the best results in the cognitive and brain sciences is that we think in terms of typically unconscious structures called "frames" (sometimes "schemas"). Frames include semantic roles, relations between roles, and relations to other frames. A hospital frame, for example, includes the roles: Doctor, Nurse, Attaint, Visitor, Receptionist, Operating Room, Recovery Room, Scalpel, etc. Among the relations are specifications of what happens in a hospital, e.g., Doctors operate on Patients in Operating Rooms with Scalpels. These structures are physically realized in neural circuits in the brain. All of our knowledge makes use of frames, and every word is defined through the frames it neurally activates. All thinking and talking involves "framing". And since frames come in systems, a single word typically activates not only its defining frame, but also much of the system its defining frame is in (2010: 71-72).

We give the dominant discourse in Argentina the name of *The Story of Meat* (FORTE, 2019). This dominant discourse constitutes the main frame in the Argentine common sense and includes meanings every citizen of Argentina must know to consider themselves as such. This story of meat is based in speciesist representations that place animals in a subaltern place, below all human categories. This speciesist common sense is called by JOY *carnism*:

We don't see meat eating as we do vegetarianism – as a choice, based on a set of assumptions about animals, our world, and ourselves. Rather, we see it as a given, the "natural" thing to do, the way things have always been and the way things will always be. We eat animals without thinking about what we are doing and why, because the belief system that underlies this behavior is invisible. This invisible belief system is what I call *carnism* (JOY, 2011: 9).

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The Story of Meat constitutes the frame that in Argentina activates and links to each other carnist meanings such as *asado*, *tradition*, *friendship*, *relaxation*, *gathering*, *party* and *strong masculinity* but also *national wealth*, *animal husbandry*, *national development* and *the best meat in the world* (FORTE, 2019: 5). This frame was built through the history of the Nation along with its identity and manifests itself in National discourses: literature, political and government discourse, newspapers and media, music, etc.; this is, where social meanings reside (NAVARRO, 2016: 126). It creates speciesist interpretation frameworks, assigning non-human animals specific referents, converting them into food, entertainment, clothing or research material. We follow ADAMS to name this framework "the Story of Meat".

The story of meat follows the narrative structure of storytelling. Alice B. Toklas implies this in her cookbook when, in a chapter entitled "Murder in the Kitchen," she uses the style of a detective story to describe killing and cooking animals. Through recipes she provides the appropriate conclusion to the animals' death according to the texts of meat; the animal becomes delectable, edible... Meat eating is story applied to animals, it gives meaning to animals' existence...The story of meat follows a sacred typology: the birth of a god, the dismemberment of the god's body, and the god's resurrection. This sacred story paves the way for a mundane enactment of the meaning of dismemberment and resurrection—achieved through consumption of meat (ADAMS, 2017: 76).

Livestock farming industry is the most developed in the country and in its discourse non-human animals become resources and wealth (DIETZ; YORK, 2015: 36). Whether intended for food or as a pet, they are considered as marketable objects and, in this sense, within this discourse and in a quarantine, anything that does not generate income is useless. From a Neoliberal discourse perspective, Argentine newspapers grant three places to non-human animals: suppression, for the excluded; backgrounding for those who don't even have an identity; and ornamental presence for those who have an aesthetic value.

3. COVID-19 Quarantine implications for animals

The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has been defined as caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Its outbreak was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January, and a pandemic on 11 March. Until May 1, 2020, more than 3.27 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported in 187 countries and territories, resulting in more than 233,000 deaths. More than 1.02 million people have recovered (CSSE, 2020: 1).

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COVID-19 Quarantine deepens the carnist discourse including new harmful meanings for non-human animals. TV news show wild animals entering empty cities, due to quarantine, around the globe. Newspapers and magazines also talk about cats not feeling well with their human families at home all day and how pets can transmit the virus, and they also talk about “eastern wet markets” and wild animals as food, specially bats. According to this, the three discursive possibilities for non-human animals we mention in 2. present the following characteristics:

- Suppression: animals are completely erased from the discourse or they are just a circumstance surrounding human action.
- Backgrounding: animals are the cause or the effect for a human related process. Their importance in the texts is linked to human will.
- Ornamental presence: this is the place of the object, granted to non-human animals in most of the western discursive tradition. Animals are present in discourse due to the importance they hold as food, clothing, entertainment, or some benefit they can bring to humans.

We claim that in Argentine newspapers non-human animals are a symbol of the different status humans can achieve.

4. Corpus and theoretical framework

In this opportunity we will analyse three news related to the COVID-19 outbreak. They were taken from two national newspapers: *Página 12* and *Clarín*.

- Text 1. March 31, 2020. Demoras, falta de entrega e insuficiencia de alimentos en las comunidadesⁱ. *Página 12*.
- Text 2. March 29, 2020. Coronavirus: un diario inglés asegura que los mercados chinos siguen vendiendo murciélagos y carne de animales domésticosⁱⁱ. *Clarín*
- Text 3. April 16, 2020. El “coronavirus canino”, una enfermedad que inquieta a los dueños de mascotasⁱⁱⁱ. *Clarín*

Considering that our main interest is to exhibit the three types of strategies used to erase, mask or hide non-human animals, we will proceed through strategy order instead of chronologically.

We adopt as main framework STIBBE’s postulates (2014) regarding language and non-human animals. Since all the analysed texts present images, we will take a multimodal approach. We will analyse verbal material following HODGE & KRESS (1993) to describe processes and participants and KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN (2006) and HART (2014) for image analysis.

5. COVID-19 and the speciesist discourse

According to VAN LEEUWEN, discursive exclusion works in several ways:

Some exclusions leave no traces in the representation, excluding both the social actors and their activities. Such radical exclusion can play a role in a critical comparison of different representations of the same social practice, but not in an analysis of a single text, for the simple reason that it leaves no traces behind. (2008: 29).

He distinguishes between *suppression y backgrounding*:

In the case of suppression, there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text... someone or some institution surveyed the opinions of the public, but we do not find out which individual or company or other institution did this, which takes away one possible avenue of contesting the result of these “surveys.” In the case of backgrounding, the exclusion is less radical: the excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given action, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, and we can infer with reasonable (though never total) certainty who they are (2008: 29).

As we have mentioned before, Argentine press grant animals three discursive places: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence. We will see now how this three strategies are articulated in each text.

5.1. Text 1: Demoras, falta de entrega e insuficiencia de alimentos en las comunidades

This text, published on March 31, 2020 in both the digital version and the paper edition of the Buenos Aires newspaper *Página 12*, constitutes an Editorial Note, often called Leading Article. It is an unsigned story that represents the editorial line of the newspaper (SILK, 2009: 1).

This Editorial is dedicated to the situation of the Wichí aboriginal people, a Nation that lives in the north of the country, on the border between Argentina, Bolivia and small areas bordering on Paraguay and, on the Argentine side of the border, the province of Salta. The note refers to the general situation of the Wichí people, prior to the declaration of the pandemic, but extends its scope until the moment of the crisis.

Analysing the actional model (HODGE & KRESS, 1993: 9) we find first that the main actors involved in actional transactive processes are provincial and national officers, such as provincial Secretary of Public Relief, officer from National Ministry of Social Development, National Representatives for Salta Province and Salta’s Provincial Ministry of Social Development. And they all are involved in transactive processes:

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Actor	Process	Afected	Type of process
Secretario de obras públicas de Santa Victoria, Pedro Lozano	visitó	Padres de un niño de un año y tres meses que falleció	Transactive - Material
Lozano	filmó	A la hermanita de esa criatura	Transactive - Material
nutricionistas del Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación	Dispusieron	X	Transactive - Mental
El diputado nacional Lucas Godoy	indicó	X	Transactive - verbal
la ministra de Desarrollo Social de Salta, Verónica Figueroa	Había adjudicado el problema de las demoras	A una situación particular de los proveedores	Transactive - Mental
Verónica Caliva y Juan Ameri	Presentarán un proyecto	En el congreso	Transactive - Material
Godoy	solicitará	se enmarque en las acciones paliativas	Transactive - verbal
X	Se tomaron	Medidas ante la pandemia del COVID 19 en el país	Transactive - Material

Table 1

The only aboriginal participant in the text is the Chief Agapito Ceballos, who declares the current situation of his people at the moment of the publication. Official figures give legitimacy to the discussion. The entire text constitutes an argument between officials and the opinion of the Chief, who acts as the social legitimizer for Wichí people: it is the official word of the Wichí community. In this context, the discourse of the economy and the place of the Estate prevail.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
Agapito Ceballos, cacique de la comunidad de Rancho El Ñato	confirmó	X	Transactive - Verbal

Table 2

The problematic situation arises when National government disputes with the provincial government of Salta the way in which emergency food is distributed. On the one hand, the Secretary of Public Relief of Santa Victoria, Salta, Pedro Lozano, is involved in two material

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processes: visiting and filming the situation of the family that lost a child because of malnutrition. In contrast, the National Government Officials (nutritionists from the National Ministry of Social Development, National Representatives Lucas Godoy, Verónica Caliva and Juan Ameri, are involved as actors in mental and verbal processes. As a third part, Wichí people appear in two cases: the parents of a little boy of one year and three months and the sister of the dead child. They are trapped inside nominal constructions that include them: particular situation of the providers, palliative actions, etc.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
La nena	Falleció		No transactive - Material
Lozano	filmó	A la hermanita de esa criatura	Transactive - Material
Las comunidades wichí	viven	Una situación	No transactive - Existencial

Table 3

This presents a situation in which the provincial government, represented here by Pedro Lozano, visited the community, filmed the malnourished child who died, and continued without delivering food. In contrast, National Officers took action on the matter and protested, presenting bills to Congress.

The wichís are also actors in non-transactional processes (*the child died*). Only the Chief is an actor in verbal processes. They only appear in two instances: when talking about them and their situation, as in the case of the girl filmed by Lozano and later deceased, and when the Chief Agapito Ceballos confirms the situation, without being taken by direct speech. In this sense, indigenous people have almost no place in the discussion. It is an issue between the Provincial and National Government.

The whole discussion is described in terms of an argument between National and Provincial governments. The Wichí people appears but in a very limited part of the text. Non-human animals are not mentioned in the verbal text at all. Nevertheless, they have an important role in the image, as we will see.

5.1.1. Image analysis

The editorial is illustrated by a picture that and, as any image, it presents particularities in itself. These are amplified when considered together with the verbal text.



Image 1

As we have mentioned in 4., we adopt Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) multimodal analysis model as main framework. These authors, following the categories defined by Halliday (1978), analyze the three metafunctions of language in the images: 1. Ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions.

5.1.1.1. Ideational function

In the picture can be identified a material transactional process in which an adult person serves food to two children. In the background, but in the center of the image, there are two malnourished dogs and part of an adult person, presumably a sitting man. The vector of the transactional process comes from the faceless person who is serving food and goes to the children. The indigenous origin of this person can also be inferred by the color of its skin. Therefore, we

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can see one actor that serves food to two affected participants. Here we can say that the place assigned to the dogs depends on the type of interpretation we chose for the image:

- Speciesist: dogs are a companion circumstance that builds the idea of poverty (the poor are always accompanied by skinny dogs).
- Inclusive interpretation: dogs are poor too (and not a symbol of poverty) and are waiting for their turn to eat. They are also affected participants and are going to be fed.

If we consider the verbal text that accompanies the image, the interpretation becomes clear: it is the speciesist one. In addition, there is no plate or food remains on the floor, and the text establishes the idea of human hegemony. The location of the malnourished dogs in the image, together with the null space they have within the verbal part of the Editorial reinforces the metaphorical interpretation of non-human animals as a representation of poverty. This interpretation is possible through the metaphoric function of the dogs constructed by visual documentation (HART, 2014: 96), that is to say, it calls for previous knowledge of the viewer that allows to grant them a particular place in the image.

5.1.1.2. Interpersonal function

The analysis of the Interpersonal metafunction allows us to say that the image constitutes an offer act. No participant is looking at the camera. Everything we see is information offered to the viewer and there is no intention for the participants to establish a direct connection with the public. Camera is at a steep angle, focusing from above diagonally and taking a close shot. The situation is shown from the gaze of an adult who is very close to the boys. The observer is involved in the scene because of the close position the scene is taken.

5.1.1.3. Textual function

We have two elements at the center of the image: food and dogs. Everything else is peripheral. Color and modulation present a “naturalistic” representation of what they show.

While the actors are officials in the verbal text, the image shows a faceless participant with indigenous skin and austere clothing, clearly not a government official, feeding aboriginal children.

The photograph represents the counterpart of the verbal text: while the government officials fight each other, the image presents the concrete impact on people. In this context, the verbal text leaves

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indigenous people in the background and photography fills that void. In it, dogs are just a metaphor for poverty, as the text does not mention them. Only their image is used to show the situation of extreme poverty.

Animals are erased. Skinny dogs, as social actors, are erased from the verbal narrative, appearing only in the visual reference as an emblem of poverty. As the Spanish saying says: *a perro flaco todo son pulgas*^{iv}. According to the definition of the Instituto Cervantes, *this saying is applied when misfortune is fed on the helpless, the poor, the weak, those who are downcast* (2020: 1). Bottom line, dogs are suppressed and Wichís backgrounded.

5.2. Text 2: Coronavirus: un diario inglés asegura que los mercados chinos siguen vendiendo murciélagos y carne de animales domésticos

This article appeared on march 29, 2020, in the digital version of the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarín*. It is an Editorial, no journalist nor editor signed it, and its main concern is the story about the animal origin of the pandemic and its consequences in the opening of the so-called *wet markets*.

Although the text refers to animals, they are not involved as actors in any processes, they are affected in impersonalized processes, included in nominalizations or participants in relational clauses, which means they don't *do*, they *are*. When they are affected, they are sold, terrorized and staked. They are also included in constructions such as Chinese *markets*, *Market of Guilin*, etc. Finally, *they are* considered the main cause of the outbreak of coronavirus.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process	Transformation
Los mercados chinos	Siguen vendiendo	Murciélagos Carne de animales domésticos / A humanos	Transactive	
X	Aterroriza	Perros y gatos	Transactive	Elision y nominalizatio
X	Apiló	Jaulas de diferentes especies	Transactive	Impersonalization/erasure
X	Cree	Los muerciélagos son la principal causa del brote	Transactive	
China	Impulsa	La economía	Transactive	
El mercado de Guilin	Estaba	Abarrotado de compradores	Relacional	

Table 4

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An interesting case is provided by the following clause:

Actor	Process	Affected	Type of Process
Los mercados chinos	Siguen vendiendo	Murciélagos Carne de animales domésticos / A humanos	Transactive

Table 5

In this case we can see a clear transactive process, *keep selling*, with an actor, *Chinese Markets*. But the verb asks for two arguments and the affected participant depends, once again, on the perspective we adopt:

- Speciesist interpretation: Markets sell something to someone. Bats and domestic animals' meat are the product the costumers buy.
- Inclusive interpretation: Markets sell non-human persons that suffer the consequences of the process like in human trafficking.

The main actor involved in major processes in the article is China and Chinese officials. They appear in clauses celebrating the end of the quarantine and reopening its markets but also promoting conspiracy theories against the US and silencing people from talking about what, according to the paper, is really happening there.

Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
Un diario inglés	Asegura	A X	Transactive
China	Celebró		No transactive
China	Reabrió	Sus mercados de carne	Transactive
China	No elevó	Sus estándares de higiene	Transactive
Miles de clientes	Acudían	A un mercado	Transactive
X	Cree	Los murciélagos son la principal causa del brote	Transactive
China	Impulsa	La economía	Transactive
Los mercados	Han vuelto a operar		NO transactive
Los funcionarios	Mantuvieron en silencio	El brote	Transactive
X	Silenció	A los denunciantes	Transactive
El gobierno de Beijing	Promueve	Teorías de conspiración	Transactive

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Teorías de conspiración	Son	Una historia desacreditada	Relacional
El ejército de EEUU	Llevó el virus	A china	Transactive

Table 6

The verbal text develops a story in which animals are the excuse to describe a negative perspective about China.

5.2.1. Image analysis

The article contains four pictures, named here as Image 2, 3, 4 and 5, with no identification nor epigraph. We will analyse the three metafunctions for each one of them.

5.2.1.1. First image



Image 2

5.2.1.1.1. Ideational function

The first picture presents a conceptual process. Dogs are shown as prisoners about to become food. In the photo we can see them in a place where they would not be in the Western World, like war prisoners in cages. This case refers us back to the case in image 1, where the process builds a metaphor based on visual documentation (HART, 2020: 96), invoking previous knowledge of the viewer to decode a particular meaning: animals as captives.

5.2.1.1.2. Interpersonal function

The close-up of caged dog's face looking at camera states a demand act. The dog is a domestic animal that in the west is not to be eaten, as we mentioned before. As a captive, a prisoner, a role close to humans is granted. They are asking for help, their gazes are asking for an involvement from the viewer to take part and do something about what she or he is seeing.

5.2.1.1.3. Textual function

Animal gaze is in the center of the image and, therefore, is the main element in importance to consider. It codifies a naturalistic image with no distortion or visual effects. Its dark atmosphere evokes sadness and a horrifying scene, that of a subject about to die.

5.2.1.2. Second image

The second image presents a scene close to the first one, but in this case involves cats and not dogs:



Image 3

5.2.1.2.1. Ideational function

The first picture presents a conceptual process: the participants mean for what they are. Their look grants a particular meaning (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006: 80). Cats are shown in this picture as prisoners. And if we have read the article we know they are about to become food.

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The picture shows them in a place that can be considered not suitable in the Western World. We do not eat cats. They are not food for western cuisine. Therefore, the image allows to associate them with prisoners. This metaphor is based on visual documentation (HART, 2020: 96), invoking previous knowledge of the viewer to decode a particular meaning: animals as captives.

5.2.1.2.2. Interpersonal function

A close-up of caged cats' face looking at camera constitutes, in terms of Kress; van Leeuwen a “demand”. When a represented participant looks at the camera he is looking at the viewer, asking her or him to involve with what is happening (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006: 118). As a prisoner, a role close to humans, is granted to the cats. They are asking for help, their gazes are calling for an involvement from the viewer to take part and do something about what she or he is seeing. In this picture, the cage is more crowded than in the previous image, what gives to the call a more desperate feeling.

5.2.1.2.3. Textual function

As in the previous picture, animal gaze is in the center of the image and, therefore, is the main element in importance to consider. It codifies a naturalistic image with no distortion or visual effects. Its dark atmosphere evokes sadness and a horrifying scene, that of a subject about to die.

5.2.1.3. Third image



Image 4

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5.2.1.3.1. Ideational function

Once again, we find a conceptual process involved. An animal taken out of its traditional western place. Bull skulls are not to be found in a doctor's place in the Western World, and even when they can be found in other western places they are not often seen with their fur. Therefore, this bull skull can be associated in western culture with barbaric practices or, at least with very strange foreign traditions.

5.2.1.3.2. Interpersonal function

The picture presents an offer act. The skull is not looking at the viewer, it is not asking for direct involvement. Nevertheless, the image has been taken from above, in a high angle shoot. The viewers see the bull as something inferior to themselves.

5.2.1.3.3. Textual function

The skull is not in the center of the image, it constitutes, along with the remaining elements, a strange whole that do not allow sympathy for a western public. It constitutes a naturalistic image with no effects involved. In this case, the metaphor is completed invoking the unknown for the western viewer.

5.2.1.4. Fourth Image



Image 5

5.2.1.4.1. Ideational function

The last image is the only one that presents a narrative process with human participants: two actors take a salamander and put it in a bag while other actors behind look and applaud. This represent human material action over a non-human participant affected by the process. Considering the fact that the actors are wearing safety suits, they can be thought as some kind of health officials and, due to that, holding some kind of social prestige.

5.2.1.4.2. Interpersonal function

The image presents an act of offer, no participant is looking at the camera, asking for involvement. The image is shown close but not as close to the viewer to be directly involved in the action. He/she is just a witness. It keeps the observer at a safe distance.

5.2.1.4.3. Textual function

The action develops in the center of the image, presenting a naturalistic view, without effects or modal modifications of any kind.

5.3. Text 3. El “coronavirus canino”, una enfermedad que inquieta a los dueños de mascotas

This article was published on April 16, 2020 in the Clarín Newspaper website, in *Zonales* section. *Zonales* is a section that is usually dedicated to news from specific parts of the city, nevertheless, this article is not. It was signed by Florencia Saglio. Here we can find a full discursive animal presence: that of the object. non-human animals are, according to this, accessories, food, clothing, entertainment or some type of element that brings benefits to humans. They are human ornaments and accessories that can be affected by the disease.

Dogs and cats appear in the position of the affected. They are not actors in any processes. The verbal text in this article builds humans as actors., as we can see in table 7:

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Actor	Process	Afected	Type of Process
El coronavirus canino	inquieta	A los dueños de mascotas	Transactive - mental
La gente	consulta	Por la vacuna	Transactive - verbal
Las veterinarias	aclaran	que	Transactive - verbal
Es un virus	No se contagia	A los humanos	Transactive - material
El coronavirus	Que ataca	A perros y gatos	Transactive - material
El coronavirus	No es	El mismo	Relacional atributivo
coronavirus	ataca	A humanos	Transactive material
Vacuna	existe	Para perros	Relacional identificativos
El coronavirus canino	Solo puede afectar	A cachorros o perros con el sistema inmune muy débil	Transactive material
El coronavirus canino	No genera	Un cuadro riesgoso	Transactive material
Nosotros	recibimos	Muchos llamados	Transactive material
Nadie	Se acercó	desesperado	Transactive material
Los síntomas	Pueden ser	Más graves en los gatos	Relacional atributivo

Table 7

We find two kinds of actors:

- Disease related: coronavirus canino, coronavirus, virus, vacuna.
- Humane: la gente, las veterinarias, nosotros, nadie

Main actors in the article are disease-related. The narrative unfolds as if the virus acts by itself without being spread, developed, etc. Human actors just act once the virus is on the move.

5.3.1. Image analysis

The article is illustrated by the following picture (image 6). The image is not illustrating what is narrated through the verbal text. It is a picture taken professionally and seems intended to arise emotions in the viewer:



Image 6

5.3.1.1. Ideational function

From the analysis of the ideational metafunction we find a conceptual process with one participant. The background is blurry and all the attention is focused in the dog. There is nothing more to look at. The dog is attentive, her/his ears are wide open, so we can think she or he is listening or paying attention to someone or something, and he or she is looking at camera. The dog appears to be submissive and expecting an order from his/her master or human companion. In any case the picture seems to represent the look of “our sweet and submissive dog”, being us the viewers. Following Hart, the anchorage in this picture forces us to see the look on the face of the dog as a main element (HART, 2014: 85), and this has implications for both the ideational content, because it reinforces the meaning of the conceptual process of the submissive dog; and the interpersonal content, as we now see.

5.3.1.2. Interpersonal function

The picture presents a clear act of demand. The dog is looking at the camera asking for involvement. She/he looks as if we are part of the family and wants something from us. The body posture is also important. Face and body appeal to the emotions of the viewer, complementing the verbal construction: animals are an object and that object has to appear attractive in some way to humans and in this case, the dog is appealing to us because he or she could be our dog.

5.3.1.3. Textual function

The only element in the picture is the dog. The background has been blurred to focus the attention on the dog, that is at the centre of the image.

6. Conclusions

As we mentioned in 3. newspapers allow three places to non-human animals: suppression, backgrounding and ornamental presence. This three positions share elements to say that they all are the place of the subaltern (SPIVAK, 1988). They are a symbol of something that occurs to humans (text 1), they are responsible for things that happen to humans (text 2), or they can be affected by diseases similar to those that affect humans and make those last worry about them (text 3).

Agency in their own lives has been denied to non-human animals in human contexts in the last century. They are represented as holding some kind of agency only when they are in their natural habitats or when they do something humans want them to do. But animals in captivity and exploitation conditions fought for their lives and their conditions.

Yet animals did not just labor. They also resisted this labor and fought against their exploitation. During the 1850s, the United States government introduced 75 camels into military service. Their primary duties were to provide transportation for equipment and human personnel. This was, however, a short-lived experiment. For the camels resisted. They refused to cooperate and obey orders. They were loudly vocal in their complaints. They spat upon their fellow soldiers. They bit their fellow soldiers. Their fellow soldiers learned to both hate and fear them (ESSIN, 1997, 59-60). The U.S. army stopped employing camels, and the horse and mule returned to full service in these units. The camels, in truth, were the ones who made their labor an experiment. In other words, this was no experiment. The U.S. Army actively sought to turn camels into soldiers. They failed. Hence, what was to be a permanent program became, after the fact, a trial period, an audition, an experiment (HRIBAL, 2007: 105).

But this narratives are not what the media usually show. According to Hribal (2003) non-human animals were the true working class behind industrialization. Considering that it was oxen and horses that pulled the machinery in various industries, cows, chickens and pigs that provided food and materials for different products, these have been the main protagonists and have been erased from the equation eliminating their agency. In terms of Stibbe, they were deleted and only one

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representation remains that does not correspond to the work carried out at the time (2012: 20). Today we can find stuffed cows, cartoons of smiling horses and pigs dressed in tuxedos, but never representations of horses or oxen pulling spinning wheels and heavy machinery to operate ferries, mills, cotton farms, etc., nor cows, chickens and pigs being dismembered to become manufactured products.

In this same way it can be said that those who built Argentina were, in fact, animals, more precisely cows. They were the workforce in the development of the new nation and the recognition they received was to become an emblem from the representation of their mutilated and cooked body.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the place granted to non-human animals has not been modified in a good way. Actually, as we can see in the analysis of text 2, new problems have arisen from it. Animals (and not human use of them) are considered responsible for the pandemic. As we have detailed in 1. Industrial Fatalism is almost the environmental discourse of Neoclassical economics: let's save the planet without reducing the profit. This is the main discourse that contains the idea of *animals as resources*. But even though this idea is generalized, at least in the western world, the different types of resource each animal constitutes are defined locally. This way, all animals serve a purpose for humans but each animal serves a particular purpose in a particular place. Being this the case cultural crosses arise xenophobic reactions and not antispeciesist ones.

COVID-19 pandemic blamed bats, animals not usually consumed as food in western countries. And that was the news: in China bats are food. This leads to a crack in dominant discourse.

Every year in Yulin, China, thousands of dogs—and even a few cats—are barbarically slaughtered for a summer solstice gathering, and their flesh is sold as food. Commonly called the Yulin dog-eating festival, this event is vehemently condemned by the international community—and by many Chinese people, too. It's easy to see why: The thought of killing, dismembering, cooking, and eating our animal companions is enough to make most of us lose our lunch. But there's no rational reason why the thought of eating any other animal shouldn't elicit the same revulsion—especially when animals raised and slaughtered in the United States often face horrors akin to those endured by the dogs in Yulin (HURST, 2019: 1).

According to western media, the barbaric practice is to eat bats, dogs and cats, the same way cows, pigs, ducks, goose, deer, horses, chicken, rabbits, fish, etc. are consumed in our countries. As a

pandemic, COVID-19 has, at some point reinforced the neoclassical economics discourse towards non-human animals, and its links to xenophobic, racist, misogynistic discourses. Aboriginals, homeless and poor people, women, they all share a subaltern place with animals. But animals are at the bottom of the well, they are ultimate subaltern because they are not human.

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- i Delays, lack of delivery and insufficient food in the communities. Author’s translation.
 - ii Coronavirus: English newspaper says Chinese markets continue to sell bats and meat of domestic animals. Author’s translation.
 - iii Canine coronavirus, a disease that worries pet owners. Author’s translation.
 - iv the poor skinny dog gets all the fleas.. Author’s translation.