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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Portrayals of Endangered Species in Advertising: Exercising Intertextuality to Question the Anthropocentric Lens

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines recent advertisements used by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to raise awareness about the predicament of endangered, vulnerable, and threatened species. By engaging in a critical discourse analysis of a selection of advertisements, this study demonstrates how the WWF uses intertextuality as a discourse strategy to articulate its message and objectives. In this paper, I argue that by engaging in the juxtaposition of various paratexts (“layers of meaning”), the WWF produces a narrative which reveals an anthropocentric lens through which we view the world. The advertisements are found to resort to paratexts of anthropomorphism with the intent of extending the bounds of personhood to non-human animal species. In closing, I maintain that intertextuality is employed not only to question the dominant human-centric paradigm, but serve the heuristic function of encouraging a more empathetic identification with the animals in question and the creation of a more holistic worldview.

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Introduction

The earth is now thought to be inhabited by around 1 trillion known species, each with its own unique phylogenetic features (Pappas, 2016). Despite this overwhelming diversity, representations of these species are often monolithic, taking on similar human-like forms, be they animals, moving plants, technological devices or even spiritual deities. For instance, the Greek philosopher Xenophanes noted that Greek Gods often were ivory-skinned and blue-eyed, while African Gods were invariably of darker skin tones (Leshner, 1992). The Ancient Egyptians also had a proclivity for animal–human fusion in depictions of their native deities (Bookchin, 1982). The tendency to anthropomorphize, or project human features onto non-humans, has been philosophized to be due to the intrinsic need of humans to perceive all other beings as having human characteristics (Hume, 1957), though this inclination may vary in intensity depending on the context (Waytz, Cacioppo, & Epley, 2010). The propensity to anthropomorphize those who neither share the human experience, the human form, or the human language, has become such an inevitable part of our lives that we rarely notice its presence. With the above in mind, this paper examines the techniques through which the anthropomorphic lens is employed in the context of environmental advertisements. In particular, I deconstruct the representation of the human/animal dichotomy in advertisements published by agencies whose mandate it is to protect endangered, vulnerable, and threatened species.

Advertising was chosen as the focus of our analysis considering it is of the most significant sites of meaning construction (Hendry, 2010). It not only communicates messages, but can trigger conceptions about the symbolic importance of the advertised product. If used effectively, advertisements

can encourage self-reflection or imagination of an alternative future state (Pateman, 1989). Since the 1980s, advertising has been used to “market” environmental issues (Corbett, 2002), from climate change, recycling, wildlife protection, and ecological issues such as land conservation and energy consumption. It is essential in simplifying the complexities of the subject matter and in shaping the attitudes and behaviour of the public on environmental issues (O’Keefe & Shepard, 2002).

Although many scholars have studied environmental advertising at a broader level (Corbett, 2006; Easterling, Kenworthy, & Nemzoff, 1996; Hope, 2002; Kilbourne, 1995; Meister, 1997; Olsen, 2002; Zinkhan & Carlson, 1995), few have explicitly considered the use of anthropomorphism as it concerns endangered and threatened species. The majority provide only a general descriptive analysis of the symbolism of animals in advertising (e.g. Spears, Mowen, & Chakraborty, 1996) or focus on brand engagement as it relates to animals in advertising (e.g. Braunwart, 2015). Findings from these studies suggest that anthropomorphic representations of animals have a positive effect on brand trust (e.g. Folse, Netemeyer, & Burton, 2012), enhance memorability (e.g. Pierce, 2002) and increase knowledge of the product (e.g. Lin & Wang, 2012). There has also been a noticeable emphasis in the literature on the fallacious essence of anthropomorphism, which has diverted attention away from the creation of a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of anthropomorphism and its psychological impacts.

As such, this paper proposes a novel way of conceptualizing and interpreting representations of animals in environmental advertising. By engaging in a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of a selection of advertisements published by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), I analyse the articulation of meaning around the topic of endangered, vulnerable and threatened species. This paper demonstrates how WWF realizes inferential reproduction through the extension of personhood to non-human animal species and through the placement of animals on the same conceptual ground as humans. It is argued that the manner in which this is operationalized, namely the employment of intertextuality through the juxtaposition of various paratexts (“layers of meaning”), attempts to achieve a more emphatic identification with the non-human animals which form the subject of the advertisement. Therefore, the anthropomorphization goes beyond a symbolic allowance to serve a heuristic function, whereby animals become agents of social connection towards the creation of a more holistic worldview.

WWF was chosen for being one of the world’s leading non-profit organizations in the field of wildlife conservation and the protection of endangered species and restoration of their habitats. WWF works in over 100 countries and boasts over one million members in the United States and around five million around the world. Aside from developing strategic partnerships and the dissemination of knowledge, fundraising forms a significant part of WWF’s work, with 92% of donations directly benefiting conservation efforts (WWF, 2016).

The concept of anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism, a word derived from the Greek words “anthropos” (human) and “morph” (form), is defined as the imbuement of non-human agents with human-like intentions, behaviour, and characteristics (Guthrie, 1995; Waytz et al., 2010). The term primarily refers to a psychological phenomenon or way of thinking, that is the *perception* of a non-human agent as having human characteristics, for instance seeing faces in the clouds (Waytz et al., 2010). Though traditionally anthropomorphism has been employed to refer to the overestimation or inaccurate attribution of uniquely human characteristics (Guthrie, 1997), be they physical, emotional, or mental aspects (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007), in practice it is subject to individual interpretations of what qualifies as being human-like (Taylor, 2011) and can vary in intensity (Root-Bernstein, Douglas, Smith, & Verrisimo, 2013).

The tendency to anthropomorphize is said to result from three basic human needs: to bring non-human agents into our realm of understanding (Guthrie, 1995), through the prediction and manipulation of their behaviour (Beer, 1980); to create and sustain relational connections (Waytz et al.,

2010); and to sense belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). While the definition of anthropomorphism encompasses the attribution of human features to non-living objects, such as objects, religious agents, or nature (Kuhn, Brick, Müller, & Gallinat, 2014), animals have without a doubt been the most frequent target of these anthropomorphic attributions (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005; Wilson, 1984).

The anthropocentric lens through which we view society and our human dominance in the biosphere have been well documented (e.g. Catton & Dunlap, 1980; Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). When the environmental movement developed most strongly in the second part of the nineteenth century, it embodied two complementary perspectives put forth by each of John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, that of preservation and conservation (Brulle, 2000). Preservation fixated on the necessity of protecting natural parts of the world, seen as separate from human society and of immense intrinsic value. Conservation was concerned with ensuring the sustainable use of nature as a resource by incoming generations. Both these discourses were arguably centred around the notion of domination of humans over nature and other creatures, an anthropocentric view of life.

However, in this day and age, the notion of anthropocentrism appears to be esteemed mainly because of convention rather than serious reflection (Manson, 2000), with some deeming it an unscientific and sentimental method of representation (Horak, 2006; Porter, 2006). Furthermore, although there appears to be a growing interest on the topic of anthropomorphic depictions in advertising (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011; Gelbrich, Gäthke, & Westjohn, 2012), most research has focused on the fallacious nature of anthropomorphic depictions (Epley et al., 2007), with a corresponding dearth of literature on the motivations present when people, or entities, decide to anthropomorphize non-human targets, as well as little on viewer perceptions and attitudes towards these portrayals. Considering the above, additional research is needed to develop a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of anthropomorphism and its use in the environmental sphere. In what follows, I discuss some of the strategies used by advertisers when promoting a specific cause or product, be it environmental, wildlife-related, or otherwise, with a primary focus on the topic of intertextuality.

Intertextuality and the making of meaning

Naturally, the purpose with which any advertisement is designed is to promote a specific cause or to sell products (Pateman, 1989). To have the public identify and recall messages being sent, advertisers usually deploy different strategies, of which intertextuality has become increasingly popular. It also appears to have found acceptance in numerous disciplines, specifically in cultural studies, media studies, and rhetoric.

Modern theories about intertextuality began with the writings of Bakhtin (1986), but the word was first used when Kristeva (1977/1980) coined it when describing Bakhtin's work. Bakhtin was interested in the concept of the utterance, or a "word," as a complete and free-standing unit of speech (1935/1981, 1986). Words are not necessarily always complete however, and the context, such as that of cultural and historical forces, can completely alter the meaning of the word. An utterance represents the author's thought, but is an amalgam of meanings pulled from diverse locations at once. In essence, "every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' ... and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 1935/1981, p. 272). The meaning of this is simply that an utterance cannot exist without other utterances. Fairclough (1992) similarly states that all texts are inherently intertextual and made up of other texts.

Paratexts, synergy, and memorability

As such, intertextuality is traditionally defined as the phenomenon of interweaving "texts" with each other, so they absorb and transform each other, constantly shifting and exposing a network of references and socio-cultural contexts (Schmitt, 2013). It typically occurs when "expressions recur in different texts and so provide a link between them" (Verdonk, 2002, p. 62). The texts are not a

line of words designed to state a singular theological meaning, but synergistically create a collectively produced meaning not found in any of the individual parts or “paratexts” (Gray, 2010). An example of intertextuality would be the iconic Absolut Vodka advertisements, where the viewer must search to identify the bottle through a web of juxtaposed sub-texts and interwoven cultural locations. For instance, the “Absolut Warhol” is a painting of a bottle in Warhol’s artistic style, while “Absolut Centerfold” shows a bottle presented like a Playmate in an issue of Playboy magazine.

Intertextuality as a discourse strategy is a highly effective method of articulating messages primarily because of its emotional effect on the consumer. The consumer feels he/she has accomplished an intellectual chore by recognizing the textual layers present. Once the consumer recognizes the intertextual message, he/she receives the satisfaction of recognizing the “allusion” (Verdonk, 2002, p. 5). Additionally, intertextuality is a way of placing somewhat controversial topics in novel and less contentious contexts, enhancing acceptability and possibility of later recall with repeated exposure to the same context (Nemčoková, 2014).

Another advantage chronicled in the literature is that advertisements which employ intertextuality are often considered more creative and humorous, exciting the blasé viewer, who sees through (and often resists) conventional advertising techniques (Kuppens, 2009). The intertextual references allow the viewer to become a co-creator of the message, as they participate simultaneously in both producing and interpreting the text. By achieving this, the advertisement fills the viewer’s mental space with his own associations and enhances the memorability of the product (Geeraerts & Cuyckens, 2007).

Intertextuality in multi-media

Tannenbaum and Goldstein (2005) argue that the concept of intertextuality put forward by Kristeva (1977/1980) extends beyond written texts to include multi-media texts such as videos and images, and this is where I concentrate my analysis. As illustrated by media scholar Fiske (1987), in the media-saturated culture in which we live, symbols are often adopted to illustrate larger concepts or ideas. For example, Davission and Booth (2010) illustrate how Pepsi’s 2009 advertising campaign uses a red, blue and white logo as an intertextual reference to former President Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign. They argue that the placement of the advertisement within this greater scheme explains the seemingly immediate adoption of the concepts, placing the audience in a position where they are already comfortable or which forms part of “the common sense of a society” (Fiske, 1987, p. 6). Tannenbaum and Goldstein (2005) explain this phenomenon aptly, stating that images are “structured, created, and interpreted vis-à-vis various influences affecting authors and their audiences, as well as their prior knowledge of other texts, cultural norms, and other connotations” (p. 126).

In consideration of the above, this study explores WWF’s use of intertextuality to bring to question the human-centric paradigm within which we live. It achieves this primarily by creating opportunities for analysis that are not readily apparent when the individual paratext is considered, thereby allowing for a new paradigm of conception to take place. The juxtaposition of suburban, biophilic, and anthropomorphist paratexts succeeds in extending personhood and its attendant rights to threatened and endangered animals. Specifically, I illustrate how the viewer is challenged to broaden his/her anthropocentric lens and interpret animals as part and parcel of human’s social society. The portrayal functions to illuminate aspects of the animal’s experience and to advocate a more holistic perspective towards the natural environment.

Method

The sample used for analysis includes a corpus of 10 printed and one video advertisement. The selection was restricted to advertisements addressing issues related to endangered, vulnerable, and threatened animals and which contained textual cues reflecting the employment of intertextuality. The

advertisements were found on the website adsoftheworld.com, which contains an inventory of all advertisements published by WWF, including details of the date of publication and credits for the advertisement. The chosen advertisements are not representative of all WWF advertisements, nor are they intended to be.

The study employs Huckin's (1997) approach to CDA, an interdisciplinary approach which accounts for visual representations, as well as written text. It is useful for examining advertisements (Budinsky & Bryan, 2013), particularly TV advertisements, as it enables a multimodal form of CDA for a combination of text, image, and sound in combination. It was also selected for its ability to deconstruct mechanisms of hegemony and relations of power in political discourse, as CDA is one of the most valuable methods of examining the dominating forces which form the hegemonic discourses around us (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997).

Huckin's approach espouses a two-stage process for analysis. First, he advocates observing the text from the perspective of a typical viewer through a cursory or surface reading. Second, the analyst should take a more critical look, raising questions about the text's construction and hidden paratexts. Huckin advises that the analyst identify the genre to understand how techniques used might assist the agenda of the producer. He goes on to specifically reference investigating foregrounding/backgrounding, omissions, presuppositions, and connotations, among other aspects.

Of note is that the literature describes two types of intertextuality, namely manifest and consecutive references. Manifest is usually explicit, marked in the form of quotations or citations, whereas consecutive requires the reader to exert effort to comprehend the meaning behind the text (Fairclough, 2001). As will be illustrated, the type of intertextual references characteristically used by WWF tend to be of the former (implicit or consecutive), there to be noticed (or not) by the viewer, though captions (manifest) references are minimally considered as well.

Tiger in suburbia

The WWF's, 2016 advertisement "Tiger in Suburbia" opens with a shot of a semi-detached red brick home in suburban Britain. These are one of the most common types of homes in modern Britain, for the average run of the mill family. The scene is somewhat endearing, with the sturdy Volkswagen parked outside and the tidily manicured garden. In the next shot, the viewer is positioned at the bottom of the staircase inside the house, and the camera moves slowly upwards to the second floor of the home. The stylistic use of the camera from a low angle in this manner invites the viewer to watch and take part in the scene, while also increasing the likelihood that the viewer will judge the scene positively (Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1992).

We then meet a Caucasian middle-class family of four, with the parents worriedly hovering over their two younger children, a boy and a girl, in the bedroom, looking down in concern. Till now, the banality of the scene being painted cannot be mistaken, with the nuclear family, made up of a breadwinner father, homemaker mother, and children living in domestic bliss. The family serves as a metonym for good and decent law-abiding citizens. In fact, the image of the happy household could easily be described as the "cereal packet image of a family," one frequently used in advertising (Haralambos, Herald, & Holborn, 2000). Such depictions are likely to inspire consumers to transfer the positive associations of the family (or non-commodity material) onto the commodity being sold (Delbaere et al., 2011). This allows for meanings to "glide over onto the product" (Fowles, 1996, p. 149), as occurs in the following scene of the video.

The viewer soon finds himself observing a 700-pound majestic tiger, lying in agony on the bed. The family is unfazed and matter of fact. Instead of receding in fear, they care for the tiger, which is suffering from a gushing wound on its arm caused by a poacher's snare. The juxtaposition of the wild tiger into a space where "nature" is absent augments the potential shock value of the scene. The tiger's incongruity with the setting cannot be mistaken: There is no faulting his awesome size in contrast to the compact walls of the home and the narrow bed on which he lounges. It is a stark reminder that the tiger does not belong in this tame scene in suburbia. In a statement released about the

advertisement, the creative director Jasper Shelbourne emphasized this point, “... we are bringing the audience much closer to the action ... executionally there is something uniquely engaging about a 700-pound tiger in a small bedroom in suburbia” (Jardine, 2016). Understanding the objectives of the linked but distinctive moments of production and consumption is useful in yielding and interpreting encoded messages in discourses such as this (Hall, 1980).

The subsequent scene shows the mother cleaning the tiger’s wounds. She squeezes a sponge in clean water, and the tiger winces and lets out a fierce growl. The daughter brings the tiger a hand-made “get well soon card,” with a doodle of a tiger playing in a field, and hearts and kisses adorning the picture. She places it carefully at his bedside. The mother then brings the tiger a vessel of water, and the viewer can see the tiger drinking from the shadow cast on the wall. Over the next few days, the daughter reads to him, the son watches over him during the day, and the father sleeps by his side at night. One morning, the tiger appears well enough to leave, and he yawns before calmly walking out the bedroom, down the stairs and out of the house. The scar can still be seen, but it appears to have healed. Despite his beastly nature, he does not leave any destruction in his wake and walks purposefully down to his destination.

It is important to note that the symbolism of the wild animal in this context is not an endorsement of domestication, as the tiger later returns to its own habitat, but more likely a commendation of biophilia, inspiring an understanding of animals as part of human’s social society (a concept introduced by Wilson, 1984). This is a critical distinction. As humans have moved farther away from their food systems and extinctions have risen due to degradation and loss of natural habitats, animals have paid a heavy price as the subjects of an intensely consumeristic society. On the other hand, pet owners spent in excess of \$60 billion on their pets in the past year alone (Castillo, 2015), while a blind eye is turned towards non-domesticated animals.

In fact, I posit that the treatment of the tiger by the family in the advertisement, tending to it as one would a sick family member, as well as the behaviour of the tiger himself, indicates explicit texts of anthropomorphism, when one ascribes human traits, emotions, and behaviours to the tiger, a non-human entity (Epley et al., 2007; Waytz et al., 2010). This deliberate use of anthropomorphist subtexts is in contrast to what one finds in the literature, where anthropomorphism is commonly depicted as being due to mistaken representations or over-generalized errors (Guthrie, 1995). The manner in which the tiger walks out of the house echoes this claim. He treads quietly and cautiously, as if familiar with his surroundings, and aside from knocking down a shoe, is careful not to make any disturbance. This portrayal highlights the human-like behavioural features of the tiger.

Moreover, the treatment of the tiger as a pet or surrogate child by the family, and therefore an object of caregiving, renders a portrayal of the animal as worthy of moral care and consideration. When the kitchen opens up magically into its natural habitat, a vivid green jungle, anthropomorphic themes are evident as the tiger pauses and decides to look back, acknowledging what the family has done for him and thanking them with a nod. The young girl waves goodbye as tears stream down her face.

The advertisement offers an alternate relational approach to the world in which humans are not the central actors on the stage, and where animals are not separate from the human experience. The animals are shown to be conscious beings, who experience suffering and pleasure, and have desires and memories too. Consequently, I argue that the advertisement’s juxtaposition of suburban gentility, biophilic, and anthropomorphist paratexts is not only a use of intertextuality to extend personhood to non-human animals, but is also strategically designed to encourage an understanding of animals as being worthy of affection owing to their place in human society. The selection of anthropomorphism as a rhetorical device can tap into deeply held human cognitive biases (Delbaere et al., 2011), and create a feeling of familiarity (Guthrie, 1995). The deployment of anthropomorphism in this context is designed to spur a more intimate identification with the animal by portraying his perspective and internalizing his view of the surroundings through an alignment of interests and motives (in accordance with Burke’s (1969) definition). Decreasing the psychological distance the

reader might have from the tiger encourages a shift from the position of a detached spectator to that of a highly involved stakeholder in the tiger's well-being.

The video ends with the words "They need you" typed in white on a black background, harping on the natural human instinct for social connection with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Before the advertisement concludes, it pleads "Give £5 a month and become a Tiger Protector." Considering Burke's (1969) widely acclaimed assertion that speakers must be able to identify with their audience in order to gain influence, this human-like depiction of the tiger could arguably be effective at garnering engagement (and potentially financial support) from the viewer. More importantly, it promotes an ecocentric perspective where humans and other species are equally valuable members of the Earth's community.

Animals in mourning, the car workshop, and the fingered rhinoceros

At first glance, each of Figures 1–3 shows an endangered species in its natural habitat. The polar bear is shown with its head above water in the icy blue water of the Arctic, the lion is shown in close up, huddled over, with the lens focusing primarily on the upper body without any identifiable background, and the chimpanzee appears surrounded by green grass in an open woodland or savannah. On its face, the biophysical spatial environments pictured with the animal at the centre of the scene, have limited meaning in that they do not engage the viewer with any sort of narrative. However, the posture of the animal combined with the imbedding of human dispositions onto the endangered species, allow for the advertisement to become coded with meanings through intertextual relationships.

Each animal covers its face with its hands and bows down, as if in disbelief or sorrow, and in an attempt to mirror the human schema (Miesler, Landwehr, McGill, & Herrmann, 2011). The unexpectedness of the animal's posture is noteworthy. Visual personification by metaphorically



Figure 1. What on earth are we doing to our planet? (June 2013).



Figure 2. What on earth are we doing to our planet? (June 2013).



Figure 3. What on earth are we doing to our planet? (June 2013).

presenting the animal as engaged in human-like behaviour encourages the retrieve of anthropomorphic themes. In fact, it is only through the anthropomorphizing of the wild animal in this manner that the image accrues further meaning and becomes readable. Intertextuality here becomes a precondition for the intelligibility of the text and accords it a secondary meaning beyond its literal interpretation (Hatim, 1997).

The text to the side of the picture states “What on earth are we doing to our planet?”, an explanatory text which anchors the meaning presented. The informal nature and low degree of technicality of the language attempts to attract audiences from varying backgrounds on the issues being discussed. The use of the paratexts together in this fashion allows for a consideration of both the animal’s predicament (Guthrie, 1995) and its mental state (developmental psychologists call the ability to ascertain the mental state of others as “the theory of the mind”) (Baron-Cohen, 1992).

The perceived physiological and psychological similarity to humans achieved by the anthropomorphic depiction, as well as the closeness of the shot, attempt to increase the viewer’s involvement with the visual representation (Brown, 2010). The symbolic dynamics here is a levelling of the playing field so as to include these animals within the bounds of “personhood.” In a similar manner, Figure 4 depicts a young infant bent over on a large platter (in place of a roast turkey), in what appears to be a thanksgiving spread, complete with plates, a pumpkin, and glasses of wine. In what could be termed reverse anthropomorphism, such images likewise permit the animal species into a domain traditionally reserved only for humans, thereby aiming to heighten the viewer’s emotional and cognitive connections with such animals.

Although one cannot speak as to the intent of the advertisement, I argue that these intertextual techniques bring to question the human-centric paradigm within which we live, an inherited Aristotelian legacy which states that animals do not have souls. The Judeo-Christian belief that animals lack reason and are on earth for human benefit alone is another theme which echoed all the way into the twentieth century (Taylor, 2009). Such thinking could be said to be behind the underlying tension in the portrayal of animals as fundamentally disconnected from humans.

An examination of our modern day urban environment indicates that this dichotomy continues to be the norm (Cronan, 1995; Porter, 2006), a circumstance which is evident when comparing our current lifestyle to the highly ecological existence of our hunter-gatherer ancestors, who were more intimately associated with nature and other species (Bekoff & Bexell, 2010; Haraway, 2008). The anthropomorphizing of animals in this fashion not only allows for the attribution of human characteristics to animals, but also encourages a new paradigm of conception to take place by making various anomalies or “holes” apparent (Kuhn, 1962).

The “Extinction can’t be fixed” advertisements (Figures 5–7) introduce an intertextual reference where the product (i.e. the rhinoceros, tiger and polar bear) is placed in a novel, somewhat controversial context. The camera is hovering directly over the scene, namely that of a garage servicing and repair workshop. Although it seems that the animal has been superimposed onto the scene, one could argue that it is the scene which overwhelms the animal. The details include a busy picture, from welding machines, automotive body-working tools, spare tyres, and utensils (such as wrenches, ratchets, drills, spanners, circlip pliers, and hammers), all strewn across the floor. In each of the advertisements, there are one or more technicians in overalls, heavy protective shoes, and plastic gloves, at the side of the animal, or underneath, servicing and maintaining the animal as if it were an automobile. There is no mistaking the characteristic dirt, grunginess, and greasy quality of the scene. Moreover, the image is imbued with a dreary greyness and overall granular effect.

When seen through an interpretive lens, the contrasting paratexts in the advertisement allow it to become saturated with symbolic meaning. In this scenario, the non-human animal species is rhetorically constituted as an extension of personhood, as a piece of technology resultant from human imagination and creativity. Given evidence that technology is often viewed as an “amplification or acceleration of existing human faculties” and “of functions originally performed by the unaided human organism” (Brey, 2000, p. 2), this appears a deliberate attempt to bring together two worlds which have been noticeably separated since the rise in technological developments in

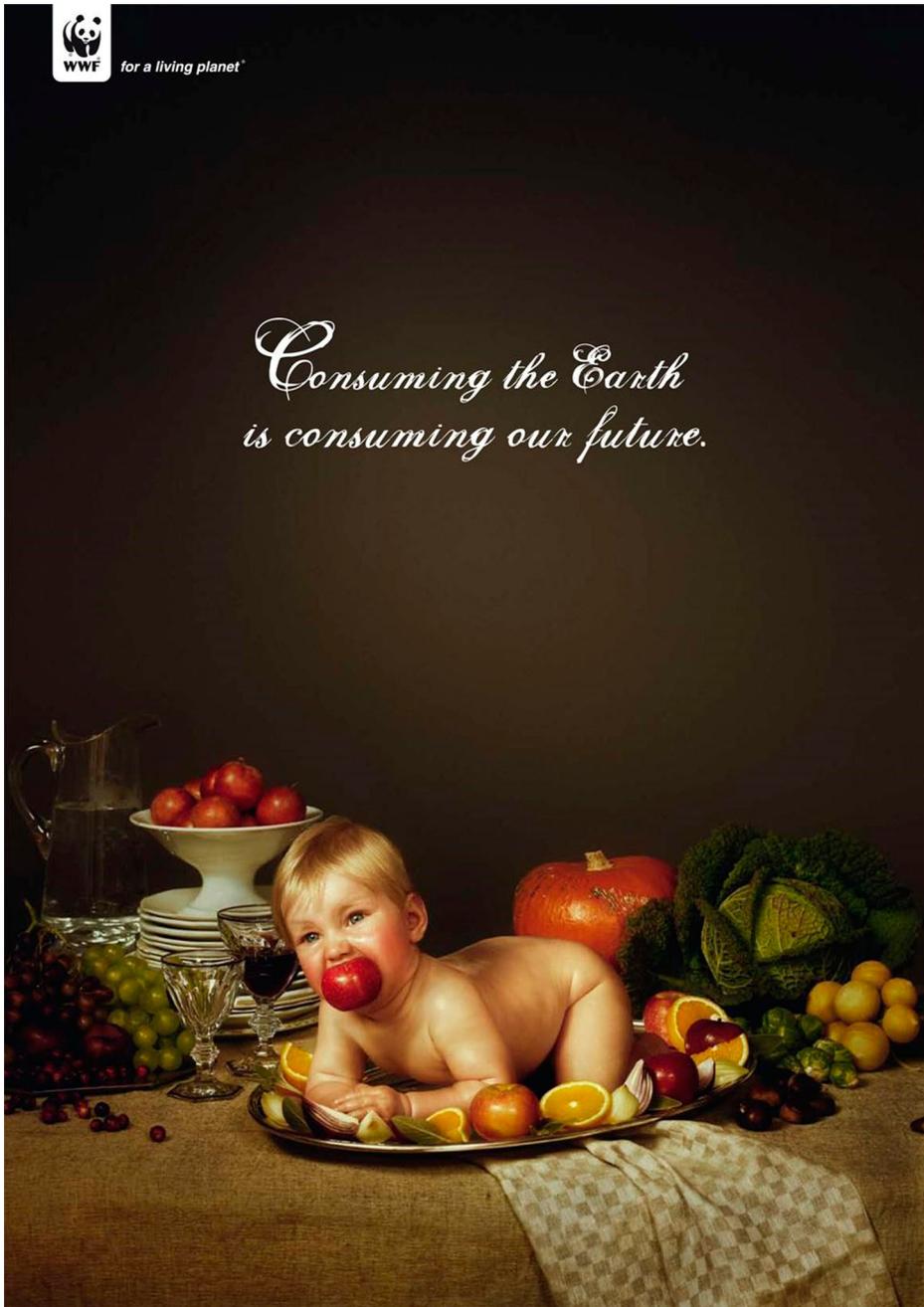


Figure 4. Consuming the earth is consuming our future (October 2008).

the late nineteenth century. Given that the construction of closed spaces such as houses, work spaces, and even vehicles means that for all intents and purposes, humans have remained predominantly separated from nature, the advertisement attempts to resolve this incongruity by joining these two realms together.

Figure 8 shows a large rhinoceros in the middle of an arid savanna, in what appears to be sub-Saharan Africa. However, two human hands have been jarringly juxtaposed onto the rhinoceros'



Figure 5. Extinction can't be fixed (August 2013).



Figure 6. Extinction can't be fixed (August 2013).

face, where its horns might typically be found. In a similar manner to the advertisements discussed previously, the absurdity of the image violates expectations. Bearing in mind that rhinoceroses are often perceived as being “strong” and “handsome” by consumers (Levy, 1985), this particular



Figure 7. Extinction can't be fixed (August 2013).



Figure 8. Rhinoceros with human hands (March 2013).

advertisement could be characterized as a schema-incongruent or deviant stimuli (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Pieters, Warlop, & Wedel, 2002). There is no doubt about the radical intertextual themes present in the image.

The advertisement confers an alternate way of imagining rhinoceros' horns, squarely placing the non-human animal into the human category. This urges an evaluation of the scene based on that category of membership, in an attempt to arouse an empathic response from the viewer. The



Figure 9. You can help stop global warming (May 2007).

intended narrative is clarified by the tag line at the bottom of the advertisement, “Rhino horn is made up of exactly the same stuff as human fingernails. Still want some?”.

The “You can help stop global warming” advertisements (Figures 9 and 10) respectively depict a polar bear and a seal in the context of homelessness. Figure 9 shows a polar bear sitting despondently in an unmistakably anthropomorphic pose, in a graffiti-filled alleyway with his back against a wall. Figure 10 shows a seal laying by the side of the road on a wooden bench, huddled over in the frosty weather, with only an old newspaper in place of a blanket for warmth. Not only do such

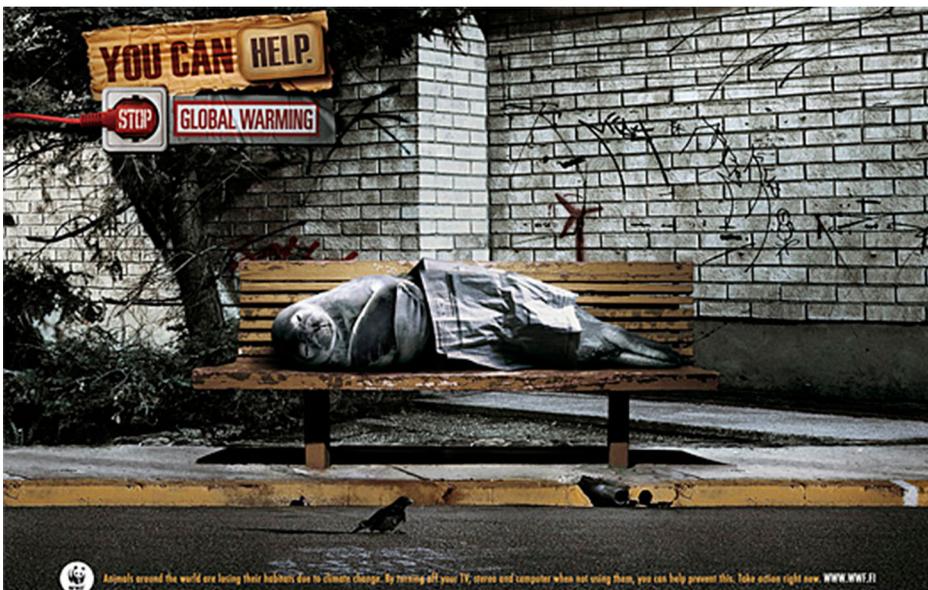


Figure 10. You can help stop global warming (May 2007).

advertisements paint animals in a state of suffering and distress, they carry with them the stigma and the marginalization associated with homelessness in the human world and alienation from the rest of society (Belcher & Deforge, 2012). The advertisement seems to suggest that the homelessness of the creature in question, endangered as a result of the large-scale destruction of its habitat, is not unlike the homelessness experienced by the human species, detached and forgotten by society.

Given the larger antecedent social and economic forces which are known to cause homelessness (such as limited housing, unemployment, and breakdown of family kinships), the portrayal arguably brings to light some of the wide-ranging issues surrounding the causes of animal species losing their habitats, as well as aims to create a more empathetic identification with the animals in question, through an emphasis on shared features and experiences (Milton, 2005; Lorimer, 2006).

Overall, these advertisements reflect a dialectic about how we define what it means to be human and the dominant paradigm within which we view ourselves, other species, and the diverse ecosystems which support our existence. Although the strength of the anthropomorphic inferences differs in each context, the aim is to encourage a normalization of the discourse surrounding the position of animals in the sphere of human society. The result is an expanding of our anthropocentric lens by inviting a resolution of the incongruity and a portrayal of animals as part and parcel of human society.

Conclusion

Each of the advertisements addressed is an overt response to the dominant paradigm of anthropomorphism, inciting a questioning of our perpetuating human-centric world view. In examining WWF's usage of intertextuality as a discourse strategy to extend the bounds of "personhood," this research sheds light on the employment of anthropomorphism with the aim of shifting the recipient from the position of a detached spectator to one in which he/she is a stakeholder highly concerned for the animals' well-being.

Increasingly, our connections with animals occur at a remove, mediated by books, ecological reports, cartoons, zoos, and museum cases, allowing us to effectively erase animals from our consciousness (Stibbe, 2012). The advertisements discussed shift these boundaries by including exotic species in scenes which we as humans are all intimately familiar, that of the home in the suburbs, the car workshop, the dark alleyway, the thanksgiving dinner table, or through the embodiment of the physical or emotional characteristics of humans in non-human species. In fact, through the juxtaposition of various paratexts, the advertisements go a step further in illustrating the nonsensicalness of the human/animal distinction and attempting to transform our sense of connectivity towards other species and life systems.

In proposing a novel way of presenting animals in wildlife conservation advertisements, I illustrate how a post-humanist perspective can present an inclusive model of personhood which includes endangered, vulnerable, and threatened species. Such portrayals offer alternate perceptions of self and of animals as an integral part of human's social society for which concern is warranted and expected. These tactics not only strengthen memorability and chance of potential recall (as demonstrated by Kuppens, 2009), as well as likelihood of viewing animals in a positive light (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007), but I argue, go beyond a symbolic purpose to serve the heuristic function of encouraging the viewer to identify empathetically with the causes being promoted and advocate a more eco-centric and relational human perspective towards the natural environment. Such a paradigmatic shift in perspectives promises a consilient rendering of humanity in which humans and non-human species share equal roles in evolutionary endurance within the biosphere. The problematization of the human-animal distinction in its capacity to provide moral guidance on the treatment of animals has important implications for animal welfare, issues of conservation, and on broader efforts to resolve the exigencies facing endangered species and the ecological systems that support life.

As this is not a media effects study, we cannot validate the causative effects of anthropomorphic paratexts on various audiences. Additional research is required on the effects of anthropomorphism

in influencing viewer perceptions and attitudes, particularly considering its widespread use by environmental advocacy organizations such as the WWF. Furthermore, although there is evidence that governments portion a higher share of conservation funds to species that are more phylogenetically similar to humans (Martín-Fores, Martín-Lopez, & Montes, 2013), to date, there is little evidence on whether the same holds true of the average citizen or consumer in terms of their personal funds. This study points to the ongoing struggle in the realm of environmental conservation efforts to produce effective discourse or “means of persuasion” to incite one to act on behalf of “others,” be they human or non-human.

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