

PUPPIES

call for papers for a monographic issue of di E/C,
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The mediatised scenario, fragmented as it is into the myriads of *deliverers* arranged by technology, converges on some central issues that are revealed in the daily practice of self-branding, of circulation - more or less *viral* - of *posts* and *memes* spread through the social networks. Digital conversations are, in fact, part of a broader ideological universe which lives as intermedial *semiosphere* and constitutes an inextricable polyphony which merges spontaneity and cultural industry, individual and collective identities, grand and ordinary narratives.

These issues keep some common features. They call into question the interlocutors in their broadest anthropological dimension, as subjectivities contended in their shape, in their own statute of existence. It is the case of the man-animal relationship which, in recent times, has become a sensitive topic and has been shown off as a basic sign of distinction in the socialization practices: being or not vegetarian or animal rights' defender are positions capable of affecting the entire way of thinking about themselves and the others in relation to the world. And it is the form of the *relata* at the core of the dispute. What is a subject? And what an object? Where does life begin and when does it end? Who is the other? What treatment should he/she/it be granted? How to think life together in the great *collective* of the world? These evoked disputes demand subjects to find albeit a provisional response.

This sphere, so sensitive and essential, may be investigated with the aim of describing its actual shapes, working on its ideological and argumentative frameworks, on the *narratives* that it produces. Textual and narrative semiotic analysis may reveal formidable tools to achieve such a goal. The purpose of this effort is, at first, to describe and analyse the forms, often unexpected, which these proper "definition conflicts" may assume; therefore, to bring to light its deepest dimension and general anthropological impact, despite the possible marginality of the texts on focus. In particular, the theme of the *puppies* lays itself to be investigated in such a frame. The general term of *puppy* refers to the little ones of each animal species, humans included. This broad semantic class, if properly explored, may lead to unexpected convergences: the advertising of pet food looks like, curiously, to that aimed at the children, although they can be traced to really distant trade and commodity sectors. Reconstructing the deep semantic universe linking these universes despite their apparent irreducibility can be useful to describe a certain rhetoric (not only linguistic but also, for instance, visual) with obvious results in terms marketing and commercial communication. But, at a later place, it may come out as the basis for the description of a wider phenomenon of re-articulation of the relationship between man and animals, which is taking place in these years.

This is why we look for proposals of papers on the theme of the *puppies* along the following lines of research:

Social Networks and practices of relation over the Net

Memes, Facebook streams, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp groups, public pages, open and closed clusters, interest specific communities: the range of circumstances for interacting on social networks with reference to the *puppies* is almost unlimited. How do affiliations emerge with respect to this topic? How do online communities dedicated to this subject work? What are the power dynamics, which determine them? What are the terms of the conflicts that invest them? And how are these same conflicts resolved? What are the characteristics of the leaders who head these communities? How does the affiliation to them affect other identities and other spheres?

Food. The food of *puppies* is very peculiar. Food packaging industry gives comparable treatments to packs targeted to both human and non-human ones. But it's food itself, which normally undergoes a comparable treatment: deconstruction, fragmentation, homogenization and so on.

How are these procedures involved in the construction of subjectivity? And how do they presuppose a certain model of family and / or group structure up to be properly used?

Fiction

Tv programs and movies, serial narratives and novels, fairy tales, cartoons and graphic novels: the world of *puppies* is the protagonist of stories, which we like to consider as *thought experiments*, that is to say original solutions to general problems, capable of substantiating a mythical horizon pending conciliation. Peppa Pig, Tom & Jerry, Donald Duck, but also - as for the *puppies* properly human - *Hungry Hearts* (2014) *3 Men and a Baby* (1987), *Look Who's Talking Now!* (1993), are just a few of the countless examples of fiction on such theme, susceptible of analysis.

Advertising

Advertising targeted to childhood is probably the one that has been less affected by the momentous changes that the sector has been experiencing with the rise of the social media. Thematic tv programs for the early childhood incessantly air commercials, as well as generalist networks do during the time of programming dedicated to the segment of the youngest ones. These videos, often, feature animals and children together. Stands next to this panorama, advertising relating to products aimed at the rest of the *puppies*: animal feed, medication for parasites etc... Even here, the horizon of humans and animals shows several similarities: cats treated like children, children playing with their pets and so on.

Products

Clothes, accessories, tools: the world of objects related to the theme of *puppies*, humans or animals, is overflowing. The discourse about the meaning and the role of these objects proliferates over the media, including magazines and general advertising, online discussions and events. On the other hand, these objects may be queried as standalone significant configurations, perhaps, in relation to the story which media construct over them: how does a nursing bottle work? What are its constituent parts? How are objects “for puppies” being communicated commercially and, more generally, anthropologically? What are the subjectivities called into question by these objects? What characteristics do they have? How do they relate?

Spaces and events

Schools, gyms, playgrounds, eateries and entertainment venues are places that see the cohabitation and coexistence of the *puppies*: these spaces work governing the relation between humans and animals, modulating the regime of permission and prohibition. The comparison of the human and animal horizons in stores dedicated to the world of early childhood and in stores for pet care is yet interesting. Even the world of events devoted to the *puppies* varies: trade shows, competitions, dedicated days and sporting occasions, are all events that involve both children and animals.

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Evaluation of abstracts by the editors and anonymous referees: June 15, 2016

Deadline for submission of final papers (maximum 20 pages + any images): July 31, 2016

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Send the abstract with your name and affiliation to:

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