

# The Translation of Nonhuman Animals into Commercial Products: A Postcolonial Critique of Dairy Commercials

**İnsan Olmayan Hayvanların Ticari Ürünlere Çevirisi: Süt Reklamlarının Postkolonyal Eleştirisi**

Research/Araştırma

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore how milk is translated into a product for human consumption. In this study, translation works as a metaphor that is used for carving up an alternative reality. The metaphor of translation is informed by postcolonial translation studies, in particular the view in which translation is seen as “a channel of colonization”. For this purpose, three dairy commercials are selected and a form of multimodal thematic analysis with a critical framework has been employed in order to discover the themes used in milk commercials. These themes are interpreted taking into account how translation is conceptualized by postcolonial approaches. The analysis demonstrates that colonial subjects and animals have many commonalities. Translation functioned for the colonizer as a force to assist in the silencing of the Other, to remove agency, to distort representations, to fabricate volunteer victims, to create familiar subjects, and to impose Western reason-based thought. Similarly, dairy commercials ‘translate’ cows so that they are silenced, their agencies are either removed or used in favor of the industry, the real lives of cows are obscured and their experiences are distorted, they are portrayed as being happily exploited, and they are reduced to subordinate creatures in relation to Western white, male subjects. Translation, in this study, demonstrates the power it yields in dominating others. Yet, translation can also bridge gaps, and foster nonexploitative relationships between humans and nonhuman animals.

**Keywords:** translation metaphor, nonhuman animals, postcolonialism, dairy commercials

## ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı, sütün insan tüketimi için bir ürüne nasıl dönüştürüldüğünü araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmada çeviri, alternatif bir gerçeklik oluşturmak için kullanılan bir metafor olarak görülmektedir. Çeviri metaforu, postkolonyal çeviri çalışmaları, özellikle de çevirinin “sömürgeleştirme aracı” olarak görüldüğü bakış açısından dayanak almaktadır. Bu amaçla üç adet süt ve süt ürünü reklamı seçilmiş ve süt reklamlarında kullanılan temaları incelemek için eleştirel kavramlar çerçevesinde multimodal tematik analiz kullanılmıştır. Bu temalar, postkolonyal yaklaşımlarda çevirinin nasıl işlev gördüğü dikkate alınarak yorumlanmıştır. Analiz, sömürülen halkların ve insan olmayan hayvanların birçok ortak yönü olduğunu göstermektedir. Çeviri, sömürge tarihinde Öteki'nin susturulmasına, failliğin silinmesi, temsillerin çarpıtılması, gönüllü kurbanların üretilmesi, tanıdık özneler yaratılması ve Batılı akla dayalı düşüncenin empoze edilmesine yardımcı olmuştur. Benzer şekilde, süt reklamları da inekleri ‘çevirir’. Böylece inekler susturulur, faillikleri ya ortadan kaldırılır ya da endüstri lehine kullanılır, ineklerin gerçek yaşamları gizlenir ve deneyimleri çarpıtılır, inekler sömürülmekten mutluymuş gibi gösterilir ve Batılı beyaz erkek öznenin karşısında madun yaratıklara indirgenirler. Bu çalışmada çevirinin başkalarına hükmetme konusundaki aracı rolü ortaya konulmaktadır. Çeviri, öte yandan, insan ve insan olmayan hayvanlar arasında köprüler de kurabilir ve sömürüye dayanmayan ilişkileri besleyebilir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** çeviri metaforu, insan olmayan hayvanlar, postkolonyalizm, süt reklamları

## 1. Introduction

Milk is the nurturing liquid secreted by female mammalian species which provides nutrition, hydration, and affection (Gaard, 2013). Nonhuman milk consumed by many around the world cannot simply be seen as an aliment. Milk is a cultural product that reflects its host society and echoes attitudes toward nature, human body, and technology (Valenze, 2011, p. 5). The meanings bestowed on milk have no stable core and change depending on time and place (Gaard, 2013). Yet, for the globalized world, milk has been a marker of profit-driven modern food regimes of Western origin (Valenze, 2011, pp. 5-6). As commercial milk is obtained from female animals, mostly cows and sheep, who are subjected to inherently violent practices, the meanings of milk multiply further, calling for a scholarly inquiry. Thus, not surprisingly, the production and consumption of milk have been taken up by critical animal scholars who have investigated animal oppression and exploitation in the dairy industry as well as the entanglements of milk to other forms of oppression (i.e. Cole, 2017; Chagani, 2016).

Advertising in capitalist societies such as ours works in concert with culture to encourage and legitimate the use of “animal products” (Cole, 2017). Milk is represented in advertisements as a natural source for consumption that has many health benefits.

This discourse is woven in such a way to portray cows as servants to human interests. Thus, Merskin fittingly states that “the power to re-present another species is an act of domination” (Merskin 2016, p. 11).

Being aware of this exploitative relationship, this paper aims at exploring how milk is translated into a product for human consumption. Here, translation works as a metaphor that is used for carving up an alternative reality. Translation seen from a broader perspective can move beyond a simple source-target text conversion and can be employed as a useful analogy that could open up discussions of unequal power relations and the distortion of reality in favor of those in power.

The metaphor of translation is quite rich in its implications and can be useful in a plethora of contexts. In this study, the metaphor of translation is informed by postcolonial translation studies, in particular the view in which translation is seen as “a channel of colonization” (Robinson, 2016, p. 31). Marketing cow’s milk for human consumption undergoes a process of translation similar to the fabrication of colonial subjects. Knowledge pertinent to the colonized is manipulated in such a way to break down any collective resistance. In a similar vein, the reality behind the milk “production” is obscured. Although translation can also be used for the benefit of the nonhuman animal as is suggested in the field of ecotranslation (see Cronin, 2017; Bogenç Demirel & Marmara, 2020), in this paper translation is not seen as a way to establish connections. Rather, it is seen as a metaphorical concept that manipulates reality and facilitates the exploitation of nonhumans.

## **2. Methodology**

The dairy industry is a huge sector, thus for the purpose of this study the research material consisting of dairy commercials had to be narrowed down. Companies that have the biggest sales have been identified via the list of Turkey’s 500 biggest industrial companies formed by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry. *Torku* and *Sütaş* have the biggest share among food companies, which is why I have chosen their commercials. Not surprisingly their commercials air quite frequently on national television. The material was limited to the commercials that featured real or computer-generated cows in order to see how representations of cows played a role in the making of colonial discourses. Among the commercials I have identified on the video-sharing platform YouTube, three of them were selected for further analysis since they were dominantly based on cow images.

After the selection of the commercials, a form of multimodal thematic analysis which draws upon a combination of a thematic coding approach (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 461), visual semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), together with a critical framework has been employed in order to discover the themes used in milk commercials. The commercials were analyzed in detail by giving codes to meaningful textual and visual units. These codes were then grouped under themes. The themes that were created through multimodal analysis were then interpreted within a larger framework, consisting of commonalities between colonial subjects and animals. I have constituted these commonalities through a literature review of postcolonial translation

theories and critical animal theories which is elaborated on in the next section. These commonalities are briefly silencing of the Other, removing agency, distorted representations, fabrication of volunteer victims, creation of familiar subjects, and the imposition of Western reason-based thought.

Critical approaches are suited to the objectives of this paper since they hold that texts are ideological in that they promote certain viewpoints and make them appear common sense (Machin & Mayr, 2012; van Dijk, 1993). I plan to work on the implicit meanings and hidden agendas which guide the production of dairy commercial discourses. Since meaning in a text can both be assigned to the words and the visuals, a multimodal approach expands our research toolkit to allow for the scrutiny of visual features.

My research questions for this study are: What are the dominant themes used in these commercials which translate nonhuman milk into a commercial product? What are the commonalities employed in these commercials between the colonial subject and animals in terms of postcolonial approaches? How are human/nonhuman power relations played out in the commercials? How are human/nonhuman actors represented? My point of view in investigating these points is informed by animal liberationist, postcolonial ecofeminist approaches in which human exceptionalism and superiority are problematized.

### **3. Translation as a Colonial Metaphor and Animal Colonialism**

Translation as a metaphor is one of the many ways in which translation can be viewed apart from a linguistic concept. With the cultural turn in translation studies, the concept of translation has been redefined and broadened to incorporate discussions from various social disciplines (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). Thanks to the widened scope, translations were not viewed as subordinate to the original texts anymore; it was recognized that they held much power in recreating the original (Guldin, 2016, p. 18). The subsequent “power turn” in translation studies further opened up possibilities of analyzing sameness and difference to different extents and provided a useful platform for exploring agency, dominance, cultural assertion, cultural resistance, and activism (Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002; Tymoczko, 2007, p. 44). A metaphor of translation is equally convenient in investigating the above-mentioned aspects of transfer since metaphors present a favorable ground for describing different aspects of a topic with the power of highlighting and explicating on one hand and distorting and hiding on the other hand (Guldin, 2016, p. 20, 27). Postcolonial contexts are highly suited for the purpose of this study which examines the human-animal divide since these approaches take into consideration “highly asymmetric power relations, as well as radical linguistic and cultural differences” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 45).

Postcolonial translation studies have provided unique perspectives in terms of power relationships between the colonizer and the colonized (Robinson, 2016; Niranjana, 1992; Cheyfitz 1997; Rafael, 1993). Linguistic translation, for instance, has been viewed as part of the colonizer’s toolkit used for collecting data on local

populations to facilitate their subjugation thus acquiring a notorious name (Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt, 2014, p. 246). Yet, translation also proved valuable in expressing the interlinked complexities reflecting the experience of the colonized who got entangled in their culture and the colonizer's culture. A metaphor of translation, therefore, seemed fitting to portray the in-between status of the colonized, aptly described by Salman Rushdie (1991) as "*translated beings*" or Homi Bhabha's "*third space*" (1994).

This article sees the marketing of milk as a translation, yet this metaphor is deeply embedded in actual linguistic translation practices of the colonial era where the colonial subjects were depicted in a distorted way to justify their conquest. To see how this metaphor functions, a discussion of central interrelated themes which occupied postcolonial approaches is necessary.

The first commonality between postcolonial translation and the marketing of milk is related to the silencing of the Other. During the British conquest of India, a pervasive image of the Hindus was crafted through imperial lenses. Within the framework of Eurocentric notions, one-sided interpretations of the colonized prevailed with no room for the Indians to speak for themselves. Having the upper hand in imposing their own notions as universals, the unique voice and authentic characteristics of the colonized quickly got erased (Shamma, 2018, p. 286). As Niranjana (1992, p. 14) tells, through the eyes of the British, Hindus were seen as "a submissive, indolent nation unable to appreciate the fruits of freedom, desirous of being ruled by an absolute power". The silence deepens when more-than-human worlds are evoked. In cases where the environment and nonhuman animals are exploited by imperialistic agendas the problem of representation becomes more complicated. Who gets to speak for nature and animals, who translates their voice, and how it could be done without the use of dualist thought or the re-enactment of human/nonhuman hierarchies gain prominence (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011).

When silencing the colonized people, lands, and other animals, their agencies are stripped away. What makes them individuals with unique abilities and capacities are ironed out. Translation works in this context by fixing colonized cultures, "making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed" (Niranjana, 1992, p. 3).

Translation as a metaphor, thus, would be a convenient tool to deal with anthropocentrism since it has been questioned by many scholars as sites of representation, power, asymmetry, and inequality as well as a source of domination that could establish and maintain social hierarchies (Vidal Claramonte, 2018). The representation in question in this study is that of the nonhuman animal and the power to translate the animal in human terms is an act of domination. Nonhumans have been defined in a monolithic way and represented as natural and universal similar to the colonial subject (Vidal Claramonte, 2018).

Apart from the silencing of the colonized and their removal of agency, the Other is also represented through a distorted image that finds itself in the rationale of colonialism. The fabrication of a fixed Hindu identity which happened to be "coward,

unfeeling, conceited, and physically unclean” in stark contrast to the Western nations boasting to be at the pinnacle of human evolution and civilization (Niranjana, 1992, pp. 21-22) further functions as a way of crushing resistance. Being colonized is seen in a way as a positive step, a development on behalf of the colonized. The colonial logic thus dictates that colonizers are quite content with being exploited. Translation contributes to the representation of this benevolent image which justifies domination (Niranjana, 1992, p. 2). Apart from animals themselves, symbolic meanings around animal bodies have also been integrated into the intellectual background of colonialism. For example, the British national identity is associated with beef, constructed on the fact that bloody meat symbolizes power, life, and passion (Rogers, 2003). The high amount of meat consumed by the British Raj in India in the 19th century was associated with masculinity and racial-physical superiority, while Indian races were portrayed as feminine and their femininity was linked to India’s warm and humid climate as well as their rice-based nutrition (Sengupta, 2010, pp. 85-87). The continuous imposition of this superiority put pressure on the native populations to consent to their inferiority and espouse the colonizer’s viewpoint (Gaard, 2013, p. 604).

Another commonality rests in the creation of familiar objects. To the Western eye, colonized people, as well as nonhuman animals, were foreign and wild, and they had to be tamed and shaped into the Western conceptual framework. For this purpose, translation was not just a linguistic transfer of native languages to European counterparts but also it was employed as a form of violence with an aim to “compact and reduce an alien reality into the terms imposed by a triumphant Western culture” (Simon, 2000, p. 11). For Lefevre (1999, p. 77) the West translated non-Western cultures into their own categories in order to come to an understanding of them.

These connections between colonized people and other animals have been brought up for some time especially in postcolonial ecofeminism and ecocriticism which dealt with ecologically destructive behavior stemming from imperialistic thought and the symbolical debasement of animalized natives and animals as well (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; Plumwood, 1993; Chagani, 2016; Adams & Mulligan, 2002; Ahuja, 2009). Plumwood’s (1993, p. 53) critique of master model is useful in demonstrating how Europe’s colonial endeavors were justified with a dualistic logic pitting manliness, reason, civilization against the femininity of nature and the animalistic natives inhabiting it. Thus, the justification of colonialism rested on the symbolic representation of “indigenous cultures as ‘primitive’, less rational and closer to children, animals and nature”.

Experiences of real animals in the colonies were not so different from humans, as expected. A variety of studies especially focus on the history of colonization and the nonhuman world in it, calling it “animal colonialism”. Cohen (2020, p. 37) defines animal colonialism as “using animals to colonise lands, native animals, and people, and ... imposing foreign legal norms and practices of human-animal relations upon communities and their environments”. First definition dwells on how the European colonizers imported domesticated animals such as cows and sheep which brought the

destruction of native lands and subsistence models. This violent agroexpansion took a toll on native ecosystems and was further used as a pretext since cows and sheep needed larger pastures to graze. Colonizers came, of course, with their mindset, stipulating that nonhuman animals are property and integrated them into legal systems as mere commodities (p. 37). This mindset has paved the way for the unfolding of a story of the “conquest of space, energy, and dietary preferences” as Valenze calls (2011, p. 3) or “the production of space” where milk is called “conquering colonial commodity” (Saha, 2016, p. 2).

Although milk has been consumed throughout history, it has been mostly limited to the western countries where the digestion of lactose after the age of two does not generally cause any problem. As a matter of fact, most of the world including indigenous people of America, tropical Africa, South East Asia, the Far East, Australia, and the Pacific Islands did not traditionally drink milk or raise animals for their milk until the end of the nineteenth century (Cohen, 2020, p. 36). Sheer numbers of milk production in today’s world, even in lactose-intolerant geographies is considered the “historically unprecedented product of industrialization, urbanization, culture, and economics” (Gaard, 2013, p. 597).

Since cows need to give birth in order to lactate, fresh milk is biologically not available year-round. Yet, its availability in markets around the world is seen as a “triumph over nature” (Gaard, 2013), a triumph that managed to control the bodies of cows with the notions of progress and efficiency. Milk, apart from being a tangible consumer product, in this context has also been a symbol of human supremacy which draw clear lines between nature and society, and also the epitome of whiteness with its color and its reference to racial superiority (DuPuis, 2002, pp. 11, 117) – the only “race” that could digest milk.

Cows, who are the ones clearly exploited in this consumerist capitalist society are rarely paid attention to. Similar to the fate of the colonized people, cows are silenced and their own experiences are neglected. A cow in an industrialized setting of dairy production will be resigned to the following dreadful fate. She will be branded, mutilated. She will be forcefully impregnated. Her babies will be taken from her and go through a similar fate. She will be milked and most likely suffer from various diseases such as mastitis. When she does not give enough milk, she will be killed (Cole, 2017; Garner, 2004; see Gillespie, 2014, for a detailed account of bovine lives in the dairy industry). A dairy cow would only survive approximately five years although they have a natural lifespan of up to thirty years (Garner, 2004, p. 105).

The production of milk is seen by many as a form of oppression that functions both through the progress-dominated capitalist economic system as a material reality and through the representation of cows in ways that elicit sexism, racism, and colonialism (Cole, 2017; Gaard, 2013, Canavan, 2017; Cohen 2020; Saha, 2016). Greta Gaard (2013) for instance emphasizes the intersectional aspects connected to milk and proposes the study field of feminist postcolonial milk studies which investigates how the industrialization of milk in colonial geographies brought on suffering both for women and cows whose connections to their offspring were severed.

Studies have shown that cows are intelligent, social beings who love, grieve, suffer, have highly developed communication skills, establish close bonds with their offspring, and get traumatized when their babies are taken away from them (Newkirk & Stone, 2020). Porcher and Schmitt (2012) found out following field research with 60 cows in a dairy farm that cows display various social behavior such as “expressing jealousy, defending a friend, disturbing without any apparent reason, provoking, seeking permission, and so on”. They also conjure up strategies to get around the farmer’s rules and show many signs of intelligence, collaboration, cooperation and adaptation. Apart from evident ethical problems associated with drinking milk, many scholars and doctors began to reveal the not-so-innocent misinformation surrounding milk regarding its health benefits. Milk has been increasingly shown to have links to osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes, and autism (Keon, 2010). In this light, then, the promotion of “animal products” must always comprise a gross distortion of the “truth” (Cole, 2017).

#### **4. Translation of Milk into a Commodity: Dairy Commercials**

##### **4.1. Cows as Willing Victims of Westernization**

The first commercial selected is that of *Sütaş* which was broadcasted in 2016, for the 41st anniversary of the corporation. The commercial starts out with a pastoral scene. The cows are scattered on lush pastures. Far away you can see a *Sütaş* factory standing in the middle of green fields. These visuals are accompanied by a catchy song from the famous singer Candan Erçetin. The next scene shows a close-up of a cow sitting on the grass with her calf beside her. The calf gets up and we see a view where cows are feeding on the grass while the calves are happy and dancing around their mothers. They, then proceed together towards the factory after taking a shower from a cloud-looking gadget. The line of the song is heard: “We are happy on this farm”. Meanwhile, the doors of the factory open up while the cows go in. They walk in line on a thin green carpet. The factory seems like a blend of nature and technology. There are patches of grass fields and trees. The cows then stand in front of the production line wearing clear goggles and bonnets. They inspect the products on the production line such as yogurts and dairy snacks; check some statistics on the screen; check through a magnifying glass; press on a machine with their hooves to imprint the inscription that reads 100% natural. Two cows are then seen behind a truck full of products. They close the doors of the truck while another cow ticks off dairy products that are being delivered on a table with a pen in her mouth. Another cow in a security booth lifts the boom barrier of the gate. The *Sütaş* truck passes by moving through the cows on the field. There are no roads in sight. The truck simply moves on the grass fields. In the final scene, the cows and calves on the field gather up and pose for a photograph. The photograph reads “natural taste, from the farm to the tables”.

The visual analysis of the commercial has resulted in several codes that are grouped under three themes, namely nature, tradition, technology grouped under “hybridity of technonature”; bonding, serenity, happiness grouped under “positive



feelings”, and lastly efficiency, workers, cooperation grouped under “production”. From the beginning, what strikes the consumer, at first sight, is the pastoral scenes where cows are roaming and grazing freely. A rooster crows, which takes the audience back to the village - arguably to an ideal past. The *Sütaş* factory is the only human-made construct in the middle of this idyllic image, presenting itself as part of nature. Nature extends into the factory as seen when cows enter the building. The production line runs through a vast well-lit space with patches of grass and trees. Thus, the factory functions as a hybrid space with technology and nature, normally incompatible symbols, brought together. Cole (2017, p. 23) mentions a similar inconsistency in dairy commercials where “freshness” alludes in part to naturalness but also to healthiness. Healthy milk would only be possible as a result of processing which is a paradox since healthy milk free from germs wouldn't be that fresh after all.

The theme of production is closely related to *Sütaş*'s aspired image as a high technology brand. Yet the workers in the factory are nonother than the cows themselves. They are seen as fulfilling human jobs such as monitoring, labeling and distribution. However, they are not seen when they are milked. In fact, when cows enter the factory, high amounts of milk are being poured into huge glass bottles from above. Cows are then portrayed as willing victims of their exploitation who are not even recognized for what they are actually exploited for. The commercial acts as an example of western rationality which takes pride in taking what nature has - milk - and perfecting it for human interests.

The last theme revolves around creating positive feelings in the customers by tapping into one of the functions of our primate brains: a capacity for empathy. As we watch the bonding between the cow and her calf, or the calves jumping around the cows in the pasture, we envision motherly love and caring as well as pure joy. Interactions of cows and their calves on the green pastures create a serene, peaceful atmosphere.

All in all, the commercial creates a fantasy world detached from the reality of the dairy industry which definitely borrows from a colonial mindset where the colonized people are happy, or should be happy to be exploited by the colonizer. The volunteer victim also features in a similar commercial of *Sütaş* in which dancing cows go downtown and dance with the people. Some cows are seen with vending trays with straps going around their necks, selling dairy products. The practices of the dairy industry are based on treating the cow as a milk machine with the highest possible yield so both the real-life cows and their representations in commercials are alienated from their own bodies and secretions (Valenze, 2011, p. 8). The bleak reality is erased and the cows are silenced through these commercials which depict an alternate reality far from the actual miserable conditions of the cows in the dairy industry.

#### **4.2. Cows in the Image of the Colonizer**

*Sütaş Büyümix* is a product specifically targeted to children. It claims to develop healthy bones and promote growth in children. In the commercial, the screen is split into two. While the left part features a cow with her calf, the right part features a woman with her son. Throughout the commercial, the cow and the woman spend time and take care of their babies while the calf and the boy jump around playfully. When the calf drinks milk from her mother, the woman is shown to feed her son with *Sütaş Büyümix*. These parallel actions are accompanied by a song having the following lyrics: “Everyone's baby is the apple of the eye - they should be fed with the essence of love - kids growing up and jumping around - they will be happy running around- children grow up with love and affection - children are strong with *Sütaş Büyümix*”.

Two strong themes are employed in this commercial. The first one, the theme of similarity, is achieved with the split-screen through which analogous behavior of the human and cow mothers are viewed. As in the first commercial, we feel empathy witnessing the mother-child bond across species which interestingly could equally work in an eye-opening campaign promoting an animal liberationist standpoint. The song even tells us that “Everyone's baby is the apple of the eye”. The second theme is “nurture”, since the mothers -human and nonhuman- both nurture their offspring and watch over them as they play happily on grass fields (the calf is seen on a pasture while the human child is in the park). The only difference is when the calf drinks her mother’s milk while the child eats *Büyümix*. Here, the child is likened to a calf who needs cow’s milk in order to have strong bones. Thus, the resemblance ends when one species is constructed as the provider of another.

From a colonial perspective, affinity is required in order to establish communication channels with the colonized. As stated, translation has played such a role in many colonial contexts. For Niranjana (1992), colonialism itself is a translation project aiming at bringing the colonized people closer to the colonizers, rendering them familiar. In the commercial, the familiarity is constructed for the purpose of backing up the claim that nonhuman is perfectly suitable for human consumption. The images tell us that women and cows have much in common, yet the cow’s capacity for showing affection and love for her offspring is the bare minimum for a mammalian species. Still, while this knowledge is shared with the audience, the commercial features a distortion. The cows and their babies never get to share their affection in the dairy industry since they are separated soon after birth.

#### **4.3. Cows as Colonial Subjects**

The *Torku* commercial focuses on the life of a cow in a village. While hearing her story from herself with a point of view shot, we follow her around and see her life through her eyes. “This is my village... the best story that I can tell” the female narrator tells. She is being caressed by the women who take care of her, she interacts with the children of the village and says that she is being loved. The camera follows a woman who pours water for her and the cow says “as for me, I loved someone the most. I learned from her

what unconditional love is...I offered her something from me, without asking something in return". In this scene, the reflection of the cow appears on the watering trough and the last part of the commercial is shot from an objective point of view where we get to see the cow and the woman who was milking her. The commercial ends with the visual of the product, defined as the "natural repayment for love".

The theme of rural life and nature is also evident in this commercial. From the start, we see images of the village as well as the sound of the crowing rooster. What is unique here is that we see the village through the cow's eyes and get a glimpse of what her life is like. The cow is portrayed as a free agent who roams within the village, mostly accompanying and following humans. The sincerity and kindness are also apparent since the cow narrates that she has won the hearts of the villagers and is being loved unconditionally. Here, the relationship given reminds us that of a family. As repayment of this unconditional love, the cow wants to give something in return, which is her milk.

From a colonial perspective, the cow seems like a colonial subject who desperately needs to be validated by the colonizer. The peasants' "unconditional" love reminds us of the white burden, the colonizers' efforts to offer the colonized a glimpse of civilization. The colonized are relegated into such a lowly status that for recognition an act of sacrifice is needed.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has shown that similar mechanisms of oppression are at work when colonial subjects and nonhuman animals are being 'translated' into an inferior construct deserving exploitation. Echoing the process of colonization, 'translating' cows includes silencing them, removing their agencies or manipulating agency in favor of the industry, obscuring the real lives of cows and distorting their experiences, portraying them as being happily exploited, and reducing them to subordinate creatures in relation to Western white, male subject.

Cows are being silenced when their agencies are ignored and treated as objects for human exploitation. When their agencies are granted, as is seen especially in the first and third commercials, it is only done to construct a subject who would welcome exploitation and render their subordinate position natural and logical. The real practices of the dairy industry are never shown. On the contrary, the commercials present an illusionary image quite the opposite of the real experience of cows.

Agency goes hand in hand with this distorted representation. Cows are given agency yet they display their subjectiveness by working in a dairy factory or by voluntarily giving their milk to the villagers in return for love. In the third commercial, their agency is constructed through story-telling. We get to see a cow as an actor who narrates her story. Yet similar to other commercials, the story being told serves the interests of the dairy companies. Cows are thus represented as self-conscious subjects happy to be exploited just like colonized people who are represented to be exploited for their own good by Western colonizers.

Cows are deemed as Others who represent nature, emotion, instinct in contrast to the Western white male subject representing culture and rationality. As stated earlier, colonial subjects were also seen as closer to animals. Colonial translation in this context aimed at reducing the colonial subject in a way to be comprehensible to the West. The dairy commercials work in a similar way to turn nature into a familiar image suitable for consumption. Milk thus becomes a text representing nature/animals that needs to be translated into a superior cultural construct through rationalization, automation, and efficiency – it is translated into a product.

The metaphor of translation can underline different facets of reality. As Guldin states (2016 p. 45), translation can be seen as “transmission, as representation, as an act of knowing each other, as change and exchange, communication and a manifestation of truth”. As presented in this study, translation involves domination. Yet this aspect of the metaphor has more connections to Western understandings of translation. Translation in the West has a dualistic framework demanding clear-cut oppositions and stable borders whereas the Eastern tradition of translation sees it as a continuum having intertwined similarities and differences (Guldin, 2016, p. 46). Perhaps in ‘translating’ animals, an Eastern view of translation might be a convenient metaphor for recognizing humans and nonhumans in a continuum with many similarities. Such an approach would question our exploitative relations with nonhumans and may open up alternative non-exploitative ways of coexisting.

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