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Three Worlds

Dwelling and Worldhood on Screen

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Cinema cannot escape nature. In relation to nature, film is either placed or, if 'the world is not enough', displaced. But however fantastical, even non-photographic, film springs forth from the world to which it ultimately returns. When speaking of the worldhood (*Weltlichkeit*) of film, I am thinking of the ways in which films construct their own worlds and in so doing assert the ontological property of film's 'groundedness' – its dwelling in the totality of its construction. This chapter examines films in which nature and conceptions of worldhood come together, not as mirror images or as overlapping copies, but by invoking different senses of dwelling inspired by visions of nature: cinema's attesting to the ways in which nature prompts us to think of our place in the world, what in *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger described as the fundamental structure of 'being-in-the-world'. Of course, every film has its worldhood (even if some films are manifestly 'poor in world'), but the examples that concern me here are those whose central theme is the natural world, and whose connection to place, their mode of dwelling, is achieved primarily through their relation to the environmental question, what Timothy Morton (2007: 175) calls the 'what-is-it?' of nature.[1]

In what follows I explore three alternatives of cinematic worldhood in popular films that foreground the environment. If the images of the BBC's signature natural history productions like *Planet Earth* (2006) lean towards ocular inflation,[2] Werner Herzog's 'wildlife fantasies' (*Fata Morgana* [1972], *La Soufrière* [1977], *Lessons of Darkness* [1992], *Grizzly Man* [2005], *The Wild Blue Yonder* [2005], *Encounters at the End of the World* [2007], and *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* [2010]), on a different scale, offer Herzog's 'ecstatic truth' (Herzog 2002: 239) about humanity's placement in the world. Yet Herzog's critique of the commercial natural history film betrays its own romantic conceit, positing man (for Herzog's dramas are predominantly male) and nature in direct opposition. A third conception of worldhood is expressed in *Earthlings* (2005), a holistic activist film that wears its worldly credentials on its sleeve.[3]

Unlike David Attenborough's work, which tends to underplay issues of anthropogenic ecological pressure, and against Herzog's reactionary tales that cast nature and man in a state of inevitable conflict, *Earthlings*' graphic exposure of human violence against nonhuman animals seeks to transform human–animal relations by encouraging humans to 'make the connection': *Earthlings* sees worldhood in radically nonanthropocentric terms and promotes the idea of a more-than-human community.[4]

While my three examples are not definitive representatives of depictions of nature and animals on screen, they do cover a fair bit of ground: from television, to semi-independent and new media productions. Each alternative at once registers and transcends a concrete (ontic) worldview, and signals the (pre-ontological) notion of worldhood. And each raises questions about the ways in which the relationship between images, nature and worldhood is articulated. In these films, 'nature' is both an enclosed system, scientifically and aesthetically knowable through what Morton (2010) calls 'ecomimesis', and the mode of our being-in-the-world, which grounds our concrete relations to nature's beings and things. Thinking the two configurations of nature cinematically also recalls the cinematic realism of André Bazin, which inspires a nonanthropocentric appreciation of onscreen worldhood.

Cinema's acknowledging of reality is not only, as Bazin claims, impersonal but also 'inhuman'. As Fay (2008: 42) argues, Bazin's 'realism, as reimagined through animals and nature, is not merely the replication or record of the world as we humans perceive it (nor is it merely the space humans and animals share); rather, it reveals the details of animate and inanimate life that are lost to anthropocentric attention and history'. Realism therefore encourages a view of the world as a biodiverse, material plane. At its most distilled, Bazin (2005: 21) envisions cinematic realism as 'the world in its own image'. None of the films discussed below is paradigmatically Bazinian, though each contains intimations of worldhood through the filming of nature and animals or via the image of Earth seen from space. The trajectory proceeds from nature as a finite terrain to worldhood as a non-spatial mode of being-in-the-world, and back to nature again.

First World

The online spoof *I Hate Nature* features a recognisably breathless impersonation of David Attenborough over footage of the BBC series *Planet Earth*.[5] Attenborough proclaims his repugnance at the animals he studies. Animals are 'boring and they suck', he says, looking up at

a family of koala bears lounging in a tree. Although the short describes animals as 'gross', recasting Attenborough as a 'zoocidal' filmmaker, the butt of the joke is not nature or animals but their packaging by the BBC–Attenborough powerhouse. Poking fun at a 'national treasure' disguises a more serious critique by suggesting that it is possible to have had enough, not only of Attenborough's 'schoolboy enthusiasm' (Cubitt 2005: 47), but of the hackneyed tropes of nature's cuteness and majesty, the sneaky configurations of nature as a secular Eden and faux sublime, formulations that simultaneously tout and tame the so-called mystery of the natural world. Beneath its reverent façade, the parody suggests, lurks the Freudian id of natural history film culture, whose idioms are contempt and disgust.

Not only the voice-of-god but also the eye-of-god is typical of the scope and reach of the big BBC productions. Wildlife programmes are the fruit of particular modes of production. Bousé (2000: 1) makes the striking claim that wildlife films and nature are, in fact, poorly matched: 'The lives of wild animals, like the stillness of open spaces, may simply be unsuited to film and television representation', not because they are impossible to capture but because mainstream wildlife film and television are subject to commercial demands. '[T]he real sources of film and television's incompatibility with nature lie in the economics and institutional agendas to which they have been conscripted' (ibid.):

> Stillness and silence have almost no place in wildlife film, or in film and television generally – not because they are incapable, as media technologies, of conveying these qualities, but because stillness and silence are incompatible with the social and economic functions of film and television, and with the expressive 'vocabularies' they have developed in fulfilling those functions. (Ibid.: 4)

Such films are closer to Hollywood features, making use of such cinematic devices as emotive musical cues, close-ups, a composite but invisible narrative, individual characters, and dramatic storylines. 'Wildlife films may be full of scientific facts, but they have largely been freed of the responsibility of looking just like reality. Like advertising, they have become an entertaining art that operates according to its own codes and conventions' (ibid.: 7).

What precisely are the 'economics and institutional agendas' that shape wildlife films? Claire Molloy (2011: 83) points out that the diversification and generic blending in contemporary wildlife programming responds 'to declining audience numbers and changing consumer demands'. 'What such programmes do is relocate "wild nature" into the domestic and culturally organised spaces of media reception – the

living room, the cinema and so forth – and in doing this, they construct a relationship between viewer and animal that reduces distance and fulfils a desire to bring animals close'. Beyond its commercial and psychological imperatives, Molloy's description of a relation of containment between human viewers and the represented world has an ontological dimension. In their sheer grandeur, penetration and condensation of space through the use of high-end cameras and non-sync sound in postproduction, wildlife films are not just purveyors of knowledge about and sympathy for the natural world, but emblems of the technical prowess required to 'produce' nature. With 3D and CGI, wildlife films offer an increasingly immersive spectacle.[6] But spectacular immersion, implicit in titles like *Life on Earth* (1979), *The Blue Planet* (2001), *Planet Earth*, *Frozen Planet* (2011) or *Earthflight* (2011), titles that capture, contain and project the very limits of the earth, can have an uprooting as well as a grounding effect.[7]

At the opening of her early collection of political essays *Oppression and Liberty*, Simone Weil states that 'it is clear that capitalism stands essentially for economic expansion and that capitalist expansion has now [Weil is writing in 1933] nearly reached the point where it will be halted by *the actual limits of the earth's surface'* (2006: 1, emphasis added). Although her essay is primarily a critique of revolutionary Marxism and Stalinism – capitalism is in crisis, 'yet never have there been fewer premonitory signs of the advent of socialism' (ibid.: 1) – Weil's statement is ecologically charged and suggests the close ties between capitalism and environmental exploitation. Something of this expansionist ethos and stretching of limits is, I think, present in Attenborough's palatial rendering of nature.[8] It is this capaciousness, or decadence, that *I Hate Nature* picks up on and mocks.

The Earth's image captured from space at the opening of *Planet Earth* is a recurring motif in fiction and nonfiction films that signifies the earth's limits. Limits can function progressively, reminding us of the beauty and frailty of Earth, or possessively, affirming a dominant human perspective. Stephen Yearly explains that '[t]he photographic portrayal of the globe viewed from an orbiting spacecraft has been used repeatedly to evoke the Earth's isolation in space, its fragility and wonder, and the sense that the beings on it share a restricted living space surrounded by an unwelcoming void' (cited in Garrard 2004: 160). But orbiting spacecrafts and satellite technology also mark the new frontiers of visibility and the extension of optics that overpower the Earth: 'As the century of unbounded curiosity, covetous looking and the de-regulation of the gaze, the twentieth has not been the century of the "image", as is often claimed, but of optics – and, in particular,

of the *optical illusion*' (Virilio 2005: 28–29). Earth becomes the ultimate plaything – abstracted and aestheticised – of global capital, or what we might call *bio-optical politics*:

> The Earth, that **phantom-limb**, no longer extends *as far as the eye can see*; it presents all aspects of itself for inspection in the strange little window. The sudden multiplication of 'points of view' merely heralds the latest globalization: the globalization of the gaze, of the single eye of the **cyclops** who governs the cave. (Ibid.: 18)

Heightened visibility, what I have called 'ocular inflation', promotes a uniform view of the world, encapsulated in the image of the blue planet, or Earth seen from space. Ocular inflation means that in seeing so much, we see too little.

Virilio's polemic explores this paradox through the interlocking of neoliberalism and film. In *The Information Bomb* (2005), Virilio links the world's relentless exposure through the use of ever more precise optical technology to the military-industrial complex. The problem is not reality's loss in the image, the postmodern problem of pure simulacra, but reality's overexposure. The image of Spaceship Earth discussed by Garrard (2004), with which many science fiction and natural history films begin, is a symbol of this overexposure. 'In the West', Virilio writes in *The Vision Machine*, 'the death of God and the death of art are indissociable; the *zero degree of representation* merely fulfilled the prophecy voiced a thousand years earlier by Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, during the quarrel with the iconoclasts: "If we remove the image, not only Christ but the whole universe disappears"' (Virilio 1994: 17). Enhanced optics heralds the end of representation; without iconic representation, without images pointing to the unseen, the seen universe vanishes. Under conditions of optical overexposure, what Virilio calls the 'zero degree of representation', the world itself disappears.

Negative readings of new technologies in wildlife cinema as combining militaristic expansionist drives with what Baker (2001: 174) called the 'Disneyfication' of nature may not do justice to the intentions of filmmakers or audience responses. Filmmakers often cite conservation, animal protection and the cultivation of a public appreciation of nature as their chief motivation. Dismissing these films as by-products of the military-industrial complex is surely reductive. Sean Cubitt provides a more favourable view of technology:

> The construction of technology as the pariah that embodies all the most evil elements of the polis and turns them against nature is not an alternative politics . . . techne is the only route through which we now can sense

> the world, most especially that part of the world's conversations which are not conducted in wavelengths we can hear, see, or otherwise apprehend. (Cubitt 2005: 59)

The titles and imagery of mainstream wildlife films are ambivalent: their planetary ambition is overblown, yet they are also and more humbly aware of the unity of our world *as* world. At once poetic and predatory, technology embodies the tensions of a totalising (and totalitarian) vision. The crisis of capitalism is inherently ecological, yet, to reiterate Weil, never have there been fewer premonitory signs of the advent of a genuinely environmental politics – at least not yet in primetime wildlife programming.[9] Popular wildlife cinema is caught between an acquisitive relation to nature, and an evocative mode addressed to nature's worldhood that eschews the crudely possessive. What does it mean for film to be thus split between the acquisitive and the evocative mode, and how might different evocations of cinematic worldhood be achieved?

Second World

Werner Herzog's work has recently reemerged under the sign of nature.[10] His 'science fiction fantasies', as he sometimes calls them, have assumed the position of counter-cultural wildlife films. Herzog wants to dismantle what he sees as the unqualified enchantment with nature of natural history films. Yet, if Attenborough's fascination with nature may be said to harbour latent hostilities (that *I Hate Nature* wittily unearths), Herzog's *dis*enchanted view of nature as 'chaos, hostility, and murder' and 'overwhelming fornication'[11] gives way to an inverse romanticism: the humanist myth of a violent chasm between civilisation and wilderness. While nearly all of Herzog's films deal with the fraught relations between humanity and nature, *Grizzly Man*, Herzog's most popular nonfiction to date, and one of his most haunting, does so explicitly.

Grizzly Man is an aggregation of layers, made up of Timothy Treadwell's videos, interviews, and Herzog's distinctive narration. This layering undercuts Herzog's stated position in the film's voiceover. The release of more films about nature – *The Wild Blue Yonder*, *Encounters at the End of the World*, and *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (should we include *Into the Abyss*, Herzog's 2011 documentary on death row, in this list? Why not, as it continues Herzog's enquiry into the opacity of human nature) – only sharpens the sense of Herzog's misconceptions of nature.

In *Grizzly Man*, as Morton claims, 'Herzog's bleakness, ironically, is far closer to wilderness-speak than Treadwell's cuddliness' and so undermines the film's critique of deep ecology (2010: 74–75). The denial of the possibility of mutually friendly relations between humans and wild animals is not borne out by Treadwell's self-shot footage, but functions more as Herzog's auteurist conceit.

Jeong and Andrew (2008) agree that Treadwell has not failed in his 'becoming-animal', if this is what his exercise amounts to (I think it does not quite).[12] The notion that it is somehow wrong or misconstrued (naïve or sentimental, affects Herzog particularly dislikes) to commune with wild bears suggests a clear division between the wild and the civilised, and a clear delineation of nature. But neither enmeshment in nor separation from that thing we call 'nature' solves the problem – ontologically, politically or ethically – of our placement in the world.

With Nietzsche, we can think of Treadwell's experiment as a successful tragic performance: an attempt to live out the contradictions and tensions between human and bear worlds and the establishing of a hybrid space, a kind of 'natural theatre'.[13] Nor is the terrible price paid after thirteen summers at the jaws and claws of an unknown bear, proof that nature and culture do not coexist, or that, conversely, we must seek to conjoin them more harmoniously or deeply. The dynamic boundaries between human and nonhuman life do not flatten out differences, but the different worldhoods at stake are more concrete and complex than either identitarian separation or non-identitarian 'becomings' suggest.

In spite of themselves, Herzog's films, nearly all of them, illustrate the mutual permeability of nature and culture beyond simple division or merger. As I have argued elsewhere, the recurring use of blank gazes, Herzog's characters held motionless by the camera as they look ahead ('staring', rather than 'talking' heads) is a mark of indeterminate humanity, neither absorbed by nor wholly apart from the rest of material life.[14] The inanimate and animate in Herzog's work are connected in ways that are difficult to disentangle, no matter how vociferously Herzog insists on the fractious encounters between Nature and Man.

Third World

Though no one could confuse Shaun Monson's documentary *Earthlings* (2005) with Richard Kalvar's (2007) collection of zany photographs by the same name, neither are these two works unrelated. *The Paris Review* states: 'We don't really need to know more about Kalvar's human subjects – "earthlings" as he calls them – although every one of the

photographs leaves us wondering: what's happening, what do these people think they're doing?' (2007: 113). Kalvar establishes a humorous rapport between ourselves and the photographed subjects because we know we are looking at people and places at once familiar (New York, Paris) and in a galaxy far, far away. Monson's *Earthlings* travels in the opposite direction, from estrangement to kinship, in a world devoid of odd but benign rituals, where zaniness has tipped over into unimaginable cruelty. Still, the gesture of home and away is the same, and the appeal to the totality we call Earth as a means of proximity and distance is equally powerful.

Earthlings is a film in five sections, each examining an area of animal use: pets, food, clothing, entertainment and science. Similar to videos shot (undercover or not) by organisations like Mercy for Animals (MFA) or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), *Earthlings* weaves together footage from factory farms, slaughterhouses, laboratories, circuses and puppy mills.[15] This web-friendly format does not easily translate into the feature film because the collage of atrocities is a challenge to watch for a whole ninety minutes. Indeed, *Earthlings*' availability for free online streaming is key to its grassroots, word-of-mouth appeal. Both like and unlike its predecessor, Victor Schonfeld and Myriam Alaux's *The Animals Film* (1982),[16] *Earthlings* straddles the line between activism and cinema in the manner of other recent animal, ecological, and social justice documentaries.[17]

Earthlings advances a politics of shared worldhood. We share the world with the animals we eat, wear, breed and enslave, and, like them, we too are sentient. Unlike the weak worldhood of dominant depictions of nature examined earlier, *Earthlings*' perspective is postcolonial, imagining a world in which living beings coexist in their commonality as earthlings. Anthropomorphism is not an issue because animals are unlike and also like us. Charges of anthropomorphism deflect from the tough questions about how to live together in a common world without causing needless suffering. *Earthlings* asks viewers to 'make the connection' between different beings who are nonetheless kin. 'Beneath the many differences there is sameness', rooted in being creatures of Earth.

Like *Planet Earth*, *Earthlings* opens and closes with the conventional image of Spaceship Earth. Here, the view from space is equated with a non-speciesist gaze, made explicit by the film's comparison between the different tiers of discrimination: racism, sexism and speciesism. The narrator, Joaquin Phoenix, sets up the film's premise:

> Since we all inhabit the earth, all of us are considered earthlings. There is no sexism, no racism or speciesism in the term earthling. It encompasses

> each and every one of us, warm or cold-blooded, mammal, vertebrate or invertebrate, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, and human alike. Humans, therefore, being not the only species on the planet, share this world with millions of other living creatures as we all evolved here together. However, it is the human earthling who tends to dominate the earth, oftentimes treating other fellow earthling and living beings as mere objects . . . If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration.

Sentient animals are separated not by degrees of intelligence that render their value higher or lower (always lower than ours), but through radically unequal power relations. It is not intelligence but power, the morally neutral distribution of forces, which determines human exceptionalism. If power precedes value, then to enable new values (and new relations) requires exploring not the capacities of different creatures, but the institutions and apparatuses that contain and control them. From an abstract notion of power, *Earthlings* drills down to examine the concrete forms of domination that subject animals.

Some of *Earthlings'* most troubling footage of animal abuse offers a complex view of the workings of power. The notion that animals are considered mere things is often used to explain human domination of other animals but, though *Earthlings* repeats this, the footage tells a different story: the swearing directed at pigs and elephants, which accompanies their physical abuse by slaughterhouse workers and circus trainers, makes little sense if the perpetrators believed the animals to be things. Although institutions depend on the 'thing-like' status of nonhuman animals, abusers do not, in fact, treat animals as unfeeling 'others' but as vulnerable persons. Kinship and otherness are thus dynamic, ever changing constructs in the ongoing ebb and flow of what Colin Dayan (2011) calls the 'making and unmaking of persons'.

To counter violence, *Earthlings* affirms that animals share with us the orientation of worldhood: animals are not just 'in the world'; they actively inhabit their world. This might seem to limit the kinds of animals that *Earthlings* morally considers by focusing only on those that are self-aware. But is there really a way of delineating where consciousness begins and ends, whether it must be intentional, to the point of affording it to some organisms and not others?[18] In *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* (1934), Jakob von Uexküll suggested that even simple organisms like the tick inhabit their world and construct their environment by responding to and conversing 'meaningfully' with sensory stimuli. Ontologically disparate, animals' perceptual worlds (*Umwelten*) are the biosemiotic creations of their organisms, and the human is but one *Umwelt* among them.

The modes of care or concern that for Heidegger define Dasein's being-in-the-world (as if humans were the only beings who actively form their world) gives way in *Earthlings* to being-with-others, and also to being-for-nonhuman-others, in the Levinasian sense. Worldhood in this film tends away from the controlled aerial views that affirm human mastery. From the serene visions of Spaceship Earth we plunge deep into the gutter: the abattoir kill floor, the circus ring, the battery cages, all the violence, torment and filth that currently pass for species coexistence.

Even if *Earthlings* subsumes all worlds under a single planet, on behalf of animals whose worlds are not too unlike ours, worlds we can at least recognise as worlds, the very fact that nonhuman creatures have 'a world of their own' should unhinge human exceptionalism. While focusing on mammals, *Earthlings* excludes no one, though it uses different strategies for different animals. Against consuming those commonly known as 'seafood', for instance, *Earthlings* makes the environmental rather than the ethical case. The film's core worldview is nonetheless inclusive: if animals' worlds may be irreconcilably different, the fact that all inhabit a world is not. This alone is a powerful appeal for a more-than-human conception of worldhood.

'The World in its Own Image'

> It is our function in this world to consent to the existence of the universe.
> —*Simone Weil, 'The Love of God and Affliction'*

Bazin's 'The Myth of Total Cinema' begins by turning on its head the Marxist account of cinema's origins in Georges Sadoul's *Histoire générale du cinéma* (1946). Bazin 'finds in Sadoul's history of the invention of cinema less a description of scientific and technological progress than evidence of an obsessive fascination with achieving a complex and "total" mimesis of the world. It is this mimetic vocation of cinema that functions like an ideal, arguably in Sadoul's history, and certainly in Bazin's understanding of cinema's origin' (Gunning 2011: 121).

The mimetic obsession of cinema's pioneers precedes (and exceeds) the technological inventions that enable the world's reproduction. At the technical level, 'there was not a single inventor that did not try to combine sound and relief with animation of the image' (Bazin 2005: 20), but 'total cinema' entails more than sound, relief, and animation. It entails the idea that cinema's *telos* is mimetic. In a striking passage Bazin (ibid.: 21) concludes that: 'The real primitives of the cinema, existing only in the imaginations of a few men of the nineteenth century, are

in complete imitation of nature. Every new development added to the cinema must, paradoxically, take it nearer and nearer to its origins. In short, cinema has not yet been invented!'

The conflation of past and future, idea and technique, is given a twist in Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, whose 3D technology is used to convey two-dimensional images.[19] But mimetic accuracy is not what Bazin's total cinema finally means. Gunning believes that, 'Bazin's *idée fixe* of total cinema extends beyond "mechanical reproduction" and signals a desire for an ideal which we recognize as his central theoretical claim about cinematic realism' (Gunning 2011: 123). Bazin describes this ideal as 'an integral realism', neither mechanical verisimilitude nor the artist's personal expression, but 'a recreation of *the world in its own image*' (Bazin 2005: 21, emphasis added). Bazin:

> [M]oves beyond the subject, envisioning an image of the world not dependent on the expressive role of artistic subjectivity. Bazin may root the origin of the cinema in the obsession of its inventors, but the significance of this ideal cannot be reduced to subjective investment . . . Bazin's total cinema strives to achieve 'the world in its own image'. This unique image seeks precisely to overcome the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, and even between materialism and idealism. (Gunning 2011: 123)

To satisfy 'subjective investment', cinema deploys techniques that trick the eye, but these, according to Bazin, are 'pseudorealist' and do not yield the world in its own image. Although it is difficult to distinguish between pseudorealism and total cinema, the BBC productions discussed above are pseudorealist insofar as they satisfy the desire for an illusion of closeness with nature, and use perspective (telephoto lenses, blue chip, post-production sound enhancement, and so on) non-reflexively to create an immersive but highly contrived experience of nature. Consciously or not, *I Hate Nature* reminds us that however difficult it is 'to separate total cinema from this appetite for illusion' (Gunning 2011: 124), alert, indeed ironic, viewing can pick up pseudorealist cues.

Total cinema delivers us from one form of subjective investment to another that reflects on our participation in the environing world. The extinction of subjectivity is not therefore a withdrawal but a mode of involvement. Total cinema enacts Weil's consenting to the existence of the universe. 'If we take seriously Bazin's differentiation of a true and a pseudoreality', Gunning writes, 'total cinema offers more than a complex process of duplication'.

> Bazin calls this something more: 'the world in its own image'. I read this phrase as equivalent to the phenomenological concept (used by both

> Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger) of *the worldhood of the world*. *The worldhood of the world forms the ultimate referent of the myth of total cinema*. Thus total cinema does not posit a Hegelian universal totality but rather the phenomenological image of the world as bounded by a horizon, and it is in the nature of a horizon to be expanded. (Gunning 2011: 125, emphasis added)

Here, as Morton suggests, are nature and the environment as interrogative structures rather than given totalities, ever changing articulations of the relation to place and space. Films invoke worldhood in different ways. Their 'ultimate referent' is not a thing or a place but a mode of involvement.

The three worlds discussed are examples of three modes of worldly engagement. If *Planet Earth* flaunts a world empty of people (Garrard 2012), such absence arguably makes for poor environmental involvement, since neither the human presence by proxy of powerful technology nor Attenborough's human voiceover is problematised. In Herzog's world, people are cast as nature's opponent, and nature is separate and 'out there'. *Earthlings* engages with nature as a global home. The film cries out against the ubiquity of human domination, the result of a misconstrued orientation of worldhood. *Earthlings* is a view of the world in its own image, and though embodied in the overused trope of Earth seen from space, 'earthlings' is not, in fact, an image at all: it is the possibility of reorienting ourselves away from the pseudorealist taxonomies of speciation, and the brutal practices they are used to excuse.

Notes

1 'The environment is that which cannot be indicated directly. We could name it apophatically. It is not-in-the-foreground. It is the background, caught in a relationship with the foreground. As soon as we concentrate on it, it turns into the foreground. In ecological terms, nature becomes bunny rabbits, trees, rivers, and mountains – we lose its environmental quality, though this is what we wanted to convey. We are compelled to rely on ecomimesis, a list that gestures toward infinity. The environment *is* the "what-is-it?", the objectified version of our question. As soon as it becomes an exclamation it has disappeared' (Morton 2007: 175).
2 For a comprehensive look at the BBC's long and varied history of natural history programming, see Timothy Boon's (2008) *Films of Fact*.
3 For a different reading of *Earthlings* in this volume, see chapter 6, 'Was Blind But Now I See', by Carrie Packwood Freeman and Scott Tulloch.
4 *Earthlings*' cover image shows a plant, a cow, and a human (Phoenix himself), with the tagline 'make the connection'. *Earthlings* is the first of a

trilogy whose second, forthcoming installment is *Unity*, on the 'unifying force of consciousness found in nature, animals and humankind'. See http://www.earthlings.com/ (accessed 25 March 2013).

5 *I Hate Nature*, by the New York comedy group Olde English, retrieved from http://www.oldeenglish.org/podcast/i-hate-nature.

6 *Born to be Wild 3D* (Lickley, 2011) combines the wildlife film with 3D technology to create an immersive nonfiction about orphaned elephants and orangutans in Kenya and Borneo. The 2012 Disney film *Chimpanzee* is another example of a documentary that appeals, via narrative and technological cues, to the desire to come close to wild animals. But, as Lori Gruen suggests, for those 'working hard to end the use of chimpanzees in entertainment . . . this film walks a fine line. It is designed to entertain and chimpanzees are the entertainment', http://ethics-animals.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/chimpanzee-movie.html (accessed 26 March 2013).

7 Compare these to James Benning's laconic *Ten Skies* (2004), *13 Lakes* (2004), and *Ruhr* (2009), discussed in the next two chapters of this volume.

8 'Rendering' in the sense of both digital filmmaking and the production of animal by-products. On the notion of rendering in the context of biopower, see Shukin (2009).

9 In fiction films, the situation is different: from *Fern Gully* (1992) to *Madagascar* (2005), *Wall-E* (2008), *The Road* (2009), *Avatar* (2009), or *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), and in the 1970s cycle of ecological science fiction like *Silent Running* (1972) and *Soylent Green* (1973), environmental dystopias and the destruction of nature are essential motifs.

10 Released in 2009 by Revolver, the DVD box set *Werner Herzog – Encounters in the Natural World* includes *Encounters at the End of the World*, *Grizzly Man*, *White Diamond*, *La Soufrière* and *Flying Doctors of East Africa*. The list is incomplete, leaving out other available titles like *Fata Morgana*, *Lessons of Darkness* and *The Wild Blue Yonder*, as well as fiction films that may be considered under the same rubric (*Aguirre Wrath of God*, *Fitzcarraldo, Signs of Life*).

11 In *Grizzly Man* (2005) and Les Blank's 1982 documentary *Burden of Dreams* on the making of Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, respectively.

12 Treadwell communed with individual bears. Living with and among them was not, for him, simply a matter of dissolving his human identity, though it was partly that too. Treadwell engaged in animal advocacy, education and outreach; his commitment to *these* Grizzlies in *this* national park is not, then, the rhizomatic process of becoming-bear.

13 For a detailed Nietzschean reading of Herzog, see Pick (2011: 168–79).

14 Ibid.: 155–62.

15 Organisations like Mercy for Animals, http://www.mercyforanimals.org/, PETA, http://www.peta.org/, or Animal Defenders International (ADI), http://www.ad-international.org/adi_home/ use film to expose the conditions and practices in all branches of animal business. Much of the footage is shot undercover, and the industry has been fighting back using so-called 'Ag Gag' legislation and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act. On the push-back against environmental and animal activists, see Phil Potter's *Green is*

the New Red (2011), and the accompanying blog, http://www.greenisthenewred.com/blog/ (accessed 26 March 2013).

16 Originally broadcast on Channel 4, *The Animals Film* uses a mixture of materials, including found footage, cartoons and underground videos. The BFI's 2009 DVD edition includes footage censored by Channel 4. The planetary theme is apparent also in Schonfeld's radio programme *One Planet: Animals and Us*, available here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p005k2zy (accessed 26 March 2013).

17 Monson exposes harrowing truths in order to confront and transform his audience. A different approach is adopted in Marisa Miller Wolfson's *Vegucated* (2010), which reaches out to viewers via the personal journeys to veganism of the documentary's subjects, reminiscent of Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004).

18 See, for example, Marder (2013) on the new frontier of 'plant ethics', Morton (2007), especially his reading of *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* as texts that 'enjoin us to love people even when they are not people' (ibid.: 188), and Sagan (2010), 'Umwelt After Uexküll', Introduction to *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*. Sagan discusses the difficulty in categorically distinguishing human from machine 'thinking'. Ultimately, it is difficult to tell 'real' from 'artificial' life, a point illustrated in the famous Turing test.

19 I am grateful to Silke Panse for pointing out this Herzogian irony. Some of the Chauvet paintings resemble clips laid out on an editing timeline. Bazin's idea of the inverse relations of past and future explains the strange pairing of two-dimensional cave art with 3D technology.

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