ABSTRACT

Affective Identification with Animals in the Public Sphere in Earth, the Movie

Dustin A. Greenwalt, M.A.

Committee Chairperson: Jeff D. Bass, Ph.D.

Following Derrida's introduction to *Dissemination;* "I will not feign, according to the code, either premeditation or improvisation. These texts are assembled otherwise, it is not my intention here to *present* them." Animal films are tied to a system of liberalism and the objectification of nature that has developed through the historical confluence of visuality, anthropomorphism, and a fascination with nature. Sequences in *Earth* produce collective fantasies of a pristine nature, containing a marked absence of connection between growing environmental destruction, and the modernist forms of consumption that underwrite western society. Further, *Earth* naturalizes discourses through anthropomorphic images, naturalizing the domination of humans and animals in everyday practice. Challenging Critical Rhetorics that reaffirm critique at the level of discourse, *Earth* calls forth an interrogation of the ethical possibilities offered by a greater awareness of the material processes of nature, and their influence on the cultural imagination.

Affective Identification with Animals in the Public Sphere in Earth, the Movie

by

Dustin A. Greenwalt, B.A.

A Thesis

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_____
David W. Schleuter, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

_____
Jeff D. Bass, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____
James Kendrick, Ph.D.

_____
Douglas R. Ferdon, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2010

_____
J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

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CHAPTER ONE

Earth as A Rhetorical Artifact

Introduction

When Walt Disney funded the first *True Life Adventure* film in 1948, it would

have been difficult to predict that it would influence audience expectations for animal

films to this day. No longer dependent on ideas of scientific veracity, animal-films would

develop into a world of fantastic representation that is still prevalent. During the post-

war period Disney provided audiences with an entertainment value that the audience now

expects, regardless of the film's scientific accuracy. One film that draws its influence

directly from the *True Life Adventures,* is *Earth,*[1] a film assembled from footage from the

BBC series "Planet Earth."

The film follows three animal "families" for an entire year. Narrated by James

Earl Jones, the sequences and story lines work to fascinate the audience. The narration

combined with the sweeping images of exotic and scenic environments cause the

audience to be mesmerized by the film's exotic setting. Similar to other animal-films,

Earth continues a charade of scientific accuracy, allowing the audience to experience

what they mistake for an authentic experience of exotic locations. Couched in references

to the struggle of animals against their environment, the audience becomes attached

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1. Fothergill, A. and Linfield, M. 2007, American Release in 2009

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to animals that serve as synechodicial representatives of their species. The audience

follows these animals as they struggle for survival, often foregrounding the problem of

animal death as a specter that haunts their every action.

The soothing and surreal sequences of *Earth* contribute to its popularity and

affective power. Public and critical responses emphasize fascination the images in the

film produce.[2] Even when reviewers referenced the threat of climate change, they tended

to mention it as an afterthought to the entertainment value of the images. One critic went

as far as to characterize the subtle nature of global warming warnings in the film as

welcomed, as the emphasis on catastrophe detracts from its aesthetic value.[3] Some

positive reviews, however, concluded that the film creates a love of nature among the

target audience of children, a necessary condition for ensuring the popularity of action

against climate change.[4]

Responses to the film, however, were not unitary. Several critics noted that *Earth*

produces apathy towards the problems of climate change.[5] According to one review, “The

plight of the thirsty African elephants (every dehydrated fold lovingly captured) and

starving humpbacked whales seems as removed from human action as a solar eclipse.”[6]

Similar to other reviews, this one concludes that, despite the possible affective

connections that the film could generate, *Earth* is likely to produce a feeling of dis-

empowerment towards the problem of global warming. These reviewers are apart of a

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2. Bunch, S. “Our fantastic 'Earth' Redux,” 2009, Neumaier, J. “New Disney Film,” 2009, Scott, M. “Disney doc 'Earth” 2009

3. Smith, M., “Feels Familiar” 2009

4. Cole, S., “A View of Our Planet,” 2009; Ventuolo, A., “Documentary 'Earth' surveys,” 2009

5 Catsoulis, J., “Earth (2009),” 2009; Puig, C., “Disney's 'Earth' treads familiar” 2009; Schwarzbaum, “Movie Review Earth,” 2009

6. Catsoulis, “Earth (2009),” 2009 p. online

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long-running criticism of animal-films as producing identification with the animals as individuals, not necessary as apart of an ecosystem, and planet, that human consumption effects negatively.

The competing views of *Earth* and its popularity as a rhetorical text about nature, serve as ample justification for rhetorical analysis. However, its status as a text representative of Disney's portrayal of nature, and as an example of communication about animals in the public sphere, deserve a closer look. *Earth* is the first product of Disney Nature, a division meant to replicate the success of their *True Life Adventures* series, responsible for bringing fantastic animal-documentaries to American audiences. Some critics have argued that it is in part a continuation of Disney's popularization of the "wildlife" or "animal" genre of films, although *Earth* presents nature in a more "empathic" fashion compared to previous texts.[7] Given the pedagogical force of Disney Films in the public sphere,[8] and the predominance of animal movies as a genre, it is important to investigate *Earth* as a text representative of how the public relates to non-human others.

Earth can also be read as a product of cultural attitudes towards the non-human world. Typical of Disney films, it is called forth by the popular fascination with the natural world that make wildlife films continually popular, providing it ready-made market.[9] The popularity of *Earth*, and *March of The Penguins*[10] shows that their narrative qualities have brought about a change in consumer demand for images of nature, as long

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7. Walsh, B. "Disney's version of Earth," 2009

8. Giroux, H., "Rodent Politics" 1999; "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy," 2004

9. Good examples of reactions to the film that de-emphasize global warming include: Berton, J., "Earth' full of Friendly," 2009; Catsoulis, J., "Earth (2009)," 2009; Puig, C., "Disney's 'Earth' treads familiar" 2009; Walsh, B. "Disney's version of 'Earth," 2009

10. Jacquet, Luc, 2005

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as they contain popular tropes easily transposable onto human culture.[11] *Earth* then, presents itself as a text through which we can investigate the popular cultural themes that shape public fascination with animal documentaries.

Increasing public interest in images of animals is evidenced by the popularity of films, and the rise of cable T.V. stations, such as The Discovery Channel and Animal Planet, that feature natural history and wildlife shows. The proliferation of images of animals in the public has coincided with the increasing separation of humans from regular contact with the natural world, producing complacency with destruction of the non-human world.[12] Jennifer Parker-Starbuck argues that "animals have largely been relegated to objects used in a technologized food-processing system, a scientific-experimentation process, and as sentimentalized subjects for film, resulting in a blind spot when animal's lives are at stake."

Authorizing the current practices of industrial progress, the depiction of a nature absent human intervention makes it impossible for audiences to relate to the non-human world without regarding it as a resource ready for exploitation.[13] Widespread complacency with industrialism generated by encounters with images of a pristine wilderness, put the continued existence of the non-human world at continual danger of complete destruction. It is within texts such as *Earth* that we can find how the images of the natural world hide the audience's complicity with the systems of modernity that destroy the planet at an ever quickening pace.[14]

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11. Bouse, D., *Wildife Films*, 2000; Chris, C., *Watching Wildlife*, 2006

12. Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 2000; Derrida, J., *The Animal*, 2002; Chris, C., *Watching Wildlife*, 2006; Horak, C., "Wildlife documentaries," 2006

13. DeLuca, "Image Politics," 1999; p. 65-66

14. Lippit, A., ibid., 2000; Derrida, J. ibid., 2002; Burt, J., "Morbidity and Vitalism," 2004

The use of rhetoric and images to create a feeling of connection between an imagined natural world and the audience invites an investigation of the relationship between the public images of animals, and the ongoing destruction of the non-human. The interrogation of *Earth* as a rhetorical artifact calls forth a critique of the exclusion of non-humans from the public sphere. The connections between practices of representation, the exclusion of animals from the public, and the increasing destruction of animals in the public sphere demand interrogation within the text.[15] This thesis will redirect the work of rhetoric in the public sphere towards investigating images that produce public disavowal of their complicity with the disappearance of animals. Specifically, it is important to investigate ethical implications for rhetoric that masks the ongoing slaughter of animals as apart of the systems of modernity.[16]

This thesis addresses the formation of animal-representation as manifest in "animal-films," a genre that tends towards realism in representation. At several points references to explicitly fictional, and even animated films, serve to establish comparisons between *Earth* and cultural tropes, while demonstrating the problems with delineating between "animal-films" and fictionalized portrayals of the non-human world. In different places, it may also refer to "wildlife films" and "nature films." Both terms refer to the category of "animal films," but have been widely used to denote that the films represent nature in general, not just animals as a category of beings. These distinctions will be used later in the text to contextualize the images of animals within images of their environment, an interaction that works to create different meanings.

By reviewing the literature on films similar to *Earth,* the next section will highlight attempts to analyze "animal-films" in recent communication literature. It will

15. McKerrow, R. "Critical Rhetoric," 1989

16. Derrida, J. ibid., 2002

argue that although the authors have incorporated studies of identification and rhetoric, little room is left for the emergence of nature as a material subject. Following the literature review, this chapter will highlight the necessity and methods of reading the human-animal relationship as produced in *Earth*. This methodology will become a topic of in-depth discussion in later chapters, providing the basis for a reading of the film. The final section will preview the following chapters. It will provide some detail as to the content of the following chapters, and their structure.

Recent Scholarship on Animal Movies

The proliferation of animal-films portends studies about their rhetorical significance. While little literature about *Earth* exists*,* literature about similar films will provide insight into the possible ways to approach the text. Since a wide variety of reviewers explicitly connected the film to previous incarnations of 'Disneyfied' nature, it is reasonable to argue that previous analysis can be applied in this instance. [17] While Earth certainly contains new and different aspects this thesis will address, reciting previous scholarship remains necessary.

This section will review recent scholarship about animal films as rhetorical artifacts. The scope of this review will be limited to articles that address how films address the human/animal relationship. While there is plenty of literature from the previous two decades about animal-films, it is important to attend to how they have been understood in the current rhetorical situation, with the mediation of the human-animal

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17. Berton, J., "Earth' full of Friendly," 2009; Catsoulis, J., "Earth (2009)," 2009; Puig, C., "Disney's 'Earth' treads familiar" 2009; Walsh, B. "Disney's version of 'Earth," 2009; Moore,R., "Disney Nature's Earth," 2009

relationship.[18] This section will outline the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis, demonstrating the need for the work of this thesis.

In an analysis of *Grizzly Man*[19] and *March of The Penguins,* Jennifer Ladino argues that although the films do engage in some unique strategies to create identification, they tend to represent animals in a way typical of the wildlife film genre.[20] She shows that they transpose human narratives and values onto the audience's imagination of non-human others. Ladino argues that *Grizzly Man* and *March of The Penguins* affect audience reconsideration of the human-animal divide. It is from the recognition of film as producing identification that the author approaches the two films.

In her discussion of *March of The Penguins*, Ladino shows that the camera positions the penguins as humans, struggling against the hardships of their environment. Through their animal proxies, the audience imagines themselves as separated from nature, as the film highlights how even animals struggle against their environment. Further, it humanizes the penguins, lending the narrative of birth and family life to interpretation through lenses such as the evangelical 'culture of life.' The scenes involving the birth of penguins are interpreted then, as affirming the sanctity of human life, not just the lives of animals. Despite the reconsideration of the human-animal relationship that the film affects, the author shows how this reconsideration reaffirms a form of "visual tourism"[21] based on an aesthetic that positions Antarctica as a pristine wilderness, separate from human intervention. According to her, the audience ends the film wanting to travel to Antarctica before it disappears completely.

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18. Lippit, A., ibid, 2000

19. Herzog, W., 2005

20. Ladino, J., "For the Love," 2009.

21. ibid., p. 70

Grizzly Man, a film about Timothy Treadwell, who spent thirteen consecutive summers living with grizzly bears in Alaska, was also subject to Ladino's analysis. Comparing the film to *Into the Wild* the author argues that Treadwell modifies the traditional narrative of a masculine venture into the wilderness by connecting it to the 'work of love.' She demonstrates this by showing that Treadwell referred to his existence in the wilderness as an authentic encounter with grizzly bears on their own terms. His films remind the viewers of animal subjectivity, "encouraging ethical inter-species relationships based on respectful love."[22] Because the lives of the bears intrude Treadwell, as he shares film space with them, the audience is reminded of their own animal like qualities. It is through these sequences that *Grizzly Man* avoids the desire to master the natural world, challenging the distinction between humans and non-human animals.

Showing that both *March of The Penguins* and *Grizzly Man* move the audience to reconsider the human/animal relationship, Ladino indicates that the films create identification with animals as agents, not just objects. Despite the potential problems with their strategies of identification, the author argues that the films are "exemplary"[23] of the potential for filmmakers to open space for a more respectful human/animal relationship and subsequent political action. As an assessment of the impact of these films on the public sphere, Ladino fails to account for the problems with transposing human stories and values onto the natural world. She focuses instead, on the possibility that animals may be seen as autonomous. the present study will attempt to account for this linkage, showing similar representations are just as likely to produce nature as an object for consumption.

22. Ibid, p. 73
23. Ibid., p. 85

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In her critique of *March of The Penguins,* Rebecca Wexler addresses the problems of anthropomorphism,questions the extent to which cinema is appropriated to lend value-laden narratives scientific authority.[24] According to her, many critics have read the film as an allegory that lends credence to the theory of intelligence design. She then argues that the audiences most receptive to readings of the film as favoring intelligent design were those audiences who already identify themselves as religious. While these readings were popularized by vocal religious critics, the secular and scientific critics were, for the most part, silent about the film's false scientific authority.

Wexler poses the problem of the film's veneer of scientific authority as inextricably related to audience expectations and patterns of consumption. She argues that the documentary format of the film allow filmmakers to hide the fictional aspects of the narrative, and the contrived nature of its construction. In *March of the Penguins*, Wexler finds that the advanced editing allows a seamless transition between human-constructed narrative and images of nature completely absent human intervention. Despite constant fictionalizations of the family life of penguins, the audience is lead to interpret the anthropomorphic aspects of the film as fact. This is especially true given the camera-work of the film, that uses fictional plot devices, and technical manipulation, to make it appear objective. The author concludes that the film presents problems with the ideas of scientific authority and popular support for religious policies in the public. For Wexler, *March of the Penguins* served as an important "starting point"[25] for a broader discussion of how film can lend scientific authority to religious and ideological norms.

In a review of *Lady and the Tramp*, Goldmark and Mcknight demonstrate how anthropomorphism in cinema can be used to construct public ideas of ethnicity and

24. Wexler, R. "Onward, Christian Penguins," 2008
25. Ibid., pg. 278

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citizenship.[26] According to the authors, the film uses different dog and cat species to represent different races. The film's anthropomorphic images correspond with popular motifs surrounding the public imagination of immigration, legitimating popular discourses of ethnic exclusion as benign or natural. The authors retell the scene where Lady is introduced to the Siamese cats. Analyzing 'The Siamese Cat Song,' they ague that it reaffirms a national narrative of the threat of Asian immigration in the American homeland. Promoting a view of difference as dangerous, this scene transposes post-colonial anxieties onto the cinematic text through the use of animal images.

The use of cinema to transpose ideas of citizenship is brought to the fore in *Lady and the Tramp*, according to Goldmark and Mcknight, because dog care and ownership are apart of the space of collective citizenship in the American public. The film uses spatial representations of dogs in stereotypical ethnic scenes, such as the alley of an Italian restaurant, to highlight a connection between dog breeds and ethnicity. This connection, according to the authors, affirms an understanding of ethnicity as biological difference, traces of which are still visible in the public sphere. The film is thus caught up in an economy of racial representation that re-affirms the American public as under-threat from ethnic others, who occupy the scenes juxtaposed against upper-class enclaves represented by Lady's home.

Furthermore, the authors show that the use of animals as 'surrogates' for narratives of citizenship allow Disney to obfuscate responsibility for an exclusive understanding of 'American social membership.'[27] Because the film allows the audience to accept ethnic difference as similar to the difference of dog breeds, and represents difference as a product of the scene of the immigrant life-style, it legitimizes conceptions

26. "Locating America," 2008
27. Ibid. p.109

of immigration as social contamination. Framed through anthropomorphism, the post-war narrative of race as a battle for biological and social preservation are accepted by the audience with little room for critique.

The authors complete the article with a criticism of the discourses excluded from the text. The first is a discussion of the class aspects of social exclusion and representation. Tramp's supposed poverty is contrasted to the life of Lady, whose owners are upper-class dog. This contrast, however, is erased through the discourse of ethnic difference, 'stifling' any focus on class as producing oppression. The use of spatial representations of a 'stable America,' and the 'borderlands,' where immigrants and minorities live, lends credence to this interpretation, naturalizing class-difference as a product of the social environment, not the economy.

Goldmark and Mcknight then argue that the film's vision of America is completely replete of African Americans. This vision is apart of the 'racist biopolitics' typical of Disney's representations of America as a country of European immigrants.[28] Even when present, African Americans tend to be given only limited inclusion. The authors conclude that *Lady and the Tramp*, calls forth a biological understanding of race that continues to influence public debates. By focusing on differential character of the possible threats, they conclude that the film discourages solidarity of non-white people against forms of social exclusion.

In a succinct criticism of the human-nature relationship as created through animal films, Phil Bagust posits that they embody a hybrid form of cinema.[29] 'Wildlife films' combine elements of fiction and scientific documentary to present themselves as objective descriptions of reality while containing a variety of fictionalizations. While

28. Ibid. p. 115

29. "Screen Natures,"April, 2008

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some critics have posited these films as fundamentally new forms, the author argues that new documentaries in film and on television are not dissimilar from the conventions established with the help of Disney's early forays into animal films.

Because of concerns for profit in television and film-making however, the spectacular elements of wildlife films remain prominent. Using the term 'blue-chip documentaries' to denote the rise of fantastic films featuring mega-fauna and a veneer of scientific legitimacy, Bagust demonstrates that audiences are likely to understand the films as representative of reality. The author then connects this quality to discourses on the constructed nature of ecology in the modern world.

The analysis then shows how some films such as *Jurassic Park*, and films that purport to be 'more scientific' such as the *Walking with...* series, transcend the documentary/fiction dichotomy.[30] What connects these films is that they use new technologies to summon a fictional ecology on screen. These fantastic elements, far from being understood as reducing the scientific nature of the films, are credited with constructing a more believable and entertaining cinematic world. Noting that entertainment imperatives drive the use of these fantastic mechanisms, the author concludes that these films transgress the market boundaries between documentary and fiction, that were simply the construction of critics, not a structuring force in film production.

Arguing that competing readings of *An Inconvenient Truth* expose an intertextual economy between environmental jeremiad and disaster films, Rosteck and Frentz propose a method of reading myths that resolves the contrasting readings.[31] According to them,

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30. For instance, *Walking with Dinosaurs* (1999), and *Walking with the Cavemen* (2003). They are apart of the series that ran periodically on the BBC between 1999 and 2005. It was re-aired by Discovery Channel sometime later.

31 "Myth and multiple Readings," February, 2009

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the tropes within the film can be related to popular representations of nature throughout history; such as readings of nature as a crucial link to our place in the 'cosmic scheme,' and as a place in need of a mythic hero. Negotiating readings of the film as documentary, as a natural disaster film, and as a narrative of personal transformation for Al Gore, the authors show how the film borrows from various genres and deploys multipe strategies to produce audience identification.

The film centers on a narration of Gore's development into an environmental activist. Contrasting images of a pristine nature, and the negative effects of climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth* establishes the former vice-president's desire and authority to intrepret science for the audience. Gore's position shows the necessity of the use of rhetoric in the intrepretation of scientific debates, a situation that often draws controvery over the credentials of the speaker. By using documentary footage framed around his narrative of science, he is able to 'neutralize suspicions' that of his use of science is for self-aggrandizement.[32] Rosteck and Frentz then discuss how the juxtaposition of the personal and scientific aspects of climate change attempt to call the audience toward personal action. The dual movement of personal struggle and the impending environmental catastrophe, according to the authors, remedies some of the pitfalls of the jeremiad as an appeal for change.

Arguing that the film was successful in cultivating audience willingness to change public consumption habits, Rosteck and Frentz regard the film as an effective excersize in intertextuality among film genres and rhetorical strategies. Combining science, political rhetoric, and autobiography, *An Inconvenient Truth* deploys multiple strategies to construct a powerful myth that necessitates political action. Furthermore, representation

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32. Ibid., p. 11

of nature as a sublime place where we can garner a better connection with the cosmos, is apart of a jeremiad that constrasts the world with the increasingly intense consequences of climate change. Concluding that these aspects of the film are irreducible to a single reading, the authors show that *An Inconvenient Truth* mirrors the public's fractured understanding of nature.

Discussion of the representations of animals in film has shown that they are an site for the formation of public understandings of both human and non-human others, and their relationship to current cultural practices. The studies have, to a large extent, focused on the ability of films to naturalize meanings constructed through the processes of film, including the insertion of fictional narratives. Only the review of *An Inconvenient Truth* demonstrated that the representation of non-humans had the ability to produce social awareness and possibly political action. Even when a form of identification is established by films, such as in *March of The Penguins*, critics have found that audiences are likely to be fascinated by the images, without producing a desire to change their material relationship to animals, or nature as a whole.

The reviews have little discussion of the possible place for the influence of the material substance of nature, and its possible emergence through the interaction between cinema and the audience. With the possible exception of Ladino's article, the recent literature on the representation of nature as rhetoric fails to account for the possible subjectivity provided by animal images themselves. While Ladino argues that *Grizzly Man* allows animal subjectivity to emerge, there is little consideration of how it is prefigured by the audience, that expects animals to be objects for the dissimenation of human meaning.

Also excluded from the recent literature is a discussion of how films influence the public understanding of the human-animal relationship. The tranposition of exclusionary visions of the public onto animal images is a common strategy in animal films, leaving the audience with little room to critique the vision of society they produce. Given the importance scholars give to cinema in estabishing the credibility of the cinematic world, scholars must attend to these films in the context of the modern public sphere, where many of their anthropomorphic motifs first emerge.

While the recent literature on the representation of animals in film has attended to parts of this relationship, there is little connection between the strategies they expose and the overall critique of the objectification of animals as an ongoing problem apart from global warming. The interrogation of Earth should remedy these problems with the literature on animal and nature films, interrogating the possibility of animal subjectivity therein. This reading will take place in the context of a crtique of the exclusion of animals from the public sphere, and the ongoing violence that this exclusion produces.

Engaging Earth as a Rhetorical Text

The purpose of this thesis is to show that *Earth* is an important text for understanding how the human/animal relationship is constructed in the public sphere. While seemingly providing a space for public identification with a nature they rarely encounter, this text will argue that scholars must attend to how the film creates a fantastic nature. It will highlight how this ecology is the product of the historical development of an obsession with more accurate visual assessments of the natural world, as an extension of human desires to master reality. As an example of the growing popularity of televisual and cinematic images of animals, the film uses previously shot footage that resonates

with the public in order to construct a problematic image of nature. The rhetorical significance of *Earth* then, lies in its construction of the human/animal divide, a subject that demands investigation given the continuing exclusion of animals from the public sphere.

Given the decreasing contact between the public and the non-human world, the human-animal relationship is increasingly constructed through rhetorical artifacts such as *Earth*. As one of the earliest and most recurring subjects of film, animals have been the subject of almost every form and genre of film. They have ranged from being the scene of a human narrative, to being the central subject, as in animal-films. As such, film has become a central medium for the circulation of the discourses that constitute public understandings of the non-human world. As a Disney film that exists somewhere between a completely fictional account and a documentary, *Earth*, provides little in the way of clues to point to it's subjective narration and sequence construction. Thus, this thesis argues that it is important to attend to *Earth* as a rhetorical artifact demonstrative of the use of human narratives to assign meaning to the non-human world it represents.

The preservation of the perception of the non-human world through film, this thesis argues, is apart of the modernist dream of the reproducibility and object-status of nature, where the film attempts to preserve a world that is quickly being destroyed. This act of preservation provides a certain credibility to the understanding of nature as a stable object, as the images in the film do not change with repeated viewings. The objectification of nature then, denies the change of nature as evolution, as the movement of time provides it with a constancy of change, a *becoming* that common rhetorical constructions deny.[33] By positing the natural world as stable and unchanging, the rhetoric

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33. Lippit, A. Ibid, 2000; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 1987

of *Earth* promotes audience misrecognition of nature as amenable to human management and preservation.

While it will be possible to identify potentially enabling aspects of *Earth* for the emergence of animal subjectivity*,* this thesis argues that it creates an affect of the presence of animals hides the public's complicity in destructive practices of consumption. The reduction of environmentalism to the promotion of acts of preservation continue current modes of consumption, on only a slightly reduced scale.   Furthermore, this thesis will show how, by positioning animals as only proxies for human meaning, or objects to be re-animated at the whim of the audience, the rhetoric of *Earth* affirms the status of nature as a place for human exploitation. Identifying the double-movement of protecting nature, while preserving it as an object for exploitation, is the goal of this text.

To do so, it is necessary to deploy a method that shows how the affect of presence created by film hides the absence of subjectivity for cinematic animals. This thesis will propose a way of reading sequences of images in the context of the narrative. It will highlight how the narrative and images over-code each other at different points, providing coherence to the film, despite the competing worlds of a pristine and disappearing nature found therein. By attending to the structure of presence and absence within *Earth*, this method of "doing visual rhetoric"[34] will be able to highlight the sequences that emphasize nature as both a pristine object, and a disappearing subject.

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34. "Doing visual rhetoric" is a concept explained by Sonja Foss, ("Framing the study," 2004), that positions the work of reading images as a performative act. In this light, this thesis will attempt to create something new in the form of a counter-reading to the idea of images of animals as a transformative practice.

Preview

The rest of this thesis will address *Earth* as a text representative not only of

popular nature-films, but also, of animal representation in the public sphere in general.

The following chapters will address animal films in general, and *Earth* specifically, as

apart of a history of rhetorical technologies that have, since the invention of folklore,

influenced how the public relates to the non-human world.   It will then construct a way

of reading the film that focuses on how different sequences create an illusion of mastery

over non-humans, situating the human-animal relationship as one of domination. This

thesis will then read *Earth* as a text that creates a superficial and human-centered

identification with images of animals. The conclusion will address the reading of images

in *Earth* as apart of the work of ethics and visual rhetoric, answering and amplifying the

demand to interrogate the domination of animals in the public sphere.

The second chapter interrogates the historical relationship between technologies

of representation and the construction of the human-animal relationship in the public

sphere. By outlining the movement of anthropomorphism and technologies of

representation, it will argue that the development of modern liberalism and the strategies

of animal representation are inseparable. It will do so through the construction of the

historical context of animal representations, beginning with myth, religious texts, and

literature. It will then address the explicitly visual nature of the relationship, starting with

the development of visual technologies such as the microscope. It will trace the context

to the development of photography as a means of visual capture and reproduction of

animal images that spurred further the development of film as a technology to study

animal motion. Finally, the chapter will address the development of cinematic

representations of nature as a rhetorical technology that was crucial to spreading a modern conception of nature as a reserve of resources.

The third chapter will propose a theory of reading animal films that accounts for the problems with modernity's construction of animals as visual objects. It will contextualize this method of reading through a discussion of the exclusion of animals from the public as the basis for the liberal subject, and consequently the systems of the slaughter of animals this system justifies. Through these readings, and a discussion of popular readings of the positioning of animals as objects within the cinematic apparatus, it will argue that the possibility of empathic identification of animals in film can also be read as producing a fantasy of control and manipulation of the natural world. This fantasy of control, this chapter argues, is manifest in technologies of animal representation such as photography and the microscope, that assuage audiences by bringing them into contact with what they mistake to be the essence of the natural world. Through the use of theories of rhetoric as identification with the affective experience of film, this chapter will propose a method of reading that accounts for the illusion of presence produced by animal films. It will argue that reading *Earth* necessitates that the critic engage an economy of presence and absence as it works to convince the audience that their experience of the images is as authentic as any encounter with the natural world. It will set the stage for the analysis, that will focus on how sequences common to most animal films, in concert with the narration, produces animals as objects for human manipulation by the public.

The analysis will the images in Earth as fulfilling the audience's fantasy of possession and control over the natural world. It will argue that the film continues many of the predominant themes of the animal-film genre, contributing to the development of

the human-animal relationship in the public-sphere. It will construct a typology of sequences to show how the narrative frames the animals as tools for the exhibition of human motifs such as the importance of family, scientific authenticity, and the omnipresence of death as a threat to the individual subject. By emphasizing the human ability to master and re-creates the natural world through technology, this chapter will argue the film is apart of the modernist imagination of nature as a place of human meaning and unlimited resources.

In conclusion, this thesis will argue that the reading of images of animals in *Earth* call forth a reconsideration of the material and ethical implications of rhetorical practice. By positing the work of the rhetorician as accounting for the treatment of Others in the public sphere, it will become possible to understand this thesis as opening space for the consideration of the forthcoming representations of nature, such as Disney Nature's *Oceans*, premiering in April. Furthermore, the conclusion will argue that *Earth* demands a reconsideration of constitutive theories of rhetoric as material practice. It will argue that only though incorporating analysis of the affective power provided by images of the material subjects they are supposed to represent, can the work of a critical rhetoric take into account the interaction with animals as material subjects with the rhetorical mechanisms of animal representation, and the production of meaning with the audience. Thus, the conclusion will situate the analysis as a possible response to the problems of modernity and representation as posited in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

A Rhetorical History of Animal Representation

Introduction

Technologies of representation are crucial to the production of the human-animal

relationship, as animals lack the faculty of language necessary to enter the field of

representation as subjects.[1] While discourses of anthropomorphism and objectification

produce the relationship between the human public and animals, the strategies would not

have the same force without audience expectations developed through the historical

popularization of technologies and genres of animal representation. Investigation of the

inter-relationship between strategies of animal representation and the technologies that

produce them can provide ample ground to reconstruct the rhetorical context that not only

produced *Earth,* but also provides grounds for audience interpretation of the film.

Interrogating the technologies used to construct anthropomorphic meaning in the

public sphere is crucial to understand the conditions under, and means through which

audiences encounter animal representation.[2] The history presented here is also called

forth by the work of rhetoric as "inventing a text suitable for criticism."[3] As a product of

cultural context, it is only possible to understand interactions between the *Earth* and it's

audience through an understanding of the historical development

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[1] I take this concept loosely from Foucault's (The Order of Things, 1977) observation that systems of knowledge, in this case the deliniation of humans from animals, and animal's inability to speak in the public sphere, produces objects and tools for the purpose of circulating knowledge.

[2] Finnegan, K., "Rhetorical history of the visual" 2004

[3] Mcgee, M."Text, Context," 1990, p.288

of the circulation. Through a construction of the history of technologies of animal

representation, it will be possible to better understand how to approach the film.

Even when constituted through the process of *ekphrasis,* or the use of language to

create visual imagery[4], animal images construct how we imagine non-humans. It is

possible to read the forms of representation as different technologies of circulation that

constitute and frame how the audience encounters them. Jonathon Burt, taking into

account not only film, but Zoo's, photography, and new television formats, argues that,

"the history of the visible animal is the product of a mosaic of institutions, technologies,

and cultural practices, all of which interconnect in various ways."[5]

Not all of the technologies mentioned here were used for representation in the

public. However, we can trace their importance to the production of cultural attitudes, as

well as new means of circulation, and representation, that established the grounds for

popular practices of image consumption. For instance, we can find that from the

obsession with painting, drawing, and other visual arts, western culture moved to develop

technologies of visual capture culminating in the development of film.[6] These events,

while they do not constitute a coherent or causal chain of cultural development, do

construct a variety of fragments in which to situate the film. While the importance of

rhetorical context has been examined in depth elsewhere, new technologies and ways of

representation contribute to an always changing rhetorical context.[7]

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[4] Finnegan, K. "Rhetorical history" 2004

[5] Burt, J., *Animals in Film*, 2002, p. 20

[6] Gronbeck, B., "Visual Rhetorical Studies," 2008

[7] A good reference on the rhetorical context Bitzer, L. (1968) *The Rhetorical Situation* in Readings in *Rhetorical Criticism* eds. Burghardt, C. 1995 For an understanding that accounts for contingency and the criticism presented here see: Mcgee, C. "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," 1990 *Western Journal of Communication*

One must be careful however, to not understand these technologies as flowing along a linear path of development. Rather, the events are only part of the total collection of rhetorical forms, images, and individual choices, that have contributed to the fragmented reality of the public sphere. As such, Jonathon Burt has argued that, "there needs to be a more specific description for the construction of the visual animal, one that takes better account of the particular positionings of the animal in relation of the human."[8]

It is through the interrogation of the film's context, especially in relation to the human-animal relationship, that we will find the historical work to also have a critical function. Posing this history of technologies of animal representation as apart of a greater critique of modernity, this chapter connects the technologies to new methods of viewing and consuming animal images.[9] This will demonstrate that the fascination with the human-animal relationship in the public sphere has developed alongside technologies of representation, that are the product of the collective desire to more accurately know the natural world.

It will do so by interrogating animal fables and myths, followed by the development of scientific means of classification that influenced the development of different technological means of representation to enhance human perception. This movement influenced the popularization of nature and animal photography, as well as the first motion study experiments. These developments can be understood as apart of the cultural process that produced the development of film. It will be necessary to engage the

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[8] Burt, J, ibid, 2002, p. 44

[9] Finnegan, ibid., 2004

history of animal-films, as they have contributed to the development of popular

expectations and methods of consumption that provided the ground for the development

of *Earth*. Through these moves, this chapter will provide ground from which to situate

the constraints and audience demands that govern how we are likely to read the film.

Literary Animals

Throughout the development of western culture, various texts have addressed the

human-animal relationship. Some of the earliest mechanisms for disseminating rhetoric,

religious, mythical, and fictional works, demonstrate the continuity of anthropomorphic

motifs in western culture, that attach *animality* to a *logos*. While some later authors such

as Kafka show *animality* escaping all rational explanation, earlier texts explain *animality*

as either apart of the origins of what it means to be human, or a quality of god-like

creature. As Akira Lippit argues, "Animals are linked to humanity through mythic,

fabulous, allegorical and symbolic associations, but not through the possession of

language as such."[10] Thus, fables and other literary texts about animals and *animality*

offer evidence of the rhetorical construction of the human-animal relationship.

To contextualize discussions of anthropomorphism, this section will argue that

animality haunts the founding and development of culture in the West. This discussion

will include texts that either influenced, or exemplify, the development of the cultural

imagination of animals and *animality*. Each text adds a unique facet to our understanding

of these phenomena, as this section will focus on texts that use strategies such as

anthropomorphism to construct the human-animal relationship.

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[10] Lippit, A, *Electric Animal* 2000, p. 7

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No western myth is as famous, or influential, as the story of creation in the book of Genesis.[11] Although *The Bible* was written after some of the other texts, it continues to serve as a popular justification for a stable boundary between humans and animals. Not only does God create Adam in his own image, Satan is embodied as a serpent. In this way, we come to think of humans as privileged above animals, or in some cases, to understand them as having a mythic power. Overall however, the text tends to emphasize human exploitation or control of nature. For instance, the notion that Adam was given dominion over the animals has served as a central tenet in the Western tradition. In fact, Adam's power of naming has been cited as a metaphor for the idea that animals are excluded from discourse. The ability to control the *Earth*, given to Adam by God, has also served popular justification for continued exploitation of the natural world.[12] When contextualized with Adam and Eve's recognition of their own nudity, it is apparent that the biblical creation story provides for a distinct separation from between the human and the non-human.

The earliest emergence of folklore surrounding animals discussed here, can be found in Homer's *Odyssey*.[13] The importance of myths such as this to the development of our early imagination cannot be overstated, as Xenophanes and other early rhetorical theorists referenced the epic in their interrogations of the definition of humanity. Similar to other myths, yet, unlike the biblical representations, *The Odyssey* begins the challenge the distinction between humans and animals.

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[11] The first collection of the bible has dated to AD 382, although the New International Version used by the author is cited as much later.

[12] Derrida, J., "The Animal," 2002

[13] *The Odyssey* was written sometime during the 8th Century B.C.

Representations of animals and *animality* occur throughout the text. For example, the figure of Proteus is inscribed as a god who "lies down, and goes to sleep in a great sea cave, where the seals- Halosydne's chickens as they call them- come up also from the grey sea, and go to sleep in shoals all round him." He is thus aligned with the category of *animality,* or of possessing characteristics normally associated with animals, such as sleeping in a cave with seals. Proteus' *animality* lends itself to a fundamental untrustworthiness created by its Otherness to humanity. As Homer indicated: "He will turn himself into every kind of creature that goes upon the earth, and will become also both fire and water." Through the story, the element of *animality* present within Proteus is seen as dangerous, producing an oppositional quality that Odysseus will have to overcome in order to achieve his goal. This, and other examples, demonstrate how animals and animality became a rhetorical construct through cultural myths.

Centuries later, the founding myth of Rome also played a central part in developing the cultural imagination about *animality* and animals. The founding of Rome, according to Plutarch, is in wide dispute, as there are multiple recountings of the myth that proliferated throughout Roman society.[14] The true story, according to him, begins when Tarchetius, the King of Alba, receives a prophecy from an Oracle about a child of infamy that will be born. This prophecy spread throughout the kingdom before Roma, married to Latvius, gave birth to "two boys, whom Tarchetius gave into the hands of one Teratius, with command to destroy them; he, however, carried and laid them by the river side, where a wolf came and continued to suckle them."[15] Thus, the future founders of

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[14] Plutarch, "Romulus," 1888, Written 75 C.E.

[15] Ibid., p. 14

Rome were cast off from human society and were raised by wolves: "And they were called Romulus and Remus (from ruma, the dug), as we had before, because they were found sucking the wolf."[16]

This part of the founding narrative, that the brothers raised by wolves were responsible for the beginning of Rome, shows further the fascination with the border between humans and animals. The centrality of this fascination to the founding myth of Rome, confirms that the relationship was central to the founding of public imagination in the west. The beginnings of Roman culture, to which many cultures since have pointed to as a model for western values, are inextricably linked to the imagination of animals. Further, the notion that wolves were able to raise the children exemplifies a maternal instinct similar to that of humans, that further mystifies the human/animal divide.

Questioning of the border between humanity and *animality* is extended through the work of Franz Kafka. His work *The Metamorphosis,*[17] has been studied as a narrative that features a human transforming into a bug. As the story progresses, the main character, Gregor Samsa, is increasingly dissociated from the human world through his physical characteristics, and his inability to relate to insect others. When he completes his transformation, he loses the ability to communicate through language.

Showing how their inability to recognize him as human affects his family relationships, *The Metamorphosis* focuses on how Gregor's relationship with humans is forever altered, ultimately resulting in his death. Demonstrating the way in which our world would change if we were no longer recognizable as human, the book is to some

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[16] Ibid., p. 15

[17] Kafka, F., 1915

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extent a product of our obsession with the human-animal border. These changes are meant to be shocking to the readers, as the human/animal divide has been a source of anxiety for literary as well as political cultures.

Animal representations in literature can also be found in the late 19th and early 20th century adventure writers such as Jack London and Rudyard Kipling. While their stories are too diverse and complex to address here, the popularity of these works just prior to the development of cinema shows the public desire to identify with human narratives through animal characters.[18] While Derek Bouse draws a causal connection between wilderness adventure novels and public fascination with animal-films, it is more likely that they are one of the many cultural discourses that have influenced their popularity.[19] Wildlife adventure novels do however, serve as an example of the popularity of the representation of nature in the public sphere around the time of the invention of film. Furthermore, the books demonstrated the popular desire to transfer human narratives onto depictions of the natural world, continuing the public's fascination with the human-animal boundary.

The rhetorical construction of animals has taken place through the divergent processes of anthropomorphism, and the delineation of the human-animal boundary. Prior to the development of new visual technologies such as the microscope, camera, and film, the cultural imagination of animals was a product of religion, literature, and myth. The way these artifacts frame the human-animal divide represent the traditional mystification of the human-nature relationship. This process has contributed widely to

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[18] Bouse, D., *Wildlife Films*, 2000; p. 102-103

[19] Ibid, 2000

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the current scene in which the human-animal relationship is portrayed. In the following sections, the importance of this scene to the development of wildlife films will be explored.

Animals and The Development of Visual Technologies

The development of wildlife films can also be linked to the public fascination with science and the modern ability to visually categorize and understand nature. By shifting the human-animal relationship towards being a product of visual rhetoric, the obsession with technologies of representation have changed what the public understands as an encounter with the non-human world. Culminating in the technologies of modernity of which film is a part, this obsession has shifted popular experience of nature to a mediated event.[20] This changes not only in the priority given media centered on representations of animals and nature, but also, changes in the viewing habits by the audience. The technological advancements in visual encapture such as the microscope and camera have been crucial in the extension of the popular myths of presence in the age of science and empiricism.

The importance assigned to visual observation in science, and the technological advancements of the microscope and camera, provided for the popularization of ways of viewing animal-images that are apart of the context of the films themselves. Technological advancements in visual representation are in some part, a manifestation of the desire for presence within representation, as it produces an affective identification with the photo-realistic subject. This section will trace the technological advances prior to the development of film, such as the microscope and camera. It will highlight their

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[20] Deluca and Peeples, "From Public Sphere," 2002; Ingram, *Green Screen*, 2000

contribution to the increasing categorization of animals through visual means. It will also highlight the growth of visuality as central to the human-animal relationship, as audiences have increasingly sought out the experience of being present with nature.

Central to the development of new visual technologies was a widespread belief in scientific and communicative rationality that animals are said to "lack." The development of the microscope and other technologies of scientific observation has allowed humans to visually study animals.[21] Lacking a singular cause, the popularization of scientific forms of animal representation, as apart of the construction of nature as a rhetorical artifact, coincided with a two-fold process: "the new privileges associated with observation" and "the invention of the microscope" as well as the belief that natural science "provided a model of rationality".[22] This contributed to the expansion and specialization of the human and natural sciences during the Enlightenment, a central part of the current university system.

According to Foucault, new visual technologies provided for the development of a variety of agricultural and scientific disciplines driven by the idea that it is possible to classify and hierarchize all "living beings."[23] Because of the lack of knowledge about biology during the 18th and 19th centuries, it is apparent that "to write the history of a plant or an animal was as much a matter of describing its elements or organs as of describing the resemblances that could be found in it, the virtues it was thought to posses, the legends and stories with which it had been involved".[24] In concert with the cultural

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[21] Foucault, M. *The Order of Things*, 1971

[22] Ibid., 1971, p. 125

[23] Ibid., 1971, p. 126

[24] Ibid., 1971, p.129

mythos of animals and *animality,* the development of natural history and the sciences established the popular frame for understanding the natural world prior to the development of cinema.

These natural histories did not constitute the end of the intertwinement of rhetoric and our understanding of nature. Foucault tells us that the progression of scientific thought produced new technologies that attempted to bring the scopic and linguistic relationship as "close as possible".[25] Relying on artificial means of magnification, scientific study of nature attempted to produce better descriptions and representations of beings and a more adequate hierarchization of them. This produced new positivist methodologies essential to informing our understanding of the history of nature as well as humans. After this split, science can be understood as relying on the context for the interpretation of meaning, as the obsession with visual proofs reduces it to the work of classification.   The spread of positivism then, is apart of the flattening of the natural world into a system of visual objects to be experienced through their appearance, a theme that underwrites current modes of film consumption.[26]

Through the criticism of the development of positivism, it is apparent that our understanding of the world is produced in the space between language and sight, where humans must identify objects and associate them with words.   The process of thinking produces an understanding of nature as falsely continuous, as subjects associate the similar outward appearances of animals as indicating that they are identical. This is the basis of the systems of classification of animals, even if they exist in different

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[25] Ibid., p. 132

[26] Ibid., p. 133-38; Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology,* 1974; p. 81-87

geographical locations.[27] This mistake can be compared to the failure to think through dissemination in the public sphere. Just as we think of animals as being continuous, the mistake of science is to think that we can transmit knowledge in a continuous fashion, and that their observations are somehow more valid because they produce presence. This focus on reduction of nature to a *logos* denies the constant movement, the force of the becoming of nature, that escapes the purview of scientific methods of encapture.[28]

The drive toward scientifically knowing nature has produced and been shaped by a variety of technologies and rhetorics. Natural history then, "concerns a fundamental arrangement of knowledge, which orders the knowledge of beings so as to make it possible to represent them in a system of names".[29] In light of the observations about naming and the need to categorize animals as stable similarities, the scientific drive for knowledge about the non-human world is a central source of its objectification.[30] The desire for presence then is equated with the desire to posses the subject in totality, a form of narcissistic gaze.

Further, this investigation enriches our understanding of the rhetorical construction of nature and *animality*. Foucault argues that we should conceive of nature as a system of representations and rhetoric instead of a material process in order to understand the ways it interacts with regimes of governance and power. This exposes an important criticism of the representation of animals as crucial to understanding our relationship to all beings, including humans. While this thesis will argue later that it is

[27] Foucault,M. Ibid, 1977, p. 145-49

[28] Grosz, E. *The Nick of Time*, 2004; Derrida, J., *Dissemination*, 1981

[29] Foucault, M., ibid, 1977, p. 157

[30] Derrida, J., Ibid., 2002; Grosz, E., ibid., 2004

important to create space for the animals as material subjects to emerge, the use of

discourse to construct our imagination of animals has been crucial in the development of

many strategies of anthropomorphism.[31]

The beginnings of photographic experimentation were built around the same

desire to know reality better. The ability to create photographs, added an aspect of

"analogical representation" that changed the standard set by the other arts for reproducing

reality.[32] While early photographers could not capture living subjects in the wild, that did

not stop them from finding "animal corpses and captive animals" that were more

"cooperative" towards their ends.[33] This restriction on the ability of photography to

effectively depict reality, however, was engaged as a problem by pioneers such as

Eadweard Muybridge. As the result of a wager placed on whether or not a horse's feet

completely leave the ground while in stride, Muybridge set about to photograph a running

horse to settle the bet. Using a tripwires to trigger a battery of cameras, he was able to

produce the first known photographs of animal motion.

In the same way that earlier classifications of animals relied on an obsession with

the ways we could understand animals via visual classification, "these pictures relied on

the 'principle of maximum visibility,' a kind of privileged looking at the animal and

human body."[34] The example of Muybridge shows how even in 1872, there was a

widespread obsession with using the new photographic technology to understand and

grasp nature better. Further, his participation in government funded nature and landscape

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[31] Foucault, M., ibid., 1977, p. 160-162

[32] Barthes, R., *Image/Music/Text*, 1977

[33] Chris, C., *Watching Wildlife*, 2006, p. 5

[34] Ibid., p. 7

photography in the national parks has been cited by Deluca and Demo as apart of the transformation of the public obsession with a sublime nature.[35]

Muybridge however, was only one of many photographers who explored the possibilities of natural photography. Etienne Jules Marey followed him, developing a camera to capture pictures of birds in flight. This was a significant step in the photography of nature. It moved the possible settings from controlled situations to the field, where animals had not been photographed in motion.[36] While motion and landscape photography are crucial developments in the visual capture of wildlife, other examples abound.

The desire to visually capture and classify nature was not always put to the most ethical ends. For example, the work of Felix Louis-Regnault attempted to use camera technologies to study the different kinds of humans, classifying them via biological characteristics, a project with racist predilections.[37] As early as the 1850's, field expeditions in Africa were carrying cameras to photograph their kills, although they could not capture images of live animals until the 1870s. Early photographs of moving animals in Africa often involved provoking the animal until they charged and the photographer was able to take a photograph, at which point the hunter would shoot the animal. This practice, known as "camera hunting," as well as a variety of other photographic techniques, were distributed in magazines of the time and provided audiences with a glimpse of life in a far-away place.[38]

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[35] "Imaging Nature," 2000

[36] Chris, Ibid., 2006, p. 7

[37] Chris, Ibid ., 2006, p. 8

[38] Chris, C., ibid., 2006, p. 9-14

The history of capturing animals on camera is, according to Susan Sontag, a manifestation of the desire to manage and control the world through instrumental knowledge.[39] When interacting with the subject, the photograph produces a certain affective nostalgia. For the audiences of safari photographs, that nostalgia is for a time and place where European empires continued to dominate. Chris argues that this process contributed to the audience's complacency toward colonialism, as it represented a barbaric practice of slaughtering fauna for the entertainment of audiences in Europe and America.[40] Taking Sontag's notion of photographs as "fantasy machines," it becomes apparent that the photographs of other cultures and animals provided Western audiences with the means of imagining that the outside world is theirs for the taking.[41]

If we are to follow Sontag further in showing the importance of affect in identification, one must be careful to decenter the observation that the quality of presence is crucial in schemes of identification.[42] However, her idea that audiences seek "traces of presence"[43] as a result of the nostalgia they produce demonstrates the extent to which audiences of nature photography participate in the fantasy of mastery over the non-human world. This process of objectification through photography established a popular mode of consumption that later media such as film will exploit.

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[39] Sontag, S., *On Photography,* 1977, p. 14

[40] Chris, ibid., 2006

[41] Sontag , ibid., 1977, p. 14

[42] Deluca and Demo, "Imaging Nature," p. 243

[43] Sontag, ibid., 1977, p. 16

Animal Films

The reproduction and circulation of animal images in the last century has increasingly become work of television and cinema. Given that the popularity of entertainment and informative formats, it should be no surprise that public representations of animals have an important impact on popular attitudes towards the non-human world. Even early films such as *Electrocuting an Elephant,*[44] that featured animal death caused by humans, drew widespread fascination from movie-going crowds. While certainly the production values and technology have changed from the first animal films, some basic motifs that emphasize mastery of nature that have persisted.

The growing number of films about animals, and the different formats they create, necessitate a discussion of the differing formats and subject matters that they have covered. This study will pay special attention to how animals are constructed as objects throughout the development of the genre. The development of animal-films has had a complex relationship with our ability to technologically capture and reproduce moving images. This section will make possible the connection between ways of viewing animal films, the history of animal representation, and the destruction of modernity made explicit in the next chapter.

We will find the distinctive types include films of captive and dead animals, safari films, Disney films about nature, 'blue-chip' science documentaries, that use high production values, and a variety of new small-screen formats. While historically, most of depictions of nature have been in the cinematic form, the section on 'blue-chip' animal documentaries, and new television formats will highlight the use of television as a

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[44] Edison, Thomas, 1903

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method of circulation as well. This survey should provide an overview of the cinematic context from which *Earth* was produced.

Films of Animals in Zoos/Dead Animals

The first variety of films about nature that emerged at the beginning of the last century were known as "natural history films." Produced in a closed environment such as a zoo, these films were often in the format of shorts, or *acualities* that showed audiences passing glimpses of an animal being fed by a human. The focus on feeding was a product of the need for the animals to be captive to the camera's exposure time. While as early as 1898 films such as *Ostriches Running* captured film of animals in motion, most early animal films were "fairly static" for the first decade and a half of the last century.[45]

Audiences, however, demanded increasing amounts of action involving animals and filmmakers were willing to provide it. These filmmakers often regarded their subjects as disposable. Many of the animals were provoked and then killed only to capture the required footage. Derek Bouse argues that the most obvious example of these films is Edison's *Electrocuting an Elephant,* that showed the death of Topsy, an elephant at the Zoo that had killed one of its handlers.[46] While this film was technically a documentary of an event that would have happened regardless of the intent to film it, the audience response foreshadowed the growth of films about animals that featured violence and death.

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[45] Bouse, ibid. 2000; pg. 44

[46] *Watching Wildlife*, 2000

The short versions of these films did not satiate the audience's demand to see films of animals. Bouse cites the premier of Oliver Pike's *In Birdland*,[47] a ten minute long film that took two years to film, as a crucial example of the increasing complexity of animal films during the beginning of the 20th Century.[48] This film, and others like it, corresponded with the development of narrative cinema in Hollywood by directors such as Edwin Porter. They demarcate a boundary in the genre between *actualities,* and the development of safari and hunting films. While during this period it remained difficult to film animals in their habitat, filmmakers recognized and exploited the fascination of audiences with images of the non-human world.

The popularity of animal films was not restricted to American audiences. The works of Jean-Painleve, former Prime-Minister of France stand out as an example of popular animal-films directed towards non-American audiences during this period. While his film-making career spanned the better part of the 20th Century, his work in the mid-1920's and 1930's was groundbreaking in bringing avant-garde film techniques to the world of scientific representation.[49] "Painleve" according to Jonathon Burt, "saw cinema as a synthesis of art, poetry and science."[50]

For his 1934 film *The Seahorse,* Painleve went to great lengths to capture a seahorse giving birth. Filmed in a studio equipped with saltwater aquariums, capturing the birth required several days of filming. This film is not only notable for capturing a unique event, it is also one of his many films that deployed new forms of underwater

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[47] Pike, Oliver, 1907

[48] Bouse, D. ibid., 2000

[49] Berg, B., "Maverick Filmmaker," 2005

[50] Burt, J., Ibid., 2002, p. 194

filming. While he would produce more than 200 films during his career that spanned

until the 1980's, and became the first person to broadcast an animal-film on French

television, it was The Seahorse that he is most remembered for.[51] Even so, it remains

notable that Painleve's career spanned a wide variety of formats of nature-films, at every

turn turning a fantastic eye to the world around him.

Given their short form, public fascination with the nascent genre of "nature films"

demonstrates not a fascination with anthropomorphism qualities, but rather the collective

obsession with mechanical reproducibility and management as overcoming the problem

of the finitude of nature. The ability to constantly re-play the image of a captive or dead

animal allows the audience to participate in a fantasy of constant re-animation, erasing

the significance to which they assign the destruction of nature.[52] Furthermore, the ability

to capture images of animals in the zoo has lead commentators to compare the cataloging

of nature through film to the idea of a virtual zoo, affirming humanities' ability to control

and manipulate the non-human.[53] The transition from motion studies to films provided

these images to widespread audiences for the first time, as images of animals were

presented for audience consumption.

Safari/Adventure Films

While the early actualities captured the images of animals, bringing them to

audiences, the growing popularity of films such as *Electrocuting An Elephant* pointed to

the audience's fascination with animal death as much as animal life. During the decades

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[51] Berg, B. Ibid., 2005

[52] Lippit, A., *Electric Animal*, 2000; 2002

[53] Bouse, D. ibid. 2000; Chris, C. ibid. 2006

following their popularization, filmmakers used advances in camera technology to film animal and human subjects in places far removed from western audiences. The development of hunting and safari films that often required the filmmaker to provoke animals and then kill them after they charged the camera, obtaining the necessary footage.

While films such as *Hunting the White Bear*[54] featured movement with the animals in their habitat, this new format centered around the human-explorer cum protagonist who would either provoke the animal or explain it's significance to the audience while the cameramen looked on.[55] One characteristic of these early films is that they feature a central expert or 'adventurer' who guides the plot line. The first couple of decades of animal films made a variety of filmmakers and adventurers into virtual celebrities as their films were consumed by movie-going audiences. The practice of having a 'star' adventurer to host the film is a practice that continues today, especially in televised formats.

There are a few notable examples of filmmakers of early safari films. Paul J. Rainey developed a variety of feature-length films about African safaris. Some accounts indicate that he killed upwards of 27 lions in the span of a month of filming, as he had to provoke the animals to get footage. Another example is Frank Kleinschmidt, who filmed almost exclusively in the arctic region. Attesting to the growing authority these films had about nature, Kleinschmidt's films were shown to congress in 1914 when they were attempting to legislate human interaction with the arctic region[56] While safari films relied

[54] Pathe Exchange Films, 1903

[55] Bouse, D., ibid., 2000, 47-48

[56] Ibid. pg. 46

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on images of actual events, constraints on technology continued to influence the limited

nature of their depiction of natural environments.

A particular pair of filmmakers from this era, Martin and Osa Johnson, standout as

especially prolific, and also as representative of many of the problems with early

filmmakers. While they attempted to provide "scientific accuracy and conservationist

messages,"[57] their films tended to not only essentialize animal life, they also produced

colonialist messages about other cultures. Overall, their films such as *Cannibals of the*

South Seas[58] are typical of the images of the periphery which presented people there as

savages.[59] The Johnson's work is apart of the rise of the safari and adventure films, that

attempted to capture images of animals as well as images of other cultures.

The mixing of animal images and images of other cultures is an important trait of

these films. The transposition of the discourses of savagery and irrationality around

animals to other cultures is a strategy of anthropomorphism that primed the audience for

the more subtle messages in later films. The explicit use of anthropomorphism as a

method of explanation foreshadowed the extent to which it would be given scientific

credibility by audiences later in the development of cinema.

Safari-adventure films also raised questions of the relationship between filmic

representations of nature and the material world it supposedly represents. Many of the

early explorers and filmmakers tended to present images of dead or captive animals as

alive or in their natural habitat. Adding to this problematic is the establishment of films

as centering around an expert or explorer is a strategy that would be used in later films, as

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[57] Chris,C., Ibid., 2006, pg. 13

[58] Martin and Osa Johnson, 1912

[59] Ibid., p. 13-15

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they were in early cinema, to establish the scientific credibility of the text. It is the combination of feigned scientific credibility and a constructed plot that drew comparisons between Safari films and the natural adventure books that had preceded them.[60]

Disney Films

As a product of the explosion of animal-films during the inter-war period, Walt Disney's "True Life Adventures" required the use of the ways of viewing they developed to make sense of their content, as they embodied qualities of documentaries and fictional films. Characterized by Derek Bouse as "the first fully live action films,"[61] current patterns of animal-film comsumption can be traced to Disney's production of films about nature. The audiences during the post-war era until the early 1960's mistook the "True Life Adventures" as attempting to educate them about the natural world, despite their constant insertion of fantasy and narrative that demarcated them from more objective presentations at the time.[62]

Despite repeated statements of the fantastic nature of the films, Disney was quoted by his directors as wanting to emphasize the beauty of nature as apart of the documentary form. At different times, he emphasized that his directors were as much "scientists" as "craftsmen."[63] Regardless of Disney's intent, it is clear that audiences understood the images of nature combined with a narration in a way that continues to influence public modes of consuming images of nature. Disney was responsible for

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[60] Bouse, D., 2000

[61] Ibid., p. 63

[62] Ibid., p. 62-65

[63] Ibid., p. 66-67

changing audience expectations for animal-films, as they encountered a variety of plot mechanisms that entranced them into a fantasy world masquerading as nature.

The impetus to shoot live action films featuring animals can be found in previous animated films such as *Bambi*,[64] where audiences were drawn in by the fantasy of being drawn closer to nature. *Bambi*, and *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*,[65] were commercially successful enough to establish the Disney brand identity around films featuring animals. That made the move to live-action animal-films a natural choice. Originally filmed as shorts to accompany Disney's feature films, by 1953, True Life Adventures were released as feature length films because of the popularity of the short versions.[66] Their popularity can not only be attributed to the use of fantastic imagery, but also the narrative, that accentuated a scientific-like presentation of events in the film.

The camera work and narrative were not the only notable features of the "True Life Adventures." For instance, Cynthia Chris cites music in the films as adding to the feel of the film being scientific. She demonstrates this through a discussion of *The Living Desert*, the most popular "True Life" film. According to her, these films were sometimes ridiculed for their choice of melodramatic or humorous music and sound. Most audiences did not understand the use of sound as decreasing the credibility of the film. Instead, they tended to read the films as having a high level of scientific accuracy.[67] It is the acceptance of the films as accurate that has shaped expectations for further animal-films to embody the same documentary motif.

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[64] Disney, W. 1942

[65] Ibid., 1937

[66] Chris, C.,*Watching Wildlife*, 2006, p. 33-36

[67] Ibid., p. 34-35

The "True Life" films were influential in shaping audience expectations for the genre. The success of the feature length versions propagated formulaic attempts to emulate their mix of fantasy, comedy, and nature. They demonstrated to other filmmakers the viability of films featuring animals, as the audiences for the first time experienced documentary like footage in concert with "the narrative conventions from mainstream Hollywood films."[68] According to Derek Bouse, "Today one can only speculate as to the influence of the 'True Life Adventures' on the perceptions and expectations of audiences from the 1950's to the 1970's, and on the sensibilities of other wildlife filmmakers seeking to emulate their success."[69]

Despite the production of other animal-films during the first decade after the Second World War, Disney's "True Life Adventures" were particularly important in shaping audience expectations and practices for the emergent genre.[70] One can find how the anthropomorphic tropes, and the construction of a nature that audiences mistake for reality, were already forming in these films. For instance, the films had overtones of social Darwinism, as the narrative tended to depict competition between animals as similar to human life. Also, they used birth scenes and an emphasis on life-cycles of animals to provide audiences with the necessary clues to interpret the films as human dramas.[71] By encouraging the audience to identify with animals competing in a social drama for survival, "true-life" films served to carry a social message that emphasized the social order as a natural one, as not even all animals have equal standing.

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[68] Bouse, D., *Wildlife Films*, 2000, p. 68

[69] Ibid., p. 69

[70] Ibid.; Chris, C. ibid., 2006

[71] Chris, C., ibid., 2006 p. 36-37

Not only does the anthropomorphism in the films raise concerns about scientific accuracy, it also raises questions of whether the "true-life" films were productive in encouraging environmental awareness. Cynthia Chris has argued that these films, with their "requisite happy ending,"[72] provide the audience with an assurance that the only necessary action is to see the movie again, allowing them to go about their lives with little thought of environmental problems. The influence of these Hollywood-style infused animal-films, their anthropomorphic narratives, and their fantastic representations of nature are qualities that can be found in almost every popular animal-film afterward, especially in films such as *Earth,* that explicitly take their cue from previous Disney films.

Cable Television, "Blue-chip Documentaries," and the Imagination of Nature

While Disney provided the cultural source of their popularity, modern animal shows and movies have grown with the influence of broadcasting and production companies. Many of these animal-films broke from the Disney model, attempting to provide a more accurate depiction of the natural world, while others continued to favor entertainment values in their production. The animal shows and films in the latter part of the 20th Century continued to use devices present in their predecessors, such as the use of an individual adventurer as the focal point of the text, the insertion of a narrative, and high production values. The films and shows, similar to the "True-Life" Series, are funded by production companies that want to reach audiences fascinated with images of animal-others they don't encounter in their everyday lives. [73]

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[72] Ibid. p. 39

[73] Bouse, D., "Are Wildlife Films," 1998

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Having established their presence in the market during the 1960's and 70's, The

National Geographic Society and the BBC's Natural History Unit continue to produce

and broadcast animal films. These production companies provide audiences with shows

and films that focus on scientific discovery and exploration, catering to the rising demand

for educational programming in the American and British public. *The Undersea World*

of Jacques Cousteau,[74] produced by National Geographic and broadcast on ABC,

featured the travelogues of Jacques Cousteau. He provided audiences with a narrative of

adventure while maintaining a veneer of scientific accuracy. Cynthia Chris argues that

National Geographic's influence lead to the re-popularization of documentaries featuring

an adventurer cum scientist, a mechanism popular in films produced during the inter-war

period.[75] The Society today continues to influence popular forms of viewing, as they own

their own cable television channel, and continue to expand the production and circulation

of their wildlife programming.

The BBC formed the Natural History Unit in 1957, a division charged with

documenting the natural world. Until 1957, the BBC's nature and animal television was

the purview of the radio staff. Notably, in 1954, the BBC broadcast *Zoo Quest*,[76] the first

in a long list of series' and documentaries hosted by David Attenborough who would

become a key figure in shaping the BBC's scientific programming.

With the formation of Natural History Unit, nature programming in Britain

became a spectacular event. Under Attenborough's direction, the division would come to

be recognized as a world leader in scientific programming. For instance, the developer of

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[74] Cousteau, J., 1968

[75] Chris, 2006, p. 55-56

[76] Chris, Ibid, 2006, p. 51

PBS's *Nova* series was heavily influenced by his experience at the Natural History Unit. *Nova* is not the only American program to be influenced by the BBC, as they have continually exchanged programs with American Public Broadcasting.[77]

Attenborough's style would become known as "Blue-Chip documentaries" for their high production values and the use of a third-person narrative style. While it has been criticized for creating problematic understandings of nature in some instances, the "Blue-Chip" style continues to be popular today.[78] Not only did this style influence the BBC-Discovery Channel series' *Planet Earth*[79] and *Blue Planet*,[80] from which the images in *Earth* are compiled, it has also influenced the development of recent animal-movies and television shows. For instance, *March of the Penguins* borrows heavily from Attenborough's style. These "blue-chip" programs will continue to influence the public's understanding of animals, as they present scientific content in a format that has a high entertainment value.

In contrast to the blue-chip offerings, the proliferation of cable television channels devoted to scientific and nature programming such as The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and National Geographic during the last two decades has prompted the return of the explorer-adventurer lead format. The popularization of Steve Irwin is exemplary of the transition of public interest towards the new small-screen format, that developed out of the increasing specialization of television channels to suit consumer interests.[81] While

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[77] Ibid., 2006, p. 69-70, Bouse, D., Ibid., 2000, p. 74-75

[78] The Independent, 2002

[79] Attenborough, D. and Fothergill, A., 2006

[80] Ibid., 2001

[81] Chris, Ibid., 2006, p. 92-95

the "blue-chip" format continues to be popular, the close contact between the adventurer and nature provides a form of authenticity left out with third person narrative.

The success of cable channels devoted to scientific and wildlife programming, and the continuing popularity of "blue-chip" films such as March of The Penguins, demonstrate how the public continues to rely on film, to shape how they come to understand the natural world. As a product of cultural expectations and generic norms developed in earlier films, the recent cinematic and televisual works are directly indebted to the work of not only the early filmmakers, but Walt Disney, and David Attenborough as well. Well not the inevitable result of the obsession with better knowing the non-human world, current animal-films and shows seek to satisfy the human curiosity desire to contact nature.

Conclusion

The rhetoric of anthropomorphism, a technology for practical reasoning developed first, in the religious and mythical texts of western society, has influenced the public's imagination of the human-animal relationship. Western literature would follow from these early texts to constitute the public imagination of animals as one of fantasy, presenting tropes through the use of anthropomorphism. The development of the popular imagination of non-human others is also the result of the modernist drive to visually classify all known life-forms. Necessitating the development of technologies such as the microscope to gain a total knowledge of the subject, the progress of modernist frameworks of knowledge demanded increasing accuracy in the visual mastery of the natural world.

The spread of modernism also installed within the public sphere, the technology of scientific reason, and an attendant obsession with producing images to catalog the experiences and images of reality. Tracing this obsession to the development of technologies of visual capture such as photography and film, it becomes possible to understand the association between animal-films and scientific accuracy in the public. This association continues even today, as demonstrated by the controversy over *March of The Penguins*.[82]

Animals were the subject of film as early as the initial motion experiments, and they continue to be a central feature of popular television and cinema. The development of animal-films as a genre can be understood as a product of the competing values of scientific accuracy and entertainment, mediated by the director and production company. Each film or television show employs both strategies in differing amounts, and this interaction can, to some extent explain the increasing popularity of cable networks devoted to scientific and nature programming. While the increasingly mediated environment in which we live has increased the dissemination of television shows devoted to animals and nature, it is necessary to understand the current phenomenon in terms of the historical rise of modernity and the development of new visual technologies.

Despite the historical connection between the foregoing developments, it is important to read them to some extent as fragmented and contingent events that are the product of arbitrary choices and accepted methods of public reasoning. While it is possible to construe the events presented here as a part of the teleological movement of history, it is almost impossible to demonstrate a causal relationship given the variety of

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[82] See Ch. 1

influences that intervene in any historical account.[83] Rather, the development of technologies for reasoning, and the attendant change in our technological or linguistic methods of communication have a complexly interrelated history that defies attempts at separation. By situating animal-films within the context of the development of technologies of popular reason, visual representation, and mass communication, it is possible to interrogate audience expectations for, and interactions with the genre. These expectations and ways of interacting with a given text form a context from which to devise a method of critiquing the construction of the public's relationship to non-human others through artifacts such as *Earth*.

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[83] Burt, *Animals in Film*, 2002

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The growing importance of technological apparatuses to the public imagination of

the non-human world cannot be separated from, our understandings of the public sphere,

or the cinema as an apparatus for the circulation of rhetoric. Rhetorical and cultural

critics have noted that rhetoric plays a central role in the construction of our

understanding of animal others.[1] Calling attention to the visual, not linguistic,

relationship to the natural world, the work in environmental rhetoric has expanded the

acceptance of visual and mediated forms of argument.[2] The visual component of this

relationship, as the previous chapter noted, lends itself to use in the production of the

public's imagination of our animal others.

The rhetoric of animality takes on a new persuasive power in the cinema.[3] Given

attention to the importance of circulation of rhetoric in general, and specifically the

cinematic apparatus, there is ample ground for the application of rhetorical and film

theory to nature-films.[4] As products of cultural practices and motifs, films often provide a

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[1] Rhetorical scholars that have engaged this problem include: Deluca, K. and Demo, T., 2001; Deluca, K. and Peeples, J., 2002; Deluca, K. 2000, 1999; Rogers, R., 1998. Important cultural critics that conclude that our conception of animality is increasing the result of rhetoric include Derrida, J., 2002; Baudrillard, J., 1993 and, Lippit, A., 2000.

[2] Deluca, K., *Image Politics*, 1999 is a particularly good example.

[3] Lippit, A. *Electric Animal,* 2000

[4] Harriman R. and Lucaites, J., *No Caption Needed*, 2007;Blakesly, D., "*Defining Film Rhetoric*," 2004

perspective that is the product of rhetorical choices intended to create a world of meaning with the audience. These choices, often in the form of image selection, editing, or narration, interact with the cinematic apparatus to produce an artificial image of animals. Any theory of reading nature-films must account for the interaction between the images and the audience, as well as the interaction between the subject of film and the camera.

The interactions between the audience and its subject can be understood as an *assemblage*, or a collection of elements that create unpredictable meanings through their interaction.[5] This process not only changes the audience's perception of the natural subject, the interaction between technological apparatus and the audience allows them to understand the non-human world as an object ready for exploitation. Kevin Deluca argues that,

> Modern Technology is not a chainsaw. Rather, it is the chainsaw and forestry science and the transportation system and the professional journalism and printing presses and public relations and mass communication technologies and the machinery of politics and... It is a system that enframes/ensnares/produces a particular version of nature and a particular type of humanity.[6]

Nature films themselves can be conceived of as assemblages, as they are composed of sequences of images, often shot in different places and times, composed in a fantastic format.[7] While the interaction of these elements is often unpredictable, it is possible to construct a method for engaging the rhetoric of the cinematic text. This method would take into account film as a technological assemblage, as well as the constraints that influence the choices made by filmmakers. Despite the fact that

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5 Deleuze G. and Guattari, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987

6 Deluca, K., "Thinking With Heidegger," 2005, p.81

7 Lippit, A., *Electric Animal*, 2000; "The Only Other Apparatus," 2007

positioning film as an assemblage disrupts the causal influence of these choices, it is still possible to understand how they are the result of forces of production.

A method of engaging texts such as *Earth* as an assemblage, however, must account for the film itself as productive of new contexts for the audience.. It is the interaction between the text and context that makes crafting an effective method problematic. Only by shifting the focus towards a form of pragmatics, that focuses on motifs and images produced the film, instead of the process of its construction, will it be possible to understand how the rhetoric of the film creates meaning.[8] An appropriate method will take into account how images and motifs work on the audience, while not forgetting how the use of narrative serves to impose a meanings on these *affective* forms of meaning creation.

The method proposed in this chapter will apply the notion of film as a technology for the circulation of images that uses both narrative and technological manipulation to produce an affective rhetoric. This rhetoric affects the audience's perception of the cinematic world, making it impossible to differentiate the affects created by the form, comprised of the manipulation of images through the cinematic apparatus, and the content of the images and narration, that supposedly represent the natural world. Applied to nature films, it becomes possible to understand how the film produces audience identification with animals as manipulable objects.

This chapter will interrogate how the circulation of animal-images through cinema produces nature as an object for consumption in the public sphere. Only through the reconstruction of the context of the liberal public sphere and citizenship will it be possible to propose a method of understanding how the images, sound, and narration all

8 Deleuze G. and Guattari, F., ibid., 1987

work on the audience to produce meaning. This chapter will provide the necessary

framework for the analysis of *Earth* to follow, allowing a critique of the sequences that

produce public understandings of animality.

By interrogating the relationship between animality, rhetoric, and modernity, the

first section will demonstrate how the human-animal relationship is a product of the

rhetorical processes also responsible for the global dissemination of liberal ideologies.

Then, this chapter will respond to the exigency with a discussion of affect as the

substance of identification in film, arguing that affective experience, not linguistic signs

are responsible for meaning production. Then it will argue that despite some critical

responses to the contrary, wildlife films tend to produce audience identification with

animals as vehicles for human meaning, or as objects in need of management. Finally,

this chapter will propose a method of reading wildlife films that negotiate the problems of

identification and image construction highlighted here.

Rhetoric, Animality and Modernity

The modern relationship between rhetoric and *animality* can be traced to ancient

Greece. The example of Xenophanes' *Fragments* is instructive. Although it often

appears to be making an argument about Greek citizenship, "Xenophanes offers little by

the way of argument in support of specific conclusions"[9] While Fragments addresses a

variety of issues, including our ability to know in the human sciences, of interest here is

his commentary on the myths and folktales of the time, as they constituted, in large part, a

justification for the popular standards of governance in ancient Greece.

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9 Lesher, J.H., "Fragments," 1992, p. 5

As a work of inquiry into natural philosophy and human philosophy, this text

establishes a clear delineation between animal-like characteristics of strength and force,

and the rationality necessary to govern. In the second fragment, Xenophanes argues;

> For Our expertise is better than the strength of men and horses
> But this practice makes no sense nor is it right
> to prefer strength to this good expertise.
> For neither if there were a good boxer among the people
> nor if there were a pentathlete or wrestler
> nor again if there were someone swift afoot-
> which is the most honoured of all man's deeds of strength-
> would for this reason a city be better governed.

Here, only the qualities of "reason" and "sense" serve to demarcate the boundaries

between the human and animal, especially in the public sphere. Further, his concern with

reason as necessary for governance animalizes athletes and manual laborers, positioning

them as second class citizens, without the necessary faculties to participate in the sphere

of governance. This verse contains the beginnings of the hierarchical public sphere

characteristic of antiquarian societies, that relied on distinctions between slaves and non-

slaves, and those who are free from labor, and those who must work to maintain it's

legitimacy.

The importance of reason to economic prowess is established at the end of the

second fragment, "Small joy would a city have from this-/if someone were to be

victorious in competing for a prize on piza's banks-/ for these do not enrich the city's

treasure room"[10] The importance of economic reason to the proper functioning of the

public sphere is established as early as the fifth century B.C. The predominance of

economic reason as a necessity to governance emerges in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries through the development of industrialism and systems for the mass slaughter of

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10 Xenophanes, 1992, fragment 2, 20-23

animals. In a later fragment, Xenophanes proclaims that animals serve as objects for show, and rewards to be won in public contests,establishing the dominance of humans over the natural world as a product of the ability to reason and effectively organize the public interest[11]. The virtues of governance and economic stewardship here, are only obtainable by those with the ability to reason, establishing them as a higher class.

The ability to reason, argues Xenophanes, allows humans to identify with animals as similar to themselves and to take compassion upon the non-human.

> Now I will come to yet another account, and I will show the way.
> And they say that once as he was passing by a puppy being beaten,
> he felt compassion and said this:
> 'Stop, don't beat it, since in truth it is the soul of a friend
> which I recognized upon hearing it cry out'[12]

In the form of an allegory, then, Xenophanes instructs the audience that humans have the ability to experience compassion as an act of identification with the non-human world. The moment of recognition of similarity between the suffering animal and a suffering human allow for ethical identification with those who posses the ability to "cry out," regardless of the logical sense of the appeal.

The insistence of Xenophanes on rationality as central to the definition of humanity has, along with similar texts, provided for the the elevation of humans as managers and protectors of the non-speaking world. In a reading of Martin Heidegger, Kevin DeLuca argues that "Descartes' ontology presumes the dynamic of an isolated subject grasping mathematically the world as object." In Cartesian philosophy then, the reduction of the non-human to an object can be understood as an extension of the

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11 Ibid., fragment 6

12 Ibid., fragment 7

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understanding of human reason as a virtue that demarcates differing levels on the social hierarchy.

"Arguably," Deluca notes, "it is this perspective that is at the root of the environmental crisis, for the world is reduced to an object laid out before me and I am reduced to a detached subject that only has a use-relation to the dead world."[13] Thus, the beginning of enlightenment thought situated thinking subjects as masters of the material world, reducing the non-human as simply a tool for human survival. "More significant is how this conceit of humanity as lord of the earth manifests itself in environmental discourses, so, in a common example, humans need to save the rainforest because unknown cures for human diseases may be found in them."[14]

The distinction between humans as speaking subjects, and nature as an object to be managed, in turn, provided the basis for the assertion of modern citizenship. Western metaphysics, according to Derrida, is based on "the domination of a linguistic form" as a condition for the delineation between subject and non-subject.[15] This domination is attributable to *logocentrism*, the structuring desire of western thought; "It is this longing for a center, an authorizing pressure, that spawns hierarchized oppositions. The superior term belongs to presence and the logos; the inferior serves to define its status and mark a fall."[16] Those possessing language then, were provided the status of the primary term in the binary between speaking and nonspeaking, which in turn is associated with presence.

13 DeLuca, K., Ibid. 2005, p. 73

14 Ibid., p.80

15 Derrida, J., *Of Grammatology,* 1974 p. 23

16 Spivak, G. "Translators Introduction," 1974 p. lxix

Because animals cannot speak, they are already excluded from the public. This exclusion, as a result of the preference for presence as a sign of authenticity, leaves the knowledge of the natural world to the work of human-centered rhetoric and representation.[17] "That is, because the animal is said to lack the capacity for language (Aristotle, Descartes, Rousseau,Heidegger), its function in language can only appear as an other expression, a metaphor that originates elsewhere, is transferred from elsewhere."[18] The imposition of meanings "from elsewhere" prevent the emergence of animals as subjects in the modern public sphere.

In western culture, then, animals are almost always objects, excluded from the political and social order because of their dearth of linguistic subjectivity.[19] Although recent studies have argued or a complex form of linguistic communication among non-human primates, "Within the humanist tradition, philosophical debate has often sought to determine/relegate the animal's position vis a vis the human from a hierarchical standpoint through issues of language and communication."[20] This established a litany of standards for human subjectivity and the proper conduct of citizenship, as one is tempted to summon Habermas' history of humanist enlightenment as the driving force in the development of the modern public sphere.

The development of theories of natural right and citizenship were dependent on the inflation of culture over nature, as early liberals situated the citizen as a product of the processes of civilization that separates them from the natural world. The separation of

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17 Lippit, A., *Electric Animal*, 2000

18 Lippit, A., "Magnetic Animal," 1998, p. 1113

19 Derrida, J. "The Animal" 2002

20 Parker-Starbuck, Jennifer, "Becoming Animate," 2006, p.654

culture from nature, however, ignores the life of *animality,* that exists outside the realm of language and culture.[21] This move, central to the development of modern citizenship, is based on a historicization of culture as a mechanism to guard against the unpredictability of nature. According to Rousseau, childhood development brings children into the realm of the sensible, where they participate in discourse.[22] The underwriting of western citizenship with the ideas of liberalism then, carried forth the delineation between animals and humans.

The installation of liberalism in the public was inseparable from the rise of modern systems of consumption and urbanization. During the previous three centuries, the spread of industrialism through the discourses of individualism, and rationality, also provided for the increasing consolidation of human society in urban areas. Through this process, human life became increasingly separate from the non-human world, developing more complex systems of communication and culture.[23] Kevin DeLuca has argued that "At risk with the abandonment of the concept of wilderness is the loss of what Derrida terms 'monstrosity,' the other that exceeds human sense and economic calculation, the excess that is a constitutive outside, the unlimit."[24] These systems of communication developed into practices of circulation that produce popular understandings of the human-animal relationship.

As the progress of industrialism has separated humans from the animal world, it has been necessary to continue the rhetorical construction of animals through new forms

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21 Derrida, J. Ibid, 1974 p.242

22 Ibid.

23 Derrida, J. Ibid, 2002

24 De Luca, K. "Meeting in a Redwood," 2003, p. 34

of mass communication responsible for the circulation of rhetoric. The understanding of *animality* then, has become increasingly intertwined with the systems of modernity responsible for the continuing destruction of the non-human world.[25] "Animals," writes Lippit, "exist in a state of perpetual vanishing... With the prosperity of human civilization and global colonization, ecospheres are vanishing, species are moving toward extinction, and the environment is sinking."[26] It should be no surprise then, that theorists have implicated the system of circulation in the development of the human-animal relationship.

The spread of liberalism as a historical process has changed the way that humans relate to animals. By centering governance around economic rationality and productivity, liberalism has justified a passive acceptance of the murder of animals in slaughterhouses around the world.[27] The slaughter of animals and similar practices, have required the development of systems of communication that produce a tacit acceptance of the excesses of modernist consumption. It has done so, according to Derrida, in such a way that western publics are unaware of their complicity in the systems of destruction on which their lifestyle depends.[28]

The extent to which the circulation of rhetoric has been responsible for public complicity with the disappearance of animals, extends beyond the literal destruction of nature during the filming of early wildlife-films. A wide body of literature that exists on the construction of the natural world points to the importance of an investigation of

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25 Derrida, J., Ibid., 2002

26 Lippit, A., Ibid 2000, p. 1

27 Derrida, J. Ibid, 2002; Luke, T., *Ecocritique* 1997

28 Derrida, J. Ibid, 2002

environmental rhetoric.[29] "The dislocation of the modernist concept of nature as a storehouse of resources", argues Deluca, "opens up the possibility of critiquing the domination of nature and re-articulating the human-nature relations."[30]

The growing visuality of the public sphere, and the mass complicity with the slaughter of animals in factory farms, points to the importance of interrogating the human-animal relationship through the work of visual rhetoric. "A spectre haunts the environmental movement," argues Deluca, "In the industrial juggernaut's incessant plundering of the earth's resources, the tropes of jobs and human welfare consistently trump other values."[31] Only through the development of better rhetorical strategies to persuade the public that the environment is worth protecting apart from its human value, can demands for environmental protection come to fruition.

Because images of animals in the public sphere tend to situate humans as masters of the the non-human world, demands for structural changes in the systems of modernity have been sparse. Kevin Deluca has argued that "In General, environmental justice groups envince no concern for wilderness or endangered species except when in instrumental relation to human welfare." "Instead" of demanding the inclusion of the non-human world in political calculations, "they speak for humans from an anthropocentric perspective and concern themselves solely with issues that impinge on human welfare."[32]

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29 Rostock and Frentz, 2009; Kinsella et. al., 2008; Sovacool, 2008; Deluca and Demo, 2001; Deluca and Peeples, 2002; Deluca, 2000; Deluca, 1999; Rogers, 1998

30 DeLuca, K., Ibid. 1999, p.67

31 DeLuca, K., Ibid., 2003, p.32

32 Ibid., p.33

Critiquing the reliance of the environmental movement on systems of circulation such as television to produce public awareness of the plight of animals, DeLuca argues thus affirms the need to find alternative visual strategies that do not rely on the modern public sphere.. "In a fundamental sense, then, the environmental strategy of relying on wilderness pictures insures the promotion of a wilderness vision that prevents even the possibility of a human-wilderness engagement."[33]

Challenge to the *logocentrism* of constitutive theories of rhetoric, the field of visual rhetoric has developed a critique of the exclusion of images from consideration in analysis of democratic deliberation.[34] Only by extending this critique to the exclusion of animals from the communicative process to cultural texts, will it be possible to challenge the public sphere as a place where the exclusion of animals is rampant. Short of a change in public habits of consumption, it is still possible to understand an ethical form of the consumption of animal-films that would allow the rhetorician to attend to the exclusion of animals from the public.[35]

Affect, Rhetoric, Animals, and Cinematic Identification

Dominant understandings of identification in cinema have been summarized by David Blakesley in "Defining Film Rhetoric: The Case of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*."[36] He has shown how the Burkean understanding of rhetoric as identification through shared experience, or *consubstantiality*, is useful in explaining audience identification with film characters. Through each film, the audience forms a new opinion about the world, or

33 Deluca, K, Ibid. 2005, p. 84

34 Harriman and Lucaites, 2007; Gronbeck, 2005; Finnegan, 2004; Deluca and Peeples, 2002

35 Burt, D. *Animals in Film*, 2002

36 Blakesly, D., Ibid., 2004

desire to occupy the place of the Other, in this case the characters.[37] In this formulation, the images in the film provide "visual cues," that the audience is likely to associate with a *logos*, or signified meaning. [38] By reducing the substance of identification to "expressions of attitude and identity,"[39] it is possible for Blakesly to analyze films as if they are no different than linguistic texts.

While the images identifiable with a signifier cannot be discounted, it is important not to reduce film identification to an analogical process. Given the dearth of linguistic subjectivity of the non-human world, cinematic images of animals do not create meaning with the audience in the same fashion. Rather, the images create an impression, or affect, in excess of the identifiable signifiers contained within. Blakesley also cannot account for the technological process of film as it interacts with the audience's perception of the event. This interaction provides the images with a certain repeatability that erases the audience's awareness that the animal on the screen lives a finite existence. The final problem with the reliance on images as a series of "visual cues" is that it cannot account for work of wildlife films, that produce identification with what the audience in excess of simply wanting to take the place of a character, or causing a change in opinion. Because the cinematic apparatus produces a moving image, animal-films allow the audience to participate in the fantasy that the subject of film is still living.[40] Affective rhetoric, as a form of identification produced in excess of the meanings within the individual frames,

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37 Ibid, p. 117

38 Ibid, p. 118

39 Ibid, p. 117

40 Lippit, A., "Death of The Animal," 2002

can account for the nuances of animal films, while refusing to flatten or ignore the work of the narrative and other linguistic components.

In a chapter entitled "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...,"[41] Deleuze and Guattari interrogate the inhuman feeling produced by watching *Willard*,[42] a film centered around rats. Noting that the pack of rats forms an assemblage that produces a motif indistinguishable from a single rat, they argue that the film circulates an affect that disrupts the signification of animals. Affect "is the effectuation of the power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel."[43] In other words, it is a form of rhetoric that causes a reconsideration or change in the audience, not through the use of language, but rather through images, and the creation of a motif. When understood in terms of Aristotelian rhetoric, affect is a form of *pathos* that works at a level separate from the *logos*

The circulation of affect is central to how the public relates to animals. Similar to their exclusion from the public, an analysis of film that stops at the level of the signifier, such as Blakesley's, forecloses animal subjectivity.[44] The use of wildlife footage allows, to some extent, an affective expression from the animal to work on the audience. Here, the audience can identify with the animal as a subject, not necessarily an object.[45] According to Deleuze and Guattari, this works through the process of *becoming animal,* where the line between the human subject and the animal becomes blurred. The audience experiences psychological movements towards *animality,* disrupting

41 Deleuze G., and Guattari, F., Ibid. 1987, p.232-309

42 Mann, D., 1972

43 Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., Ibid. 1987, p. 240

44 Lippit, A., Ibid., 2000; Burt, D., *Animals in Film*, 2002

45 Burt, D. Ibid., 2002

momentarily our inner humanity.[46] While these movements do exist, it is important to not ignore how they are often assigned meaning through a reassertion of the narrative.

Through a discussion of Sergei Eisenstein's understanding of film as a rhetorical device, Deleuze outlines two strategies of meaning making; affective strategies and representational strategies.[47] According to him, they are existent at the same time in every film, and can be compared to the split between the conscious and unconscious, insofar as they work together to produce a seemingly unified meaning, or subject. This unified outside, embodied in the meanings produced by the film as a whole, demonstrates the problem with separating images in a film from the narrative. While film has the potential to produce a public identification with animals as subjects, it is unlikely that the affective meanings produced by the images can overcome their coding by the narrative and human manipulation.

If the text operates at the level of affect and representation to produce a change in the audience, then these changes can only come about through technological processes.[48] The affective experience of film, unlike nature, is the product of manipulation that renders sequences, often separated by time and place in their happening, into a coherent and believable whole.[49] Despite the fact that Blakesley accounts for the possibility that the cinematic world is fictional, in this instance, the film works to alter the audience's perception of the non-human world. Identification of "visual cues" as a method of criticism, also cannot account for the invisibility of many editing strategies, where the

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46 Deleuze G, and Guattari, F., Ibid, 1987, p. 240

47 Deleuze, G., Cinema 2, 1989

48 For a discussion of film as a process of technology, see. Rodowick, 2007

49 Lippit, A., Ibid. 2000

constructed sense of continuity invites the audience to accept the images as an accurate depiction of the world.

The problem of false continuity cuts to the center of claims that human imagination of nature is increasingly mediated. Many critics have observed that the idea of the film as a continuous and coherent whole leads audiences to expect nature to be more exciting than it really is. Because the animal films focus on "action-sequences," excluding mundane activities such as sleeping, the audience is likely to experience a feeling of disappointment when they encounter nature first-hand.[50] Continuity editing serves to legitimate the images and narrative within the film, as the audience is likely to perceive it as an objective image.

The final concern is that the camera produces the perception of movement. Because 35 mm film is shot in individual frames exposed over a period of time, film produces the illusion that the animals in the images are moving, and somehow connected to the animal they represent. Akira Lippit has demonstrated how this works on the audience to produce identification with animals by enacting their becoming for the audience on screen. In effect, a living, breathing, version of nature is always available to the public, in an infinitely repeatable form.[51]

When combined with the illusion of continuity in film, the illusion of movement causes audiences to mistake the experience they garner as substitutable for the real thing, in effect, rendering non-human constructed nature obsolete. This is because the affective experience of animal films produces a passivity in the audience regarding the need to experience nature, and to know it outside of the cinematic context. Blakesley's

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50 Burt, J., Ibid. 2002; Bouse, D., Ibid., 2000; Chris, C., Ibid. 2006

51 Ibid.

interpretation of cinematic identification as a symbolic process then, ignores how the affective experience of animal films creates a passivity among the audience through the naturalization of technical manipulations.

Film rhetoric, then, cannot be understood simply as a process involving "visual cues" or any other human signifier. Because of the problems posed by animal movies, it is necessary to expand the discussion to how images work at the level of the body to produce a rhetorical movement in the audience. Not only does a reading of the signs in a film flatten any chance for animal subjectivity, it also serves to naturalize the technological movements and manipulations in the minds of the audience, inviting them to mistake the moving images for a first-hand encounter with the non-human world. In this way, at the same time that the public's understanding of animals has shifted toward one of the fantastic, subjects have become increasingly isolated from encounters with the non-human world.

Affect,Identification, and Nature as an Object

The process of affective identification in film has been recognized as central to the persuasive function of animal-films. Although they produce multiple, unpredictable meanings, the audience is likely to engage in reading practices that make animal-films more or less likely to produce certain meanings. While many of these practices are the result of the historical development of technology and culture, it is important to understand how critics have approached the work of affect in recent texts. Despite their attempt to account for how animal-films construct the human-nature relationship in the public, many studies focus on the animal's subjectivity, without consideration of how practices of viewing and representation construct our imagination of the natural world.

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Jennifer Ladino's reading of *March of The Penguins* and *Grizzly Man* is a good example of an attempt to preserve animal agency cinema.[52] Reading critics of animal-films who cite Laura Mulvey as an inspiration, the author objects to the constitution of animals as passive subjects of the gaze of the audience. Critiquing what she understands as the "speciesist camera," Ladino argues that although most films reduce animals to proxies for human narratives, *March of The Penguins* and *Grizzly Man* are good examples of films that open space for animal agency. Despite problems with the narrative of *March of The Penguins,* that lends itself to interpretation in favor of anti-abortion rhetoric, the author emphasizes the film's ability to generate identification with the penguins as subjects.

The review of *Grizzly Man* focuses on the protagonist's narrative of living in nature as forming an affective relationship with the bears, who he encounters face to face. By showing Treadwell, the main character, overcoming the irrational fear of animals in their habitat, Ladino situates the film as causing a reconsideration of the human-animal relationship. For audiences, it demonstrates how the protagonist embodies a variety of animalistic qualities, producing identification between animal behaviors and their own habits. Concluding that these films produce an affect that moves the audience towards environmental activism, the author holds out hope that filmmakers will begin producing similar texts.

In a similar commentary on the work of Werner Herzog, director of *Grizzly Man*, Paul Sheehan argues that animals are able to escape the logic of production in cinema because they are less amenable to film conventions when compared to human actors.[53]

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52 Ladino, J., "For The Love," 2009

53 Sheehan, P. "Against the Image," 2008

Because it is more difficult to shoot and edit films featuring animals, the author claims that animals are somehow 'anti-cinema.' This is why for Sheehan, and Ladino, Herzog's resistance to putting animals within a human framework is productive.

Concluding that images of animals allow the audience to experience an "unmanipulable" "otherness on the screen,"[54] Sheehan looks to the popularity of digital imaging as apart of changes in film technology that will change how we understand cinematic representation. While it is unclear how the author foresees this move in the context of problems of anthropomorphism and the objectification of nature, it is important to note that both instances have a constitutive, not representative, quality. In other words, given the disappearing status of the natural world, animal-films produce what the audience mistakes for the originary affective experience of encountering nature.[55]

In response to theories that celebrate animal-subjectivity in film, Akira Lippit argues that film produces an affect of mastery that invites the audience to understand animals as passive objects for their consumption.[56] Demonstrating that cinema reduces animals to a product of the world of metaphors and literature, the author shows that all meaning in the films is the result of a deferral process whereby human fantasies are transposed onto the animal world.[57] From this observation, Lippit has argued that the insertion of fantasy into the world of animals, is, to some extent, an act of erasure whereby the possible animal subjectivities are given a structural absence. While he

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54 Ibid., p. 132-133

55 Lippit, A., Ibid., 2000

56 Lippit, A., "Magnetic Animal," 1998; Ibid., 2000; "The Death of an Animal," 2002

57 Lippit, A., Ibid. 1998

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contributes the structural disappearance of animals to their exclusion in the process of forming a distinct human subjectivity, the author focuses on how this disappearance manifests itself in the context of globalization and mass media.[58]

It is the rise of mass media and film that is Lippit's central concern. For him, the development of multiple, new forms of communication has increased the possible worlds that animal images can create. By showing that the images enter the human world and come to produce a variety of unpredictable meanings, the author positions animals as always in the process of movement and *becoming,* never embodying a singular meaning.[59] Similar to film then, animals themselves are always open to interpretation, as different bodies are affected in different ways by the images they receive.

It is mimicking the process of *becoming*, as the movement of time modifies the identity of all beings, that provides cinema the ability to produce life-like worlds. For Lippit, film as providing sequences of animals with a magnetism that works on the audience to create dangerous forms of identification. Before outlining the dangers of this identification, however, the author discusses the problems with the idea that film opens space for animal subjectivities to emerge. Unlike Ladino's account, where cinematic images can exist apart from imposed meanings, Lippit contends that the affects produced by animal films are already the result of an assemblage of features that produce a human-centered meaning regardless of their content.

While the transposition of human meaning onto the animal-world is concerning, it is their propensity to hide how nature is disappearing at a alarming rate that is most relevant for this work. Because films capture the illusion of movement, audiences are

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58 Lippit, A., Ibid., 2000

59 Ibid

likely to misinterpret the image as having the quality of *livingness*, such that within their symbolic world the animals are actually alive. According to Lippit, it is the affective power of film, created by the illusion of becoming, that allows audiences to forget that the images are only a simulation.[60]

Linking film to the disappearance of the natural world allows Lippit to explain a central problem with theories of animal subjectivity in film, that they ignore the interactions between the animal being filmed, the technical apparatus, and purposeful manipulations that produce the image. Because the film sequences are easily repeatable, the audience can experience what they mistake for authentic encounters with nature at any time without having to leave the comforts of modern society. Through this observation, Lippit is able to critique the deaths of animals on film as becoming a repeatable image, contributing to the disappearance of nature from the public imagination.

Regardless of the means of production, whether it is computer generation, or the filming of a staged reality, animal-films provide the audience with a constructed experience that removes the need for encounters with the non-human world. It is necessary in the reading of animal-films then, to account for the ways in which experience in the cinema covers over the increasing absence of non-humans from everyday experience. When contextualized within the rise of modern liberalism and the early history of film, it becomes apparent that the possible benefits of affective identification in animal-films are problematized by the status of the images as manipulable objects.[61]

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60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

Their status as manipulable objects is, for the most part, the central problematic of the representation of animals and nature in the public. While the importance of challenging the exclusion of animals has been discussed, it is important to note that the discourses of objectification not only make the audiences forget about nature, they also sanction the approaches to conservation that emphasize human dominance over the natural world. The reproduction of nature as a place to be managed is a crucial trope in the development of current stances towards the environment, as it will be apart of the typology of affects to be established in the analysis.

Reading Affective Identification in Animal-Films

The rhetoric of animal-films operates through an unpredictable interaction between nature, the camera, and processes of technical manipulation, as they work upon the audience to produce a variety of meanings. One thing that can be said however, is that they produce an image of the world that is easy to mistake for a representation of reality. Further, these images are especially powerful, as audiences have been prepared through popular ways of viewing to engage animal-films as a representative medium. The films produce audience identification through affective and narrative strategies that emphasize the similarities between humans and animals. These strategies then, reduce the animals simply to objects for human manipulation and consumption.

To account for these problems, it is necessary to outline a way of reading films that allows the critic to understand how the audience comes to imagine the natural world through the text. It will then be possible to show this imagination covers over collective responsibility for the disappearance of the natural world. This method of reading will establishes a typology of affects, as they manifest themselves in different sequences. It

will then provide a way of understanding how these affects produce identification with animals as objects to be managed, affirming the public acceptance of human dominance over nature. These processes will provide a framework for an analysis of the rhetorical affects of *Earth*.

It is possible to understand the different affects produced by a given text, or even an entire genre of texts; "Once again, we turn to children. Note how they talk about animals, and are moved by them. They make a list of affects."[62] Only through noticing how the interaction of editing, the natural world, and the process of cinematic capture produce a variety of meanings, can the rhetorical critic understand how the text produces identification with animals as objects. This movement connects affects generated by the text with wider cultural understandings of the natural world.[63] Each film modifies how we conceive of animals, at the same time the audience reads dominant cultural themes into the text. These interactions are responsible for identification and meaning.

The list of affects changes how the rhetorical critic understands typologies. While Perleman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have attempted to widen the discussion of typologies towards the human-sciences, and schemas of proof they employ, their discussion is completely removed from the content therein.[64] By decontextualizing argument schemes from the world of meaning they create, traditional typologies cannot account for the interactions that influence the becoming of the images contained therein, as their affects work upon the bodies of the audience. The work of rhetoric instead, should focus on counting the affects themselves, a process that turns the rhetorical critic towards the

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62 Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., Ibid., 1987, p. 257

63 Deleuze,G., and Guattari, F., Ibid. 1987

64 Pereleman, C., and Olbrechts-Tyteca, L., *The New Rhetoric*, 1969

process of meaning making, allowing the critic to understand the mutually constitutive relationship between text and context.. Establishing a typology of the affects produced by *Earth* is only possible however, once the film is broken into sequences that work to produce meaning.

If the thesis of cinema as assemblage is true, then it is necessary to understand how the *diachronos*, or linear movement of the film, from beginning to end, produces a text that has thresholds. That is to say that there are points past which a sequence of images is no longer recognizable as the original sequence and thus, has become 'something else.' [65] While individual frames may provide the audience with information, only over the progress of a sequence can the critic identify how the film is working to create an affect. Attention to only a singular frame amounts to a form of photographic analysis that flattens movement, a unique feature of film.[66] This movement that is responsible for much of the audience identification with the image, making it a central part of the analysis.

The temporality of sequences is important here, as the movement of film through time is crucial to the illusion of presence it produces.. While human perception works by creating snapshots of reality, unable to portray the movement of objects as modified by time, cinema creates the perception of time and movement, fascinating audiences with a life-like image that appears to be a representation of the material world. This is because affective identification only works through the collection of images over a period of time, further convincing the audience of their authenticity, and intensifying their affective power.

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65 Deleuze, G., Ibid., 1989

66 Ibid.; Lippitt, A., Ibid., 2000

An analysis of wildife films then, must turn to the unit of sequences. While they are not finite units of measurement, which allows the critic to account for the contingent nature of film, it also allows the critic to highlight the places where the affective power of cinema is most intense. This is a useful measurement for the work of rhetoric as it allows the critic to explain how films create often conflicting meanings, and how they move the audience in different parts of the text.

The process of identification happens in relation to a world of meaning either referenced, or created, by the film. Representation has, since antiquity, relied of the presence of an interlocutor in the public. While at first, only those who had the time to be physically present themselves were able to participate in democracy, the move towards a representative government has only shifted the burden of presence onto the elected official. This obsession with presence, according to Derrida, is apart of the *logocentric* universe responsible for the establishment of human language as the only rational form of communication, and humans as the center of existence.[67] This allows the identification of two necessary interactions to account for in the analysis; the ability of human language to write-over the animal images, and the illusion of presence created by the movement of the film.

While each world produces a multiplicity of meanings, the concern of this method is how they relate to the structuring affect of presence and absence central to representation in the public. "Although an historically and culturally understandable desire, the fondness for bodily presence and face-to-face conversations ignores the social and technological transformations of the 20th century that have constructed an altogether

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67 *Of Grammatology,* 1974; p. 22-24, 84-85

different cultural context, a techno-epistemic break."[68] It is this structuration, that

provides the image with an authenticity and affective power. According to D.N.

Rodowick, "filmed images present a mode of existence split by qualities of presences and

absence, present and past,now and then, a here before us now encompassing a there

displaced in time."[69]

Narratives in wildlife-films interact with the images to assign their affective

power a symbolic meaning. While the work of the analysis will focus on counting the

affects produced by film, it is important not to forget how the narrative works on the

sequence of images, changing how the audience encounters the image. The work of the

critic then, is to not only outline the images work to create meaning, but also, to show

how these affects are assigned a symbolic meaning for the audience and flattening the

number of possible perspectives on the images. The critic should work to decenter the

importance of narrative and linguistic meaning to rhetorical analysis of film, something

that many rhetorical critics have focused on to the exclusion of affective forms of

communication.[70] Further, by not excluding an analysis of the narrative in totality, one

can avoid the mistake of understanding meaning making as happening through separate

processes of image and narrative. Only when attending to their confluence can allow the

critic to understand how film works to create a perception of a coherent diagetic world.[71]

As a response to the disappearance of nature, animal films work on the audience

to produce an illusion of presence that disrupts traditional readings of representation in

68 Deluca, K., Ibid., 2003, p. 37

69 Rodowick, D.N., Ibid., 2007 p. 56

70 Gronbeck, B., "Visual Rhetorical Studies," 2008

71 Deleuze, G., Ibid., 1989

the public imagination. Because film is the product of careful construction, like many forms of mass communication, it uses the apparatus to frame representations such that they produce an illusion of a present and sovereign subject.[72] This illusion is no different then the fiction of the public sphere, where in reality presence is already disrupted by the impossibility of communication as a linear process.[73] As Derrida argues, "The apparent immediacy of what seems to be present perception," as in the encounter with the cinematic assemblage, "is already shed as an effect; it falls: under the sway of a machinated structure that never gives itself away in/to the present"[74].

The illusion of sovereignty and presence produced through film becomes especially powerful when applied to animal representation. Akira Lippit argues that animal-films create an 'electric affect' that mesmerizes audiences with their display of fantastic images only obtainable through technological manipulation. The audience mistakes the movement on screen as establishing a certain 'livingness' for the animals that creates an illusion of presence so powerful, that they are likely to forget that nature exists outside the cinema.[75] The affective force of these films can be attributed to the use of cinema to establish an illusion of coherence and naturalness, whereby the audience does not look to the veracity of the representations.

The Rhetorical analysis of Earth must attend to the economy of presence and absence within the text. Only through these observations can we understand how the context of the film situates the images, working to move the public imagination. In this

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72 Derrida, J., *Dissemination*, 1981, p. 296-327

73 Ibid.,, p. 296-300

74 Ibid., , p. 307

75 Lippit, A., Ibid,2000, p. 185-187

case, it is possible to outline how the false presences in film work to cover over the audience's complicity with the disappearance of nature.[76] While the analysis will work at the level of affect, as much as representation, it will be possible to compare these affective experiences with the state of the natural world. Only then can a critique of animal representation account for the economy of presence and absence of animals in the public, as it manifests itself in different sequences to produce identification with a rhetorically constructed nature.

Conclusion

The collective imagination of animals as a rhetorical artifact is the product of a variety of historical discourses, and the development of technologies, that have contributed to their ongoing exclusion from the public sphere. Only through interrogating the relationship between nature, modernity, and rhetoric, is it possible to situate a critique of the meanings produced by *Earth*. The cinematic assemblage is a product of, and continues to produce, social discourses that define collective realities, and the limits of acceptable *praxis*. The rhetoric of nature and animals are difficult to separate, as the collective understanding of non-human others is the product of cultural processes that have culminated in their objectification and destruction.

Animal films however, are a special case in the production of the human-animal relationship in the public. Because animals cannot produce discourse, their images carry with them an emotional power that changes how we think of identification in the cinema. While Blakesly has rehearsed the Burkean view of identification in cinema, it is only possible to understand animal-imageswithin athe context of an affective form of

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76 Ibid.

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identification that no longer relies on linguistic-symbolic determinations of meaning. This shift from *identification as symbolic*, to *identification as affective*, is crucial to understanding meaning creation in the absence a symbolic relationship between animal-movement and language.

Cinematic identification is not a neutral process. While there has been discussion about the ability of filmmakers to situate animals as having agency in the cinematic world, these views cannot account for the process of construction that constitutes each film, and cinema itself, as an assemblage. Instead of identifying with the images of nature as something to be saved, audiences are more likely to identify with nature as an object to be manipulated and used for human purposes. Even when they are able to identify with nature as a subject, audiences are unlikely to be aware that the cinematic world they understand as nature, is a false presence. This makes it unlikely that they will leave their urban existences to experience the non-human world first hand, producing widespread complicity with the exclusion of animals.

The concerns with modernity, cinema, and the exclusion of animals, can be accounted for through a careful reading of the text, and how it interacts with the context. By attending to a typology of sequences, and the different affects they produce, it is possible to read *Earth*, taking into account not only the affective images and the false presentness they create, but also their progression over a sequence as images combine to create meanings via interaction. While not forgetting the impact of the narration on the creation of meaning, only attending to the affects created by sequences of images can demonstrate how audiences mistake animal-films as reproducing a *livingness,* or authentic presence, through which they can experience the illusion of an authentic nature.

The foregoing constitutes an investigation of how the dissemination of animal-movies allows the audience to obscure their responsibility for the ongoing genocide of animals. When situated within the history of animal-representation, it becomes clear that animal-movies are an extension of the drive to know the natural world better, even if that desire is subverted by the technological and rhetorical processes used to produce them. Through this understanding, it becomes possible to interrogate how the texts work upon audiences in the process of rhetoric.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis: Of Assemblages, Sequences and Typologies

Introduction

Unlike many wildlife films, *Earth* is an assemblage of footage compiled for use in another format. Using footage originally shot for The BBC and Discovery Channel's series *Planet Earth,* the film uses footage of a limited number of animal species to provide for a Hollywood friendly narrative, as it follows the animals over the span of a year.. According to one reviewer; *"*Any previously unseen footage seems like a mere footnote to the spectacular images that made the series such a hit."[1] Noting that: "The TV series was 11 hours long," another commentary concludes that, "By rights, condensing it to 96 minutes ought to diminish it, but the movie's tour guide is James Earl Jones, and Jones just doesn't do small."[2] By condensing the series, the filmmakers not only assured that their film would appeal to audiences, they also produced a new cinematic 'reality' for audiences to internalize.

Taking sequences of different species, and providing for their existence as multiple, continuous, story-lines, allowed the filmmakers to to go beyond their claim to 'preserve images' of a disappearing world.[3] The finished product, like most animal-films, provides the audience with the impression that the natural world is before them, as

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[1] Page, J., "Earth Delivers," 2009 p. online

[2] Mondello, B. "Earth, A Documentary,". 2009 p. online

[3] For a good discussion of the filmmaker's intent, see the 'Making of Earth' feature on the theatrical release DVD. In several places, Fothergill is qouted at several places as wanting to preserve the natural world, as the non-human is dissapearing.

technological manipulations construct the natural world as a serene and action-filled

place. Relying on the use of new technological apparatuses such as a swiveling camera

mounted on a helicopter, and more conventional manipulations such as continuity editing,

the film provides the audience with a too-good to be true depiction of nature.[4] The

combination of storytelling and technological prowess used to make *Earth* demonstrate

the extent to which film-assemblages produce what audiences mistake for a complete and

singular depiction of the natural world.

Presenting itself as a complete image, produces a singular meaning, out of the

multiplicity of possible ones. *Earth* is a good example of a film that contains a

multiplicity of meanings that are covered over by viewing practices that fail to account

for it's assembled nature. Akira Lippit has shown how similar to dreams, films establish a

unity where the audience mistakes the text for a coherent work. In the case of

documentaries, the audience participates in the collective fantasy that the film is a

representation of reality. While the audiences of most films are able to repress the images

as false in the way that dreamers conclude that their nightmare was "only a dream," the

audiences of *Earth* are inundated with a series of affects that makes such an

acknowledgment difficult.[5] When combined with the synchronicity of the music and

narrative, the coherent assemblage of images into sequences is the process that provides

the audience with little room for critical reception, as they exploit the accepted viewing

practices that already accept film as representative of reality.

Earth exploits the public tendency to understand animal-films as documentaries,

in many ways continuing the formula of construction often attributed to Walt Disney.[6]

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[4] Page, J., Ibid. 2009

[5] Lippit, A., "The Only Other," 2007 p. 172

[6] For example, Bouse, D., "Are Wildlife Films Really," 1998; *Wildlife Films*, 2000; Chris, C.,

The film combines the emphasis on narration and anthropomorphism of Disney's "True Life Adventures," with the attributes of "blue-chip" documentaries, such as an emphasis on the depiction of mega-fauna in a visually appealing format. According to one commentator: "Though it doesn't quite reach the visual artistry of "Winged Migration," "Earth" still dazzles with its multitude of how-did-they-get-that shots." Describing the affective experience of the animals, the review conclude that "It's the best kind of special effect: the kind that's real."[7] It is possible for the critic, then, to investigate how *Earth* constructs the public understanding of the human-animal relationship through creation of a realist depiction of the natural world.

The analysis will develop a typology of sequences that accounts for how audiences flatten the multiple affects they produce, as the film interacts with the context and is interpreted through dominant practices of film consumption. This chapter will argue that the film is a vehicle for the rhetorical construction of the human-animal relationship, where the animals are given a false presence, and the audience is allowed to forget that the non-human world is disappearing. It will outline the existence of three different types of sequences within *Earth* that consist of a variety of overlapping affects. The sequences fall into three general types; animals as having a family life, the scientific representation of the natural world, and animal death. Each collection of sequences can be connected to culturally significant discourses, and a way of understanding the human-animal relationship in the public sphere through the use of anthropomorphic, as well as scientific discourses.

Through this critique, it will be possible to connect *Earth* to the destructive systems of modernity, opening space for the assertion of an ethics of intrepretation for the

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Watching Wildife, 2006; Horak, C., "Wildlife Documentaries," 2006

[7] Macdonald, M. "Disney's Nature," 2009, p. online.

images and discourses of animality. The affective experiences provided by the film are apart of the construction of the human-animal and human-nature relationships in the public imagination. It is important to interrogate how the film uses visual rhetoric and narration to work on the audience, calling forth a variety of motifs. Only then will it be possible to contextualize *Earth* as it relates to the human-animal relationship in the public sphere.

The Family Life of Animals

In the wildlife genre, using sequences that reaffirm the sanctity and necessity of family life is a central strategy of representation. Relying on the use of anthropomorphic narratives, and the assumption that animal parenthood engenders a relationship of dependence, *Earth*, similar to other films of the genre, deploys the parent-child relationship as a central plot mechanism. "By looking closely at the ways in which animals' family and social lives are portrayed in wildlife films," Derek Bouse argues that "we can see the mechanics by which wildlife films appeal to audiences' emotions and predispositions towards certain values."[8] By connecting the affect of familyhood to modern discourses on the human family, we can see how the these sequences engender a transposition of modern discourses of family in the public sphere onto animals. The use of anthropomorphism of family relations in *Earth* operates on an economy of absence. Of the young animals that play an important part in the film, only the polar bear cubs, whose father is present in the film, and dies in search of food, survive until the end of the film.

The discourses of fraternal sacrifice, and the virtues of fatherhood, are important to the construction of modern citizenship. Henry Giroux has argued that Disney has re-

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[8] Bouse, D. Ibid, 2000, p. 153

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appropriated cultural memory towards ideological ends; "The persuasive symbol through which Disney defines its view of capitalism, gender, and national identity is the family, more particularly, the white, nuclear, middle-class family."[9] The affective investment in the family called forth by Disney's films and theme parks is inseparable from the institution of the modern subject in the public.

Arguing that the obsession with the family is a product of the drive to maintain the current order, Deleuze and Guattari indicate; "Everything is reduced to the father-mother-child triangle, which reverberates the answer 'daddy-mommy' every time it is stimulated by the images of capital"[10] The images in *Earth* then, re-affirm then normative family structure, and subsequently compulsory heterosexuality, a central structure in the institution of modernism and capitalist production. Through the use of anthropomorphism, then, the film re-inscribes normative marriage and sexual practices as natural processes.

Earth deploys the notion of an 'animal family' in many of the relationships between animals of the same species. A good example is "flight school for the mandarin ducks," a sequence that features the baby ducks leaving their nest for what the narration tells us is "the first time." As the young ducks fall from their nest, high in a tree, the mother looks on, ostensibly as an expression of anxiety about the fate of her offspring. The look of the mother engenders an affect of identification, where the audience is invited to connect this experience to the fear of their own children hurting themselves. Overlaying the narrative and images is a soundtrack that emphasizes the importance of this 'first step' as a crucial trial in their progress through life. As the film moves on to a

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[9] Giroux, H., *The Mouse That Roared*, 2001, p. 142

[10] Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., *Anti-Oedipus*, 1977, p. 265

sequence of growing flowers, it begins to produce an affect of scientific authenticity that re-enforces the idea that parent-child relationships are a natural part of the life cycle.

The narrative of the polar-bear produces audience identification with the nuclear family. Through the juxtaposition of images of a male polar bear swimming in the ocean, and a female polar bear with two cubs, the audience comes to identify with the father as struggling to hunt for the family. The narrative overwrites these images, leaving little room for appreciation of the beauty of nature; according to Jones, "Unlike humans, polar bear cubs do not always listen to their moms," as the images show the young bear climbing in what we are lead to believe is the wrong direction. David Pierson has argued that the anthropomorphic qualities of young bears is likely to produce identification, "In addition, humans are attracted to animals, such as bear and lion cubs, that share the same evolutionary juvenilization of biological features as human infants."[11]

Interspersed within these sequences are wide-angle shots of the tundra, as the camera sweeps across the wind-swept arctic. In the context of the family, these produce identification with the struggle of the family, and reinforce the motif of the crisis of morality in American culture. Derek Bouse has argued; "That wildlife films in general continue to assign too much responsibility for the behaviour of the young to their parents may be further evidence of the subtlety with which human values are projected onto nature."[12] Through the movement of the polar bear sequences, the film emphasizes the value of families as the center of human values and surival. The transposition, made possible by the narrative, music, and images, film leaves scientific knowledge of their reproductive activities absent.

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[11] Pierson, D., "Hey, They're Just Like Us," 2005, p. 704

[12] Bouse, D., Ibid., 2000, p.178

While the importance of the sequences of the "father's" death will be discussed further, these sequences provide narrative closure that frames their family life. As the sequence juxtaposes the dying male polar bear with the cubs and their mother, the narration refers to the death as a "sacrifice" for his "family." Even in death, the polar bears are as "vehicles of meaning" for the "doctrine of personal responsibility," that re-affirms a Disneyfied version of America, where taking care of your children is central to citizenship.[13] The familial life of the polar-bears produces audience identification with the "good" parenting as crucial to citizenship, and economic survival, as it mixes an affect of parental love with a narrative of social responsibility, making it likely that the audience will interpret the sequences as a model for their own behavior.

The sequences featuring the elephants in the desert, and the migrating whales, focus on the tragedy of the modern family with differing intensities. The images of elephants communicate not only the struggle of young elephants against the harsh conditions, but also the universality of the family in the struggle for survival. The film rarely shows images of only adult elephants, showing instead either "families," or single young elephants. Through images of elephants, struggling against the dust storm, then, the audience understands the situation as analogous same way that human families struggle against social conditions.

When combined with a narrative of two lone elephants, one assumed to be the mother of the other, who get lost in a dust storm and are left behind, the fragility of family life begins to shade the audience's understanding of the sequences. The images of the blowing dust, that makes it difficult to see the subjects, leave only the narration as a source of information. Later in the film, sequences of the young elephants appear. While

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[13] Bouse, D., 2000, Ibid, p. 181. See also Bouse, D. Ibid, 1998

one death is the result of starvation, and the other the result of predators, both sequences serve to further emphasize the struggle of humans and animals against their conditions.

Similarly, the sequences of migrating whales naturalize family as crucial to the struggle against natural conditions and predators. In the first sequences with whales, the audience is shown an older whale helping a younger one to the surface, ostensibly to breathe. The narration leaves no doubt about the scene, as James Earl Jones provides the idea that the older whale is the mother of the younger one. The sequence moves on by emphasizing the natural beauty of the current location, although even here, the film cannot leave the images to interpretation. Jones informs the audience that the shallow water is "great for raising kids," and similar to humans, they drink milk from their mothers in the first weeks of their life.

Because the "warm southern waters" where the young whale is born lack the necessary food for the mother to eat, however, they must migrate half-way across the world to their feeding grounds. This serves as a plot mechanism that changes the affect of the whale sequences from harmonious familial interaction and connection, to a palpable anxiety about the fragility of that connection. Their journey, mixed with images of other sea-animals, serves to emphasize the harshness of conditions threatening the family. The isolation of their existence, similar to the polar bears, serves to emphasize the importance of the familial relationship. Thus, unlike the world of the elephants, where isolation is indicative of a crisis, the sequences that feature the isolation of whales and polar bears, show the family can survive in what is taken to be social isolation. The final sequences of the whales, show the mother attempting to protect her child from predators, as it becomes increasingly weakened from their journey. In the end, the young whale succumbs to the conditions, as images of its death are shown.

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Of the three central 'families' that the film follows, only the narrative of the polar bear provides hope for the future, as they are the only young animals to survive. When framed by the sequence that discusses the death of the male bear as a "sacrifice" for the survival of the young, and how his "spirit" will continue to provide for them, it becomes apparent that his presence in the film is the unique feature that allowed the polar bear cubs to survive. In this way, the polar bears, as framed in familial relationships are designated as somehow more "deserving."[14]

This sequence calls forth motifs of "broken families" and "welfare mothers," central to social-conservative discourse.. "The father," in this instance, fulfills the audience's desire for a nuclear family as the center of social life, similar to the liberal narrative of social relations. Without the representation of this familial relationship, the audience would be less likely to contextualize the sequences as a lesson on "good parenting." It is more likely that they would establish differences between themselves and the animals. The representation of relationships between animals in *Earth*, then, invite the audience to understand the images as tools for the creation of human meaning, an understanding that is typical in the modern public sphere. Not only does this reproduce current human-animal relationships, the juxtaposition of the presence of the polar bear "father," with the complete absence of a similar character in the elephants and whales, speaks to the audience's desire for a parental relationship as a locus analogous to the human family.

Animal Myth and Scientific Credibility

The production of scientific affects, through seemingly objective images edited for emphasis, and assertions about the biological facts of animals, are another common

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[14] Ibid., p. 164

strategy in wildlife films. Given the popularity of forms of animal representation and objectification that establish their legitimacy through notions of authenticity, it should be no surprise that As Greg Mittman has argued; "Nature films, like naturalistic displays found in animal theme parks, museums, and zoos, have sought to capture and recreate an experience of unspoiled nature"[15]

A re-telling of the genre's history demonstrates that many of the desires that filmmakers and the audience associate with the films, can be connected with the the scientific will to master the natural world through it's visual classification. Fascination with scientific knowledge of the natural world influenced public expectations for cinematic realism in animal-films, insofar as they preclude references to human manipulation of the subject, or the image itself. *Earth* exploits public expectations for scientific validity and accurate representation in animal films as there is little in the way of a reference to the film world as different from the world it attempts to represent.

The focus on the authenticity of perception, however, legitimizes the cinematic world as representative of the natural world,instead of a result of the process of invention. Greg Bouse has argued that: "As audiences grow larger, wildlife films become more technically and artistically sophisticated and move farther away from depicting nature on its terms and more dramatically recreating it in terms set by global media."[16] The illusion of objectivity, here, relies on the economy of presence and absence to legitimate *Earth* as a scientific text. Creating identification with an assemblages of images the audience is likely to mistake for a recreation of the non-human world, the film serves as a literal tomb for a nature constructed by the producers.[17] The sequences examined here deploy

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[15] Mittman, G., *Reel Nature,* 1999, p.3

[16] Bouse, D., Ibid. 2000, p. 192

[17] Lippit, A., *Electric Animal*, 2000 p. 187-192. Also, in "The making of *Earth,"* the producers

the affect of scientific authenticity in three ways; 1) the absence of narrative that renders all references to technological intervention present, 2) the explicit use of film technology to produce images that enhance audience perception of events, and 3) the use of narration to add what appear to be scientific facts.

Typical of the animal film genre, *Earth* contains a variety of sequences that provide often unrelated sequences a seemingly geographic and ecological context. Calling the audience to identify with the film as encompassing a coherent image of the natural world, they sometimes provide short clips of different animal species as they follow what can only be assumed to be their migratory pattern. These affective sequences then provide a segue into the next sequence, where Jones narrates the importance of the images before the audience. These sequences provide the anthropomorphic narrative an affect of authenticity, as the images resonate with the audience, making human imposition seem completely absent.

Two examples are particularly relevant, as they act to naturalize sequences focusing on how the audience is to understand the human-animal relationship. The first are a series of movements that use time-lapse photography to highlight the growth of the plants, including a few species of wildflowers. Changing how the audience perceives time through mechanical processes, the sequences overflow with proof of their *livingness,* as the flowers appear to be real from the perspective of the progress of cinematic time, producing an affect of authenticity that may not even be accessible through intermittent first-hand observation.

The sequence turns into a narrative about the forest, that provides a logical explanation for the affect experienced in the audience. While theseemingly "fact-filled"

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refer to their work as literally preserving the disappearing natural world.

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narrative of northern woodland forests even makes reference to their disappearance at the hands of industrialism, there is little visual evidence of this devastation, and the concern generated by the narration is quickly forgotten. In this instance, we can see how the overwhelming presence of plants and animals in Earth, often serves to obscure the audience's collective responsibility for the disappearance of the forests, of which the film offers only a fleeting awareness.

The second sequence of interest begins with a fly-over of rivers and waterfalls in what the audience finds out later is Africa. These shots are inserted, it can be assumed, to produce fascination with the continent that most western audiences associate with human devastation and colonial exploitation. After movement through images of waterfalls, Jones begins to tell a narrative of Africa as a continent of rivers, and images of birds migrating over the continent are shown through high-angle shots. Calling these images "an Africa we rarely see," the narration reaffirms the authority of the film to accurately portray the natural world, while also implying that the cinematic world is representative of nature as a whole. Similar to the sequences of plant growth in the forest, the audience is left with the impression of a false presence, except in this example, little reference is given to the devastation of the continent. Given one recent study, that, found a bevy of threats to African forests, including its' consumption by the local populations, the sequences of African forests and rivers in *Earth* serve to hide human complicity with its' actual disappearance.[18]

Another kind of sequence that produces identification with *Earth* as a scientific text explicitly uses the affective power of nature, represented as absent human intervention or manipulation, legitimizing an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric

[18] de Wasseige, C. and Devers, D., "Report on the State of Forests," 2008, p. 11

narrative. A good example is the sequence of the northern forests for coniferous trees.

This sequence features an aerial shot that leaves the audience in awe of the seemingly

present and untouched wilderness. The narration tells the audience that the northern

forests contain "1/3 of all the trees on Earth," and that they "refresh the atmosphere of the

entire planet." The audience is thus reminded that the natural world is important because

of it's use value. Authenticated through the cultural discourse that constructs nature as a

"storehouse" of resources to be consumed, this sequence provides the audience with

confirmation that there is little reason to worry about running out of oxygen, as trees in

this region remain abundant.

The sequence of overhead shots transitions to images of a lynx, in what the

audience is told is "rare footage." As the animal comes into view, the forest around it

appears pristine, with the falling snow adding to the entrancing scene framing the fox. As

the sequence progresses, the filmmakers deploy an obscured close-up of the face, where

the audience is never given a complete view. The obscurity of the Lynx's face, provides it

with a meaning that breaks from normal animal-film convention; "In most wildlife films,

facial close-ups are instead, closely integrated, according to cinematic convention, with

other shots that give them a narrative and emotional context, and perhaprs even a

'meaning."[19]

Despite the fact that this sequence is a rare moment in film for animal subjectivity

to emerge, one must look no further than the narration to discern human meaning of the

shots. Highlighting the seeming absence of animal life from the northern forests, Jones

intones , "those that do live here, they're so hard to glimpse, they're like spirits."

Emphasizing the rarity of such an encounter with the lynx, the narration tells the audience

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[19] Bouse, D., Ibid., 2000, p. 31

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that, "this creature is the very essence of wilderness," and that it "may never visit the same patch of forest twice." In this way, the lynx becomes an object of spiritual identification, moving the audience to remain in awe of it's uniqueness.

Although this shot could produce multiple meanings, or no meaning at all, when combined with the narrative, it is apparent that the obscure face is likely to produce an affect of fascination and awe, as the lynx is framed as an ethereal being. This sequence provides the text with an authenticity unattainable in normal experience, as it is unlikely the audience will encounter with the lynx first-hand.

As the film ends and the credits begin, the film transitions to sequences of the film crews that emphasize the lengths to which they went to capture the footage. These images are important because they provide a present context through which they can verify the film's authenticity. Combined with lighthearted music, this sequence convinces the audience that nature film-making requires an "authentic" encounter with nature. Calling forth the generic tendencies of adventure-safari films, this sequence exploits the cultural association of adventurers, and face to face encounters with nature, as productive of accurate representations. The sequence works to remind the audience, then, that nature exists outside of the film, and filmmakers are working hard to bring them the best sequences possible.

 Sequences in *Earth* that emphasize the authenticity of the images, and the scientific authority of the narrative, serve to produce an affect of presence in the cinematic world that hides the disappearance of non-human others as a result of industrialism and modernity. Interspersed within sequences of the "main characters," the affective power of these sequences, allows the audience to accept anthropomorphism and the use of nature as an object, as legitimate practice. In this light, the sequences

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naturalize ideological fantasies throughout the film that use the animals as objects for

human meaning, or actively hide their disappearance from the natural world. Through

the interaction with the film assemblage that produces the illusion of presence, it becomes

possible for the audience to read *Earth,* in part, as a scientifically accurate representation

of the planet.

<p align="center">*Animal Death as a Strategy of Modernity*</p>

The practice of representation is, in some ways, inseparable from the cultural

imagination of the death of animals. From some of the cave drawings, to animal sacrifice

in religious ceremonies, to the mythic representations of *animality* in many classic

western texts*,* to the development of photography and film, western culture is founded on

an economy of the sacrifice of animals.[20] As a product of the historical development of

this economy, *Earth,*attempts to preserve nature from disappearance through the cinema.

According to Akira Lippit, "If the animal cannot die but is nonetheless vanishing, then it

must be transformed to another focus, another continuum in which death plays no role.

Animals must be transformed into cryptological artifacts"[21]

The disappearance of nature is inseparable from the development of an industrial

economy and mass communication technology. As Lippit has argued, "Film, perhaps the

emblematic technology of he late nineteenth century, keeps animals from ever truly dying

by reproducing each individual animal death in a fantastic crypt."[22] In *Earth,* animal

death remains central to the narrative; sequences of multiple living animals, are often

contrasted with the death of singular subjects. In each type of sequence, the critic can

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[20] Derrida, J., "The Animal," 2002, p. 409-411

[21] Lippit, A., Ibid, 2000, p. 189

[22] Lippit, A., Ibid., 2002, p. 12

evaluate how the deaths of individual animals construct nature as a reproducible and manipulable object, leaving little room for collective mourning of the animal, as it is framed as a vehicle for a specific meaning.

Several sequences of animal migration in *Earth* emphasize the swiftness with which   death can arrive for the subjects, especially for the young animals, vulnerable to attacks by predators. This generic narrative has it's roots in the becomes a vehicle to legitimize social competition, as Derek Bouse argues; "In wildlife films, however, 'survival of the fittest' and the 'struggle for existence' continue to be illustrated not only by individual acts of incidents of aggression, or, worse, predation, neither of which is appropriate to these concepts."[23] Competition in animal-films such as *Earth* transpose cultural discourse of self-interest and economic exploitation. Typical of Disney portrayals of nature, several sequences in the text reference the popular motif of "Social Darwinism," a discourse of economic and political rationality that sanctions some of the worst acts of violence against animals.

The caribou migration exemplifies the film's naturalization of social competition through the chase. In this sequence, a young caribou is attacked by the wolves following the herd. Separating a young caribou from the herd, a wolf chases the calf as the audience observes from the point-of-view of a helicopter mounted camera. This sequence of images, combined with the narrative and music, works to produce a sense of dramatic urgency in the audience, as what is known to be an inevitable death. As the wolf knocks the young caribou to the ground, the sequence cuts to wide angle shots of a green landscape absent human intervention.

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[23] Bouse, D. Ibid., 2000, p. 34

While the audience could identify with the images of the caribou, allowing its death to become representative of the disappearance of nature and constituting the sequence as a space for mourning, the exclusion of images of it's death deprives the audience of a visceral affect the images could produce. There is little room to recognize the caribou as a subject in death, as the images that follow, and the disinterested narrative, downplay it's importance. It is in the sequence of the caribou chase, that we find the film-animals themselves becoming artifacts of meaning, as their deaths serve to naturalize social discourses that emphasize the primacy of competition and survival. Compounded by the movement of the film towards images of a pristine landscape, the affect of authenticity in the sequence risks that the audience will succumb to the fantasy that competition among humans is a product of our biology.

Emphasis on competition as crucial to survival manifests itself in the desert scenes, however, in a different fashion. Following a pack of elephants are what jones terms an "epic quest" across the African Continent during the dry season, the desert sequences embody an affect of foreboding against the fragility of animal life. While the narrative of the lost elephants is rehearsed above, the sequence of the young elephant succumbing to lions is of interest here. As the desert sequences progress, the pack of elephants finally find a watering hole. Although this assures their access to water, the film directs attention to the presence of predators as well. Culminating in a scene, filmed using a night-vision camera, where a group of lions attack a young elephant, the sequence reminds the audience that even when one struggle is past, the "natural order" of competition is inescapable.

The death of the male polar-bear provides narrative closure for the audience through the valorization of animal-sacrifice as a meaningful event. While animal death is

prominent in other sequences, the sub-plot of the starving polar bear attempts to survive

not only for himself, but also for the young bears the narrative characterizes as his

offspring. As the film follows the bear on the hunt for food, the sequences produce

anxiety about the fragility of human life, as experienced by the polar bear.

The final sequences of the bear show it hunting a young walrus, a move the

narration characterizes as an act of desperation. After this fails, the images show the bear

laying down, ostensibly to die. As Jones refers to the death as a literal "sacrifice," it

serves as a metaphor for the objectification of animals for the creation of meaning.

According to Derrida, the necessity of animal sacrifice in Genesis, is a product of Adam's

dominion over the non-human embodied by the power of naming. Following the fall of

man, the old testament repeatedly calls for the sacrifice of animals as an act of

appeasement and thanksgiving.[24] In a very literal fashion, animal sacrifice manifests itself

here through the imposition of language in the narrative, allowing the audience to identify

the animal as a vehicle for human knowledge.

As the death of the polar bear manifests itself as an act of sacrifice, the audience is

able to forget the scene of a disappearing habitat highlighted by the images and narrative.

Destruction of the polar bear habitat, characterized by melting ice, and warnings of global

warming, is all but forgotten in the narrative of animal sacrifice and individual survival.

While the narrative mentions the warming atmosphere as the cause of the melting ice, the

lack of human intervention in the images, and the use of the death as a vehicle for human

meaning, prevent reflection on the audience's complicity with the problem. The white

ice, when contrasted with the deep-blue water, produces a soothing affect, as the audience

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[24] Derrida, Ibid., 2002, p. 383-385

is entranced by the flow of images. These movements, while sure to please audiences, serve to hide the collective responsibility for the death of the polar bear to follow.

In *Earth,* the specter of animal death haunts many of the sequences. The audience, however, is unlikely to identify the dying animals as a manifestation of the destructive power wrought by modernity, as any trace of human intervention in the natural world is absent from the images. While the narration gently reminds the audience's complicity in global climate change, and habitat destruction, the animals become vessels for human meaning, effacing any affect of mourning experienced by the audience. The sequences of death in *Earth* then, demonstrate that animals serve as objects for meaning creation, rather than representations of a disappearing nature.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the affective experience of viewing *Earth*, and the cultural motifs it references, it becomes apparent that many of the narratives produce worlds of human meaning constituted by the absence of animal subjectivity. This chapter has argued that, despite the possibility of animal subjectivity in animal films, the imposition of human meanings on the text render the animals absent from consideration as subjects by the audience. By making a "list" of the affects produced by each sequence, and organizing them in relation to how they move the audience, it becomes possible to understand how they each reference different, yet often overlapping, worlds of meaning.

The first world of meaning interrogated in this chapter is the world of the family, which translates into the cinema world in relatively literal terms. The animal "parents" in *Earth*, charged with protecting their "children," become the vehicle for a number of moral lessons. Exploiting the powerful affect produced by parent-child relationships in the human context, the film uses this identification as a vehicle for a citizenship lesson

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about proper parenting. Of the animals featured in the film, only the young polar bears survive, a result attributable to the presence of a contrived "father" bear that is said to have "sacrificed" himself. This re-affirms the necessity of a present father in human relations, and fulfills the audience's desire for a centering force in the narrative structure.

Following the discussion of animal families, this chapter demonstrated that the film relies on sequences that the audience mistakes for objective representations of nature. Through the seamless technological manipulation of images, the filmmakers created a believable representation of the planet. Audiences are likely to lend it a high amount of credibility, given the film's conflation of cinematic realism and objective representation. In this context, the audience ignore the technological process that produced the image, allowing them to ignore the technical manipulations that provide the film coherence. Contextualized in terms of the narration that contains surface-level facts about the subjects of the film, these sequences can be read as educating the audience about a constructed world. While the exploitation of audience expectations for cinematic realism is not problematic in itself, these sequences constitute a rhetorical strategy to naturalize the anthropomorphic representations throughout the text.

The haunting presence of dying animals in *Earth* constitutes their *livingness* as a method to hide their status as objects for the creation of human meaning. If nature itself is disappearing, then in some ways, *Earth* is the perfect humanist solution to the animal's death. Because the audience can access the experience of dying animals repeatedly with no material consequences, they are unlikely to be moved by the sequences, especially when they are provided a specific, anthropomorphic, meaning through the narrative. The sequences of animal-death highlight for the audience the natural status of competition as a way of survival, making it likely to re-affirm modern forms of citizenship based on the

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exclusion of the non-human. With this re-affirmation of modernity, and it's soft treatment of Global warming, *Earth,* to some extent, is apart of the circulation of rhetorics that obscure collective responsibility for the destruction of the planet.

The typology provided in this chapter is far from complete, however, it does highlight three central motifs referenced by the sequences that compose *Earth*. The identification with these motifs, it has argued, works at the level of the body to create meaning through affect. Unlike current theories of identification, the use of affect does not rely on a system of signs in the world, a move crucial to opening up space to study visual elements in film that lack a clear relationship to a signifier in language. As the conclusion will argue; the necessity of considering affective encounters with nature as rhetoric is necessary to challenge public imagination of the human-animal boundary. This move will open space for the work of critical rhetoric to be reconstituted as an ethics of reading and viewing animal films that de-naturalizes the imposition of fantasies and myth upon the audience.

CHAPTER FIVE

Earth and The Work of Rhetoric

Introduction

This thesis has interrogated the development of the human-animal relationship in the public sphere through differing forms of animal-representation. It has argued that *Earth,* as the first Disney Nature film, is an important text in the continuing development of the human-animal relationship in the public sphere. From the historical development of this relationship through literature, myth, and fable, to the proliferation of an technologies of viewing and circulation, it became possible to contextualize the emergence of wildlife films during the last century and a quarter. The context demonstrated inter-linkages between the human-animal relationship and the development of technologies and practices of representation, calling for a consideration of their influence upon audiences.

A confluence of film technology, cultural artifacts, and the liberal public sphere have demonstrated the need to critique current understandings of identification as resulting from the process of affective perception. The third chapter argued that it is more productive to read rhetoric in wildlife films working on the audience to produce a perception of presence that the audience mistakes for the animal's living essence. The false subjectivity of animals in animal films, including *Earth*, produces identification with a world of abundant biodiversity and beautiful landscapes that hides audience responsibility for the ongoing destruction of industrialism and modernity.

The fourth chapter outlined a typology of sequences sorted by the affect they create. Three interrelated motifs are of importance in *Earth;* the importance of the family, film as scientific representation, and the death of animals. Despite the brief mentions of the disappearance of the natural world, the images in the film, and different parts of the narrative, work to neutralize the narration of ecological crisis. This analysis argued that the motifs interact as an assemblage of meaning that works to produce complacency with the slaughter of uncountable numbers of animals in the industrial food complex, scientific laboratories, and the victims of a disappearing habitat. Through *Earth,* the audience comes to identify with nature as an object for the transposition of human narratives at every turn.

The analysis situates *Earth* at the cross-roads of ecology and ethics, an intersection invites interrogation. This chapter will argue that because "critical rhetoric" privileges the production of critical discourse as an act of agency, it must be reformulated to account for the material rhetoric produced by animal images that work at the level of the body to produce affective meaning. In conclusion, it will argue that *Earth* presents several ethical dilemmas for scholars of environmental rhetoric and animal representation, making an interrogation of future Disney Nature films such as *Oceans[1]* an important task for rhetorical scholarship.

Earth, Critical Rhetoric, and Animals in the Public Sphere

Incorporating the consideration of affect in a theory of "critical rhetoric" is crucial to account for the material rhetoric produced by animal images. In the most well known articulation,"Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Practice," calls for a constitutive theory of

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1 Forthcoming, Earth Day, April 22nd, 2010.

rhetoric based in Foucaultian notions of power and discourse. According to Mckerrow, "If we are to escape the from the trivializing influence of universalist approaches, the task is not to rehabilitate rhetoric, but to announce it in terms of critical practice."[2] While this move remains central this thesis, his claim that "The task of a critical rhetoric is to undermine and expose the discourse of power in order to thwart its effects in social relation"[3] belies a narrow focus on relationships between humans. Furthermore, Mckerrow argues that "Terms are not 'unconnected'; in the formation of the text, out of fragments of what is said, the resulting 'picture' needs to be checked against 'what is absent' as well as what is present."[4] Thus, despite the critiques offered here, Mckerrow's rhetoric remains an important justification for interrogating the economy of absence and presence, as manifest in representations of the non-human world.

Even attempts to extend the practice of "critical rhetoric" to environmental communication cannot escape a human and symbolic approach.   The importance of retaining a focus on discourse has been defended by Kevin Deluca, who argues, "The accusation that poststructuralists retreat into language and leave the 'real' world behind on erroneously equating discourse with language, for post-structuralism suggests that discourse is material and includes within it the linguistic and non-linguistic."[5] In fact, theories of discourse revive the possibility of challenging the hegemony of industrialism, "If progress is not accepted as the grand narrative of industrial society, then toxic waste dumps become the sites of rhetorical and political struggle"[6] Deluca's use of critical

2 Mckerrow, R., "Critical Rhetoric," 1989, p. 94

3 Ibid., p. 98

4 Ibid., p. 107

5 Deluca, K., *Image Politics*, 1999, p. 147

6 Ibid., p. 147

rhetorics for environmental politics, however, extends the project simply to the use of images for the use of advocacy, but still leaves little room for an affective theory of communication with the natural world. Remaining focused on the subjectivity of the critic, rhetoric as a practice must also re-construct the affective experience of the viewer.

In a recent essay by Emily Plec argues that "These questions of power, ideology, and domination through discourse require scholars of critical rhetoric and environmental communication to carefully examine regimes of representation."[7] While she recognizes that "Mckerrow's approach to critical rhetoric has been widely criticized for it's modernist assumptions,"[8] the author makes little attempt to interrogate the implications of modernism for human engagement with the environment. In fact, the article concludes that scholars should adopt a "radical semantism- an application of critical rhetoric to the realm of definition and negotiation of meaning." Radical semantism, by focusing on "crimes of redefinition" extends Mckerrow's move to focus on "who may speak" in rhetorical practice, without extending consideration to animals and nature as a class that cannot exert itself in discourse through language.

The focus on language and human discourse as producing images exemplifies the approach of critical rhetoric as remaining at the level of the analysis of signs. Dana Cloud has argued that "we ought not sacrifice the notions of practical truth, bodily reality, and material oppression to the tendency to render all of experience discursive, as if no one went hungry or died in war"[9] Concluding that "the materiality of discourse" is an "oxymoron,"Cloud posits many of the conditions of oppression as existing outside of

7 Plec, E. "Crisis, Coherence, and the Promise," 2007, p. 54

8 Ibid., p. 51

9 Cloud, D. "The Materiality of Discourse,"1994, p. 159

rhetoric, in the fields of economics and politics. While certainly the conditions of the oppression of animals is the result of material processes, this thesis has shown the importance of rhetoric to the public to disavowal of their responsibility in producing and maintaining the systems of material oppression.

Critiquing the competing theories of McKerrow and Cloud, Richard Rogers has argued that critical rhetoricians rely on a logos of human knowledge and control that excludes the material becoming of nature. "Ontology has been subordinated to epistemology- to the will to control, ego, being, sense, language, mankind *[sic]*."[10] Constitutive and materialist theories of rhetoric thus preserve the human-nature relationship as one of objectification; "As long as nature is objectified and the nature/human relationship constructed as one-way- active humans giving meaning and order to passive nature- the implications for a radically materialist and dialogic theory of communication will be obscured."[11] To remedy the problems with current theories of critical rhetoric, whether constitutive, or materialist, Rogers sees the necessity of "listening to nature" in a "transhuman dialog" that makes space for nature to emerge as a subject within rhetorical theory.[12]

While post-structural theorists may leave room for the "non-linguistic," *Earth* demonstrates the necessity of theories of identification that account for the movement of nature as a material force, while also calling for a critique that connects the sequences to their technological and discursive contexts in the public. Sequences of images that escape signification, then, summon cultural motifs and meanings by working at the level

10 Rogers, R., "Overcoming the Objectification," 1989, p. 255, *sic* added

11 Ibid., p. 246

12 Ibid., p. 266-268

of the body. The relationships between animal "children," and their "parents" in the film *Earth* is given a persuasive power through the construction of the images. While it is important to understand how images becomes embodied in language, one should notice how the images themselves work at the level of the body to produce identification.

The necessity of encountering images of nature, and the natural world itself, through a critique of discourses about the environment point to the intersection between rhetorical theory and the natural sciences pointed to by Foucault in *The Order of Things*.[13] According to Manuel Delanda, "And the theory of evolution had already shown the animals and plant processes were not embodiments of eternal essences but piecemeal historical constructions, slow accumulations of adaptive traits cemented together via reproductive isolation."[14] "What is needed here is not a textual but a physical operation: much as history has infiltrated physics, we must now allow physics to infiltrate human history."[15] Elizabeth Grosz argues that critical subjectivity requires an engagement with the material world. "Our continuing studies of subjectivity and the body in the humanities and social sciences, inevitably, if we go deeply enough, bring us back to the more complex and unsolved questions of the natural sciences."[16]

The discursive construction of nature as an object must be challenged to effectuate a change in the reading practices of the public. The need to escape the dichotomy between constitutive rhetoric and materiality can be likened to the double movement of images and narration within *Earth,* insofar as they both constantly work to affect the production of rhetoric and meaning.. Because affect operates at the level of the body, it

13 1977

14 Delanda, M., *A Thousand Years*, 1997; p. 14

15 Ibid.; p. 15

16 Grosz, E., "The Nick of Time," 2005, p. 3

has a materiality absent from discourse produced by language and signification. "An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously." If we are to follow Deleuze and Guattari then, "There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)."[17] Interrogating affect, then, deconstructs the materiality-discourse binary, insofar as it becomes possible to understand how images move the audience through psychological and involuntary reactions to the feelings produced by the images.

Earth also demonstrates the necessity of accounting for the muliple affective meanings within any text. The analysis demonstrates that the text often produces multiple meanings, as the audience interact with the flow of images that characterizes the public sphere. Each sequence moves past the audience, causing meanings to build upon each other, working on the audience members in different ways. The repetition of motifs in different sequences makes it possible to connect understand their interaction. Similar to encounters with the non-human world, there are inevitably a variety of meanings one could garner from the images. Many of the sequences in *Earth,* however, produce a more limited set of affects, given the assignment of a *logos* by the narration that renders the images intelligible in discourse. .

Liberalism, Animal Representation, and Rhetoric as the Work of Ethics

Articulations of environmental ethics in the classical age have influenced popular conceptions of the human-animal relationship in the public sphere. The discourses of Aristotle are instructive as they install the reasoning individual as a moral subject. "From

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17 Deleuze, F., and Guattari, G., 1987, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.22-23

this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature, for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature."[18] Humans, unlike animals, have the reasoning capacity that allows them to always seek pleasure. "It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else," because, "that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reasoning is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else, is man"[19] From antiquity, ethics in the western tradition have contributed to the separation between the humans and animals insofar as humans are free to dominate the natural world as it lacks rationality.

The ethics of liberalism, as later articulated by J.S. Mill, translate the self interested, rational subject, into a dignified creature, that pursues ends other than simply the fulfillment of their desires. "Few human creatures consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of the beast's pleasures, no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool."[20] The possession of "higher faculties," for Mill, is crucial to ethical subjectivity, as "the law of nature" cannot serve as a basis for ethics. The realm of moral behavior, then, is situated clearly on the side of culture as distinct from the realm of nature, that is lacking reason. "Culture versus nature, reason versus nature, male versus female, mind versus body, machine versus body, master versus slave, reason versus emotion, self versus other. In each dichotomy, the first member of each air dominates over the second." "The dominating side in each pair," argues Michael Bell, "is culturally linked with reason, and the dominated side is

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18 Aristotle, *Nicomanchean Ethics,* 1994, p. 26

19 Ibid., p. 188

20 Mill, JS, *Utilitarianism*, 1994, p. 202

culturally linked to nature"[21] Liberal political theory, as the basis for the modern public sphere, then, has installed an individualist ethics that emphasizes the ability of humans to make rational decisions that destroy the environment.

Current codes of rationality prevent audiences from understanding how their actions effect the well being of the environment. As Bell argues, "With an individualistic frame of mind, we tend to ignore the consequences of our actions on those wider surroundings and therefore, because of our interconnections, sometimes on ourselves as well."[22]Ethics that emphasize individual rationality provide little room for collective values that are crucial to the formation of a public aware of their complicity with the destruction of the environment. As Deluca has argued "In environmental circles it is still a Cartesian world, wherein the founding act is human thinking (*cogito ergo sum*) and the earth is object to humanity's subject." In most attempts to "save the environment," "humans act ot save the object earth and, fundamentally, this action is motivated by the subject's self interest."[23]

As long as audiences are able to imagine themselves as masters of the non-human world, including animals, the public is likely to continue the "disavowal" of their complicity with the genocide of animals. "Although radical groups offer a different valuation, note that this position does not trouble the terms of Cartesianism." In fact, DeLuca argues that "the dichotomies of subject-object, human-animal, culture-nature, civilization-wilderness, remain intact."[24] Even liberal responses such as "animal rights" rely on judgments about suffering attached to a *logos* of suffering, a "possibility of the

21 Bell, M., *An Invitation*, 1998, p. 167

22 Ibid., p. 157

23 DeLuca, K., "Thinking with Heidegger," 2005, p. 72

24 Ibid., p. 72

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impossible," of a permanent state of deprivation of their ability to participate in rational deliberation.[25]

Liberal ethics pervade the discipline of environmental communication. For instance, Heath et. Al have argued recently that "Environmental communication, as studied today, serves as a place for the sort of hand-wringing that has characterized communication studies since the age of Plato and Aristotle." Almost all studies of environmental communication focus on the "symbolizing animal" as the authors argue further, "At the heart of such inquiry is the universal question of how we can know, and once we know how we can decide collectively in ways that improve society, the human condition."[26] The reduction of ethics in environmental communication to human concerns leaves little room for the materiality of nature to be taken into consideration, as it's work reaffirms the exclusion of the non-human that serves as the basis for liberal subjectivity.

Instead of the predominant understanding of ethics in environmental communication as concerned with the continuation of human society, Julie Shutten argues that film has the ability to produce a new form of ethical identification with humans as apart of nature. This relation is one of embodiment, where we understand ourselves as an organic part of nature. Her reading of *Grizzly Man* is similar to Jennifer Ladino's, "Taken together, treadwell embodies an environmental ethic that includes pieces from Leopold, Rolston, and Warren's conceptions, illustrating what it might look like for humans to live a web of life mentality"[27] Although the film maintains a separation between human culture and animals, Shutten concludes that, "Careful analysis of such

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25 Derrida, J. "The Animal," 2002, p. 395-396

26 Heath et. Al, "Crisis, Risk, Science," 2007, p. 36

27 Shutten, J., "Chewing on... Grizzly Man" 2008, p. 208

films can offer insights into how the environmental movement might work to deconstruct dominant dualities for mainstream audiences."[28]

The celebration of the collapse of the human-animal boundary through film, however, does not account for the technological apparatus that short-circuits the affective work of mourning the disappearance of the non-human world. While *Earth* often moves the audience to reconsider their relationship to animal-others, the sequences, as apart of the cinematic assemblage of sequences, encourages a docile complicit with the ongoing destruction of the natural world. By treating animal death as a scene for human allegory, *Earth* produces animal death as unremarkable, as the images remain de-contextualized from widespread ecological destruction happening outside the cinematic frame.

Concern for issues of treatment of animals is inseparable from the history of liberal modernity, "the imagining of the body at the end of the active body at the end of the nineteenth century is linked to the disciplining of that body, particularly at the conjunction of cinema and science."[29] In this light, *Earth* is at the head of the ethical *aporia*, or overload of concerns experienced by supposedly rational actors, that must be negotiated if scholars of environmental and critical rhetoric are to move past an exclusive concern for human wellness. At every turn, it is possible to understand how the predominance of human concerns, and an apolitical fascination with images, produces widespread disavowal of responsibility towards animals. The rhetorical critic, then, must attend to the ethical implications of animal films, mediating the competing problems of the technological production and the emergence of an emergent animal subjectivity. As

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28 Ibid., p. 209

29 Burt, J., *Animals in Film*, 2002, p. 113

Jonathon Burt has argued, "film locates questions of the place of the animal in modernity at the junction where technology and issues of the treatment of animals meet."[30]

Because *Earth* moves the audience to recognize an overabundance of animal life, the scenes of animal death are not enough to engender the process of mourning. Rather, animal death serves as a specter, producing the fantasy that they will be able to better manage the environment, preventing both their death, and the death of the animal. Turning to the work of mourning instead would situate critics and the audience as responsible for interrogating the representations of animals that exude a particular *livingness,* "To live, by definition is not something one learns. Not from oneself, if not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death. In any case from the other at the edge of life. At the internal border or the external border, it is a heterodidactics between life and death"[31] *Earth* invites the audience to participate in a fantasy of 'reanimation' where animal death and destruction is disavowed, preventing any recognition of collective responsibility for events absent from the frame.

The disavowal of environmental destruction is an extension of the ideal of liberal citizenship that privileges the powers of reasoning and rationality. The ethics of separateness that dominate the public sphere and the field of environmental communication cannot leverage an effective critique of the ability of animal films to construct the human-animal divide. Instead, it is necessary to turn the work of rhetoric to the process of "being with" animals. "Being *after,* being *alongside,* being *near [pres]* would appear as different modes of being, indeed of *being-with.* With the animal." Leveraging the contingency and differentiation of subjectivity that comes with being

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30 Ibid., p. 87

31 Derrida, J. *Spectres of Marx,* 1994, p. xvii

alongside others, "But, in spite of appearances, it isn't certain that these modes of being come to modify a preestablished being, even less a primitive 'I *am*."[32] Situating the subject in constant relation to animal others, Derridean ethics allows the critic to escape the problems of liberal subjectivity and human based scholarship that is responsible for replicating anthropocentric rationality in environmental communication.

A turn towards "being with" allows the work of rhetoric to investigate the historical relationships between the present, and those animals whom we come after, while leveraging a critique of the present, and exhorting an environmental politics of the future. Ethics, according to Derrida, involves learning to orientate oneself towards those beings who only enter the social field through their physical absence, "To live otherwise and better. No, not better, but more justly. But *with* them." Only once rhetoric questions our relationship to animals can critics deconstruct the economy of presence and absence that renders them spectral objects in the public sphere. "No *being-with* the other, no socius without this with that makes being-with in general more enigmatic than ever for us. And this being-*with* specters would also be, no only but also, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations"[33]

Summoning the work of rhetoric as ethical duty, Jacques Derrida has argued "To think the war we find ourselves waging is not only a duty, a responsibility, an obligation, it is also a necessity, a constraint that, like it or not, directly, or indirectly, everyone is held to. Henceforth and more than ever."[34] In this sense, to fight the war for identification with animals, the rhetorician must attend to the "animal-as machine" as an example of

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32 Derrida, J., Ibid, 2002, p. 379

33 Derrida, J. Ibid, 1994 p. xvii

34 Derrida, Ibid., 2002, p. 397

their exclusion form discourse, as the subjectivity of visual identification is covered over through narration and editing in many films, including Earth. In the film, the "wholly other" animal is submitted to the demands of filmmakers who attempt to preserve them as objects for the transmission of human meaning. *Earth* renders animals spectral objects of human meaning, and calls forth an awareness of our being with, and after, non-human others. It is from this standpoint that scholarship about animal movies cannot remain at the level of history and technique, instead, the critic must attend to the structure of presence and absence as creating a spectral animality absent from consideration in everyday public interactions.

Conclusion

In response to Earth, this thesis has interrogated how the film moves the audience towards a particular understanding of the human-animal relationship. The work of rhetoric, here, opens space for the reader to ethically orientate themselves towards the non-human world, pointing to how Earth allows the audience to disavow their responsibility for the genocide of non-human's. This relationship is the product of liberal citizenship that installs rationality as the highest faculty, ensuring that humans continue to dominate the earth. This thesis has argued that the liberal public sphere is a system that installs humans as the manipulators of the non-human world, allowing the public to disavow their complicity with the disappearance of the natural world.

Highlighting how Earth produces animals as objects for consumption and exploitation by the audience, this thesis has argued that it is necessary to attend to physical processes, and their influence on historical conceptions of the human-animal divide. Only through attention to the material subjectivity of animals, as they affect the

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bodies of the audience, can the critic come to understand how films produce

identification with meanings exclusive to the human world. This thesis has argued that

the future of analysis of animal films must turn to the rhetorical construction of nature

and the human-animal divide if we are to answer the affective call to re-orientate

ourselves towards being with animals in the world.

For the field of rhetoric, it is necessary to answer the call and enlist in the war of

empathic identification with animals, interrogating how they are rendered absent from the

field of representation. Future research into the rhetoric of animality and the environment

must highlight the public disavowal of the ongoing genocide of the animals. While

certainly there have been attempts to study environmental movements and works of

natural representation, there has been little discussion of how animals are rendered absent

in the name of a variety of human meanings. Furthermore, there are uncountable works to

be written on the use of anthropomorphism to shape social debates about the family,

science, and the environment. This thesis presents not only an ethical challenge to

rhetoricians, but also a pedagogical one, to educate audiences about how the system of

circulation and the construction of animal images through a variety of processes.

Although this thesis has pointed to a general complicity between

anthropomorphism and the erasure of the natural world, there are signs of a growing

counter-current to this logic that emphasizes the differences between humans and

animals. The increasing frequency of human-animal encounters as cities expand into

preciously rural areas is one example of a site where the differences between humans and

animals is highlighted. While many suburban homeowners and their children tend to keep

distance between themselves and the animals, some humans, imagining the animals

would be similar to their domesticated counterparts, have had decidedly negative

encounters with the animals.[35] These events, to some have demonstrated the need to differentiate further humans and animals, "Children should be counseled about approaching animals that might appear to be friendly, she said."[36] The article concludes that there have been a litany of dangerous encounters between children and animals because the children do not respect them as possibly dangerous creatures, speaking to the need for adults, in some fashion, to cut across the messages that transfer human qualities onto animals.

Other examples, however, demonstrate that anthropomorphism is a strategy that has the possibility of producing political action and change. Recent court battles over videos of animal abuse also testify to the use of transference as an argument against the sale of animal "snuff films." Although the Supreme Court overturned the ban, one of the few laws protecting animals at the federal level, Samuel Alito's dissenting opinion cited the films as representative of all films that exploit images of death for profit. Despite the failure to persuade the court in this instance, however, it is apparent that the comparison between human and animal suffering is, to some extent, a persuasive argument for the protection of animals.[37] According to one commentator, "The parallel between protecting animals from abuse and children from sexual abuse in the form of child pornography is compelling."Furthermore that, "Surely, innocent animals deserve the same protection from abuse and exploitation. Historically, many of the organizations promoting humane treatment of animals grew out of the child protection movement."[38] The reaction to the increase of wildlife in urban areas, and support for making illegal the sale of animal

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35 Murrell, Mark.""If you care, leave 'em there" April 24ᵗ, 2010 p. Lexis Nexis
36 James, Brent. "More Florida wildlife venture into urban centers" April 22, 2009 p. Lexis Nexis
37 White, Ken. "Supremely bad decision" April 21 2010 p. Lexis Nexis
38 *The Washington Post*, "A setback for protecting animals" April 25, 2010 p. Lexis Nexis

"snuff films," are two examples of the diverse reactions to anthropomorphism, including the possibility of such strategies being used for positive political ends.

Shortly after the defense of this thesis, Oceans will be the second feature-length release of Disney Nature. Coming after Earth, in the movement of the genre through time, it will be apart of the collection of developments in technology, industry, and cultures of viewing that continue to influence the public imagination of the human-animal relationship. There has been little mention in this text, however, of the possibility of a wildlife film that avoids the pitfalls of anthropomorphism such as the objectification of the animal. While the previous examples demonstrate some potential problems with the use of the technical processes of film in any instance, the increasing popularity of "trail cams," that show animals as they move about an area, do offer some hope. In these images, often accessible online, the audience is shown the day to day habits of the animals with no human imposition or narration. Furthermore, there is evidence that the trail cameras available on the internet have been growing in popularity as audiences attempt to get a glimpse of the African Savanna, or the Brazilian rainforest.[39] While the films do not offer a remedy for our separation from nature as an experiential condition, one can hope that the films will bring an appreciation for the natural world that does not rely on their relation in a human constructed storyline, or as a stand in for a human archetype.

Given the historical connection between animal films and the objectification of their subjects, the possibility of widespread changes in the practices of viewing that influence the public imagination of the human-animal relationship. Despite the current movements both in favor of educating the public about the differences between humans

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39 Mason, Cecelia. "Appalachian Trail offers research opportunities" April 18th, 2010, p. Lexis Kayser, Mark. "Outlawing Trail Cameras" April 14, 2010 p. online,

and other animals, and in contradistinction, the use of such comparisons to establish a basis for animal suffering in a Supreme Court case however, it is unlikely that practices such as the mystification of the systems of animal slaughter and food processing, will be brought to light through new forms of rhetoric. Absent the continued work of critically examining the disappearance of nature from human experience, it is likely that such movements will be fractured and unorganized. Only through a continued critique of animal films, and their ability to produce identification, can the work of rhetoric describe how each text functions to produce meaning in through the economy of presence and absence, as the images work at the level of the body to create identification. The work of rhetoric, then, opens space for an understanding of how films influence our understanding of animal others, allowing the critic and his audience to answer the ethical demand presented by our living with the non-human.

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