

Abstract

With an aim to explore the possibility of depicting non-human subjectivity in film, the thesis centers on three contemporary American films that venture beyond the current state of human exceptionalism and bridge a caesura between humanity and animality. Therefore, the thesis puts forward a hypothesis whether film as a cultural and visual medium has an aesthetic, ontological and ethical potential to illustrate animal subjectivity.

Terrence Malick's war film *The Thin Red Line* is an example of highlighting intersubjective experiences of human beings and non-human phenomena. Kevin Costner's western *Dances with Wolves* underscores reciprocity between humans and animals as well as animal agency and practical and spiritual engagement with animals. *Okja*, the Korean-American collaboration, is a dystopian satire that reveals the anxieties of the present state of farm animals.

Applying an interdisciplinary approach, the thesis engages with philosophy, anthrozoology, animal studies, and critical theory, in an attempt to balance between examining visual representation of animals in film and deconstructing the state of dominant cultural and political ideologies that have locked actual animals within the ideological frameworks of anthropocentric status quo. These human-centered paradigms explicitly and implicitly have removed animals to the periphery of cultural imagination and established a number of certain tropes which cinematic animals have to succumb to — the sentimentalized animal, the exotic animal, the loyal friend, the beast, the villain, the anthropomorphic projection.

The thesis thus concludes that subjectivity, in any form, is a relational category. This suggests that once animals are under the gaze of the cinematic apparatus, a certain form of subjectivity is inevitably imposed on them.

Key words: animal subjectivity, intersubjectivity, animality, biopolitics, phenomenology, more-than-human-world, relational subjectivity, animal agency, animal capital, The Thin Red Line, Dances with Wolves, Okja.