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**On Animal Subjectivity in Contemporary
American Film**

**vedoucí diplomové práce
(supervisor):
doc. Erik Sherman Roraback, D.
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**Zpracovala (author):
B.Ed. Botagoz Koilybayeva

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Intersubjectivity

I would like to start this introduction by briefly recounting the stories of two animals named Topsy and Gunda. Topsy was an elephant at Coney Island's Luna Park at the beginning of the twentieth century. What is known about Topsy is that she was used for riding the park visitors on her back and had a number of handlers that did not treat her well, as a result, three of them were killed by Topsy. Following that unprecedented event, Topsy was electrocuted publicly and her death is forever captured on film. In fact, *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903) is considered to be one of the earliest films, "the earliest live footage captured by emergent moving picture cameras by the Edison Manufacturing Company".¹

Gunda is a farm pig who has just given birth to ten piglets. Her life is captured on film in the eponymous black and white documentary film *Gunda* (2020) by the cosmopolite director Viktor Kossakovsky. Sharing a farm with a herd of cows and a one-legged rooster, the new mother spends her days tending to her babies, feeding and keeping an eye on them. The film was premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and received substantial praise and critical acclaim. From calling the film "sublimely beautiful"² and "one of a kind documentary feature"³ to "gently immersive storytelling"⁴ and "beautiful, monochrome slice of farmyard life"⁵, the critics were impressed by film's poetic cinematography, Kossakovsky's decision to exclude musical score, humans, and narration in order to create a timeless portrait of a nonhuman life rather than appealing to sentimentality or shocking the audience by showing bloody slaughterhouses.

¹ Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 140.

² Manohla Dargis, "A Remarkable Pig's-Eye View of the World" *The New York Times*, Dec. 2020 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/10/movies/gunda-review.html>> Sep 2022.

³ Joe Morgenstern, "A Pig's Life" *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 2020 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/gunda-review-a-pigs-life-11607628711>> Sep 2022.

⁴ Guy Lodge, "Gunda: Film Review" *Variety*, Feb. 2020 <<https://variety.com/2020/film/festivals/gunda-film-review-1203519818/>> Sep 2022.

⁵ Ben Nicholson, "Gunda gets down and dirty with a sow", June 2021 <<https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/reviews/gunda-gets-down-dirty-with-sow-victor-kossakovsky-joaquin-phoenix>> Sep 2022.

Kossakovsky's agenda was to demonstrate that a living being like a farm pig experiences her own life-world, her *Umwelt* (to borrow from Uexkull) and deserves to live with her offsprings by her side.

There is more than a century that divides the cinematic representations of Topsy and Gunda. Both movies, somewhat, encapsulate the potential of visual culture, and film in particular, to reframe narratives about animals. From depicting an act of killing of a real animal, of an elephant, an endangered species, as a public spectacle to portraying a sow inhabiting her own world; the world of emotions, love, joy, grief and sorrow. Cinematic tools such as sophisticated camera lenses, long shots, close-ups, musical score, voiceover or the lack of thereof are able to assist in illuminating what phenomenologists call intersubjectivity, i.e, the phenomena which appear to a human eye (the objective world like trees and clouds) are inevitably interpreted as subjective because they are experienced by a particular self with their own moods and perception capabilities.

Upon seeing a chestnut tree for the first time, for instance, I was amazed by its early blooming and the shape of its leaves which form a sort of perfect ellipse. Having grown up in Kazakhstan where chestnut trees do not grow, I can only assume that my perception of them was different to the German-born Herman Hesse who grew up seeing them everywhere and letting them inform his subjectivity. Yet the same chestnut trees are also experienced by many other embodied subjects (birds, bugs and squirrels) in their own way, therefore making these phenomena intersubjective.

With this in mind, cinema can be a useful mediator between a more-than-human-world and spectators. Moreover, it can enrich our understanding of the surrounding world by going to places a human eye cannot penetrate. Thus, film puts a viewer in the position of an observer pulling him into a different reality like the world of a sow. By watching a 15-minute long shot of Gunda with her piglets one cannot help but to become immersed in her world. Kossakovsky, for example, truly believes that nature and film are very similar as they both initially give people feelings, which then turn into thoughts:

Nature and evolution taught us to look and to understand, to feel first and understand second. This is why, I believe cinema is very close to nature. Cinema gives you feelings first and uses your brain second. ⁶

In other words, nowadays there is an urgent momentum, a greater need, “a mix of curiosity, guilt, greater technological prowess and creativity”⁷ to venture beyond the anthropocentric framework, to gesture towards a possibility that our reality as we know it encompasses multiple intelligences and a myriad of subjectivities. Contemporary American phenomenologist and ecologist David Abram named this mode of existence as “more-than-human-world”⁸ and such perspective perceives nature and all living beings as embodied subjects. *Gunda* is one of the few successful exemplars of what is known as multispecies documentaries - a newly emerging genre of wildlife filmmaking or ecocinema which situates itself between aesthetics and ethics (politics) to provoke in viewers “an evocative approach”⁹, i.e eliciting affect and emotion and challenge the viewers to “rethink political society at large and one’s place in it”.¹⁰ Having said that, an eco-phenomenological approach could help society develop empathy which would enable the individual to look beyond its own ego and perceive the world, nature, animals and plants not as determinate objects ready for human manipulation and intervention but as intelligent subjects in their own respective realms. “By associative empathy”, Abram elaborates, “the embodied subject comes to recognize these other bodies as other centers of experience, other subjects”.¹¹

1.2 Animal Representation in Film

⁶ Erik Luers, “A Question of Empathy: Viktor Kossakovsky on *Gunda*” Feb 2021, <<https://filmmakermagazine.com/111265-a-question-of-empathy-viktor-kossakovsky-gunda/#.Y3dXDezMLsG>> Sep 2022.

⁷ Nicholson, *Sight and Sound*

⁸ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, (Vintage Books, 2017) 37.

⁹ Benjamin Schultz-Figueroa, “Death by the Numbers: Factory Farms as Allegories in *Cow and Gunda*”, *Film Quarterly*, Vol.75, No.4: 48. <<https://online.ucpress.edu/fq/article-abstract/75/4/47/183162/Death-by-the-NumbersFactory-Farms-as-Allegories-in?redirectedFrom=fulltext>> August 2022.

¹⁰ Schult-Figueroa 49.

¹¹ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* 37.

Animals in film are typically portrayed according to what Foucault calls the discursive productions of truth, i.e, the internalized stereotypes, a system of knowledge enhanced by institutions, law, states, visual culture, and ultimately the logic of a dominant ideology. The specter ranges from repulsion against rats, fear of sharks, sympathy to horses and adoration of dogs (the cult of pets in general from Victorian bourgeoisie onwards) among many other. For example, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) established, quite deeply, a false conception of sharks as being terribly dangerous and villainous toward people. Alfred Hitchcock's *Birds* (1963) used birds as an omen of ill fate for the townspeople. Survival films implement human versus animal trope like in *The Edge* (1997) which opposed a man versus a grizzly bear and a recent film by Alejandro G. Inarritu called *The Revenant* (2015). Another example is *The Grey* (2011) which confronted a hunter with a pack of wolves. What should be highlighted in the relation to survival dramas is a white man's desire to establish his dominance over nature, which undoubtedly refers to Western Expansionism, imperialist and colonial sensibilities of industrialized Western nations.

Moreover, animals tend to be represented either as commodities, tokens, therapy pets or loyal companions. In such depictions not only is the animal body rendered subservient to humans, these portrayals facilitate a constructed sentimentality in the relation to the trope of the good human master and a loyal animal friend. Such films assume an anthropocentric lens and use an animal as a vehicle for the transformation of the main human protagonist. For instance, in Steven Spielberg's *War Horse* (2011) a horse is immensely instrumental in the coming of age process of a young man. *Lassie Come Home* (1943) and *Free Willy* (1993) demonstrate the same trope using a dog and an orca respectively. In the former the dog replaces a friend and in the latter the orca replaces a parent figure.

Another common trope for animals is anthropomorphism which is particularly symptomatic of animation and fantasy like Wes Anderson's *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) and *King Kong* (1976) to name a few. Animals are anthropomorphized to be caricatures (or ironic representations) of humans. On the other side of the spectrum, animals can act as raw material, the bodies for the experiments or rituals which serve humans for the purpose of satisfying their curiosity, such as Peter Greenway's *Zed and Two Noughts* (1983) or for sacrifice, as in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979).

That being said, the sentimentalized body of the animal, the villain animal, the sacrificial animal, the beast cast a veil over our critical understanding of human/non-human relationship making an actual animal a rather mediated representation far removed from its reality. As a result, those ‘versions’ of the animal establish themselves in the cultural imagination.

1.3 Rupture Between Humanity and Animality

Recently there has been a rise of philosophical and political inquiries into the newly emerging field of animality studies within the critical studies in literatures and cultures and in humanities and social sciences in general. The crux of these inquiries lies in questioning, admitting or denying nonhuman subjectivity. This is what Cary Wolfe, one of the leading contemporary theorists of posthumanism, calls “repression”¹², meaning that the question of animal subjectivity is repressed because it is always assumed and believed that the subject is a priori human. Such prominent scholars as Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have posed a question on the very concept of ‘the animal’ and essentially what it means to be human as the latter has traditionally been defined in opposition to the former in Western history.

John Berger opens his influential essay “Why Look at Animals” (1977) with a rather sorrowful statement that men have lost touch with animals. “They [animals] were with the man at the centre of the world”¹³ reminds Berger, as mediators between man and nature, as kin, myths, muses, parts of rituals among many other functions before the anthropocentric dominion sustained by capitalist values of profit and consumerism pushed animals to the periphery of human imagination. Berger indicates that this “rupture”¹⁴, which shattered human/animal kinship, happened in the 19th century at the arrival of the industrial revolution which turned an animal body into a commodity and an animal image into a mediated, screened and reproduced product.

¹² Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 1.

¹³ John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?”, *Worldviews*, Vol.9, No.2 (Special Edition: Viewing Animals (2005): 3. JSTOR URL: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43809300>> June 2022.

¹⁴ Berger 3.

It seems that Berger expresses a somewhat romantic stance in regards to animal ontology, valorizing an immediate contact with animals over any other form of engagement with them. Film scholar Jonathan Burt in his book *Animals in Film* (2002) also talks about “a rupturing effect”¹⁵ which creates an ambiguous space for animal imagery, meaning that film, on the one hand, evokes in people a sense of empathy and compassion yet, on the other hand, it constructs the animal culturally and “the force of the viewer’s response to the animal is imbued with the *techniques* by which film provokes feelings in its audience”¹⁶ (my emphasis). Hence, Burt considers Berger’s views on the loss of the animal to be rather pessimistic and symptomatic of the “postmodern notions of impossibility of animal representation”.¹⁷ What I would like to borrow from Burt is his assurance that “film reasserts the moral importance of the bonds between human and animal”.¹⁸ On top of that, I would like to keep in mind Burt’s emphasis on films’ potentiality to gesture beyond the screen. As he explains:

This rupturing effect of the animal image is mainly exemplified by the manner in which our attention is constantly drawn beyond the image and, in that sense, beyond the aesthetic and semiotic framework of the film.¹⁹

What this thesis wants to open up are these techniques which encapsulate much deeper critical and philosophical inquiries into the possibility of animal subjectivity, nonhuman subjectivity, the subjectivity of the more-than-human-world and, last but not least, what it means to be human. What is crucial to remember is that human perceptions of animals reflect the politics, aesthetics and social structures of the dominant human-centered ideologies of different periods throughout history. What is animal subjectivity other than a human construct - the essence of which has been changing and mirroring the stages of the evolution of human thought. Therefore, the thesis will pose the following question: Is it at all possible to illustrate animal subjectivity? Or rather, does film as a medium have an aesthetic, ontological and perhaps ethical capacity (or obligation) to illuminate animal subjectivity? To begin unravelling this possibility means admitting, first and foremost, that the animal is a philosophical, and in some cases a (bio)political subject. Additionally, it is

¹⁵ Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (Reaktion Books, 2002) 12.

¹⁶ Burt 12.

¹⁷ Burt 26.

¹⁸ Burt 22.

¹⁹ Burt 12.

necessary to acknowledge the fact that humans have been constructing animal subjectivity politically and culturally throughout centuries on the basis of an unavoidable gap (or a caesura as Giorgio Agamben calls it) between humanity and animality.

Let us assume then that there is a caesura between man and animal; a gap between us and them. We speak, they do not; we are rational, they are not; we experience world in a unique way by being open to it (to borrow from Heidegger), they do not; we are bios, they are zoe; we think, they do not or do they? This question whether animals think or not has been haunting philosophers and the like for millennia as the whole fundamental Western concept of a rational human has been built on the basis of its difference from an animal. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1969) the Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer neatly point out:

The idea of man in European history is expressed in the way in which he is distinguished from the animal. Animal irrationality is adduced as proof of human dignity. This contrast has been reiterated with such persistence and unanimity by all the predecessors of bourgeois thought - by the ancient Jews, Stoics, Fathers of the Church, and then throughout the Middle Ages down to modern times - that few ideas have taken such hold on Western anthropology. The antithesis is still relevant today.²⁰

Assigning to animals a possibility of having animal subjectivity is a way to bridge this caesura, to bridge the gap between humanity and animality. The further question that arises from this attempt is whether it would require a new radical way of looking and portraying animals in visual culture beyond established anthropocentric tropes like the loyal friend, the villain, and the beast. Would it not be just another way to solidify the caesura between man and animal? Would such nonhuman portrayal necessarily imply viewing an animal as a sentimentalized body or feeling guilty for witnessing animal suffering?

1.4 The Rational for the Films Presented in the Thesis

The thesis will provide a close analysis of three contemporary American films as three opportunities to explore nonhuman subjectivity and non-anthropocentric perspective of looking at animals. The thesis, hence, is interested in the modes of representation

²⁰ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso, 2016) 245.

(mediation) of animal subjectivity in film which are ultimately formed and constructed through human perceptions of animals which, in turn, are emblematic of the politics and the aesthetics of certain ideologies throughout history.

In Chapter 1 (The Problem of Animal Subjectivity in Western Philosophy) the thesis will outline the problematics of animal subjectivity in the Western philosophical tradition. The thesis will focus on the caesura between human and animal and will attempt to demonstrate the philosophical mechanisms which were deployed in order to construct “the animal” in the Derridean sense. Chapter 2 (Terrence Malick and the More-Than-Human-World) analyses the interconnectedness of the human and more-than-human worlds. Terrence Malick’s anti-war film *The Thin Red Line* (1998) is chosen as an example of a phenomenological approach to filmmaking; as an example of a non-hierarchical way of portraying ontological realities of non-human beings, be it animals or plants, at the same level as the human ontological reality. Even though Terrence Malick does not address animal subjectivity explicitly nor are the animals the main protagonists of his films, it is crucial to introduce and analyze *The Thin Red Line* as a way to radicalize a different kind of subjectivity or rather intersubjectivity.

Chapter 2 will also engage with the prominent phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and their contemporary American counterpart David Abram to illustrate Malick’s openness to multiple perspectives and other subjectivities in order to find a dialectical resolution to a seemingly intractable conflict of portraying nature and animals on film: film, on the one hand, is a provider of mediated images which facilitates a constructed representation of realities (or worlds). At the other end, Malick the philosopher and Malick the filmmaker let the audience “encounter nature on screen”²¹ as an embodied subject and thereby enrich their understanding of the interconnectedness of human- and more-than-human-worlds.

In Malick’s and John Tall’s (his cinematographer in *The Thin Red Line*) hands a film camera becomes a sort of an embodied subject itself; a medium that tries to bridge a caesura between humanity and animality and draw a viewer across a gulf of misunderstanding. Through Private Witt, one of the main protagonists of *The Thin Red*

²¹ Ilan Safit, “Nature Screened: An Eco-Film-Phenomenology”, *Environmental Philosophy* Vol.11, No. 2 (Fall 2014) 211. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26169804>> Dec. 2021.

Line, Malick shows one's possibility to transcend ideological frameworks and open oneself up to other subjectivities and at the same time continue to be a part of a bigger world.

Chapter 3 (Animals in Oral Cultures) will explore human perceptions of animals in oral and prehistoric cultures. Animal personification and tribalism rendered a different view of non-human animals and their relational ontologies. In oral sensibilities, the boundary between us and them was fluid; the modes of engagement with animals were reciprocal on many levels as hunting societies depended on them but also, animals were completely embedded in their cultural imagination as kin, myths and spirits. This chapter will provide a closer reading of the anthropological accounts on oral traditions and an analysis of Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990), a critically-acclaimed American western about the relationship between the white Lieutenant John Dunbar with the Lakota people and domesticated (a horse) and wild animals (buffalo and a wolf) so as to highlight the earlier human perceptions of animals in human cosmologies.

From discussing tribal awareness and perceiving animals in a cyclical and reciprocal way in Chapter 3, the thesis will move on to the question of animal subjectivity in industrial societies. The final chapter, Chapter 4 (Animals in Industrial Cultures), will enunciate the logic of biopolitics and human exceptionalism and their effects on human perceptions of particularly farm animals. The final film that will be analyzed in this thesis is the South-Korean and American co-production *Okja* (2017) directed by Bong Joon-ho starring Tilda Swinton, Jake Gyllenhal and Paul Dano among others. In *Okja*, a genetically modified pig-like creature allegorically alludes to Derrida's idea of "animal genocide"²² which questions a techno-scientific and utilitarian mode of engagement with animals, namely corporate greed, factory farming and breeding.

Drawing from the theories of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben as well as contemporary animal studies scholars such as Nicole Shukin, Cary Wolfe and Kari Weil, the thesis will pose questions on animal capital, the animal as a political subject, rendering animals as images as well as rendering animal remains. Above all, the thesis will extend the discourse of biopolitics to the non-human other and will analyze its mechanisms which are used to justify "animal genocide", namely the institutions of confinement for farm animals such as slaughterhouses and factory farms.

²² Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Fordham University Press, 2008) 26.

In the Conclusion I will summarize the main points made throughout the thesis and attempt to answer the hypothesis, whether it is at all possible to render animal subjectivity in film.

2. The Problem of Animal Subjectivity in Western Philosophy

2.1 Derrida's cat

In his famous lecture series given in 1997 for the ten-day Cerisy conference later to be published as *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida starts his deconstruction of what 'the animal' is with a peculiar personal experience with his own cat. Having had a shower he meets the gaze of his cat intently looking at his frontally exposed body, which triggers a sense of shame. The situation of being naked in front of his naked cat set him off on questioning ethics, animal suffering, the concept of the animal as such, and the human/animal entanglement:

The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me - I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also - something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself - it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbor or of the next (-door) than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat.²³

'The point of view of the absolute other' is Derrida's breakthrough into the possibility of animal subjectivity. The acknowledgment of the gaze of an animal is where the gulf between us and them can be bridged. Evoking Agamben's caesura, it is important to mention here that rather than focusing on what divides *The Animal and The Human*, Derrida gestures towards the potentiality of shared experience and volition and agency on the part of the animals, meaning that they can look at us as well. In *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012) the contemporary animal studies scholar Kari Weil neatly summarizes Derrida's thinking stating that

This entanglement of human and nonhuman is what Derrida exposes in looking at his cat. It is not a denial of difference by any means, but rather an attention to the construction of difference at the very foundation of the ethical. And this is true for

²³ Derrida 11.

the ethical difference itself. The ethical, like the animal, is a category of the human.²⁴

In other words, what Derrida states lucidly is the fact that the animal is a human construct. The fact that animals can look at us means that they can think of us, about us. Is this gaze reciprocal? Is this gaze mutually recognizable? What does it mean for humans and in turn can it mean anything for animals? Obviously this 'animal' way of thinking does not equate a Cartesian way of rational thinking; nor do I ascribe to Heidegger's view of animals as not being able to transcend the boundaries of the environment. Derrida's cat is a vivid example - if not of animal subjectivity - than of animal curiosity and surely of animals' capacity to meet our gaze. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Derrida demonstrates that the Cartesian construct of humanity is based on the very separation of humanity from animality. From Descartes to Kant and from Heidegger to Levinas and Lacan, Derrida states that all these crucial philosophies helped to establish "this auto-biography of man".²⁵ Importantly, Derrida considers the singular term 'the animal' to be deeply problematic:

Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give. These humans are found giving it to themselves, this word, but as if they had received it as an inheritance. They have given themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept «The Animal», they say.²⁶

What is brilliant about Derrida's observation is that he acknowledges the shortcomings of subsuming a vast number of various nonhuman species under one umbrella term 'the animal'. Without delving into zoology and ethology, Derrida's straightforward observation penetrates this immense gulf between humanity and animality, the gulf that has been constructed by centuries of human history that reveals the shortcomings of the anthropological machine of humanism and its human-centred ontologies. Why did a naked Derrida feel shame in front of his naked cat? The possible answer could be because the cat is a living and breathing creature who is able to meet his gaze and think about/of him without or while being trapped in her own world. "To consider that animals look and look at us is to imagine that animals think (about us)", writes Weil, "which changes what it means to be human: thought can no longer be regarded as our exclusive and defining privilege".²⁷

²⁴ Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (Columbia University Press, 2012) 22.

²⁵ Derrida 24.

²⁶ Derrida 26.

²⁷ Weil 26.

2.2 Animals in Western Philosophies

It seems vital to outline several philosophical milestones which have moulded human perceptions of animals, or rather to describe the dichotomy between animal historicity or animal ontology and prevailing human ideologies in different historical periods. The man and animal relationship, as we now know it, is a result of a long historical development comprised of animal husbandry, hunting, poaching, industrial farming, vivisection, the culture industry, pethood to name a few. Prior to that, in prehistoric, traditionally oral societies, especially those reliant on hunting, the boundaries between humans and animals reflected more reverence and fluidity. From representing animals in ceramics and cave paintings to burying animal remains individually and with deceased humans, people were always interested in making sense of human/animal kinship.

In the words of Giorgio Agamben, “even the physical demarcation between man and the other species entailed zones of indifference in which it was not possible to assign certain identities”.²⁸ Hence, animals used to occupy human imagination as kin and were integral to the complex mythological social structure. Archeologist and anthropologist Erica Hill conceptualizes such kin relations between humans and animals as “relational ontology”.²⁹ Human and animal lives used to “run parallel”³⁰ as Berger remarks. Animals were painted; their stories were permeated through myths and legends about the origin of life and humans themselves; and they were also sacrificed and domesticated. In other words, they were seen not as objects but as subjects with their own respective ontologies - as animal persons.

Interestingly, the American philosopher and environmentalist George Sessions accounts that “some anthropologists argue that the majority of humans who have lived on Earth over the two to four million years of human history have been hunters and gatherers”.³¹ What this means is that with the advent of agriculture and civilization, the ecocentric lifeways were gradually replaced with anthropocentric dominion. Sessions adds that in regards to

²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford University Press, 2002) 12.

²⁹ Erica Hill, “Archaeology and Animal Persons: Toward a Prehistory of Human-Animal Relations”, *Environment and Society*, 2013, Vol. 4: 117. JSTOR URL: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43297040>> Feb 2022.

³⁰ Berger 6.

³¹ George Sessions, *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Shambhala Publications, 1995) 158.

Western civilization, starting with Socrates and Aristotle “an anthropocentric system of philosophy and science was set in place”.³² Aristotle held the view that nature, as well as animals and slaves were subservient to humans.

Western metaphysics put a stamp of ‘exclusion’ on animals. Medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas believed that there is no place in Paradise for the sinful human body marked by its secretions and other animal bodily functions.³³ It goes without saying that animals and plants were banned from Eden as well. “The blessed life is in no case an animal life”³⁴ concludes Aquinas. Aquinas’ sensibilities indeed sum up an ill-disposed attitude of Christianity towards extrahuman nature including the human body. Undoubtedly these early beliefs, such as “Aquinas’ celestial policing of the corporeal”³⁵, gave further impetus to Cartesian duality and biopolitics.

The foundation of Enlightenment with its emphasis on logos and rationality has further established a biopolitical and anthropocentric bias which justifies vivisection, breeding, lab experiments in the name of science, prosperity and human comfort. The publication of Descartes’s *Meditations* (1641) came to signify a point of departure for modern sciences which started to perceive the material reality in an objective and mechanistic way.³⁶ Famously Descartes viewed animals as *automata mechanica*, simple technology like a clock, regulated by mechanistic principles. Only humans have immortal souls which transcend physical bodies. Moreover, Descartes believes that

human beings are conscious, and consciousness cannot have its origin in matter. [Descartes identified] consciousness with the immortal soul, which survives the decomposition of the physical body, [and asserted] that the soul was specially created by God.³⁷

³² Sessions 159.

³³ Agamben, Open 19.

³⁴ Agamben, Open 19.

³⁵ Anat Pick, “Review of Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*”, *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature*: Vol. 5: No.2: 5 <<https://repository.brynmawr.edu/bmrcl/vol5/iss2/1>> Feb 2022.

³⁶ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 32.

³⁷ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (The Bodley Head, 2015) 200.

Following that there came to be what is now known as Cartesian dualism or mind-body dualism. Cartesian radical separation of the intelligent mind from the sensing body has pedestaled human exceptionalism not only over nature, plants and animals but also over one's own body. Such an influential yet reductive paradigm denies intelligence and subjectivity to nonhuman animals and extrahuman nature. In the Cartesian worldview, according to David Abram:

humans alone are a mixture of extended matter and thinking mind, we alone are able to feel and to experience our body's mechanical sensations. Meanwhile, all other organisms, consisting solely of extended matter, are in truth nothing more than automatons, incapable of actual experience, unable to feel pleasure or suffer pain.³⁸

With this justification in mind, Descartes himself dissected living animals with clear conscience.³⁹ As Abram notes, this provided "a splendid rationalization for the vivisection experiments that soon began to proliferate, as well as for the steady plundering and despoilment of nonhuman nature in the New World and the other European colonies".⁴⁰

Another important milestone is the progression of human thought which reframes a caesura between humanity and animality from being solely Cartesian to placing animals in a state of exclusion as being *poor in world* (Heidegger). To borrow from Agamben we could call this milestone *the anthropological machine of humanism*. In 2002 the Italian philosopher published a treatise called *The Open: Man and Animal* in which he is primarily interested in the origin of man, not in a Darwinian biological sense but rather as a product of philosophy. Analyzing the manuscript it is evident that there is no discussion of humanity with man at the centre without opposing man to animality, to the animal itself and to the animal within man. Agamben is particularly interested in the latter and he reaches out to Heidegger's philosophical apparatus so as to shed light on the workings of the anthropological machine that produces both man and animal.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1983) Heidegger famously says that "the stone is worldless [weltlos]; the animal is poor in world [weltarm];

³⁸ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 48.

³⁹ Singer 201.

⁴⁰ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 78.

man is world-forming [weltbildend]”.⁴¹ Departing from the Cartesian rigid paradigm, Heidegger, firstly; considers animals to be living beings and not mere automatons, secondly; he opens up a possibility for animals to be existing in their own environments yet remaining locked in them. What differs man from animal is *Dasein*, a uniquely human experience, a human ability to see things as they are and being open to them. Animals, according to Heidegger’s logic, are trapped, captivated in their immediate environments and unable to escape them. Humans, conversely, are able to transcend this captivation through language.

Kelly Oliver, who has extensively written on animal/human dichotomy and particularly in the relation to phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty explains that for Heidegger,

language is a way of being in the world and a way of having access to it, what he calls “world-formation” ... Animals are captivated by their instincts and therefore have no true or conscious relationships with others or with their environment, while humans comport themselves toward others and their environment in a conscious way, which is to say a world-forming way.⁴²

To support his point of view Heidegger takes a lizard lying on a rock and soaking up the sun as an example. He states that “the rock and sun are given to the lizard in a lizard-like way defined by the lizard’s way of being”⁴³ which is not *Dasein* because a rock does not open up to a lizard as such, as a rock; it is only “given [to the lizard] in some way”.⁴⁴

At first it may seem that Agamben criticizes Heidegger as “the philosopher of the twentieth century who more than any other strove to separate man from the living being”⁴⁵ yet just like Heidegger, Agamben is principally interested in man and the animality within man. From Agamben’s point of view the anthropological machine either humanizes the animal

⁴¹ Agamben, *The Open* 61.

⁴² Kelly Oliver, “Stopping the Anthropological Machine: Agamben with Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty”, *PhaenEx*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2007): 4. <<https://phaenex.uwindsor.ca/index.php/phaenex/article/view/236>> June 2022.

⁴³ Oliver 6.

⁴⁴ Oliver 6.

⁴⁵ Agamben, *The Open* 39.

(ancient machine - perceiving marginals and slaves as animals) or animalizes the human (modern machine - the Jew, the camp prisoners, and today's refugees). In the end, what the machine does is that it produces the state of exception or the zone of exclusion which Agamben calls bare life - that caesura between humanity and animality. Agamben clearly criticizes the mechanisms of the machine which justifies violence and maltreatment and dehumanizes humans, the most brutal manifestation of which is concentration camps. Drawing from Foucault's biopolitics, Agamben sees how the logic of the anthropological machine is embedded in politics and ethics, but most importantly in people's perceptions (or Foucault would say the technologies of the self). Despite Agamben's important insights on the caesura between humanity and animality which has been manufactured by an anthropocentric production of history, it is important to underline that the Italian scholar is still rather human-centered. Not much is mentioned about the effects of the anthropological machine on animals as such.

In Chapter 4, *Animals in Industrial Cultures*, the thesis will attempt to engage with the anthropocentric philosophies of Agamben and Foucault extending them to the nonhuman other. Critical Animal Studies have built a substantial discourse around the ideas of biopolitics and bare life in the relation to the institutions of confinement of farm animals such as slaughterhouses and factory farms. The comparison of farm animals to the camp prisoners is an established parallel that demonstrates the logic of biopower and "the discourse of species".⁴⁶ in biopolitical societies. In the recent decades, a number of significant critical papers have been produced that appropriate Foucault's concepts of power, apparatus, panopticism, biopower and docility (docile bodies), to illuminate the logic of slaughterhouses and factory farms and the mechanisms of power implemented there. "Subjecting Cows to Robots: Farming Technologies and the Making of Animal Subjects" by Lewis Holloway, "Foucault and Critical Animal Studies: Genealogies of Agricultural Power" by Chloe Taylor, "Foucauldian Hog Futures: The Birth of Mega-Hog Farms" by Dawn Coppin, "Cows and Sovereignty: Biopower and Animal Life" by Stephen Thierman are among many other research papers that utilize Foucauldian concepts as critical and analytical tools to extend the notions of power to the nonhuman others.

⁴⁶ Wolfe 2.

2.3 Relational Subjectivity

In the discourse of species there is an alternative view on subjectivity as not being an *a priori* human category. From Derrida to Emanuel Levinas and from Cary Wolfe to Donna Haraway, these philosophers have been urging us to reconsider the notion of subjectivity as an ontologically humanist category, but rather to open it up to include other forms of subjectivities or to regard it as a “relational”⁴⁷ category rather than a stable, fixed attribute of one’s humanity. I have already written about Derrida’s reservations about the plurality of animal species conveniently subsumed under one umbrella term ‘the animal’. Without returning to Derrida, let us take a look at Levinas’ understanding of subjectivity. Unlike Derrida’s encounter with his own cat on the safe premises of his own bathroom, Levinas’ crucial meeting with an animal happened in the concentration camp. In his essay “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights” Levinas details the hardships of being reduced to bare life as a Jew and the prisoner in Nazi Germany:

The children and the women who passed by and sometimes raised their eyes - stripped us of our human skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes. A small inner murmur, the strength and wretchedness of persecuted people, reminded us of our essence as thinking creatures, but we were no longer part of the world. ... We were beings entrapped in their species; despite all their vocabulary, beings without language.⁴⁸

Such an extraordinary situation, it seems, destabilized Levinas’ subjectivity. Not being able to speak his mind, repressed, oppressed and humiliated, he felt as a being without language, a subhuman. Paradoxically, it is a being without language, a strayed dog named Bobby that reminded him of his own humanity. Upon returning from his daily toil, exhausted and drained, the detainees were greeted by Bobby who “was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight”.⁴⁹ For Bobby “there was no doubt that we were men”.⁵⁰ What Levinas’ experience shows is perhaps a quasi-categorical nature of subjectivity. Under certain circumstances, a human may shed what makes him human in the first place. When one is being bullied, mistreated and oppressed, people commonly say ‘he is treated worse than an animal’. This cultural and linguistic

⁴⁷ Wolfe 108.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) 153.

⁴⁹ Levinas 153.

⁵⁰ Levinas 153.

metaphor suggests that a human deserves to be treated better as a rational, linguistically-capable being. Despite the fact that Levinas, in the end, adheres to this cultural idiom, his observation is still rather pertinent as it suggests that such a rigid ontological category as human subjectivity can be altered due to some harsh factors. Moreover, his subjectivity was reconstructed or restored due to his encounter with Bobby. What's more, his subjectivity is precisely what emerged from his engagement with Bobby - which suggests that it is relational, rather than fixed.

The prominent postmodernist philosopher Donna Haraway, who has extensively written on the fluid nature of subjectivity, suggests that subjectivity is a relational category that is born in the process of interaction with companion animals such as dogs.⁵¹ Unlike Berger, Deleuze and Guattari who consider pets to be a commodified projection of their human owners' whims or intentions, Haraway believes that

dogs are not about oneself. ... They are not a projection of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs; ... dogs are about the inescapable, contradictory story of relationships - co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners preexist relating, and the relating is never done once and for all.⁵²

What is insightful about Haraway's argument is her recognition of dogs as world-forming agents for themselves and for humans. Yet Haraway appears to be rather idealistic in her emphasis on emotion and the inescapability of a deep connection with animals, which appears to bear a rather anthropomorphic attitude. What about farm animals which could also form an inescapable bond with humans but end up on their plates?

Lastly, I would like to highlight Cary Wolfe's perspective on relational subjectivity which in a way combines Haraway's idealism, Derridean uncompromisingness and Levinesian finesse. In a way, Wolfe extends Agamben's anthropological machine of humanism by adding animals to the picture. Together with Jonathan Elmer, he suggests a species grid which organizes both humans and animals according to "how the law of culture arranges its species signification".⁵³ The grid consists of animalized animals, humanized animals,

⁵¹ Colleen Glenney Boggs, "American Bestiality: Sex, Animals, and the Construction of Subjectivity", *Cultural Critique*, Fall 2010, No. 76: 108. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40925347>> Sep 2022.

⁵² Boggs 108.

⁵³ Wolfe 101.

animalized humans and humanized humans. Animalized animals are those who serve as animal capital; they provide food, clothes, recourses and whatnot. Humanized animals are Haraway's dogs or generally pets to which we prescribe human qualities. Animalized humans is precisely Levinas in the concentration camp; humans stripped of their humanity. Humanized humans is "the wishful category" says Wolfe - perhaps those humans who are able to escape the constraints of power and realize their own potential like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.

What Wolfe and Elmer show is how historically contingent and arbitrary subjectivity has always been. 'Humanized animals' is rather a recent contrivance, whereas 'animalized humans' never disappear from the grid as postcolonial oppression still continues. Wolfe explains that the

humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and institution of speciesism, which relies on the tacit acceptance - that the transcendence of the "human" requires the sacrifice of the "animal"⁵⁴.

2.4 The More-Than-Human-World

Recent interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies in the field of ecology, ethology and biology have provided numerous examples of nonhuman intelligence. It seems that what interests scientists now is not only a pervasive question whether animals think or not, but also, how they think and perceive the world, what it is like for a particular animal to be that animal. It also appears that the scientific world has finally embraced Jeremy Bentham's sentiment on animal experiencing pain and is prepared to acknowledge the fact that nonhuman beings may perceive reality in different ways to humans. Yet most importantly, scientists seem to recognize more and more the importance of ecosystems and the role of nonhuman animals who are completely embedded in them.

For example, Ed Yong, the science journalist and author of *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* (2022), appropriates Jakob von Uexkull's nineteenth century term *Umwelt* to indicate life-worlds experienced by different animals differently. It can be said that *Umwelt* is juxtaposed with Cartesian worldview

⁵⁴ Wolfe 43.

which is strictly hierarchical and objective. Uexkull believes that the world consists of “an infinite variety of perceptual worlds”⁵⁵ that may or may not overlap yet are completely in synch:

... we imagine that the relations a certain animal subject has to the things in its environment take place in the same space and in the same time as those which bind us to the objects in our human world. This illusion rests on the belief in a single world in which all living beings are situated. Uexkull shows that such a unitary world does not exist, just as a space and a time that are equal for all living things do not exist. They fly, the dragonfly, and the bee that we observe flying next to us on a sunny day do not move in the same world as the one in which we observe them, nor do they share with us - or with each other - the same time and the same space.⁵⁶

Today Yong presents the findings about communication between whales through songs; Ugandan chimpanzees having fifty-eight gestures which they combine in sequence to convey a certain meaning; “prairie dogs in the American West making distinctive cries to indicate different predators”⁵⁷ and many more instances of sophisticated techniques animals deploy to communicate with each other. This impetus has given rise to the development of bioacoustics - attempting to decipher animal sounds and create some forms of alphabets. All of these cutting-edge studies seem to be propelled by the question Thomas Nagel asked long ago, in 1974 in an influential essay called “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”.

Not only are scientists such as ecologists, biologists, ethologists and animal studies scholars willing to admit that animals are intelligent and agential creatures, philosophers like David Abram for example also challenge the anthropocentric philosophical apparatus which rigidly separates humanity from animality. David Abram, who draws upon influential ideas of the continental philosophers and phenomenologists of the twentieth century like Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, essentially undermines the Cartesian logic which separates mind and body; mind as a limitless holder of divine potential and the rest of the mechanical nature. Instead, Abram believes that our body is inseparable from our

⁵⁵ Agamben, *The Open*, 40.

⁵⁶ Agamben, *The Open* 40.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Kolbert, “The Strange and Secret Ways that Animals Perceive the World”, *The New Yorker*, June 13, 2022 Issue <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/06/13/the-strange-and-secret-ways-that-animals-perceive-the-world-ed-yong-immense-world-tom-mustill-how-to-speak-whale>> June 2022.

mind and is embedded in the world and experiences of the earth's shifting moods and myriad perceptions. In *Becoming Animal* (2010) Abram writes:

Since the body is precisely our interface and exchange with the field of awareness, a praying mantis's experience of mind is as weirdly different from mine as its spindly body is different from mine; the dreaming of an aspen grove is as different from both mine and the mantis's as its own fleshly interchange with the the medium is different from ours. It is our bodies that participate in awareness. Hence no one can feel, much less know, precisely how the big mystery reveals itself to another.⁵⁸

Husserl believes that it is through the body that the self opens up to other subjectivities and phenomena. Thus, the self, the embodied subject, realizes that other experiences are just as manifested as their own. The intersubjective character of one's experience led Husserl to suppose that the mode of living which is immediate and present is "a collective landscape, constituted by other experiencing subjects as well as by oneself"⁵⁹ - the *Lebenswelt*.

The French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty takes Husserl's ideas one step further. Whereas Husserl still believes in a transcendental ego being a priori separate from a living body one inhabits, Merleau-Ponty believes that "the body-subject"⁶⁰ is inseparable from the world-as-phenomenon. In other words, without a body there is no thinking, sensing, smelling etc. possible. Defying Cartesian logic, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the mind and body constitute a body-subject; a seeing and living body: "My body simultaneously sees and is seen"⁶¹.

What this ultimately implies is the endeavors of phenomenologists to call into question the notion of human exceptionalism. It is important to emphasize again that a pervasive belief (Aristotle, Descartes etc.) that only humans possess a rational incorporeal mind, which resides outside of our body and is connected to a divine realm of existence, has established an anthropocentric paradigm that denies intelligence to other lifeforms and above all, justifies a manifold of injustices done to nature and animals.

⁵⁸ David Abram, *Becoming Animal* (Vintage Books, 2011) 272.

⁵⁹ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 36.

⁶⁰ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 46.

⁶¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Northwestern University Press, 1964) 162.

Merleau-Ponty, in turn, believes that humans and other living beings are similarly responsive to the present moment and the situations they find themselves in. Those are not simply instincts, as many people believe animals are governed by, but rather an active non-conceptualized participation of senses, bodies and a particular environment the body is in. Merleau-Ponty termed this experience *perception*: “When I contemplate the blue of the sky, it thinks itself in me. I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself”⁶². However, for Descartes perception is a faculty of the mind which originates in “a radical separation of consciousness from the world, of self from others - and renders nature as matter-machine”.⁶³

In other words, phenomenologists understood that the world consists of multiple intelligences which are constantly shifting as they respond to changing environments. The world, in such view, is a web of interconnected and immediately experienced perceptions rather than what Cartesians uphold as “a hierarchical kingdom of substances differentiated by their qualities: God, human, animal, plant, living or dead”.⁶⁴

Abram states that we tend to define intelligence in purely anthropocentric terms as something which only belongs to men, or more precisely to the mind. This is a narrow-minded and reductive way of thinking as it perpetuates Cartesian binaries between us and them and openly denies the notion of ‘mind’ to non-human beings. Abram writes that

Thinking, for us seems to have little bearing on our carnal life; it often seems entirely independent of our body and our bodily relation to the biosphere ... Non-human animals are in a constant and mostly unmediated relation with their sensory surroundings, [they] think with the whole of their bodies.⁶⁵

This statement seems convincing if one has ever spent some time observing and being with animals. Just like Derrida’s cat, not all their reactions appear to be determined solely by their instincts and genes; they observe the world and react according to the situation of

⁶² Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* 52.

⁶³ Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Indiana University Press, 2008) 12.

⁶⁴ Hass 12.

⁶⁵ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 189.

the present moment, displaying an array of emotions, such as empathy, grief, curiosity and happiness. Abram concludes that

We're ill-equipped to notice if we associate smartness only with our own very centralized style of cogitation. When we disparage the intelligence of birds, or the size of their brains, we miss that flight itself is a kind of thinking.⁶⁶

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1969) also remind us about empathy or "compassion"⁶⁷ towards animals as a way to remember our own animality:

The greater gifts of human beings, above all reason, by no means annul the communion which they feel with animals. To be sure, the traits of human beings have a certain imprint, but the relationship of their happiness and misery with the life of animals is manifest.⁶⁸

Adorno and Horkheimer's ideal man is the one who is constantly attuned to his animality; is weary of progress which only further removes him from his own animality; uses reason and rationality yet does not perpetuate animal suffering. Adorno even says that this ideal human being should learn from animals how to be at peace:

Perhaps the true society will grow tired of development and, out of freedom, leave possibilities unused, instead of storming under a confused compulsion to the conquest of stage stars. ... Rien faire comme une bête [Doing nothing, like an animal], lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky.⁶⁹

Moreover, the Frankfurt School theorists liken the domination of man over nature and animals to that of a plight of women. The latter were (and in most of parts of the non-Western world still are) oppressed due to their biological shortcomings and were treated more like objects rather than subjects - "Women became the embodiment of the biological

⁶⁶ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 191.

⁶⁷ Adorno and Horkheimer, 292.

⁶⁸ Adorno and Horkheimer, 293.

⁶⁹ Adorno and Horkheimer, 295.

function, the image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that civilization's title to fame"⁷⁰. Compassion is seen by Adorno and Horkheimer as an antidote to men's blindness and their prowess enhanced by modernity. Compassion and solidarity, embraced collectively, can be the foundation of harmonious co-existence of human rationality and human animality.

By and large, it appears to be important to acknowledge the fact that when concepts such as subjectivity and ontology - which have been solely reserved for humans (or rather for men) - are applied to animals, it only highlights that animal subjectivity and animal ontology are human constructs based on changing human perceptions of animals. As a result, there is no animal subjectivity without human subjectivity in the first place; there is no animal ontology without human ontology. Having said that, what animal studies theorists are trying to do now is to destabilize subjectivity as a human category only, because this ultimately suggests that the human carries some transcendental meaning greater than life. This is one of the roots of human exceptionalism.

Therefore, what is interesting, thought-provoking and compassionate is a way of perceiving subjectivity as something which is relational. Humans are a part of nature, so are animals. When Plato thought of subjectivity, not only animals, but humans such as women and slaves were excluded from his perception of ontology; it was rather a free male-centered ontology. Nowadays, it could be said that women have earned their right to be considered as agential and world-forming subjects. So perhaps animals will be given these rights as well; since there would be no need for them to prove something to the human because the animal that therefore I am.

⁷⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer, 294.

3. Terrence Malick and the More-Than-Human-World

Filmmakers can be divided into two categories: those who strive to imitate the world they live in, to re-create the world that surrounds them...and the directors who create their own worlds. Those who create their own worlds are generally the poets...

- Andrei Tarkovsky

In this chapter I will focus on nature in Terrence Malick's film as an all-encompassing signifier that provides the context for the inner and outer conflicts of the story. Malick lets nature be; be it sublime, brutal or indifferent. It could be stated that Malick's films in general and *The Thin Red Line* in particular are a site of dialectical tensions, meaning direct and mediated experiences of nature. When watching the way Malick portrays nature, it is impossible not to think about Malick's valorization of nature; of real nature. Looking at the way Malick portrays nature's textuality, materiality, ambiance, senses and colors, one cannot escape the feeling that there is nothing more fulfilling than an immediate contact with nature. Yet, in his unique filmmaking style imbued with his curiosity and spontaneity as well as some form of his own philosophical ideology, Malick valorizes mediated contact with nature as well. His camera lingers on a leaf, a bug, or a stem much longer and in a much more intimate and aesthetic way than a human eye would do.

Moreover, with the help of his cinematic tools, Malick builds a more-than-human-world in which nature and humans are interconnected. Malick knows how to depict intersubjective reality of many beings, human and nonhuman. This I would argue is a phenomenological approach to filmmaking; one that is obviously constructed and yet provides a sense of direct belonging to nature.

In the article "Nature Screened: An Eco-Film-Phenomenology", the author Ilan Safit places Terrence Malick's films between ecology and phenomenology. What he means by that is that an (eco)phenomenological approach to filmmaking lets the audience experience nature in their own mediated way yet that mediation is not completely reductive but enriches their openness to the world:

Nature screened refers to such images of land-, sea-, and skylscapes, which may serve as the living, three-dimensional environment for the characters within the film, yet are coming into a different kind of contact with the viewers of these images.⁷¹

Safit adds that:

the cinema becomes an invaluable tool for our search for new significances in our relation with the natural world, as it also allows us to see the world in ways which we could otherwise not see. The medium delivers us visually to places - too far, too near, small, large, hidden, dangerous - that we could not otherwise reach.⁷²

In this way the cinematic image, instead of further removing us from nature, brings us to a more intimate contact with it. Malick's filmmaking repertoire includes; a moving, mobile camera; close-ups - at times extreme and unconventional; intercuts of nature elements into mis-en-scenes; classical music accompanying shots of nature which enhances their sublimity and timelessness; voiceovers which remove human dominance on screen to that of a gentle commentary. Nature, in Malick's films, is purposefully brought up again and again on screen; constantly 'disrupting' the human-centered narrative as if to highlight its constant presence in life on and outside of the screen.

The notion of "the ecological self" will also be reviewed in this chapter particularly in the relation to Private Witt, one of the main protagonists of *The Thin Red Line*. Originally coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess as a linchpin of his philosophy named deep ecology, the ecological self is instrumental in conceptualizing Witt's profound awakening to the interconnectedness of humans and the nature around them.

3.1. The More-Than-Human World of *The Thin Red Line*

Made after Malick's 20-year hiatus, *The Thin Red Line* may sound as an odd choice for illustrating the intersubjective character of human and more-than-human experiences simply because it is a war film which centers on many humans and particularly army men - soldiers, sergeants, generals and admirals. War is a human affair after all. Yet Malick

⁷¹ Safit 212.

⁷² Safit 219.

subverts the most common genre tropes. As Simon Critchley poignantly notices “it is a war film in the same way that Homer’s *Iliad* is a war poem”.⁷³

Let me first introduce the basic plot of the film. *The Thin Red Line* (1998) is based on a 1963 novel by James Jones and tells a story of a group of soldiers from Charlie Company (C Company) who fought in the battle for Guadalcanal against the Japanese resistance. The year is 1942. It is hard to pinpoint who the main protagonist of the film is as Malick focuses on several characters. Among the most important ones are Private Witt (played by Jim Caviezel) who at the beginning of the film is found AWOL (absence without leave) living peacefully with the Melanesian tribe; Sergeant Welsh (played by Sean Penn) who embodies the spirit of a true soldier, rational, trustworthy and cynical; Private Bell (played by Ben Chaplin) who is constantly thinking about his wife; Captain Staros (played by Elias Koteas), an empathetic father figure; and Lieutenant Colonel Tall (played by Nick Nolte) who is ready to sacrifice his soldiers in order to achieve his last glory.

C Company attacks the Japanese who are in control of Hill 210 hiding in the bunkers. The attack does not go well at first as C Company loses a lot of soldiers resulting in the confrontation between Captain Staros and Colonel Tall in which the former refuses to obey the latter’s commands. Despite the casualties, the American men proceed and finally take control over the bunkers, killing and capturing the Japanese soldiers. As a reward, C Company get a week off war yet they do not enjoy themselves as most of them are shattered physically and mentally while drowning in self-pity and remorse. Captain Staros is relieved of his command for not obeying the Colonel’s orders. The army is sent on another mission in which Private Witt volunteers to scout the river alongside two other men, yet, noticed by the Japanese, Witt decides to distract them and buy some time for his fellow men to go back and inform C Company of the potential danger. Eventually Witt ends up encircled by the Japanese men, raises his rifle and gets shot. His body is buried by his comrades. C Company is appointed a new commander and, in the end, they leave the Guadalcanal for good.

Unlike traditional war films — from the award-winning classic *The Great Escape* (1963), directed by John Sturges, to Steven Spielberg’s modern classic *Saving Private Ryan* (1998); and from Ridley Scott’s acclaimed *Black Hawk Down* (2001), to Michael Bay’s

⁷³ Simon Critchley, “Calm - On Terrence Malick’s *The Thin Red Line*”, *Film-Philosophy* 6 (1) (2002) <<https://philpapers.org/rec/CRICO>> Feb 2022.

Pearl Harbour (2001), which was destroyed by critics — Malick is not subsumed by the common tropes of war narratives: patriotism, typical dichotomies of “us” versus “them”, “good” versus “evil”, or easily identifiable characters. The characters are thus not two-dimensional winners or losers, but rather they resist a binary paradigm; they are obscure in their morals, changing and ultimately flawed. Not only does Malick portray various American soldiers on more or less equal terms, he also portrays other worlds.

Film critic Martin Woessner, for example, outlines four different worlds: that of the American soldiers whose task it is to establish control over the island in the Guadalcanal battle; that of the Japanese soldiers who had come there with the same mission; that of the Melanesian tribes which had been living peacefully on the island before the war broke out; and last but not least, Woessner suggests “the world of nature”⁷⁴, which “stands out as resplendent and abundant but also somewhat menacing”.⁷⁵ However, what Woessner does not seem to acknowledge is a world that encompasses all those worlds - a more-than-human-world - which transcends the ideological and perceptual boundaries of the separate worlds and where the individual becomes attuned to all beings. In this sense Private Witt does not isolate the American soldiers, the Japanese soldiers and the people of the Melanesian tribe - for him they are a part of a bigger world.

Let us now focus on Witt and Welsh as the embodiments of varying natures of human subjectivity; as the Phenomenological and the Cartesian ways of perceiving the world and nature in its micro- and macrocosm. At first, it appears rather easy to juxtapose Witt and Welsh who are like day and night. The former is an open, spontaneous, spiritual seeker of truth and purpose, while the latter is a rational, nihilistic sceptic who sees pain, misery, and futility of war and the human being within it. The two different views on the world can be observed early on in the film, when Witt is captured while AWOL and brought back to the ship:

Welsh: In this world a man himself is nothin’. And there ain’t no world but this one.

Witt: You’re wrong there, Top. I’ve seen another world. Sometimes I think it was just my imagination.

⁷⁴ Martin Woessner, “What Is Heideggerian Cinema? Film, Philosophy and Cultural Mobility”, *New German Critique*, No. 113, Ideas in Motion (Summer 2011): 151. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41288136>> Sep. 2022.

⁷⁵ Wossner 151.

Welsh: Well then you've seen things I never will. We're living in a world that's blowing itself to hell as fast as everybody can arrange it. In a situation like that, all a man can do is shut his eyes and let nothing touch him. Look out for himself.⁷⁶

This dialogue illuminates that through the character of Witt, Malick shows a manifestation of the ecological self - an alternative, more compassionate worldview; a view that embraces other worlds, other beings. According to the ethos of deep ecology, the ecological self is "self-realization which involves the development of wide identification in which the sense of self is no longer limited by the personal ego, but instead encompasses greater and greater wholes".⁷⁷ The ecological self recognizes humans' connection with nature and moreover, the process of identification with the other, whether human or nonhuman, develops compassion towards extra human nature (this undoubtedly evokes Adorno and Horkheimer's sentiments).

Naess himself recalls a moment when he experienced the identification with a non-human animal. A flea was drowning in the middle of acid chemicals while he was working with an old microscope. "To save it was impossible"⁷⁸ laments Naess. Yet he found himself overpowered by the emotions of empathy and compassion towards the unlucky animal. "I saw myself in the flea"⁷⁹ Naess contends. For John Muir, who among many other things helped to create Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks, the ecology of the self manifested when he came across rare white orchids growing in a Canadian swamp far away from any humans and thus "it dawned on him that things exist for themselves; the world was not made for man".⁸⁰ Aldo Leopold, who in many ways can be considered a follower of Muir's environmental ethics, awakened to his ecological self when he looked in the eye of a dying wolf to witness "a fierce green fire"⁸¹ in her eyes. Later Leopold said that "I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes - something known only to her and to the mountain".⁸²

⁷⁶ The Thin Red Line, 00:12:55.

⁷⁷ Sessions 226.

⁷⁸ Sessions 227.

⁷⁹ Sessions 227.

⁸⁰ Sessions 165.

⁸¹ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 138.

⁸² Leopold 138.

It appears as though being on the island evoked in Witt a powerful realization of the interconnectedness of different worlds, what phenomenologists refer to as intersubjectivity. As was mentioned before, Husserl established the phenomenological tradition as a way to confront Cartesian logic which views nature as objective reality determined by fixed and mechanical laws. Phenomenologists, in turn, see reality to be comprised of subjective experiences which resonate with the changes and fluctuations of the environment in which multiple forms of intelligences coexist. “The phenomenal field was no longer the isolate haunt of a solitary ego, but a collective landscape, constituted by other experiencing subjects as well as by oneself”, concludes Husserl.⁸³

Let me explain this in the context of Muir’s orchid experience. The sensations that arose in Muir upon seeing orchids are subjective as they are experienced by Muir only; they might have evoked in him the senses of wonder, excitement and curiosity yet these sensations are inseparable from the world-as-phenomenon - the color of the orchids, the way they are moved by a gentle wind, the way the wind bends the leaves from one side to another; the clouds above the orchids; the earth and water that nourish the roots - these are the phenomena experienced by a multitude of sensing beings. Just like Muir, Leopold and Naess, the fictional Witt had a direct experience with nature, which has ultimately given him a deeper understanding of human existence. As Abram enunciates

Our bodies have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attend by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity, and to rob our mind of their coherence. We are human only in contact and conviviality, with what is not human.⁸⁴

This reciprocity of humans and nature is the basis of the subjectivity of humans, to paraphrase Abram.⁸⁵ Our actions are informed by our surroundings - something that phenomenologists call prereflective action. In other words, Malick portrays characters whose actions are in reciprocity with their surroundings. For instance, once in the field to seize Hill 210 Private Bell, close to the ground, catches the sight of a blade of grass that is

⁸³ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 36.

⁸⁴ Abram, 22.

⁸⁵ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 31.

being gently moved by a slight breeze. Immediately he remembers his wife, the way her dress moves to the wind blowing. This was Bell's spontaneous reaction to his surroundings.

When it comes to Witt, it seems that he does not know himself what he will do next; he is completely present as his actions are informed by what is happening around him. He is driven by his pre-reflective impulses (his instant impulses to console a dying soldier, or gazing at the buried Japanese soldier, meeting his death). Witt is not a typical war hero as Malick's narrative does not build up for him to be one. Instead, we perceive him as a part of a larger history, a larger *Lebenswelt*. As is noted by Francesco Baldo, what Witt experienced is "the pre-individuated and destratified firmament of our material existence in which all things and beings are connected".⁸⁶

Welsh, in turn, clings to his nihilistic thinking, after all, he has seen many atrocities in the battle:

There's not some other world out there where everything's gonna be okay. There's just this one. Just this rock.⁸⁷

Witt does not reply to this remark; instead he listens intently and smiles gently as if he too realizes the horrors of the war yet he still believe in goodness. Malick then cuts to the night sky and a dark silhouette of a palm tree followed by a rather disturbing shot of some dogs eating the remnants of the dead soldiers. Nature's grace and nature's indifference exist side by side.

In portraying these two different world views Malick does not prescribe to one or the other. He equally portrays both. Welsh does not fully epitomize selfishness nor indifference. He risks his own life in the battle trying to help a dying soldier and in the conversation with Sergeant Storm (played by John C. Reilly) he admits that he still does not feel numbness. As Baldo suggests: "The contradiction between Welsh's world-view and his actions are merely reflective of a battle within, of a concern for others that he cannot easily jettison".⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Francesco Baldo, "Each like a coal drawn from the fire: *Terrence Malick's The Thin Red Line*", Sense of Cinema, July 2012 <<https://www.sensesofcinema.com/tag/the-thin-red-line/>> March 2022.

⁸⁷ *The Thin Red Line*, 1:22:47.

⁸⁸ Francesco Baldo, "Each like a coal drawn from the fire: *Terrence Malick's The Thin Red Line*", Sense of Cinema, July 2012 <<https://www.sensesofcinema.com/tag/the-thin-red-line/>> March 2022.

3.2 The embodied camera of Terrence Malick

As much as Terrence Malick is invested in the ambiguities of human nature, he is equally interested in non-human nature. The interconnectedness of human and more-than human worlds acts as a doorway to compassion and empathy which transcend ideological and perceptual boundaries. Ideological boundaries are shattered through the way Malick constructs the narrative. There is no straightforward and clear narrative in *The Thin Red Line*. It is rather fragmentary - the present state of the war is constantly engages with the past of the soldiers (Sergeant Bell remembers his wife; Witt remembers his mother); a voice is given to 'the enemy' but it is not the voice of bravado or asking for mercy but it is the voice of the dead Japanese soldier that Witt hears from the tomb. Some characters come and go, appear and disappear. The intercuts of nature (a shot of a butterfly or a bird shooting in the sky) emerge in the middle of a bloody and horrifying battle scene. Malick is breaking apart the boundaries of the genre and the chains of the narrative to point to something bigger, something that encompasses this all; alluding to the fact that evil and goodness, patriotism and ignorance reside side by side. In the end we never look at C Company as if they were the heroes least we want to celebrate them. Neither do we want to praise the Japanese soldiers. The universality of human experience is what Malick is after.

Similarly, perceptual boundaries are ruined through the way Malick portrays the interconnectedness of human and more-than human nature on screen. Let us now take a more detailed look at the opening sequence of *The Thin Red Line* that runs for the first ten minutes of the film. Before the first shot reveals itself we hear the non-diegetic sounds of birds which are then merging with the dramatic music and the appearance of a crocodile sliding into murky water. After that the film cuts to the enormous roots of a tree and then the camera shoots up to capture the morning light coming through the dense leaves. The disembodied voiceover remarks: "What is this war in the heart of nature? Why does nature vile with itself?".⁸⁹ The camera, meanwhile, keeps moving like in a dance, panning, focusing on the branches of the trees, their roots and the light permeating through them. The audience is enveloped in the sounds of the chirping birds and the gentle rustle of the leaves. The voiceover continues to observe: "Is there an avenging power in nature? Not one power but two?".⁹⁰ We are then delicately cut to the Melanesian children hammering a

⁸⁹ The Thin Red Line, 00:02:00.

⁹⁰ The Thin Red Line, 00:02:15.

nut with a stone. In the next shots Malick captures the native islanders going about their life on the beach and the children swimming in the sea. Malick's camera is constantly and gently moving around the swimming children captivated by the movements of their bodies in water. Only after that scene are we cut to Witt who is paddling in the canoe looking happy and content as he is observing the local people.

This opening scene is emblematic of the ontological and aesthetic dimensions of the film. First, Malick, using his landmark cinematic tools (voiceover, diegetic sounds of nature, non-diegetic inserts, moving camera, to name a few), is pointing at the world of the islanders, which might, at first, look too idyllic and romanticized. On the contrary, in his unbiased filmmaking style Malick is showing an existence of a world "not moulded to a human purpose"⁹¹. As Critchley poignantly notices:

In each of his [Malick's] movies, one has the sense of things being looked at, just being what they are - trees, water, birds, dogs, crocodiles, or whatever. Things simply are, and not moulded to a human purpose. We watch things shining calmly, being as they are, in all the intricate evasions of 'as'.⁹²

Malick's camera is itself an embodied subject as it registers and ultimately acknowledges the intersubjectivity of trees, animals, islanders, daylight, sunlight, chirping birds etc. - all existing carnally, sensually in a unitary life-world. In Merleau-Ponty's words this world is a world of "perceptual complexity"⁹³ as there is always an unceasing dialogue between the body and the natural elements; a gesture towards "a larger field".⁹⁴

Malick shows how embedded in the environment the islanders are; they live off the land, entertain themselves by swimming in the ocean and playing with each other; by signing together - all of this shows an immediate relationship to nature. Abram argues that modern civilizations have established "perceptual boundaries"⁹⁵ that act as barriers in our separation with nature. These boundaries are reinforced through social customs, beliefs

⁹¹ Simon Critchley, "Calm - On Terrence Malick's The Thin Red Line", *Film-Philosophy* 6 (1) (2002) <<https://philpapers.org/rec/CRICO>> Feb 2022.

⁹² Simon Critchley, "Calm - On Terrence Malick's The Thin Red Line", *Film-Philosophy* 6 (1) (2002) <<https://philpapers.org/rec/CRICO>> Feb 2022.

⁹³ Hass 31.

⁹⁴ Hass 31.

⁹⁵ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 9.

but most importantly through language and writing. The oral communities, in turn, have no such demarcations between human and nonhuman worlds. What in the West is regarded as a natural resource or a beautiful spectacle, in the indigenous communities is regarded as a “spirit”⁹⁶ but not in the commonly accepted anthropomorphic sense of a ghost or a hobgoblin. In Balinese communities, for example, a spirit is “a mode of intelligence or awareness that does not possess a human form”.⁹⁷ In this nonhierarchical place-based worldview, animate and inanimate objects are not objects as it were, rather they are embodied subjects; they possess subjectivity or intelligence in the same way as humans do:

Nature speaks in the form of meandering river from which animals drink, and the torrential monsoon rains, and the stone that fits neatly into the palm of the hand. The mountain, too, has its thoughts. The forest birds whirring and chattering as the sun slips below the horizon are vocal organs of the rain forest itself.⁹⁸

To achieve this result Malick utilizes a number of his particular filmmaking techniques; the techniques that have become more refined and Malick-esque as he continues to experiment with them. As mentioned earlier, Malick’s camera acts as an embodied subject. In other words, due to its constant movements and different positions, the camera becomes a part of the characters’ environments inseparable from a larger world. For example, in the opening sequence the camera assumes a position lower to the ground than normally expected. In order to show a tree in its environment Malick positions the camera at its roots and then moves up slowly. On top of that, Malick shoots with natural light (backlighting, side lighting), which means that it is always present in the frame and allows for more freedom and improvisation as the subjects and his camera are not attached to artificial lights.

Moreover, Malick’s camera is closer to the characters and other subjects in the diegesis, at times it seems even uncomfortably close. In battle scenes, for example, the combination of wide-angle lenses with deep focus allowed Malick to create an intimate close-up of a subject (be it a soldier, an insect or a plant etc.) while simultaneously situating the subject in their environment. Yet by making these choices, Malick’s camera still acts as an

⁹⁶ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 13.

⁹⁷ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 13.

⁹⁸ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 14.

unbiased spectator, unmotivated by the subject in the frame and their emotions, always pointing to a larger world.

The cinematographer John Toll emphasized how the moving camera and the sense of presence it conveys is important for Malick:

we had talked about various ways to create that kind of style, but we never settled on a single approach. On the first couple of days of the schedule, we shot some scenes with a moving camera on a dolly, and some with stationary cameras incorporating conventional coverage and angles. It was all technically correct. And there was nothing wrong with the scenes when we viewed the footage, it sometimes felt very 'staged' and overly structured for the camera we decided to loosen up our approach a bit. As a result there's a lot of Steadicam and handheld work We allowed the camera to explore a bit, and Terry encouraged the actors to try something different if they felt like it. At times, the camera would drift from one actor to another, we might not get conventional masters or coverage, but it didn't seem that important. Every scene became a unique situation, and we just shot what seemed to be most appropriate for a particular sequence. We allowed the camera to follow the emotional thread of a scene without worrying about much else. What seemed to emerge from that was a feeling of unpredictability which completely supported the idea that Guadalcanal was a strange and dangerous place that these characters suddenly found themselves in Terry got into that style of shooting immediately; he has a rather spontaneous and unpredictable personality, so the idea made a lot of sense to him.⁹⁹

It appears as though Malick the director embodies this (phenomenological) spontaneity in his filmmaking approach by being responsive to the environments of the filming locations, the light and nature there. Unlike formalist directors, who tend to religiously follow a script and a set of pre-established rules, Malick allows freedom to himself as well as his cast and crew. Michael Nordine in "Hollywood Bigfoot: Terrence Malick and the 20-Year Hiatus That Wasn't" shares one of the most famous anecdotes about Malick: "[Malick]'s been described more than once as a butterfly-catcher, a truth-seeker who once halted a day-long setup of a fighter jet taking off in *The Thin Red Line* in order to film a bird that happened to be flying by."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ C. Clinton Stivers, "All Things Shining: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis of Terrence Malick's Films" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2012), 190.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Nordin, "Hollywood Bigfoot: Terrence Malick and the 20-Year Hiatus That Wasn't", lareviewofbooks.org, Los Angeles Review of Books, 12 May 2013. Web. Sep 2022.

Safit believes that Malick's filmmaking style allows the audience "encounter nature on screen".¹⁰¹ He turns to the phenomenological notion of intentionality to explain how it is possible to encounter nature on screen. In other words, despite the fact that the audience's encounter with the cinematic images is not first hand because it is mediated through Tall, his camera, editing, a screen and even glasses, Safit believes that "the external phenomenon which is an image becomes the internal phenomenon which is an image internalized".¹⁰² The image becomes a part of me, my consciousness and phenomenology is precisely about enriching "the meanings that arise at the meeting point of consciousness and world, the meeting point provided by that which we call "phenomenon".¹⁰³ Applied to Malick and his depiction of nature, eco-phenomenology provides a milieu where our vision meets the ecological meaning of the film. As Safit explains:

Images, rather than inserting a distance and a removal from the things themselves, are the locus where the very meanings of things - that is our very understanding of things - could be sought and found. The images of nature offer a site where we focus on nature as meaningful, where nature has no utility other than the perceptual and mental ones; they offer a contact with the world which is vision and consciousness.¹⁰⁴

To summarize, Terrence Malick's cinema does synthesize aesthetics and ontology, cinema and phenomenology to open up a possibility for other, non-human subjectivity to exist. Nature is rendered with its own intersubjectivity and agency; its own presence unrelated to human affairs like war. By building worlds, by putting them together, Malick gestures towards a more-than-human world, in which a man is embedded; of which he is a part of. Through the character of Witt, Malick shows a man's possibility to bridge the separation between the Western technocratic rationality and a phenomenological sensibility embodied in the connection to earth, nature and animals. Masterfully utilizing his cinematic devices and storytelling techniques like the fluid camera, "random" and seemingly spontaneous editing, elusive and disembodied voiceovers, alongside his unbiased narrative style, subverting genre tropes, and improvisations, Malick pulls the audience in, making them participate and ultimately feel the sensations of a larger world. Symbolically Terrence

¹⁰¹ Safit 211.

¹⁰² Safit 213.

¹⁰³ Safit 213.

¹⁰⁴ Safit 214.

Malick decides to end *The Thin Red Line* with the shots of two parrots sitting on a tree branch followed by a shot of a coconut leaf sprouting towards the sun as to remind yet again that nature is a network, an ecosystem of multiple intelligences, ultimately beyond human domination.

4. Animals in Oral Cultures

In the following chapter I will center on what anthropologists call the “subject-oriented perspective” of non-industrial ontologies that imbue animals with agency, intentionality, symbolic and social roles beyond their pragmatic function. Delving into such a perspective is instrumental in understanding the different perceptions of animals in oral societies and ultimately, juxtaposing it with the perception of animals in industrial cultures. Kevin Costner’s Academy Award winning western *Dances with Wolves* will be analyzed as a prime example of human-animal engagement in the pre-industrial Sioux tribe.

There is a recent trend in the archaeological studies towards anthrozoology (Nadasny 2017; Hill 2013; Willerslev 2004), which can be described as an interdisciplinary cooperation between archaeology as such and human-animal studies (broadly anthrozoology studies the relationship between humans and animals across humanities and social sciences). Classical archaeology is rather object-based and categorical as archaeologists are predominantly interested in how animals served humans in various contexts. The recent trend towards anthrozoology engages also the literature of indigenous peoples, combining ethnohistory and anthropology to reexamine “existing assumptions about the ontological positions of both humans and animals”.¹⁰⁵ By including ethnohistories of indigenous peoples and their core conceptions like animal personhood and animal agency, the archaeological studies acknowledge the contingency, reciprocity and fluidity of our engagement with animals.

Erica Hill, an archaeologist who specializes on the prehistory of man-animal relations in the Bering Sea region, has produced an impressive paper titled “Archaeology and Animal Persons: Toward a Prehistory of Human-Animal Relations” in which she provides a number of archaeological evidences that demonstrate that “animals played subjective, agential roles in many ancient societies. Human-animal interactions were often intimate and relational, integral to the fabric of society and part of the total social phenomenon”.¹⁰⁶ Hill goes further and proposes that some animals were regarded as “persons”.¹⁰⁷ The idea of an animal as a person has been documented in many anthropological accounts across

¹⁰⁵ Hill 127.

¹⁰⁶ Hill 117.

¹⁰⁷ Hill 118.

a wide range of Indigenous peoples, from Yukon First Nations to the Siberian Yukaghirs. In the cosmology of oral communities, animals are persons, not human persons but animal persons endowed with soul and spirit. Moreover, different animal species are considered to be different persons, i.e, a bear person is different from an elk person. Applying the notion of relational ontology and the idea of animals giving themselves to people, I will look at hunting as both a practical and spiritual engagement with animals.

Another important concept that will be reviewed in this chapter is mimesis, that is the decentering of one's self. In other words, a hunter would mimic his prey, thereby adopting a perspective of the animal and thus erasing the boundary between his self and the animal self. Lastly, this chapter will look at reciprocity as a fundamental cornerstone of people's engagement with animals.

4.1 Dances with Wolves

Dances with Wolves (1990) is an American Western film directed by actor turned director Kevin Costner and which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The film, in fact, is an adaptation of the eponymous novel by Michael Blake and revolves around a white lieutenant John Dunbar played by Costner himself and his relationship with the Lakota peoples (that can also be referred as Sioux) in the second half of the 19th century. Having been transferred to the remote Fort Sedgwick, Dunbar is living a solitary life much like Thoreau by the shores of Walden lake. He keeps a diary, fixes the place and patrols the land with his nonhuman companion, a horse named Cisco. His encounter with the Sioux tribe begins when he saves Stands with a Fist, a white woman who had been adopted by the tribe long ago. Later he gets to know the shaman of the tribe named Kicking Bird, the warrior leader Wind in His Hair and the chief of Sioux named Ten Bears. He himself receives a name "Dances with Wolves" after Kicking Bird sees Dunbar interacting with the wolf Two Socks that he had befriended.

Dunbar's growing sympathy for the lifeways of the Lakota results in him participating in an epic buffalo chasing scene which becomes a sort of initiation for Dunbar and after which he is accepted by the tribe. Moreover, the white lieutenant learns the language of Sioux, abandons his post in Fort Sedgwick and helps the tribe to defend themselves against the aggressive Pawnee tribe. Later Dunbar is captured by the US Army for leaving his post.

The army arrests him and kills Dunbar's horse Cisco and the wolf Two Socks. In the end, the Sioux help release Dunbar and completely accept him as one of his own, yet Dunbar decides to leave the tribe (together with Stands with a Fist whom he marries) as he realizes that the white army will be following the tribe until they find him.

The film is of a particular interest to this thesis as it portrays the Lakota people as a complex culture which lives in attunement with the natural cycles. Dunbar, the western man, is here as a conduit between the progressive society and the so-called primitive society. The film provides a number of ideological readings. Film critic Richard Grenier felt the movie was emotionally manipulative making him "ashamed of being white".¹⁰⁸ Another film critic Paul Valentine claimed that the film "creates a new stereotype of the native American as all nobility, wisdom and oneness with the earth".¹⁰⁹ Yet, the Native American critic Edward D. Castillo compliments "[the film's] sensitive exploration of a native culture".¹¹⁰ He praises the complexity of the First Nations' characters in the sense that they abide to the typical archetypes of shamans and warriors yet the screenplay allows them space to illuminate universal human emotions like doubt, hope, fear and love.

Moreover, the fact that the actors are played by the Native American actors and speak Sioux only adds to the authenticity and complexity of the story. To be fair, Castillo admits that the Pawnee, on the other hand, are reduced to simple bandits, "the stereotypical bad Indians".¹¹¹

Having said that, most critics agree that making a film about Native Americans and letting them speak their language is a big achievement in transcending the tropes of either the noble or primitive savage. Film critic Larry R. Bowden observes that

¹⁰⁸ Larry R. Bowden, "Dances with Wolves", *CrossCurrents*, Fall 1991, Vol. 41, No. 3: 392. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24459957>> Sep. 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Bowden 392.

¹¹⁰ Edward D. Castillo, "Review", *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1991, Vol. 44, No.4: 14. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1212760>> Sep. 2022.

¹¹¹ Castillo 15.

A culture is taken seriously neither when it is objectified and then “studied” nor when it is rendered exotic or artful and put on display, but when it is allowed to speak - with its own voice, in its own language, in culturally appropriate ways.¹¹²

The film is chosen for the purpose of the thesis to illustrate the attitude of the oral nations to animals and on top of that, the film provides a space to juxtapose the perceptions of the Lakota tribe towards animals with those of Dunbar’s as a quintessential white man. There are three principal animals that are portrayed in the film - a buffalo, a horse and a wolf.

First let us take a look at buffalos. “Ta’Tanka” was the Lakota people’s name for the North American Plains buffalo. Ta’Tanka is a fundamental bridge, semiotic and cultural, that connects a white man and the indigenous tribe. Yet Ta’Tanka is also about the symbolic and ontological connection of the Lakota people with animals and nature. In a captivating buffalo hunt scene, it is strikingly evident that the life of the Lakota people is completely centered around buffalos, the hunting of which determines the seasonal migration of the tribe, while providing its food for cold winter months. Similarly, the buffalo provides the hides for their dwellings and the bones for their tools while no part of the animal is wasted. Being skillful horse riders, the act of hunting buffalo is seen as a testament of spirit and a way to come out of puberty. Upon hunting, a liver of a freshly killed buffalo is consumed and the buffalo’s spirit enters a human body erasing demarcations between man and animal. The celebration would carry on with ritual songs by the fire that honours life and death. The scene of the hunt is strikingly different to an earlier scene that depicted the slaughtering of buffalos by white hunters who brutally killed the animals, taking only parts of them and letting their corpses rot on the Plains. In the article called “Demise of Buffalo” it is stated that

There is an estimate of 31 million were slaughtered by 1868 and 1881. The majority of the white buffalo hunters killed for the tongues and hides leaving the carcasses on the Plains to rot. The buffalo tongue was the main meat that the hunters kept. The tongues were purchased at 25 cents each and sold on the markets farthest east at 50 cents. Meanwhile, the 200,000 Native Americans Plains Indians were thought to kill 2 million buffalo a year a mere third of the bison's birthrate.¹¹³

¹¹² Bowden 394.

¹¹³ Derek Graves, “Demise of Buffalo”, Kawvalley, Plains History Project 2004 <http://www.kawvalley.k12.ks.us/schools/rjh/marneyg/03-04_Plains-Projects/graves_04_demise%20of%20buffalo.htm> Sep. 2022.

Interestingly, in the film it is the white man who helps find the buffalo. Castillo sees in this “a shamanistic allegory”.¹¹⁴ Essentially Dunbar, the white man, acquired his shamanistic powers by embracing his spirit animal - the wolf nicknamed Two Socks. While living alone in Fort Sedgwick, Dunbar was close to the earth, nature, the natural cycles and ultimately to his own soul and spirits. Therefore, the wolf came to him as if he had heard the calling. Castillo believes that “the wolf assisted in [Dunbar’s] transformation from a normal man into a man of power”.¹¹⁵ In that regard, the scene, when the shaman Kicking Bird observes Dunbar playing around with the wolf and gives the white man a new Lakota name “Dances with Wolves”, is of particular importance. Robert Baird in his book *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (1998) notices that

This renaming of a white man with a ‘natural name’ and the shedding of his European name is the quintessential American myth - the self-made man rediscovering both America, and, most importantly, his own self in the process.¹¹⁶

Castillo adds that “one way of explaining Dunbar’s unexpected hunting prowess is the “power” he may have received from his powerful predator ally, wolf”.¹¹⁷ It is fair to say the lone wolf is a mirror of the lone white man and in this way, Dunbar could be seen as a conduit between the world of nature and the world of progress. Similarly to Witt from *The Thin Red Line*, Dunbar is the white peoples’ chance to reconnect with nature and animals, to see beyond the shutters of anthropocentrism.

Furthermore, the death of Two Socks is also emblematic. The wolf is killed by the white US Army soldiers who came to arrest Dunbar. The act of killing a wild beast symbolically (and literally) shows the Western attitude towards the untamed animals. Wolves in particular have been slaughtered in the West throughout centuries. Similarly to bisons, they have ended up at the brink of extinction. The main argument is that they hunt down livestock yet this actually happens because they are being hunted down. Not being able to form larger packs, wolves are forced to hunt smaller and easier prey like sheep simply because they are not able to catch bigger prey like deer. Dan Ashe, director of the US Fish and Wildlife

¹¹⁴ Castillo 22.

¹¹⁵ Castillo 22.

¹¹⁶ Robert Baird, *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (The University Press Kentucky, 1998) 161.

¹¹⁷ Castillo 22.

Service under Obama simply explained that “this isn’t about elk, deer, livestock, or science. It’s just old-fashioned persecution, hatred, and cruelty”.¹¹⁸ Throughout centuries and under different administrations, the population of wolves has been regulated in the US either by almost eliminating their numbers or reintroducing them back to the wildlife. The idea of wildlife management is a concept which the First Nations people cannot grasp. In *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (2004), Paul Nadasny writes that

Many Yukon First Nations people find the assumption of control inherent in the agricultural metaphor absurd, perhaps even offensive to the animals. At wildlife management meetings, one Kluane First Nation hunter regularly objected to use of the term wildlife management itself. Humans cannot “manage” wildlife populations, he said. Animals manage themselves; they make their own decisions about when to reproduce, and where to go, decisions that are quite independent of any human desires. “Wildlife management”, he said, “is not about managing animals; it is about managing people.”¹¹⁹

Either being considered as a white man’s spirit animal or the mirror of his wildness, or a symbol of the destruction of wildlife of the Anthropocene, the wolf in *Dances with Wolves* exceeds the trope of a wild beast or simply a friend. It is an in-between creature, almost mythical, mysterious and primordial at the same time.

The horse Cisco, on the other hand, can be interpreted as a mirror of Dunbar’s civility and domesticity. Cisco is a stereotypical loyal friend who is always by Dunbar’s side. Dunbar perceives both animals, the domesticated Cisco and the wild Two Socks as the carriers of their own nonhuman ontologies. While he treats the horse as a friend, Cisco is still a commodity, because it belongs to Dunbar. It goes without saying that Cisco is his companion, but also a means of transportation that has a name (and value) attached to it. Two Socks is treated differently, I would say more like a fellow human being since Dunbar realizes the intelligence of the wolf and obvious lupine agency that Dunbar cannot control. Dunbar’s only successful attempt was in giving the wolf a name and thus somehow labelling him as “my”.

¹¹⁸ Ted Williams, “America’s New War on Wolves and Why It Must Be Stopped”, Yale Environment 360, Yale School of Environment, February 17, 2022 <<https://e360.yale.edu/features/americas-new-war-on-wolves-and-why-it-must-be-stopped>> Sep 2022.

¹¹⁹ Paul Nadasny, “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and human-Animal Sociality”, *American Ethnologist*, Feb., 2007, Vol. 34, No. 1: 127. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4496783>> Sep. 2022.

4.2 Animal persons and relational ontology

Let us take a closer look at hunting which can be considered as a primordial form of engagement with animals. The attitude of Indigenous peoples to animals reflected utter respect to the natural cycles and processes to the point that Aboriginal peoples saw themselves to be a part of those natural life ways. The demise of the buffalo as shown in *Dances in Wolves* points to the imbalance that occurs once the industrial West appeared on the hunting scene.

Throughout this chapter I will be referring to the relations between animals and humans as ontological; meaning “relational ontology”¹²⁰ as defined by the anthropologist Erica Hill. Hill coined this term to signify the kinship between humans and animals which is embodied in ceremonies, myths, social structures and rituals. She states that “rather than perceiving animals and “other things” as insensate objects, many people in the past - especially foragers - experienced their worlds as comprised of dynamic agents capable of independent and intentional action”.¹²¹ Moreover, she emphasizes that in relational ontologies “animals are persons, possessing traits or capacities that, in modern West, tend to be restricted to humans”.¹²² Essentially, relational ontology implies a whole range of engagements with animals from hunting to domestication. Hill suggests that “domestication initiates major ontological shifts”¹²³ because animals became property. Yet even this relation-as-property is not fully utilitarian as, for example, Mongolian pastoralists acknowledge herd animals’ agency in the process of domestication.¹²⁴

John Berger supposes that the relations between humans and animals is “maybe the first existential dualism”¹²⁵ because “[animals] were subjected and worshipped, bred and sacrificed”.¹²⁶ His use of the conjunction “and” is highly important as it implies that humans

¹²⁰ Hill 120.

¹²¹ Hill 120.

¹²² Hill 120.

¹²³ Hill 120.

¹²⁴ Hill 119.

¹²⁵ Berger 7.

¹²⁶ Berger 7.

treated animals as Animals with a capital A; as persons; as subjects; as essential parts of their lives:

Today the vestiges of this dualism remain among those who live intimately with, and depend upon, animals. A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* and not by a *but*.¹²⁷

Berger pointedly notices a sort of double nature of interaction between pre-industrial people and animals. The double nature of their attitude lies in the fact that those people viewed the engagement with animals, in both hunting and domestication, as reciprocal. Despite the fact that it may seem that hunting is a brutal and fast means to an end, it is in fact not true. Hunting was perceived as a social act in which an animal played a significant role, a role in which it was not simply a victim.

Paul Nadasny in the article “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality” (2007) explains that hunting was viewed not “as a violent process whereby hunters take the lives of animals by force”¹²⁸ but rather, “as a long-term relationship of reciprocal exchange between animals and the humans who hunt them”.¹²⁹ The animals’ agency can be revealed in a number of ways, but the most crucial aspect of their participation is the idea of animals giving themselves to hunters. In indigenous cosmologies, a hunter has to earn an animal’s respect so that the latter will decide to give its life to him. For example, the Kluane peoples believe that at times animals have to be deceived and outsmarted in order to concede. Nadasny adds that “gifts are not always freely given; those who wish to receive a gift must often resort to some strategy - whether it be physical, social, or magical - to force the giver to part with the desired gift”.¹³⁰

As a part of the investigation of the Indigenous peoples’ relations with animals, Nadasny spent some time with Kluane people of the Southwest Yukon. He observed their ways around animals, talked to the natives and learnt how to snare rabbits. Having caught a rabbit, the scientist was bewildered as he had never killed an animal before and therefore

¹²⁷ Berger 7.

¹²⁸ Nadasny 25.

¹²⁹ Nadasny 25.

¹³⁰ Nadasny 28.

felt immense guilt for the animal's suffering. He later learnt from the Kluane that feeling guilt is disrespectful to the soul of an animal because the animal decided to give its life and experiencing guilt is a big insult to the animal. He was told that

If they [animals] give themselves to you, you say a prayer of thanks and accept the gift of meat you have been given. To think about the animals' suffering is to find fault with the gift, to cast doubt on whether the animal should have given itself to you in the first place. To do this is to run the risk of giving offence and never receiving such a gift again.¹³¹

Similarly to Berger's remark on the double nature of reciprocity, Nadasny realized that hunting involves death and grace - the life of the animal is perceived as a gift; it is respected and not taken for granted.

The relationship between the Ainu of Hokkaido and the Kurils and bears may also be looked at as an example of the existential dualism Berger describes, as the strong kinship between people and bears involved both killing bears and deeply respecting them. The Ainu people believe that a bear is an ancestor, a kin, a disguised deity or a spirit (kamuy). The Ainu would raise bear cubs, treating them respectfully in the manner of modern day pets. Then they would engage them in a ceremony which resulted in "skinning, dismemberment, and consumption of the bear"¹³² which was believed to return a human home, to the mountains. Essentially, a bear or a disguised deity was treated well; as a guest it would receive good food and good treatment; in return the Ainu used a bear's flesh, claws and skin as food and material. Simply put, a bear was seen as "a bear person" rather than an insentient beast.

Another example of hunting as the most common engagement between men and animals is cooperation in the hunting of a particular prey. For example, Hill writes that in the Bering sea region humans and orcas hunted belugas and bowhead whales. "Oral narratives related how humans and orcas cooperatively hunted and exchanged meat, blubber, and ornaments"¹³³, explains Hill. Humans would leave orcas some beads or a necklace on the shores, and in return "orcas would leave blubber floating on the water's surface so that

¹³¹ Nadasny 27.

¹³² Hill 119.

¹³³ Hill 126.

humans could retrieve it”.¹³⁴ That blubber was used to make oil and soap for example. The narratives get more cathartic when Hill recounts a story in which a young orca’s calf was drowned by being entangled in a hunter’s net. In return, “the mother orca took the life of a human child to replace her own lost offspring”.¹³⁵ Hill summarizes by saying that this particular narrative shows a different side of human and animal relationship; “a long-term, ongoing relationship remembered by both human and animal persons”.¹³⁶

4.3 Mimesis

Rane Willerslev, who studied the Siberian Yukaghirs, recounts similar examples of reciprocity between animals and hunters. In the article “Not Animal, Not Not-Animal: Hunting, Imitation and Empathetic Knowledge among the Siberian Yukaghirs” (2004) Willerslev describes that the Yukaghirs see animals as persons or “other-than-human persons”¹³⁷ who have their own perspective and subjectivity. During the hunting process it is essential for the hunters to literally mimic the prey and thus adopt the subjectivity of the animal:

Mimetic practice provides this ability to be like, yet also different from, the animal impersonated, it grants the hunter a “double perspective” whereby he can assume the animal’s point of view but still remain a human hunter who chases and kills the prey.¹³⁸

As a part of his ongoing research on animal persons, Willerslev spent around a year with the Yukaghirs in the forests of Yakutia (northeastern Russia). Modern-day Yukaghirs live in practically the same way as their pre-industrial ancestors. With the collapse of the USSR, the industry left Yakutia and therefore most men are involved in hunting and fishing for “eight or more months of the year”¹³⁹. Similarly to the Kluane peoples, the Siberian natives

¹³⁴ Hill 126.

¹³⁵ Hill 126.

¹³⁶ Hill 126.

¹³⁷ Rane Willerslev, “Not Animal, Not Not-Animal: Hunting, Imitation and Empathetic Knowledge among the Siberian Yukaghirs”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Sep. 2004, Vol. 10, No. 3: 629. JSTOR URL: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3803798>> Sep 2022.

¹³⁸ Willerslev 630.

¹³⁹ Willerslev 632.

believe that animals are persons and, like people, they possess what they call “ayibii”¹⁴⁰ which means soul or spirit. Just like the Indigenous Kluane nation, the concept of the animal giving itself to a hunter is a universal truth among the Yukaghir hunters too. Willerslev cites an account from 1926 written by W. Jochelson in *The Yukaghir and the Yukaghirized Tungus* (1926) who states that

in the opinion of the Yukaghir, a lucky hunt depends on the good-will of the animal’s guardian spirit but also on that of the animal itself. Thus they say: “tolo’w candice e’rietum el kude’deti” - that is: “if the reindeer does not like the hunter, he will not be able to kill it”.¹⁴¹

Elk and reindeer are the two most important animals in the lives of the Siberian hunters. In order to attract luck, hunters go through what Willerslev literally calls “body transformation”.¹⁴² Carnally and mentally hunters embody what it is like to be elks - the hunters start with thinking like elks, dreaming about them; they go to the sauna in order to get rid of their human smell. Moreover, they adopt a particular linguistic jargon whereby they refer to the prey by not naming it directly. For example, instead of saying the elk, they would say “the big one”.¹⁴³ On the actual hunt, the Yukaghir hunters wear “wooden skis covered underneath with smooth skin from the leg of an elk”¹⁴⁴ to more resemble how the elk walks. Willerslev adds that

he [the hunter] will move his body like an elk: from side to side in a waddling manner... Provided that the hunter’s mimic performance is convincing, vivid, and alive, the elk will leave its hiding place between the trees and bushes and begin to walk towards him, apparently taking him for one of its own kind rather than a human hunter.¹⁴⁵

This mimetic transformation should be regarded as a social act whereby an animal is not seen as a raw meat but rather as a person who is endowed with its own agency because the animal decides whether it will give its life to a hunter. The animal is tricked, outwitted for exactly the same reason - the hunter has to prove that he is smarter and deserves to

¹⁴⁰ Willerslev 633.

¹⁴¹ Willerslev 634.

¹⁴² Willerslev 634.

¹⁴³ Willerslev 632.

¹⁴⁴ Willerslev 639.

¹⁴⁵ Willerslev 641.

receive a gift (the life of the elk). In the act of mimesis, a hunter's self is decentered and embraces a nonhuman subjectivity. Willerslev cites Taussig's fundamental idea on mimesis and particularly its role in a human subjectivity in *Mimesis and Alterity: a Particular History of the Senses* (1993):

To mimic something is to be sensuously filled with that which is imitated, yelling to it, mirroring it - and hence imitating it bodily. It is, he [Taussig] claims, a particularly powerful way of understanding, representing, and controlling the surrounding world.¹⁴⁶

Following this, by mimicking the animal, the hunter taps into the psyche of the animal, its life-world, blurring the dichotomy between "Self" and "Other". Nadasny indicates that

For them [northern hunters] animals are people. This does not mean that they cannot distinguish between human people and animal people. After all, one does not set snares to capture human people. There are many different kinds of people, and the social rules and conventions for dealing with human people are different from those governing social relations with rabbit people, which are different again from those governing relations between humans and moose people and so on.¹⁴⁷

To be fair, the concept of reciprocity is embraced by Western philosophers as well, particularly by (eco)phenomenologists like David Abram. Abram sees reciprocity as a foundation of perceptions, i.e, our senses and their engagement with the surrounding environments. Abram states that

Such reciprocity is the very structure of perception. We experience the sensuous world only by rendering ourselves vulnerable to that world. Sensory perception is this ongoing interweavement: the terrain enters into us only to the extent that we allow ourselves to be taken up within that terrain.¹⁴⁸

The bottomline is that our senses inform our subjectivities - what we smell, touch and soak up. Subjectivity in this way can be viewed as an ongoing reciprocal exchange between human perceptions and the things around us. By mimicking animals, humans open themselves up to nonhuman sensibilities.

¹⁴⁶ Willerslev 639.

¹⁴⁷ Willerslev 631.

¹⁴⁸ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 38.

In *Becoming Animal* (2010) Abram describes his experience with body transformation which allowed him to penetrate animal interiority. Abram states that rational thought and centuries of progress have made us regard our bodies as something monolithic and fixed, as mere machines for consumption, with only the brain as the seat of intelligence. Oral cultures see our bodies and language as shifting, malleable and changing entities - hence many rituals include dance, prayer and the mimicking of animals in order to expand one's consciousness and one's body.

Abram, who is particularly interested in reciprocity between one's corporeality and nature, spent years living with healers, magicians and medicine men from oral cultures who were able to transcend their bodies and mind in order to be nourished by nonhuman subjectivities. In The Himalayas, Abram spent some time living with Sonam, a local farmer and medicine man who taught him how to be present and attuned to the nature around him. Even by walking barefoot, working physically on the farm, being immersed in the everydayness of the Himalayas, Abram noticed how his perceptions heightened and intensified:

The deeper I slid into the material density of the real, the more I found that there was nothing determinate or predictable about existence. Actually, this inexhaustible mystery, cannot be domesticated. It is wilderness incarnate. Reality shapeshifts.¹⁴⁹

But more interesting is Abram's account on body metamorphosis. Once while hiking with Sonam, he witnessed how the latter turned into a raven. At first Abram could not believe what he had seen, as the transformation looked very convincing. Later Abram realized that Sonam had spent years observing ravens, perfecting his mimicking of raven's croaks, staring at them for hours on end, talking to them:

Sonam had long practiced holding himself in the various postures of that bird, had practiced Raven's ways of walking, of moving its head, of spreading feathered limbs. Learning to dance another animal is central to the craft of shamanic traditions throughout the world. To move as another is simply the most visceral approach to feel one's way into the body of that creature.¹⁵⁰

Similarly to the Siberian Yukaghirs, Nepalese shamans mimic the bodily gestures of animals, thus shaping their own bodies into resembling those animals and ultimately

¹⁴⁹ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 224.

¹⁵⁰ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 238.

penetrating into the psyche of the animals. In the end, Sonam “turned” into a raven when it was close to dusk, on a hill, thus covering some part of his body, perfectly imitating the raven’s croaks and flapping his arms in a raven’s manner. Abram details:

He squawked very loudly as he heard me approach the bend, and then again LOUD, forcing the expectation in my organism that I was about to meet a raven. ... As I was rounded the bend he simply kept up his dance, hopping on both legs together as he turned, shivering his head in jerking movements, blinking his eyes like shutters and opening his beak to squawk one last time before hopping to the ground.¹⁵¹

After this extraordinary incident, Abram spent months learning how to become a raven. At first he spent hours simply observing them, imitating their sounds, getting closer to them. After that, he was learning how to use other senses, apart from sight, in the manner of the raven. He imagined the taste in his mouth to be what the raven was eating; he touched the surface of the stones where the ravens normally landed. Eventually, all of this made Abram realize that “indigenous, oral awareness is much more deeply informed by the immediately surrounding locale than most modern folks can ever imagine”.¹⁵²

4.4 Social Animals

When it comes to the role of animals or animal persons in the social order, Hill indicates animal burials as places “where complex social relations between humans and animals were enacted”.¹⁵³ and can be used to recreate prehistoric kinship of man and animal. Hill delineates that dogs and horses in particular were interred alongside humans or in separate graves, which reflects their significance and status:

At two Mesolithic sites, Skateholm I and II in Sweden, several dogs were found in human graves by themselves. One dog was buried with flint blades and red deer antlers, the same kinds of grave goods found in human make burials. Such treatment indicates that some dogs possessed the inherent “emergent” capacity to become persons. Like humans, dogs at Skateholm were treated in variety of ways,

¹⁵¹ Abram, *Becoming Animal* 240.

¹⁵² Abram, *Becoming Animal* 268.

¹⁵³ Hill 122.

some suffering violent ends, some buried richly, and some without any goods at all.¹⁵⁴

Similarly Hill describes dog burial sites near Lake Baikal emphasizing that the dogs were not simply pets but rather “ontological subjects, persons deserving of treatment similar to that of humans”.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, horse graves reflect different social roles horses played in a community. Hill cites an example from the animal burials in Pazyryk, southern Siberia in which “[ten horses] were interred, along with a human male, in a burial mound dated to about 300 BC. Each horse was outfitted with a saddle, pendants, tassels, and gear that varied in complexity and design”.¹⁵⁶ Archaeologists dismiss the idea that those horses were mere gifts, sacrifices or indicators of the social status of the deceased male. Instead, they believe that “each horse was an individual with a specific personal history and status within the human community”¹⁵⁷. Depending on the horses’ abilities, achievements and other markers, they were buried differently.

Alongside structured burial sites, Hill analyzes remains of animal bones and skulls as the markers of ontological acknowledgement of animals as kin. An illustrative example is the relation between Yup’ik Eskimo in Southwest Alaska and beluga whales. Hill describes the findings from the Kegcaqurmiut beluga whale hunting site as “the site of reciprocal exchange between human hunters and beluga prey”.¹⁵⁸ According to Yup’ik Eskimo mythology, beluga used to be a land creature just like wolves or deer and wanted to be returned back to land. Normally the remnants of sea prey would be put back to the sea or compiled together, yet on the Kegcaqurmiut site, the beluga whales bones were found “carefully curated and arranged”.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that “beluga would continue to give themselves to hunters as long as hunters observed taboos and deposited their (still sentient) remains in appropriate ways”.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Hill 121.

¹⁵⁵ Hill 121.

¹⁵⁶ Hill 123.

¹⁵⁷ Hill 123.

¹⁵⁸ Hill 125.

¹⁵⁹ Hill 125.

¹⁶⁰ Hill 125.

By and large, the above mentioned stories, conveyed through myths, narratives and rituals as well as through hunting, burials, remains and various forms of rock art, suggest a continuous entanglement of humans and animals in indigenous ontologies. Hunting is just one of the many ways of human-animal interactions in pre-industrial communities. The interaction was conceived more like a reciprocal exchange between a hunter, his primordial nature and nature as we know it embodied in the body and spirit of a particular animal. It is tempting to romanticize human and animal relationship through rose-tinted glasses as something pure and sacred yet that is not the main point of the above mentioned accounts from preindustrial societies. What those examples clearly demonstrate is complex human and animal interactions from both sides. Animals, domestic and/or wild, were viewed as sentient and agential beings and were therefore given respect. People of oral cultures believed that animals were persons with a soul and a spirit. The Ainu of Hokkaido call it kamiya, whereas the Siberian Yukaghirs name it aybii.

I will carefully look at the conceptual animal framework of Western societies in the next chapter; for now it will suffice to state that animals have been excluded from Western human societies for centuries due to various reasons, social and economic. They have been reduced to being a raw material, a pet, a fetishized or endangered species - all of which suggests a utilitarian or exploitative mode of engagement with animal.

Having said that, the indigenous ways that were discussed in this chapter also imply a utilitarian mode of engagement yet more respectful and more intimate. In hunting and nomadic societies animals were ultimately killed, yet it was not done excessively, and most importantly, the interaction between animals and humans was sensual, ongoing, “involving the living and the dead”.¹⁶¹ Not only did animals play a key role in the social structures of the societies like the Lakota people’s way, they also pervade the cosmologies, myths and ultimately language of those communities. Animals were imbedded in the fabric of the prehistoric peoples quite literally and metaphorically. Each part of them was used, nothing was wasted. They were spirits, gods, kins, friends, but also providers of food and material for survival. Yet what is crucial about the indigenous conceptions of subjectivity is that subjectivity has never been considered a solely human attribute.

¹⁶¹ Hill 126.

In other words, for some communities hunting starts way before the actual hunt. It starts in observing, mimicking animals; seeing animals in dreams and thinking like them. Therefore, it should be emphasized again that in the sensibilities of oral peoples - predicated upon a continual reciprocity and engagement with animals through domestication or hunting - the boundaries between man and animal were fluid, even porous as the living and the dead, man and animal, reality and dreams were intertwined and present in their day to day life.

What *Dances with Wolves* captures is this oral, place-based awareness, that sees animals as non-human persons sharing a more-than-human space. To paraphrase Berger, for the Lakota people buffalos are respected *and* hunted down. Animal agency is manifested through a social act in which an animal decides to give its life to a human. The human in turn has to deserve this right by the act of mimesis, wit and respect.

5. Animals in Industrial Cultures

5.1 Biopolitics and Bare Life

Now let us turn to the question of the animal in Western philosophy. Western thinkers have always been particularly interested in what separates humans from animals and thus they have inevitably put distance between themselves and animals. This separation, “which is so decisive for our culture”¹⁶², is arguably the origin of Western politics or rather biopolitics. Animal ethics aside, the biopolitical order imposes a complete control over the animal body as well as its representation in culture industry - this mode of control is what Giorgio Agamben calls the anthropological machine of humanism.

Contemporary Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his outstanding manuscript entitled *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004) investigates the origins of the separation between man and animal and the mechanisms of control that have been put in place by Western politics to pedestal the human above non-human animals and nature and exclude animals to the state of bare life, somewhere in-between humanity and animality, somewhere outside of what Heidegger calls the open, which is an exclusively human attribute. Agamben is particularly interested in this in-betweenness of animality and humanity - this bridge, the open space, the space of contingency as it were that divides man and animal and this place of indeterminacy he calls a caesura:

In our culture, man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a logos, of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social or divine element. We must learn instead to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation. What is man, if he is always the place - and, at the same time, the result - of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way - within man - has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Agamben, *The Open* 21.

¹⁶³ Agamben, *The Open* 16.

Agamben's aim is to analyze the anthropological machine which produced both "human»" and "animal" via biopower which separates the non-human or the animal within the human. Agamben's arguments are based on Michel Foucault's groundbreaking analysis of biopolitics. In *The History of Sexuality - Volume 1*, Foucault examines the emergence of biopolitics as a system of social norms; a system of knowledge that is needed to sustain life, and how this system is then imposed on all individuals (subjects). To be more precise, Foucault's analysis comes down to the fact that with the emergence of the nation states and populations in the 18th century, sex became the basis of political and economic agendas. For a country to be prosperous, it had to know and predict the birth rates, the gender of newborns, life expectancy, fertility and so on.

By and large, the way biopower exercises its control over sex is through language and discourse (Foucault calls this political techniques). The discourse becomes ingrained in people to the point that it becomes a moral duty, an obligation (Foucault labels this as the technologies of the self). In this way individuals become oblivious to the power dynamics involved in the discourse and "bind themselves to their identity and consciousness, at the same time, to an external power".¹⁶⁴ The discursive element of sex is then transformed into law thus gaining juridical, social and political validity. As Foucault contends "in Western societies since the Middle Ages, the exercise of power has always been formulated in terms of law".¹⁶⁵

Agamben takes Foucault's analysis of biopolitics one step further and considers biopower to be the basis of the European-humanist politics as such. While Foucault discerns biopower as an attribute of modern State power and modern democracy, Agamben understands the union of biopower and sovereignty to be the foundation of Western politics since the onset of classical democracy. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) Agamben distinguishes between two Ancient Greek words for life - *zoe* (animals, women, gods) and *bios* - the former meaning the biological fact of life whereas the latter - "a qualified life"¹⁶⁶, i.e how life is lived. In the classical world *zoe* was excluded from the polis, while *bios* (*bios politikos*), a good life, could be achieved through politics.

¹⁶⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press, 1998) 5.

¹⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: 1* (Penguin Books, 1998) 12.

¹⁶⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 1.

Agamben by all means refers to Aristotle who states in *Politics* that “in the classical world, simple natural life is excluded from the polis in the strict sense, and remains confined - as merely reproductive life - to the sphere of *oikos*”.¹⁶⁷ What this ultimately means is that the biological life is placed outside the political realm on the basis of its exclusion yet it is subsumed in it and as a result is politicized.

To demonstrate how this logic of exclusion works, Agamben refers to a figure of *homo sacer* (sacred man) and the idea of bare life as an extension to Foucauldian biopower. According to the ancient Roman law, *homo sacer* is someone who is banned from a political life and hence reduced to the condition of *zoe* - someone who has no rights and can be killed (but not sacrificed) by anyone. This precarious situation of being “exposed to death”¹⁶⁸ is where bare life stems from. In other words, bare life “is the politicized form of natural life”.¹⁶⁹

Concentration camps are the most brutal and evident example of bare life in operation. Agamben writes,

Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life ... the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen.¹⁷⁰

In other words, the lives of the camp prisoners can be taken away from them by guards who were appointed there by law. In a nutshell, bare life is born when exclusion becomes the norm. As Agamben concludes, bare life “is a threshold in which law constantly passes over into fact and fact into law, and in which the two planes become indistinguishable”.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 2.

¹⁶⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 88.

¹⁶⁹ Catherine Mills, “Giorgio Agamben”, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <<https://iep.utm.edu/agamben/#H3>> Sep 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 171.

¹⁷¹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 171.

5.2 Animals, Biopolitics and Bare Life

From here the question arises: how are the ideas of bare life and biopolitics relevant to the plight of animals? It goes without saying that Foucault's intellectual legacy was deeply anthropocentric with little regard to nonhuman other. Contemporary posthumanist as well as critical animal theorists such as Nicole Shukin and Cary Wolfe have criticized Foucault for not viewing animals as subjects of biocontrol, for not including non-human subjectivity in his investigation of biopower and the state control of disciplinary institutions. Shukin writes that

actual animals have already been subtly displaced from the category of "species" in Foucault's early remarks on biopower ... for [Foucault] animality functions predominately as a metaphor for that corporeal part of "man" that becomes subject to biopolitical calculation.¹⁷²

Wolfe provides a more general criticism of cultural studies for not considering animal historicity and animal subjectivity. He remarks that "cultural studies situate themselves on ... repressing the question of nonhuman subjectivity, taking for granted that the subject is always already human".¹⁷³ He adds that

In the light of developments in cognitive science, ethology, and other fields over the past twenty years, it seems clear that there is no longer any good reason to take it for granted that the theoretical, ethical, and political question of the subject is automatically coterminous with the species distinction between *Homo sapiens* and everything else.¹⁷⁴

Following Foucault's definition of an apparatus analyzed in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* as "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings"¹⁷⁵, critical animal studies scholar Stephen Thierman in his paper "Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse" admits that it is debatable even in the realm of philosophy to consider animals as subjects yet the question should be

¹⁷² Shukin 10.

¹⁷³ Wolfe 1.

¹⁷⁴ Wolfe 1.

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Thierman, "Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse", *Foucault Studies*, Numer 9, Sep. 2010: 91. <<https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i9.3061>> August 2022.

shifted to acknowledging that “apparatuses of animality”¹⁷⁶ such as abattoirs have power “to deeply shape the experiences (and subjectivities) of other creatures within which they are situated”.¹⁷⁷ Anyone who has ever spent some time seeing farm animals like pigs and cows in the open field can testify how the spaciousness and freedom of fields and pastures affect these animals, they can run, play around, chase each other etc. Their life conditions and hence their behaviour in abattoirs presents a striking difference to that of an open pasture. Moreover, the apparatuses of animality extend to other forms of confinement like zoos, labs, and battery cages to name a few albeit in this chapter I will focus on slaughterhouses as an ultimate form of controlling animality.

Another important Foucauldian critical tool most animal studies philosophers focus on is the ideas of agricultural power as an extension of sovereign power (humans exert their right to kill farm animals on a massive scale) and biopower. Following Foucault’s definition of sovereign power as the right to kill, Chloe Taylor in the article “Foucault and Critical Animal Studies: Genealogies of Agricultural Power” argues that

Foucault stresses that sovereign power is a self-appointed right that is later enshrined in law and myths of origin. Thus humans confer upon themselves and define their rights over animals and then mythologize these as the natural order of things.¹⁷⁸

It follows thence that the logic of biopower provides the foundation for factory farms. Moreover, agricultural power illustrates the inability of law to place the natural outside the realm of political. Laura Hudson in her paper “The Political Animal: Species-Beings and Bare Life” observes that

the rise of environmentalism, deep ecology, and animal rights can be seen as effects of this inability of law, or the Law, to distance the “natural world” as a state outside itself. Natural objects reappear within the political realm not as political actors but as markers of bare life.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Thierman 92.

¹⁷⁷ Thierman 92.

¹⁷⁸ Chloe Taylor, “Foucault and Critical Animal Studies: Genealogies of Agricultural Power”, *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (2013): 541 <<https://www.ualberta.ca/research/media-library/research-projects/0be7629aaf1248d28d20151fc12fba1a/e13aaea7d4ff4c73b397af386628d5ff/foucault-and-critical-animal-studies-final.pdf>> August 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Laura Hudson, “The Political Animal: Species-Being and Bare Life”, *Meditations* 23.2 (Spring 2008): 97 <www.mediationsjournal.org/the-political-animal> July 2022.

This is what makes the parallel between the figure of the animal and the figure of the *homo sacer* (the refugee, the marginal, the camp prisoner, the lobotomized) legitimate. Hudson compares the refugee and the animal to emphasize how the state determines which lives are worth living. Here we could recall Levinas' imprisonment in the Nazi camp. As a rational being equipped with language as an instrument of power, Levinas felt completely helpless, subhuman to the external reality which put him in a state of exclusion - he was excluded from society, yet his life was in the hands of the Nazi state.

When it comes to animals, Werner Herzog's documentary film *Grizzly Man* (2005) could provide us with a vivid example of sovereign power (state power) and biopower exercised on an animal. The documentary film reenacts the events that led to the death of American amateur bear enthusiast Timothy Treadwell and his girlfriend Amie Huguenard. Having spent 13 summers living among grizzly bears at the protected area of Katmai National Park in Alaska, Treadwell and Huguenard were eaten by an unfamiliar stray brown bear who had not gone into hibernation and was very hungry. Upon finding out about the tragedy, the bear was executed on the spot by the state police. Did this situation put this grizzly bear in the state of exclusion? Having been considered a protected animal against poaching, the bear was put to death by the state police because it had killed the political animals, the human beings and this occurrence propelled his life under juridical control and hence led to his execution.

5.3 *Okja: The Ambiguous Pet*

The Korean-American co-production *Okja* (2017) precisely questions the politics of natural life and the nature of political life. In his satirical attempt, the director Bong Joon-ho investigates how animal bodies are intertwined with politics, ethics, nature and humans. Through animal-human friendship, animals have the power to become mediators between the anthropological machine of humanism and nature by creating the possibility for humans to redeem themselves, to remind them of their own animality.

First and foremost, let me outline the basic premise of the film. The South-Korean auteur Bong Joon-ho, who is known in festival, academic and mainstream circles for approaching themes such as class inequality, environmentalism, excessive consumerism, child labour, to name a few, through the critical lens of films like *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *Parasite*

(2019), teamed up with the British-American filmmaker Jon Ronson to create a dystopian milieu which lucidly yet satirically criticizes corporate greed benefitting off the vulnerable members of our global society like nonhuman animals, immigrant workers in abattoirs, women and minorities. Produced by the American production company Plan B Entertainment and the streaming giant Netflix, the film tells a story of a giant super-pig named Okja which is deemed to be the most affordable solution for global hunger. Okja is one of the 26 super-piglets found in the mountains of Chile, which resembles more an enormous hippo than a farm pig, selected by the CEO of the Mirando Corporation played by Tilda Swinton to be raised in a remote village in South Korea by an old man and his granddaughter Mija. Chosen by the corporation for an international contest, the piglets would grow naturally and harmoniously in different parts of the world for 10 years only to end up on the plates of pork lovers. Yet one swine would become a winner of the contest as the best super pig.

In fact, Okja is a genetically-modified pig created in the Mirando laboratory and promoted as a real animal. This information is concealed from the general public to avoid the public's outcries against GM food. Okja is a pure product of biopolitics situated within the apparatus of animality, is controlled (Okja is wearing a special device in her ear to track her growth), improved (the pig is extremely intelligent; does not pollute the environment and her meat is particularly delicious) and exploited (at the end of the day, Okja is created in order to fill one's stomach).

The film offers a number of ideological readings as it is a melting pot of dystopia, satire, science fiction and paradoxically a pet movie in the age of the Anthropocene. It gestures towards a variety of themes from consumerism, spectacle society, animal rights and environmentalism to human/nonhuman kinship, global food production and corporate capitalism. The following critical reading of *Okja* through the prism of biopolitics and bare life focuses on the relationship between the human and the animal to further contribute to the question of animal subjectivity. The dystopian setting allows the filmmaker to be creatively, politically and aesthetically bold in essentially asking the question: Is Okja a pet animal or is Okja a farm animal? And if the answer is positive to any of the questions, how does it affect the plight of the animal? And what does it say about our current society? In an interview by *The Guardian* the director laments that

Films either show animals as soulmates or else we see them in documentaries being butchered. I wanted to merge those worlds. The division makes us comfortable but the reality is that they are the same animal.¹⁸⁰

Speaking of the narrative framework, Joon-ho follows a classical three act structure with a prologue and an epilogue of sorts. If we were to outline the essential arc of the film, we could divide it like this:

Prologue - Lucy's Mirando speech and introducing the piglets.

The first act - a happy life in the Korean Eden or the harmony of human/animal existence.

The second act - Okja as a political subject or the fall of Eden and pignapping.

The third act - the climax of the story - Okja is saved from death in a slaughterhouse.

Epilogue - a happy ending or a lurking possibility of harmonious human/animal existence.

In the prologue we see the CEO of the Mirando Corporation Lucy Mirando announcing the amazing super-piglets and the international contest for the best super hog at what-would-become a new mega-swine factory. Appealing to people's environmental ethos, Lucy proclaims:

The world's population is at seven billion. 805 million human beings struggle with hunger every day, including 30 million right here in the United States. The world is running out of food and we're not talking about it. We needed a miracle. And then we got one. ...

These little piggies will be the ancestors of a whole new species. Mama Nature's gift. A revolution in the livestock industry. ... Our super pigs will not only be big and beautiful, they will also leave a minimal footprint on the environment, consume less feed and produce less excretions. And most importantly they need to taste fucking good.¹⁸¹

This prologue establishes a speciesist milieu of animal capital. It is speciesist because people clearly know that pigs are intelligent creatures. There have been numerous studies that illustrate that pigs have the capacity to think like a three-year old child and yet a pig's intelligence is evidently undermined by its aesthetic 'flaw'. In *Okja*, this brain capacity of Okja the pig has intentionally been magnified as she literally saves her human friend's life

¹⁸⁰ Ryan Gilbey, «Okja director Bong Joon-ho: «In films animals are either soulmates or butchered», [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jun/16/okja-director-bong-joon-ho-in-films-animals-are-either-soulmates-or-butchered) Fri 16 Jun 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jun/16/okja-director-bong-joon-ho-in-films-animals-are-either-soulmates-or-butchered>> July 2022.

¹⁸¹ *Okja*, prod. Plan B Entertainment, dir. Bong Joon-ho, 2018, 00:05:10.

by assessing the situation, including potential risk and a possible outcome and thus demonstrating not only mental ability to think but also agency - an ability to think and act. On top of that, it is a milieu of animal capital as Okja is a cinematic descendant of two hundred years of “animal genocide”¹⁸² to borrow from Derrida. As the French philosopher reminds us:

Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures of a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries.¹⁸³

The first act celebrates (but some might say ironizes) the loyal friend trope. Having raised Okja for 10 years Mija has developed a strong bond with the genetically engineered creature. Everyone realizes that Okja is future pork, including the farmer himself, Mija’s grandfather, who bitterly remarked after Okja has been taken away:

Blade shoulder! Loin! Spare rib! Hock! Got it? This is what will happen to her.¹⁸⁴

Yet Mija has come to show a strong determination in their interspecies friendship. Mija sees Okja as a companion animal, a friend. Time and again animals in film have been reduced to the trope of a loyal friend who save their human masters literally and/or metaphorically. This trope has come to be characterized by portraying animals as anthropomorphic and sentimentalized versions of animals, which only further removes people from actual animals. In the critical discourse of pethood, the posthumanist ideas of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Donna Haraway are of major contribution to the question of pet animals. Famously the French postmodernists consider domesticated animals to be “commodified, oedipalized, and anthropomorphic projections of their owner’s bourgeois individuality”.¹⁸⁵ Similarly to Deleuze and Guattari, John Berger sees pet animals as the makings of middle-class privileged groups:

The small family living unit lacks space, earth, other animals, seasons, natural temperatures, and so on. The pet is either sterilized or sexually isolated, extremely limited in its exercise, deprived of almost all other animal contact, and fed with

¹⁸² Derrida 26.

¹⁸³ Derrida 26.

¹⁸⁴ Okja, 00:33:35.

¹⁸⁵ Weil 22.

artificial foods. This is the material process which lies behind the truism that pets come to resemble their masters or mistresses. They are creatures of their owner's way of life.¹⁸⁶

Modern pet ownership is in fact the product of the affluent female Victorians of the 19th century who established having a pet as culturally and morally acceptable in the West. Since then the pet market has been on the economic rise: from breeding pedigree dogs to pet food, pet salons and pet hotels, some pets become hybrid forms of their human owners and actual animals. Contrasting these Oedipal animals to what Deleuze and Guattari call "demonic animals"¹⁸⁷ - which are the complete opposite of subjugated pets, that is wild, "pack, or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale"¹⁸⁸ - the French philosophers disdain imitation between pets and their masters. Instead, they propose that becoming-animal can occur only when people start considering pets as "a multiplicity rejecting the binaries of superior and inferior species ranks".¹⁸⁹

One of the ways to reconsider the unbalanced relationship between pets and owners is to view the process of domestication as an active and reciprocal operation. In the chapter called "Is a Pet an Animal?" of *Thinking Animals* Kari Weil attempts to answer this question by drawing from the recent anthropological studies and the ideas of Haraway that suggest that "domestication [is] a symbolic and dynamic relationship between humans and animals independent of either's forethought or conscious intent and that potentially ascribes agency to both".¹⁹⁰ From this it follows that through training humans and animals can bridge the rigidity of the roles of "the pet" and "the master" as training involves becoming animal in the Deleuzian sense, it involves mutual understanding and interplay. As Weil concludes "for training to work, each must become attuned to the language of the other, while acknowledging that there will be limitations to knowing the other".¹⁹¹

Okja the hog is rather ambiguous in this sense. It is both rendered as a sentimental animal and by the same token, her relationship with Mija does have the aspects of becoming

¹⁸⁶ Jerger 14.

¹⁸⁷ Weil 53.

¹⁸⁸ Weil 53.

¹⁸⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 271.

¹⁹⁰ Weil 58.

¹⁹¹ Weil 59.

animal. Firstly, Okja lives in the wilderness, in the lush Korean mountains the beauty of which is captured by the cinematographer Darius Khondji. Here I would like to remind that exposure to the environment is the basis of subjectivity as believed by phenomenologists. As David Abram reminds “subjectivity is inseparable from bodies and environment”.¹⁹² We see Okja experiencing her own *Lebenswelt* by eating fruit from the trees, swimming in the lakes and running down the hills. Let us put aside for a moment the fact that Okja is a mediated animal, more so she is a CGI animal yet in representing her in this way, not only can we witness human and animal kinship and harmony, but also Okja’s own intersubjective experience regardless of human will.

Secondly, Mija does not assume the role of a master, but rather she invites Okja to learn by establishing a safe environment for them to both learn from each other. In the film this is evident from the scenes when Mija whispers something inaudible to Okja’s ear - something only they share, neither the audience, nor the other characters can attune to Mija’s and Okja’s language. Mija teaches Okja to help her with catching fish, she knows and respects her behaviour. Reciprocally Okja knows the girl’s habits and is ready to console her. Some might say that due to the fact that Mija is motherless and fatherless, Okja has also undertaken some parental (familial) obligations.

Having said that, this portrayal of the pig facilitates the Oedipal, even romanticized aspect of Okja, as first; she is primarily viewed as the closest friend by Mija (with whom the audience relates the most) rather than a multiplicity, and second; Okja reinforces the nostalgic representation of bonds humans used to have with farm animals. Such nostalgia can distract our attention from focusing on the systemic conditions that enable humans to have lost touch with (agricultural) animals in the first place. Lastly, the fact that Okja is not even played by a real animal but is a computer-generated image only enhances what Shukin calls “the double entendre of rendering”¹⁹³, that is rendering animal bodies literally and rendering animal images. These symptoms of the Oedipal and biopolitical attitudes to animals are epitomized by John Berger who states that

Until the 19th century, anthropomorphism was integral to the relation between man and animal and was an expression of their proximity. Anthropomorphism was the residue of the continuous animal metaphor. In the last two centuries, animals have

¹⁹² Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* 31.

¹⁹³ Shukin 20.

gradually disappeared. Today we live without them. And in this new solitude, anthropomorphism makes us doubly uneasy.¹⁹⁴

Going back to the ambiguous Oedipal Okja, I would like to pose two questions: Is sentimentality necessarily bad? Does it really deprive people from any critical thinking in relation to animal ontology and the plight of animals? I would argue that even visually mediated animals like Okja reveal the power of catharsis; of radical empathy. My view attempts to oppose or rather provide a necessary nuance to the question of animal representation. Berger's 1977 views are still being supported by contemporary cultural theorists like Nicole Shukin who valorize direct and unmediated contact with animals over rendering animal imagery thus making the possibility of animal interiority via film impossible. For Berger, for example, animal is disappearing and becoming invisible:

Technically the devices used to obtain ever more arresting images - hidden cameras, telescopic lenses, flashlights, remote controls and so on - combine to produce pictures which carry with them numerous indications of their normal invisibility. The images exist thanks only to the existence of a technical clairvoyance.¹⁹⁵

In 2009 Nicole Shukin echoes Berger's sensibilities by criticizing digital capitalism for utilizing animal capital in the form of animal imagery:

Caught in the midst of the reinvention of rendering by digital technologies, it is important to consider that computer-imaging technology supplements rather than displaces its industrial precursor, enabling advanced capitalism to pursue contradictory semiotic and biological traffics in animal life.¹⁹⁶

Despite the fact that Berger's and Shukin's conceptualizations hold truth, film provides space to rethink our relations with nonhuman animals and penetrate their interiority precisely due to sophisticated filmmaking tools. Film becomes a common ground where the cinematic apparatus and the apparatus of animality merge which evokes an emotional response from the audience, hence creating empathy or attunement with animals. As the film historian Jonathan Burt explains:

¹⁹⁴ Berger 11.

¹⁹⁵ Berger 16.

¹⁹⁶ Shukin 61.

Film, the medium of representation in modernity par excellence, encapsulates many of those things seen as responsible for alienating man (and animals) from nature: technologization, mass culture, an industry of image reproduction that substitutes for the 'real' world. And yet, film also reasserts the moral importance of the bonds between human and animal.¹⁹⁷

Burt does not fail to notice that film has capacity to always point beyond its frame to a broader social and political context. He remarks that “this rupturing effect of the animal image is mainly exemplified by the manner in which our attention is constantly drawn beyond the image and, in that sense, beyond the aesthetic and semiotic framework of the film”.¹⁹⁸

In order to create Okja, the director joined forces with the visual effects (VFX) designer Erick De Boer who built the final CGI of Okja using cutting-edge technologies at VFX house Method. “We built this creature from the inside out using an anatomically correct skeleton/muscle rig with several skin simulations,” said De Boer, “We art-directed the simulations on the muscle level”.¹⁹⁹

Undoubtedly there is certain irony in the fact that Okja the GM pig is birthed through using cutting edge scientific technology and that Okja the CGI creation is birthed just as well through using sophisticated film technology. One way to look at this irony is through the biopolitical lens that is articulated by Shukin as the double rendering or I would say double meta rendering as it happens inside the diegesis and in its production. Such view questions the way animal body is reduced in its corporeality and what is more, this technologically-created animal is consciously used to manipulate audience's emotional response.

The filmmakers' manipulations with Okja's appearance challenge the ethics of speciesism. The friendlier, 'more humane' an animal looks, the more people tend to sympathize with it. According to some historians, the inherent friendliness of animals was the basis of their domestication. 'The friendly animal' aesthetic has been reproduced in films countless times

¹⁹⁷ Burt 22.

¹⁹⁸ Burt 12.

¹⁹⁹ Carolyn Giardina, “How ‘Okja’ Brought a Fantasy Animal to Life”, [hollywoodreporter.com](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/how-okja-brought-a-fantasy-animal-life-1061577/) November 27, 2017 < <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/how-okja-brought-a-fantasy-animal-life-1061577/>> Sep.2022.

which make people like certain animals and be afraid of others like sharks (largely due to Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*). Among many other things, *Okja* is a pet movie, so she has to be likable according to the genre tropes. One crucial aspect of establishing a friendly attitude of an animal is through filming their eyes, their animal gaze, which without a doubt gestures towards human/animal kinship at large.

Burt particularly emphasizes the animal gaze as a vehicle towards attunement with animals:

The animal's eye is a very significant motif in films and we need to ask what it is that film invokes by delineating this type of contact. The very fact of screening the mutual gaze between human and animal to an audience means that film is always going to play on a number of different registers that relate to both psychological and social aspects of visual contact. This effectively means that this exchange of looks is not just a form of psychic connection but also determines the practical interaction that is taking place. In that sense the exchange of the look is, in the absence of the possibility of language, the basis of a social contact.²⁰⁰

Therefore, not only does the animal gaze acknowledge a psychological relatedness to the animal, but it is also the basis of mutual communication. Bong Joon-ho emphasizes the significance of the eyes, and particularly of a single eye as a way to acknowledge Mija's kinship with the pig. In the interview to LA Times he mentioned: "Okja's eyes, how clear they are, the innocence, the kindness within that's embedded in her eyes. Many people have a puppy. It was the most efficient, easy and simple way for the audience to really feel for Okja".²⁰¹

Similarly to the famous gaze of the Derridean cat, the camera which focuses on the mutual gaze between Okja and Mija illustrates Agamben's caesura, a space where humanity and animality meet. To paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, my eyes see and are seen. The same acknowledgement of the mutual gaze happens between Two Socks (the wolf in *Dances with Wolves*) and John Dunbar as analyzed in a previous chapter. This mutual gaze becomes the basis of Dunbar's illumination that he is a part of a more-than-human world. His encounter with Two Socks marks the birth of his ecological self.

²⁰⁰ Burt 39.

²⁰¹ Gregory Ellwood, "With its real-world messaging, 'Okja' and director Bong Joon-ho tap into something special", [lattices.com](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-en-mn-bong-joon-ho-okja-20171109-story.html), Nov. 9, 2017 <<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-en-mn-bong-joon-ho-okja-20171109-story.html>> Sep 2022.

5.4. Okja: From Pig Body to Pig Capital

In the second and third act *Okja* is portrayed as a political subject or I would say agri-political subject as it is no longer treated as a pet but as a farm animal whose life is predetermined. Okja is a product of a power/knowledge dichotomy as she represents a new breed of hogs that has come to life as a result of a series of scientific trials and errors.

Bong Joon-ho portrays a Derridean allegory of factory farms and the animal genocide which has been happening in the past two hundred years. The aesthetic appearance of Okja the pig clearly suggests the ironic tone of Bong Joon-ho. By making her thrice bigger than a normal swine, the filmmaker underlines the logic of biocontrol which genetically engineers and changes the animal's body to be bigger, to taste and smell better etc. In the interview to Collider Joon-ho explains the reasoning behind the size of Okja:

Having such a big sized animal, I thought it would be related more to food. ... so there [are] some G.M. [genetic modification] involved. The G.M. aspect of it derived from the fact that the animal was so big. For example, in reality there are scientists who have succeeded in creating a G.M. salmon, and it's big, and because of it's size I thought that maybe Okja, this creature, too, had some sort of G.M. aspect to it. Also this means that there must be some big corporation. A small company cannot do that kind of project. There is a big company to make this animal.²⁰²

The factory farm in the film is painstakingly similar to American mega-hog farms described by Dawn Coppin in "Foucauldian Hog Futures: The Birth of Mega-Hog Farms". In the article Coppin provides a brief history of American swine farming and its transition to large-scale swine farms. Despite living in farms, before the turn of the 20th century pigs still had a lot of freedom in finding their food, exploring surroundings and communicating with fellow pigs. Their life was less a matter of federal laws and hence there was less pressure on farmers themselves. Since mass-production took place in the 1970s in the US "total confinement facilities began to replace pasture operations".²⁰³ Pig body has been transformed into pig capital, meaning that meat, fat, reproduction, nutrition became a matter of control and data collection.

²⁰² Brian Formo, "Bong Joon Ho on Why He Chose a Pig for 'Okja', Working with Netflix", [collider.com](https://collider.com/bong-joon-ho-okja-interview-netflix/) JUN 29, 2017 <<https://collider.com/bong-joon-ho-okja-interview-netflix/>> August 2022.

²⁰³ Dawn Coppin, «Foucauldian Hog Futures: The Birth of Mega-Hog Farms», *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Autumn, 2003): 600. JSTOR URL <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4120724>> August 2022.

According to Coppin, animal disassembly lines look like factories where each task is managed, controlled and completed. Coppin writes about this precision:

At one swine operation I visited all the piglets are weaned on Thursdays so that by the following Tuesday the sows are back in estrus and can be bred again. On the piglets' third day of life the producer has to dock the piglets' tails, clip their needle teeth, give injections of supplemental iron, and castrate the males. These are just some examples of the minute control of activity that are prevalent throughout pork production. It is also worth noting that both the farmer and the hog are being controlled and recreated to fit in with the existence of mega-hog farms.²⁰⁴

In *Okja* we can see a cunning representation of real life mega-hog farms described by Coppin. As Mija tries to save Okja, she is driven to the factory farm by the people from the Animal Liberation Front (also a real life animal rights organization). As she is running along the hall she ends up at the heart of the production line processes. On perpetually moving conveyor belts she sees parts of pig bodies and then the camera looks down at the main facility room where one can observe all the processes happening at once. The camera offers this perspective for a few seconds and the audience gets to see how meticulous and precise animal disassembly is. What is particularly important here is the panopticon gaze of the camera which clearly suggests that this is the view of the factory management. This is a way the factory farm is designed so that the management gets to see what is happening and the workers have a sense that they are constantly being surveilled.

Stephen Thierman in "Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse" provides a description of swine factory farm in North Carolina called the Smithfield Packing Co. He describes how the architecture of the place reaffirms disciplinary power, efficiency and docility:

First, individuals are cut off from one another by spatial organization and task assignment. Those on the kill floor are separated from those on the cut line. These types of workers are both, in turn, separated from warehouse workers and from the managers whose offices are positioned above the factory floor. This separation is intensified further by the noise in the establishment, that is, by "the hammering of compressors, the screeching of pulleys, the grinding of the lines", which makes effective communication between employees in the same area impossible. Furthermore, these spatial and auditory separations are buttressed by other barriers, such as language, which separates Spanish and English speaking

²⁰⁴ Coppin 607.

employees, nationality, which separates Americans from Mexicans, and race, which creates divisions between white, black and Latino workers.²⁰⁵

Back to *Okja*, we see how Mija navigates through the noise of the factory farm and the Spanish-speaking farm workers. Bong Joon-ho does not focus on the identity politics explicitly yet even in this short instance it is clear that he is aware of it. Another instance happens at the most critical moment of the film when Okja is being placed in the restrainer where she is a second away from being stunned. Mija cries Okja's name and the butcher turns around and we can see that he appears to be a worker of Latin American origin. Thierman states that

[this] division of labour appears to intermesh with, and reinforce, hierarchies of a racial nature. Blacks and Mexicans get the "dirty" jobs; American Indians tend to get the "clean" jobs in the warehouse; and the few whites on the payroll "tend to be mechanics or supervisors".²⁰⁶

Furthermore, the fact that Okja is released because the CEO of the corporation and the management go to the killing floor and encounter the slaughter of Okja on sight rather than from their usual panopticon position yet again reaffirms that the decisions are made by those on top, those that do not see the everyday cruelty and are protected from the realities of pork processing.

Finally, let us address the happy ending of the film. Does it try to redeem humans? Given the fact that the film is a melting pot of various themes from animal rights to global meat production, from animal/human kinship to corporate greed, it could be said that in the end *Okja* remains a sentimentalized body as Bong Joon-ho succumbs to the tropes of a pet movie. Sentimentalism implies a lack of criticism and a form of complacency. To which Jonathan Burt poses some questions "What kind of imagery would it be more appropriate for [children] to see? And what kind of imagery would be more true to the position of animals in the world?".²⁰⁷ Similarly, Kari Weil ponders "whether it is possible to render nonhuman animals visible without fixing their meaning".²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Thierman 103.

²⁰⁶ Thurman 104.

²⁰⁷ Burt 187.

²⁰⁸ Weil 26.

It appears as though Bong Joon-ho and his collaborator Jon Ronson brought a necessary nuance to a familiar portrayal of animals in film. In their perspective a happy ending reaffirms a possibility of animal and human harmony; after all the fallacy is to believe that animal and human lives run separately. Despite the fact that John Berger proclaimed in 1977 that “the parallelism of their separate lives has been destroyed”²⁰⁹, *Okja* offers a more positive perspective on regaining a long lost kinship. While exaggerating, ironizing, and mocking the corporation leaders with comical performances, Joon-ho makes the portrayal of Mija realistic and truthful. Making the feature dystopian allowed the filmmaker to create a captivating milieu that questions the biopolitical logic of animal capital. In the relation to documentary animal films that depict torture and suffering as a way to emotionally guilt trip the audience, Weil writes that such films make people “look away”²¹⁰ instead of looking at. In this regard, the ending of *Okja* is sentimental and makes people feel good but also, manages to provoke deep empathy to the plight of animal bodies trapped in the mechanisms of profit, power and control.

To conclude, it seems absolutely relevant to appropriate Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics and Agamben’s examination of bare life to the question of animal. The two conceptual frameworks allow us to understand the anthropocentric dominion through a critical lens of domination over one’s body, both human and non-human. Agamben’s study of bare life helps us understand the formulation of concepts of humanity, animality and nature. Bare life and the figure of homo sacer indicate that there is no clear separation between the life of the mind and the life of the body. Explicitly or implicitly, the body has always been dominated, regulated and made of value for bios politikos. The nonhuman body shares similar historicity to that of the human body. As Hudson observes

[animal lives] once excluded from direct consideration in the political realm, [are] increasingly subjected to political force. Animal cruelty laws, the Endangered Species Act, the Humane Methods of Slaughter Acts, the banning of force-feeding: all of these bring the lives of animals under the rule of law as more than mere property.²¹¹

This chapter attempted to provide an overview of animal ontology in industrial societies when animal body has been turned into animal capital. Not only does it imply a utilitarian

²⁰⁹ Berger 15.

²¹⁰ Berger 26.

²¹¹ Hudson 99.

mode of engagement with animals, but also symbolic. Applying Foucault's concepts of biopower, docility, disciplinary power among others, I analyzed the politics and aesthetics of slaughterhouses through the Korean-American film *Okja*. The comparison of slaughterhouses to concentration camps, which is an established analogy in critical animal studies, reveals how the same instruments which determine human ontology are applied to animal ontology. When it comes to animal subjectivity in film, film as a medium tends to utilize animals in a certain way following familiar tropes. In case of *Okja*, *Okja* the pig is represented as a beloved pet for her human friend Mija yet it is also shown as an agricultural capital for the corporation and this is an instance when film gestures towards themes and issues beyond the aesthetics of the film.

Conclusion

The thesis attempted to draw a philosophical sketch of 'the animal' in order to deconstruct the current prevailing cinematic representations of nonhuman animals. The visual, the cinematic animal stands on the shoulders of actual pets, farm animals, domestic animals, wild beasts and so on. What's more, the visual animal has always reflected the dominant anthropocentric ideologies of different historical periods.

In other words, animals have always occupied cultural (human) imagination. In tribal awareness, in industrial societies, in the culture industry, animals gaze at us like a Derridean cat. Going back to the thesis hypothesis whether it is, at all, conceivable to illustrate animal subjectivity through the medium of film, I must admit that the more I have pondered over what animal subjectivity could be, the more I have thought about subjectivity as such.

In the best poststructuralist and posthumanist fashion, let us assume that subjectivity is a social construct like gender, class and race. Arguably, the subjectivity of a free-roaming wild animal is different from that of a confined farm animal. In a similar vein, one can assume that the subjectivity of a white western educated man is different from a person of different race and educational background. The list can go on and on yet what this ultimately suggests is that subjectivity is a relational (Wolfe; Abram; Haraway), rhizomatic (Deleuze) or even nomadic (Braidotti) category that responds to the particular social and biopolitical environment one finds oneself in.

Therefore, film is a powerful tool that has moral and aesthetic capacity to assign subjectivity to an animal. Film creates a dialectical milieu in which not only does the animal become a part of the constructed story, which, on top of that, has an immense potential to elicit affective reaction from the audience, the visual animal also becomes a part of a bigger social and cultural canvas. Like any visual sign, the cinematic animal gestures beyond the diegesis to the cultural animal, the historical animal, the actual animal. Cultural awareness, in turn, subsumes both empathy to animals and the fear of them. Implicitly the visual animal establishes the cultural animal which could further be protected, studied and/or commodified as pets or toys.

In our current times, with our colossal technological prowess and a growing interest in ecology and anthrozoology, the possibility of animal subjectivity emerges. In film, it is manifested through multispecies documentaries which immersively and (more often than not) solely focus on the lives of nonhuman others. In science, the numerous studies on animal cognition and animal emotionality have revealed the aspects of animal intelligence, both emotional and cognitive, which would have made Descartes blush with shame.

Whether animal subjectivity exists or not, it is, perhaps, like opening Pandora's box and hunting through anthropocentric fallacies. For now this thesis concludes that once the animal falls under the scrutiny of the film camera, it is assigned some form of subjectivity. Moreover, the thesis as well as analyzing a variety of film techniques which are used to illuminate animal subjectivity particularly in *Dances with Wolves* and *Okja*, has also approached a complex position of the animal in human society across centuries and heeded the historical circumstances that shaped what the animal was and has come to be.

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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.

Abstrakt

S cílem prozkoumat možnosti zobrazení ne-lidské subjektivity ve filmu se práce soustředí na tři současné americké filmy, které se vymykají současnému stavu lidské výjimečnosti a překlenují *cézuru* (Agamben) mezi lidskostí a zvířecostí. Práce proto předkládá hypotézu, zda film jako kulturní a vizuální médium má estetický, ontologický a etický potenciál pro ilustraci zvířecí subjektivity.

Válečný film Terrence Malicka *Tenká červená linie* je příkladem zdůraznění intersubjektivních zkušeností lidských bytostí a ne-lidských jevů. Western Kevina Costnera *Tanec s vlky* podtrhuje reciprocitu mezi lidmi a zvířaty, stejně jako zvířecí aktérství a praktické a duchovní zapojení se zvířaty. *Okja*, jež vznikla z korejsko-americké spolupráce, je dystopická satira, která odhaluje úzkosti ze současného stavu hospodářských zvířat.

Uplatněním interdisciplinárního přístupu se práce zabývá filozofií, anthrozoologií, studiem zvířat a kritickou teorií ve snaze najít rovnováhu mezi zkoumáním vizuální reprezentace zvířat ve filmu a dekonstrukcí stavu dominantních kulturních a politických ideologií, které uzavřely skutečná zvířata uvnitř světa ideologického rámce antropocentrického status quo. Tato paradigmatata zaměřená na člověka explicitně a implicitně odstranila zvířata na okraj kulturní představitosti a vytvořila řadu určitých stereotypů, kterým filmová zvířata musí podlehnout – sentimentální zvíře, exotické zvíře, věrný přítel, bestie, padouch, antropomorfní projekce.

Práce tak dochází k závěru, že subjektivita v jakékoli podobě je vztahovou kategorií. To naznačuje, že jakmile jsou zvířata pod dohledem filmového aparátu, je na ně nevyhnutelně vnucena určitá forma subjektivity.

Klíčová slova: zvířecí subjektivita, intersubjektivita, animalita, biopolitika, fenomenologie, více než lidský svět, vztahová subjektivita, zvířecí aktérství, zvířecí kapitál, Tenká červená linie, Tanec s vlky, Okja.