

Chapter 1

Introduction

Released in 2005, *March of the Penguins* (*La Marche de l'empereur*), a French film about the cyclical mating habits of Antarctica's emperor penguins, became the second highest grossing documentary in cinema history. *Grizzly Man* was also released in 2005 and it became a breakthrough film of a different kind—it brought the work of German auteur, Werner Herzog, to a wide audience and became one of the most discussed and critically acclaimed documentaries of the decade. While employing very different approaches, the two films share a fascination with nature as an arena for storytelling with animals playing a central role. Herzog began his next documentary, the Oscar winning *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007) set in Antarctica, with the proclamation that he was not going to “come up with another film about penguins.” The reference to the French documentary was clear to most—penguins had become draw cards of the big (and small) screen.

Although penguins have achieved particular star status, the allure of documentaries focused on animals has extended well beyond this single species. *March of the Penguins* and *Grizzly Man* represent two high-profile examples that punctuate a much broader terrain of television and film. Referring to wildlife and nature onscreen, Gregg Mitman makes the case that there is a contemporary “green wave” of film and television, enabled by the popular penchant for “eco-chic” (214), underpinned by not only commercial, but also ethical and environmental concerns. He cites that of the “\$631 million in gross revenues earned by 275 documentaries released between 2002 and 2006, \$163.1 came from eight wildlife documentaries” (216). Another term that has gained momentum in the popular press is “eco-doc” or “eco-documentary,” which describes a broader body of films tasked with critiquing corporate dominance and investigating and advocating on issues concerning the decimation of the environment and its natural resources.¹ Bringing a critical perspective to this body of films, Helen

Hughes identifies its iconography and principle characters, posing the environmental documentary as a distinct subgenre (*Green Documentary*, 7–9). These developments in the documentary representation of environment and animals dovetail with the increased popularity and circulation of feature-length documentaries more broadly over the past two decades.

The period Mitman describes, 2002–2006, was a particularly important phase for the genre, labeled by scholars and the popular press as a “boom” or “renaissance” in documentary.² A cluster of documentaries achieved unprecedented box office success over this time; however, beyond a small number of French and British films this group was overwhelmingly American.³ While commentators are still, albeit with less regularity, proclaiming a new era for documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and *March of the Penguins* have maintained their position as the most commercially successful documentaries produced in decades. Nevertheless, nature documentaries, especially those produced under the DisneyNature brand, are following closely behind.⁴ Further, while other examples of “animal-led” documentaries such as *Blackfish* (2013) and *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004) may not rank in lists of high-grossing films, they have found sizable audiences on the festival circuit and DVD distribution.

While the documentary boom and the subsequent decade have proven to be a significant time for animals onscreen, to focus on the growing (commercial) prestige and high circulation won by a small group of feature-length documentaries is to recognize only a fraction of a wider phenomenon. This book demarcates the contours of a rapidly expanding documentary terrain in which the representation of animals is becoming markedly more complex and multilayered. There is a new tide of ecologically inspired film work that expands beyond blue chip nature documentaries and beyond the auteurist vision of Werner Herzog. It includes a range of wildlife natural history film and television, advocacy documentary, avant-garde nonfiction and developments in new media. Observing this breadth, I am less concerned with proposing a new subgenre than exploring a certain momentum that exists across a range of nonfiction modes and approaches.

The energy of this impulse to represent the nonhuman⁵ is also genre-specific—documentary is increasingly the preeminent format for rendering nature, especially animals, onscreen. Moreover, one of the most striking features of these films is the growing emphasis on paradigmatic debates about anthropogenic knowledge or use of animal life, whether it concerns food, agriculture, science, exploration, or species loss. The growing awareness in the twenty-first century of the human impact on the nonhuman world has influenced this contemporary archive of documentary. Films and

filmmakers have become centrally concerned with the intersection between the institutions and practices of modernity and the life and death of nonhuman animals.

This book elucidates how the momentum of film and media I have described works to structure knowledge of animals and the relations between humans and animals in the contemporary epoch. It begins with the question of how particular films instantiate humans and animals and to what ends—do they center the human in familiar ways, supporting anthropocentrism, or do they offer examples of animal difference, suggesting avenues for the recognition of the distinctiveness of animal being in ways that question the privileging of human identity? Cinema functions across multiple and intertwined registers, engaging both the cerebral/political and the intimate/corporeal. I propose an approach to this question of anthropocentrism that perceives cinema as an aesthetic practice, a social artifact that trades in ideology and cultural norms and a medium that inheres with sensuous meaning, sustaining a sensory and epistemological relation with the viewer. By the end of this book it should be clear how nonfiction examples appeal to the horizon of experience of viewers in ways that reference the history and conventions of documentary film, the desire and expectation it evokes. An inquiry that explores how animals are recognized or disavowed, how nonhuman life is regarded, observed, or acknowledged and, crucially, how it is respected in its otherness, is pivotal to an understanding of the contemporary role of the moving image.

Rather than simply examining how animals onscreen are visualized, this approach coalesces around the proposition that the systems of knowledge that produce debates about life and its uses subjectify humans and animals. This notion dovetails with the idea that both humans and animals are positioned and made sense of by the apparatus of cinema, and other media, and the conditions of reception. Fully grasping this concept relies on identifying the human subject-centric or anthropomorphic conventions of film and documentary in particular. For Adrian Ivakhiv, cinema is anthropomorphic “because film shows us human or human-like subjects, beings we understand to be thrown into a world of circumstance and possibility like us” (9). Building on Ivakhiv’s formulation, I argue that the task for cinema and media studies, in thinking beyond the human, is to consider anew how the properties and economies of documentary center the human, relying on its form and subjectivity for identification and social purchase. Only through interrogating this powerful anthropocentric impulse is it possible to theorize the fissures in this representational order and ascertain documentary cinema’s capacity to show and express all life, not only the human.

Film Studies and the Nonhuman

Growing constellations of scholarship are wrestling with how to understand the nexus of film or media and the nonhuman environment. One of the most influential studies has been Sean Cubitt's *EcoMedia* (2005), a book that follows multiple theoretical pathways in order to explore the problem of technology and mediation in relation to ecological thought and environmental politics. Cubitt identifies developments across media forms since the 1980s. This work poses new interdisciplinary conceptual tools with which to consider the mutually constitutive relation between nature, technology, and the human, largely through examining popular cultural texts, including blue chip natural history film.⁶ I take inspiration from Cubitt's interdisciplinarity, but argue for the value of considering a more specific field of production and circulation, elucidating the documentary as a discreet form with particular histories (intellectual and industrial) and modes of audience address. There are specific pleasures and expectations associated with nonfiction that warrant a close examination of the documentary form in its different guises.

John Blewitt's *Media, Ecology and Conservation: Using the Media to Protect the World's Wildlife and Ecosystems* (2010) addresses the media as an even broader phenomena, attending to photography, advertising, the Internet, and television. Within this he focuses on a number of important documentary examples, again including blue chip wildlife films. Blewitt is chiefly concerned with the potential for media to operate pedagogically, examining media literacy and the role of communication in the conservation movement across international sites. With its concentration on politics and animals, Blewitt shares with my study a sense of responsibility to our "nonhuman others" (11). He elaborates on this responsibility by determining how conservation movements gain purchase in the public sphere. Helen Hughes offers the first book-length study of environmental documentary, bringing much needed attention to the genre. Like Blewitt, she takes up the problem of communication, couching her work in debates about environmental education and psychology. The concise body of documentary she discusses is assessed in relation to questions of rhetoric and argumentation, rather than the narrative and aesthetic work of genre.

This book is not only more concerned with animals, but also more attuned to documentary aesthetics than the work of Cubitt, Blewitt, or Hughes. It draws on film studies and documentary studies with a view to considering the properties, circulation, and history of the form, while also extending the boundaries of the genre as they are normatively understood.

Scott MacDonald has been one scholar to consistently address the aesthetics of the moving image in shaping our perception of place and nonhuman nature. His book, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films About Place* (2001), might be seen as an early example of eco-film criticism, one that takes historical American avant-garde cinema as its object. His recent *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary: The Cambridge Turn* (2013) continues this focus, exploring pioneering approaches to ethnographic-inspired documentaries and many of the filmmakers he discusses turn their cameras to the nonhuman as much as the human world. Moreover, MacDonald explicitly advocates for an eco-cinema, an aesthetic and industrial alternative to the mainstream that might offer an “Edenic respite” (“Toward,” 109) from the contemporary media apparatus. I take a cue from MacDonald in observing the importance of a film historical perspective, one that values traditions and conventions of filmmaking and what can be gained by understanding the changing form and circulation of images. Unlike MacDonald’s work, however, this study encompasses both the alternative and the mainstream, making a case for the importance of popular culture in the field of documentary culture.

I use the conditional phrasing “documentary moving image” not to isolate a single (visual) dimension, but to indicate that many of the examples I discuss fall outside documentary proper. They either predate the invention of the term in the 1920s or sit as much in categories of new media, television, or avant-garde and essay film. The following chapters explore an array of forms of nonfiction, both valued and devalued, in order to find productive sites where the canon can be put in dialogue with popular commercial cinema (or consumer-generated content). The most relevant of these “devalued” forms, for my purposes, is wildlife film and television, particularly in its “Disneyfied” expression. In a 1998 essay Derek Bousé makes a case that while the film industry and television schedules nominate “documentary” as the preferred category for wildlife film, in accounts of film history and in film and media studies more widely this mode, beyond some notable exceptions, has been excluded because it occupies an ambiguous location (“Are Wildlife Films,” 116). Bousé discusses this ambiguity in terms of the assumed disparities between wildlife film and that of documentary, most notably the perceived lack of social relevance of “nature films” and their associations with entertainment, artifice, and fictionalized storytelling (“Are Wildlife Films,” 118–132). Since the time Bousé made these observations a number of scholars have critically engaged with wildlife and natural history film and television, instituting it as a subfield of film and media studies and distinguishing the diverse makeup of this category.⁷ Despite this attention,

the form continues to sit outside the field of documentary studies, attracting little interest from documentary scholars.

Jan-Christopher Horak's article, "Wildlife Documentaries: From Classical Forms to Reality TV," crucially intervenes in the erasure of wildlife film from the canon of documentary film studies. Horak brings the weight of archival research to his survey, bringing early cinema, television documentary, and reality television under the umbrella of documentary. In charting the transformation of the narratives that structure wildlife film, Horak identifies and critiques strategies of anthropomorphism that are a feature of increasingly entertainment-oriented wildlife film and media. In a different way, Cynthia Chris's influential book, *Watching Wildlife* (2006), maps the development of wildlife as a distinct moving image form, firmly establishing the significance of wildlife film and television as "a prism through which we can examine investments in dominant ideologies of humanity and animality, nature and culture, sex, and race" (xiv). This book builds both on Chris's assertion and the attention to documentary traditions in Horak's work while taking in a broader notion of the animal in documentary, including and moving beyond animals in the wild.

While I explore examples from an array of moving image contexts, all confront the intricacies and challenges posed by anthropocentrism and its manifestation in cultural artifacts. Chapters thus contribute to a groundswell of critical approaches in animal studies, a body of interdisciplinary scholarship that has been referred to as the "animal turn."⁸ The most influential pockets of this work emerge from Continental philosophy and are occupied with the being of animal life, the distinctions between humans and animals and the status of animals in (human) society and culture. Anat Pick has been a decisive figure in bringing a consideration of critical animal studies to bear on film studies analysis. In her groundbreaking work, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (2011),⁹ Pick formulates an account that is founded in extensionism (extending moral considerations to animals), and the recognition of the corporeality and vulnerability of animal existence (*Creaturely*, 2–3). *Creaturely Poetics* establishes a mode of scholarship that this study is indebted to—it brings the question of the animal to cinema by foregrounding poetics and acknowledging the central role of aesthetics and form in unmasking the anthropocentrism of cinema. This poetics is one that recognizes the significance of embodiment and vulnerable animal materiality. For Pick, "notions of embodiment—the material, the anonymous, and the elemental—provide a powerful antidote to anthropocentrism" (*Creaturely*, 6). Moreover, she examines key documentary examples, such as the work of Fredric Wiseman and Werner Herzog,

testifying to the importance of the genre in this context. This book orients the emphasis on aesthetic considerations established in *Creaturely Poetics* toward the sociohistorical positioning of animals while mapping a contemporary body of film work.

Finally, I wish to address Jonathan Burt's considerable contribution to the field. His 2002 book, *Animals in Film*, was the first to outline how animals might feature as a disciplinary concern in film studies and the related arena of visual culture. Elaborating on a history of moving images across a range of genres, Burt brings a cogent analysis, rich with examples, to the relationship between film, animal imagery and ethics. His book is a forerunner in a field that is still young. Nevertheless, recent analysis in film and media studies has profoundly extended how we think about animals and the environment. In turn, this book argues that we must consider the specificity and importance of the documentary form, how it powerfully shapes audience expectation and produces knowledge of the (nonhuman) world. I extend this intervention with a double-edged approach, one that asks how the materiality and immediacy of the documentary moving image *and* histories of documentary representation that work to organize and subjectify life impinge on one another to structure an address to the viewer.

From Muybridge to the Green Wave

From his perspective as an archivist and film historian, Horak describes how little attention documentary filmmakers have historically paid to animals:

As a casual subject of moving images, animals have been present ever since Eadweard Muybridge photographed his animal locomotion series, yet within classical documentary forms, animals have seemingly remained ghettoised in the scientific and educational sphere, only intermittently the subject of mainstream theatrical experience. (460)

While animals may not be the focal point of classical documentary, their presence and meaning is understated in Horak's characterization. A focus on the canon of historical theatrical documentary, often defined by the Griersonian tradition, Soviet cinema, and the influence of Robert Flaherty, only tells one story of documentary and its nonfiction precursors in early cinema. Science and education, more to the point, both align with what Bill Nichols, in his cardinal documentary text *Representing Reality* (1991), refers to as

the “discourses of sobriety” (3). They have underpinned much documentary or nonfiction practice and were closely tied to the capacity for drama and entertainment in early cinema. These discourses informed, and made use of, representations of animals in important ways. A broader appraisal of the form must take science and education films out of the ghetto and measure their influence on dominant contemporary modes. In this respect, they sit alongside and intersect with other cinematic traditions that represent animals, such as ethnographic or travel and exploration film, the representation of labor and film surrealism, the essay film and observational cinema.

It is possible to trace a significant epistemological relationship between the nonfiction image and animals even if, at times, animals are in the margins of the frame. As Horak notes, this relationship extends back to Eadweard Muybridge’s iconic and much-cited precinema proto-animations in the 1870s that captured the movement of a galloping horse, birds, and other animals. From this point, early cinema and film theory consistently drew attention to the affinities between biological life and the vitalist potential of the new form. As Chris Tedjasukmana notes, proto-cinema apparatuses were named in a manner that invoked the energy of biodiscourses: the Bioskop, Biograph, and Vitascope. He also observes “the film-theoretical fascination with cinematic vitality in the context of the history of modernity,” exploring how scientific, cultural, and aesthetic exploration of the time labored under the expectation that the technology of cinema would produce a form of vitality and life. From a different perspective, in Muybridge’s experiments the movement of human *and* animal bodies offered an avenue to test the capacity of the moving image to convey the dynamism of life. Moreover, these proto-cinematic devices were not only, as Elizabeth Cowie writes, “prostheses for human sight” (13), they verified the detail of the movement of living bodies to the degree that the human eye could not. They functioned as a knowledge and truth-telling instrument in a way that was tied to the phenomenon and sensation of life.

After Muybridge, animals’ screen roles expand and proliferate. Thomas Edison consistently featured animals in his early actualities: *Feeding the Doves* (1896), *The Burning Stable* (1896), *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903). Films that pose animals as vital to the exoticism of travel and adventure include the renowned *Nanook of the North* (1922) as well as a wealth of safari films (some titles include *Native Lion Hunt* [1909] and *African Animals* [1909] through to *Heia Safari* [1928], *Simba: The King of Beasts, a Saga of the African Veldt* [1928]). Animals were invariably extras in scenes depicting the vibrancy of the modern city with horses playing a starring role—this is seen most famously in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Grierson’s expressive

depiction of the labor of fishermen, *Drifters* (1929) is aesthetically devised through the interaction between the movement of men and the movement of schools of herring. Other pivotal films include the nature experiments of prolific filmmakers Percy Smith (*The Acrobatic Fly* [1910]) and Jean Painlevé (*The Seahorse* [1934]), the formal innovations of the Oscar-winning *The Private Life of the Gannets* (1934) and the essayist surrealism of Georges Franju's *Le Sang des bêtes* (1949). In each of these examples the capacity for cinema to observe the materiality of its animal subject in space and time is crucial.

With the advent of “direct cinema” the works of Fredric Wiseman become defining works in the representation of animals in documentary with four films devoted to animals in human institutional settings: *Primate* (1974), *Meat* (1976), *Racetrack* (1984), and *Zoo* (1993). The most discussed documentary in this group is undoubtedly *Primate* and this attention is well deserved—the film offers complex and carefully crafted insight into both human and animal actions and responses. The film was shot at Yerkes Primate Research Center in Atlanta and follows the interactions between scientists and their primate subjects as they undergo testing. The experiments on the animals are largely shown without explanation or rationale. While the film is highly confronting, Wiseman's aim was not to mount a case against vivisection.¹⁰ The film is much more engaged with telling a story, through documentary sound and image, about human *and* animal beings.¹¹ While portions of *Primate* work to anthropomorphize animals, it asks the viewer to regard animals by offering sustained attention to different species of primates, in particular their faces and gestures, in a way that is unparalleled in the history of nonfiction film. The documentary, and Wiseman's animal *oeuvre* more broadly, constitutes incisive work that explores social institutions in order to redraw perceptions of how animals are co-opted into human enterprise, while defamiliarizing human sociality (and perhaps even human existence) in the process.

Audiovisual representations of animals in the (nonhuman) environment appear in much greater numbers, offering a counterpoint to the representation of animals inhabiting the realm of science and industry. In his study of early wildlife photography, Matthew Brower identifies a “discursive regime of wildlife photography” (xvii) that positions animals in the wild (as distinct from domestic animals) as “real animals” (xvii) due to their function in supporting the extremes of the nature/culture divide and sustaining the assumed existential separation between humans and pristine wildlife. This separation, and the attribution of a “real” animal, denies the connectivity between all life, that humans exist on a continuum with all other animal species and inhabit a mutual planetary ecology. The wildlife genre

frequently appeals to audiences precisely due to its disavowal of this connectivity. To a degree, the promise of narrative pleasure involves maintaining an emphasis on a picture of resilient and harmonious nature, insulated from the human world of sociality and progress. This promise is tied into the reasons mainstream wildlife and natural history film and television (typically constituted by high-cost productions) has been slow to take up the problem and reality of climate change. These reasons are largely industrial. Until recently “bad news” stories of environmental decline have damaged ratings.¹² Additionally, climate issues have been separated out from the core concern of zoology in the wildlife mode in order to increase its market longevity. Blewitt describes this when he notes “films that deal with current issues and problems soon date and become unsaleable” (100).¹³ Nonetheless, this should be considered against the fact that mainstream programming exists as one component of an expanding market for wildlife imagery. In the current media landscape diverse forms of niche programming have also burgeoned.

Since the 1970s, subscription television has provided increasing avenues for viewing wildlife with Animal Planet, the National Geographic Channel, and the Discovery Channel broadcasting twenty-four hours a day. Discovery Communications International, the parent company for Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel, boasts a total of 2.9 billion subscribers, across 189 countries for its stable of channels.¹⁴ There is clear evidence that both the production and popularity of this niche programming is substantial.¹⁵ Further, more recent developments, such as specialist and nonspecialist film festivals, and online distribution mechanisms such as *Netflix*, *Amazon Studios*, and YouTube, have taken not only documentary, but also the portrayal of nature and environmental politics, into a new territory of production and distribution. Film and television representations of nature, and animals specifically, have secured valuable currency in the contemporary media sphere—they are both ubiquitous and diverse.

This book explores the green wave while also rethinking its parameters, taking a wide view of the documentary genre and attending to varied styles employed to represent the real. It also considers, as I have noted, how cultural narratives and practices work to structure our idea of animals. The examples under discussion do not all necessarily offer explicit messages of environmental or ecological consciousness, rather they provide differing avenues for understanding how nonfiction forms play to and enable recognition of changing human impact on the nonhuman.

My approach is one that focuses the histories, practices, and uses of the documentary moving image in ways that chart how particular examples

trouble, revise, or reiterate the humanism of this history. Chapters pinpoint dominant concerns in the tide of filmmaking I describe—they focus on the themes of food, agriculture, species loss, science, and digital technology. Case studies exploring food, agricultural labor, and technology delineate bodies of film and media examples dealing with institutions and practices. Those examining species loss and science/exploration focus on environment and wildlife, attending to films set in defined geographical regions. This structure is designed to pose three contingencies for understanding the figure of the animal in modernity: the subjection of industrial livestock to formal institutions, the wild animal other positioned historically by narratives of science and the Anthropocene, and the negotiation with subjection and objectification where digital modes of vision allow for a rethinking of point of view and animal agency.

The question of subjection is a decisive reference point—conceived as a process for organizing and interpellating human identity, subjection (and its correlation in subjectification¹⁶) is a term that refers to regimes of power that take life as their object. While usually understood in relation to human subjectivity, the three contingencies I have proposed provide a pivotal taxonomy—they bring into view the notion that subjection should crucially be understood as a process that acts upon or defines all life, not only human life. Yet I want to be careful to emphasize that subjection to human systems of power (which are by definition anthropocentric) only tells part of the story of what cinema can accomplish—as I discuss later, it can also conceive of animal life and embodiment in ways that challenge the anthropocentric web spun to capture the meaning of the animal.

Representation, Biopower, and Modernity: “Producing a History of Animals”

The primary reference for those theorizing animals in the epoch of capitalist modernity has, without doubt, become John Berger’s “Why Look at Animals?” Encompassing a wide range of examples and contexts, Berger’s 1980 long-form essay asserts that since the precapitalist, preindustrial era, animals have become marginalized. With the decline of feudal agrarianism and the rise of the machine age we have less proximity with animals. For Berger, they have lost their autonomy figuratively as they have been demystified in nature and physically, as they have become domestic pets. Berger articulates this in his famous maxim that in modernity “animals disappear.” Berger’s story is one of transforming metaphors. For him, the fading figure of the

animal is replaced by the spectacle and the sign. While Berger oscillates between discussing the treatment of *actual* animals in history and changing *metaphors* of animality, Akira Mizuta Lippit is almost wholly concerned with the animal as an epistemological category. In his study of the animal in modernity, Lippit examines sites of mediation, technologies of knowledge, and metaphors of modernity. He is interested in how animals have transformed over the past two centuries, principally through changing conceptualizations in Western thought, but also through the technologies of photography and cinema: “modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity’s habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity’s reflections on itself: in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and technological media such as the telephone, film and radio” (3). Again, changing proximity with animals produces an altered paradigm for posing animals, one that is spectral, with animals reduced to a haunting referentiality.

The approaches offered by Berger and Lippit are pioneering and serve as a foundation for considering the social and epistemological status of animals in the human world, particularly as it is constituted in practices of representation. Such practices, where cinema is concerned, are themselves tied to the technologies and aspirations of modernity. Indeed, cinema poses animals as objects of vision and knowledge, potentially supporting Berger’s claim that “animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them” (16). Cinema, on this measure, is another technology of human mastery that increases animals’ separation and distance from humans. An explanatory frame, however, that views cinema only as a distancing device, minimizing or failing to recognize its impressionistic or expressive power, is limiting.¹⁷ Moreover, both Lippit and Berger emphasize the animal as metaphor (albeit with a critique of this status) or epistemological object, and similarly, such a frame is not sufficient for understanding the range of approaches in the documentary culture I refer to, or the way cinema grapples with the materiality of animal life and animal embodiment.

The concept of “biopower” provides an important supplement to Lippit and Berger, offering an avenue to discern how life of all kinds becomes an object of power against the changing logics of technology, capital, and cultural value. Describing human subjectification, Michel Foucault identifies a historical shift in the seventeenth century that took the foundation of Western culture from sovereign power over life (the power to take a life) to biological modernity (the regulation and optimization of life). The

power over death that was once held by the sovereign, the king, “now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimise and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (137). Further, Foucault refers to the “anatomy-politics,” or machine-like productive capacity of humans under capitalism. Biopower is both productive and deductive—it is concerned with the productive capacity of life and the power to destroy or degrade biological life. The notion that institutions and discourses are centrally concerned with shaping, using, or optimizing life takes on a different tenor where animal life is considered the object of human knowledge.

Human history has been founded on the labor of animals and the use of their bodies as food.¹⁸ The use of animals has transformed under capitalist modernity. Jacques Derrida describes the increasing manipulation and use of animals in his essay, “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” when he writes that the subjection of the animal has become unprecedented in type and scale:

In the course of the last two centuries . . . traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic *forms of knowledge* and the always inseparable *techniques* of intervention with respect to their object, the transformation of the actual object, its milieu, its world, namely, the living animal. (Emphasis in original 394)

Recent scholarship has taken up biopolitical approaches to rethink the human “bios” in political terms and through its continuities with nonhuman life. Matthew Chrulew reconceives the work of Giorgio Agamben and Michael Hardt in ways that “bring closer together the lives of humans and animals (. . .) who, notwithstanding their ontological differences, are nonetheless exploited in common by the workings of capitalist biopower and the anthropological machine” (“Animals in Biopolitical,” 63). Nicole Shukin, in her book *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009), offers a perceptive study of the biopolitical uses of animal bodies under different instances of capitalism, critiquing entanglements across species, race, and labor.

Alongside the productive capacity of animal labor and animals as food, understandings of the biologization of power also offer a way to reframe institutions and practices of care and protection. Modern animals have not only been exploited in unparalleled ways, they have also benefited from

the ethos of liberal humanism. In the nineteenth-century romanticism's respect for nature and a forward-looking modernity jointly contributed to the institutionalization of the humane treatment of animals. Burt charts this development in Britain, noting government legislation on animal welfare and numerous societies that were founded in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ For Burt, the advent of animal welfare coincides with the growing concern with display and surveillance: "the mark of a more civilized society—a common trope of animal welfare literature generally—is the way in which a society displays its humanity. The appearance and treatment of the animal body became a barometer for the moral health of the nation" (*Animals*, 36). Practices involving the slaughter of animals became less apparent in the public domain, particularly in cities. Burt adds more specificity to Berger's hypothesis in this respect, proposing that it was animal *death* that became obscured at this time, rather than animals disappearing per se ("John Berger's," 213). He goes on to note "the interplay between visibility and invisibility, or imagery and the animal body, are therefore much more problematically aligned in relation to welfare and killing" ("John Berger's," 213). In part Burt attributes the promotion of the ethical treatment of animals to a fear that the mistreatment of animals would trigger disorder, particularly among the underclasses ("John Berger's," 212). While the sensibilities of animal welfare emerged through a concern for the animal other, they were founded on an anxiety about maintaining the civilizing progression of the body politic.

These insights and approaches point to histories characterized by loss or disappearance, by spectral animals, and by forms of knowledge that enable care and responsibility as well as the unprecedented transformation of animals and their worlds. Putting the biopolitical aside for the moment, I turn to the stakes of representation and how it functions at the nexus of animals and history—what does it mean to produce a history of animals in modernity? Necessarily modernity is a term that indicates and draws on the history of human enterprise since the enlightenment. Significantly, Lippit and Berger are not concerned with the modernity of animals, but rather with history as a form of knowledge produced by humans and concerning human actions and perspectives. Erica Fudge confronts the spirit of this erasure, addressing the problem of writing a "history of animals" as a methodological one and in doing so brings to the fore the anthropocentrism of understandings of history and modernity, in which animals are accessed only through the proliferation of human texts about them.

Focusing on the written archive, Fudge notes that such texts more consistently signify the problem of the human rather than the existential reality of animals, nullifying and subordinating the material body of the

animal (7). She argues for the conditional utility of the rhetorical: “Material and rhetorical are linked in their context, and the history that recognises this can, in turn, force a reassessment of the material through its analysis of the written record” (11). At stake for Fudge, then, is a rethinking of modernity through a focus on the nonhuman. This is a project that entails the possibility of refiguring the status of the human: “history should reinterpret the documents of the past in order to offer a new idea of the human” (Fudge 15). Such a claim brings into relief the question of how history has been rendered in humanist terms, shaping and constructing perceptions of the nonhuman. However, I wish to pursue the potential of the visual in such a history. Following Fudge’s lead, I recognize a history of animals in modernity by attending to the processes through which they have been perceived. But this must be specified on cinematic terms. Film realism manifests life for the viewer (an embodied animal, and a sensory experience of this), in a manner the written word cannot. More to this, while I pose three contingencies for rendering animals within regimes of biopower, within this I wish to acknowledge film’s capacity to bring forth elements of indeterminacy. How might films shape our seeing and sensing of animals, in ways that allow perception of their difference, irreducibility, ephemerality—their material otherness?

Film and Animal Life

Suggesting a special place for what they refer to as the performativity of animals when regarded as spectacle, Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman argue that there is an element that escapes the anthropocentrism of rhetorical or textual deployment. They refer to this as “magnetism” and “the active reality of animals” (12). Lesley Stern’s work on “things” in narrative fiction film provides an avenue to consider this indeterminacy more precisely in relation to indexicality and the moving image in ways that, I suggest, include documentary. Stern moves beyond simply proposing a taxonomy of objects in order to examine the way *things* take on a weight of meaning, via both their affective and signifying power:

I assume that while things are never without signifying power (taking signification to entail more than the semantic) nevertheless they carry affect and an indeterminacy that frequently derives at least in part from their indexical relationship to the real world. I pose this indeterminacy as simultaneously a resistance and an

allure; at the very least it is an opportunity to shift the emphasis from the signifying potential of things to the sensuous, to the affect produced through tactility, the generation of a sense of touch. (334)

Stern's notion of indeterminacy is tied to affect and the senses and interpreting the experience encouraged by cinema in this way offers one avenue for rethinking the anthropocentric power of systems of representation. Her film theoretical approach also anticipates scholarship in "new materialism," a field in which approaches such as Jane Bennett's "highlight the active role of nonhuman materials in public life," giving "voice to a thing-power" (2). However, another maneuver is needed here to distinguish "the active reality of animals," to borrow Daston and Mitman's phrase, and the distinctiveness of animal *life* as it might be produced by the moving image.

Elizabeth Grosz, in her book *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*, couples matter and life, understanding both in terms of their "temporal and durational entwinements [. . .]. They transform and are transformed. This is less a new kind of materialism than it is a new understanding of the forces, both material and immaterial, that direct us to the future" (5). The material qualities of life are also realized in temporal terms by Stern's point that "in cinema, it is the mutability of things that matters" (354). Encounters with the animal in cinema and encounters onscreen between life forms are produced in ways that rely on different modalities of time—the time of the narrative unfolding in shots, audio, and edits; reception and the instant of bodily response to bodies onscreen; and the interval between capturing the image of life with the camera and projecting it on screen. Because it brings together the impermanence of life and the mutability of the moving image, a discussion of the audiovisual representation and perception of life is inevitably underpinned by considerations of temporality.²⁰ For this reason the productive capacities of time is a recurring theme in individual chapters. This includes exploring how the length of a shot might allow for the contemplation of animal bodies, the montage of manufacturing in which animals become meat, or the archiving of images of wildlife that anticipate a future of species loss. In each case, moreover, perception and the senses are activated through temporality, whether it is the experience of cinematic time or the evocation of the relation between time and life.

Siegfried Kracauer's conception of realism recognizes the importance of a film's temporal progression. Further, it navigates the viewer's experience of modernity and cinema's ability to address the viewer in ways

that engage the senses, the ephemeral, and the gestural in order to open a space for an experience of reality. Kracauer's realism of the everyday is interested in how cinema might harness "the flow of life" or "nature in the raw." His theory of film is motivated in part by his desire to seek out how some forms of cinema provide relief from the alienating experience of modernity. He describes the viewer's "susceptibility to the transient real-life phenomena that crowd the screen. [. . .] Along with the fragmentary happenings incidental to them, these phenomena—taxi cabs, buildings, passers-by, inanimate objects, faces—presumably stimulate the senses and provide him with the stuff of dreaming" (170). While Kracauer was not concerned with the natural environment per se and was more likely to describe city scenes such as this, the way he captures the material sensibility of the image remains relevant. Because his realism is shaped by material phenomena and its otherness rather than simply human subjectivity, it offers distinct avenues for moving beyond an anthropocentric approach to the medium. Film profoundly engages the material reality and the physiology of the spectator, embracing the human and nonhuman world.²¹ It does so because it has the facility for "shocks" or "eruptions" of physical reality. There are clear references here to film phenomenology, a suggestion that is borne out in Kracauer's interest in Edmund Husserl's notion of lifeworld or *lebenswelt* and the way the indeterminacy and openness of lifeworld aligns with the indeterminacy of the film image,²² a quality that also lends itself to engaging the viewer in material phenomena, life and its otherness.

The sensual work of cinema theorized by Stern and Kracauer before her has more recently been explored in a growing body of work in film studies that attends both to the audiovisual materiality and spectatorial corporeal experience. The scholar most associated with this turn is Laura U. Marks, with her book, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (2000), proposing a theory for how a mode of cinema might provoke memories of the senses for intercultural subjects. Subsequent work²³ has expanded the utility of the sensual as a conceptual tool. Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener's *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (2010), is one such work. Indeed, Elsaesser and Hagener argue that the "idea of the body as a sensory envelope, as a perceptual membrane and material-mental interface [. . .] is the ontological, epistemological 'ground'" (11) for the broad film theoretical history they elaborate. Elsaesser and Hagener's work as well as studies by Vivian Sobchack (2004), Malin Walberg (2008), and Steven Shaviro (1993) inspire discussions in this book. My contribution to this scholarly landscape is the proposition that film analysis must avow, and be oriented away from, a frequently implicit anthropocentrism. The

stakes of this endeavor are significant. Attending to the body of the animal is a pursuit that can push understandings of cinema and the senses into a domain that rethinks not only the rendering of animal life, but also human narratives, perception, and corporeality as they are posed in relation to the cinematic image.

As I have noted, chapters are organized to address three different (interrelated) alternatives for structuring our understanding of animals, possibilities that are driven by the evident preoccupations of contemporary documentary culture. The first two chapters identify clusters of films that explore institutions and practices related to food and agriculture. They are concerned with the subjection and representation of industrial livestock. Chapter 2 observes the work of agriculture through identifying a stylistically coherent corpus of film. The examples in question turn the camera to humans working the earth and laboring over or alongside animals. This is an international grouping and I focus principally on three films, *Sweetgrass* (2009), *Raw Herring* (2013), and *Los Herederos* (2008), produced in the United States, The Netherlands, and Mexico, respectively. All are concerned with a certain style evolved from documentary and ethnography, preferring long takes that capture action uninterrupted by edits. I examine how these films deploy the long take and Bazinian realism to both confront questions about precarious social existence and bring a new awareness to the materiality of animals. Chapter 3 is again interested in a new concern in the feature-length documentary and looks at a contemporary cycle that confronts the food system and a crisis of industrialization. It focuses on a selection of films including *Food, Inc.* (2008), *King Corn* (2007), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), *Our Daily Bread* (2005), and *The Moo Man* (2012), exploring how the relationship between meat and animals is rendered, melding sensory and social modes of viewer identification. I consider Vivian Sobchack's approach to identification to unlock the ways in which the power of animal death and materiality structure the embodied knowledge of the viewer, disturbing the separation of animal and human corporeality.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the putatively nonhuman environment and the conventions that frame our understanding of the "wild" animal other, examining two dominant themes in this sphere of filmmaking, species loss, and science. I focus on environment and wildlife by choosing films set in defined geographical regions. I concede that there is a range of possible case studies that might address this aspect of contemporary documentary culture. I chose the polar regions as twin studies because they hold a significant place in documentary history—they are the site of technological and narrative innovations (both of which, as I show, are tied to the representa-

tion of animals) and continue to offer compelling nonhuman spectacle and fascination for filmmakers.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the Arctic, examining how animals in this fragile polar region function as potent symbols for environmental movements. It wrestles with the problem of rendering life by investigating species loss and the notion of the archive. *Nanook of the North* (1922) provides an important antecedent for contemporary films set in the Arctic, rendering Arctic life in the face of potential (human) species loss and binding animals and humans together in film history. Flaherty's film provides a foundation to consider the more recent examples *Being Caribou* (2008) and *Arctic Tale* (2007) in terms of the problem of the archive; these films offer an avenue to investigate how documentary might convey endangered life in ways that either anticipate extinction by perceiving images as an archive of animals about to disappear, cohering with humanist narratives of species loss, or gesture to a more open set of possibilities for the future. Chapter 5, in turn, examines Antarctica, recognizing its status as a continent unlike any other, a preeminent site that is consistently located outside modernity and reason. This chapter explores how different nonfiction filmic modes have worked to recuperate the continent into rational cultural paradigms such as exploration and science. Focusing on three key examples, the films of the "Heroic Age of Polar Exploration," principally Herbert Ponting's *The Great White Silence* (1924), David Attenborough's television series *Frozen Planet* (2011), and Werner Herzog's *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), I scrutinize the roles animals have played in this recuperation. Charles Darwin's work on the genealogy of the species not only inspires the scientism of wildlife film and television, but also provides a platform for evaluating how these films pose animal life and its relation to the human in radical ways.

Returning to the question of human practices and institutions, chapter 6 is informed by a reflection on technology and the ontological status of documentary. Here I pose *Grizzly Man* as a film that sits at the cusp of a new epoch in documentary that is influenced by changing manifestations of agency, digital technology, and ecological interconnectedness. This epoch exists against the background of both the "green wave" of film and television and Deborah Bird Rose's notion of ecological existentialism. I expand on this new era by considering online examples YouTube clips in which animals stage direct encounters with technology ("Hawk vs. Drone! [Hawk Attacks Quadcopter]," "Marmot Licks GoPro") and nature cams, such as *Africam*. These examples inhere with the potential to disturb traditions of anthropocentrism in moving image culture and contribute to a rethinking of human *and* animal agency, one that both generates the destabiliza-

tion of familiar codes of humanist vision and accentuates the corporeality of animal life. A brief conclusion thinks further about the ontology of the documentary moving image, experimenting with how vision might be rethought from a nonhuman perspective, through Jacob von Uexküll's notion of *umwelt* or lifeworld.

Complicating the anthropocentric assumptions of cinema is an endeavor that must also acknowledge the biopolitical function of the camera—its ability to define and organize life for and with the viewer. In Berger's terms, one prospect here is for animals to "disappear," with animal specificity replaced by human knowledge and power. To perceive the productive capacities of biopower, in contrast, is to allow for the possibility that cinema might yield multiple manifestations of animal embodiment. An analysis of the moving image and the expression of life must seek out the material continuities between human and animal *and* the way each is distinct, equally regarded, even if such a cinematic image or utterance is momentary and ephemeral. This is because the recognition of nonhuman difference has the potential to bring with it the realization that we inhabit a world shared by a multitude of distinct autonomous beings. Cinema and media can activate this realization, encouraging human responsibility beyond the frame without perpetuating the illusion of totalizing human mastery over nature.