

# ■ Species in a Planetary Frame: Eco-cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and *The Cove*

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## Abstract

This essay argues that the critical project of bringing animals into representation encounters particular difficulties in the context of the international political impasse over global environmental and animal welfare concerns. Analyzing Louis Psihoyos' 2009 Oscar-winning documentary film *The Cove*, the essay contends that attempts to establish ethical and affective claims for animal life encounter a familiar tension between local and global, particular and universal, that works to contain the film's compelling critiques of nationalism's authorization of transspecies violence. The essay suggests instead that a more elaborated critique of both species and nation, which would emphasize the radical interpenetration of species and the transnational character of ecological movements, is necessary to undo the normative humanization of cosmopolitan political projects including environmentalism.

**Keywords:** environmentalism, cosmopolitanism, Japan, dolphins, International Whaling Commission

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The provocative title for this issue of *Tamkang Review*—“Cetacean Nations”—offers an opportunity to take account of emerging directions for the recent outpouring of critical work on species and “the animal question.” The anti-anthropocentrism of this site of interdisciplinary critique derives not only from an elaborated animal activist ethic but also from decades of work to reimagine the affective formations and political mobilization of life itself in feminist studies, queer studies, science studies, and systems and environmental theory. To the extent that “animal studies” scholars in North America have narrated this comingling of disciplinary and political energies as an ethical project, they have often followed the transnational animal rights movement in invoking visibility as a paradigm for engagement, granting species a claim to representation as an ethical ideal as well as a normative political gesture. It is this relation, that between the ethical and the political, that begs our attention as species critique turns to the problem of the nation and the state authorization of transpecies violence—and, thus, to the opposed possibility of “earth democracy” (Shiva). The dyad “cetacean nations” not only begs the question of how to reconceptualize citizenship when the tropes of democracy and justice are mobilized in relation to multispecies system-environments, but also what kinds of histories offer up “nonhuman” bodies as potential bearers of solidarity and community, even as these bodies may slither and sink off of the coast of the epistemic *terra firma* that defines the scale, borders, and representational practices that have humanized the nation since its emergence in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. I thus take the idea of “cetacean nations” as a challenge to untangle the threads of the normative liberal-humanist content of the categories “species” and “nation”—and to do so with an eye to a planetary ethic required to address the crises arising from the coming mass species extinctions and planetary ecological transformations.

Animal and environmental activist campaigns can be read as planetary ethical projects (or “eco-cosmopolitan” projects according to a certain liberal-humanist phrasing) to the extent that they attempt to build dissident modalities of belonging and solidarity across lines of national and species difference. The idea of cosmopolitanism, which has occasioned a return in critical theory to a number of humanist tropes (totality, universality, democracy, empathy), suggests an interplay of difference and universality that fissures the sphere of politics, requiring an agentive ethical engagement across lines of difference in order that particularity not devolve into a relativism that bars judgment and justice. Cosmopolitan figures of the planet narrated in rich countries, as Immanuel Wallerstein points out, often represent an ideal world in which the romance of difference supplants attention to violent forms of inequality (122-24). But the field of postcolonial studies, in which the assimilation of cosmopolitanist theory over the past decade

has both been influential and fraught, has suggested a second vision of the cosmopolitical. Whether positioning the anticolonial valorization of “the minor” as a set of rarefied practices and ethics as a gift to the world (Gandhi, “Pauper’s” 32), or calling for a critical cosmopolitanism that unveils the reliance of liberal-managerial forms of cosmopolitanism on a history of coloniality (Mignolo 723), such moves invert the presumed civilizational debt the colonized owe to European “modernity” and situate decolonial praxis as a site of worldmaking.

Against this fissuring of the cosmopolitical (mobilized across local/global and minor/major binaries), then, any vision of a multispecies planetary ethic would have to navigate the post-Enlightenment division of “species” and “nation” such that solidarity and belonging constitute an ethical orientation across *both* national borders and the taxonomic lines that separate humanity from multispecies lifeworlds. Historically, we can situate this division of nation and species as figuring analogous but distinct planes of difference unified within a larger structure of natural-historical taxonomy. The ethnographic, the botanical, the zoologic, etc. were all part of a single cosmological system of ordering. This formulation at once suggested a sameness and difference between species and nation as orders of difference, occasioning the dissident cosmopolitanism of Johann Gottfried Herder to articulate the cosmopolitical frame as a diversity of national species composing the human (*Outline* 108-09). It was this speciation of the human as a unity of national differences that allowed Herder to posit that humanity was the only cosmopolitan species, against the presumed particularity of animals: “it is obvious that the whole face of the earth is made for the human species, and the human species for the whole face of the earth. . . . This natural law is hence apparent here too: ‘Human beings should live everywhere on earth, while every animal species merely has its land and its narrower sphere’” (*Philosophical* 150).

Cetaceans, like many birds and other migratory species, violate Herder’s presumption of animality’s occupation of only a local ecology. Since cetaceans are mobile and traverse not only the wide oceanic expanses from the arctic to the southern seas, but also riverways and coastlines that bring them into collision with human populations, toxic pollution, and major economic trafficways, they may be easily disarticulated from the processes of “imagining” that are hailed as the bases of nationalism (Anderson). Yet even cetaceans become grounded in the projects of constructing *the country*, a national ecology or object-world.<sup>1</sup> For Japan,

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<sup>1</sup> While postcolonial critiques of the nation have had much to say about the colonization of *land*, the category *country* is an oft-overlooked object-space of the nation. Unlike land, country encompasses the land-, sea-, and aero-scapes as well as the subterranean firmament thought to ground the nation in deep time and bounded space. See Tölölyan (3-36) for distinctions between nation, state, and country.

Iceland, and Norway, the “whaling nations,” the imaginary of national survival may be constructed through an idea of the national dependency on cetacean bodies (often refusing a taxonomic distinction between large and small cetaceans). As Jessamyn Abel argues, the lure of new whaling technology as well as the pressure of US whaling imperialism were key pull-push factors in the transformation of Japanese foreign policy; whales played a central role in what outsiders would represent as the “opening up” of Japan to the worlds of commerce and diplomacy. Later, the post-WWII consolidation of a national whaling identity related to the important role of whale meat during wartime. Cetacean bodies have thus been rendered points of consolidation of national identity precisely because of their transborder circulation. In such processes of (trans)nationalization, whales become both potent symbols of modernity and objects for the material exercise of national sovereignty, which includes the sovereign right to noncriminally kill (Derrida 69). Given this history, cetacean bodies become unique sites for theorizing the linked ethico-politics of nation and species.

Recent confrontations between transnational marine mammal activists and human communities engaged in hunting—most notably the southern sea conflict between the Sea Shepherd Society and Japanese whaling ships and the annual protests over Canadian First Nations seal hunting—reflect the contradictions between the two axes of the eco-cosmopolitan, with one side arguing against the provinciality of the welfarist or ecological ethic (which compromises national-cultural sovereignty) and the other side denouncing the provincial violence of the nation against sentient beings it excludes from personhood and citizenship. Is there ground for judgment which could mine the aporetic relation between nation and species? And is there any planetary ecological ethic that would address these two axes without resorting to the familiar “Enlightenment method of comparative history” that would analogize oppression based on nation and species, preserving the normative liberal-human contours of both terms (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 81)?

### Two Planetary Ethics in *The Cove*

First-time director Louie Psihoyos’ Oscar-winning 2009 documentary, *The Cove*, can help us understand the unfolding of nation and species as two axes of planetary ethico-politics. Psihoyos, a National Geographic photographer, is also a longtime sea diver and co-founder of the Ocean Protection Society. When TV-dolphin-trainer-turned-anticaptivity-activist Ric O’Barry, whose story provides one of the film’s central narrative arcs, began publicly critiquing the slaugh-

ter of dolphins in Japan, he soon came into contact with Psihoyos who agreed to collaborate on a film to expose the scale and violence of the slaughter. The film centrally concerns the annual slaughter of thousands of dolphins at a cove in the coastal fishing town of Taiji, and it traces the causes and consequences of the slaughter across several themes: the nature of dolphin intelligence and sociability, the violence and profitability of the global captive dolphin entertainment industry, the relation of the Taiji slaughter to mercury toxicity in the Japanese food supply, and problems of censorship as the filmmakers are pitted against the state's protection of Taiji fishermen's claim to public land and cetacean bodies. The main narrative concerns the guerilla filmmaking operation of the mainly US-based activists themselves, who set out to film the slaughter in the closely monitored Taiji cove. Offering images of slaughter as a public antidote to speciated violence, the film echoes the appeal to animal visibility long invoked by transnational animal rights campaigns, which suggest the potential of redress, for example, "if slaughterhouses had glass walls . . ." ("Why Vegan?" 6).

*The Cove* and its director explicitly claim the affective capacity of film (Stratton),<sup>2</sup> presuming that the medium can marshal emotional response against the purportedly narrow nationalist framing of cetacean killing as an extension of Japanese culture and sovereignty. Somewhat ironically, the filmmakers deploy the generic conventions of a heroic expedition narrative to capture the dolphins (not as specimens but as filmed images),<sup>3</sup> alongside other techniques such as video montage and investigative interviews to chronicle the emotional responses and moral crusade of the white US American, Canadian, Australian, and Antiguan activists themselves, as well as the reactions of Taiji fishermen, a number of Japanese state and local officials, and health and oceans experts.

The opening and closing sequences capture the documentary's most important formal innovation: its use of sophisticated hidden and night-vision cameras to circumvent Taiji and Japanese state authorities' prohibitions on filming the dolphin slaughter and, in the process, to use surveillance technologies to depict

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<sup>2</sup> "Affect" is to be understood as distinct from intimacy, emotion, feeling, sentiment, etc., as it suggests the emergence of material communicability or embodied capacity to affect and be affected across levels of system-environments in which humans and other speciated beings are assembled. Although affect is immersed in representation it is not reducible to a represented emotion or feeling—affect would intersect with the field of representation inasmuch as technologies of representation (such as film) are imbricated in the production of affective capacities, as when a specific genre of film in a specific context enables transfer or communicability across bodies, times, or spaces. See further Rai (n.pag.); Massumi (1-22); and Puar (207-08).

<sup>3</sup> Fatimah Tobing Rony (157-60) argues that the ethnographic gaze established by the jungle expedition narrative (which centrally featured the filmic capture of exotic animals) was central to the production of a modern filmic sensibility.

the fear and surveillance of the activists themselves. The director's cooperation with a Hollywood outfit, Industrial Light and Magic, allowed the "OPS team" to place hidden aerial, ground, and underwater cameras in and around the cove. Drawing on techniques of sophisticated nature documentary, which often involves the use of aerial footage, night photography, and high-speed ground filming, the film shifts between the nature documentarian's gaze on the sentimentalized dolphin and night-vision and infrared images of the activists. Psihoyos' opening narration proclaims, "I tried to do the story legally," setting up the activists' rejection of anthropocentric law. From here, the opening sequence of *The Cove* moves quickly from a serene nighttime shot of the lighthouse overlooking Taiji's cove to a series of pointed high-tech night images that eerily capture the tension over the filmmakers' presence in the small fishing community as well as both the violence and the beauty of human-dolphin interactions. After the filmmakers' van is passed by an ambulance with blaring sirens, the shots switch to green-tinted night camera images of two hooded white activist men crossing a barbed wire fence followed by shadowy infrared images of a butchering floor, a power plant, and dolphins swimming. The next shots, taken using a military-grade infrared/thermal surveillance camera, display a ghastly low-contrast, border-blurring greyscale effect, and capture an eerie beauty of both the landscape and the dolphins. The intro sequence closes on a close-up of a dolphin whose eye reflects back an intense glow. The night-vision and infrared images are then sequenced to move from a limited view of the activists' entrance to the final scene of the film showing, now in daylight, the dramatic and violent luring, netting, and harpooning of dozens of dolphins by Taiji fishermen, whose blood turns the entire inlet a gruesome red.

Night-vision infrared ("thermal") filming was first broadly introduced to television-viewing publics during the Second Persian Gulf War (the war initiated by United States President George H. W. Bush in 1991 against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait) (Shohat and Stam 125-36). Widely compared to the spectator position of video games, night-vision and infrared technologies give viewers an intimate perspective of surveillance, heightened in *The Cove* by the occasional appearance of cross-hairs and time stamps in the frame. Yet the film does not simply take up the militarized position of world targeting. This militarized gaze is complicated by the fact that the activists are more often than the dolphins the object of the infrared gaze. On the one hand, the activists are themselves militarized and turned into idealized able-bodied rebels placed under surveillance. On the other hand, they command surveillance of the dolphins, whose slaughtered bodies come to represent the ultimate emotional appeal of the film. This doubled infrared gaze, then, is made explicit in the double-meaning of the acronym OPS, which stands for both Ocean Protection Society and military "special operations."

The interviews and depictions of repeated daytime travel to the cove situate Taiji fishermen as enemies of the dolphins. The film produces a visual ordering that fosters identification with mobile conservationist subjects against the static, essentialized figures occupying the position of the enemy (a contemporary incarnation of the savage). In this case, a Taiji fisherman who the filmmakers nickname “Personal Space” (citing his repeated angry claim that the filmmakers are trespassing) embodies the capitalist violence carried out spectacularly against dolphin bodies. “Personal Space” is a particularly evocative name, especially since the man repeatedly and menacingly enters the “personal space” of the white subjects of ocean protection who have themselves transformed the ordering of public space in Taiji. The name furthermore literally represents the provinciality of the fishermen. Predictably, the film is unable to offer any subject-position for Taiji fishermen other than enemy to the cosmopolitan order, in the process silencing any consideration of Japanese urban/rural politics, the relation of Japanese nationalism to the neoliberal production of widespread economic precarity, or the ecological changes threatening fishing communities.

In contrast to the expedition narrative, the film also tells a sentimental conversion narrative explaining the transformation of Ric O’Barry, whose earlier career capturing and training dolphins (including the five dolphins who played TV’s Flipper) ended when he abruptly realized the violence of his occupation. He then began a thirty-five year campaign to personally release captive dolphins from the industry he started and to prevent further dolphin capture and hunting. Interweaving slow-motion photography of dolphin swimming, images of O’Barry’s past dolphin training work, and mournful music with O’Barry’s monologue, this narrative segment mourns the death of Cathy, one of the captive Flipper dolphins, who O’Barry claims committed “suicide” by intentionally asphyxiating in his arms. Producing dolphins as victims of both the captive dolphin entertainment industry and Japanese capture and hunting practices, the film in Psihoyos’ words “generates a lot of emotion” through both sentimental depictions of dolphins and O’Barry and through the thriller/action element produced by its expedition narrative and filmic technologies. For Psihoyos, these elements of the film are significant because they speak to both “guys and women” (presumably through differently gendered emotional appeals) allowing him to work not as “a filmmaker” but instead as someone “trying to lead a movement” (Stratton, n.pag.).

If the film simultaneously takes advantage of expensive military filming equipment, a not-so-subtly racialized deployment of the colonial expedition narrative, and a sentimental conversion narrative, it also presents a number of compelling arguments on topics ranging from the public health impacts of Taiji dolphin meat to the responsibility of international consumers of both captive



dolphin entertainment and ocean-polluting coal power. Thus to dismiss the film's aesthetic as dependent on a triumphalist deployment of cultural chauvinism would miss its more substantive claims to a cosmopolitical ethic.<sup>4</sup> The film, particularly in its interview segments with health experts, opens up two serious avenues of critique. The first addresses the multiple layers of violence (exclusive neither to the state of Japan nor to the state's relationship to animals) underwritten by nationalism and its related exercise of state sovereignty. The second suggests a planetary ethic requiring the tracing of the complex geophysical transformations that the earth and its inhabitants are experiencing due to anthropogenic climate change and industrial pollution.

First, the critique of nationalism in the film is navigated with some complexity. In interviews, Psihoyos stresses that his argument for dolphin protection is not a condemnation of "Japanese culture" but rather a call to the Japanese state and to international consuming publics to enforce a proper vision of humanity. First, the film argues against the sale of cetacean meat to the Japanese public, which it figures as both at serious risk of mercury poisoning and generally unaware of the scale of penetration of this meat into the food supply. Using the interviews of a number of experts including several nonplussed Japanese health authorities, the film suggests the high concentrations of mercury in the food supply (always higher in larger animals such as cetaceans since mercury concentrations increase going up the food chain). Following these interviews are street interviews in Tokyo of perplexed urbanites unaware of the continuing significance of dolphin meat to coastal diets and its circulation nationally, labeled as whale meat. The film suggests a food industry disinformation campaign that hides both mercury toxicity and the unlabeled circulation of dolphin meat. As dolphin meat is a minor revenue source for Taiji compared with the international sale of live dolphins to entertainment venues, the film carefully couches its argument against the authorization of a violence that exists largely for the immaterial satisfaction of a national tie to place, culture, and heritage, working to the detriment of public health and animal welfare. Thus the film broadly challenges nationalism's capture and arbitrary deployment of the authorized violence of the state, which need not be limited to this specific instance of killing dolphins nor to the nation-state of Japan.

Cross-cutting this emphasis on the local and the national are links to a broader set of planetary concerns, both economic and ecological. These underpin the second cosmopolitical ethic of the film, one based on a planetary critique of industrial pollution of the oceans and the commoditization of life. The world dolphin trade, which has shipped Taiji dolphins, according to the filmmakers, to

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Denise Khor, who forcefully convinced me of this point!



the US military and to marine mammal performance parks in the Caribbean, Russia, and around Asia, both profits in the billions annually and denies dolphins the space and sensory environment required for basic levels of comfort and communication. Presenting human-dolphin interactions as evidence of dolphins' sociability, intelligence, and capacity to experience discomfort, the film performs a provisional incorporation of dolphins into political representation in the face of failures of subnational, national, and multinational bodies to grant dolphins even limited access to claims of personhood or citizenship. Meanwhile, as coal and industrial runoff are the two major sources of mercury toxicity in ocean food chains, the film suggests that the Taiji mercury problem is evidence of broader translocal systems that form the basis of a planetary "slow violence" against dolphins, humans, and a wide variety of other species. In Rob Nixon's formulation, slow violence suggests that the dispersed toxicity of human economic activity accomplishes an accumulated violence against species that is realized at a variety of scales and speeds and that subtly moves across space (2-3). In contrast to the bounded time and concentrated space through which Euro-American popular media construct spectacles of death and violence, slow violence and slow death suggest the insidious forms of violence that penetrate and shift the life trajectories of bodies and species assemblages, often avoiding the human gaze. Both dolphin exploitation and slow violence escape serious regulation by the commercial law of the sea or, as the film depicts, the failed governance of the International Whaling Commission. As a *multinational* institution rather than an enforcement of a *planetary* ethic, the IWC allows Japanese and Norwegian nationalist claims to whaling, as well as their privileged positions in the international economy, to trump eco-cosmopolitan ethics and maintain the nation-state's monopoly on the arbitrary deployment of authorized violence.

### **Bridging Planetary Ethics**

Despite the critical and commercial success of *The Cove*, the film was unable to achieve wide distribution in Japan and generally drew scorn from Japanese officials and media. The grudging last-minute admission of the film to the Tokyo Film Festival under pressure from Hollywood bigwigs is indicative of the lukewarm reception that the film received in Japan, with government officials rejecting its arguments about health as inaccurate, its claims of animal cruelty non-unique and hypocritical given the authorized violent slaughter of other animal species in the filmmakers' home countries, and the aesthetic as anti-Japanese. The Japanese distributor of the film, Medallion, has faced small protests at its

offices (“Right-Wingers”). The public dismissal and censorship of the film in Japan appears to have colored reception of the mercury toxicity claims, as Taiji and Japanese officials whitewashed the results of a 2010 study of mercury levels among 1137 Taiji residents called by Taiji’s mayor in response to the film. The study, which demonstrated dangerously high average levels of mercury in the human population, found 182 residents with extremely high mercury concentrations. Emphasizing the fact that zero residents were, at the time of the study, experiencing symptoms of mercury poisoning, Japanese media indicated that residents felt vindicated by the results of the study (Matsutani, “Taiji Locals” n.pag.; Matsutani, “Most Taiji Residents” n.pag.; Harnell, n.pag.; “Living with Whales” n.pag.).

If *The Cove* presents viewing publics with two linked planetary ethics, one that calls for an end to nationalism’s capture of authorized violence and a second that links this authorized violence to capital processes that are transforming the very form and future of a diversity of species on earth, why does the film devote most of its time to the national question, the first of these themes? Psihoyos and O’Barry repeatedly, in the film and interviews, stress the importance of sticking to the local in the film as the example of the Taiji cove would provide the most digestible and emotionally powerful connection to the broader planetary questions of animal and ecological violence that guide their activisms. The commercial and critical success of the film outside of Japan speaks to the strengths of this strategy. The filmmakers seem aware of potential charges of cultural imperialism in response to their argument (if not their aesthetic), and thus decide to keep the focus local (Arce, n.pag.). To postpone the deeper environmental ethic that the film invokes, then, is to be responsive to a particular line of eco-regionalist thinking that declares that the diversity of environmentalisms is often foreclosed by the hegemony of a secular, abstract environmentalism forged in the post-Fordist northern countries (Guha 71-84). Paradoxically, in this case it also focuses a critical gaze almost entirely on Taiji and the Japanese government, whereas abolishing the international captive dolphin industry, reducing carbon emissions, and limiting industrial runoff that causes mercury pollution are topics that are addressed only in brief asides (Arce, n.pag.).<sup>5</sup> Despite Psihoyos’ statement that there are “enemies everywhere” in the film, they are most visibly located in the film within the radius of Taiji. In the process, a broader planetary ethic that would engage with complex systems of environmental change—a difficult task given that expert languages remain foreign to nonexperts (Beck, “Climate” 254-55)—is postponed.

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<sup>5</sup> In interviews, O’Barry insists on the centrality of this part of the argument moreso than Psihoyos; for him, “supply and demand” is everything, and the entertainment industry he built through the Flipper phenomenon as at the heart of the dolphin meat trade.

In terms of its ethical ideal, then, the film raises questions about what emphasis and which aesthetic strategies would best operate the two often opposed axes of eco-cosmopolitics. Would a film with a more “neighborly” ethic of transnational engagement with mainstream Japanese nationalism have more purchase in Japan? Or would it have been easily dismissed given that the filmmakers base their affective appeals to global audiences in part on the sentimental and heroic action narratives that squarely target the state as arbiter of violence? I don’t think there are any easy answers given that all strategies are necessarily a compromise with one or another axis of the eco-cosmopolitical. Interviews with O’Barry and Psihoyos even reveal a different emphasis, with O’Barry’s narrative of conversion adamantly stressing his own guilt and the deep complicity of transnational capital in all of the problems depicted at Taiji.

However, in addition to its normative claims, we can also analyze the film in terms of its engagement with actually existing cosmopolitanisms—in which case we would find the filmmakers’ planetary ethics deeply compromised by an absence of transnational organizing. It is telling that *The Cove* does not include interviews with any Japanese environmentalists or animal activists. Barriers of language, location, and cultural literacy point here to the argument of one of the more skeptical theorists of the cosmopolitan, who has argued that there is no such thing as an actually existing cosmopolitics given the current international division of labor and the disarticulation of NGO and activist work from the sustained cultural practices through which community identification is performed over time (Cheah 40-42). In the instance of *The Cove*, the refusal of the film entrance into Japanese public discourse signals not a repudiation of the film’s descriptive and normative claims, but more significantly a refusal to answer the basic question posed by the film: under what conditions might a politics of transpecies recognition be established at Taiji, in Japan, and beyond? The point of my analysis, then, is that the film’s admirable attempt at articulating an eco-cosmopolitan ideal is bogged down in a world deeply divided by situated histories of empire—histories that repeatedly disarticulate nation and species in order to maintain the biopolitical authorization of delimited forms of violence.

### **Decolonial Critique of Species and Nation**

In the face of the neoliberal disarticulation of nation and species in the Taiji example, it would be a mistake to grant Japanese official claims to sovereignty under the banner of relativism and reduce the planetary ethic opened by *The Cove*

to a matter of cultural particularity. Even if *The Cove's* aesthetic reflects provincial colonial discourses projected as a global moral framework, and even if it deploys an imperialist aesthetic, such facts do not invalidate all of the normative ecological and animal-rights claims of the film. The multinational position of relativism leaves no paths for a critique of state violence, a violence that has historically been applied arbitrarily and without regard to any defense of species, even by appeal to "humanity." A decolonial ethic in an imperialist world sometimes requires judgment from within impure politics, not accessing some mythic outside or open which would provide a critical refuge from the fallen world (Haraway, *New Voices*). In light of the deployment of the eco-cosmopolitan ideal in *The Cove*, it may be useful to reflect on what different visions of the cosmopolitical might offer to species and environmental critique and vice versa. And it is here that critical work on species (especially those articulated from the vantage of posthumanism) may offer the outlines of some limitations to the cosmopolitical in its persistent disarticulation of nation and species. In this concluding section, I will return to theories of cosmopolitanism to address this aporia of species and nation that constrict *The Cove's* planetary ethic.

Cosmopolitanism, in Walter D. Mignolo's phrasing, consists of "a set of projects towards planetary conviviality" (721). While there can be no single dominant theory or exemplary project of cosmopolitanism, and while different proponents of the term cite different definitions and examples, the idea of cosmopolitanism has come to suggest an ethic that transcends provincial forms of social organization via engagement with alterity. For Mignolo, modern cosmopolitan projects can be traced to the 16<sup>th</sup> century colonial conversion projects of Spanish empire and have been rearticulated in a number of modern/colonial projects in the intervening centuries which take the earth broadly as their sphere of action.

As I wrote at the outset of this essay, there are two binarized divisions of the cosmopolitical field, the local/global and the minor/major. Many invocations of cosmopolitanism in postcolonial studies take up the second of these binaries, making a foundational distinction between (1) a normative or hegemonic liberal cosmopolitanism that figures mobility, capital, and official internationalism as bases for envisioning the globe a zone of freedom or modernity, and (2) a cosmopolitanism from below or "critical cosmopolitanism" that would articulate the interests of the proletarian multitude via decolonial critique of the international division of labor. It will be clear from this brief gloss on the cosmopolitanist theory of the 1990s that both valences of the term retained a close association with liberal-humanist concepts of freedom and transcendence which were articulated against an image of the nation as a provincial and ethnocentric form of community.

Pheng Cheah has offered the most systematic critique of this line of thought, arguing that the cosmopolitan is dependent on the national, both in its normative definition and in actually existing transnational projects oriented toward a cosmopolitan ideal. In *Inhuman Conditions*, Cheah further critiques the anthropocentric embrace of “culture” as the field of cosmopolitical action. Focusing on postcolonial critics’ centering of migration as a fundamental process of the cosmopolitical, Cheah critiques the valorization of cultural hybridity as a mode of transcendence: “The success of culture as a utopian project depends on an anthropocentric conception of nature as a totality in harmony or accord with human normative interests. . . . Put another way, the nature of the *anthropos* is to be free of nature” (100). Not only does this understanding, according to Cheah’s account, inflate the domain of culture (often itself reduced simply to text by literary scholars) to the status of power itself, it also ignores the new international division of labor, which renders most of the world’s human population stuck in the space and time of the decolonizing nation, wedded to its limited projects for representation, and subjected to its uneasy compromises with transnational capital’s exploitation of their countries’ labor, speciated matter (“natural resources”), and state apparatuses. While sociologist Ulrich Beck has famously read this distribution of vulnerability as the basis of an embodied (nonagentive) everyday cosmopolitics of shared risk, Cheah reads the international division of labor as fundamentally opposed to a cosmopolitanism defined more narrowly as “global human solidarities and belongings” (4).

Cosmopolitanism, then, is a deeply problematic ideal for at least four reasons. First, it is closely associated with privileged forms of mobility tied to circuits of transnational capital. This is true even in some ostensibly critical cosmopolitanisms which center the figure of the diasporic economic migrant even as large swaths of humanity are precluded from such mobility by the economic and juridical structures of contemporary neoliberalism. Even when neoliberal mobility is conceived as telemobility rather than the physical movement of peoples across space, the idea of the cosmopolitan may overstate the extent to which capitalist technologies create cosmopolitical fields instead of appealing to and integrating into forms of national or subnational culture. Second, cosmopolitanism (in both its hegemonic and subaltern forms) relies on an understanding of an agentive subject of politics whose knowledges and labor-forms are figured as transcending the narrow sphere of national belonging. The liberal subject at the heart of cosmopolitical action is anthropomorphized and conceived through representation of an intentional, agentive subject as opposed to affective assemblages, the complex material crossings linking the subject through many levels and scales of system-environments. Third, the cultural field of the cosmopolitical is discursively defined, such that the

important elements of hybridization, affiliation, and ethical engagement are deeply contextual and often distorted by the operations of capital. Finally, while cosmopolitanism is understood normatively as transcendence of the narrowly local or national, cosmopolitanisms are historically deeply grounded in the formation of the European nation as a unit of difference fragmenting the planetary space of humanity.

Given these challenges, there should be a healthy skepticism that cultural media alone can do the work suggested by Psihoyos of actually “leading a movement.” Nevertheless, publicly articulating planetary ethics—yoking critical cosmopolitanism to multispecies concerns about slow violence and the arbitrary deployment of speciated violence by the state—can be of use for challenging the liberal-humanist conception of the cosmopolitan as a sphere defined by intentionality, transparency, and transcendence (all terms underwriting the cosmopolitan’s normative anthropocentrism). While Mignolo and Cheah’s accounts do the important work of situating the ideal objectives of cosmopolitanism within long histories of modern-colonial violence, neither fully thinks through the *planetary* stakes of “planetary conviviality.” Gayatri Spivak has recently invoked the planetary, which literally involves the fact of our existence on a planet (*Death* 72-73), in response to the excessive reach of the idea of “the global,” which more often projects provincial designs onto an imagined human geography of the globe. Adding complexity to this distinction, Mary Louise Pratt claims that the planetary optic offers “a concept of the human that is superordinate to that of the Enlightenment and to capitalism” (219-20). For Spivak, “to be human is to be intended toward exteriority. And, if we can get to planet-feeling, the outside or other is indefinite . . .” (“World Systems” 107-08). Spivak is here pointing to a limit of most discussions of cosmopolitanism, which rely on a model of alterity in order to conceive of the (normatively intentional) subjective movement toward those outside of one’s spatial scale or imagined community. While Spivak’s language borders on a romantic vision of the planet as a unity, I am compelled by her insistence that it is possible to practice an ethico-politics that is not centrally defined by the dual alterities that, by proclaiming the internal and external differences to humanity, shore up that very category.

Ursula Heise’s book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* takes up Spivak’s call to think planetarily and puts forward the most sustained theorization of eco-cosmopolitanism to date. For Heise, critiquing what she identifies as a misguided stress on localism in US American environmentalist writing and activism, eco-cosmopolitanism acknowledges the necessity of thinking beyond one’s own place, nation, or region in order to both challenge nationalist political conflicts over environment and take account of the

planetary ecological systems that must be assessed by any cultural production attempting to introduce an environmental ethic. “Eco-cosmopolitanism,” writes Heise, “is an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary ‘imagined communities’ of both human and nonhuman kinds”. While the cultural mechanisms by means of which allegiance to national communities is generated, legitimated, and maintained have been studied in depth, ecocriticism has only begun to explore the cultural means by which ties to the natural world are produced and perpetuated, and how the perception of such ties fosters or impedes regional, national, and transnational forms of identification” (61). Along with Ulrich Beck, who argues that shared ecological risks have the potential to underwrite a new cosmopolitics, Heise is one of only a handful of scholars who have attempted to link projects of human cosmopolitanism with ecological ones.

Heise, however, writes within the limits of a cosmopolitan discourse dependent on a disarticulation of nation and species as well as a liberal subject of politics. It is at this point that the cosmopolitan comes up against its theoretical limits, as species critique stresses the non-selfsame nature of the subject and the body. Take, for example, the multitude of species of bacteria, archaea, virus, mineral matter, gas, and ingested animal and plant material through which the human body as we know it reproduces itself. Species critique breaks down not just the subject, but the embodied assemblages of species from which cosmopolitan projects are normatively perspectivized as outward-looking. The more radical critiques of species stress the inability to take the body or species as transparent categories, as well as the necessity of recognizing the affective linkages that cross borders of and scales of living and dying. Donna Haraway, for example, argues for a “terran” politics which suggests the necessity of both knowledge and lived engagement across lines of species difference and a recognition that bodies are made of many different species at many different scales (“Sowing Worlds” 1-13).<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, although animal welfare and environmental “stewardship” by humans could be valued as reforming the endless capitalist exploitation of the planet, they would not be coterminous with a planetary conviviality that would require recognizing the multispecies constitution of the human as well as the implication of multiple species in both the political and the international division of humanity. A critical reading, then, of an eco-cosmopolitanism that attempts to link species and nation would require tracing the material-affective

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<sup>6</sup> The “terran,” which Haraway borrows from science-fiction writer Ursula LeGuinn, should be understood within the geographies of the “terrestrial” rather than land-bound. It is a longstanding convention of colonial representation to center the land in opposition to the sea, the subterranean, and the atmospheric. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, for one, has done important work to center islands and ocean worlds as significant to postcolonial rendering of environment. See DeLoughrey.



assemblages of bodies within different scales, system-environments, and temporalities; it would suggest the vitality of life itself and its constitution of many relations of multispecies becoming whose agencies exceed the intentional sphere of politics. It would also recognize the inherent limits of the concept of cosmopolitanism when defined by a model of an agentive subject immersed in relations of alterity. Thus what I have been calling a “planetary ethic” in this essay suggests not the conventional interplay of identity and difference that defines the humanist sphere of cosmopolitics, but rather the muddled assemblages of bodies, affect, and environment that constantly reproduce the fields of ethics and politics as multispecies domain.

I want to end by offering one exemplary cultural text that imagines a planetary ethic through both the messy politics of neocolonialism and the embodied articulations of multispecies encounter. Bengali-American writer Amitav Ghosh’s stunning romance of cetacean protection, *The Hungry Tide*, depicts the dependency of an Indian-American oceanographer on the labor and knowledge of a fisherman in the Bengali Sundarbans, a coastal mangrove forest that is home to endangered river dolphins, occupied by local and transplanted dalit communities, and one of the sites of India’s controversial national tiger conservation program. To the extent that the novel suggests a planetary ethic, it is one that must be grounded in a sense of deep time that notably precedes the nation-state. This can be accessed from the vantage of multiple framings of time, space, and spirit including those of indigenous human inhabitants, who in the story display the most intimate forms of transpecies communication and knowledge. Planetary vision, however, only emerges in the translation of the teacher Nirmal, who reads the time of the gods as physics’ deep time of the planet, in the process situating human and dolphin in a broader and interconnected lifeworld that can only be assembled as totality out of the intersection of secular scientific knowledge (the account of deep geologic and physical time and of the geophysical agency of the earth) and myth (the account of the gods as planetary agents) (150-51). Nirmal’s ethic is embodied by the indigenous fisherman Fokir, who is subjected to surveillance by the corrupt conservationist state. Fokir is able to read the movements and trials of the river dolphins, who face both environmental threats and environmental disasters such as hurricanes that render all species in the Sunderbans vulnerable. Yet Nirmal is unable to transmit his view of life itself, blocked by the violence of the state during the forced removal of dalits for the creation of protected forests for tigers. Ghosh’s ethic delivered by Nirmal links the deep time and expression of nonhuman agency figured by both environmental history and the subaltern human histories expelled from dominant national and global narratives of capitalism (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing* 72; Chakrabarty, “Climate” 201-

07). Ghosh's vision recognizes the ways in which a planetary ethic can encompass difference as a unity, and that projecting a global ecological design can involve acts of creolization and exchange between locations, epistemic frameworks, skills and resources, and even species. Yet such negotiations never operate in a vacuum of power, and the planetary ethic is one that emerges within the confines of the nation and country but ultimately cannot be contained by the regulation of the state. Ghosh's deployment of alternative senses of temporality and place is unique in South Asian diasporic literature, and, like Haraway's mining of the complex scales and species that populate the human, suggests both a move away from normative liberal grounds for politics and for a radical reevaluation of embodiment, space, and species.

*The Hungry Tide's* valorization of subaltern environmental knowledges must not be understood, then, as a simple orientalizing or primitivizing of the indigene who is romantically incorporated into an environmental ethic—the subaltern position is offered here as a critique of rule itself, an anarchic ethics fundamental to the writings of India's most well-known critic of both state violence and speciated violence, M.K. Gandhi (Gandhi, *Affective* 67-114). This fundamentally decolonial aspect of a planetary ethic is one avenue for thinking across those divisions of nation and species that continue to buttress hegemonic dismissals of planetarity. In response to *The Cove*, it might prompt us to ask whether localizing the question of violence to the cove at Taiji recenters the state as the arbiter of violence, or whether it might open a broader ethico-politics attentive to the transnational histories of cetacean hunting and industrial pollution, as well as the transpecies constitution of subjects and embodiments. For it is only in the transpecies assemblages of media, embodiment, and affect that the subject appears to disarticulate nation and species, and thus appears to navigate ethics through the duality of identity and difference. Planetarity suggests a politics that starts from the presumption of transpecies assemblage; it thus requires not simply an appeal to bring animals into representation, but rather to recognize the fundamental ways in which transpecies embodiments constitute the object-worlds of nation and planet, and thus delimit the capacity of representation to transmit affect.

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## 全球架構下的物種：生態世界主義， 國族主義與《血色海灣》

### 摘要

本文主張，因全球對於環境與動物福祉的關懷所導致的國際政治僵局，爭取動物代表權的批判議題在這個脈絡中將面臨嚴峻的難題。藉由分析路易斯·普斯霍約斯二〇〇九年的奧斯卡最佳紀錄片《血色海灣》，本文認為人們對於在倫理與道德層面上建立動物生命權的嘗試也面臨了一直存在的在地與全球、特殊和普遍之間的緊張關係，而這個張力遏制了《血色海灣》對於國族主義默許跨物種暴力的強烈批判。因此我們需要一個同時對物種與國族兩者更細膩詳盡的批判，強調物種之間的徹底滲透以及生態運動的跨國族特色，才能夠解消世界主義式的政治計畫下（包括環境主義）規範性的人類化。

**關鍵字：**環境主義，世界主義，日本，海豚，國際捕鯨委員會