Studies in Documentary Film
Volume 7 Number 3
© 2013 Intellect Ltd Feature Article. English language. doi: 10.1386/sdf.7.3.209_1

FEATURE ARTICLE

JANET WALKER
University of California, Santa Barbara

Eavesdropping in *The Cove*: Interspecies ethics, public and private space, and trauma under water

ABSTRACT

The Cove *is an activist documentary that seeks to stop the dolphin drives in Taiji, Japan in which tens of thousands of dolphins annually are herded into a hidden lagoon where some are culled for dolphinaria and the majority slaughtered. This pro-cetacean effort proceeds by means of an intense, clandestine field deployment of high-tech cameras and audio recorders to infiltrate the forbidden above- and under-water space of the lagoon and expose the stabbing, suffering and dying. Responses to the film have questioned whether the resulting depiction of the coastal whalers is unethical, anti-Japanese or even racist, and whether the film's focus on dolphins neglects the broader catastrophe of marine life depletion. This article develops a spatial media approach to reframe these and raise other questions. Extrapolating from 'eavesdropping' – a research practice that marine mammal scientists use to study dolphin-to-dolphin and dolphin-to-human communication – the article explores how* The Cove *extends documentary modalities to observe, hear and interact with dolphins in their aquatic environment. The article also considers how*

KEYWORDS
documentary
mapping
geography
trauma
dolphins
whaling

certain philosophical and geographical concepts resonate with trauma studies and in an interspecies context. In short, The Cove *is conceptualized here as a device for mapping and navigating the ecology of the dolphin–human interaction.*

> Right now I'm focused in on that one little body of water where that slaughter takes place. If we can't stop that – if we can't fix that – forget about the bigger issues. There's no hope.
>
> (Ric O'Barry)

> [T]he impact of a traumatic event lies precisely in. … its refusal to be simply located, in its appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time.
>
> (Caruth 1995: 9)

The eyes of dolphins are located on the sides of their heads and may be 'pooched out' to enable a full 180-degree field of view on each side or limited binocular vision towards the area below the snout or 'rostrum'. Dolphins have spherical lenses – as distinguished from the flattened human lens – that enable the animal to focus both in air and in water. After a few observations of a dolphin 'speed-swimming upside down just below the surface' of the ocean, marine mammal researcher Kathleen Dudzinski realized that the animal was using binocular vision to see above the surface in order to catch flying fish the moment they reentered the water (Dudzinski and Frohoff 2008: 23). Even more developed is the dolphin's acoustic sense of echolocation, or the use of pulsed sounds or clicks to locate and investigate objects or features of the environment.

Dudzinski and her collaborator Toni Frohoff make a point of conducting their research under water, where dolphins as small cetaceans spend about 99 per cent of their time, instead of from land or boats, the surface vantage point from which most of the existing scientific data about dolphin behaviour has been gathered. They call their practice 'eavesdropping', and their 'Etiquette for Interacting with Dolphins' includes not touching, chasing or feeding the creatures, but rather watching, listening, diving down and ceding them their space (2008: 166–68). Following the lead of these dolphin researchers, I seek to watch and listen to dolphins under water – while ceding them their space – through an improvised environmental media approach to *The Cove* (Psihoyos, 2009), a recent activist documentary about the yearly slaughter of dolphins in a 'killing lagoon' formed by the coastline around Taiji, Japan.

Working with long-time pro-dolphin activist Richard 'Ric' O'Barry, the Oceanic Preservation Society (OPS) has created the film to help put a stop to this annual hunt, in which a limited number of animals are culled for dolphinaria but the majority are driven around the point and killed. The subject matter is harrowing – a graphic title cites the estimated figure of 23,000 dolphin and porpoise deaths per year in Japan[1] – and the film a labour of compassion.

In academic settings, conversations have concentrated on whether the depiction of the coastal fishermen in the US film is ethnocentric, anti-Japanese, or even racist; and whether its laser focus on dolphins and dolphin hunting in Taiji neglects what would be a more appropriate critique of the *global* seaquarium industry (including enormous profits being reaped in the west) and wild fish depletion. In other words, scholars have questioned the documentary ethics of the film's incursion into Japanese waters.[2] My own sense is that the

1. Dolphins are not whales, but they are classified along with porpoises and whales within the order cetacea. According to Save Japan Dolphins, An Earth Institute Project, the Japanese government Fisheries Department issues annual permits to kill dolphins, porpoises and small whales. This source places the number of permits issued in 2011 at 19,300, http://savejapandolphins.org/take-action/frequently-asked-questions. Accessed 21 June 2012.
2. One event that occasioned such debate was a panel discussion I convened with presenters Toni Frohoff, Simon Hutchins and Peggy Oki. '*The Cove:* Thinking Through the Dolphin-Human Interaction', University of California, Santa Barbara, 4 November 2009. I would also like to cite, with gratitude, the lively discussion that followed my presentation of 'Eavesdropping in *The Cove*: Interspecies Ethics, Public and Private Space, and Media under Water' as a conference paper at Visible Evidence 18, New York, 11–14 August 2011.

film does acknowledge, but to a limited extent, the global network of dolphinaria, the machinations of the International Whaling Commission (which historically has not been recognized as having jurisdiction over small cetaceans) and catastrophic overfishing. These topics will be taken up below, along with a discussion of the film's nuanced distinctions between the handful of Taiji whalers and the broader Japanese public.

In any case, I want to begin by placing these critical intersectionalities in abeyance in order to concentrate on dolphins. What can learn by immersing ourselves in the film's dolphinophilia, even if we must breach it, in the final analysis, with our own transgressive criticality?[3] And since *The Cove*'s ecology is one of captivity and slaughter, how might the film's focus on dolphins enable us to engage with trauma studies concepts in an interspecies context? Bridging between 'eavesdropping' as a marine mammal research practice and 'observation' as a documentary function or mode (Sobchack and Sobchack 1980; Nichols 1991), this article will explore how director Louie Psihoyos and company's campaign for filming in the cove – which operation is reflexively featured in the film itself – makes visible the capacity of documentary film not only to sense and to represent but actually to remap and remake the natural environment. This article will also investigate how the film's technological and aesthetic practices for sounding out animal voices make audible questions about the inclusion of dolphins subjected to violence as a group appropriately thought of in terms of traumatization, genocide, and/or Giorgio Agamben's articulations of the concept of 'bare life'. Informed by philosophies of critical human geography and ecocentrism as well as documentary and trauma studies, this analysis offers an interdisciplinary, or perhaps it would not be too bold to say ecosystemic, approach to the development of spatial and environmental media studies in the era of sea life depletion.

3. Jaimie Baron designed and chaired the Visible Evidence panel, 'Transgressive Bodies, Bodily Transgressions: Exposure and Occlusion in Recent Documentary Films', on which an early version of this article was presented as a talk.

4. Multiple species of dolphins are targeted off the coast of Japan. See http://savejapandolphins.org/take-action/frequently-asked-questions, accessed 20 June 2012.

THINKING ACROSS SPECIES

The Cove builds its pro-cetacean argument on the basis of protagonist Ric O'Barry's critique of anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to non-human animals. Having made a career in the 1960s as a dolphin trainer with the Miami Seaquarium and then for the *Flipper* TV series about a Bottlenose dolphin[4] who befriends and aids the warden of a marine preserve (NBC TV, 1964–1967), O'Barry became an activist when Kathy, one of the dolphins 'playing' Flipper, died in his arms. She 'looked me right in the eye, and [audible whoosh as O'Barry sucks air into his mouth] took a breath and didn't take another one. And I just let her go and she sank straight down'. 'On her belly. To the bottom of the tank'. The next day, O'Barry was 'in the Bimini jail for trying to free a dolphin'. He goes on strongly to criticize the marine 'captivity industry' with its *Flipper*-inspired dolphin shows for making Taiji hunting vastly more profitable than it would be if its object were solely the harvest and sale of dolphin meat, which 'meat' has to be sneaked onto the market because of its high mercury content and because the whale meat sold for food in Japanese groceries has *not* traditionally included that of the small cetaceans.

A major problem, O'Barry tells us, is the popular tendency to misinterpret the 'dolphin smile' as a reflection of the animal's emotional state. This physiognomic feature that scientists know to be a 'a by-product of the structure of the lower jaw' and 'result of a morphological adaptation for sound reception' (Dudzinski and Frohoff 2008: 90) 'creates the illusion they're always happy' (O'Barry), thus contributing to people's felt affinity with dolphins, and, in turn, to the popularity of dolphin shows and swim with dolphins programmes.

O'Barry and the OPS refute the avowed educational value of captivity-based programmes that supposedly teach children and adults to love dolphins and other sea creatures. The truth of the matter is the other way around, Expedition and Technical Director Simon Hutchins explained to students in my course on Films of the Natural and Human Environment and other audience members present at the panel discussion of the film (see Hutchins 2009). As with zoos, the dolphin shows are popular because people *already* love dolphins (the film includes a shot of a little girl hugging a stuffed dolphin next to a display shelf of the fuzzy marine mammals) and humans may benefit emotionally and socially from this felt connection to entertaining dolphins. But the benefits are far from mutual. An apt comparison may be the English bulldog's debilitating respiratory problems that exist as result of breeding for a pushed-in snout more desirable to humans (Serpell 2005 cites Thompson 1996). In the case of dolphins, the cuteness factor exploited not only fails to raise consciousness for cetacean protection, but also serves as a contributing factor to their captivity. O'Barry mentions that the sound of tank filtration systems has been identified as a cause of stress and even death in dolphins as acoustic creatures.

The Cove is therefore critical of the *Flipper* TV show's anthropomorphizing tendencies,[5] exploited by O'Barry himself in his younger days. 'I feel somewhat responsible … because it was the *Flipper* TV series that created this multi-billion dollar industry', he confesses (however grandly). We see O'Barry pulling a dolphin into a boat in a 'behind the scenes' documentary from 1962 included on the DVD of the film: 'She seems to sense that she has come home; that no harm will come to her now. She is safe', intones the narrator. Sandwiched between O'Barry's statement and the Orwellian publicity documentary, the show itself, with its catchy theme song, animated intro and signature shot of an open-mouthed 'laughing' Flipper, reads as enormously exploitive of both the dolphin cast and its child audiences. The premise that Flipper lives in the wild and helps human 'friends' of his own volition is efficiently revealed by *The Cove* as a pretense riding on the backs of the five female Flipper dolphins held in captivity in the Florida saltwater lake.

And yet, the film is actually structured around a contradiction: coexisting with its critique of anthropomorphism is a tendency to engage audiences in the lives of dolphins 'by appeal to mental states similar to the ones we take to explain our own behavior'; that is, by appeal to the rhetoric of anthropomorphism (Mitchell 2005: 101). As O'Barry explains in the film, and presumably at his many speaking engagements around the world, at the time of its occurrence he understood – and still today construes – the *Flipper* dolphin Kathy's death as a suicide:

> She was really depressed. I could feel it. I could see it. And she committed suicide in my arms. I know that's a very strong word, suicide, but you have to understand, dolphins and other whales are not automatic air breathers like we are. Every breath they take is a conscious effort. And so they can end their life whenever life becomes too unbearable by not taking the next breath. And it's in that context that I use the word suicide. …

O'Barry and the film despair of dolphins who are 'all stressed out', 'freaked out', 'really depressed' or suicidal. And of course, all of the dolphins who played Flipper had names they were given and that O'Barry continues to use. To the extent that the value of dolphin life is ascribed to their similarity to humans, the film may be seen as being caught up in the very anthropomorphic thinking it purports to reject.

5. In point of fact, although *The Cove* contrasts *Flipper*'s anthropomorphic deception with its own avowed pro-dolphin sensibility, we may discern in individual episodes of the *Flipper* TV show a critique of animal captivity, if not anthropomorphism per se. For example, Season 1, Episode 6 (24 October 1964), is entitled 'Dolphin for Sale' and concerns a dishonest fisherman who 'lures Flipper from the preserve and wants to sell him to a circus' (Wikipedia entry for 'Flipper [1964 TV Series]'). Later that season ('Mr. Marvello', Episode 9, 7 November 1964), a ventriloquist tries to acquire Flipper for his circus act by convincing kids and others that Flipper talks. This deceit is characterized as such and the plot itself promotes Flipper's continued 'freedom' in the lagoon.

But this is not to fail *The Cove* on its own litmus test requiring the rejection of anthropomorphism. In fact, I am intrigued by the possibilities of *The Cove*'s anthropomorphic proclivities for facilitating this conceptual move from a human-based to a more inclusive trauma studies perspective. The potential of anthropomorphic thinking for interspecies understanding has been addressed by scholars from various fields. As historian and philosopher of science Sandra Mitchell argues,

> anthropomorphism is neither prima facie bad or necessarily nonscientific. It can be both, but it need not be either. There has been a recent resurgence of interest in anthropomorphism, attributable to two developments – the rise of cognitive ethology and the requirements of various forms of expanded, environmental ethics.
>
> (2005: 100)

With careful attention to rhetorical logic, scientific experimentation and empirical findings, Mitchell explores claims of human-to-non-human causal isomorphism – that is, similarities in 'neurophysiological structure, sensory apparatus, and so on' (2005: 110) – and finds them valid in certain cases. For example, 'we are comfortable using the results of drug tests on mice to infer the consequences of those drugs on human biochemistry' (2005: 111). Toni Frohoff, for her part, embraces the term 'zoomorphism' to emphasize what humans and other animals share as distinguished from how 'they' are like 'us', thus affirming the interspecies bond (personal communication 4 November 2009).

From this perspective, we may sense *The Cove*'s array of felt affinities, observational findings and interspecies listening as sophisticated and useful for the identification of genuine commonalities. Kathy the dolphin watching the *Flipper* show (as we see, on a portable TV at the end of the dock) was able to distinguish between herself and the other Flipper players, O'Barry claims. Here he invokes the well-known mirror self-recognition argument that a dolphin knows when looking in the mirror that it is herself or himself that she or he sees. 'They are self-aware the way humans are self-aware', he explains. The point is supported by scientific research and reporting: 'when presented with a mirror, dolphins take the opportunity to check their teeth and body parts they can't normally see, like their anal slit' (Angier 2010). One of the experiments done to confirm self-recognition is marking dolphins on their sides with a (presumably non-toxic) pen, and seeing if they swim immediately to a mirror in the tank to turn and check what has just occurred on their bodies. They do. *The Cove* is very much in keeping with these scientific studies of dolphins and other cetaceans (Angier 2010; Leake 2010) in its emphasis on these creatures' individual self-awareness, feelings and emotions, non-human intelligence (but intelligence nonetheless), inter- and extra-group sociality and ability to think about the future.

TRAUMA UNDER WATER

However, the film's recognition of dolphin sentience raises ethical quandaries in light of species differentiation, and in the space of the cove. O'Barry states at the beginning of the film that 'Nobody has actually seen what takes place [in the killing lagoon] and so the way to stop it is to expose it'. The dolphin hunters, including one man the film-makers dub 'Private Space', would seem to concur. These members of the Taiji Fishermen's Cooperative (the name

featured in their hand-lettered signs) seek to block the film-makers' access to the cove and the visibility of the hunt. The project team must therefore make a concerted effort to film the hunt, which effort involves eluding the Cooperative members either by physically getting around them or by filming clandestinely when they are not present.

The challenge was to present the full sensory environment of the slaughter as, in Psihoyos' words, a 'three dimensional experience of what's going on in that lagoon'. Hence the high-tech operation depicted reflexively and organized to culminate in two 'missions' (first, 'planting hydrophones' 'to get the auditory experience' along with underwater footage, and second, keeping the sound theme alive, the 'full orchestra').[6] Via the film itself, and in a more detailed fashion through the DVD's special features, we become privy to the necessary technical innovations: the use of gyro-stabilized high definition cameras, protocols for remote operation and, of course, the fake rock housings in which cameras could be hidden above or under water created by artists at the world-renowned visual and special effects studio Industrial Light and Magic.[7] The film features numerous shots of equipment cases (at airport baggage check-in, pushed along on hotel caddies, lined up in a hallway outside hotel rooms), and multiple sequences showing the team innovating, testing, manipulating, hooking up and joking about the need to peel the OPS labels off equipment.

Strong capability for aural eavesdropping under water is referenced repeatedly in the film. On camera Hutchins mentions the use of hydrophones. In edited voices over, we hear 'high tech sound devices put in underwater housing' being referred to: 'I wanted to hear the dolphins in the lagoon, you know, how deep it was', explains Psihoyos. The sequencing in this passage of the film explains that world-class free diver Mandy-Rae Cruickshank was brought on board the project because she could descend in depth without the need for unwieldy, noisy ('clanky') scuba equipment that would compromise 'stealth and speed' (Hutchins 2010).

In fact, Dudzinski's and Frohoff's notion of 'eavesdropping' is defined specifically in relation to the aural dimension:

> When we … think of eavesdropping, we usually think of someone listening to a conversation without being observed – from behind a closed door, around a corner, or on a telephone extension. Remaining undetected allows us to learn much information from, and about, others.
>
> (2008: 64)

'But snooping on dolphins is a whole different story than eavesdropping on a sister's phone conversation', they continue. Dudzinski works with a 'mobile video/acoustic system (MVA)' that she developed beginning in 1992 and that now takes the form of two hydrophones 'located at the ends of a bar attached to the housing, where they are plugged into a stereo video camera' and 'a third hydrophone, a digital audio recorder, and a circuit board to capture and record echolocation from wild dolphins' (2008: 81). Unlike Jacques-Yves Cousteau in *Le Monde du silence/The Silent World* (Cousteau and Malle, 1956) mocking the vocalizations of a sperm whale ('I can hardly believe my ears, the giant squeaks like a mouse'!), Dudzinski and Frohoff are most emphatic that the whistles, clicks, screams and barks that dolphins make are a sophisticated form of communication.

From the perspective of the documentary studies, referencing the defining quality of the observational camera to disappear into the woodwork, we might

6. Hutchins reports that there were at least six equipment planting and retrieving missions and two missions to plant hydrophones (Hutchins 2010).

7. Cameras were dubbed 'Nest' (looks like a bird's nest), 'Thermal' (used during the secret missions to detect the presence of whalers, but ended up documenting OPS's own activities), 'Rocks Cams', 'Heli Cam' and 'Blood Cam'. There was also a unmanned drone (painted to look like a whale and named Kathy) created for the purpose of aerial photography and, as indicated in the DVD special features, because 'even if the blimp didn't succeed and we got caught …, everybody loves a balloon'.

note that in this case the 'fly-on-the-wall' has sonar. Hearing the sounds of cetaceans may indeed remind us that they are sentient, acoustic creatures able to communicate with one another, if not with humans in a language we understand.[8]

One of the film's most powerful audio-visualizations, therefore, is a gruesome underwater seascape captured by a planted, submerged camera. In it we see waving plant life and a school of fish progressively enveloped by a red cloud of dolphin blood mixed with seawater. On the accompanying soundtrack, sounds that have been dredged up are made accessible to auditors on land. Over the roar of the sea through the hydrophone we hear the sound of dolphin whistles.

Back at the hotel, the team listen with rapt attention to their recordings of dolphins communicating with one another. 'When [the dolphins are] in that killing cove and their babies are being slaughtered in front of them, they're aware of that. They can anticipate what's gonna happen to them', O'Barry states. Intercut with shots of the laptop and digital audio recorder we see medium close-ups of individual team members. They are listening not only to everyday dolphin vocalizations but also, silently, respectfully, to the sounds made by particular groups of dolphins in the Taiji lagoon while under attack. Their faces reflect the import of bearing witness, retrospectively. 'It's an eerie sound, isn't it? The dolphins we're hearing now are all dead', says O'Barry. 'Tomorrow there will be another group replacing them.'[9] Elsewhere in the film, pointing to the cove and the smaller lagoon off to the side, O'Barry characterizes the place as 'a dolphin's worst nightmare'.

* * *

Writing about Freud's use of Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* to theorize persistent patterns of suffering in certain individuals, trauma studies scholar Cathy Caruth emphasizes that the experience Freud termed 'traumatic neurosis' 'emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one simply cannot leave behind' (Caruth 1996: 2). Tasso's hero Tancred unwittingly wounds his lover twice over: first, mortally, 'in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight', Freud wrote. Then, '[a]fter her burial',

> he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders' army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.
>
> (Caruth 1996: 2; quoting Freud)

Caruth extends Freud's discussion of this traumatic repetition compulsion not only by developing the concept of traumatic 'belatedness' (the notion that trauma is experienced belatedly as a haunting rather than at the time and place of 'original' events) but also by emphasizing that the trauma that the wound 'speaks' is *both* that of Tancred as (unwitting) perpetrator and that of Clorinda as the 'other' who cries out. Caruth also meditates on the significance for psychoanalytic historiography of Freud's having turned to literature to explain his ideas.

8. Whale vocalizations are also used as a sound bridge to the historical footage of a 1971 'Save the Whale' movement rally in Trafalgar Square, London. There, the whale sounds – haunting cries – recorded by pioneering cetacean researcher Roger Payne, Ph.D. were amplified and broadcast over the gathered crowd. *Cove* interviewee Dr John Potter, Underwater Acoustics Consultant, remarks on the sorely ironic one-way communication effect of using sign language to train and command captive dolphins, since, as he quips, 'dolphins don't *have* hands'.

9. The film also includes a passage of Cruickshank on the shore of the cove crying as she watches a wounded baby dolphin that had somehow leapt one of the barrier nets take its last breath and sink below the surface. In voice-over narration intercut with on-camera testimony, she describes in tearful words and graceful hand gestures the death of this dolphin separated from its pod which had been driven into the killing lagoon.

If willing to psychologize Ric O'Barry, we might say that the distress discernible in his manner – evidence of his traumatization? – is produced from the inadvertent injury he himself inflicted on the dolphins by maintaining them in captivity, as well as from the recognition of the fatal plight of those whose cries he now hears:

> I watched them give birth. I nursed them back to health when they were sick. Had I known then what I know now I would have raised enough money to buy them away from the Seaquarium and set them free. That would have been the right thing to do … But I was as ignorant as I could be for as long as I could be.

He reflects on a prior state of disavowal: he did not know (that he had wounded, was wounding, his beloved dolphins by keeping them captive at the end of the dock in the TV show's salt lake location) because he didn't *want* to know, while living the high life, buying a new Porsche each year. As Caruth writes,

> Just as Trancred does not hear the voice of Clorinda until the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simply violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on.
>
> (Caruth 1996: 4)

But then O'Barry did come to consciousness, on the day that Kathy 'cried out from the wound' (Caruth 1996: 3). He has spent the rest of his life to date ('10 years building that the industry up' and 'the last 35 years trying to tear it down') belatedly experiencing the trauma of captive dolphins and bloody dolphin hunts all around the world and year after year in Taiji (with his captor role now played by hunters); hearing in reality – and in his head – the fishermen's metallic banging to build their wall of sound; and hearing through recordings the desperation of the penned dolphins calling to one another, to their separated babies or to humans in the vicinity.

Whether or not one gives credence to these speculations about O'Barry's (or the dolphins') psychological state(s), the narrative structure of *The Cove* may be said to parallel Tasso's story and that of traumatic experience in the repetition of the slaughter and collective (in this case) human culpability. The dolphins in the cove may well be construed as embodying 'that other voice' (Caruth 1996: 8) – acoustically present but linguistically incomprehensible to humans.

And yet, while recognizing *The Cove*'s major contribution to principled advocacy for cetaceans and sustainable ecology, I would submit that it could have moved more decidedly in the anthropomorphic direction it signals. Just as Caruth regards the story of Tancred not only 'as a parable of trauma and of its uncanny repetition' but also as 'a parable of psychoanalytic theory itself as it listens to a voice that *it cannot fully know* but to which it nonetheless bears witness' (Caruth 1996: 9, emphasis added), *The Cove*'s spatialized, traumatic witnessing is (*necessarily*, if we are of psychoanalytic bent) deaf to certain voices and discourses to which it nevertheless bears witness.

Drawing on the Ancient Greek distinction between zoē ('expressing the simple fact of living common to all living beings' [1998: 1]) and *bios*

('the form or way of living proper to an individual or group' [1998: 1]) as well as the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben suggests in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* that '[t]he fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion' (1998: 8) and perhaps also voice/language, with these pairs coinciding in a 'zone of irreducible indistinction' (1998: 9). The book's 'protagonist' is a figure of Roman law included to be excluded or existing to be 'killed and yet not sacrificed' (1998: 8). But as Matthew Chrulew has brilliantly analysed, in a subsequent book Agamben extends his discussion from the problem of 'humanity animalised' to the consideration of non-human animal life itself (2012: 55). Chrulew explains that whereas according to Agamben's broader argument 'the exception of bare life is tied to the attempt *to distinguish* humanity from animality', alternatively, in Agamben's 'historical task, man and animal are divided, and thereby *bound* in the urgent repetition of that division, as a consequence of which both animals, and animalised humans, are exposed to violence' (2012: 55, emphasis added; Chrulew cites Agamben 2004). Approaching the film from the perspective of Agamben's and Chrulew's thought, we may come to understand the cove's dolphins as figures relegated *by the hunters* to the (low) status of bare life – stripped of power, existing precisely for their 'capacity to be killed' (Agamben 1998: 8) – but held *by the film* to be exposed to violence in and through this 'urgent repetition' of the catastrophic division of man and animal.

Perhaps, then, the protagonist- makers of the documentary observe their dolphin etiquette too well, filming without interfering, hanging back from ultimate recognition of dolphin existence. Biologists who came out publicly against a proposed IWC policy change that would have specified how many whales of each species could be 'sustainably harvested' concluded instead 'that maybe we shouldn't talk about *what* we're harvesting or harpooning, but *whom*' (Angier 2010, emphasis added).[10] The OPS crew have chosen to refrain from deep ecology's call for civil disobedience (Naess 1989: 29) or the type of forcible interventions for which environmental activist Paul Watson, founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, has become known; the film's first line includes Psihoyos saying, 'We tried to do the story legally'.

What I would suggest – with all due respect for the restraint, wisdom, legality and probable success-over-time of the route the film-makers took – is that their acceptance of the self-consciousness of dolphins complicates their choice not to intervene in the series of massacres to which the film bears witness. Agamben levels his thinking against this horrible exclusion that we must nevertheless acknowledge in order to change:

> … until a completely new politics – that is, a politics no longer founded on the *exceptio* of bare life – is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the [Aristotelian] 'beautiful day' of life will be given citizenship only either through blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the [Debordian] society of the spectacle condemns it.
>
> (1998: 11)

Notwithstanding its insistence on the value of interspecies mutuality, in a context where humanitarian efforts are generally confined to humans, *The Cove* crashes up against an anthropomorphic conundrum.

10. Returning from this perspective to the mirror test for dolphin self-recognition, I wonder whether a given dolphin subject might frame the problem of being marked with a pen as one of 'what has this human done do me'?

WHALERS AS OTHERS

Of course, marine mammal hunters are also part of this ecosystem. If dolphins are acknowledged as sentient beings and some are even given credence as individuals, how are the 'whalers' (Psihoyos' term) depicted? In a popular episode of the cartoon satire *South Park* (Parker and Stone 1997) entitled 'Whale Whores' (Season 13, Episode 11), a horde of samurai warriors storm the Denver Aquarium during a child's birthday party at the Dolphin Encounter exhibit. We have just been introduced to the dolphins Trigger, Dolly and Bubbles, when, wielding their spears (and to the sound of someone crying 'Oh, no, it's the Japanese'), the warriors proceed to stab the captive dolphins in the tank. With the bloodied carcasses in the foreground, and as the group runs off, one (cartoon) man and then another turns back towards the tank and yells in Japanese-accented English, 'Fuck you, dolphin'.

This brilliant and biting *South Park* satire captures the cultural and ethical complexities of the cetacean activism in which *Whale Wars* (an Animal Planet reality television series featuring Paul Watson in his role as Captain aboard various ships seeking to stop Japanese whaling activities on the high seas) and *The Whale Warrior: Pirate for the Sea* (also with Paul Watson; directed by Ron Colby, 2010) as well as *The Cove* participate. Apart from rhyming with 'whale wars', the exact significance of the title 'whale whores' is unclear (nobody – nobody in the episode, that is – is literally prostituting him/herself to satisfy an uncontrollable desire for whale meat – as in the urban expression 'coke whore'). But it surely nails the anti-whaling caricature of 'The Japanese' as addicted to going after whales (and small cetaceans, i.e. dolphins). Still, there is a rational explanation for this killing impulse, the *South Park* episode purports. From the Prime Minister on down, the Japanese mistakenly believe that a dolphin and a whale piloted the Enola Gay airplane that bombed Hiroshima. When they 'find out' that the pilots were actually a chicken and a cow, the Japanese become 'normal, like us' in their eating habits.

The Cove makes a point of distinguishing between (1) Taiji whalers and whale industry personnel and (2) the Japanese populace and individual Japanese researchers and public authorities. The former are presented as willing to attack interlopers and greedy enough to poison their own children with mercury-laden dolphin meat in school lunches. At one point O'Barry is shown speaking through a translator to one of the hunters:

> O'Barry: Does he want to know if he's poisoning the bodies of other Japanese that he's selling the meat to?
>
> Translator: No. He doesn't want to know.

At best, the hunters are misguided in their view, reported by Psihoyos, that mammals are gobbling up all the fish such that killing dolphins is 'an issue of pest control'. Or they are disingenuous. O'Barry says that fishermen have told him that dolphin hunting is their tradition. But he refutes the claim, noting that it cannot be a cultural tradition if the Japanese people do not even know that dolphin hunting is occurring – or that dolphin meat is being sold for food. Members of the public are presented either as victims of a media blackout of the issue or, in the cases of the researchers and officials, as having seen the light.

When we hear O'Barry say that 'Nobody has actually seen what takes place back there [in the killing lagoon] and so the way to stop it is to expose it', we are seeing footage of a fishing boat disappearing behind a rocky outcropping headed for the secret lagoon. Members of the Taiji Fishermen's Cooperative

are willing to cull scores of dolphins for seaquariums, but they are not willing to harpoon thousands in public view. Thus, the circuit of secrecy and fear is closed. While the film-makers attempt to infiltrate the cove without being seen, the fishermen also try to avoid being immediately observed or filmed.

The latter are not completely successful. Following O'Barry's statement that the cove killing action is heretofore unwitnessed, there is a sequence of film-makers v. fishermen: shaky, angled shots, pushed off balance by the jockeying for position; one guy holds up a 'Don't Take Photos!' sign to block the camera's view while another swats the lens with his cap.

Of course, images from the planted cameras are indeed retrieved. They show hunters pulling their boats alongside the cordoned off dolphins, killing dozens of animals with multiple stabs, and grappling them into the boats with barbed hooks. One key camera has been positioned to aim outward from shore, another aims shoreward from the mouth of the cove. Different angles and shot distances have been achieved by varying the zoom of the cameras on each of multiple nights of filming, and through digital processing.

In the notorious killing sequence near the end of the film, we see the water in the cove turned blood red, in strong colour contrast to the white and aquamarine painted boats that glide along its surface. A scuba diver surfaces, blows water from his snorkel, and dives back down in search of dolphin carcasses on the bottom (where visibility must be next to nil), his bright yellow flippers the last we see as he is enveloped by the opaque fluid. The soundtrack is a mix of dolphin whistles recorded under water, the above water ambient sounds of the hunters, and the musical score. An improvised flute melody is heard, the wind instrument invoking and harmonizing with the voices of the dolphins.

This is the material (snippets of which are included in the film's trailer) that has kept audiences away while at the same time guaranteeing the film's terrible legitimacy as a document of what has occurred and continues to this day: the low-tech but highly organized, profitable and prolific annual killing of tens of thousands of socially attuned and self-conscious creatures.

I would maintain that the dolphin slaughter footage is shocking because the actions documented are understood by those in film and many in the film's audiences as cruel and unethical, and by Psihoyos himself as genocidal, for being directed at a particular group it is assumed may be decimated with impunity. Whereas the Nazis succeeded in precluding films of killing during the Holocaust such that 'there is only one known piece of motion picture footage [showing killing action], lasting about two minutes' (Hirsch 2004: 1),[11] the fishermen in Taiji were not as successful.

Psihoyos' specific reference is to the 'banality of genocide', which phrase he uses (on the commentary track) to describe the casual attitude of the whalers in the killing sequence.[12] In this regard, and illustrative of the incredible revelations clandestine filming may produce (Figure 1 is a still frame of a shot taken by a perfectly located, hidden camera), we eavesdrop on a conversation among the whalers at dawn preparing for the day's labours.

Standing around the fire, reminiscing about past whaling experiences, the cohort display a casual camaraderie. A few minutes later, once we have seen the killing action, a shot is inserted of one of the men pouring blood-infused water to douse the fire. The whalers might be just any group of working men, discussing the physical rigours of the job in a matter-of-fact manner, smoking as they chat amongst themselves, unwinding as they bring their catch to shore. But this is big business. A graphic title has informed us previously that an animal for a dolphinaria might garner $150,000 and the carcasses add up to hundreds of thousands of pounds for sale.

11. Joshua Hirsch reports that the existing film is 8mm amateur footage of Jews who had been rounded up and shot by a firing squad in a pit in Latvia, and that the film is held at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem with a copy at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

12. Cavalieri explicitly discusses whaling in the context of genocide.

Figure 1: Dawn in the killing lagoon. Image from The Cove *courtesy of Oceanic Preservation Society.*

Should a question arise at to the ethics of filming these men without their knowledge, one might address if not resolve it with reference to Claude Lanzmann's secret filming of Franz Suchomel, SS Unterscharführer in *Shoah* (Lanzmann, 1985). There we see and hear Lanzmann promise Suchomel that his name won't be used (not to mention his image, which Suchomel does not know is being captured). But he is interviewed, named, and therefore singled out by the film as a Treblinka death camp participant.[13] The whalers, on the other hand, are not singled out for individual criticism (nor have any promises been made them).

The exception is 'Private Space'. He has been given this moniker by the film-makers, and an off-screen voice offers the opinion that these are the only words he knows in English. We see him throughout the film, including in the killing sequence where he jumps out of a boat and walks up the beach to warm his hands over the fire pit. Often we see him interacting with the film-makers: squatting by the side of the road to accost them as they come along, shouting into the lens – exerting a territorial imperative that must be defended through repeated engagements with the film-makers who did finally succeed in infiltrating 'Private Space's private space' (Psihoyos, commentary track). There is also a blurry image of Private Space looking right into the lens.

By filming and including in the finished work their own interactions with Private Space and others who would defend the cove's secret, the film-makers foreground their 'interactivity': 'a sense of … *situated* presence and *local* knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of film-maker and other' (Nichols 1991: 44, original emphasis). The fishermen's combative and self-serving attitudes are exposed.[14]

Are the Japanese in *The Cove* 'whale whores'? Not in the film's own terms. It is only this particular cohort of Taiji hunters and those who maintain them in business whose behaviour is impugned by the film. In fact, two conscientious Taiji Town Councilmen have made themselves available to be interviewed. 'If dolphin meat is used for school lunch it brings about terrible results', states one of the men.[15] The film's distinction among various constituencies is to be applauded, I believe, especially since the number of dolphin hunters involved in the slaughter is known to be small in relation to the overall number of

13. I have always been fascinated by the cock-eyed honesty of Lanzmann's having left in the film the promise to Suchomel that he makes in the very act of breaking it. He could have abandoned the material on the cutting room floor along with shots of the van from which the filming was handled remotely. Still, audiences would have guessed from the quality of the footage that it was filmed with a hidden camera, even without Lanzmann's on-screen acknowledgement of his subterfuge (see Erens 1986).

14. These interactions have much in common with what one could term the 'negative' interactivity Michael Moore purposely features when building a film around his failed attempts to get in to see General Motors CEO Roger Smith (*Roger & Me*, 1989) or to get a K-Mart employee to remove boxes of bullets from the store's shelves (*Bowling for Columbine*, 2002). But there are 'positive' interactions as well, both in Moore's *oeuvre* and in *The Cove*, when the film-makers and interview subjects are in agreement and talk together about matters of mutual concern (see footnote number 15 below).

15. Through an end title card, we learn that the councilmen did manage to have the dolphin meat removed from Taiji school children's lunches. Psihoyos also informs us in voice-over, that they risked 'if not their lives, then their livelihoods' to speak out. And on the commentary track he tells us that, subsequent to the filming, these officials were ostracized by the

fishermen in the area: perhaps something like two or three dozen dolphin hunters among a population of five hundred fishermen (McCurry 2009, 2010).

community and forced to reject the film. One man had to flee the town with his family because it became too dangerous to remain.

MAPPING *THE COVE*

What does it mean to speak – and listen – from the spot itself, from the very place where violent, catastrophic events occurred and continue to occur on an ongoing basis? The cove's physical geography is a key factor in its use as a net and buoy dolphin death camp. Dolphins really were and, as I write this, *are* being harpooned and grappled there. Through the film's 'site-seeing', in Giuliana Bruno's term, and site-hearing (less alliteratively) converged on Taiji, we experience vicariously the affective witnessing-from-the-place in which O'Barry, Psihoyos, Cruickshank and the others participate.

And yet, moving into position with trauma studies scholar Cathy Caruth, we may recognize as well that place is never firmly located, and there is an outside. Alluding to the spatial dimension of traumatic experience, Caruth writes that '[T]he impact of a traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, *in its refusal to be simply located*, in its appearance *outside the boundaries of any single place* or time' (1995: 9, emphasis added).

Further inspired by the insights of critical human geography and choosing at this point in the article to read expansively, I understand space in *The Cove* as *both* heavily material and also profoundly unassimilable and traumatic. 'What is geography beyond the charting of land masses, climate zones, elevations, bodies of water, populated terrains, nation states, geological strata and natural resource deposits?' asks critical human geography-influenced art historian Irit Rogoff (2000: 21). She provides a response, writing, in part, that geography is a 'mode of location' and 'epistemic category … grounded in issues of positionality' (2000: 21). Accordingly, I would submit that along with the cove's existence as a physical feature goes its meaning as an epistemological regime and site of discursive contestation.

Whereas O'Barry vows to concentrate on the 'one little body of water' as if its boundaries were clear, the film itself presents the cove as subject to multiple, competing constructions. At one point OPS member and

Figure 2: OPS appropriating the official map. Image from The Cove *courtesy of Oceanic Preservation Society.*

photographer/cinematographer Charles Hambleton describes how Japanese officials presented the film-makers with a map indicating the areas that were off limits, and how he asked to keep the map – ostensibly to know where *not* to go, but actually to reference the exact spots to penetrate and reconstruct in the filmic idiom (Figure 2).

The cove with its cliffs, mountains, and engineered tunnels, in addition to being presented through garnered documentary footage, is also re-presented as a digital animation created at significant expense (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The lagoon digitally re-presented. Image from The Cove *courtesy of Oceanic Preservation Society.*

These various maps do more than merely orient the viewer to the geography at hand. They also serve, first of all, to facilitate the filmic occupation of a furiously contested space, second, as a reminder that mapping is not an ideologically neutral proposition, and third, as a metonym for the film's work of constituting and reconstituting – the 'fatal environment'[16] it might seem only

16. This term is adapted from Slotkin.

Figure 4: Another angle on the labour of the slaughter. Image from The Cove *courtesy of Oceanic Preservation Society.*

to approach, observe and record. In its audio-visual reconstruction, the cove becomes the purview of film-makers and spectators who together infiltrate, inhabit, survey, map, shoot, record, fragment and ultimately mosaic back together – *in a different form*, precisely, as *The Cove* – this would-be off-limits space (Figure 4).

In and through our experience of *The Cove* (Figure 5), we may come to know more deeply the central insight of Henri Lefebvre's magisterial work, *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991, 1974: 229) that space itself is a social phenomenon and that 'occupied space gives direct expression … to the relationships upon which social organization is founded'.

Figure 5: Some of the clandestine camera positions from which the space of The Cove *is created as a film mosaic. Mapped by Janet Walker in Google Earth.*

In addition to construing the lagoon as both material and multiply produced, we may also observe the film's rendering of this space as both an exceptional 'geography of atrocity' (Robert Jan van Pelt uses this term in relation to Auschwitz-Birkenau during his participation in Errol Morris's film *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr.*, 1999) and also, somewhat paradoxically, as the hub of a global network. The dolphin trade practices, permitted by the Japanese central government and emanating from the killing cove, are exceptional not only in their robustness that the film amply displays, but also in comparison with those of most western dolphinaria. These latter rely on breeding programmes to replenish their Bottlenose Dolphin population even though trade in multiple dolphin species is regulated through the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and Bottlenose are not endangered (Alabaster 2010). But the film also

demonstrates Taiji's centrality and linkages to the seaquarium industry's 'dissipated accountability', to adopt Neil Narine's significant concept.[17] Passages in the film introduce the International Whaling Commission, as, precisely, an international body, albeit one that Japan attempts mightily to influence.[18] Hence the logic of the bright red curved lines that we see superimposed over a map of the world radiating outward from Taiji to points elsewhere, presumably designating dolphinaria, including in North America.

Even more crucial for this consideration of the extent and limits of the film's sea life/sea food cartography is the question of how it figures the wider problem of wild fish depletion. A time-lapse sequence of inventory movement at Tokyo's Tsukiji Market, the biggest wholesale fish market in the world, is interrupted by a title card that reads: 'A 2006 report in the journal *Science* predicts a total collapse of the world's fish stocks within 40 years at the current rate of fishing'. As *Cove* interviewee Michael Illiff of the Institute of Antarctic and South Ocean Studies at the University of Tasmania states: 'They [the Japanese] have a real fear that they'll run out of food. What more logical thing can they do but to catch whales to replace them?' This latter sequence, brief though it may be, does serve to locate dolphin hunting within a broad environmental and 'eco-economic' (Cubitt 2005) network of food production. But overfishing is neither extensively explored nor graphically prominent in the film. A new cartography might therefore be envisioned, with fish *and* non-human *and* human mammals included, and the small body of water off the Taiji coast as but one node in a mesh network with multiple intersections and lines radiating both in and out.

Imagining the contours of this broader ecosystem also enables as a rather different view of Taiji-based fishermen. The hidden camera and microphone that captured the hunters' apparently calloused attitudes around their campfire also captured the following oral historical account of marine life depletion:

> In Midway, Hawaii, you know Midway, Hawaii, I saw sperm whales from horizon to horizon. Just like dolphins. There was a time when sperm whales were as plentiful as dolphins. When I was in Chile I saw blue whales from horizon to horizon. Wherever you looked, the ocean was truly black. It was covered with blue whales. My arms were exhausted.

However inadvertently and indirectly, the sequence suggests (and Simon Hutchins has confirmed) that the older men among the Taiji group are former offshore whalers now working by necessity in coastal waters.[19] Thus, from the film itself one may glean that the lives of the film's whalers have been negatively affected by unsustainable fishing practices.

Researching beyond the film, international studies such as those conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Pulvenis de Séligny et al. 2008) and UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) (2004) and a 2010 study by Canadian, US and Australian researchers (Swartz et al. 2010) report the dire depletion of world fish stocks and a declining global seafood catch.

The Japanese fishing industry, among the largest in the world, has been greatly impacted by this situation. Commercial fleets have long plied territorial waters and been deployed in distant waters as well. But whereas in the 1950s, fishing's ecological footprint was concentrated in the coastal waters off Europe, North America and Japan, by 2005 it had expanded into the Southern Hemisphere and the high seas as new waters had to be sought

17. My thanks to Neil Narine for suggesting this concept and phrase drawn from his own research.

18. The film depicts, for example, the collusion between Japan and certain Caribbean member states that sell their votes to the wealthier nation for material gain.

19. 'The Old Timers were certainly experienced off shore whalers', he wrote (Hutchins 2010).

Figure 6: Mapping Taiji's dolphin trade. Image from The Cove *courtesy of Oceanic Preservation Society.*

for commercial exploitation (Swartz et al. 2010: 2). A recent report on Pacific Island Fisheries notes the 'steadiness in the Japanese purse-seine [a type of net fishing] fleet' in the area (Gillett and Cartwright 2010: 9). Even so, the Japanese fishing industry is declining due to a lack of wild fish and foreign competition that has lowered the price of the resource. Since the industry peak in the 1980s (Swartz et al. 2010: 2), the number of Japanese fishing boats has dropped (Pulvenis de Séligny et al. 2008: 46), as has the total deep-sea catch by three quarters between 1970 and 1999 (Kristof 1999: A4). The number of people employed in fishing has fallen correspondingly due to these and other factors, including the employment of lower paid foreign workers on what remains of Japan's deep-sea fishing fleet (Pulvenis de Séligny et al. 2008: 43).

With fish stocks in coastal waters severely exploited by commercial fleets, many fishing villages have lost population or their fishers have been forced to seek other work (Fackler 2008). Nicholas Kristof's (1999) *New York Times* commentary, 'Ah, When Nets Were Full, and So Was Life at Sea', sketches a very different portrait of the fishing community than does *The Cove*. Kristof reports that 'nearly half of Japan's 290,000 remaining fishermen are in their 60's and 70's' and the younger generation cannot make a living from fishing. Citing the statistic that '[o]nly 205,000 Japanese households – one-half of 1 percent of the total – are now engaged in fishing', he proceeds to describe the changed circumstances of coastal fishermen:

> [T]hey get most of their income from other sources. Some run sports fishing charter boats or even operate sightseeing boats for whale-watchers from the cities. 'There are just fewer and fewer fish out there,' said Tanisaku Makiyama, a 44-year-old fisherman. 'Many of the young fishermen are still single, unable to find a wife, because their incomes are so low'.
>
> (Kristof 1999: A4)

This description likely corresponds to the plight of the minority of Taiji fishermen who engage in dolphin hunting, among other workingmen whose

occupations have changed drastically with the situation. According to Simon Hutchins, the younger fishermen who appear in the film hunt dolphins during half the year and fish in the alternate season, thus expanding their options. Large commercial fishing fleets – and not these dolphin hunters – have depleted whale and fish populations, and thrown their former employees out of work through short-term, profit-driven and unsustainable practices. The whalers' memories of work-produced exhaustion harken back to years of fuller employment. We may choose to compare these fishermen to workers at a Hormel plant or other slaughterhouses in the US meat and poultry industries whose livelihoods have been compromised by the consolidation of wealth among the executives and stockholders. If only 'the Japanese' ate 'chicken' and 'cow' – as well they may one day if aquaculture proves insufficient to replace wild fish.

The dolphin hunters have their own video cameras. I wish I could see the footage they obtained: the reverse perspective on this contested territory. Singling out whalers as the villains of the piece is problematic to the extent that it inhibits an ecosystemic view not only of the multi-billion dollar marine mammal corporate infrastracture around the world, but also of the ecological catastrophe of worldwide wild sea life depletion.

Singling out dolphins is also problematic. Although I have swum with the film's anthropmorphism, the philosophy is limiting especially where it blurs into anthropocentrism. The film to some extent prizes dolphins because they are sentient, like us and not like fish, rather than because we and all the other animals are part of a larger ecosystem.[20] As discussed, one implication of this filmic logic is that *not* intervening in the immediate massacres to which the film bears witness could be construed as unconscionable. Perhaps even more saliently, the film's anthropocentrizing anthropomorphism inhibits acknowledgement of an ecocentric perspective in which sustainable hunting and fishing practices are seen as imperative, not only for the sake of dolphins and coastal Japanese, but because 'the entire ecosphere and ecological systems are thought to be of value' (Katz et al. 2000: xiii). Why not understand the dolphins in the cove as embodying not just 'that other voice' (Caruth 1996: 8) – acoustically present but linguistically incomprehensible to humans – but as one among many other voices to which we humans should attend?

20. O'Barry takes care in certain moments of the interview with him to emphasize dolphin 'sentience' over 'intelligence', presumably to avoid the very homology with the human brain that the film does nevertheless suggest.

EAVESDROPPING AS WITNESSING

The passages in the film showing dolphins in the wild are a huge relief, although we watch them, from the start, with prior and *Cove*-conveyed knowledge of dolphin captivity and slaughter. Distributed throughout the film, these sea-blue sequences of dolphins swimming and jumping above and surfing inside of waves are made even more expressive by the accompanying score featuring the music sounding to my ear like a plucked harp. In one such sequence, along with music and images of dolphins, we hear and see surfer and cetacean activist Dave Rastovich express what it feels like to look down into the water while surfing and see dolphins alongside as if in a glass case, and how his life was once saved by a dolphin who t-boned a shark coming right at him. In the main sequence of this nature – and it is truly transporting – free-diver Mandy-Rae Cruickshank is photographed underwater swimming with wild dolphins. We hear her narration – a rare human female voice in the film – intercut with an interview in which her eyes glow with excitement as

she describes the distinct feeling of 'understanding' that has passed between her and a dolphin on such an occasion.

> When you're out swimming in the ocean and you have whales and dolphins come by you, it is one of the most incredible experiences ever. It's so humbling that this wild creature would come up and be so interested in you. It's unbelievable really. Even though there's obviously no words spoken, you really feel like you're on some level communicating with them. Like there's an understanding between the two of you.

'I don't normally touch anything in the water', she continues, in keeping with Dudzinski's and Frohoff's eavesdropping etiquette. But in this case, the dolphin of its own volition swam right up and rolled into her hand, so she rubbed its belly. With Cruickshank and the film, 'we' submerge to be with the dolphins. Our diving down constitutes an action comparable if opposite to their spy-hopping or looking from below to above the surface; a kind of reciprocal breaching and perspective. Here there is no need to be a clandestine or even 'boring' observer. Zoomorphically speaking, the dolphins seem to welcome the underwater visits of the humans and the resulting engagement in their water world.

In a way, we, as viewers and auditors of the film, do come to listen after all. With reference to trauma theory, we may comprehend the address of the voice in *The Cove*, and the ecological crisis that the mercury poisoning (including of dolphins themselves and not just 'their meat') and decimation of dolphins represents, 'not as the story of the individual in relation to events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another' (Caruth 1996: 8). This form of listening is also tantamount to 'bearing witness' as defined by clinical psychiatrist and theorist of Holocaust-related trauma, Dori Laub. It is a form of listening 'to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence' (Laub 1992: 57). It 'includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time' (Laub 1992: 57), and 'may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound' (Caruth 1996: 8).

Imagine if dolphins had their own cameras (even though, as Dr John Potter remarks in the film, they don't have hands). *National Geographic* is engaged with scientists in an on-going project to attach sensing devices including cameras to marine creatures. 'By allowing us this animal's-eye view, Crittercams help to solve scientific mysteries', the Crittercam Chronicles website reports. In one such video posted to YouTube, we see footage from a small camera suctioned to the back of a pilot whale showing whales 'socializing at depth', according to the narration, and diving down to feed at the astonishingly low depth of 2300 feet.[21] Of course, this project was not initiated nor carried out by marine mammals. But it may inspire thinking about life and death in the cove from a dolphin's-eye perspective.

Another way to infiltrate the cove would have been to attach cameras to the dolphins out at sea before they were driven in. This procedure might have garnered individualized footage of an animal under attack, but of course the cameras would have been difficult if not impossible to retrieve. In any case, I wish the dolphins would learn to give the Taiji cove a wide berth and to warn one another.[22] This may not be entirely far-fetched. Interviewee and film-maker-activist Hardy Jones mentions another spot, Iki Island, where

21. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8kEJyur_Co, accessed 21 June 2011.

22. Cetacean volition is discussed by Paola Cavalieri who begins her essay, 'Cetaceans: From Bare Life to Nonhuman Others' with an account of a white sperm whale who 'terrorized whalers', it was thought deliberately, off the coast of Chile in the first half of the nineteenth century.

dolphins once were hunted, but are no longer found. Rather than assuming the pods that passed through the area have been wiped out, I prefer to imagine that they have learned to avoid the spot.

SURFACING[23]

During its last few minutes, the film draws viewers' attention to its production process and image activism, through the incorporation of three 'reflexive' documentary moments (Nichols 1991). In the first, we see from over his shoulder as Psihoyos holds up to the face of Hideki Moronuki (Deputy Director of the Fisheries Agency of Japan) an early iphone on which the footage Psihoyos reports having just seen is being played. Only the back of the iphone (and therefore not its screen) is visible in the shot, such that audibility is prioritized: those 'eerie' dolphin vocalizations heard previously in the killing sequence. 'When and where did you take this'? Moronuki asks. In the second reflexive instance, we follow Ric O'Barry as he bursts into a meeting of the International Whaling Commission with a monitor strapped to his torso. This time we can discern, even at a distance as O'Barry turns to face the room and the news cameramen covering the IWC meeting rush in, that the footage playing on the monitor is that of the dolphin slaughter we have seen just previously in the film – gliding turquoise fishing boats and the inlet running red with blood. The third instance ends the film: Ric O'Barry, again wearing the monitor harness, standing on a street in Tokyo exposing images of dolphin killing to the pedestrian traffic. The time-lapse photography with which this three-camera sequence is shot makes geometric patterns of the umbrella-carrying passers-by, and of the few who stop. It suggests the long duration of O'Barry's staunch commitment.

These moments of forcible exposure to watchers with the film reflect and affect our own experience as audience members, including the hesitation many felt to see the film after the blood of the trailer. Here we are given to understand that the film text consists, reflexively, of delivering and receiving the story as well as investigating and constructing it. Just as the network of profitability for whaling extends around the globe, so too the film's life as a media object extends from below the surface of the cove to the overland routes of its film prints and the fibre-optic paths of its cable-casting.

As I drafted this article, protestors in Japan were continuing to press the boycott of theatrical screenings, but *The Cove* had just debuted on US television (on 27 August 2010) in conjunction with the Animal Planet series *Blood Dolphin* (2010) designed to update and extend knowledge of the fraught relationship between humans and dolphins.

Still thinking about that one little body of water, I navigate my way to the cove. Unable to make the trip in person, I travel via the geographic information programme Google Earth. Although resolution is lacking as I zoom down into the cove, a click on the icon of a local hotel brings up photos of the gorgeous, tranquil surroundings and also an enticing whale watching video. This is the view of Taiji *The Cove* deems violently deceptive but which O'Barry and company must now help cultivate as a financial alternative to whaling (McCurry 2009[24]). In the meantime, somebody has added a photo of bloodied dolphin carcasses labelled 'that's so sad' to mark the killing cove.

By means of amphibious locomotion and psychic trauma, *The Cove* encourages audiences to imagine how the world would be different if we all eavesdropped on dolphins underwater instead of hunting them. Conceptualized

23. My use of this term is inspired by Nicole Starosielski and her brilliant work on 'media under water'.

24. McCurry quotes O'Barry as follows:

> Japanese people have to get involved in this issue. There are groups out there calling for a boycott of Japanese goods, but I am involved in an anti-boycott campaign. We want people to go to Taiji and spend money in its hotels, restaurants and shops. We want to stimulate Taiji's economy, not ruin it.
>
> (2010)

as a device for mapping and navigating the ecology of the dolphin–human interaction, the film furthers as I have argued a pooching, spherical optic and echolocation of life and death matters in and beyond the killing lagoon. *The Cove* has inspired me – and I hope us – to think ecosystemically about our fellow creatures under and above the waters of this liquid planet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Simon Hutchins, *The Cove*'s Expedition and Technical Director, for his impressive presentation on our campus and for his time, knowledge and consideration in answering my follow-up questions via e-mail while out at sea. I also wish to acknowledge Claire Johnson's astute paper comparing *The Cove* and *The End of the Line;* Lindsey Parker's Google research; ann-elise lewallen's knowledge of Japanese media; and the enlivening comments of the students of 'Films of the Natural and Human Environment' (Fall 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013). Lisa Parks and Chuck Wolfe encouraged me to write about this film, Jaimie Baron inspired me with her 'transgressive documentary' panel call, as did Neil Narine with his commission and concept of 'eco-trauma' and Nicole Starosielski with her work on under water media. My thanks to Ariel Nelson for her comments on a draft of this article, especially the insights offered from her field of transitional justice. Finally, I thank the anonymous reviewers for their encouragement and for sharing extraordinarily interesting thoughts that will continue to influence my scholarship.

REFERENCES

Agamben, Giorgio (1998), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen), Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

—— (2004), *The Open: Man and Animal* (trans. Kevin Attell), Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Alabaster, Jay (2010), '"Cove" Oscar won't end Taiji dolphin kill', *The Japan Times*, 10 March, http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20100310a4.html. Accessed 10 December 2010.

Angier, Natalie (2010), 'Save a whale, save a soul, goes the cry', *New York Times*, 25 June, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/weekinreview/27angier.html?scp=1&sq=angier,%20natalie&st=cse. Accessed 12 July 2010.

Animal Planet (2010), *Blood Dolphins*, USA: Animal Planet (Aired on Friday nights beginning 3 September).

Bruno, Giuliana (2002), *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, New York: Verso.

Caruth, Cathy (ed.) (1995), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

—— (1996), *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Cavalieri, Paola (2011), 'Cetaceans: From bare life to nonhuman others', *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society & Culture*, 10: 1, http://www.logosjounral.com/Cetaceans-bare-life-nonhuman-others.hp.

Chrulew, Matthew (2012), 'Animals in biopolitical theory: Between Agamben and Negri', *New Formations*, 76, Winter, pp. 53–67.

Colby, Ron (2010), *The Whale Warrior: Pirate for the Sea* (alternate title *Pirate for the Sea*), USA: Artists Confederacy.

Cousteau, Jacques-Yves and Malle, Louis (1956), *Le Monde du silence/The Silent World*, France: FSJYC Production, Requins Associés, Societé Filmad, Titanus.

Cubitt, Sean (2005), *EcoMedia*, Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi B.V.

Dudzinski, Kathleen M. and Frohoff, Toni (2008), *Dolphin Mysteries: Unlocking the Secrets of Communication*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Erens, Patricia (1986), '*Shoah*', *Film Quarterly*, 39: 4, Summer, pp. 28–31.

Fackler, Martin (2008), 'Japan tests technology to lift fishing industry', *New York Times,* 26 December, p. B3.

Freud, Sigmund (1953–1974), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson), 24 vols, vol. 18, chapter 3, London: Hogarth.

Frohoff, Toni (2009), Panel presentation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 4 November.

Frohoff, Toni, Hutchins, Simon, Oki, Peggy, and Walker, Janet (2009), '*The Cove*: Thinking through the Dolphin-Human Interaction', Panel convened by Janet Walker, University of California, Santa Barbara, 4 November.

Gillett, Robert and Cartwright, Ian (2010), *The Future of Pacific Island Fisheries*, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Noumea Cedex.

Hirsch, Joshua (2004), *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hutchins, Simon (2009), Panel presentation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 4 November.

—— (2010), Personal e-mail communication, 19 November.

Katz, Eric, Light, Andrew and Rothenberg, David (2000), 'Introduction: Deep ecology as philosophy', in Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg (eds), *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. ix–xxiv.

Kristof, Nicholas (1999), 'Ah, when nets were full, and so was life at sea', *New York Times,* 9 July, http://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/09/world/oshima-journal-ah-when-nets-were-full-and-so-was-life-at-sea.html?pagewanted=2&src=pm. Accessed 10 December 2010.

Laub, Dori (1992), 'Bearing witness, or the vicissitudes of listening', in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York: Routledge, pp. 57–74.

Lanzmann, Claude (1985), *Shoah*, France: Historia. Les Films Aleph. Ministère de la Culture de la Republique Française.

Leake, Jonathan (2010), 'Scientists say dolphins should be treated as non-human persons', *New York Times*, 3 January, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/science/article6973994.ece. Accessed 21 July 2010.

Lefebvre, Henri (1991, 1974), *The Production of Space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith), Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Mitchell, Sandra D. (2005), 'Anthropomorphism and cross-species modeling', in Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman (eds), *Thinking With Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 100–17.

McCurry, Justin (2009), 'It's Dante's Inferno for Dolphins', *GlobalPost*, 25 September, http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/japan/090924/its-dantes-inferno-dolphins?page=0,1. Accessed 21 November 2013.

—— (2010), 'Japan's dolphin slaughter: Cruelty or custom', *GlobalPost*, September 30, http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/japan/100929/taiji-dolphin-slaughter-cove. Accessed 21 November 2013.

Moore, Michael (1989), *Roger & Me*, USA: Dog Eat Dog Films and Warner Brothers Pictures.
—— (1992), *Pets or Meat: The Return to Flint*, USA: Dog Eat Dog Films.
—— (2002), *Bowling for Columbine*, USA: Alliance Atlantis Communications.
Morris, Errol (1999), *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr.*, UK/USA: Channel Four Films, Fourth Floor Pictures, Independent Film Channel, Scout Productions.
NBC TV (1964–1967), *Flipper*, 18 September 1964–15 April 1967, USA: NBC TV.
Naess, Arne (1989), *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (trans. and ed. David Rothenerg), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Narine, Neil (2010a), 'The cinematic network society: Ethical confrontations with new proximities to human suffering in the information age', Doctoral dissertation, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada.
—— (2010b), 'Global trauma films and the cinematic network society', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 27: 3, pp. 209–32.
National Geographic, *Crittercam Chronicles* (1996–2013), National Geographic, http://www.nationalgeographic.com/crittercam/. Accessed throughout July 2010.
Nichols, Bill (1991), *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Oceanic Preservation Society, (2012), http://www.opsociety.org/. Accessed throughout July 2010.
Parker, Trey and Stone, Matt (1997), *South Park*, 13 August, USA: Comedy Central TV series.
Psihoyos, Louie (2009), *The Cove*, USA: Cos. Diamond Docs, Fish Films, Oceanic Preservation Society, Quickfire Films (Distribs. Lionsgate, Roadside Attractions, and international distributors).
Pulvenis de Séligny, J.-F., Gumy, A., Grainger, R. and Wijkström, U. (2008), *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2008*, Rome: FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
Reiss, Diana and Marino, Lori (2001), 'Mirror self-recognition in the bottle-nose dolphin: A case of cognitive convergence', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, 98: 10, 1 May, pp. 5937–42.
Rogoff, Irit (2000), *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, London: Routledge.
Serpell, James (2005), 'People in disguise: Anthropomorphism and the human-pet relationship', in Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman (eds), *Thinking With Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 121–36.
Slotkin, Richard (1994, 1985), *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800–1890*, Norman: Oklahoma Press.
Sobchack, Thomas and Sobchack, Vivian (1980), 'The documentary film', in Thomas Sobchack and Vivian Sobchack, *An Introduction to Film*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co, pp. 346–73.
Starosielski, Nicole (2010), 'Media under Water: Friction, Flow, and the Material Geographies of Undersea Cables', Doctoral dissertation, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Swartz, Wilf, Sala, Enric, Tracey, Sean, Watson, Reg and Pauly, Daniel (2010), *The Spatial Expansion and Ecological Footprint of Fisheries (1950 to Present). PLoS ONE*, 5: 12, http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0015143. Accessed 9 December 2010.

Thompson, K. S. (1996), ‘The fall and rise of the English bulldog’, *American Scientist*, May–June, pp. 220–23.

United Nations Environment Program Report (2004), ‘Overfishing, a major threat to the global marine ecology’, *Environment Alert Bulletin*, www.grid.unep.ch/ew.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Walker, J. (2013), ‘Eavesdropping in *The Cove*: Interspecies ethics, public and private space, and trauma under water’, *Studies in Documentary Film*, 7: 3, pp. 209–232, doi: 10.1386/sdf.7.3.209_1

CONTRIBUTORS DETAILS

Janet Walker is Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she is also affiliated with the Environmental Media Initiative of the Carsey-Wolf Center. Her writing in the areas of feminism and film culture, documentary film, and trauma studies has been published in journals including *Screen* and *Continuum*, and she is author or editor of five books including *Westerns: Films through History* (2001); *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (2005); and *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering* (with Bhaskar Sarkar, 2010). Walker lectures internationally and co-directs a community project to create expressive videos and archival material from the testimony and encounters of refugees and rescuers of the Holocaust. Her current project is a book about documentary, geography and environment.

Contact: Department of Film and Media Studies, 2433 SSMS, UC Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California 93106, USA.
E-mail: jwalker@filmandmedia.ucsb.edu

Janet Walker has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

Copyright of Studies in Documentary Film is the property of Taylor & Francis, Ltd. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.