

Trolls, Tigers and Transmodern Ecological Encounters: Enrique Dussel and a Cine-ethics for the Anthropocene

David Martin-Jones, University of Glasgow

(David.Martin-Jones@glasgow.ac.uk)

Abstract:

This article explores the usefulness of Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel's work for film-philosophy, as the field increasingly engages with a world of cinemas. The piece concludes with an analysis of two films with an ecological focus, *Trolljegeren/Troll Hunter* (2010) and *The Hunter* (2011). They are indicative of a much broader emerging trend in ecocinema that explores the interaction between humanity and the environment in relation to world history, and which does so by staging encounters between people and those 'nonhuman' aspects of the Earth excluded by coloniality/modernity (e.g. animals, animal-spirits, mythological creatures, shaman, the very Earth itself). The interdisciplinary concerns of this work place it at the intersection of the latest research into a world of cinemas (in particular the various moves to understand films beyond the national paradigm now increasingly labelled the 'transnational turn'; alongside growing concerns with how cinema helps us engage with ecology); and the need to broaden our philosophical grasp of the world. This latter point requires engagement with thinkers from beyond the Eurocentric canon of Western thought that currently dominates philosophy, and equally shapes film-philosophy. Dussel's philosophy is shown to provide a perspective capable of illuminating the intertwined nature of human and planetary history evident in these films, in a manner that is extremely pertinent to our global situation. Thus it is shown to be more useful than approaches to similar groupings of films which draw on, for example, speculative realism, when it comes to providing a cine-ethics appropriate to the Anthropocene.

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The intention of this article is to make a two-fold intervention. Firstly, in line with the aims of this Special Section of *Film-Philosophy*, to challenge and expand how film-philosophy, and Film Studies, understands a world of cinemas philosophically. In contrast to the near-total dominance of Western philosophy in this area, I engage with the work of a Latin American philosopher, Enrique Dussel. Secondly, and simultaneously, Dussel's work is shown to provide a more useful tool than current developments in Western philosophy, such as, for instance, speculative realism. This is because Dussel's world historicized position, and the resulting political dimension of his work, enable engagement with films at the intersection of some of the most cutting edge areas of recent research in the field. These areas are: ecocinema, depictions of structural inequality under neoliberal globalization, coloniality/modernity, the human/nonhuman, ethics, and the Anthropocene. Working at the intersection of these areas, the article considers what Dussel can offer to the study of a world of cinemas, a move which simultaneously decentres European philosophy's dominance in the field by illustrating the pertinence of Latin American philosophy for cinematic imaginings of the Anthropocene. In this way Dussel's thinking is shown to be well suited for enhancing understanding of our globalized and environmentally precarious world.

Until very recently, very little work in film-philosophy, film theory or Film Studies more broadly, has engaged with Latin American philosophy. There is a significant lack relative to the amount of discussion that has been generated by the works of philosophers in the Anglo-American 'Analytic' tradition and the European 'Continental' traditions. Although, this is not to suggest that there is an absolute silence in the fields of film-philosophy, film theory or even Film Studies with respect to Latin American philosophy, or with Dussel specifically. One could argue that research which engages with so called 'Third Cinema', typically including discussion of the Latin American manifestos of the 1960s, by Glauber Rocha (1965), Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (1969), and Julio García Espinosa (1969), is greatly influenced by Latin American thought, and indeed the broader global context in which discussion of postcoloniality and decolonization became widespread. Thus the subtitle of Tesholme H. Gabriel's *Third Cinema in the Third World: An Aesthetics of Liberation* (1982) is evocative of the Liberation Philosophy which Dussel has been writing in Latin America for several decades, even though the collection in question encompasses

examples from around the world. Again, various Latin American thinkers, if not philosophers, have been discussed in relation to specific national film traditions. For instance, the writings on cannibalism of Brazilian Oswald de Andrade have been used to unlock the meaning of Brazilian films (Stam 1997, pp. 70–78). However, it is only in the 2010s that Dussel, a philosopher of increasing global renown since the 1970s, has begun to breakthrough into Film Studies.

Nayibe Bermúdez Barrios's introduction to the anthology *Latin American Cinemas* (2011) discusses Dussel in order to introduce how the region's cinema is critiquing modernity (Bermúdez Barrios 2011). In the same year, an article by Susan Martin-Márquez in *Cinema Journal* draws on Dussel (along with a form of border thinking akin to that advocated by fellow Latin American philosopher Walter Mignolo) to examine how the nexus of coloniality and modernity is critiqued in two transatlantic coproductions of the 1960s (Martin-Márquez 2011).¹ For my part, in 2013 I published a piece in a Brazilian anthology exploring how Dussel's thinking can enhance our understanding of the intercultural interactions between people under globalization, as it is depicted in European art cinema (Martin-Jones 2013). These recent instances of scholarly engagement with Dussel illustrate how such thinking from beyond the Eurocentric philosophical canon typically emerges in engagement with 'peripheral' cinemas of the world (whether peripheral within national, regional or global frameworks) (Iordanova, Martin-Jones & Vidal, 2010).² As yet, however, they remain isolated, scattered instances of such take up of Latin American philosophy in the field.

By contrast, beyond the parameters of such fields as Film Studies and Philosophy, where Dussel typically remains a very marginal voice (in the West at least), there is a markedly much broader interest and engagement evident elsewhere. As noted previously, this is not surprising considering Dussel's works have received international acknowledgement since the early 1970s (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000, p. 21). Most apparently, scholars in numerous disciplines in Latin America, as well as researchers outwith the region but belonging to Latin American Studies, will know the respective positions of scholars like Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, Mignolo,

1. The two films in question were coproduced between Latin American countries and 'the Unión Industrial Cinematográfica (UNINCI), which was run by members of the clandestine Communist Party' (Martin-Márquez 2011, p. 96) .

2. For a full discussion of the way in which the term 'peripheral' is deployed here, see Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones and Belén Vidal's introduction to the anthology *Cinema at the Periphery* (2010, pp. 1–27)

Fernando Coronil (amongst others) on coloniality/modernity. This is the idea that there is a shadow or darker side to all that is loftily venerated about Eurocentric modernity and Enlightenment ideals. Put more bluntly, the debate surrounding the coloniality/modernity nexus reveals that modernity only exists atop coloniality. This latter term is a specific one which emerges from Quijano's concept of the 'coloniality of power', to indicate a structure of domination which emerges with modernity and remains ongoing. It is thus not quite the same as a discrete, historicized period of colonialism (Mignolo 2000, p. 52). The condition of coloniality/modernity, in fact, stretches back to the European colonization of the Americas after 1492, and explains how the wealth of the European centred world system which emerged over several centuries was based upon the genocide of indigenous peoples and the systematic colonial pillaging of the Americas and elsewhere.

Finally, in addition to scholars of Latin America, those researching topics related to 'otherness' more broadly are often likely to be cognizant of this discourse, and the work of Dussel. For instance, in Robert Stam and Ella Shohat's *Race in Translation* (2012), they discuss the coloniality/modernity paradigm in relation to various attempts to decolonise knowledge production in Europe, North and South America (Stam & Shohat 2012, pp. 61–92).

Dussel's work, then, is more influential than scholars in certain areas of academia, such as Film Studies or Philosophy in their Western incarnations, may realise. This influence is felt because, I believe, the works of Latin American thinkers like Dussel are entirely relevant for today's world, and – as I hope to now show – today's world of cinemas. This is due to the origin of their ideas in debates like that surrounding coloniality/modernity which continue to have relevance under globalization. In fact, for many thinkers utilizing this paradigm, globalization is but the latest stage of coloniality/modernity. For example, we can consider that Dussel's philosophy has engaged with topics such as the impact of coloniality/modernity on indigenous peoples in the Americas (Dussel & Barber 1995; Dussel 2011), including in relation to contemporary revolutionary movements like the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Dussel 2011, pp. 540–548). In this respect, Dussel is not altogether dissimilar from Hamid Dabashi, whose *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (2015), which I discuss in the Introduction to this Special Section, explores the Green Movement in Iran and the Arab Spring.

Of course, there are many problems that can be raised concerning Dussel's philosophy. Although this is not the place to delve into the merits and challenges of his work, even so, as considered critiques offered by

scholars such as Ofelia Schutte illustrate, there is much that can be questioned and disagreed with regarding his arguments (Schutte 1993, pp. 175–206). Dussel is, after all, no saint. He is just another philosopher. However, there is also much to take inspiration from. Indeed, what the much broader usefulness of his work for our globalised world indicates is the relevance of Dussel, and the coloniality/modernity project more broadly, for what are perhaps the most globally pertinent contemporary concerns: structural inequality under neoliberal globalization (massively uneven global wealth distribution), and (as part and parcel of this), the ecological changes currently effecting the planet – the threat of an impending environmental disaster, potentially that of a sixth mass extinction, due to the global growth and proliferation of humanity at the expense of all other species (Barnosky et al. 2011). In short, Dussel is a very relevant philosopher for the Anthropocene.

In Latin American philosophy these two issues are not considered a recent phenomenon. Rather, they are understood to be the result of the latest phase of coloniality/modernity, their roots stemming back to 1492. This philosophical tradition, then, provides a very useful tool to understand how these two intertwined issues are being addressed in films from all around the world. One example of which, providing the focus for this article, are those films with a foregrounded emphasis on ecological concerns. A range of such films which could be engaged with in this respect include: Apichatpong Weerasethakul's festival-bound art films, *Sud pralad/Tropical Malady* (2004) and *Loong Boonmee raleuk chat/Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), originating in Thailand (even if their funding, and Apichatpong's education and range of cinematic influences is far more transnational); the two more generic films under discussion here, the Norwegian monster movie *Trolljegeren/Troll Hunter* (2010) and the Australian thriller, *The Hunter* (2011); the independent film, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), from the USA; the Chilean postcolonial shamanistic slasher movie *Gritos del Bosque/Whispers of the Forest* (2014); and doubtless there are many others to be identified.

These are all films which illustrate the intertwined nature of human and planetary history. The relationship of coloniality/modernity to globalization I will explore in more detail drawing on Mignolo when I turn to *Troll Hunter*. But what all these films show is that the historical background which the paradigm of coloniality/modernity provides enables the correlation, which has very recently been noted by contemporary research on the Anthropocene, between our contemporary situation and what can be considered, after Michel Serres, a 500 year old attack on the planet.

To unpack what I mean by this, at this juncture it is worth first considering Dussel's intellectual project in overview. In this way we can uncover how interdisciplinary film-philosophical work can utilise Dussel to develop the latest research into a world of cinemas. Simultaneously it can expand the breadth of our philosophical grasp of the world, with an example from beyond the Eurocentric canon that shapes Western thought, and by turns, film-philosophy.³ Thus, with Dussel's intellectual project outlined, I next explore the recent emergence of work on ecocinema and its convergence with the transnational turn. Finally, I contrast the usefulness of a Dusselian approach with the conclusions that can be reached using speculative realism, before turning to the two films.

Dussel, Transmodern Ethics, Serres

Dussel is an Argentine philosopher who has been based in Mexico since his exile from Argentina in 1975, just prior to the military dictatorship of 1976–1983. He is most well-known for his work towards a Philosophy of Liberation (Alcoff & Mendieta 2000, pp. 19–21), an idea which stems from the theology of liberation as outlined in Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez's eponymous book of 1971. Several of Dussel's works are now available in English translation, including: *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation* ([1974] 1978), *Philosophy of Liberation* (1985), *Ethics and Community* ([1986] 1988), *Towards an Unknown Marx* ([1988] 2001), *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the 'Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, ([1992] 1995), *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation* (1996), *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology* (2003), *Politics of Liberation* (2011) and *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (2013). Dussel could be described as a post-Levinasian philosopher in that he, like Emmanuel Levinas, also critiques Western philosophy's emphasis on ontology, retaining ethics as first philosophy. However, Dussel also departs from Levinas, to draw upon his own interpretation of Karl Marx and a Latin American view of history, in developing a politically informed, historically grounded, ethics of alterity. A Philosophy of Liberation, for Dussel, requires an acknowledgement of all those excluded from modernity, when the latter is understood as a several centuries long process of colonial inequality stemming from 1492 and what Dussel calls the 'invention' of the Americas (Dussel 1995): 'It is a project of liberation of a periphery negated from the very beginning of modernity' (Dussel 1998, p. 19).

3. For a fuller discussion of this, see the Introduction to this Special Section.

In this I am not suggesting that Dussel is particularly unusual. His thinking remains close to that of several other Latin American philosophers, such as Quijano, Mignolo and others, in particular in observing the relationship between modernity and coloniality (Moraña, Dussel & Jáuregui, 2008). Mignolo, for instance, whose work is (he directly states) indebted to his engagement with Dussel (2000, pp. xii–xiii), argues that: ‘there is no modernity without coloniality’ (2000, p. 43), the two being ‘two sides of the same coin’ (2000, p. 50). Nor am I staking a claim for Latin American philosophy as superior to other forms of thinking from other parts of the world. In the Introduction to this Special Section I mentioned various other non-European philosophers (e.g. Abdolkarim Soroush, Kitaro Nishida, Achille Mbembe) whose work could be useful, and indeed, recent works from within Film Studies to engage with film theory from Japan and China (Gerow 2010; Fan 2015) (much as Canan Balan does in this collection), as just some examples. Yet it is, in fact, due to the particular historical context from which Latin American philosophy emerges that it has the potential to be increasingly relevant in today’s world. This is because of the influence of world history/world systems theory on Dussel’s ethics.

Dussel’s worldview is strongly influenced by the history of Latin America as an integral part of the several centuries old Eurocentric world system, as identified by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) (Dussel 1995, 1998). This is an idea that has been developed upon and critiqued by such scholars as Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1989), K.N. Chaudhuri (1990), Andre Gunder Frank and Barry K. Gills (1993), Frank (1998) and so on. Modernity, for Dussel, is the management of the world system (Dussel 1998, p. 19), a process which, in the centuries following 1492, came to ensure Europe’s global hegemony. Contrary to notions of European exceptionalism, it is the exploitation of the Americas, Africa, and elsewhere, which is seen to have fuelled Europe’s economic growth on the world stage.

This historical backdrop enables a productive use to be made of Dussel’s ideas when reframing the study of world cinemas historically. Exploring a world of cinemas in relation to world history and world systems theory moves this field beyond the often cited relationship of the problematic term ‘world cinema’ with the equally problematic terms (indicative of often Orientalising attempts to group aesthetic objects transnationally), ‘world music’, ‘world literature’, and so on. Instead, world history and world systems provide a different ground upon which to observe a world of cinemas. If the tradition of studying how films tell, as it were, the ‘story of history’, as is evident in the works of Hayden White (1973, 1996), Robert Rosenstone (1995), Marcia Landy (1996), Robert Burgoyne

(2010), et al., has typically focused on the nation, then the world history underpinning Dussel's work makes it ideal for exploring how the, as it were, 'story of world history' is told. Dussel can help us understand how films from around the world can be studied together, in their examining of the same world historical events, the same phenomena which have shaped the world system. Due to the view of world history which underpins it, the notion of the 'transmodern' (an idea integral to Dussel's philosophy as a whole), thus provides a way to focus in on its ramifications for the cinematic negotiation of the various constitutive features of coloniality/modernity, such as ecology, and the Anthropocene.

Dussel's idea of the transmodern, and transmodernity, may be more well known to Western scholars as an idea posited almost as though an alternative to postmodernity. This may be in part due to the inclusion of English translations of Dussel's works in such anthologies as John Beverley, José Oviedo and Michael Aronna's, *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America* (1995) and Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi's, *The Cultures of Globalization* (1998). Yet, whilst Dussel does critique postmodernism (for its Eurocentrism) in these works (1995, p. 75), he seems ultimately more interested in offering his concept as a contrasting idea. This is so that in moving beyond modernity, an alternative, inclusive, planetary vision can be offered instead. For instance, in 'Eurocentrism and Modernity' ([1993] 1995) he states:

The 'realization' of modernity no longer lies in the passage from its abstract potential to its 'real', European, embodiment. It lies today, rather, in a process that will transcend modernity as such, a trans-modernity, in which both modernity and its negated alterity (the victims) co-realize themselves in a process of mutual creative fertilization. Trans-modernity (as a project of political, economic, ecological, erotic, pedagogical and religious liberation) is the co-realization of that which it is impossible for modernity to accomplish by itself: that is, of an *incorporative* solidarity, which I have called analectic, between center/periphery, man/woman, different races, different ethnic groups, different classes, civilization/nature, Western culture/Third World cultures, et cetera. For this to happen, however, the negated and victimized 'other face' of modernity – the colonial periphery, the Indian, the slave, the woman, the child, the subalternized popular cultures – must, in the first place, discover itself as innocent, as the 'innocent victim' of a ritual sacrifice, who, in the process of discovering itself as innocent may now judge modernity as guilty of an originary, constitutive and irrational violence. (Dussel, p. 76)

Dussel considers his ethics to be 'transmodern', in the sense that it seeks to encounter, engage, and liberate, all those excluded from

Eurocentric coloniality/modernity, globally. Whilst Levinas's ethics sought transcendence in the encounter with the other (stipulating the Biblical figures of the stranger, widow and orphan as representative others) (Levinas 1969, pp. 199–210), Dussel seeks a recognition of coloniality/modernity in the encounter with modernity's 'colonised' or excluded other. This other he describes again, in similar terms, in *The Underside of Modernity* (1996), as: 'The poor, the dominated, the massacred Amerindian, the Black slave, the Asiatic of the opium wars, the Jew of the concentration camps, the woman as sexual object, the child under ideological manipulation' (Dussel 1996, p. 80).⁴ As Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta observe in their introduction to *Thinking from the Underside of History* (2000): 'Dussel's argument is that the Other is concrete and historical, existing in time and space. In our time, the Other is the poor of the Third World, the populations that have been forcibly excluded from globalization and whose exclusion, through starvation or environmental genocide, is in fact necessary for the current form of globalization to be maintained' (Alcoff & Mendieta 2000, p. 10).

By contrast, Dussel's ethics is indicative of an alternative form of globalization – an inclusive transmodernity rather than an exclusive (coloniality//)modernity – enacted through dialogic encounters with the other (Alcoff & Mendieta 2000, p. 10). Dussel's is a historicized ethics, then. It relates to the 500 year old world system that saw the rise to global economic prominence of Europe, to rival the position previously held by Asia. This was due to the exploitation of Africa and the Americas, a colonial growth propelled by the North Atlantic Trade Circuit (Frank 1998). As Mignolo summarises, Dussel's idea of 'transmodernity', along with Quijano's of 'coloniality of power', are 'responses to global designs from colonial histories and legacies in Latin America' (Mignolo 2000, p. 51).

In this approach, Dussel's work resonates with that of previous writers on colonialism, such as Eric Williams's famous thesis concerning the coexistence of, as his title states, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). More importantly, though, whilst seemingly redolent of Cold War concerns in its origins, Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation chimes clearly with the works of contemporary thinkers on globalization: Félix Guattari in *The Three Ecologies* (1989), Arjun Appadurai in *The Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Multitude* (2004). Thus Dussel's position might be described as a postcolonial, or Marxist, or (paradoxically) secularised Christianity. With its Levinasian emphasis on

4. On economics, see also pages 12–14 (Dussel 1996).

recognising the other, it offers an ethics of alterity for globalization that is more dialogic in approach than, say Slavoj Žižek's attempt to consider Christianity in terms of its seeming revolutionary potential, through the equating of St Paul with Lenin (Žižek 2003, p. 9). In fact, in respect of its recognition of the globally disenfranchised, Dussel's ethics attempts the exact opposite of Žižek's Eurocentric denial of the value of other histories worldwide (Žižek 2000, p. 100). Instead it looks to recognise the peoples who pre-existed the typically bloody arrival of Europeans, an event which in many cases also eradicated their histories. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that in May 2015 the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Argentine Pope Francis, invited Gutiérrez (the author of *A Theology of Liberation*) to speak in Rome, seemingly as part of his attempt to focus the Catholic church upon what might be considered, after Frantz Fanon, the plight of the wretched of earth, as they currently subsist under global capitalism (Kirchgaessner & Watts 2015).

As Dussel's consideration of the other excluded from modernity has developed, the notion of who, precisely, is excluded has become increasingly inclusive. In addition to the Eurocentrism of the current capitalist world system, it can be noted that coloniality/modernity incorporates a range of factors, including the very environmental destruction this system has caused. Hence Dussel calls for:

The overcoming of cynical management reason (planetary administration), of capitalism (as economic system), of liberalism (as political system), of Eurocentrism (as ideology), of machismo (in erotics), of the reign of the white race (in racism), of *the destruction of nature (in ecology)* [italics mine], and so on presumes the liberation of diverse types of the oppressed and/or excluded. It is in this sense that the ethics of liberation defines itself as transmodern (because the postmoderns are still Eurocentric). (1998, p. 19)

Amongst the various facets of exclusion which a 'pluri-topic' transmodern ethics would address (Alcoff & Mendieta 2000, p. 2), this evocation of the ecological (Dussel, after Marx, considers nature to be modernity's primary object of exploitation for profit) provides one way with which Dussel can enable us to see the growth of ecocinema, within a world of cinemas, in relation to the world system. This is just one category of the many indicated above (economics, politics, race, ideology, etc., all of which follow *from* nature), through which we can classify the cinemas of the world transnationally. As will be seen in the film analysis which follows, however, a focus on any one of these categories ultimately leads to exploration of its intertwined existence with several of the others. By which I mean, 'the destruction of nature (in ecology)' is not a separate issue from 'capitalism (as economic system)' or

'liberalism (as political system)' as is most evident in *The Hunter*. What joins together all these features which Dussel looks to address with a transmodern ethics, is a historicized reappraisal of coloniality/modernity. It is this which study of a world of cinemas can also illuminate.

Although it might be tempting to consider the 'trans-' of Dussel's 'transmodern' in relation to the transnational nature of coloniality/modernity and those it excludes, this is not really the emphasis. Rather, this 'trans-' offers a different, (paradoxically) more material form of transcendence of a post-Levinasian kind. A transcendence, precisely, of modernity, as Dussel argues (in the first quote above), not from within modernity (postmodernity), but through the encounter with modernity's excluded others. Transmodern encounters, we might say. This includes, as noted in the inclusion of nature in the second quote above, an encounter with the Earth itself: transmodern ecological encounters. With this in mind it is worth bringing in a related philosophical idea, that of the contract.

In the third quote from Dussel above, there is clearly an indication of what Charles W. Mills dubs the Racial Contract in Dussel's 'the reign of the white race.' The Racial Contract, as Mills details, has the same colonial origins as coloniality/modernity. (1997, p. 20) In respect of the encounter with the Earth, in its observation of 'the destruction of nature' Dussel's transmodern ethics also evokes the Natural Contract. As discussed by French philosopher Michel Serres, in contrast to the Social Contract which humans use to organise society, humanity lacks, or denies, a Natural Contract with the Earth. Thus Serres outlines what he considers a war waged by humanity against nature: 'We so-called developed nations are no longer fighting among ourselves; together we are all turning against the world' (1995, p. 32). The origins of this war, Serres places in Cartesian thought: 'Descartes' master word amounts to the application of individual or collective property rights to scientific knowledge and technological intervention' (1995, p. 32) This move, in turn, directly links Serres' position to Dussel's critique of the same Cartesian rationale as propelling coloniality/modernity, and to its propensity to divide mind from body, human from nonhuman (Dussel 2003, p. 221). With this one particular feature of Dussel's transmodern ethics in mind, then, we turn to ecocinema as it is emerging as a concern in Film Studies and film-philosophy, and its importance for study of a world of cinemas due to its intertwined relationship with the 'transnational turn'.

Transnational Ecological Cinematic Concerns

Since the millennium Film Studies has evidenced a strong emerging interest in ecocinema and ecocriticism. This is apparent in a wide range of

works, from Sean Cubitt's *EcoMedia* (2005) to Paula Willoquet-Marcondi's anthology *Framing the World* (2010), to Adrian Ivakhiv's *Ecologies of the Moving Image* (2013), naming only three standout texts from a vibrant new area. Whilst some of this research analyses cinema's potential as a 'consciousness-raising' medium in relation to environmental issues (Ingram 2013, p. 44), alternatively, there has been much discussion which could be considered more film-philosophical in approach. As a result, the position of writers like Cubitt (informed by philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Luc Nancy and several others) and Ivakhiv (who draws on Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Charles Sanders Peirce) increasingly emphasise that to understand cinema ecologically is to grasp the intertwined and inter-communicative existence of humanity and nature. It is to realise, as Ivakhiv notes, that: 'humans are embodied agents and interpreters of a world that is there to be perceived, but is also perceptive and communicative in its nature' (2013, p. 91). There is a crossover with Dussel's concern with ecology here, in that both approaches seek to understand the (transmodern) ethical encounter between humanity and nature. Following a Dusselian trajectory, we shall see, a transmodern ethical encounter is seen to take place in various films, between humanity and the so-called 'natural world.' This is the case in spite of humanity's animosity to the Earth, as noted by Serres. Such an encounter occurs between the forces of coloniality/modernity which are waging war on the environment, and that which it excludes, ecologically. These are films, then, about the need for a Natural Contract.

The work on ecology in Film Studies has also begun to follow the 'transnational turn.' As Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim explore in detail, the study of cinema as a transnational phenomenon takes many forms as it moves 'beyond' the limiting borders of the previously dominant national paradigm (2010, pp. 7–21). One of the most prevalent is a research focus at the nexus of cultural, geopolitical and industrial forces, often also taking into account how a negotiation of the transnational may well require engagement with the complexities of the nation. This type of approach to transnational cinema might take various forms, such as the study of international coproduction arrangements (Hjort 2009), work on the film industry as a global phenomenon (Miller et al. 2001), or, of most relevance to this discussion, as a practice which Dina Iordanova has called 'watching across borders' (2010, p. 51). This latter practice involves the drawing of links between films amidst the globally circulating mass of world cinemas. This practice, I contend, can be understood to correspond to an emergent understanding of the expression 'world cinema' as no longer indicative of a (homogenised) alternative to Hollywood, but rather

as what can be considered, if we follow Lúcia Nagib, a decentred world of cinemas without singular origin or centre (2006, p. 34). Jordanova uses her cross border method to demonstrate how films about a topic like immigration or diaspora, although made in different nations, can be shown to evidence shared concerns. Thus they specifically require viewing together across borders if the bigger picture as to the global situation surrounding such a topic is to emerge. This is an approach to which a film-philosophy informed by Dussel can add considerable depth of understanding when exploring issues like ecology.

Recent attempts to consider ecology transnationally already evidence something of this potential. For example, Pietari Kääpä and Tommy Gustafsson's anthology *Transnational Ecocinema* (2014) explicitly builds upon Sheldon Lu and Jiayan Mi's *Chinese Ecocinema* (2009) to encourage the use of analytical frameworks that enable explorations beyond national borders. In so doing they shift the debate somewhat away from the environmental (in the sense of the 'natural world') and consciousness-raising in this somewhat narrow sense. Instead they see transnational ecocinema as 'comprising a range of approaches that share ... concerns with imbalances and inequalities of power in global society' (Kääpä & Gustafsson 2013, p. 19). By reaching beyond the purely environmental they suggest instead concerns not only geopolitical and biopolitical, but ultimately transnational – or world – historical, very much like those of Dussel.

Such an emphasis on understanding the eco-systemic relations between humanity and nature is also evident in recent works which explore how to interpret humanity's interaction with the nonhuman. In *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human* (2013), editors Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway profess to being concerned with 'realism' in the sense of film's 'entanglement in the world it shoots, edits and projects', observing that 'film screens nonhuman nature as both revelation and concealment' (2013, p. 2) Of usefulness for the analysis that follows, they argue that:

... reading films with an ecological eye partly means learning to see beyond the confines of narrative and story, whose natural tendency, as it were, is to suppress the nonhuman elements by relegating them to the role of setting, background or prop. At the same time, it means no longer viewing landscape – itself already a laden human construction – as passive or mute. (Pick & Narraway 2013, p. 8)

This ability to discern 'nonhuman nature' in its 'revelation and concealment', via an 'ecological eye', is increasingly evident in film-philosophical work. It can be found, for example in Laura McMahon's

analysis of the films of Claire Denis in terms of their ‘nonanthropocentric detailing of the coexistence of body and landscape, and a democratic attentiveness to the distributed agencies of humans, animals and things’, which draws on Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Nancy (McMahon 2014). It also resonates with the ecological encounter evident in films viewed through a Dusselian lens.

Dussel Encounters Speculative Realism in the Anthropocene

The transmodern encounter between humanity and its ‘nonhuman’ other provides one way of considering together films that, when viewed across borders, can be seen to place ecological concerns in relation to the global imbalances created by coloniality/modernity. Particularly evident in this respect is the war on nature observed by Serres. Deploying a Dusselian framework illustrates how we can group together such films due to their shared concern with the ‘destruction of nature (in ecology)’ as part of coloniality/modernity. To illustrate the importance of this approach, it can be contrasted with a recent piece to group together some of these same films using an altogether different philosophical tool, that offered by speculative realism. This is an approach which is perhaps increasingly in vogue because of what it can offer to our grasp of humanity’s place within nature. However, the results obtained from using such an approach, whilst sharing some similarities with those garnered using a Dusselian approach, are not as multi-faceted, politically or historically.

Speculative realism is the name given to what might be loosely termed a movement, which includes such works as Quentin Meillassoux’s *After Finitude* ([2006] 2008), Iain Hamilton Grant’s *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (2008), Graham Harman’s *Towards Speculative Realism* (2010), Ray Brassier’s *Nihil Unbound* (2010), Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Harman’s open access anthology, *The Speculative Turn* (2011), amongst others. Speculative realism, along with object oriented ontology, questions the belief which originates in the works of Immanuel Kant (and continues to hold sway through the development of phenomenology and on into the present day) (Shaviro 2014, p. 7),⁵ that the only way we can know the world is through our human experience of it. As Steven Shaviro summarises in *The Universe of Things* (2014):

Most Western philosophy since Descartes, and especially since Kant, has reinforced the bifurcation of nature because it is centered on questions of cognition. It privileges epistemology (which asks the questions of *how* we

5. As Steven Shaviro helpfully indicates, it can be uncovered in the works of thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Slavoj Žižek amongst others (Shaviro 2014, p. 7).

can know what we know) at the expense of ontology (which directly poses the question of what is). The Cartesian cogito, the Kantian transcendental deduction, and the phenomenological epoche all make the world dependent on our knowledge of it. They all subordinate *what is known to our way of knowing*. (p. 3)

How speculative realism challenges this established position can be uncovered in Meillassoux's *After Finitude*. Meillassoux notes 'the central notion of modern philosophy since Kant seems to be that of correlation. By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (2008, p. 5). Accordingly, Meillassoux argues for a reconnection with that which is outside of humanity, in its own right: 'contemporary philosophers have lost the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory – of being entirely elsewhere' (2008, p. 7). To recover this '*great outdoors*', for Meillassoux, requires a speculative approach, which Meillassoux considers currently more akin to that of science than philosophy (or at least, Western philosophy after Kant) (2008, p. 119). Such an approach can 'uncover knowledge of a world that is indifferent to any relation to the world' (Meillassoux 2008, p. 118). In setting out this aim, Meillassoux discusses what he calls 'ancestrality', a term which he posits in an attempt to view the world without and outwith a human set of eyes: 'I call 'ancestral' any reality anterior to the emergence of the human species' (2008, p. 10).

Speculative realism's attempts to grasp the world beyond humanity in and for itself, and indeed its challenge to the anthropocentrism of the Western canon, is a result of the contemporary era's concern with humanity's devastation of the planet. Here again is a philosophy of use for a world marked by climate change and immanent mass species extinction (Bryant, Srnicek & Harman 2011, p. 3). In this it shares similarities with Dussel's concern with encountering and re-engaging with that which is excluded by modernity, including that portion of the world which Western thought would bracket off as the 'natural world'. Yet, this surface similarity aside, and to stay focused on cinema, there is a significant difference in terms of what can be uncovered in films with ecological concerns by using Dussel, than by using speculative realism.

Selmin Kara's article, 'Beasts of the Digital Wild' (2014) provides an interesting, extremely original, and as yet pioneering, example of how

speculative realist philosophy can be engaged with ecologically concerned films. Kara contextualises her choice of films in relation to speculative realism's potential 'as a response to the global ecological crisis and the scientific advances in fields like neuroscience and physics, which challenged continental philosophy's commitments to anthropo-centric approaches to reality' (Kara 2014). Then, exploring Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia de la luz/Nostalgia for the Light* (2010), Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011), and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, Kara argues that the digital composition in these films is used to create a distinct nonhuman realm (marked by primordality and extinction as discussed by speculative realists like Meillassoux and Brassier), which contrasts aesthetically with the analog-created human world. The two realisms evident in these films, she argues, suggest two temporalities. The interplay between such temporalities in the films is then teased out. Here is Kara's helpful summary:

I want to argue that their two seemingly disjunctive aesthetic realisms – one based in the analog representations of human loss and the other in the digital imaginations of primordality and extinction, which are essentially nonhuman temporalities – do not necessarily suggest a clash. Instead, they point to the emergence of what one might call a speculative realist aesthetics, which poses an alternative to the photographic, digital, sutured, or post-humanist realisms in cinema in the digital age. (2014)

Although this is a compelling argument – and Kara's position regarding how a film like *Nostalgia for the Light* engages at the intersection of eschatology, thanatology, and cosmology is very sophisticated – there are two reasons why I think a Dusselian perspective more productive.

Firstly, consider the grouping of films, and the 'neatness' this creates to the argument for Kara's digital/analog split. With these three examples from the Americas grouped together across borders, it is possible to draw such a conclusion as Kara does. Yet, once the field is broadened to include a world of cinemas this neatness starts to unravel. In the alternative grouping that I offer, alongside digital effects we also find modernity's excluded nonhuman others depicted by much simpler devices, such as, in *Uncle Boonmee*, men in rubber monkey suits. Admittedly, as yet this critique may seem a little unnecessarily pedantic. After all, it could be counter-argued that, in line with Kara's argument, it does not entirely matter whether every effect is CGI for a 'speculative realist aesthetic' to emerge. Indeed, Kara's theory does not entirely hold for *Nostalgia for the Light* in this respect, which she acknowledges early on in the piece, so perhaps it is not so crucial to her overall position. Yet there are more substantial ways in which to realise this same difficulty with Kara's narrow

focus on solely three films from the Americas. Consider, for example, the emphasis she places on the elegiac nature of these films, their focus on human loss and mourning:

The images of galaxies, stardust, and prehistoric beasts seem to have a speculative dimension in that they point to an understanding of human loss and mourning at a deeply philosophical and cosmic scale. This resonates with speculative realism's foreboding, at times nihilistic engagements with the idea of death (subjective, collective, and nonhuman) while addressing the questions of primordiality and extinction. (Kara 2014)

Again a more expansive approach to the grouping together of films with ecological concerns demonstrates the flaw in this reasoning. Whilst it is true that a case could be made for *Uncle Boonmee* doing just this, thereby perhaps answering or negating the point I raise above regarding some of its low-fi special effects (such as men in rubber monkey suits), the black comedy *Troll Hunter* does not fit this overview and nor the slasher *Whispers of the Forest*. Rather, what this larger grouping of films indicate when viewed together, is what is missing from Kara's argument based on the three films of the Americas: the critique of coloniality/modernity that traverses all of those films in the larger trend emerging from a world of cinemas. This is so, at least, with the notable exception of the digital dinosaurs of *The Tree of Life*, a film which is entirely uninterested in such a world historical formulation.

Secondly, beyond this critique of Kara's position from a world of cinemas lies a further critique from a world of philosophies. After Dussel, a more historically politicised reading of these films can be proffered, viewing them as transmodern encounters between humanity and the Earth. Immediately, I am aware, the argument begins to seem anthropomorphic, attributing communicative qualities to nonhuman representatives of the Earth, as they engage with humans. In this respect a point made by Shaviro in his meditations on speculative realism is extremely useful.

Shaviro notes that a 'certain cautious anthropomorphism is necessary in order to avoid anthropocentrism. I attribute feelings to stones in order to get away from the pernicious dualism that would insist that human beings alone (or at most, human beings together with some animals), have feelings, whilst everything else does not' (Shaviro 2014, p. 61). Again, as Shaviro comments a little later: 'the accusation of anthropomorphism rests on the prior assumption that thought, value and experience are essentially, or exclusively, human to begin with' (2014, p. 90). The point of my making such a claim about these films staging transmodern

ecological encounters, then, is not that the Earth actually does attempt to communicate with us (it seems unlikely that it would be concerned with such a minor element in its history as humanity), but rather that these films are asking us to speculate on what such an attempt might look like. In spite of the technological nature of film, inevitably this can only ever be an anthropomorphised view of the Earth as provided by filmmakers.

Once more, Shaviro is helpful here, as he notes the re-emergence of panpsychism as a consequence of speculative realism's attempts to break away from a correlationist approach (2014, p. 83). Although, as he cautions, it may entail being labelled as a 'crackpot' (or perhaps 'stoned or crazy' sounding) (Shaviro 2014, p. 63; p. 86), in fact this is a philosophical tradition with a heritage stemming back to pre-Socratic thought. The panpsychist idea that 'mind is a fundamental property of matter' is explored by Shaviro in relation to the nonhuman world (Shaviro 2014, p. 86), as evidence of the indifference of the Earth to us. He observes that 'panpsychism's insistence on the mentality of other entities in the world also implies the autonomy of all those entities from our apprehension – and perhaps even from our concern' (Shaviro 2014, p. 89).

With this in mind, rather than providing an aesthetic of speculative realism that removes us from an epistemological emphasis on how we can know the world (as Kara argues), these films should be understood as staging encounters with modernity's excluded others to meditate on Serres's concern with how humanity might somehow learn the language of the world in the face of extinction. Serres argues that: 'To be sure we don't know the world's language, or rather we know only the various animistic, religious, or mathematical versions of it. ... In fact, the Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds, and interactions, and that's enough to make a contract. Each of the partners in symbiosis thus owes, by rights, life to the other, on pain of death' (Serres 1995, p. 39). Thus all these films address how humanity might know the world better, in the absence of a Natural Contract. What we see in these films, therefore, is better understood in terms of a Dusselian transmodern ethics, than a speculative realist aesthetics.

From a Dusselian position, I would agree with the speculative realists that the Western philosophical tradition since Kant, indeed since Descartes, is an anthropocentric one. I also tend to agree that we can (and perhaps should) speculate as to the 'nature' of the world that is beyond (and likely indifferent to) us. I might also agree with Kara that these films could be said to demonstrate these points. Indeed, although I come to these films via Dussel and Serres, I think the encounter, or confrontation between humanity and Earth that they stage is that

of a human mind trying to imagine a nonhuman one, cinematically. It is a speculative cinematic realism in this sense, then, even if it may never entirely break out of the correlationist circle due to the anthropomorphising often involved in this process.

However, there is a difference. After Shaviro, who himself follows Henri Bergson and Deleuze, what I see in these films is an attempt to depict humans as one animal amongst many, or better yet as part of universal matter. So whilst this is also an interpretation regarding how humanity encounters the world, rather than humans encountering an indifferent world (as it no doubt is), instead a cinematic imagining of the world's concern to address humanity provides a tool to show that we are still an integral part of that world: that mind is in all matter. Hence there is an anthropomorphising of the nonhuman involved, admittedly, but this can – precisely – enable a transmodern ecological encounter. As Shaviro states, after Thomas Nagel, 'Likeness-in-human-terms, if it is projected imaginatively enough, may work to dislocate us from the correlationist position of understanding ... other entities only in terms of their resemblance, and relationship, to ourselves. But it can never actually attain the inner being of these other entities' (2014, p. 91). The encounters staged in these films, then, are not necessarily best understood as a speculation on what the world is like beyond or outside humanity, something we can never attain. Rather, they offer a critique of humanity's ignorance of its own place in the world by providing a glimpse of 'other entities' in their precarious relationship to an exclusive (colonial/modernity).

As we shall see, the trolls of *Troll Hunter* and the Tasmanian Tiger of *The Hunter* function much as the various other extinct and mythological creatures do across the trend I am identifying, to provide humanity with an encounter with the other that is excluded by a lack of a Natural Contract: the Earth. The 'monsters' excluded by coloniality/modernity – the forest-dwelling man/shaman/tiger of *Tropical Malady*, the monkey spirits of *Uncle Boonmee*, the extinct Aurochs of *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, the indigenous forest shaman of *Whispers of the Forest*, and so on – are all rendered cinematically so as to evoke coloniality/modernity's long history of exterminating nature.

Accordingly, rather than the coexistence of human and nonhuman realisms described by Kara (of humanity/ancestrality), after Dussel I consider these films to show the coexistence of coloniality/modernity. They stage transmodern encounters with modernity's excluded others, in this case the Earth that humanity has been at war with since 1492, to suggest the need for a Natural Contract. In so doing they ask us to consider the history of this several centuries-long engagement, something

which a speculative realist argument would not be able to uncover, due to its focus on the unknowable.

Dussel's Transmodern Ethics and the Anthropocene

It is here that this argument draws on recent advances in consideration of the dating of the Anthropocene. This term refers to the idea that we now live in a geological era dominated by humanity, the proof of which would be a measurable trace of humanity's impact on the globe. For scientists, this change should be charted by geological signatures observable in nature, such as, for example, radiation from nuclear detonations found in rocks. The Anthropocene is a topic very often discussed along with ecological concerns in general, and ecocinema more specifically. With the publication of Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin's 'Perspectives' piece, 'Defining the Anthropocene' (2015), in *Nature*, the debate regarding the dating of the Anthropocene now includes the possibility that the year 1610 might be considered for its commencement. This choice of date in turn refers back directly to 1492.

The new argument put forward by Lewis and Maslin is as follows. With the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, the indigenous population was reduced by around fifty million people. As a consequence of their absence, the same quantities of trees were no longer felled to create the space for farming, or to provide fuel for cooking, amongst other uses. The extensive regeneration of forest and grasslands that occurred over the following one hundred years thus resulted in a decline in atmospheric CO² levels between 1570 and 1620. This created the measurable impact of humanity on the environment – the so-called Little Ice Age – which is now recorded in Antarctic ice core records (Lewis & Maslin 2015, p. 175). This, along with the various other indicators of global change created by the meeting of the so infamously misnamed 'Old' and 'New' Worlds (it is difficult to understand how Europeans could constitute an 'Older' culture than the indigenous peoples they exterminated), such as 'the globalization of human foodstuffs' (Lewis & Maslin 2015, p. 174), lead Lewis and Maslin to conclude that: 'colonisation, global trade and coal brought about the Anthropocene' (2015, p. 177).

This genocide, it is worth remembering, included the enslavement of many indigenous people who were forced to work in mines for the European colonists, as the Earth's resources were pillaged as part of humanity's war on the planet. Andre Gunder Frank observes in *ReORIENT* (1998) that Europe would eventually emerge as a major economic player on the global stage due to the wealth it created from the Americas, including the silver it mined directly from the Earth. It was this wealth, for Frank, which enabled Europe to compete in the then

Asia-dominated world market (1998, p. 5). With this in mind, what the scientific recording of the Anthropocene now captures, in line with pre-existing work in Latin American philosophy (of which Dussel's hoped for transmodernity is but one manifestation), is the same 500 year attack on the planet described by the coloniality/modernity paradigm.

The very idea of the Anthropocene indicates, as Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in 'The Climate of History' (2009) that climate change foregrounds how the study of human history is now intricately bound up with the study of the ecological. Natural and human histories are now indistinguishable, and accordingly economic histories of capital cannot be understood apart from humanity's species history (Chakrabarty 2009). This is a point echoed by Akira Iriye in *Global and Transnational History* (2013) who concludes that transnational history and world history are in fact planetary history, and include both humans and the natural world (Iriye 2013). Hence the dating of the Anthropocene's commencement to 1492 (albeit via 1610) illustrates the importance of a world historically grounded philosophy like that of Dussel for our contemporary world. Therefore, to understand how contemporary films are engaging with the Anthropocene, a more politicized and world historically informed philosophy like that of Dussel is more relevant than speculative realism.

The trend emerging in a world of cinemas, when seen across borders, includes films that variously examine how the Earth has been excluded, ecologically, by coloniality/modernity. They evoke the past exclusions of coloniality/modernity in a variety of ways, to illustrate the historical nature of the exclusion of the Earth from a Natural Contract during the Anthropocene. They consider the consequences of five hundred years of coloniality/modernity for the Earth, in mankind's refusal to envisage its part in a Natural Contract. They offer an opportunity to reconsider the taken-for-granted primacy of the Western ego after Descartes. They challenge the thinking which propelled coloniality/modernity by allowing a distinction between white/European/civilized/human and the supposedly subhuman other, destined to be exterminated. To do all this they create encounters between humanity and the Earth, via the landscape, animals, animal-spirits, mythological creatures, shaman, etc.

The two films I explore hereafter exemplify this trend, *Troll Hunter* and *The Hunter*. These two films are deliberately explored side by side for their potential to demonstrate globally shared concerns occurring if such films are viewed across borders. They also demonstrate that the 'cynical management reason' of coloniality/modernity is not just a condition to be found in former colonies, but is all-pervasive under neoliberal globalization. It is as true of the nation building projects of European nations like Norway (which displaced the Sami people, for instance), as it

is of settler colonies like Australia (which likewise displaced their indigenous populations). In both instances, however, it is an ecological concern with the nonhuman (trolls in *Troll Hunter*, extinct tigers in *The Hunter*) which serves to offer a critique of the global spread of coloniality/modernity.⁶

In *Troll Hunter*, humanity's war with nature is foregrounded. Human interaction with trolls is shot so as to depict the mythical creatures as (anthropomorphised) faces emerging from the landscape, their ability to communicate amongst themselves then contrasting with their inability to communicate with humanity after the centuries of violence between them. In *The Hunter*, by contrast, humanity's war with nature is shown to have advanced to the point of its near devastation. Instead, the potential of an ecological encounter with the last of a species is suggested as a catalyst only able to awaken humanity to the dangers of coloniality/modernity. This can be seen if we analyse these films with what Pick and Narraway call an 'ecological eye', to understand their CGI creatures (mythical monsters, extinct species), as forces, at times even creating faces or temporary apertures in the Earth, through which humanity might communicate with it (even if it here fails to do so) if it were able to learn its language, rather than to wage war.

Troll Hunter

The opening titles of *Troll Hunter* tell of an anonymous package handed in to Filmkameratene AS (the Oslo-based production company of the film), containing hard disks with 283 minutes of filmed material. The rest of the film pertains to be a rough cut of that footage. Despite how this may sound, this is not a homage to US teen horror, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). Rather, the film's register is somewhere between a mockumentary and (the stated European influence on director André Øvredal), *C'est arrivé près de chez vous/Man Bites Dog* (1992). The footage shows three students from Volda College – Thomas (Glenn Erland Tosterud), the cameraman Kalle (Tomas Alf Larsen) and the sound assistant Johanna (Johanna Mørck) – making a documentary. They are intrigued by a man called Hans (Otto Jespersen), who may be a poacher, but whose presence is disturbing some bear hunters. In fact, it transpires that Hans is the eponymous Troll Hunter. The students persuade Hans to allow them to film him on his nightly troll hunts, and there they catch their first glimpse of real life trolls. They also witness Hans' skill as a troll hunter, his

6. It is for this reason that *Tree of Life* is not included in this cross border grouping.

knowledge of trolls and their habits, his ability to identify different troll types, his skill in turning the huge monsters to stone, his connections with his bosses in Troll Security Services (TSS) – a shadowy government agency operating behind the legitimate front of the Wildlife Board – and also to a veterinarian, Hilde (Torunn Lødemel Stokkeland) involved in the management of Norway's troll population.

Hans' motivation for allowing the students to film him is that he is fed up of his job being unrecognised, and the poor working conditions he suffers as the lone troll hunter. He receives no overtime, night pay or pension, and yet the inevitable paperwork of a unique 'Slayed Troll Form' for each kill. Gradually a government conspiracy is uncovered, to keep the existence of the trolls a secret. The trolls are penned in, as though on a reservation, in an inhospitable part of Norway. The fence which keeps them captive is an unbroken ring of power cables strung from pylons, which stretches for many miles in a vast loop. A colleague of Hans, Finn Haugen (Hans Morten Hansen) from the Wildlife Board, is responsible for covering up sightings and traces of the activities of escaped trolls, typically by planting the corpse of a bear (illegally imported from Poland) in the area where trolls have caused damage, to suggest that the bear was responsible.

The most precocious of the three students, Thomas, is bitten by a rabid troll, and gradually begins to suffer the effects. Kalle, a Christian, who remains involved despite the warning the students receive from Hans with regard to the trolls' abilities to smell the blood of a Christian, is eaten as they try to escape a troll lair. He is replaced by a Muslim, Malica (Urmila Berg-Domaas). In one of the film's funniest moments, no one is sure whether it is the blood of all religions which are detectable by trolls, or only Christianity, the ideology of European consolidation and expansion.

The conclusion to the film sees Hans attempt to tackle a huge Larde June troll in the snowy mountains of Jotunheimen, succeed, and depart afterwards. Thomas, Johanna and Malica also leave the scene, only to encounter Haugen. The footage ends with the three filmmakers running from Haugen and his goons, who are intent on capturing the footage. The film closes with an actual press conference from 25th June 2010, in which Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg speaks of the need for power lines to produce electricity, in spite of the need to protect the environment, and the existence of 'trolls' in Norway. In fact he was referring to the 'Troll Field' oil field off the coast, but a clever edit to the facial expression of a shocked Haugen suggests that this is actually an unguarded comment from the national leader (Magnet Pictures 2011, p. 7; Rees 2011, p. 60).

Troll Hunter has already received scholarly attention. Ellen Rees gives an extremely compelling reading of *Troll Hunter* as ‘a critique of Norwegian greed and narcissism’, and ‘a cautionary tale about government bureaucracy that ... gets caught up in a self-aggrandizing and exploitative conspiracy that serves the state rather than the citizens’ (2011, pp. 58–61). As part of this reading, Rees considers contemporary plans to install power masts across pristine countryside, and the paradox of protests against such plans at a time when the demand for power is ever increasing (2011, pp. 58–61). However, it can also be considered rather differently, as a transnationally-oriented movie. As Rees observes, *Troll Hunter* builds upon Norway’s recent success in making suspenseful, often special effects-driven horror and monster movies which also feature the Norwegian countryside. These include *Fritt vilt/Cold Prey* (2006) and its sequels, plus the resulting spoof Nazi Zombie film *Død snø/Dead Snow* (2009) and the rather different monster movie, *Thale* (2012). *Troll Hunter* is also discussed by Ib Bondebjerg & Eva Novrup Redvall as proof that Norwegian cinema ‘has entered the quest for a Scandinavian-European blockbuster’ (2011, p. 37), noting that it has been sold to over forty countries. Thus, although it stars nationally recognisable Norwegian comedian Otto Jespersen in the lead, this is a film with international ambition. Again, in *Ecology and Contemporary Nordic Cinemas* (2014), Pietari Kääpä observes *Troll Hunter*’s engagement with not only national myths but also broader ecological concerns (in particular, humanity’s negative effect on the ecosystem through the artificial construction of barriers between human and animal worlds): an emphasis which points towards the more international appeal of the film (pp. 78–80). Therefore, when viewed as a European film with a potentially more universal story than Rees uncovers by focusing on its specific engagement with Norway (much of which may well pass by a non-Norwegian viewer in any case), *Troll Hunter* demonstrates the value of a Dusselian approach for illuminating how the ecological concern at work in the film relates to coloniality/modernity.

In fact, this is a film which uses the jokey transnational appeal of monsters (trolls in this instance) to illuminate the shaky historical past upon which Eurocentric coloniality/modernity is built. Specifically, *Troll Hunter* uses CGI to depict mythical creatures which have been excluded by modernity, in order to maintain the integrity of the nation state of Norway. Such use of CGI might be read, in line with Kara’s speculative realist reading, as the imagining of Meillassoux’s ancestry. However, after Dussel, the insistence of these mythological pre-modern beasts can be more clearly shown to illustrate the remnants of Europe’s colonial past upon which the centrality of Europe to the world system

was constructed. This includes, in Norway/Sweden/Finland/Russia, the border-crossing Sami people (although the film avoids any simplistic equation or conflation of trolls with the Sami), but could apply to any number of contexts beyond Scandinavia. Indeed, it is to the very Earth itself, as opposed to any one people excluded by modernity, that the CGI trolls point us most directly. With an 'ecological eye' we can understand the depiction of the trolls as at one with the landscape as a design deployed to emphasise that they, as creatures almost imperceptible from their environments, are at one with or representative of the Earth against which humanity wages war. The encounter with the trolls is thus used to demonstrate the difficulties, or more accurately perhaps, the impossibilities, of the transmodern encounter. How can we learn to speak with the very Earth itself, as Serres asks us to consider? Nevertheless, using Dussel we can unlock how the film explores the historical nature of their exclusion, in order to demonstrate how a transmodern ethical encounter would require an ungrounding of the historical construction of both Eurocentrism and the modern nation state form.

Transmodern Trolls

The film's story was influenced by Norwegian folk tales, especially those collected and published in the mid-1800s, by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe (Magnet Pictures 2011, p. 4; Asbjørnsen & Moe 1960, 2009). This was a time of flourishing romanticism in Norway (coinciding with the industrial revolution), and Asbjørnsen and Moe were inspired by the similar collecting of several centuries-old oral folk stories by the Brothers Grimm (Asala 2005). The design of the CGI trolls, likewise, was influenced by the illustrations of Theodor Kittelsen, which often accompany books of Norwegian folk or troll tales (Magnet Pictures 2011, p. 11). These mythical beasts, initially the excluded other of Christianity, thus became linked with both industrialised modernity and the era of nation building.

The violence which occurs when humanity encounters the pre-modern, in this case trolls, thus shows the constant state of war between humanity and nature. As outlined by Serres, the absence of a Natural Contract is a product of Christianity's focus on humanity rather than nature (1995, p. 49). Whilst it might be objected that we now live in a post-Christian age, as Mignolo argues this is an age marked by the 'coexistence of successive global designs that are part of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system'. These coexisting designs are the product of a several centuries long history which saw the shift from an initial 'Christian mission' after 1492 to a later 'civilizing mission' (its secular version) and then to a developmental and modernizing mission, before our

contemporary efficiency and marketizing mission. These shifts did not see phased eradications of former 'missions'. Rather, they only saw their persistence, along with their subservience to new emphases each time. Thus, for Mignolo: 'Christian mission and civilizing mission are not ideas of the past', but coexist in the present (2000, p. 280). Perhaps for this reason, as Catherine Wheatley has shown in relation to the emergence of various contemporary European films that engage, contemplatively, with Christianity, we find the 'persistence of religion in our postsecular era' (Wheatley 2014, p. 12). In any case, in *Troll Hunter* the trolls' violent reaction to their olfactory sensing of Christian blood, which is contrasted with the unresolved question mark over their possible reaction to a Muslim, is used to demonstrate this historical link.

As Étienne Balibar notes in *We, the People of Europe* (2003), in the context of a broader discussion of Europe's exporting of the concept of the border globally (and building on his previous analysis of the construction of a 'fictive ethnicity' in order to divide people into nations), nationalism is a form of 'civic religion' (p. 8). As such, we can conclude that it is the formation of the nation which banishes such monsters as trolls, to the mythological past. In *Troll Hunter*, then, these mythical beings function to demonstrate the historical basis for the European nation state (and by extension, the constructed nature of the European ego) based upon the exploitation of the land wherein it is build, irrespective of the rights of animals and other indigenous inhabitants (in Norway's case, the Sami people), not to mention in the absence of a Natural Contract with the Earth itself.

Thus this film from Europe, interpreted after Dussel, indicates a point made by Mignolo regarding the globally widespread nature of coloniality/modernity. Mignolo argues that: 'the coloniality of power underlies nation building in both local histories of nations that devised and enacted global designs as well as in those local histories of nations that had to accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their direct participation' (2000, p. 43). The human encounters with the trolls, then, illustrate the shaky border zones upon which modernity is constructed, worldwide, and the insistence of the potential of the transmodern encounter with the excluded other. The trolls are breaking out of their reservation because there is an epidemic of Rabies, which infects Thomas, the disease being only a manifestation of the insistence of (in this instance) the excluded other of nature, along with its violent resurgent power in the absence of a Natural Contract.

To further this interpretation of the film as a critique of coloniality/modernity, let us consider the way nature is depicted in its interaction with modernity. The trolls are shown to be penned in by the huge

electricity pylons and power lines. They are culled using ultra violet light shot from a specially made weapon, and large lamps mounted on the troll hunter's Land Rover, both of which turn the trolls to stone. These technological means are assisted by the media conspiracy, the tracking of troll movements through satellite surveillance and the monitoring of newspaper reports, all devices used in the creation and surveillance of the borders of the 'imagined community' of the nation (Anderson 1983). With the trolls thus penned in by modernity, the film considers how we might understand this excluded species, as though it were a force that speaks to us from the Earth.

Initially Hans describes these 1000 year old creatures much as other large endangered species (such as the rhinoceros) are sometimes dismissively discussed: 'Trolls are animals. Predators. They eat, shit and mate. Eat anything they can.' When asked about their intelligence, he continues: 'In the pits. They are not bright. They manage to eat. But how hard is it to survive on rocks?' Yet the film makes it clear that this stereotypical view is not entirely accurate. The trolls are often heard before they are seen. Their grunts, growls and snarls are suggestive of a language, even if it is one that humans do not have the power to comprehend. The filmmakers, in fact, went to great lengths to humanise the trolls in this way (Magnet Pictures, p. 12). In addition, Hans speaks of their mating rites, including the growth of extra heads on the Tosslerlad troll which is described as related to competitive behaviour amongst males vying for territory and females to mate with. Moreover, Hans himself is haunted by a troll massacre he was ordered to undertake, akin to any number of genocidal acts against indigenous populations worldwide. Despite what he may tell himself in order to do his job, Hans' conscience is pricked, it would seem, by the 'humanity' of the trolls.

Moreover, the massacre which haunts Hans was perpetrated to make way for a more homogenous or, to return to Balibar, a fictive ethnically 'ideal' nation state (Balibar and Wallerstein, pp. 96–100). Hans relates that he was tasked with exterminating a troll community (including pregnant mothers and infants) to enable the building of tunnels through a mountainous area in the 1970s. This specific decade is presumably evoked to very obliquely link – at least for national audiences – the trolls' relationship to the state to that of the Sami people, whose land rights were again in question during the 'Alta Affair', caused by the state's building of a hydro-electric power station in 1979 (Minde 2004, pp. 87–94). Indeed, as Rees notes, as part of her broader exploration of *Troll Hunter's* 'cultural references and social critique', Hans' desire to reveal the secret of his profession to the world is less out of compassion for the trolls, but more due to his desire to receive better pay and working

conditions, to gain access to the bounty of the nation state's welfare system (Rees 2011, p. 57). Yet this national-allegorical reading ultimately points less towards a specifically Norwegian interrogation of national history in the film, than it does towards a broader allegorical exploration of the nation state per se. In other words, the film attempts to uncover, in a humorous manner, the exclusion of otherness upon which nations are built, in particular (due to the setting of Norway) the banishment into myth of the inhabitants who preceded the formation of modern European countries.

As the film's humorous coda illustrates, the government-led conspiracy to keep the existence of trolls a secret is akin to a making-extinct of the past which pre-existed the modern European nation state. The rise of the European nation emerged, after all, in the period which, for Frank, saw Europe finally make its global presence felt by entering the Asian market (1998). Something similar could be said for Christian Europe more generally in the era leading up to and including the colonial expansion into the Americas. As noted previously, it is not by coincidence that the trolls are averse to the blood of Christians, nor that when the film replays the 'De tre bukkene bruse/The Three Billy Goats Gruff', Hans dons protective metal armour such that he looks and moves exactly like a medieval knight.

Finally, and most importantly, it is the film's use of CGI to provide a 'different' perspective on the trolls which creates the resonance that links this film to those other examples from a world of cinemas mentioned above, when viewed with an 'ecological eye'. In these standout instances, their anthropomorphising illustrates how the trolls come to represent the face of the Earth, as it encounters the species that has been waging war with it for several centuries.

Firstly, the film's initial encounter with a three headed Tosselad troll in the woods include striking images created using green filters for shots of the woods as though seen through a night vision function on Kalle's camera. These shots render the trolls a part of the wooded landscape, their initial emergence from the trees suggestive of the forest suddenly coming alive, as though troll heads have sprouted from the tree tops. At times the troll's legs are indistinguishable from tree trunks, and as such it surprises the students by appearing closer than they think. These eerie green filtered shots are illustrative of the nonhuman lives of the trolls, who merge with the wooded environment, and do not struggle as much to perceive their human quarry in the dark. Humans, for their part, are vulnerable to the trolls, with only the nonhuman perception enabled by the night vision camera function ensuring their ability to dodge the mythical monsters. This blurring of the trolls with the landscape is

clearly a deliberate ploy on the part of the filmmakers, as it occurs in all three environments.

Secondly, the Tosserlad's tree-like appearance is matched by the boulder-camouflage of the Dovre Gubbe mountain-dwelling trolls (whose hairy sleeping forms seem to merge with their cave lair). Third and finally, the impressive finale of the huge grey Larde Jutne's appearance from deep within the slate grey and snow white mountainscape is all the more stunning visually as he appears to walk out of the very landscape itself.

These three instances clearly demonstrate that the trolls are the nonhuman other, excluded from the Natural Contract which humanity never made, and as such they are a force capable of providing a transmodern encounter for humanity with the very Earth itself. Yet the war the trolls wage with the troll hunter and the Norwegian government shows how the possibility of a transmodern encounter is excluded, because of the way in which Eurocentric modernity intellectualises difference into inequality, and through the constraining force that is the nation state.

Ultimately, then, *Troll Hunter* is a film about the impossibility of a transmodern ethics emerging in a situation where our awareness of the excluded other is so limited. This is seen to be a product of the perpetuation, through mass media, of a belief in our supposed right to colonise the planet. By turns this is shown to be backed up by government monitoring and surveillance of the others which insist at the borders of coloniality/modernity, globally. That this is rendered a mythological other upon which the European nation state was built, underscores the historical nature of the construction of Eurocentric understandings of history and the self, bringing much closer to home the legacy of colonial activity which Europe has perpetuated globally since 1492, in order to compete in the world market.

Troll Hunter is a transnational tale of ecology in that it exposes both Christianity and the nation as Eurocentric colonial structures. The film with which I am pairing *Troll Hunter* in this analysis, *The Hunter*, is a little different. For its part, it exposes how multinational capital has taken control of the war against nature. The two films together thus illustrate Mignolo's understanding of the coexisting designs of coloniality/modernity. The older, Christian and civilizing missions critiqued in *Troll Hunter's* expose of the construction of the nation are joined in *The Hunter* by the developmental and modernizing, along with the efficiency and marketing missions of globalized capital. In this instance, the nation has been reduced to a location riven by transnational capital such that local people are pitted against each other (the need for employment versus the need to save the environment) in a manner which only ultimately benefits large corporations and not the country itself.

Whilst different in emphasis, however, both films (as is the case in the broader trend they illustrate) foreground ethical encounters between humanity and nature. Both deploy CGI at pivotal moments to render visible humanity's excluded ecological other. Thus the trolls merging with and emerging from their natural habitats in *Troll Hunter* find their parallel in the recreation of the extinct Tasmanian Tiger in *The Hunter*, in this instance – in the context of a critique of multinational global capital rather than the nation – in a manner which enables a further consideration of the transmodern encounter in the final figure of the child. This final figure, whilst seemingly reminiscent of the Levinasian figure of the orphan, is more accurately understood to represent the possibility of a transmodern encounter with the child excluded by coloniality/modernity, as understood by Dussel.

The Hunter

The Hunter is an Australian production, by Porchlight Films, with the support of Screen Australia, Screen NSW and Screen Tasmania. The film was made with a substantial contribution from Australian-based talent. This includes the special effects produced by Postmodern Sydney (now a part of Method Studios), with the tiger effects by FUEL VFX, also of Sydney. Aside from the opening scenes supposedly set in Paris, but presumably filmed in Australia or Tasmania (depicting an anonymous international airport and up-market hotel), the film features the outstanding natural landscape of Tasmania's outback.

The Hunter begins as we first encounter the mercenary, Martin (Willem Dafoe), in an anonymous (apparently Parisian) hotel by an airport. He is an uptight, anally retentive hunter, his surroundings demonstrating his minimalist and ordered existence – razor, toothbrush, nail clippers, lip balm and towel all neatly arranged. His only pleasure seems to be to listen to classical music and opera. Martin meets with his contact, and accepts a job hunting what may be the last living Tasmanian Tiger (*Thylacine cynocephalus*), a species previously thought to be extinct. The company involved, Red Leaf, is 'a military biotech' operating out of Germany. The country is not mentioned specifically, but their letters are marked 'REDLEAF GmbH', and their email address ends with '.de'. Red Leaf wants Martin to obtain samples of the tiger's blood, skin, hair and organs, and then destroy entirely the remains. They aim to have the sole ownership of a toxin which the tiger uses to immobilise its prey, for weapons technology development. Amongst the information they give to Martin is archival footage of a Tasmanian Tiger in captivity, from the early decades of the Twentieth Century. On his arrival in Tasmania, Martin lodges with the Armstrong family, whose father, Jarrah

(Marc Watson-Paul) disappeared some months previously in the area where the tiger has been spotted. The local community is divided between the workers who depend upon the logging trade for their jobs and livelihood, and the 'Greenies', environmental protesters intent on stopping the logging trade.

During his extended stay with the family, during which he is away in the bush tracking the tiger for long stretches, Martin slowly, begrudgingly, begins to take on the role of husband to Lucy (Frances O'Connor) and surrogate father to her two children, Katie (a.k.a. Sass) (Morgana Davies) and Jamie (a.k.a. Bike) (Finn Woodlock). Bike is mute, or at least, does not speak. When Red Leaf grows frustrated with Martin's slowness, they send another hunter to kill and replace him. Martin kills his would-be assassin. However, he returns to the family home only to find that the hunter has killed Lucy and Sass by setting the house alight. Martin returns to the wilderness, and finds the remaining Tasmanian Tiger. In a face to face encounter with the CGI creature, he has to choose whether to kill it, or allow it to live. His decision appears to be made by the tiger's dropping of its head, a seeming act of acquiescence to death. This, the film cues us to believe, may be due to the tiger's realisation that it is the very last of its species. Earlier, Martin muses: 'I wonder if she's the last one. Alone. Just hunting and killing. Waiting to die.' As though to reaffirm this view, later in the film Lucy says: 'It's probably better off extinct. Whilst it's alive people will always want to find it, hunt it down.' In the coda, Martin calls Red Leaf and tells them that their prize will never be found, and that he has left the hunting trade. He then collects Bike from school, leaving behind his uptight professional persona to take on the role of father.

On one level, Martin's transformation is a cliché familiar to many genre movies. Admittedly, his 'journey' from heartless capitalist motivated solely by money, to family man, is not rendered with the bombast of a Hollywood movie like *The Family Man* (2000). Nevertheless, it is not a dissimilar trajectory. Even so, I am not claiming that the more sombre tone or 'serious' subject matter of *The Hunter* – a film which circulates on the independent cinema circuit as much as through the multiplex – necessarily makes it a 'better', more 'progressive' or 'worthy' film. Rather, in its use of archival footage and CGI to recreate the pre-modern past, in the now extinct species of the Tasmanian Tiger, *The Hunter* plays out this recognisable generic narrative with the added dimension of a transmodern encounter with the excluded ecological other of modernity. This, in turn, is not to repeat the age old cliché that a more 'artistic' film somehow 'transcends' generic conventions, even if the film is, to be fair, artistic. Rather, I mean that if we consider the film in terms of a Dusselian transmodern ethical encounter, then there is more to this well-trodden

story of a man's revelation about his need to transform his life than solely a regurgitation of patriarchal family values.

Martin is initially shown to be isolated from any connection to the world or other people, a distance which he mediates through modern technology. We do not know anything of his home, but his introduction, living for two weeks in a sparse hotel overlooking an airport suggests he is a rootless capitalist. He has a personal stereo to drown out sound, a computer through which to connect with the world, and a rifle scope through which to view nature. The first shot of the film is the airport as seen through Martin's hotel room window, placing him at the centre of global capital. The music he listens to is European classical music and opera (throughout the film including Antonio Vivaldi, George Frideric Handel and Antonín Dvořák), indicative of a European heritage if not to Martin, then at least to his professional activity at the blunt end of Western modernity's continued global dominance. Whilst his methods of hunting and bush-craft (tracking, trapping, snaring) show remarkable skill in reading and utilising the natural environment, he also uses steel traps which draw criticism from the local 'Greenies'. Thus Martin is depicted as a product of modernity, a technologically proficient tool of a large biotechnology company. In Dussel's terms, he is a weapon of the 'cynical management reason' that is responsible for the current 'planetary administration', that which profits from the exploitation of nature.

Through Martin's transformation *The Hunter* engages with the world history which belies modernity, and explores the difficulties inherent in a transmodern approach to ethics. His initial discomfort as he roughs it at his new lodgings in Tasmania – cleaning the bath, restarting the electricity generator, cooking for the children – gives way finally to a desire to protect the orphaned Bike. Thus a story of seeming patriarchal recuperation is in fact one of ethical transformation through a transmodern encounter in which the initial meeting with the tiger (after Dussel, realising 'the destruction of nature (in ecology)') leads to a new relationship with the orphan (after Dussel, a post-Levinasian other of 'the child under ideological manipulation').

This ethical dimension becomes very apparent in the differences between the film and the source novel, by Australian writer Julia Leigh, from which it was adapted. Three differences stand out in particular, all aspects uniquely developed in the film which point towards the movie's final confrontation between hunter and tiger as one between humanity and the history of its exclusion of, or war with, nature.

Firstly, the film makes a point of opening with the meeting between the hunter and the representative of the biotech company which hires him. In the book, by contrast, the first mention of the 'biotech multinational'

comes only on page twenty-five of 170, and the meeting with Martin's handler is alluded to briefly four pages later, as part of a flashback. No location is given. By contrast, the film places the initial hiring in Paris, the clean lines of the airport hotel, the global hub of travel and the classical music which Martin uses to fill his anonymous environment, suggesting the European centre of the multinational's global reach.

Secondly, the nature of the global biotech's activities is represented very differently in the film. The book leaves unresolved the manner of the death of the family's father, Jarrah, and renders accidental the break-up of his remaining family (ex-wife committed to an institution, daughter suffering terribly from accidental burns due to familial neglect, son in foster care). In the film, by contrast, when Martin discovers the skeleton of Jarrah the skull is present (it is missing in the book), and shows a bullet entrance wound in the centre of his forehead. The direct implication in the film is that Jarrah has been murdered by an assassin paid by the multinational, presumably because he refused to reveal to them the location of the tiger. His remaining family, with the exception of Bike, is also murdered by the second hunter who is sent to dispatch Martin when the company grows impatient at his slowness.

In the book there is no conspiracy uncovered in logos on headed paper, revealing the extent of the ambition of global capitalism to destroy not only the family, but also the natural world. No second killer is dispatched to kill Jarrah, or replace Martin, suggestive of the multinational's inexhaustible supply of finance in its bloody pursuit of profit. Noticeably, whilst the film has Lucy speculate on the motives of the biotech in desiring the DNA of the tiger – to manufacture the immobilising toxin which the tiger supposedly used in hunting, presumably, we are left to infer, for the purposes of weapons manufacture – the book leaves a degree of ambiguity over why the biotech wishes to preserve sufficient of the dead animal to manufacture its own clones. In the book, species extinction is not necessarily the inevitable conclusion of Martin's performance of his job as hunter. There is not so direct a suggestion of deathly intent (weapons manufacture), and perhaps the tigers could be cloned for other purposes. Albeit whilst some such possibilities, such as medical research, are arguably little different in terms of intention to profit, nevertheless, this future might also see repopulation of the species. In the film, by contrast, human death and animal extinction are rendered as simply collateral damage left in the wake of the (globally colonial) violence of multinational capitalism. The only alternative, Martin realises, to its insatiable greed fed by a relentless replacement of assassins, is absolute annihilation of the last remaining tiger.

Third and finally, the choice Martin is asked to make in the film, on the surface level between career and family but one which also imbricates global capital and the natural world in his decision-making, plays out very differently. The book concludes with Martin killing the tiger and carrying out his professional duty in delivering the organs to his employers. The death of the animal is not rendered as a traumatic event for Martin, even if the fantasy of an adopted family tugs briefly at him earlier in the story. The effect of this is to depict the extinction of species at the service of global capitalism as an unremarkable, everyday event. Such violence is perpetrated by humanity the hunter, a figure sovereign over the landscapes it traverses, as is emphasised in both book and film as though it were a blunt matter of fact, simply in the honed bushcraft skills of Martin.

The film, for its part, deals with the relationship between Martin and the last Tasmanian Tiger very differently. As opposed to the tiger engrossed in devouring its prey, which reacts angrily to Martin's presence just prior to its death (the book), the film depicts the final tiger as a sad creature, apparently aware of its status and seemingly unperturbed by its fate as a result (the film). This anthropomorphising of the tiger as a 'noble' creature, although itself a remnant of colonial discourses on the savage who might be 'better off dead', nevertheless enables the film to establish an ethical encounter between man and tiger in which there is a two way communication and understanding regarding its fate. This, in turn, leads Martin to embrace the orphaned Bike in the film's final scene.

What is added to the film, as is evident in these three differences, is a foregrounded exploration of the role of global capital in species extinction (here the confrontation between the loggers and the 'Greenies' is also given greater time in the film), and the insertion of an ethical encounter which manifests the need for a Natural Contract between humans and Earth (evident in a hunter's seeming moment of communication with an animal prior to its death) to stop the ongoing extinction of species caused by coloniality/modernity. To better understand how the film makes this point, let us focus on Martin's relationship with the tiger.

Transmodern Tiger

Martin's first contact with his quarry is via the archival footage he watches on his computer. This is film from 1933, of the last known Tasmanian tiger to be kept in captivity. Martin's initial encounter, then, is with the past. In this way the film first indicates what is at stake in Martin's ethical transformation, namely, the encounter with the historical evidence of the 'irrational violence' on which modernity is based. Whilst tracking the

animal, Martin must accommodate himself to the nonhuman coordinates of the wilderness terrain he traverses, for instance by covering himself in the smells of animal waste and smoke in order to mask his human odour. The maps Martin carries with him (described in the book as ‘high-resolution, satellite-generated and computer-enhanced physiographic maps’) prove useless in locating the tiger (Leigh 1999, p. 29). Instead, the topographical clues for its location are given by a child’s drawing, supplied by Bike.

When Martin finally meets the tiger, in the film’s revelatory finale, he meets a CGI created creature. For the viewer, well aware of the impossibility of such a creature being in the same space as the actor Willem Defoe (in spite of the efforts to make the special effect created creature fit in to its surroundings), this is clearly an encounter between a man and the excluded (indeed, now extinct) ecological past upon which modernity has been built. In the encounter with the creature, Martin has the ability to reconsider not only his biographical past, but also the historical past. In Tasmania in particular, the species was pushed to extinction by human culls for bounty in the Twentieth Century, although occasional sightings suggest some remnants may still exist. Thus, his encounter not only deconstructs the Western notion of the self (as in a Levinasian ethics), but also the world history upon which it is predicated (as in a Dusselian transmodern ethics).

Initially, the tiger returns to its den to find Martin awaiting it. He is, literally, the coloniser. As the tiger flees, we see Martin approaching from behind, rifle in hand. The ethereal chimes which accompany the scene suggest that this is a moment of significance temporally, a ‘High Noon’ for Martin, but also a moment of past and present meeting each other, due to the possibilities of CGI. The reverse shot reveals the tiger in the snow, who seems to slow, stop, turn his face to regard Martin, and wait. The cross cutting continues as Martin sees his opportunity, and raises his rifle to take aim. Something gives him pause, however, and (without a cut) we see him lower his rifle. The quick crosscutting that follows is the climactic moment of the film, as Martin stares in wonder and sadness at the creature without the aid of his rifle scope. He exposes his face to the encounter without the mediation of modern technology. The creature, as Jane Stadler notes, anthropomorphised by the CGI (2012, p. 14), appears to lower its head, as though giving Martin permission or perhaps even asking him to shoot.

Finally we cut back to Martin, who rapidly raises his rifle and fires the killer shot, only for the reverse shot to register agonised sadness on his face. As he approaches and grieves over the still warm body of the tiger, his face affectively demonstrates the revelation he has had in this

encounter regarding his own self (that without an engaged relationship with others the colonial (European) ego is 'the last of his kind'), but more importantly, the historical processes he represents – of Eurocentrism, the history of Western modernity's pursuit of profit at the expense of the Earth, and the current state of global capital. All of this is evident in his inability to create a Natural Contract with an extinct species in the face to face transmodern encounter.

For this reason, although Martin kills the tiger, he refuses to help Red Leaf obtain their weapons toxin. Unable to save one of coloniality/modernity's various others, he is at least able to renounce a profession which hunts them to extinction. His rationale in the lethal act is to stop the tiger's extinction being completed in the service of global capitalism. This motivation is made clear by the film. As though in agreement with Lucy's pronouncement that the tiger is better of extinct, Martin stated previously after defeating his would-be assassin: 'They sent someone to replace me. They'll send someone to replace him, and they'll keep on sending people until they get what they want!' Martin's action, then, is a conscious decision to throw a spanner into the works of unrelenting global capital, akin to an eco-protestor spray painting a seal's fur to render it useless as a commercial product.

The 'all too human' clichéd ending which follows, although it might suggest a rather trite returning of Martin to family values and patriarchal responsibilities in his adoption of Bike, nevertheless can also be understood a little differently. In terms of a Dusselian interpretation, it further suggests a transmodern ethical recognition of the other excluded by coloniality/modernity in its multinational, globalized form. Unable to save the Earth, Martin can at least save an orphan. Rejecting the 'cynical management reason' of our 'planetary administration', Martin thus rejects the capitalist accumulation of profit from the 'destruction of nature'. Instead in a transmodern encounter he recognises the other, the Levinasian orphan here refigured as a Dusselian 'child under ideological manipulation', subject to the menacing impersonal forces of multinational capital.

When Martin arrives to collect Bike from school, their encounter is deliberately shot in a manner evocative of his previous encounter with the tiger. This is no surprise, as the film has previously suggested a link between the two. Bike is the only other character to have seen the tiger, and Bike was the one who told Martin of its likely whereabouts in a drawing. The significance of Bike in this moment is in what he shows of Martin's newfound ability to engage with coloniality/modernity's other, the child. Bike is sitting alone in the school playground. Martin approaches him from afar, hiding himself behind a wall, as though moving

up slowly on a quarry. Bike turns to stare at Martin, and a similar cross cutting between faces occurs as it did with the tiger, a parallel emphasised by Bike's muteness. As Bike runs to hug Martin, he shouts Martin's name, the replaying of the previous encounter with the ecological other now enabling completeness in its human form. In this way, Martin chooses not to become extinct, like the tiger, but to change the trajectory of his own career as 'lone wolf' hunter, and to re-engage with humanity. Set in a context of a local dispute between loggers and ecowarriors, Martin's adoption of the son of a 'Greenie' places him on the side of those hopeful for a Natural Contract.

Conclusion

The transmodern encounter these films provide is produced through the use of creatures who emerge from the past of coloniality/modernity. These excluded nonhuman's provide the face, or (after Levinas) the visage with which an encounter with humanity might be achieved. This is a device which in some of the other films noted previously, such as those of Weerasethakul Apichatpong, even include landscapes which Deleuze would consider in terms of their 'visageification' (literally, 'faceified' landscapes). These are any-spaces-whatevers which do not necessarily look like a face, but illustrate the expressive qualities of a face (2005, p. 90). Following Shaviro, these faces from the Earth, whilst undoubtedly anthropomorphised, are used to enable humanity to conceive of an encounter with that which is excluded by coloniality/modernity. Through these faces, we can grasp the panpsychist idea that 'mind is a fundamental property of matter', that the Earth can communicate. Less a speculative realist aesthetic, revealing of humanity/ancestrality, then, than a Dusselian ethics revealing of coloniality/modernity.

This may just be unthinking Eurocentrism by and for coloniality/modernity, it is true. These are not films produced by indigenous filmmakers, after all, but were produced within, and for global circulation amidst, the same world system which they critique. They are mostly films looking to circulate internationally on the festival and interlinked independent cinema chain circuit, yet in many cases with enough generic pleasures – for example, comedy and teen protagonists in *Troll Hunter*, suspense and a Hollywood star in *The Hunter* – for potential mainstream crossover to the multiplex. Nevertheless, they are important in that the transmodern encounters that are needed to overcome coloniality/modernity also require an awareness of this need *within*, as well as *outwith*, its now globally displaced 'centre', as much a recognition at the heart of what Hardt and Negri call 'Empire' as in its impoverished (and now also globally ubiquitous) peripheries.

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