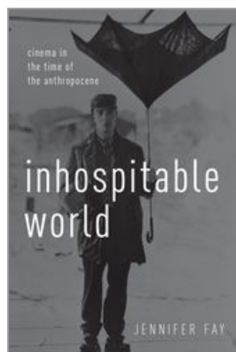
University Press Scholarship Online
Oxford Scholarship Online



Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene
Jennifer Fay

Print publication date: 2018
Print ISBN-13: 9780190696771
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: March 2018
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190696771.001.0001

Antarctica and Siegfried Kracauer’s Extraterrestrial Film Theory

Jennifer Fay

DOI:10.1093/oso/9780190696771.003.0006

Abstract and Keywords

`Siegfried Kracauer’s film and photographic theory along with cinematic records of early Antarctic exploration explain how this utterly inhospitable continent (Antarctica) and this media theory advance an alternative and denaturalized history of the present. Cinema has the capacity to reveal an earth outside of human feeling and utility without sacrificing the particularity that gets lost in scientific abstraction. And Antarctica, for so long outside of human history altogether, simply numbs feeling and refuses to yield to human purpose. It is also a continent on which celluloid encounters its signifying limits. Kracauer, this chapter argues, helps us to imagine an estranged and selfless relationship to an inhospitable or even posthospitable earth that may not accommodate us.

Keywords: Siegfried Kracauer, Antarctica, Gerhardt Richter, alienation, Ernest Schackelton, Herbert G. Ponting, Captain Robert Scott, Miriam Hansen

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Antarctica is the most inhospitable place on Earth, and thus it is a fitting location for this book's final chapter. Read any account of this continent's features and you will find a string of chilling superlatives: it is the coldest, driest, and windiest mass of land and ice on the planet. During its sunless winter, temperatures drop to minus eighty-one degrees Fahrenheit, and even in summer, writes one nature writer, the air "causes instant pain to any exposed skin. It's not even wise to smile—your gums and teeth will ache. Frostbite can set in quickly."[1] A different writer comments on the amenities: "In the interior of the continent there is nothing to make a living from—no food, no shelter, no clothing, no fuel, no liquid water. Nothing but ice."[2] America's National Science Foundation (NSF)-run McMurdo Station, on the southern tip of Ross Island, testifies to the artificiality of human existence in this bitter cold. The largest scientific outpost on the continent, McMurdo was established in 1955 as a fragile "blizzard-prone pastiche of a small American town, complete with a cinema and a chapel."[3] Children are banned along with most creaturely comforts, and today it is a small but "grubby, ugly mess," in an otherwise pristine frozen landscape.[4] Everything needed for survival must be shipped or flown in during the summer months because humans have never lived "naturally" on this continent. Earth's hospitality and human expression reach their limits at the South Pole.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Because of its extreme remoteness, moreover, for millennia it fascinated as a hypothetical continent, presumed to exist as a ballast to the North Pole until the late eighteenth century when Captain James **(p.163)** Cook confirmed both its geographic existence and its uselessness to science and empire. The continent was fully mapped (but still not fully known) only in 1997 when satellite technology could provide detail for what was still considered to be a largely uncharted, *terra incognita* at the bottom of the planet.[5] Always of the earth, it was the last continent to become part of the human world. Antarctica’s belatedness thus confronts us with a natural history on the far side of human meaning. For most of human existence, Antarctica has been an image of “the world without us.” It is a “frozen part of the Garden of Eden that has been off limits to us,” writes geophysicist Henry Pollack in reference to Alan Weisman’s speculative science of humanity’s sudden disappearance (in which, incidentally, Antarctica does not figure).[6] Unlike Eden, Antarctica is not where human life and its world begin so much as end. The very name, *Ant*arctica, designates geography by negation: *opposed* to the North Pole, *opposite* the North Star.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Antarctica is also a challenge to if not negation of cinema—in particular, expressions of cinephilia that constellate around ecophilia. These are two forms of love and attachment that seem to intensify when celluloid and certain ecosystems draw near their moments of disappearance. The latter expresses a love of dwelling in the world, the former a desire to dwell in the image. Or, taken together, they express a singular love of dwelling in the world *through* the image. Antarctica is tough to love, in this regard, because it resists analogical transcription—not because it changes too fast, like the Three Gorges Dam, but because its extreme conditions are too bright, too dark, too cold, or too still and too undifferentiated to register on film. Its relentless sun in summer can lead to snow blindness and overexposure of skin and celluloid alike. Its winter defies vision and cinematic capture. At the time of its earliest “nondiscovery” by Cook, the seventh continent figured cartographically as a negative space, and, in many films and photographs shot during the long winter, the landscape captured with flash photography produced what appears to be a negative image (Figure 5.1).[7] Stephen J. Pyne explains that in the heroic age of exploration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the South Pole defied not just narrative, but the “metaphysics (and metahistory) of nature,” philosophy, representation, and genres of art:

> The abundance of the observed world was stripped away. . . . In place of increasing information, there was less. In place of abundant objects, there was only ice; and in place of tangible landmarks, such as mountains or lakes, there were only abstract concepts, such as the poles of rotation, magnetism, or inaccessibility, all invisible to the senses.[8]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(p.164) In early exploration films, the journey to the pole eludes the cinematic and even photographic record altogether, and not simply because few of the early filmmakers reached this prized geographic coordinate. Roald Amundsen had to plant a flag in the otherwise empty, indistinct space before he could photograph a location he discovered by virtue of crude meridian calculation. And even after planting the flag and taking the photo, he realized his team had still eight kilometers to travel before reaching the “absolute Pole,” the coveted destination that eludes perception.[9] Arriving at the same spot just months after Amundsen, Robert F. Scott, without a trace of sublime reverence, described the pole’s “awful monotony” of ice, snow, and inhuman cold.[10] Richard E. Byrd, accompanied by Paramount cameraman Joseph Rucker, was the first to fly over the pole in 1928, as recorded in the documentary *With Byrd at the South Pole: The Story of Little America* (1929/1930). The triumphant moment captured on film, however, is nothing but white spied from the plane’s small window; not even a horizon provides a measure of context or grandeur (Figure 5.2). Byrd tosses a US flag out of the window that disappears into the utterly blank white below, reducing this claim of discovery to its most bare symbolic gesture. Upon his return to North America, Byrd recounts to an off-screen crowd of admirers what he and his men missed while on the expedition: “all that you **(p.165)** have about you here—land, grass, green trees, voices other than our own, the warm rays of the sun, nearly everything that makes life worthwhile.” The value of human life finds no confirmation on a continent that is “white, silent and dead.” In a different register, geophysicist Bill Green writes of his Antarctic obsession: “It is precisely what is not there, what has never been there, that makes . . . the whole continent . . . so strange and so important.”[11] Antarctica, as a place, and the pole, as a coordinate, seem to offer *nothing* to the lovers of cinema or nature. Or maybe it is the void that we love. Channeling the last thoughts of one of Captain Scott’s doomed traveling companions, Annie Dillard imagines the dizzying Antarctic freeze as a “lightless edge where the slopes of knowledge dwindle, and love for its own sake, lacking an object, begins.”[12]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Figure 5.1 Frank Hurley’s flash photography of *The Endurance* during the Antarctic winter. *South* (1919).

Figure 5.2 The triumphant shot of the South Pole as seen through the plane’s window. *With Byrd at the South Pole* (1930).

As a result of this apparently empty, shimmering topography, even modern Antarctica has reflected back more the temperament and culture of the people who have traveled there than it has revealed about itself. Survival in the early days of exploration, as Pyne describes it, “meant surmounting the inactivity and lethargy of the polar night and enduring the introspection and deprivation that were the supreme Antarctic attributes.” Paradoxically, he continues, Antarctica did not produce a sensible experience of nature despite its complete isolation from civilization: rather, **(p.166)** its numbing whiteness—“utterly without ‘human interest’ ”—made it the most anesthetic continent on Earth, causing visitors to explore their own inner depths.[13] A map of Antarctica tells the story of triumphant claims and crushed human spirits. Entering Hero Bay, you will come upon

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Desolate Island. On the continent’s Akra Peninsula, Exasperation Inlet is just north of Cape Disappointment.[14]

Today, Antarctica’s affront to humanity is of a different order. Far from fixed, it is on the verge of collapse. The effect of global warming is that the ice shelves and glaciers will melt, sea levels will rise, and the great coastal cities including New York, Venice, Shanghai, Sydney, and Rotterdam, and several low-lying island nation-states will disappear. The geographical end of the world (the South Pole) is now tethered to the temporal end of many coastal worlds. Despite these imperatives, however, citizens are hard-pressed to invest in the conservation of ice for its own sake, as an object in its own right. Environmental advocates long ago realized that the public could be persuaded to care and donate money for preservation if they were faced with familiar species onto whom they could map intelligence, happiness, suffering, and other signs of human experience, and thus feel toward them something like love.[15] The charismatic animals of the American West inspired the Endangered Species Act. Yet, as legal scholar Bradley Bernau concedes, “the vast majority of endangered species are the small, the microscopic, the unseen, the unnoticed and the unheralded” whose existence matters to the public only insofar as it supports cuter life forms.[16] Loving attachment also underwrites efforts to preserve habitats. The Nature Conservancy pleads to would-be donors to “Protect Nature You Love.” Today, as I write, the Conservancy’s homepage features the following images: a field of yellow wildflowers at sunset; an aerial view of elephants running through a dusty savanna; an inviting glass of water framed in front of a waterfall; and a child, dressed in a T-shirt, jumping between boulders against a blue sky, his campsite in the background. Just opposite the “Nature You Love” donation button is a photo of a verdant, tree-filled landscape.[17] The humanism presupposed by environmentalism suggests the limits—geographical, emotional, and sensible—of our love for a world that wants us, on and into which we may project ourselves thriving. With public resources for preservation dwindling and human populations expanding, we choose which places and species merit preservation and which may just have to disappear. When we rescue from extinction only the creatures and places we love, what becomes of the unlovely, ugly, invisible, or dangerous animal or seemingly indifferent, remote, and utterly inhospitable land?[18] Against these

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

reigning criteria for preservation, Antarctica is a lost cause. Or it matters to us only insofar as its coastline hosts charismatic penguins, **(p.167)** whales, and seals and that its melting, over time, threatens the world’s more populous shores.

This once-hypothetical continent, in other words, raises the ethical questions about care and even moral judgment across great distances that Adam Smith first raised with the parable of the “hypothetical Mandarin”: if suddenly the empire of China were to be destroyed by an earthquake, how would citizens in Europe respond to an event they did not see or feel? Could they summon sympathy for so many people so far away, or would the earthquake resonate meaningfully only when—sometime later—it affected local commerce? More locally still, would a European willingly sacrifice the lives of thousands of Chinese men he would never encounter to avoid a survivable misfortune to himself? For Eric Hayot, “the hypothetical Mandarin” and the scenarios of mass, but far-off, suffering have tested European sympathy. The Mandarin has become a philosophical figure marking where “moral responsibility ends and indifference begins.”[19] Antarctica presents a different, but no less remote, challenge to feeling and sensibility. Why do we care and how do we come to love a place that is such an affront to our senses?

Guided by Antarctica’s radical negativity, I am interested in the way that film and film theory may intervene in and temper our emotional and even sentimental relationship to nature, the earth, and even the human world, and help us to form more meaningful ecological attachments outside of conventional feeling, narrative, and genres of representation. In this endeavor, I turn to Siegfried Kracauer, for whom cinema does not preserve a world we love any more than it reflects our subjectivity; rather, it is the medium par excellence that estranges nature and our contemporary moment with the effect of dissolving reified history and the emotional and political investments that sustain it. We may read Kracauer’s pre– and post–World War II writings as advancing an alternative and denaturalized natural history of the present. Can such disinterest lead to an ethics of seeing in the service of our mutual survival? Must we vanquish love and human feeling to see our current predicament clearly? Or may Antarctica inspire some kind of nonbinding, detached love beyond what we typically ascribe to human feeling?

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Kracauer’s explanations of photography and cinema—regarded as essential technologies for decoding urban modernity—illuminate film’s role in environmental aesthetics and, in particular, help us to theorize a continent that has never been host to midcentury shopgirls, white-collar workers, or hotel lobbies. I read Kracauer together with early films about Antarctic exploration to think about cinema’s relationship to brute and brutal physical reality and, more pointedly, to a vanishing natural history that marks the experience of living in the time and place of catastrophe. **(p. 168)** As we anticipate the seemingly inevitable melt of the polar ice caps, Kracauer’s writings model an environmental stance akin to that which Gerhard Richter posits, more generally, to the Frankfurt School’s relentless but redemptive negativity. In the face of irrevocable loss and of an always already damaged life, “the last and the traumatic void can be made the poetic and philosophic occasions for a vigilant stance that will neither simply revel in resignation nor fully relinquish that madness and enigmatic stimulus of non-deluded hope.”[20] In the spirit of this provisional optimism, Kracauer’s film theory may be read in the service of ecocentric thought in which human life and humanistic modes of dwelling find themselves in exile if not outright extraterrestrial estrangement. Like damaged life, nature is also already lost to us: it is already past, pastoral, cultivated, mapped, and historicized according to the contours of human meaning. Kracauer urges us to see nonidentical nature and physical reality through the unloving, antihumanist, and perhaps above all postapocalyptic medium of film. We should learn from photography and film to perceive the earth as having multiple pasts and futures—a product not of divine will, political theologies, or inevitable natural development, but one that is fragmented and accidental in design: “nature in the raw, nature as it exists independently of us.”[21] And Antarctica, through its very challenge to representation and human history, serves as the most extreme and apposite example of a nature outside of the human world.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

While Kracauer’s investments in experience make him an odd choice to pair with a continent that has been so insensible to human explorers, his model of filmmaking and spectatorship posit, as Miriam Hansen remarks, a “stoically cool, post-apocalyptic ‘subject of survival.’ ”[22] Drawing on the recent scholarship on Kracauer that challenges his status as a realist or humanist, and guided by his own ecological remarks, this chapter turns to his film and photographic theory to explore a productive model of postcatastrophic self-alienation as the basis for environmental thought. Taken together, Kracauer’s theory of photographic vision (which productively alienates the viewer) and Antarctica’s negativity (which, as I’ll discuss, turns humans into extraterrestrials) lead to a clear-eyed perception of human estrangement on and from Earth. Beyond the exilic sense of nonbelonging, this pairing also liberates us from a naturalized present and foreclosed future.

Film Theory after the Apocalypse

In his 1960 *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Kracauer ponders cinema’s antireferential depiction of nature and the possibility **(p.169)** that this unfamiliar view may actually redeem a disenchanted reality after the apocalypse.[23] The apocalypse, however, is not climate change or the Anthropocene planet we currently inhabit and which inspires all manner of traumatic, futuristic disaster cinema. Rather, as Heidi Schlüpmann explains, though there is only oblique reference to Hitler’s war and Kracauer’s own biography as a German Jewish refugee, Kracauer’s book “thematizes film after Auschwitz—in both the subjective and objective sense. This not only entails finding words of description, finding language, but also a prior difficulty, namely that of regarding film in the context of this reality.”[24] In the wake of man-made apocalypse, Kracauer proposes humankind’s rescue not through revived religiosity (the apocalypse of war did not bring about divine revelation) or scientific truth (which leads only to abstraction). Instead, Kracauer turns to cinema as a technology that will redeem physical reality (as his subtitle announces) and bring us to a planetary consciousness.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

> It is my contention that film, our contemporary, has a definite bearing on the era into which it is born; that it meets our inmost needs precisely by exposing—for the first time, as it were—outer reality and thus deepening, in Gabriel Marcel’s words, our relation to “this Earth which is our habitat.”[25]

Imprinted by the earth’s radiance, film answers humanity’s urgent need to see and think beyond itself and perceive—perhaps become photosensitized to—our earthly habitat. Out of this process of exposure comes a relation to the world impossible before film and perhaps also before war.

The crisis in perception, as Kracauer understands it, is that the physical environment, cluttered with material and historical debris, has been “persistently veiled by ideologies relating its manifestations to some total aspect of our universe.”[26] In his historical sequencing of modernity, religious totalization has been superseded by scientific abstraction. In the former, outer reality reflects metaphysical and “holistic notions as sin, the last judgment, salvation and the like.” In the latter, material life is subsumed into immaterial laws and data: “No sooner do we emancipate ourselves from the ‘ancient beliefs’ than we are led to eliminate the quality of things.”[27] Science, like religious art, removes “the world from the field of vision” such that “things continue to recede.”[28] Cinema, however, can wrest the natural world from the holisms of both artistic and scientific abstraction:

> Film renders visible what we did not, or perhaps could not, see before its advent. It effectively assists us in discovering the material world with its psychophysical **(p.170)** correspondences. We literally redeem this world from its dormant state, its state of virtual nonexistence, by endeavoring to experience it through the camera. And we are free to experience it because we are fragmentized.[29]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

While cinema has existed since the turn of the twentieth century, it is only in this post–World War II era, in the context of *this* fragmented reality, in which all master narratives have been shaken by the war’s imponderable violence, that we may, in watching film, encounter the physical world in its incomprehensible singularity. A postapocalyptic subject, in other words, is as fragmented as the world she hopes to experience, and this correspondence between fragmented nature and fragmentized human experience gives rise to this new horizon of perceptibility. From this follows that the material world’s “virtual nonexistence” to which Kracauer refers has a double meaning. In one sense, the reality we perceived before the advent of cinema was a virtual projection of ideology. Postwar cinema has the potential to shatter this illusion of coherence, especially if it embraces the affinities of its photographic substrate, namely, if cinema leaves the dark studio and discovers a reality that is unstaged, fortuitous, endless, and indeterminate.[30] In another sense, the external world is itself so fragmented, particular, and dormant that, as a comprehensible whole or meaningful totality, it is practically nonexistent. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Kracauer is not declaring the end of ideology or the triumph of capitalist history.[31] Quite the opposite. Cinema in his account may guide us to nonteleological, highly particularized, and above all estranged modes of perception. This is as close to enlightenment as we are likely to come after the apocalypse.

Kracauer elucidates the ontologically estranging effects of photography through a passage from Marcel Proust’s *The Guermantes Way* (1913). The grandson, Marcel, arrives in the living room unannounced and catches sight of his beloved grandmother. For the first time in his life, he beholds her not through his affectionate idealization, but objectively and coldly, like a photographer who has happened by the house. Kracauer quotes this long passage in which Marcel reflects on this horrifying reality and feels himself a passing stranger in the most familiar of places:

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

I was in the room, or rather I was not yet in the room since she was not aware of my presence. . . . Of myself . . . there was present only the witness, the observer with a hat and traveling coat, the stranger who does not belong to the house, the photographer who has called to take a photograph of places which one will never see again. The process that mechanically occurred in my eyes when I caught sight of my grandmother was indeed a photograph. We never see the people who are **(p.171)** dear to us save in the animated system, the perpetual motion of our incessant love for them, which before allowing the images that their faces present to reach us catches them in its vortex, flings them back upon the idea that we have always had of them, makes them adhere to it, coincide with it. How, since the forehead, the cheeks of my grandmother I had been accustomed to read all the most delicate, the most permanent qualities of her mind; how, since every casual glance is an act of necromancy, each face that we love a mirror of the past, how could I have failed to overlook what in her had become dulled and changed, seeing that in the most trivial spectacles of our daily life our eye, charged with thought, neglects, as would a classical tragedy, every image that does not assist the action of the play and retains only those that may help to make its purpose intelligible. . . . I, for whom my grandmother was still myself, I who has never seen her save in my own soul, always at the same place in the past, through the transparent sheets of contiguous, overlapping memories, suddenly in our drawing room which formed part of a new world, that of time, saw, sitting on the sofa, beneath the lamp, red-faced, heavy and common, sick, lost in thought, following the lines of a book with eyes that seemed hardly sane, a dejected old woman whom I did not know.[32]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Kracauer writes approvingly: "Photography, as Proust has it, is the product of complete alienation."[33] Its "foremost virtue" is "emotional detachment." The grandson's shock at this revelation demonstrates how "photographs transmit raw material without defining it." The photograph arrests the image in the here and now before its content is flung back into memory and sentimentality, as indeed occurs with Marcel shortly after this defamiliarizing happenstance.[34] Counterintuitively, Marcel's "necromancy" is not a vision of his grandmother in fumbling old age, approaching death; rather, his memories maintain a projection of her in her unchanging youth against the fact of her decline. Thanks to photography, we can begin to see qualities of reality through the suspended gaze of an unloving stranger and what we find may horrify us. In stark contrast to André Bazin, for whom cinema brings "a virginal purity" of reality "to my attention and consequently to my love," for Kracauer, love and memory are implicated in the very meaning-giving totalities that abstract the world from view and that cause us to preserve a mental image against the truth of a person's or thing's materiality.[35] Because "the nature of photography survives in that of film," film also redeems reality from the animated system of love and memory.[36] The effect of *cinema*'s perpetual motion is to "alienate our environment by exposing it."[37] Such exposure is not conducive to tragedy and its always-belated but inescapable revelations, as Marcel remarks in the passage earlier. The fated vision of tragedy attends only to the details that satisfy a contained **(p.172)** narrative and, specifically, its foreordination. Because the camera does not know the meaning of the future, it records and exposes every detail, and thus photography signifies its own mechanical indifference to signification. Not even grandmother is safe from its cold gaze.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

From the book's first chapter comes a theory of film rooted in a literary account of photography that celebrated as alienated both the subject and beholder of the image. The salutary effect of this technology is that it erodes human subjectivity and the individual's confidence in a world perceived through feeling. Not only does Kracauer's impersonal cinema thus part ways with Bazin's account of loving attention, but also he is working against the grain of what would become dominant psychoanalytic film theory—what would count *as* film theory in the 1970s. From Jean-Louis Baudry's "Apparatus" theory, to Christian Metz's "Imaginary Signifier," and arriving at Laura Mulvey's "Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure" blockbuster manifesto, film theory would posit a spectator duped by the technology and seduced by scenarios of narrative cinema into a false sense of mastery and often sadistic control.[38] Cinema would not be an instrument of the subject's undoing. On the contrary, it fashioned a world and experience built to the measure of human, specifically and increasingly *masculine,* desire. Publishing his book more than a decade before this turn to apparatus theory, Kracauer celebrates cinema's capacity to render "life at its least controllable" and to snap us out of our reveries.[39] The point, however, is more than the undoing of the human subject. Kracauer's polemic is for a vision that is receptive to unknown entities and as-yet-undiscovered phenomena that present themselves to a camera that records without thinking. In particular, far from shielding the subject or confirming its attentive inclinations, cinema's "revealing functions" turn on a set of phenomena that the camera alone brings to consciousness. In the third chapter, he enumerates these categories of the cinematic: those that are normally unseen (because too small or too big for human perception), those that are typically overlooked (because too familiar and thus rarely noticed), and those that overwhelm consciousness (because too cruel or too catastrophic to be witnessed without the intervention of extreme emotion). Importantly, cinema has the capacity to maintain the alterity of the unseen world before it is domesticated into narrative.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

In describing a theory of redemption through alienation, *Theory of Film* advances a natural history of the photographic present. This is a curious claim to make for a book that, as Miriam Hansen rightly notes, all but represses film history and Kracauer’s own intellectual, exilic biography in its exegesis of cinematic properties.[40] Bracketing off master historical narratives, however, is precisely how the book opens itself up to a different **(p.173)** postcatastrophic historicism. By drawing on Kracauer’s Weimar-era and post–World War II writings, I want to track in his work the nature of natural history and the nature of nature as it culminates in *Theory of Film*. “Nature” in most of Kracauer’s work is a load-bearing and ambiguous term. In much of his early, prewar writing, nature designates a mythical appeal to a supposedly immutable status quo, the appearance of the present moment as the telos of the past, or a sense of the natural world as a comprehensible totality. In these uses, nature is akin to ideology, a false doctrine that hides the truth about contingency and alternative possibilities for the past and future. On the other hand, he will appeal to nature as what history does not account for and what challenges ideological claims to coherence or totality. A “natural” image may appear to the onlooker as almost incomprehensible matter. In Kracauer’s later writing, especially in *Theory of Film*, this second definition (nature as beyond or outside of history/ideology) becomes most pronounced. Nature is no longer aligned with ideology or master explanatory narratives (a natural image that naturalizes the status quo), but is sub-subsumed into physical reality. In his postwar writing, nature *is* the fragmented truth that ideology prevents us from perceiving. In both the prewar and postwar writing, photography and cinema are deeply connected to the political significance of nature.

Nature and Natural History

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Writing in reference to Walter Benjamin, Eric L. Santner explains that natural history (*Naturgeschichte*) refers not to a history of nature, “but to the fact that the artifacts of human history tend to acquire an aspect of mute, natural being at the point where they begin to lose their place in a viable form of life.”[41] As a result of this process, which affects people and things alike, we experience artifacts detached from history as denaturalized. Or, as Beatrice Hanssen notes, “Natural history entails a falling away from pure ‘historical’ time in inauthentic ‘spatialization’ and a temporality of transience” that typifies Benjamin’s modernity.[42] Whereas Benjamin turns to the figure of allegory as the representation of “irresistible decay,” Kracauer in his Weimar writings finds repositories of a differently inflected version of this natural history in the alienating technologies of photography and film.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

We find the origins of this line of thinking in Kracauer’s well-known 1927 essay “Photography” published in eight parts in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Here he compares two photographs to explain the petrifying effect of technological reproduction. The first is a contemporary image **(p.174)** of a film star who is immediately recognizable because everyone has seen “the original on the screen.”[43] We automatically accept a contemporary photograph’s iconic relationship to its subject because not only the starlet but also her hairstyle and clothing correspond to the historical world as we experience it; indeed, it is all so familiar as to be transparent. The second example, however, challenges photography’s iconicity; it is a sixty-year-old photograph of a grandmother taken when she was a young woman. Her grandchildren behold this image and discern no similarity between it and the “long since decayed” original. Failing to recognize their grandmother, the children fixate instead on the “fashionably old-fashioned details” of her clothing that might more appropriately be found in a museum exhibit under the title “Traditional Costumes, 1864.”[44] Whereas a contemporary photograph is “translucent,” suffused as it is by the historical present, the old photograph renders grandmother into “an archeological mannequin.”[45] The children laugh at the outdated fashions and shudder uncomfortably at obsolescence itself. Old photographs “make visible not the knowledge of the original, but the spatial configuration of a moment. What appears in the photograph is not the person but the sum of what can be subtracted from him or her.”[46] Because they arbitrarily and mindlessly record a spatialized field, photographs utterly fail as portraits: “When the grandmother stood in front of the lens, she was present for one second in the spatial continuum that presented itself to the lens. But it was that aspect and not the grandmother that was eternalized.”[47] Eventually the connection to human history will be lost: the grandmother’s costume “will be peculiar, like an ocean-dwelling octopus.”[48] In contrast to painted portraits and to history, which rely on selective data and significant memory and even myth, photography preserves a “natural image,” defined in this essay as an object perceived mechanically and without cognition, one whose subject might become peculiar, like a strange animal, over time. Even landscapes do not escape this desubstantiating gaze. The hills of the Rhine that look like mountains in etchings are “reduced to tiny slopes” in photographs such that “the grandiosity of those aged views seems a bit ridiculous.”[49]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Incapable of conveying the Rhine's symbolic import, the photograph destroys its mythic status. This is photography's political utility: where traditional history requires subjectivity and selective memory to achieve false coherence, photography eradicates all subjective meaning and reflects instead "the residuum that history has discharged."[50] In his introduction to Kracauer's essay, Thomas Y. Levin writes: "Photography stages nature as the negativity of history." Or put differently, photography's natural history denaturalizes historical process, coherence, and inevitability. Levin **(p.175)** continues: "Only when the current state of things is revealed as provisional (that is, not nature) can the question of their proper order arise."[51] Here nature as a concept refers both to history's remainder and to the illusion of an immutable, comprehensible truth over and against a provisional reality. In one sense, nature is outside of history; in another, it is that force that naturalizes the present through historical meaning and makes the present transparent, natural, and given. This is what old photographs reveal: they show us our past not as history, memory, or art would have us see it—memorialized, laden with meaning—but instead as spatialized data arbitrarily organized. In the natural history of Kracauer's early work, the person recedes and the photograph "gathers fragments around a nothing."[52] If we could recognize this same negation in contemporary photographs, we could perhaps see even our current state of affairs as the product of a contingent and malleable order. It was Kracauer's hope that photography would bring about a transformation of consciousness that could resist the myths and self-declared inevitability of Nazism by exposing its brute nature. On the other hand, photography is itself a force like nature. Kracauer tropes the historicity of the photograph in ways that harmonize with my interest in the inassimilable Antarctic: photography buries history "as if under a layer of snow."[53] "The blizzard of photographs," he writes of the illustrated newspapers of the day, "betrays an indifference toward what the things mean."[54] Kracauer senses the affinities between photography and ice to obliterate significance.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

It is not incidental that Germany witnesses a resurgent fascination with polar exploration in the first decades of the twentieth century based not only on the numerous published accounts of pre–World War I expeditions by Erich von Drygalski but also on the interwar desire to claim parts of the poles for Germany to offset territorial losses dictated by the Treaty of Versailles. The public was able to experience something of the polar world when Antarctic dioramas were installed in the Berlin Institute for Oceanography in 1906 and the Berlin Museum of National History in 1912.[55] Quite apart from the nationalist land grab, David Thomas Murphy writes that stories in German newspapers of the poles’ “freakish beauty . . . of [their] auroras, solitude and danger . . . fostered an environmentalist sensibility that went beyond the sentimental naturalism embraced by the romantics.”[56] As knowledge of a prehistoric ice became more widely accepted and as fears of another global freeze took hold, the poles came to represent earth’s prehuman, natural past and posthuman future. Only a sober turn toward brutalizing nature could shock humanity out of the illusions of its warm but fuzzy sentiments, not just about the natural world, but, as Helmut Lethen explains, the shorter history of **(p.176)** capitalist and social alienation, which was often described “as a journey into eternal ice.”[57]

Subzero temperatures and temperaments became the master tropes for Weimar’s cool objectivity. From the bracing experience of modernization to the chilling confrontation with polar climates, German intellectuals tried to come to terms with and fashion modes of enduring “the cold of modernity.”[58] According to the codes of interwar objectivity, Lethen tells us in his reading of Max Weber’s 1919 *Art of Worldly Wisdom*, only an “attitude of defiance” could counter the “meaninglessness” of history and the failed processes of evolution. The stalwart figure was the polar explorer. At the poles, meaning was so radically and self-evidently annihilated that men would have to embrace “disillusioned realism” or else become victims of the indifferent world.[59] In his prewar writing, Kracauer figures photography in terms akin to arctic extremes: it both upends romantic, sentimental history and introduces a new and potentially revolutionary nothingness at the heart of mechanical representation—an image depleted of historical and subjective meaning that stands as the ultimate challenge to ideology and progress.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

In Kracauer’s post–World War II writing, we find a change. Nature qua nature, now subsumed under the umbrella category of physical reality, has a new primacy in his account of what cinema redeems. In his earlier work, photography destroys nature as myth. In *Theory of Film*, photography and cinema enable us to see the physical, fragmented world, including nature, outside of myth, and not only in hindsight. Whereas the single photograph may reveal the physical world through the unloving lens of a camera, cinema not only combines images but also, through its experiments of time and duration, stages the process by which physical reality is dissociated from meaning-giving, externally imposed form. Not all films achieve this potential. Because of their closed narratives and hypercontrolled mise-en-scène, Hollywood movies revert the physical world back into literary convention because they use raw material in the service of establishing what Kracauer calls “a significant whole” (as opposed to the “significant hole” of photography’s gathering fragments around a nothing): “The result is film which sustains the prevailing abstractness.”[60] Better are those with an episodic structure, as in Italian neorealism, and permeable mise-en-scène in which fragments of material life “inadvertently tell a story of their own, which for a transient moment makes one completely forget the manifest story.”[61] In contrast to the always-replaceable subjects and always-repeatable images of the atomic test movies, Kracauer values films that seek out singular and impenetrable details, phenomena, people, and things in “the maze of physical existence.” These entities, “snatched from transient life,” refuse to yield **(p.177)** their secrets. Instead, they summon the viewer “to preserve them as the irreplaceable images they are.”[62]

Kracauer’s cinephilia, indeed the primal scene for his lifelong critical practice, originates with such a transient image—one from a movie he watched as a boy whose title and plot he cannot recall. The scene itself, he writes, “I remember, as if it were today”:

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

> What thrilled me so deeply was an ordinary suburban street, filled with lights and shadows which transfigured it. Several trees stood about, and there was in the foreground a puddle reflecting invisible house facades and a piece of the sky. Then a breeze moved the shadows, and the facades with the sky below began to waver. The trembling upper world in the dirty puddle—this image has never left me.[63]

This image of a suburban world is twice transfigured. First the scene is transcribed to black-and-white celluloid, which turns the pattern of light and shadow in an otherwise ordinary street into a thrilling vision. Second, and more intriguing, the dirty puddle both reflects the facades of houses and sky that stand beyond the frame and registers the force (in the form of a ripple) of an otherwise invisible phenomenon—a breeze that disturbs the reflection. In the first transfiguration, cinema is an index of a marvelous world *absent* the human figure (not that Kracauer remarks on this feature). In the second sense, with the puddle at its center, the image is an index of the puddle as an index. As Johannes von Moltke observes, this passage condenses Kracauer's theory of film "as a medium of reflection" that "captures an unseen upper world, sets it in motion, transforms it through the 'wavering' surface, and renders it available to experience."[64] But there is something more that disturbs in this image. The puddle, as an analogy for cinema and its animated material, may either reflect back an image of the human world or bare the traces of an invisible elemental nature. The representation of one disturbs and even threatens to negate the other. The suburban world is unpopulated, still, silent, and unmoved, but also invisible except for its reflection in the dirty puddle. Then it appears to undergo a minicatastrophe. "The trembling upper world in the dirty puddle" suggests a fragility of the image and, of course, the "overlooked" vulnerable things it animates. So moved by this rippling still life as a boy, Kracauer ran home and penned the title to a book he planned to write: *Film as the Discoverer of the Marvels of Everyday Life*.[65]

In fact, the filmmaker in *Theory of Film* is nothing short of a discoverer or an endangered explorer who

(p.178)

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

> sets out to tell a story but, in shooting it, is so overwhelmed by his innate desire to cover all of physical reality—and also by a feeling that he must cover it in order to tell the story, any story, in cinematic terms—that he ventures ever deeper into the jungle of material phenomena in which he risks becoming irretrievably lost.[66]

We can imagine the filmmaker literally setting off into a jungle in search of a natural world. But what Kracauer figures here is a more profound risk of the subject dissipating and disappearing altogether. Another "hypothetical Mandarin" illustrates the process of self-abandonment. As recounted, a "legendary Chinese painter" so yearned to live in the world he had created with ink and paper that he "moved into it," vanishing into the faraway mountains of his brushed landscape, "never to be seen again."[67] The painter does not absorb the artwork from a position of aesthetic distance, but is absorbed by it, dissolves into it. Likewise, writes Kracauer paraphrasing Valéry, a cinematic film "divert[s] the spectator from the core of his being" when it exposes him to the jungle of material existence.[68] And he too is drawn into the orbit of things and launched by the film "into unending pursuits."[69] Quoting a silent film critic, Kracauer remarks on a kind of cinephilia or idealized fanaticism in which detached absorption in the image both reduces and expands perception to an almost insensible level. It is "passive, personal, as little humanistic or humanitarian as possible," and the diffused subject is "self-unconscious like an amoeba; deprived of an object or rather, attached to all [of them] like fog."[70] This is not a spectator with a sense of herself as distinct from the world, but an individual who willingly absorbs matter into her being, a single-cell organism attuned to a multisensory indistinctness of what Kracauer calls "the murmur of existence."[71] A truly cinematic film will enable the spectator to "apprehend physical reality in all its concreteness," specifically as "a flow of chance events, scattered objects, and nameless shapes."[72] What is "concrete" is not necessarily formed or even hard matter, and we may presume that the human comes to regard herself as a being among these objects, placed in the scene of "a trembling upper world in the dirty puddle."

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

As von Moltke argues, this model of antihumanist spectatorship should be understood as Kracauer's attempt to redeem experience (as opposed to physical reality) and rescue some form of subjectivity after the disastrous historical events of totalitarianism and authoritarian rule. In Nazi Germany, "the utter dehumanization of the world" correlated with "the loss of experience."[73] Postwar film, writes von Moltke, had the potential to lay bare the material world and recover experience at this minimal, cellular level by "confronting viewers with the estranged fragments of their **(p.179)** existence and allowing them to recoup these fragments in the medium of experience."[74] But we can also see the political necessity of describing the world—the real world—as fragmented, scattered, and ruled by chance as a refutation of fascist totalities, of what Hannah Arendt, Kracauer's contemporary, referred to as Hitler's "entirely fictitious world." Kracauer shares Arendt's sense that the power of totalitarian regimes rested on their capacity to construct and maintain (through propaganda, terror, and violent repression) a total fictional world in the form of a fiction that the world is a consistent, graspable totality. Writes Arendt of Hitler and Stalin:

> Their art consists in using, and at the same time transcending, the elements of reality, of verifiable experiences, in the chosen fiction, and in generalizing them into regions which then are definitely removed from all possible control by individual experience. . . . [T]otalitarian propaganda established a world fit to compete with the real one, whose main handicap is that it is not logical, consistent and organized.[75]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

In *Theory of Film*, Kracauer is insistent: “There are no wholes in the world: rather, it consists of bits of chance events whose flow substitutes for meaningful continuity.”[76] The task of cinema is to explore and affirm this fragmentation, not only to re-establish experience, but also to reject totalitarian totality. Such a modernist cinema, taken to the extreme, would by some accounts become incomprehensible and thus indicative of world refusal.[77] For Kracauer, however, such cinema allows us to slip into “the flow of life” and become enchanted by particularity and open to a world of possibility. The optimism of *Theory of Film* is that after war’s catastrophe, we know our fragmentation. That is, we know we are not products of myth, religion, or history, but inheritors of a contingent and fragmented reality that film reflects back to us.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Looking ahead to Kracauer's final, posthumously published work, *History: The Last Things before the Last* (1969), Inka Mülder-Bach notes that, with a historical continuum now reliably foreclosed, "photographic self-alienation is a prerequisite for the cognition of history" itself.[78] In this, his last book, Kracauer returns to Proust, Marcel, and the grandmother to model objective modes of historical inquiry. Back in the living room, Marcel's "inner picture yields to the photograph at the very moment when the loving person he is shrinks into an impersonal stranger." "Self-effaced," Marcel may "perceive anything because nothing he sees is pregnant with memories."[79] Similarly, the historian must purge all preconceived historical laws before he may encounter the remnants of the past and be open to the multiple stories they tell. In this paradoxical scenario of history stripped **(p.180)** of memory and law, the ideal historian, like the photographer, exists in the "near-vacuum of extra-territoriality," a stranger to the phenomena he investigates, a "sheer receiving instrument."[80] Whereas Marcel is quickly restored to his loving senses, the ideal historian lingers in—and is radically and forever altered by—his estrangement. Opening himself up to the suggestion of his sources, the historian must surrender his identity to the point of "near extinction" so that he may tap an ecstatic, depersonalized imagination. "Self-effacement begets self-expansion."[81] He is therefore able to "assimilate himself to the very [historical] reality which was concealed from him by his ideas of it."[82] Rather than finding material to fit the narrative, this historian/explorer assimilates himself to this foreign archive. Thus, in both *Theory of Film* and *History*, to be a filmmaker, spectator, or historian is to risk everything in the search for a randomly generated, nonidentical image and alien past. The payoff? "We stand a chance of finding something we did not look for, something tremendously important in its own right—the world that is ours," or "in Gabriel Marcel's words," we may access "our relation to 'this Earth which is our habitat.' "[83]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Kracauer is not proposing a posthuman mode of inquiry based on a fantasy of humans morphing into some other surviving life form. The amoeba is only an analogy. Nor is he giving up the promise of politics; at least this is implicit in his remarks. Instead, he urges a kind of active passivity, selflessness, or self-unconsciousness that can discover a lost past, a new horizon of experience, and unanticipated modes of political thought and action. Alienation or self-alienation—feeling not at home in the world or in one’s own habits of mind—leads the explorer to a path of enlightenment (with a lowercase “e”). *This thinking at the edge of extinction* is a kind of ecological attunement that presumes the subject’s alien relation to the planet, a place both unfamiliar and strange, but home nonetheless. And in this way, a postapocalyptic theory of film and history confirms that after the “end of time,” time persists, and after the end of grand narratives, the “flow of life” and the singularity of particular matter take on a new primacy. This is not divine revelation (those narratives are also foreclosed). On the other side of catastrophe emerges a new and rather alien natural history.

Indeed, echoing his critique of modern abstraction in *Theory of Film,* in *History*, Kracauer again, but more systematically, urges history’s detachment from vaguely described philosophical (predominantly Enlightenment) generalizations —be they political-theological, evolutionary, revolutionary, natural, or world historical. Such explanatory models, which may tell us a great deal about human nature, come too easily to be regarded as natural law. As such, they conceal the particular and nonhomogeneous materials **(p.181)** of the past. Even worse, when presumably immutable laws shape historical inquiry, they “preclude man’s freedom of choice, his ability to create new situations” now and in the future.[84] Even “natural history,” reduced to the hard laws of science, transforms the present into the *telos* of the past. Or, as Kracauer states, natural history tells us “why that which has occurred actually must have occurred.”[85] Nature also has a history, but we should not presume that it is necessarily natural, much less inevitable. We may now begin to speak of a nature apart from the conceptually loaded term “nature,” and also apart from love.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Kracauer of course is not the only person to critique the naturalization of history—but he is among the more prominent postwar intellectuals to promote alienation, dejection, and experiences of desubjectification not as symptoms of late capitalist exploitation but as foundations for critical thought and even future-oriented optimism. Above all, he turns to cinema as a photographic technology that reveals a past and future by redeeming an alien present that would otherwise elude us. Because it "leaves its raw material more or less intact . . . such art as goes into film results from their creators' capacity to read from the book of nature."[86] The environment captured in film is not consumed by its representation. And this notion of alien nature in the raw returns us to the glacial splendor of Antarctica.

Antarctica's Modern Exceptionalism

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Mariano Siskind argues that Antarctica stands as an exception to, and thus a critique of, Enlightenment political philosophy, particularly Immanuel Kant’s and G. W. F. Hegel’s models of world history and the concomitant globalization of reason, commerce, and enduring peace. Against a theory of global modernity that incorporates the entire earth into a narrative of human progress, Antarctica stubbornly refused to yield to this project of planetary enlightenment. In addition to possessing no indigenous people to colonize or bountiful natural resources to mine, Antarctica was, up until the eighteenth century, an exception to modern exploration and projects of empire because it appeared to be impossible to reach.[87] After two unsuccessful attempts, Captain James Cook finally crossed the Antarctic Circle in 1773 and again in 1774. In place of land, he discovered only ice and thus declared Antarctica inaccessible to man and best left to its awful nature. Cook’s nondiscovery replaced romantic myths of Antarctic exoticism and fantasies of untapped abundance with a new notion of modern incalculability. Siskind argues that the southern continent’s modern specificity is predicated on its resistance to being assimilated into Enlightenment **(p.182)** projects that perceived the world “as a modern totality” open to an “ever-expanding colonial network” and what would become the globalization of commerce. The “non-coincidence” of Antarctica with “world history”—or its relegation to a natural history outside of human usefulness (and beyond human knowledge)—makes it “the ultimate exception of the universal premises on the basis of which globalization is imaged, discursively formulated, and carried on.” More forcefully still, Antarctica “denounces” as universal these Euro-centric principles of reason and history.[88] In Siskind’s reading, Antarctica functions much like photography in Kracauer’s writing. Like photography, Antarctica exposes Enlightenment conceptions of nature as culture and requires us to think of history and representation against the norms of German reason.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

As Siskind explains, the specificity of Antarctica's modernity is not only its resistance to empire; it also confounds sublime representation, the benchmark aesthetic of extreme natural encounters in the eighteenth century. When Captain Cook first ventured into its icy waters, he beheld "the unexpressable [*sic*] horrid aspect of the Country, a Country doomed by Nature never once to feel the warmth of the Sun's rays, but to lie for ever buried under every lasting snow and ice." Propelled back to warmer waters, Cook justifies his decision to navigate no farther south. "It would have been rashness in me to have risked all which has been done in the Voyage, in finding out and exploaring [*sic*] a Coast which when done would have answered no end whatever, or been of the least use either to Navigation or Geography or indeed any other Science."[89] Siskind explains that Cook faced a particular horror, of a "nature doomed by nature," for which Edmund Burke's definition of the sublime can only partially account. In the first stage, the encounter with the sublime so overwhelms experience that the distinction between subject and object collapses, and reason abandons the beholder. The second stage re-establishes that distance through the process of representation, narrative, and communication of the sublime impression, and with it, writes Siskind, "the imposition of the codifications of a culture upon nature."[90] He argues that the specificity of the Antarctic sublime produces the overwhelming sensations of the first stage but defies all recourse to reason, or representation and culture. For this reason, Cook was not capable of discovering, naming, or even narrating his Antarctic encounter and so turned away in horror and thus the continent escaped the totalizing logic of reason—this despite the fact that Cook's adventure was a thoroughly modern event.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Siskind's formulation of the Antarctic sublime raises interesting questions in relation to the first cinematic representation of Antarctica. Could it be that cinema, especially as Kracauer theorizes it, is the medium to **(p.183)** capture this physical world and bring it into optical consciousness without subsuming it into culture codification, such as narrative? Kracauer argues that there are such horrific phenomena—including war, natural disasters, and sublime nature itself—that may be known only through photographic capture: "These images having nothing in common with the artist's imaginative rendering of an unseen dread but are in the nature of mirror reflections. Now of all the existing media the cinema alone holds up a mirror to nature."[91] In these last two sentences, "nature" describes the quality of cinematic reflections that give us access to a world indirectly, like the dirty puddle in which the world is seen to tremble. "Nature"—what he also calls "crude nature"—is also a catastrophic manifestation in the external world too dreadful to behold.[92] An artist might contain and distort such realities, or invent them whole cloth through the conventions of representation. The camera, however, is more like a mirror reflection, which, like the shield Perseus uses to behead Medusa, "redeem[s] horror from its invisibility behind the veils of panic and imagination." We depend on the camera to reveal scenes that would paralyze us with fear, enabling us to incorporate them into memory. "The film screen is Athena's polished shield," but what is reflected is not something we can act on.[93] If, as Kant argues (after Burke), the sublime is the subjective projection of the perceiving subject and not a property of the object perceived, then might photography and cinema enable us to glimpse Antarctica as raw nature in the caesura between horror and reason?[94] Might we behold the earthly nature of this continent before and apart from the world into which it will eventually become incorporated?

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

To answer these questions, I turn to two early Antarctica exploration films—or, to be exact, two films about heroically failed expeditions: *South* (1919), an account of Ernest Shackleton’s Imperial Trans-Antarctic journey undertaken from 1914 to 1916, and *90º South: With Scott to the Antarctic* (1933), which recounts Robert Falcon Scott’s fatal 1912 journey in which he discovered the South Pole a month after Roald Amundsen and then died in the company of two other members of his expedition during the trek back to camp. Though these expeditions were undertaken putatively in the name of science and explicitly for the vainglory of the British Empire, the films were unabashedly commercial ventures. *90º South* cinematographer Herbert G. Ponting, for example, negotiated with Scott for the exclusive right to disseminate images and films from the trip. He was at times regarded as the crew’s sole for-profit member.[95] Films were commissioned to offset costs, encourage future expedition investments, and repay debts. While the trade in sealskins and whale oil developed into lucrative ventures on the Antarctic islands (South Georgia, Deception, South Shetland), **(p.184)** decimating the seal, whale, and penguin colonies, the Antarctic interior contained no raw materials or riches from which the explorers or Britain would profit and the benefits to science was regarded as negligible.[96] The only guaranteed yield from the adventure was narrative—stories—that explorers would bring back to the home country in the form of lectures, memoirs, and, for the first time with Ponting, a film. As a British publisher assured one polar explorer, his financial future and historical stature would be set provided he returned with a tale “full of human, popular interest.”[97]*This* is his demand of a continent “utterly without human interest.”[98] The promise of representing and narrativizing Antarctica on film, likewise, would be the trip’s primary commodity. Given this mandate, it is curious but not surprising given the conditions of the pole and the state of feature film production that the system of cinematographic representation in both films, fragmentary at the outset, breaks down completely.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

The film of Scott’s journey, *90º South*, is most interesting with regard to the bifurcation of human history and what appears as a timeless elemental nature. The first cinematographer to accompany an Antarctic expedition, Ponting initially made his film to be serialized, in keeping with the cinema of the early teens. First exhibiting it in installations as a silent travelogue in 1911–1912, Ponting recut the film in 1922 as a silent feature. Then in 1933 he reissued *90º South* with a soundtrack and voiceover narration.[99] The final film retains traces of its exhibitionary history as it labors to both narrate Scott’s tragic adventure and represent Antarctica’s icy attractions on a continent where, as Ponting himself declares in the film’s opening prologue, nature exists “in her most wildest and relentless moods.” The film commences with the ship’s departure from New Zealand and Ponting treats us to a series of actualities about everyday life on the Terra Nova. A Slavic dance performed by Anton, the Russian “pony man”; a boxing match between two sailors followed by a comic boxing match between two cooks; a shipmate giving another a haircut; the feeding of the dogs—these are scenes that recall the very earliest films by Thomas Edison shot in the Black Maria studio. Upon arrival in icy waters, the film becomes a series of studies in coastal marine life—anthropomorphized accounts of mother and baby seals, penguin parenthood, and the threat killer whales pose to their young. These scenes of “wildlife” compete for photogenic attention with the sled dogs and ponies that stay fit hauling supplies to the various depots that will serve Scott on his southern trek. Ponting’s voiceover provides general information about human habits and animal habitats, but it lacks any kind of chronology or sense of narrative purpose. Indeed, Scott and his crew are setting up camp and waiting for the next summer to embark on the journey, and Ponting uses this time to capture images **(p.185)** of his polar surround. He then trains his camera on the spectacular “grand desolation” of Antarctica itself: the precipitous Ross Ice Shelf; smoking, looming Mount Erebus; the glacial formations that at times resembles ruins of a strange decayed world; and the deep crevices that threaten ruination to any who traverse them (Figure 5.3). In the momentary stillness of this ancient freeze, cinema becomes indistinguishable from photographs (or, to be more exact, from filmed photographs), except in those instances when sea ice breaks, a penguin appears, or one of Scott’s crew members wanders into the frame for the effect of perspective and animation.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Figure 5.3 The Ross ice shelf. *90º South: With Scott to the Antarctic* (1933).

The film reveals ice to us as a soulless, inassimilable phenomenon outside of historical significance. This becomes most evident when, fifty minutes into this seventy-minute film, Captain Scott commences his fatal journey to the pole as promised in the title, the most emotional, harrowing, and disappointing slog that would be at the heart of any narrative film about this expedition.[100] Yet this shift to adventure narrative is paradoxically also the shift away from modern cinema, as Ponting’s voiceover narrative momentarily gives way to intertitles, and sound cinema momentarily reverts to its silent system of signification. Because the movie camera was too cumbersome for Scott to carry to the pole (and because it was too dangerous for Ponting to accompany him), the cinematic record ends just **(p.186)** as Scott’s journey to the pole begins. In the film, cinema gives way to still photography and then photographs give way to drawings and maps. Once he embarks for the South Pole, never to return to base camp, cinema, in sympathy perhaps, also withdraws.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Ponting justified his exclusion from the expedition by noting that in the landscape beyond the Great Ice Barrier, “there would be nothing to photograph but the level plane of boundless, featureless ice, with the long caravan stringing out towards the horizon.” Twenty-five miles inland, Antarctica and the specific terrain of Scott’s journey finally disappear altogether as the men venture even deeper into what Ponting in his memoir names “the heart of the Great Alone.”[101] For minutes at a time, the camera scans a hand-drawn panorama of a turbulent sky over windswept ground seen from an almost impossible vantage point as Ponting’s voiceover carries completely the burden of narrating Scott’s efforts the reach the pole, (only to find Amundsen’s flag and encampment claiming first discovery) and then Scott’s tragic, fatal trek back to the base (Figure 5.4). Dying with his companions from cold and starvation only eleven miles from one of their depots, Scott’s once-lively body is represented finally only by his written words. As this story is narrated, a photograph occasionally **(p.187)** offers a generic vision of the terrain, as though we are cutting into a closer scenic detail of the etching. Thus, as this medially schizophrenic film shifts into a historical, narrative mode of human experience, specifically the experience of numbness, snow blindness, and inner turmoil, its representational system transforms Antarctica from a specific, cinematic space into a transcendental resting place for England’s fallen heroes. It is as if natural and human history cannot coincide on film. The first is too vast, endless (a key term for Kracauer), and opaque to tell in its totality. The second, reduced to a tragic, heroic narrative, is what Kracauer calls “the uncinematic aura of history,” too small and too contained for the medium of film.[102] The final image of the adventure is a hand-rendered sketch of Scott’s grave, as if Ponting, knowing Kracauer’s reading of photographs of the Rhine, feared that his photograph of this very view might undercut the site’s mythic import. Filming this site, it seems, was out of the question.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

André Bazin has observed of this and other exploration

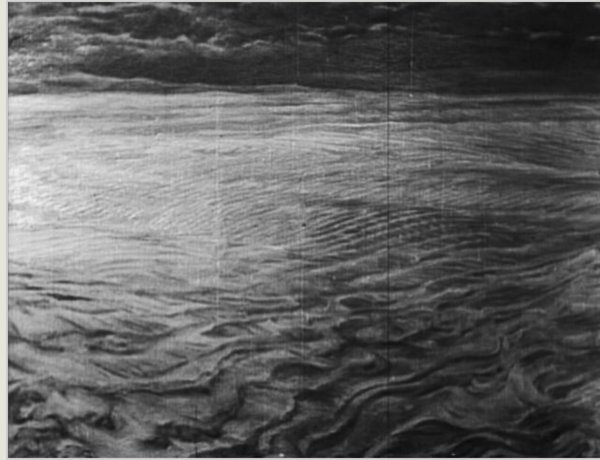


Figure 5.4 An etching of an Antarctic landscape in place of photographs or film of Scott’s expedition. *90º South: With Scott to the Antarctic* (1933).

documentaries that what we do not see on film attests to the authenticity of what remains: “The missing documents are the negative imprints of an expedition,” which the protagonists experienced but were too occupied with various obstacles to be able to film. Such documentaries present us with “the premature ruins of a film that was never completed.”[103] Kracauer, though he would agree that the documentary is far superior to any staged re-enactment or fictionalization, would also point to the incommensurability of tragedy and cinema, especially with the pathos of Scott’s demise. Tragedy “presupposes a finite, ordered cosmos.”[104] It is, he writes, quoting Proust, “ ‘a whole with a purpose,’ more often than not an ideological purpose,” and is “an exclusively mental experience which has no correspondences in camera-reality.”[105] The environment of film, by contrast, “is a flow of random events involving both humans and inanimate objects” far beyond human experience and even interest.[106] Whereas tragedy has recourse to the pathetic fallacies of symbolic storms and weather designed by gods or human authors to match the protagonists’ feelings, in the cinema, writes Kracauer, now quoting Roger Caillois: “There is no cosmos on the screen. But an earth, trees, the sky, streets and railways: in short, matter.” Kracauer concludes that there is an aesthetically determined clash between “the preferences of the medium and the tragic hero’s death. His end marks an absolute end: time comes to a stop when he dies. It is evident

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

that this ultimate solution runs counter to the camera’s ingrained desire for indefinite rambling.”[107] Antarctica’s affront to the British hero’s death is that the continent continues, indifferent to the history that has played out on its surface. Ponting saves Scott and his model of English masculinity from the insult of the ice’s persistence by concluding the film with Scott’s **(p.188)** ending. In doing so, he also abandons the animated, cinematic image.[108] When fragments give way to tragic narrative in Antarctica, cinema also comes to an end.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

We find a similarly incoherent pattern in the remarkable film *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition,* Frank Hurley’s document of Shackleton’s astonishing and failed attempt to traverse Antarctica from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea via the South Pole. The film begins in 1914 when the *Endurance* sets sail from Buenos Aires. Scenes of daily life revolve almost exclusively around the very photogenic sled dogs until the ship arrives in Antarctic water. Fascinated by the patterns of pack ice and the ship’s power to break through it, Hurley continually put himself at great risk to achieve extraordinary views by suspending the camera from a mount on the jib or by perching himself in the crow’s nest. In several shots, we can hardly distinguish sky from ice, except that the ship’s topmast casts a divine shadow of a cross on the frozen mass below (Figure 5.5). In one especially sensational early-cinema moment, Hurley cranks the camera as the *Endurance* makes it way directly toward him, breaking up the very ice on which he stands. Bringing to mind the modern dangers animated in the Lumière Brothers’ *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1896) and Cecil Hepworth’s *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900), Hurley, like Ponting before him, **(p.189)** stages attractions for the camera that are no less endangering for having been planned. When the ship becomes trapped in the frozen Weddell Sea more than three hundred miles from land, Hurley films the *Endurance* and the icescape in lateral pans and horizontal tilts. Contemporary critic Fred Camper remarks that these panoramas “look almost like choreographed attempts to depict a scene too awesome to be easily encompassed. [These shots are] less an attempt to provide meaning here than a way of adding visual pleasure to an otherwise monotonous landscape of white.”[109] Somewhere between awesome and monotonous, Antarctica, when it can be represented, resists narration. Hurley’s own inclinations are to keep with the continent’s white indistinctiveness. While he shows us a few of the activities that keep the men productively occupied once they are ice-locked, the crew’s other shipboard distractions (the stage plays, the lectures, the singing competitions, all of the ways the men produced a little world in the ship) are absent from this film. Preferring the reign of icy exteriority, Hurley provides no interior (mental or physical) views.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Shortly after the *Endurance*’s hull succumbs to the “attack of the ice” and the crew abandons ship, Hurley is forced to desert his

Figure 5.5 The ship’s mast casts a divine shadow on the ice below. *South* (1919).

cinematograph, but not before capturing chilling images of the ship being crushed by the mounting ice and the men’s efforts to salvage provisions. Once “the real troubles and hardships commenced,” a title tells us, the filming comes to an end. The men drift on their frozen encampment, a stretch of the journey we see only through a series of still photographic images (Figure 5.6). Because this is a silent film, moreover, there is no voiceover to animate the account. Intertitles begin to narrate things not shown, and even the intertitles omit many of the most dramatic moments. These include the weeklong voyage to Elephant Island, the drama of one of the crew falling through the ice and nearly to his death, and the ragged state of the men when they finally reach land.[110] A single etching shown for a few seconds stands in for Shackleton’s seventeen-day, eight-hundred-mile voyage to South George Island, considered one of the most heroic and oft-narrated maritime adventures in history (Figure 5.7). But Hurley wants us to experience something of the duration of the drama that follows. So once again, as the story moves forward and the most historic events unfold, the image track reverts to etchings, photographs, and filmed scenes taken before the ship sank or rendered long after the men’s rescue: scenes of marine animal life, landscapes on the continent and on South George Island.[111] Shackleton undertook this expedition during World War I, whose global conflict is wholly absent from both the continent and the film until an intertitle makes this oblique reference to history: the whale blubber harvested at the South George whaling station is used for munitions. These massive,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

flayed whale bodies docked in the bay **(p.190)** **(p.191)** are suggestive of the carnage such weapons will produce on the other side of the world.[112] Overwhelmingly, the high points of drama and world history are beyond the concreteness of Hurley's camera.

Figure 5.6 Having abandoned both the ship and the film camera, Shackleton's crew pose for a photograph at their new frozen encampment. *South* (1919).

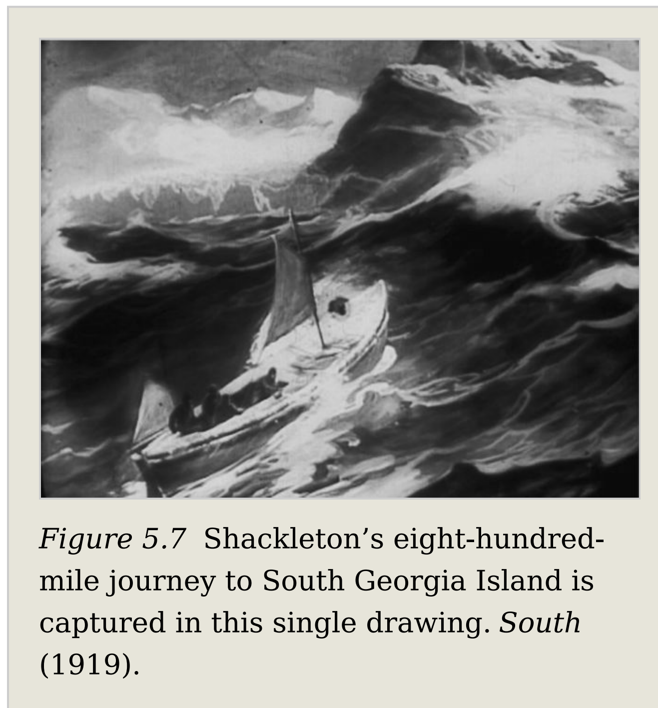


Figure 5.7 Shackleton's eight-hundred-mile journey to South Georgia Island is captured in this single drawing. *South* (1919).

Kracauer helps us to read these texts as films not just about physical reality graspable with the camera; they also attest to the impossibility of narrating this reality and of capturing these natural phenomena without turning away in horror. Failing to record the heroic adventures, discoveries, and resolutely human experiences, these temporally discontinuous films succeed in archiving a heterogeneous ecology of ice, shorelines, men and animals, ice and sky, and apparently empty interiors, and thus provide future historians with the raw materials of an alternate history,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

even an alternative *natural* history of Antarctica itself. From the vantage of our current moment, Hurley’s images, compared with contemporary photographs of the glaciers in South George Island, reveal a pattern of retreating ice and diminished wildlife populations. That is, his film, which set out to tell us about human adventure, has become most useful for natural history.[113] Indeed, these films capture what is largely excluded from such standard accounts as David Day’s *Antarctica: A Biography,* which is a history of the continent as human history—the exploration, international diplomacy, and usefulness of Antarctica to the various people and nations that have claimed it as part of their own national experiments. It begins with Cook and ends with the rise of boutique adventure tourism. These films, which are also about adventures and discovery, attest to the bios of the continent itself and to the importance of photography and cinema that record the polar extreme as a physical reality outside of human history. We find a continent whose icy abstractions may be one of its more specific features.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

But let us be clear. These are representations of ice, animals, men, and ships. Though both films struggle (and at times fail) to make interesting the monotonous, abstract expanse, several shots by Ponting especially are framed according to genres of Romantic pictorialism. Ponting was drawn to formations such as the now-iconic “ice grotto” that resembled “a veritable Aladdin’s Cave of beauty,” and the “Castle Berg,” which arose out of “the ruins” of a collapsed ice arch, appearing to him “a perfect medieval fortress” (Figure 5.8).[114] Hurley framed images of the *Endurance* miles away and through a coulisse of ice boulders in the foreground, a photograph resembling Caspar David Friedrich’s *Das Eismeer* (*The Sea of Ice*, 1823–1825) painted almost half a century after Cook’s nonsublime encounter with Antarctica (Figure 5.9). Confronted by an otherworldly nature, Ponting and Hurley impose onto the continent the familiar gravitas of Romantic landscape painting as if to access the realm of the sublime. However, as **(p.192)** **(p.193)** Joseph Leo Koerner explains, Friedrich resisted the scientific renderings of landscape not because he was committed to the capacities of human calculation or imagination, but because he wanted to capture the “obscurity” of the external world and the “radical alterity of nature itself.”[115] It may be that the Romantic imaginary finds its photo-finish when humans photograph the Great White South. Despite the similarities of compositions, Ponting’s photographs cannot transcend the terrestrial physicality of his subjects.

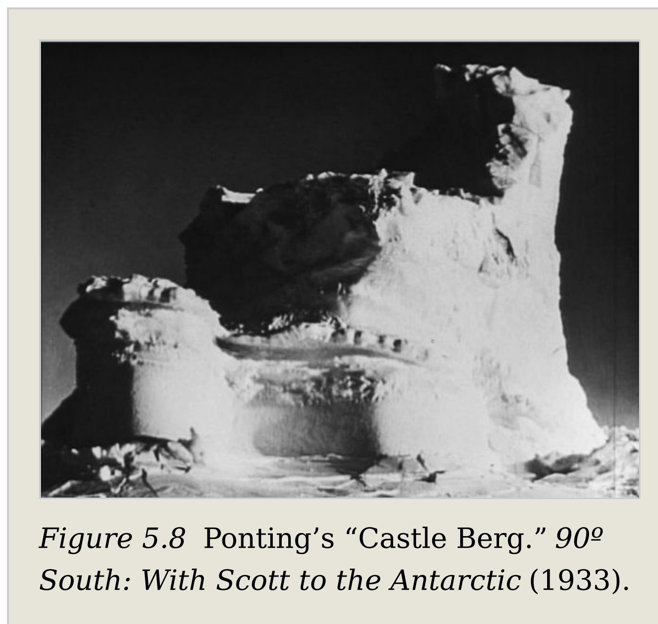


Figure 5.8 Ponting’s “Castle Berg.” *90º South: With Scott to the Antarctic* (1933).

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Figure 5.9 The Endurance seen from a romantic distance. *South* (1919).

Writing on the romantic fascination with ice, Eric G. Wilson differentiated between two modes of vision, exoteric and esoteric, that the magnetic poles inspire and that may help us to parse this aesthetic conundrum:

> The exoteric way of seeing is interested in external surfaces, understandable visibilities and social orders. The mode of cognition—shared by orthodox forms of Christianity, political systems and conventional sciences—often views ice as a deathly coldness to be transcended, raw material to be converted into commodity, or static matter to be reduced to law. The esoteric perspective considers internal depths, invisible mysteries and individual experiences. This mode of vision . . . frequently sees icescapes as revelation of an abysmal origin, marriages of opposites, merging of microcosm and macrocosm.[116]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

According to this duality, there is no mode of apprehending Antarctica and ice that has recourse to scientific or visionary abstraction. On one hand, the alien nature of Antarctica transforms landscape painting from a genre of art into the hard data of science. Stephen J. Pyne observes that Antarctica serves as a kind of “ ‘ready-made’ modernist landscape” in the spirit of Kazimir Malevich’s *White on White* (1918), a turn to elemental basics of painting minus the mimetic feints of representation—a shuttling between the antihumanist alterity of materials and transmundane self-reference. Aesthetic modernism, he explains, requires the history of landscape painting and the background of human culture for its extreme refusal of tradition to register as such. Antarctica, already purified and distilled, does modernism one better; it arrived into consciousness already depleted, extreme, acultural, ahistorical, and elemental. Modernism meets its match in the South Pole and, as Pyne reads it, turns on its heel and heads back for the metropolis. “The social context [of Antarctica] was impossible: modern art was done in lofts, not on sledging expeditions.”[117] But film and photography present a different set of challenges; they merge or dissolve altogether seemingly distinct esoteric and exoteric abstractions of ice. The problem of differentiating the two, or the task of distinguishing a representation from its object or clearly delineating cinema’s formative traditions **(p.194)** against its realist possibilities, not only sounds the affront of Antarctica to the desire for representation but also echoes the critiques leveled against Kracauer’s conception of reality in *Theory of Film*.

Becoming Extraterrestrial

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Miriam Hansen notes in her introduction to Kracauer’s book that *Theory of Film* almost immediately became the target of “critical demolition.”[118] Soon after its publication, academic film theory exploded any notion that film after Auschwitz was the end of ideology; film before and after war *was* ideology, and Kracauer was dismissed as proffering a naive and outdated theory of cinematic realism. On the other extreme, Pauline Kael declared this book a real cinephilic downer for its pedantry and refusal simply to yield to the pleasure of film. She concludes with this quip: “There are men whose concept of love is so boring and nagging that you decide if that’s what love is, you don’t want it, you want something else. That’s how I feel about Kracauer’s ‘cinema.’ ”[119] His cinephilia is not unsophisticated, only monotonous. But one review, in particular, merits sustained attention because it generously critiques the book’s reality principle while appreciating the radicality of Kracauer’s vision.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Rather predictably, Rudolf Arnheim, art historian, Gestalt psychologist, and film theorist, chafed at Kracauer's overvaluation of cinematic reality as the only proper aesthetic focus of the medium. More than this, he questioned physical reality as being identical to those elements of the world that are available to human perception: "To the best of our understanding we live in a world in which the constellations of basic forces run the gamut from the simplest order to unfathomable complexity." Kracauer's description of cinema thus redeems "not 'physical reality' but a particular view of the world, cherished—to use a handy term—by realistic romanticism."[120] Moreover, if the goal in Kracauer's theory is to reconnect humans with the material world, Arnheim claims that it may not be photographic realism so much as childlike, or even primitive, stylization that is "the prototype of genuine concreteness, or elementary closeness to reality," because it reproduces, at the most basic level, processes by which we translate sensory data into manageable, perceivable forms.[121] Echoing his own arguments in *Film as Art* (1932), Arnheim explains that physical reality in the raw eludes perception and renders objects invisible and abstract. The realistic tendency in photography, as well as in modern Western art (he references the impressionists and Jean Dubuffet), point to a gradual "decline in visibility, complementary to an increasing surrender of the formative capacity of the human **(p.195)** mind to the raw material of experience. . . . It is clear that this abandonment of pattern . . . is nothing but the yearning for the unshaped, a return to the raw material of reality."[122] The decrease in visibility—or the decline in the formative tradition in art—occurs when the materials "are no longer a means of representation but as objects for their own sake." Paint as paint. In place of mimetic forms representing the world, art objects are "additions to the material world itself."[123] And this "matter" is akin to the chaotic, elemental environment "before the Creation." Turning away from form, "the artist of a late civilization" takes refuge from reality and "escapes from the duty of man" and the burdens of history.[124] The modernist avant-garde and its fixation on materials does not move us into a spiritual future so much as it returns us to a prehuman past. And when photography and cinema move away from form to fragmentary reality, they likewise do not correct Kracauer's sense of the prevailing abstractness but serve as its supreme examples.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

It is useful to clarify that abstraction, in Arnheim's theory, is a distillation of the external world, including organic life, into its most legible and basic form. Like caricatures or stick figures, abstraction is simplified mimesis, which manages to function as representation because human perception is limited and partial and takes in only the most salient features or forms of the external world. Art, then, projects this distilled form onto the world and forms the world itself according to a rational, human need for "meaningful order."[125] This account contrasts with Wilhelm Worringer's psychology of abstraction in his famous 1908 *Abstraction and Empathy* to which Kracauer's *Theory of Film* and early writings on photography merit comparison. For Worringer, abstraction is a response (first found in primitive and premodern art) to the spiritual dread of space, to the "great unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world."[126] Humans turn to abstraction as a coping mechanism "to seek deliverance from the fortuitousness of humanity as a whole, from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general."[127] Kracauer, as we have seen, encourages spectators to fall headlong into the disarrayed reality (whose features are precisely the fortuitous and contingent) to free them from the false totalities of ideological and scientific abstraction and the seemingly determined present and future they forecast. Worringer pinpoints what he takes to be a transhistorical human anxiety in its encounter with the randomness of nature. Opposed to abstraction is the "urge to empathy" whereby "aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment" expressed in representational art. The empathetic subject does not commune with nature, but projects herself and her feeling into and into the world. The truly aesthetic encounter with life-denying nature is not in the sublime, for Worringer, but in abstraction **(p.196)** that "wrests the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of the unending flux of being, . . . to approximate its absolute value."[128] Modernist abstraction, like the abstract geometries of the ancient pyramids, reawakens a sense of the "thing in itself."[129] While Arnheim and Worringer connect modernist art to prehistoric (or, in Arnheim's case, primordial) existence, Worringer values abstractions as the antidote to both romantic self-projection and naturalism's confidence in the relationship between humans and nature, its overall world reverence.[130] And yet Worringer's abstract art fulfills the function of all art: "the maximum bestowal of happiness for the humanity that created

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

it.”[131] For Kracauer, the art of cinema casts us out of form and feeling.

Despite these differences, Arnheim concedes that Kracauer compellingly diagnoses the “melancholy in photographic vision.” I quote the entire passage from *Theory of Film* that Arnheim excerpts in his review:

> Now melancholy as an inner disposition not only makes elegiac objects seem attractive but carries still another more important implication: it favors self-estrangement, which on its part entails identification with all kind of objects. The dejected individual is likely to see himself in the incidental configurations of his environment, absorbing them with a disinterested intensity no longer determined by his previous preference.[132]

This disinterest, comments Arnheim, is a melancholic surrender to unshaped matter, not a “recovery of man’s grip on reality.”[133] Yet Kracauer gets something right in his description of the present predicament. We may indeed, writes Arnheim, be in the “last twitches of an exhausted civilization, whose rarified concepts no longer reach the world of the senses. But it is also possible that by cleansing the mind of all shapes, we are approaching the nadir which we must touch in order to rise again . . . so that the scenes of life” may return.[134] Photography’s abstraction abets this process.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

In Kracauer’s account, physical reality is neither so elemental nor chaotic as to be imperceptible, and implicitly he rejects the Gestalt model of mental mapping, its presumption of wholes, and idealist theories of perception, which posit the world known as one whose shape is already mentally formed. Certainly, he rejects a definition of art as that which is productive of human happiness. Art, such that it functions, leads to a clear-eyed attunement to the fragmented world. *Theory of Film* is written with the hope that photography and cinema not only can break habituated ways of seeing (that is Arnheim’s claim in *Film as Art*) but also may redeem the physical world from our ideas and feelings about it. As David **(p.197)** Trotter remarks of Kracauer’s book: “The direction of the [camera’s] gaze is not upwards . . . towards moral intention, but downwards into material existence.”[135] We might presume from Trotter’s comments that Kracauer’s downward, dejected (demoralized?) glance is opposed to and even counter to a moral theory of film. Or we can read this downward orientation as extending to the spectator an outright desubjectivized view of existence, a vision that models a selfless history of the future and promotes estrangement as the basis for postapocalyptic environmental thought. The term for this guarded or ambivalent optimism is *extraterritoriality*.

Gerhard Richter explains of Kracauer’s late writing that *extraterritoriality* describes a relationship to a place that can no longer be experienced as home. It captures the fact of “homeless dwelling” in the world, of “dwelling within homelessness itself”: “For something to exist in a state of extraterritoriality means to depart from territory as a space and as an idea while still remaining deeply attached to it, that is, attached to it precisely in the act of departing from it.” For Richter, Kracauer’s fixation on extraterritoriality is a symptom of political and social exile, of not belonging to a place where one lives, of feeling, as Richter writes, “extra,” “superfluous,” and “outside” of a territory. At the same time, it encapsulates Kracauer’s philosophical sense, as Kracauer himself writes, that permanently residing in a “so-called home” is “really unnatural”: “Existence as a vagabond is the only true thing.”[136] Outside of a territory, an extra to it, Kracauer helps us to unfold a rich notion of territory itself. Again, Richter illuminates the antinomies of “territory,” a word that, on one hand, denotes a place that is “settled, circumscribed, defined, articulated and distinguished” as a distinct political or

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

geographical area.[137] On the other hand, territory shares an etymology with *terror* and a *territor* (one who frightens), designating an area "from which people are warned off." Territory at once marks the earth—terra—as a settling place we may call home and designates as terrifying an area that will not be settled. As Richter speculates, territory harbors within it the *unheimlichkeit* of settlement, the idea that "the home that the territory provides cannot be thought apart from terror itself."[138] While *extra*territoriality may be an intensification or excess of these unsettling feelings, in Kracauer's usage it indexes the alienated subject between or even beyond the comforts and terrors that the earth and the human home summon forth. As an optics on the earth that is our habitat, extraterritoriality may even estrange us from any kind of physical or philosophical grounding. In Kracauer's *History*, writes Elena Gualtieri, "photography does not present us with the physical reality which abstract thought prevents us from seeing. Its function is rather that of shaking our belief in the visible, and in the presumption that the visible exhausts the real." Photography becomes a **(p.198)** conceptual technology through which humanity may approach an extravisual, extraterritorial, utopic nonspace "between established truths and dogmas."[139] In other words, photography in Kracauer's last writing is an invitation into a virtual, almost imperceptible world far from the anguish of exile.

Kracauer's celebration of cinema in these terms attracts me as a rejoinder, if not correction, to more recent aesthetic and ecocritical theory that moves beyond the fetishization of subjectivity, without abandoning sensual form or even love itself. As the title of his now-classic 2007 book announces, Timothy Morton wants us to explore the generative possibilities of environmental aesthetics in the name of a critical practice he calls an "ecology without nature." Because nature has become, and perhaps as a concept has always been, ideological, abstract, and transcendental, Morton argues that we cannot think of nature or formulate meaningful critiques of our ecological predicament so long as "nature" is still in the mix. Instead, ecocriticism needs to reflect on its own methods, vocabulary, and meaning, and to consider how nature itself is conjured in literary form: "Ideology resides in the attitude we assume toward this fascinating object [nature]. By dissolving the object, we render the ideological fixation

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

inoperative."[140] Because there is no nature without discourse, Morton takes us into the realm of aesthetics and argues for a "gothic" relation to "dark ecology." This gothic "apocalypticism" brings us into contact with a frightening nature that we can neither incorporate nor commodify, and which may be similar to that suspended sublime that is unique to the Antarctic encounter at the end of the world. Dark ecology revolves around "the idea that we want to stay with a dying world" wherein we learn "to love the thingness . . . the mute, objectified quality of the object, its radical nonidentity."[141] Kracauer, a survivor of apocalypse, writing after the apocalypse, would also reject as ideological an apocalyptic embrace of the future. Indeed, far more sanguine in his outlook, Kracauer was trying to arrive at an objective perception, even hope, through the media of film and photography. As he puts it: "Guided by film . . . we approach if at all, ideas no longer on the highway leading through the void but on paths that wind through the thicket of things."[142] Out of this thicket of raw material and cinematically induced sensations, a new (and we might say after Antarctica) cold love for inert, physical reality may emerge—one that even Arnheim admitted had the potential to bring about new, radical thought and therefore strategies of survival in a damaging world erected on an earth that persists beyond us. Thinking like extraterrestrials, we may be able to form nonbinding attachments to hostile places we have never called home, to care for an environment that exists in our absence, and to cultivate "disinterested" identification with an unaccommodating ecosystem undetermined by "previous preference."[143]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(p.199) As the only continent that has resisted permanent settlement (people who winter over are on a limited tour), with no native population (hundreds have died but only about a dozen babies have been born in Antarctic research stations, none of whom who have grown up on the continent), and with no sovereignty of its own—that is, as a place that has stood apart from and thus has served as a critique of the global project of human worlding—Antarctica is as close to an extraterritory as we are likely to find. For this reason, NASA uses the South Pole for what it calls “analog studies” for astronauts in training. Antarctica is more like Mars than it resembles other places on Earth.[144] Even politically, the continent is suggestive of interstellar diplomacy. Because it involved so many nations making symbolic claims on abstract territory, the Antarctic Treaty established in 1959, writes David Day, “provided a precedence of dealing with sovereignty in outer space.”[145] While contentious, the treaty is so far working. This is also the only continent without a history of war and the only destination to which anyone may travel (and live, if possible) without a visa or a passport. Though hardly the place to provide refuge for the homeless, Antarctica may be the last resort for the stateless subject, the only place for people without papers.[146] Its political culture continues to astound. In a recent opinion piece on jihadism, a *New York Times* columnist offhandedly remarked: “Antarctica is the only continent that remains untouched by extremism in the 21st century.”[147] Political extremism—and perhaps politics itself—cannot coexist with Antarctica’s physical extremes. And thus, I wonder if Antarctica, having for so long eluded visual capture and so productive of numbing experience, is *the* no-place—a utopia on Earth. If so, its melting is not only of the utmost environmental importance but also a matter of political and philosophical urgency.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

Today, the Antarctic has yielded to human interest. There are no places or times of year on the continent when filming (digital filming mostly) is prohibitive. Antarctica is fully part of the human world—a territory mapped, named, and mostly known—and it is featured daily in the “breaking news.” Once considered a no-man’s land “buried in everlasting snow and ice” whose geological history was cordoned off from human nature, Antarctica is now enveloped in the Anthropocene. As I write this sentence, the world has its eye on an iceberg the size of Delaware that has just detached from the Larsen C ice shelf on the east side of the Antarctic Peninsula, requiring that a new map of the continent be created. Glaciologists worry that this calving event will accelerate the rate of the continent’s ice flow into the ocean, thereby raising sea levels.[148] Its fast-morphing topography—too fast and vast for cinema—comes to us now through satellite images, remote radar sensors, and digital films often taken from helicopters assessing the effects **(p.200)** of human-caused climate change on the ice. Antarctica has become, in a sense, a digital object, a virtual place, and the source of much speculation. In the future, some predict, Antarctica’s frozen masses will melt altogether and the continent will join an iceless planet.[149] Its once-exceptional terrain, which has so unsettled human meaning, will become just another part of the world. Without Antarctica to remind us of our own extraterrestrial nature, we will have to return to photography and cinema to glimpse an otherworldly truth and to ponder an earth apart from human meaning.

Notes:

(1.) Dell’Amore, “Why Antarctica Is So Hard on the Body.”

(2.) Walker, *Antarctica*, xv.

(3.) Day, *Antarctica*, 467.

(4.) Walker, *Antarctica*, 4.

(5.) Hall, “Mapping the White Continent.”

(6.) Pollack, *A World without Ice*, 12.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(7.) See the shots of the *Endurance* taken at night by director Frank Hurley in the film *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition* (1919). Read Herbert G. Ponting’s explanation of flash photography during the Antarctic winter in *The Great White South*, 137.

(8.) Pyne, *The Ice,* 83.

(9.) See Roald Amundsen’s account in “At the Pole,” in *Antarctica: Firsthand Accounts*, 218–224; Day, *Antarctica*, 146–148.

(10.) Scott, *Scott’s Last Expedition*, 424.

(11.) Green, *Water, Ice & Stone*, 32.

(12.) Dillard, “An Expedition to the Pole,” 60.

(13.) Pyne, *The Ice*, 101.

(14.) These dispirited place names are humorously listed in Walker, *Antarctica: An Intimate Portrait,* 16.

(15.) Nabhan, “The Dangers of Reductionism in Biodiversity Conservation,” 479–481.

(16.) Bernau, “Help for Hotspots,” 618, footnote 6.

(17.) https://www.nature.org (consulted on June 8, 2017). Of course, this image and language are subject to constant change.

(18.) See this wonderful blog, Ugly Animal Preservation Society, http://uglyanimalsoc.com.

(19.) Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin,* 5.

(20.) Richter, *Thought-Images*, 14.

(21.) Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 18. Cited as *TOF* hereafter.

(22.) Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 256.

(23.) See Hansen, “Introduction” to Kracauer’s *Theory of Film,* xiii.

(24.) Schlüpmann, “The Subject of Survival,” 112.

(25.) Kracauer, *TOF*, li.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(26.) Ibid.

(27.) Ibid.

(28.) Ibid.

(29.) Ibid.

(30.) Ibid.

(31.) Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 256.

(32.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 14. Ellipses in original.

(33.) Ibid.

(34.) Ibid.

(35.) Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” 15.

(36.) Ibid.

(37.) Ibid.

(38.) Baudry, “The Apparatus”; Metz, “The Imaginary Signifier”; Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” In some respects Kracauer shares with these theorists a sense that Hollywood and closed narrative systems are ideological. But for Kracauer, the photographic and cinematic apparatuses themselves may help us to see outside of ideology. This is a point to which I’ll return in the chapter’s conclusion.

(39.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 31.

(40.) Hansen, “ ‘With Skin and Hair,’ ” 443. See also Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 256–257.

(41.) Santner, *On Creaturely Life*, 17.

(42.) Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin’s Other History*, 3.

(43.) Kracauer, “Photography,” 47. Cited as *MO* hereafter.

(44.) Ibid.

(45.) Ibid.

(46.) Ibid.

(47.) Ibid.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(48.) Ibid.

(49.) Ibid.

(50.) Ibid.

(51.) Ibid.

(52.) Ibid.

(53.) Ibid.

(54.) Ibid.

(55.) Murphy, *German Exploration to the Polar World*, 161–162.

(56.) Ibid.

(57.) Lethen, “Refrigerators of Intelligence,” 81.

(58.) Ibid.

(59.) Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 42–43.

(60.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 301.

(61.) Ibid.

(62.) Ibid.

(63.) Ibid.

(64.) Von Moltke, *The Curious Humanist,* 155.

(65.) Kracauer, *TOF*, li.

(66.) Ibid.

(67.) Ibid.

(68.) Ibid.

(69.) Ibid.

(70.) Quoted in Kracauer, *TOF*, 165. Brackets in Kracauer’s quotation.

(71.) Ibid.

(72.) Ibid.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(73.) Ibid.*Theory of FilmFamily of ManTheory of Film*

(74.) Ibid.

(75.) Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* 362. See also Benjamin Lazier's discussion of this passage in "Earthrise," 602–603.

(76.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 297.

(77.) See Eric Hayot's account of modernist form in *On Literary Worlds*, 131–133.

(78.) Mülder-Bach, "History as Autobiography," 153.

(79.) Kracauer, *History*, 83. Hereafter cited as *H*.

(80.) Ibid.

(81.) Ibid.

(82.) Ibid.

(83.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 296, li.

(84.) Kracauer, *H*, 37.

(85.) Ibid.

(86.) Kracauer, *TOF*, i. This does not mean that film does not consume raw materials. See Nadia Bozak's important study: *The Cinematic Footprint*.

(87.) Siskind, "Captain Cook and the Discovery of Antarctica's Modern Specificity."

(88.) Ibid.

(89.) Cook, *The Journals*, 412, quoted in Siskind, 13.

(90.) Ibid.

(91.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 305.

(92.) Ibid.

(93.) Ibid.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(94.) Kant writes: “It follows hence that the sublime is not to be sought in the things of nature, but only in our Ideas.” Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 109.

(95.) Thompson, *Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen*, 140.

(96.) Day, *Antarctica*, 125–127.

(97.) British literary agent quoted in Day, *Antarctica*, 141.

(98.) Pyne, *The Ice*, 101.

(99.) Lynch, “The Worst Location in the World,” 302–303. See also the production notes preceding the film on *90º South: With Scott to the Antarctic*.

(100.) Scott’s journey and heroic death are the subjects of the fictionalized Technicolor drama *Scott of the Antarctic* (Charles Frend, 1948) shot on location in Norway and Switzerland. André Bazin famously dismisses this feeble attempt to “imitate the inimitable” through re-enactment in his essay “Cinema and Exploration,” 158–159.

(101.) Ponting, *The Great White South*, 185–186, 189.

(102.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 82.

(103.) Bazin, “Cinema and Exploration,” 162. See also Rosalind Galt. “ ‘It’s So Cold in Alaska.’ ” This essay concerns Peter Delpeut’s *Forbidden Quest* (1993), an experimental film composed of found footage from various polar expeditions. Galt turns to Bazin’s essay to theorize the play between the affective allure of the documentary footage, which confronts us with the danger of exploration, on one hand, and our attraction to the fictional story that Delpeut creates by decontextualizing the shots and reassembling them as a fantastic narrative, on the other. As Galt notes, by combining footage from both poles, *Forbidden Quest* also juxtaposes the colonialist narrative of European exploration against the “black slate” of Antarctica (p. 62). As such, among other things, the film demonstrates what’s at stake in the archivist’s instinct to preserve not just an old film, but also its original political meaning.

(104.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 101.

(105.) Ibid.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(106.) Ibid.

(107.) Ibid.*Theory of Film*Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*

(108.) After the hand-drawn rendering of Scott’s grave, the film transitions to an engraving of a statue of Scott. The final image is a still photograph of the Antarctic shoreline with the sun low on the horizon.

(109.) Camper, “Mother Nature’s Cold Heart.”

(110.) These events are recounted in Shackleton, *South: A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage,* and are also discussed in the DVD commentary in *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition* by archivist Luke McKernan (Image Entertainment, 1999).

(111.) The syndicate sponsoring the film sent Hurley back to South Georgia Island a year later to film additional scenes. See Nichols, “A Survival Tale in the Ice Floes.”

(112.) Shackleton referred to this expedition as “The White Warfare in the South.” He and his men were, he claimed, “striving to carry out the ordained task . . . ignorant of the crisis through which the world was passing.” Shackleton, *South: A Memoir*, vii.

(113.) See the use of Hurley’s photograph in the Earth Vision Institute’s video essay *Extreme Ice Survey: South Georgia Island* (2015). Hurley’s photographs from the Shackleton voyage compared with photographs taken today at the same location confirm that the glacial ice is retreating. See http://earthvisioninstitute.org/share-this/extreme-ice-changes-south-georgia-island-2/.

(114.) These descriptions are taken from Ponting’s voiceover commentary in *90º South* and are also reproduced in *Great White South*, 68, 186.

(115.) Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, 226.

(116.) Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice*, 226.

(117.) Pyne, *The Ice,* 156, 187–189.

(118.) Kracauer, *TOF*, ix.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(119.) Kael, “Is There a Cure for Film Criticism?,” 292.

(120.) Arnheim, “Melancholy Unshaped,” 292.

(121.) Ibid.

(122.) Ibid.

(123.) Ibid.

(124.) Ibid.

(125.) Arnheim, *Film as Art*, 7.

(126.) Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 15.

(127.) Ibid.

(128.) Ibid.

(129.) Ibid.

(130.) Ibid.

(131.) Ibid.

(132.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 17, quoted in Arnheim, “Melancholy Unshaped,” 295.

(133.) Arnheim, “Melancholy,” 297.

(134.) Ibid.

(135.) Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, 182.

(136.) Richter, *Thought-Images*, 108, 112. Kracauer quoted on 112.

(137.) Ibid.

(138.) Ibid.

(139.) Gualiteri, “The Territory of Photography,” 89.

(140.) Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 20.

(141.) Ibid.

(142.) Kracauer, *TOF*, 309.

(143.) Ibid.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019

(144.) "Extreme temperatures, harsh winds, and atypical seasons of daylight and darkness are only some of the parallels between Antarctica and the space environment." The isolation in close quarters, moreover, provides the psychologically estranged conditions of life in a space station. See "Antarctica Analog Studies," June 10, 2015, https://www.nasa.gov/hrp/research/analogs/antarctica.

(145.) Day, *Antarctica*, 493.

(146.) Ibid.

(147.) Varagur, "Empowering Women to Break the Jihadi Cycle."

(148.) Osborne, "Giant Crack in Antarctica's Larsen C Ice Shelf"; Abraham, "Imminent Collapse of a Portion of Larsen C Ice Shelf"; Patel, "A Crack in an Antarctic Ice Shelf"; Viñas, "Antarctic Ice Shelf Sheds Massive Iceberg"; Patel and Gillis, "An Iceberg the Size of Delaware Just Broke Away from Antarctica."

(149.) "What the World Would Look Like if All the Ice Melted."

Access brought to you by:

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; date: 04 February 2019