

# WERNER HERZOG'S CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN-ANIMAL STUDIES

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"Courage consists in remaining inside oneself, close to nature, which is oblivious to our crises," proclaims the main character, played by Jean-Paul Belmondo, in Godard's *Pierrot, le Fou* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965). Indeed, nature is indifferent to the pettiness of human activity, their (our) little wars, their little crimes, their insignificant joys and disappointments. And yet, we strive to place ourselves at the centre of the universe, to the point of convincing ourselves, in some kind of collective schizophrenia, that *nature speaks to us*.

True courage, following *Pierrot*, would be to defy it (and in that very action to defy our own place inside it), something that Werner Herzog has been doing his entire career. In the final scene of *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (*Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen*, Werner Herzog, 1970), one of the characters challenges a dead tree to a competition: whoever can hold their arm raised longer will be the winner. It is a very powerful metaphor, on which we will comment later. But

it is not the first or the last challenge to nature that will appear in his filmography. *Fitzcarraldo* (Werner Herzog, 1982) is perhaps the most obvious example, the struggle on and behind camera of a man to haul a steamship over a mountain. With astounding clarity, in *Burden of Dreams* (Les



*Even Dwarfs Started Small* (Werner Herzog, 1970)

Blank, 1982) he explains the titanic task he is undertaking in the Amazon rainforest: "Of course, we are challenging nature itself... and it hits back. It just hits back. That's all. And that's grandiose about it. And we have to- to accept that it is much stronger than we are." This idea, of which there are many examples in his work, was presented in a programmatic way in his *Minnesota Declaration* (2014).

Gilles Deleuze also reflected on these films: "The visionary's sublime plan failed in the large form and his whole reality was enfeebled: Aguirre ended alone on his slimy raft, with only a colony of monkeys as his race; as his final performance, Fitzcarraldo provided a mediocre troupe of singers in front of a sparse audience and a black piglet" (Deleuze, 1986: 185). According to the French philosopher, in these films by Herzog, "a man who

is larger than life frequents a milieu which is itself larger than life, and dreams up an action as great as the milieu. It is an SAS' form, but a very special one: the action, in effect, is not required by the situation, it is a crazy enterprise, born in the head of a visionary, which seems to be the only one capable of rivalling the milieu in its entirety. Or rather, the action divides in two: there is the sublime action, always beyond, but which itself engenders another action, a heroic action which confronts the milieu on its own account, penetrating the impenetrable, breaching the unbreachable. There is thus both a hallucinatory dimension, where the acting spirit raises itself to boundlessness in nature and a hypnotic dimension where the spirit runs up against the limits which Nature opposes to it" (Deleuze, 1986: 184). From these two quotes we can conclude that in Herzog's films the hero



Fitzcarraldo (Werner Herzog, 1982)

(or antihero) undertakes an endeavour that belongs to the order of the sublime and is therefore on a par with the order of Nature. At the same time, Nature ends up causing the enterprise to fail. In this development we see Herzog's contribution reflected on two levels: on the one hand, the human enterprise is on a par with Nature in its effort to defy it, and in doing so to become part of it in the sublime; on the other hand, the enterprise ultimately fails, breaking the symmetry of the relationship and caving into the blind force it attempted to defy.

In this article, we propose to review some points of the Herzogian view of the non-human world, with the aim of identifying tools that can be used to conceptualise animality (the relationship between human and animal throughout history) from a different angle. Nowadays, studies of the relationship between humans and animals tend to conceive of harmony between the two worlds as a possible and desirable prospect, whereas Herzog's view, as suggested in the examples cited above, is diametrically opposed to such a conception. It is precisely here that we find its *originality*.

## GENESIS

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What else is history, the discipline called history, if not the eternal and perennial question about *origins*? This question raises two complementary issues: the issue of *historical* origins, that is, chronological; and the issue of *taxonomic* origins, that is, the border separating the human from the non-human, where man begins. This is a border which a great naturalist like Linnaeus considered tenuous enough to raise doubts about its existence, at least in scientific terms. In a letter to Johann Georg Gmelin in 1735, he wrote: "Yet I ask you and the entire world to show me a generic difference between ape and man which is consistent with the principles of natural history. I most certainly do not know of any" (quoted in Agamben, 2002: 26).

The question of animal metaphors and their meaning has innumerable answers that vary according to geographic and temporal coordinates that are not always entirely clear. In the last decades these answers have multiplied significantly due to the rise of an autonomous field of study that some scholars call *human-animal studies*, i.e., studies of the relationship between human and animal.

The idea proposed by the so-called *postmodern* philosophers of the end of the *grand stories* (and, with them, the idea of a *humanity*), undoubtedly contributed much to the rise of human-animal studies. In this sense, Lyotard (1998) argues that, given the collapse of the structures that gave meaning to human life, the only possible end is an inhuman one. Ethologists like Lestel (2001) and Cyrulnik (2001) took up this idea to question what is specifically human in man, arriving at extreme positions. While Lestel predicted the advent of an "ethological revolution, which will radically change our conceptions of the world and the determination of boundaries between animal and human" (2001: 162), Cyrulnik used the idea of a human existential crisis to erase the aforementioned boundary directly: "self-awareness, the use of tools, bipedalism, hunting, the taboo of incest, traditions, laughter, play, suffering, morality, family sense, all these achievements that have hitherto served to distinguish human from animal are no longer the exclusive property of man" (2001: 137). In the same year, Jacques Derrida recognised the ontological need for an ethical transformation of our relationship with animals (2001: 105). All this contributed, in the academic field, to a major migration of researchers of all areas and backgrounds towards the study of animality, giving rise to the heterogeneous group that it is today.

These human-animal studies have fostered a transdisciplinary development of our understanding of the forms of interaction between humans and animals throughout history. The

size of the field and the diversity of approaches and backgrounds of the researchers engaged in animal studies would obviously have produced a great number of enriching discussions. In the many approaches that this multidisciplinary field necessarily takes, we find two main starting points: one that signals the peaceful coexistence of the two worlds as a possible and desirable prospect; and one that identifies opposition and separation as the common theme in the relationship between humans and animals. In short, we have two opposing methodological principles, based on assumptions about the human-animal relationship that can be respectively characterised as *consensus* and *violence*.

The consensual principle is overwhelmingly predominant among theorists in human-animal studies, partly because of the ontological assumptions that dominated the discipline from the beginning and that we briefly reviewed above, and partly thanks to the individual experiences that led researchers to turn to this field of study, almost invariably related to their concern about animal suffering.<sup>1</sup> According to Paola Cavalieri (2009), the animal question benefited from the greater weight given to three ethical issues in contemporary thought: equality, the bioethical question of abortion and euthanasia, and the rise of cognitive science.

This consensual principle could be identified with an idea about nature that Slavoj Žižek recognises in contemporary environmentalism. According to the Slovenian philosopher, environmentalism sees Nature as a self-regulating force operating in constant equilibrium, while any imbalances are caused by humans, who obstruct the natural cycle to such an extent that they could destroy it. According to this perspective, the solution posited is to *get back to nature*, that is, to a more precarious life devoid of technology, for example. For Žižek, this position is fallacious since, as he asserts in an interview contained in the documentary *Examined Life* (Astra Taylor, 2008),

Nature is actually a succession of catastrophes. To overcome this obstacle, Žižek suggests we should accept human alienation from Nature and embrace technology, which is the one thing that can ultimately correct these imbalances<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, Žižek's thought is in tune with the Herzogian view that we will discuss below.

The main problem with the consensual hypothesis is, we believe, that it is excessively prescriptive, and insufficiently descriptive. It is useful for proposing public and private policies, or inspiring radical changes in our relationship with animals (Derrida, 2001), but it fails to reflect the true nature of that relationship throughout history.

It is not easy, however, to find supporters of the hypothesis of violence; at least not within the field of critical animal studies, which is strongly influenced by bioethical debates. It is therefore necessary to expand our search to other media, such as cinema, an artistic medium that has been reflecting on the animal question for a long time (Ordine, 2015). The clue we were looking for is clearly present in Herzog's films, perhaps because it is not based on a special sympathy for animals but on his own life experiences, and the result is a unique line of thinking that develops over several years and can be identified in many (if not all) of his films in which he reflects on the animal world.

Even in his early works, Herzog explored the relationship between humans and nature. *Precautions Against Fanatics* (Massnahmen gegen Fanatiker, Werner Herzog, 1969) consists entirely of interviews with horse trainers at a Bavarian racecourse, whose main concern is to protect the horses from horseracing fanatics, since their enthusiasm could prove harmful to the animals. A short man constantly interrupts the interviews to insist that the coaches leave the place. The dangerous "fanatics" never appear in the film; they are a threat that never materialises and a reminder that nature does not need to be saved by us. Clos-



ing the short film is an interview with one of the horse trainers. A medium-long shot shows him in front of a flamingo pond, and he explains that he is there because he has been thrown out of the racecourse, and now he is protecting the flamingos from fanatics. As he himself recognises, his work is practically useless since the people who come to see the flamingos are in fact harmless, and in any case the pond is surrounded by barbed wire. A man taking on an unnecessary task of salvation is the main theme of this film, and one that the filmmaker will revisit constantly. Years later, he would publish a diary on the filming of *Fitzcarraldo* with the suggestive title: *Conquest of the Useless* (Herzog, 2008).

*Even Dwarfs Started Small* was transgressive in many ways, and was even banned in Germany (Cronin, 2002: 59). Along with the pathetic duel between the dwarf and the tree, the film contained scenes that triggered the wrath of animal rights advocates, the most notable of these being the famous procession in which the dwarves transport a crucified chimpanzee. This was only five years before Peter Singer published his manifesto (1975) against such practices, which Herzog would continue to put on film, like the cat that is thrown out the window and the monkey that gets slapped in *Woyzeck* (Werner Herzog, 1979). Equally revulsive were the images of a hen pecking the corpse of its companion. There is no moral message being made here; only a direct portrayal of the crude brutality of the non-human world.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle, Werner Herzog, 1974), we see a field of tall green grass gently swaying in the wind to the sound of Johann Pachelbel's *Canon*, and the following words are superimposed over the peaceful scene: "*Hören Sie denn nicht das entsetzliche Schreien ringsum, das man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt?*" ("Do you not hear the horrible cries around us, which we usually call silence?"). Nothing about the scene or the Baroque music brings to mind suffering or death, and yet,

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as the filmmaker points out, they are there, in an uncultivated field, in the sky, in nature. Years later, while filming in the Amazon jungle, Herzog returns to the same theme: "[Klaus] Kinski always says that [the jungle] is full of erotic elements. I do not see it as erotic but rather full of obscenity. Nature here is vile and base. I cannot see anything erotic. I can only see fornication and suffocation and a struggle to survive, grow and finally rot. Of course, there is a lot of misery. But it is the same misery that surrounds us. The trees are miserable, the birds are miserable. I do not think they sing, but shriek out of pain" (*Burden of Dreams*). In the Amazon jungle, Herzog heard what Kinski, in his idyllic vision of nature, ignored: the screams around him. In this sense, one of the aspects in which Kinski and Herzog would be completely incompatible is in their views of the relationship between man and the natural world, which—as we intend to show here—is at the very core of the Herzogian *oeuvre*. In fact, much of his work can be considered a study of nature and the place of humans and animals within it.

For example, in an interview with Paul Cronin, Herzog speaks about his bewilderment with the behaviour of chickens (2014: 115), which could only be the product of sustained observation of these animals. We could even view the final scene of *Stroszek* (Werner Herzog, 1977) as a scientific essay on animal behaviour. Scientific, we would argue, because it points out something that had already been observed by great naturalists like Jakob von Uexküll (1957), and taken up by observers like John Berger when he speaks of the "abyss of non-comprehension" (1980: 5) that

separates humankind from animals. Von Uexküll would say that our *Umwelt* (surrounding world) is different from and therefore incompatible with the *Umwelt* of each animal. “To some, these worlds are invisible. Many a zoologist and physiologist, clinging to the doctrine that all living beings are mere machines, denies their existence” (1957[1934]: 5).

The conception of the animal world in Herzog’s work is a complex issue. When asked about it in an interview, he responded evasively: “I have to say that I do not have a decent answer for you. Please do not ask me to explain” (Cronin, 2002: 98). But even if he himself does not give an answer, or claims unconvincingly that he does not know what to say, what underlies all of his work is a reflection on animal life. Perhaps when he claims to have no answer, what he means is that the question is wrong. Because Herzog does not think about animals; what he thinks about is humanity; *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Werner Herzog, 2010) may be the most obvious example. He observes animal behaviour only to explore the boundary that separates the human from what is not human. Thus, he stares the chicken right in the eye, or is fascinated by the encounter between a prison priest and a squirrel in *Into the Abyss* (Werner Herzog, 2011). “What is a man?” seems also to be the central question in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, whose protagonist is thrown into



Stroszek (Werner Herzog, 1977)]

the world and *born* to it only when he is able to communicate with other human beings.

It is worth noting that our perspective in this article is the complete opposite of Matthew Gandy’s, for whom Herzog’s filmography “is a distant echo of an imaginary premodern world, replete with a nineteenth-century colonial iconography of exploration and the mastery of nature” (1996: 16). Conversely, we believe that if anything characterises Herzog’s films, it is the *negation* of our control over nature. In Herzog’s own words, Aguirre is “completely mad, rebelling not only against political power but nature itself” (Cronin, 2002: 77). This character, who believes himself capable of making birds fall from the sky by the power of his voice alone, ends the film defeated and face to face with a small ape. “Who is with me?” he asks, but no one answers him because the only living beings on his raft are a few monkeys. The animal world has won. Aguirre “dares to defy nature to such an extent that nature inevitably takes its revenge on him,” Herzog explains (Cronin, 2002: 77).

## APOCALYPSE

In that monumental moment of human thought that is Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, and under the suggestive title “*Utrum Adam in statu innocentia animalibus dominaretur*” [Whether Adam in the state of innocence had mastership over the animals], he reminds us first of the point that Augustine made that Adam did not rule over the animals, a notion that flagrantly contradicts the Bible: “It is written (Gn. 1:26): “Let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth” (*Summa*, I, q.96, art.1, ob.1). He then comes to Augustine’s defence with the following argument: “In the state of innocence man would not have had any bodily need of animals; neither for clothing, since then they were naked and not ashamed, there being no inordinate motions of concupiscence, nor for food, since they fed on the trees of paradise; nor

to carry him about, his body being strong enough for that purpose. But man needed animals in order to have experimental knowledge [*experimentalem cognitionem*] of their natures. This is signified by the fact that God led the animals to man, that he might give them names expressive of their respective natures" (*Summa*, I, q.96, art. 1, ad. 3, italics added). What St. Thomas seems to be saying is that in the beginning man did not need animals for anything except to be a man, to be able to tell apart their behaviour in such a way that it could be distinguished from his own. Or in other words, man is not man without an animal to compare himself to. This is what Giorgio Agamben points out when he asserts that "[i]f animal life and human life could be superimposed perfectly, then neither man nor animal—and, perhaps, not even the divine—would any longer be thinkable" (2002: 21). In line with Thomas, Linnaeus, von Uexküll, and Agamben, Herzog also confirms through cinematic language that the question about the animal is first and foremost the question about man.

"Why look at animals?" asked John Berger (1980), and his response is related to the need to recover that point of view, lost in the culture of capitalism, and which Herzog among others seeks to regain. Towards the end of *Cave of the Forgotten Dreams*, which takes place almost entirely between rock art and the remains of animals that died thousands of years ago, he stops to observe some albino crocodiles, and Herzog's off-screen narration reflects: "Are we today possibly the crocodiles who look back into an abyss of time when we see the paintings of Chauvet Cave?"

Gandy insists that "[t]he problem with Herzog's political vision is that it is never able to move beyond the recognition of the absurdity of existence" (1996: 14). Maybe he has no intention of moving beyond it. Herzog, like Nietzsche in his day, is a great denouncer of the nonsense of certain human activities. Some of those activities even inspire a certain affection in him: "If I was

caught on a lonely island the book I would want with me, without a doubt, is the *Oxford English Dictionary*, all twenty volumes. One of the greatest cultural monuments that the human race has ever created, such an incredible achievement of human ingenuity" (Cronin, 2002: 138). The human ambition to control everything, to attain all knowledge about the world around us, is mocked by the German director, as is the equally absurd belief that we have the responsibility to save the planet. In his *Encounters at the End of the World* (Werner Herzog, 2007), he warns us all: "In our efforts to preserve endangered species we seem to overlook something equally important: to me it is a sign of a deeply disturbed civilization where tree huggers and whale huggers in their weirdness are accepted, while nobody embraces the last speakers of a language."<sup>4</sup> This same idea is expressed crudely by Anatoly, one of the hunters in *Happy People: A Year in the Taiga* (Werner Herzog, 2010), when he says that "come to think of it, we are all killers or accomplices. Even those people who are kind-hearted and tend to pity everything." Tree huggers and whale huggers are no less guilty of their destruction than those who consume their products without remorse.

And this has to do with another dimension of the Herzogian view, a more apocalyptic one (the title of his documentary *Encounters at the End of the World* is deliberately polysemic), which we have identified particularly in his most recent works. Perhaps due to the effect of maturity or as a result of his decades of profound reflection, we observe what is no longer a challenge but a warning in the subtext of its documentaries. What began as a premonition in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*<sup>5</sup> (Aguirre, der Zorn gottes, Werner Herzog, 1972) and then in *Fitzcarraldo*<sup>6</sup> ultimately became a bitter warning about how insignificant we are to nature,<sup>7</sup> which can destroy us at any moment. In *The Wild Blue Yonder* (2005), Herzog performs an exercise in mockumentary that is worthy of praise. The images show scenes of our planet,

but edited so that it looks like an extra-terrestrial world—as Stanley Kubrick did in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), but without tampering with the images—that does not resemble Earth at all. In the film, human beings are mere explorers, aliens in a hostile world that in reality is none other than the one we call *home*. The same year saw the release of *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005), which is a *real* documentary.<sup>8</sup> In an interview about that film we find the following statement:

— Journalist: How would you explain the feelings towards nature that he [Timothy Treadwell] had? Naïve, utopian...?

— Herzog: He always maintained a romantic idea of nature, which I do not share.<sup>9</sup> He dreamed of establishing a true friendship with these animals, something impossible. I do not deny that some of them became familiar with his eccentric presence. But from there to an actual friendship there is a long way.

Herzog is categorically clear: friendship, agreement with animals, is impossible. In the film, an Alaskan native says about Treadwell: “It’s tragic because... Yeah, he died and his girlfriend died because he tried to be a bear. He tried to act like a bear, and for us on the island, you don’t do that. [...] If I look at it from my culture, Timothy Treadwell crossed a boundary that we have lived with for 7,000 years. It’s an unspoken boundary, an unknown boundary. But when we know we’ve crossed it, we pay the price.”

What Treadwell tried to have with the bears is what Deleuze<sup>10</sup> calls a “human relationship with the animal.” The cognitive incompatibility between the two makes this absurd, or rather, impossible. An animal can be given a human name, it can be spoken to, and relationships of kinship, submission, and affection can be built around it. But these are non-relationships because they are unidirectional, they cannot be apprehended or shared by the animal. The “animal-animal relationship” is also impossible; we simply need to accept that “animals are a world” (Deleuze,

1996), that this world is parallel and incompatible with ours, and that in the relationship between the two worlds our place is extremely vulnerable. “We are not a stable element on this planet. [...] Just as ammonites have disappeared, as the dinosaurs disappeared, the human race will disappear. That does not worry me too much. We are a race more vulnerable than sponges. We are more vulnerable than cockroaches. And certainly more vulnerable than some kinds of reptiles” (Herzog, 2013: 35).

The end of human race, which does not trouble Herzog, is not a possibility but a certainty. “Do you see them in destructive terms, volcanoes?” the volcanologist Clive Oppenheimer asks the director in *Into the Inferno* (Werner Herzog, 2015). Herzog’s answer is: “No, I... I do not. Uh... something different. It’s good that they are there. And the soil we are walking upon, uh, is not permanent. There’s no permanence to what we are doing... No permanence to the efforts of human being, no permanence to art, no permanence to science. There is something of a crust that is somehow moving, and it makes me fond of the volcano to know that our life, human life, or animals, can only live and survive because the volcanoes created the atmosphere that we need.” Of course, this documentary revisits a previously explored theme, that of volcanoes, although in *La Soufrière* (Werner Herzog, 1977) what interested him most was the human drama, and now he sees in them a more transcendental dimension. In the earlier film, two shots with animals stand out: in one, a pair of donkeys walk through the streets of the desolate Basse-Terre (whose seventy thousand inhabitants had been evacuated), oblivious to the concerns of humankind. In another, a cat sleeps, equally oblivious to the danger, alongside the only man who decided to stay in the island (apart from Herzog’s team).

In his most recent production, *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World* (Werner Herzog, 2016), Herzog deals with the Internet and com-



munications. He interviews specialists in several fields, among them an astrophysicist, who talks about solar flares, huge detachments of electromagnetic radiation that can have negative effects on our planet's communications. Phenomena such as these are beyond human control and impossible to predict, and if a sufficiently powerful solar flare were to occur it could break all communications on Earth, bringing about—according to Herzog—the end of the human race. The Internet gives a false sense that everything is reachable, that everything is controllable. Nature reminds us that we are not in control, that our life and death depend on the capricious designs of that same Nature that is perhaps the greatest deity of Herzogian theism.

## CONCLUSIONS

Following this necessarily brief overview of the treatment of nature in some of Herzog's works and thoughts, we must return to the question that inspired this article. What is his contribution to our understanding of the relationship between humans and animals? We believe that the importance of the Herzogian approach lies in his gaze. Cinema works fundamentally with images, and Werner Herzog is a tireless surveyor of new images. In several interviews he laments the paucity of images in our culture. That is why he has travelled to every corner of the planet in search of them. His point of view is elementary, primal, stripped of preconceptions (unlike those of us in the humanities). We are immersed in a cloud of theory, so our approach to the object of study is necessarily weighed down with ideas and concepts. That is why we need another's gaze, but a trained, incisive one. Herzog is such a filmmaker.

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### THROUGH HIS GAZE, WHAT WE SEE IN HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS IS ABOVE ALL VIOLENCE, INCOMPATIBILITY, DIFFERENCE

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And, through his gaze, what we see in human-animal relationships is above all violence, incompatibility, difference. We do not see consensus, we do not see persuasion, but only a reminder of our own fragility as a species.

We are human beings. We have desires. These desires often involve other human beings in a way that, to satisfy them, it is necessary to convince others to share our desire. Or force them to do so. Thus, there are only two options: violence or consensus. We could frame it in practical terms, positing an individual be-

longing to a village who needs, or simply desires, certain resources that his neighbour owns. This individual tries to negotiate with his neighbour to give him the resource but, when the neighbour refuses to do so, the individual chooses to seize the object of desire against the will of the owner. Violence appears where consensus could not be achieved. What happens then when our desires involve non-human beings? The option of consensus is closed to us, because we have no way of communicating with the animal, of convincing it, of consulting it (*contra* Viennet, 2009). The only way that humans have to satisfy their desires involving animals is through violence. Our relationship with the animal is always violent. "We are all killers or accomplices," said the hunter Anatoly, whether we like it or not. ■

## NOTES

- 1 In Argentina, see e.g. Ferrer, 2009; Cragolini, 2016. In Spain, Horta, 2009; Leyton and Casado, 2009.
- 2 Television Interview, "Nature does not exist" (2010), Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIGeDAZ6-q4>.
- 3 Although the issue of ethics in the exploitation of animals in entertainment is beyond the scope of this article, we wish to make it clear that we, the authors of



*Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (Werner Herzog, 1972)]

the article, are firmly against any animal exploitation. However, we understand that in the period in which Herzog's images were produced there was less awareness about the issue. This article will be limited simply to analysing the aesthetic aspects of these images.

- 4 The repetition of certain topics in Herzog's work is remarkable. His concern for the death of languages has been evident at least since the introduction of Hombrecito in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, and in a recent interview he expresses his desire to make a film about "the languages that are disappearing" (Herzog, 2013: 36).
- 5 In which it is said that God, if he really existed, must have created the jungle in a fit of rage, since even the stars are crooked there.
- 6 On-screen captions in the film read: "The Indians call these lands Cayahuari Yacu, which means 'where God did not finish the Creation'. Only when man disappears will God return to finish his work."
- 7 J. Hoberman argued repeatedly (1978, 1981) that Herzog is a "director of landscapes", and that often human figures are lost in those landscapes, appearing tiny and irrelevant. Herzog partly agrees: "I like to direct landscapes just as I like to direct actors and animals" (Cronin, 2002: 81).

8 As Comolli and Sorrel (2016: 246-248) suggest, the only instance in which a real difference can be made between documentary film and fiction is when death makes an appearance.

9 Cf. the differences with Kinski on this same subject, above.

10 "A comme Animal", television broadcast of the series *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*.

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## **WERNER HERZOG'S CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN-ANIMAL STUDIES**

### **Abstract**

It was only in recent years that historians and cultural critics, and especially those of us who study human-animal relations throughout history, have begun to understand something Werner Herzog has been warning us about for the last half century: that "nature wants us dead." In so saying he refers to the conflictive and asymmetrical nature of our relationship with nature, with the non-human world and in particular with animals. The aim of this paper is to propose a Herzogian reading of the animal world, one that reappraises the role of conflict in human-animal relations at the expense of the notion of consensus, or peaceful coexistence, so popular among researchers in this field. Fortunately, there are certain characters who, like Herzog, go against the grain.

### **Key words**

Werner Herzog; Violence; Conflict; Human-Animal Studies; Large Form; Nature.

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## **LA CONTRIBUCIÓN DE WERNER HERZOG A LOS ESTUDIOS ACERCA DE LA ANIMALIDAD**

### **Resumen**

Apenas en los últimos tiempos los historiadores y críticos culturales, y en particular aquellos que estudiamos la animalidad, es decir, la relación entre el humano y el animal a través de la historia, nos hemos dado cuenta de algo que Werner Herzog advierte desde hace medio siglo: que «la naturaleza nos quiere muertos». Se refiere así a la esencia conflictiva y asimétrica de nuestra relación con la naturaleza, con el mundo no-humano, y en particular con la animalidad. El objetivo de este artículo es proponer una lectura herzogiana de la animalidad, una que revalorice el papel del conflicto en la relación humano-animal, en detrimento de aquella centrada en el consenso y enfatizada por el grueso de los investigadores de la especialidad. Afortunadamente existen personajes que, como Herzog, piensan a contramano.

### **Palabras clave**

Werner Herzog; violencia; conflicto; animalidad; Gran Forma; Naturaleza.

### **Autores**

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