FILM CULTURE

IN TRANSITION

PLANETARY CINEMA

Film, Media and the Earth

TIAGO DE LUCA

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As with any long-term project, I have published excerpts of this book in journal articles and chapters, although these reappear here in significantly modified form. Materials contained in chapter 1 were previously published in 'Global Visions: Around-the-world Travel and Visual Culture in Early Modernity' in Louis Bayman and Natália Pinazza (eds.) *Journeys on Screen: Theory, Ethics and Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018). Portions of chapter 5 were published in 'Figuring a Global Humanity: Cinematic Universalism and the Multinarrative Film', *Screen*, 58:1 (2017) and 'Earth Networks: *The Human Surge* and Cognitive Mapping', *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*, 7:2 (2018).

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Introduction

The world picture would be a painting, so to speak, of what is as a whole.
Martin Heidegger

When a photograph is cropped, the rest of the world is cut out.
Stanley Cavell

The present environmental crisis is the gravest challenge of our time. And it is so because it is planetary. To say that it is planetary is not to say that 'we are all in this together' or that anthropogenic disturbances act as a welcome equaliser: inequities are still the currency of the day in a vastly unjust world. Rather, it is to say that it is no longer possible to delimit or suppress the consequences arising from events pertaining to one particular geographical area or to even predict the areas that will be affected by an uncontrollable and extreme climate that sometimes does not spare even the rich. It also means confronting the fact that the environmental transformations currently on course are unprecedented in human history in terms of both the rapidity at which they are occurring and their global scope. Whether we like it or not, our world is an interconnected sphere made up of delicately interdependent ecosystems and lifeworlds. It urgently demands solutions on the planetary scale. This book hopes to contribute to this task by exploring how film and related media have both shaped and responded to the history of our planetary consciousness.

The story is now familiar. In the late 1960s humans were finally able to see photographic evidence of the Earth in space for the first time. Taken during the Apollo missions, two images in particular have lodged in the public consciousness: one of a half-shadowed Earth in the distance seen from a lunar landscape, taken in 1968 during the Apollo 8 mission and subsequently referred to as Earthrise; and another showing the entire planet as an enframed disk floating in space, taken in 1972 during the Apollo 17 mission and known as the Blue Marble. These two photographs are among the most disseminated in human history, ubiquitous in their visibility and

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adorning screensavers all over the world. As the story goes, the impact of such images in cementing a planetary awareness is yet to be matched.[1] Not only did they represent the apex of post-war globalism, they quickly became the emblem of the new environmentalism.[2] According to this well-trodden narrative, if globalisation and the global environmental crisis are the talk of today, their imaginaries must be traced back to that historical moment for a deeper understanding of their technologies, ideologies and mythologies.

This book tells a different story. It contends that this narrative has failed to account for the vertiginous global imagination undergirding late nineteenth-century media culture. Advancements in the sciences, technology, transportation and communication, boosted and supported by integrated economic networks in the context of imperial global expansion, had a dramatic impact on the conception and representation of the Earth in Western metropolitan culture. Panoramas, giant globes, world exhibitions, photography and stereography: all promoted and hinged on the idea of a world made whole and newly visible. When it emerged, cinema did not simply contribute to this effervescent globalism so much as become its most significant and enduring manifestation. One of the main arguments of this book is that an exploration of this media culture can help us understand contemporary planetary imaginaries and the way we see the world.

The (Whole) World in Motion

As a visual object, the world has never been and will never be seen in its totality. As Kelly Oliver reminds us: 'Whether we are looking at a table and chairs a few feet away or the Earth from space, we see only one side, one perspective, and cannot, and never will, see the whole in its entirety'.[3]

1 Whether directly or indirectly, a number of recent publications, many important for the present study, have reinforced this narrative, including: Kelly Oliver, *Earth and World: Philosophy after the Apollo Missions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Christopher Potter, *The Earth Gazers: On Seeing Ourselves* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017); Robert Poole, *Earthrise: How Man First Saw the Earth* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2008). The recent fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission has cemented this narrative further, with a number of films released in the last years, including *First Man* (2018) and the documentaries *Mission Control: The Unsung Heroes of Apollo* (2017) and *Apollo 11* (2019), the last entirely comprising original footage.

2 For an excellent study of post-war media globalism, see Janine Marchessault, *Ecstatic Worlds: Media, Utopia, Ecologies* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2017).

3 Oliver, *Earth and World*, 23.

Oliver's observation arises from her argument that 'global thinking only emerges after [the] Apollo pictures', which gave humans the first sight of the planet from afar.[4] And yet, as Denis Cosgrove has shown in his monumental *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (2001), even if 'humans are unable to embrace more than a tiny part of their planetary surface', and for all the 'radical newness' of the Apollo photographs, 'actually witnessing the globe culminates a long genealogy of imagining the possibility of doing so' that goes back in time at least as far as ancient Rome and Greece.[5]

In fact, as discussed in chapter 1 of this book, it was in order to resolve the very conundrum that one can never see the entirety of the Earth that a giant public attraction such as the georama was first created in France in 1825, to then become the model for the Great Globe in the UK in 1851, both of which existed within a panoramic lineage that aimed to incite sublime experiences of the world's vastness. A gigantic sphere containing a concave world map, the aim of the georama, as Jean-Marc Besse tells us, was 'to make possible a type of perception that neither the flat map nor the convex globe allow: a global, and so to speak immediate, view of the totality of the surface of the Earth'.[6] Not coincidentally, georamas were erected in Paris and London, nineteenth-century capitals of global modernity and empire: betraying expansionist and ordering urges, these cartographic globes crystallised the longstanding alignment between whole-world figuration and a geographical imagination.

In her illuminating *La pensée cartographique des images: Cinéma et culture visuelle* (2011), Teresa Castro argues that this alignment gained a new intensity with the advent of cinema, which became characterised by a 'mapping impulse' undergirding a number of descriptive techniques and structuring devices.[7]

4 Ibid., 25.

5 Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, MD, and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), xi.

6 Jean-Marc Besse, *Face au monde: Atlas, jardins, géoramas* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003), 14.

7 Teresa Castro, *La pensée cartographique des images: Cinéma et culture visuelle* (Lyon: Aléas Éditeur, 2011). On mapping and cinema, see also Teresa Castro, 'Cinema's Mapping Impulse: Questioning Visual Culture', *The Cartographic Journal* 46:1 (2013): 9–15; Giorgio Avezzù, Teresa Castro and Giuseppe Fidota, 'The Exact Shape of the World? Media and Mapping', *NECSUS* 7:2 (2018): 85–95, https://necsus-ejms.org/the-exact-shape-of-the-world-media-and-mapping/; Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, *Cartographies of the Absolute* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2015). Many of these works are indebted to Fredric Jameson's influential concept of 'cognitive mapping'; see his *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (London: BFI, 1992), 1–35.

Figures 0.1, 0.2, 0.3 & 0.4 Advertisements from film companies and hirers published in *The Bioscope* (1910–1913) reveal the definitionally constitutive globalism of early cinema. Source held at the British Library.

These included the surveying panoramic shot and its aerial counterpart, the view from above, as well as film's ability to capture, inventory and organise visual chunks of the world in the guise of an atlas, which helps explain the ubiquitous figure of the globe in early cinema's promotional machinery.

To say that cinema acquired global contours as it developed in its early days does not quite do justice to its definitionally constitutive globalism, one that starts with the Lumière brothers' widely advertised travels around the world, finds verbal expression in taglines such as 'The Whole World Within Reach' (Méliès's Star Film, 1896) and 'We Put the World Before You' (Charles Urban Trading Company, 1903), and becomes materialised in the omnipresent global figures adopted by the nascent companies and hirers, many of which duly



Figures 0.5, 0.6 & 0.7 Conquering the world: eminent businessmen and personalities in the UK were regularly depicted in the trade magazine *The Bioscope* (1910–1913) alongside globes and world maps so as to highlight the global expansionism of the nascent film industry. Source held at the British Library.

attending by the names of Globe, Cosmopolitan, Atlas Films and The World on Wings, to cite but a few in the UK. The globes varied in terms of composition, layout and design but on leafing through any film trade magazine or periodical of the time, there was no way you could miss them. They appear on Atlas's hunched back 'holding the world', here enveloped by a tangled web of film reels (figure 0.1); as a spherical container within which Gaumount's Chrono camera is proudly lauded as 'the best in the world' (figure 0.2); as the curved surface on which Pathé's famous rooster perches (figure 0.3); and as the flattened-out background against which Walturdaw's silent projector Powers No. 6 sits at the center of a stage (figure 0.4).[8] Globes and world maps also regularly featured in cartoons and illustrations depicting eminent personalities and businessmen, leaving no doubt as to the expansionist aspirations of the embryonic film industry (figures 0.5, 0.6 and 0.7).[9]

It is tempting to dismiss such imagery as the hyperbolic promotional rhetoric accompanying the emergence of a wildly popular new medium. Yet other evidence suggests that globalism and its variations were foundational structuring concepts underpinning early articulations of medium specificity

8 These advertisements respectively appeared in the following issues of *The Bioscope*: 258 (21 September 1911), 598; 361 (11 September 1913), 864; 186 (5 May 1910), 12; 351 (3 July 1913), viii.
9 These illustrations respectively appeared in the following issues of *The Bioscope* (no page numbers): 216 (01 December 1910); 240 (18 May 1911); 361 (11 September 1913).

in a variety of discourses and practices, including the prevalent idea of film as a universal language explored in chapter 5. Above all, it was cinema's ability to travel that thrilled metropolitan commentators and viewers alike, so much so that one writer could claim: 'I can learn more of what the world is like from the armchair of a picture than I can from travelling because I have neither the means nor the time to travel to all parts of the world'.[10] As Jennifer Lynn Peterson and Alison Griffiths have shown, the trope of global armchair travel became especially attached to the travelogue genre, which, with its ethnographic affiliations, held the promise of a mediated encounter with 'exotic' peoples and faraway locales across the world.[11] Titles such as 'Round the World in Two Hours', 'The World in Motion', 'The World on Wings' and 'Globe Express Excursions', to cite those of a few UK programmes, accordingly doubled down on the kinetic properties of the medium through the suggestion of a world that itself moved.[12]

To be sure, cinema's self-ascribed mission to reveal the planet anew was preceded by other media. Its planetary aspirations must be viewed, as Tom Gunning has emphasised, as the last in an illustrious lineage of 'feverish production of views of the world' that gained traction in the second half of the nineteenth century, when new travel routes opened up by colonial networks and intercontinental trading businesses enacted a 'geographical extension of the field of the visible', to quote Jean-Louis Comolli.[13] As I explore in chapter 4, before cinema claimed to show the faces of peoples of the world, photography had, since the early 1860s, partially fulfilled this task in carte de visite collections, anthropological compendia and photographic galleries of a racialised global humanity. Other earlier media and attractions, such as panoramas, around-the-world stereocard boxes,

10 The Man About Town, 'Popular Travel Pictures', *Pathé Cinema Journal* 6 (8 November 1913), 23.

11 Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2013), esp. 137–174; Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, & Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), esp. 171–252.

12 These titles appear in the following articles and programmes: 'A "Travel Feature"', *The Bioscope* 347 (5 June 1913); '"The World in Motion" at Wigan', *The Bioscope* 169 (18 November 1909), 39; 'The World in Motion at Loughborough', *The Bioscope* 181 (3 March 1910), 37; 'The World on Wings', *The Bioscope* 217 (8 December 1910), 15; 'Globe Express Excursions by the Bigograph', programme n. 18 for the Scenorama and Globe Choir Federation, n/d, held at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum (BDCM), University of Exeter, UK. Item number: 18536.

13 Tom Gunning, '"The Whole World Within Reach": Travel Images without Borders' in Jeffrey Ruoff (ed.) *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 25–41; 33; Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Machines of the Visible' in Stephen Heath and Teresa de Lauretis (eds.) *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Palgrave, 1980), 121–142; 122–123.

travel picture collections and world exhibitions, had equally testified, as Brooke Belisle has shown, 'to a broader interest in picturing the world as a coherent whole'.[14] Thus, already in 1852, a poster for a moving panorama described the medium as a 'new method [...] which brings to the very doors of those who cannot go to the mountains, all the mountains of the earth'.[15] Yet, no doubt, cinema added a new frisson to this idea. This was not only because it mechanically registered landscapes and peoples of the Earth *in motion*, it similarly broadened and diversified what constituted a subject worthy of attention beyond places and humans. One of the aims of this book is to show that formulations of worlding in early cinema and related media already harboured connections with what we would today call the nonhuman and even the posthuman.

Early cinema's voracious and promiscuous appetite to show anything and everything, which Mary Ann Doane has theorised as a consequence of its indexical rapport with real-world contingency, was repeatedly asserted in critical and promotional discourses.[16] This is how one commentator described the cinema experience in 1910: as a visual concatenation of 'perhaps Macbeth, motor skating, the Victoria Falls, glass blowing, a Passion play, the latest aviation meeting in France, a Texas melodrama, and King Edward opening a bazaar'.[17] Cinematic capaciousness, as I examine in chapter 3, was then conflated with globalism as part of a semiotic process whereby the whole world was meant to signify 'all things in the world'; or to put it differently, that any thing was potentially *a thing* worth recording and inventorying. A case in point is the suggestion for a poster design, published in the trade journal *The Bioscope* (1910), where miscellaneous figures and captions are crowded inside a globe to drive the point home that the variety of film subjects enumerated – travel, sport, humour, drama, pathos – are both part and parcel of cinema's ability to bridge terrestrial distances and encompass the globe (figure 0.8).[18]

Among cinema's favoured things were nonhuman life forms and their environs. To cite another dominant perception, the idea that film has

14 Brooke Belisle, 'Nature at a Glance: Immersive Maps from Panoramic to Digital', *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13:4 (2015): 313–335; 317. See also Brooke Belisle, 'Picturing Networks: Railroads and Photographs', *Amodern* 2 (October 2013), https://amodern.net/article/picturing-nineteenth-century-networks/ (last accessed 2 September 2020).

15 'The Great European Diorama' (1852), promotional leaflet, BDCM. Item number: 70431.

16 Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA, and London: University of Harvard Press, 2002).

17 'The Bioscope a Necessity', *The Bioscope* 179 (17 March 1910), 43.

18 *The Bioscope* 192 (16 June 1910), 86.

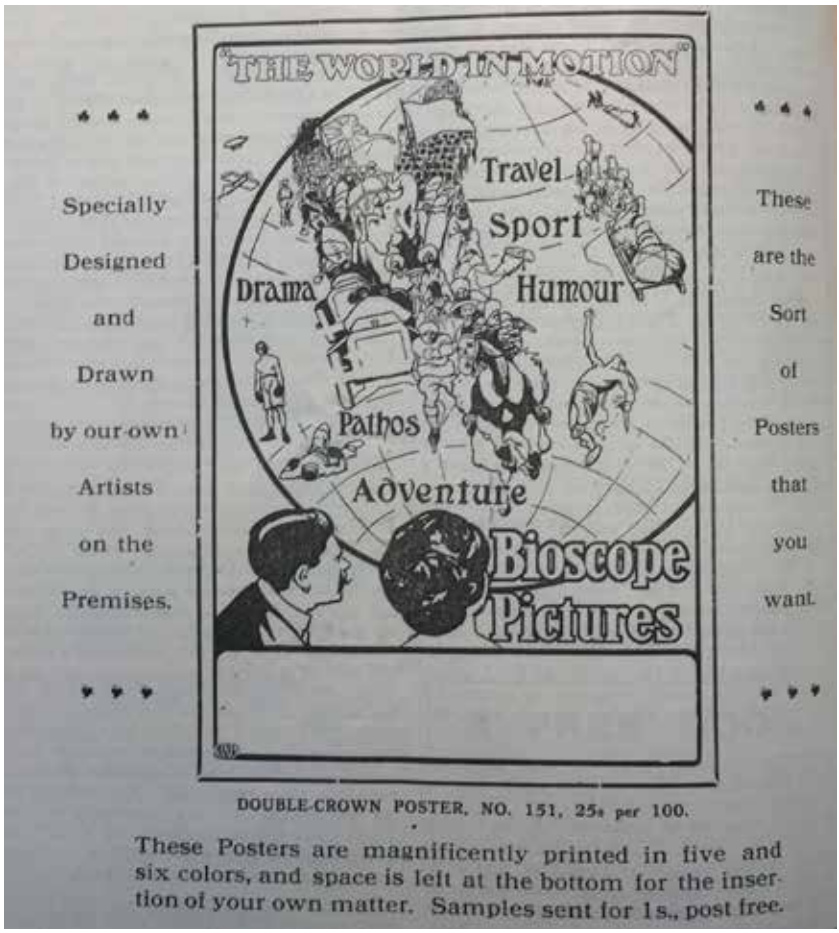

Figure 0.8 All things in the world: a suggested poster in *The Bioscope* makes visible cinema's perceived ability to show anything and everything on the planet. Source held at the British Library.

'literally brought the world – sea and land, animal and vegetable, insect, reptile, and so on – before me' was tied to its wondrous revelation of an entirely unsuspected living world, whether via film-specific devices, such as magnification and speed manipulation processes, or by showing animals in their natural habitat in distant places.[19] Put differently, the unseen world unveiled by film was mapped on to its capacity to travel and record wildlife across the world as part of a levelling impulse to equate infinitesimal organic phenomena and wild animal life, which, as I explore in chapter 2, revitalised

19 The Man About Town, 'Impressions Here and There', *Pathé Cinema Journal* 1:6 (8 November 1913): 23.

the static representational systems of natural history as an added experience of wonder by way of motion.

Cinema thus promised to reveal and organise the previously unseen: the places, faces, things, humans, animals and other life forms making up and crowding the world. Its appeal derived from its ability to make the world visible, in motion, for the first time, and its kinetic and evidentiary properties legitimised its veridical claims. But film was similarly understood, already at its dawn and like photography before it, as a medium whose duty was to record phenomenal realities on the verge of disappearance. Its appeal was therefore also inseparable from the idea that it could preserve vanishing worlds as they presented themselves in the world, for a camera, for the last time. These endangered realities included certain animals, believed to be on the brink of extinction, and nature's wilderness, threatened by an unrelenting urbanisation (chapter 2); certain humans, from presumably inferior races, who had their days counted on Earth thanks to the onslaught of 'progress' (chapter 4); and certain traditions and lifestyles about to be swept away by a wholesale and homogenising global modernity, a belief that provided the conceptual raison-d'être for Albert Kahn's Les Archives de la Planète (1909–1931), or Archives of the Planet, discussed in chapter 6.

These two poles, disclosure and disappearance, or the never-before-seen and the never-to-be-seen-again, structure many chapters in this book, most of which are correspondingly concerned with nonfiction genres and practices. In this sense, *Planetary Cinema* insists on the continuing relevance of the concept of indexicality, that is, cinema's automatic ability to record the world, for an understanding of historical (and contemporary) screen cultures.[20] But there is a significant exception in chapter 5, where my focus falls instead on a single fiction film, D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), which I explore in relation to the contemporaneous discourse of film as a universal language. Even here, however, the notion that film could show the world

20 As is well known, the term 'indexicality' derives from Charles S. Peirce's theory of signs, the index being the sign that attests to the existence of its referent through a physical connection. In the 1960s, Peter Wollen borrowed the term to account for André Bazin's concept of the 'ontology' of the photographic image. See Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 116–154. As many theorists have further noted, indexicality, as a property that attests to an automatic transference from reality to its reproduction, remains in digital capture. See Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 208. For studies that have questioned the usefulness of indexicality, or the idea of cinema as an indexical medium, see: Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), esp. 286–334; Tom Gunning, 'Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality', *differences* 18:1 (2007): 29–52; Jordan Schonig, 'Contingent Motion: Rethinking the "Wind in the Trees" in Early Cinema and CGI', *Discourse* 40:1 (2018): 30–61.

anew is also paramount, though not connected with its indexical properties but, rather, with its ability to reveal the links and connections between otherwise disparate places and times, that is, with its editing properties understood as the enabler of a networked figuration of the planet.

As can be glimpsed from the scholars mentioned above, a solid literature has critically engaged, whether directly or indirectly, with the global dimension and imagination of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century film and media culture. To this scholarship I would add the names of Tanya Agathocleous, Alison Byerly, Erkki Huhtamo and Paula Amad, and further underline the unparalleled importance of Tom Gunning.[21] This book hopes to extend this important work in three ways.

First, *Planetary Cinema* proposes a theoretical, comprehensive (though certainly not exhaustive) and critical exploration of how 'the world', as a totalising concept and figure, was variously constituted and constructed across film and related media as they commingled, interacted and overlapped in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Put simply, how was the planet imaged and imagined at the time? More specifically, what were the conceptual coordinates, aesthetic strategies and structural parameters delineating the globality of giant globes, the worldhood of unseen and thingly worlds, and the planetarity of planetary archives? Do these world visions replicate the same discourses and beliefs, and what explains their conjoined appearance? For reasons that will hopefully become clear by the end of this introduction, my historical case studies are mostly drawn from Britain and France. The 'world' envisioned in the historical projects and artefacts discussed here is therefore rooted in a Western, often imperial, global imagination.

Second, this book proposes a novel methodological approach to account for world-building processes in film and media. To be sure, whenever appropriate I will make recourse to the usual tools from geography, anthropology and natural history, understood as disciplines and fields of knowledge that

21 See, for example, Alison Byerly, *Are We There Yet? Virtual Travel and Victorian Realism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2013); Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Tom Gunning, 'The World as Object Lesson: Cinema Audiences, Visual Culture and the St. Louis World's Fair', *Film History* 6:4 (1994): 422–444; Tom Gunning, 'Early Cinema as Global Cinema: the Encyclopedic Ambition' in Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini and Rob King (eds.) *Early Cinema and the 'National'* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 11–16; Tanya Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

necessitate the global as ontological and epistemological categories; or, to put it differently, as fields that both produce and reproduce the global, especially in the nineteenth century. Yet it is also part of the argument of this book that such tools are insufficient in themselves if we want to grasp the *aesthetic* foundations of media worlding. To that end, individual chapters are organised around a specific philosophical concept, each in turn related to a specific formal technique or category. These are: the sublime and the overview (chapter 1); wonder and the unseen view (chapter 2); things and the catalogue (chapter 3); faciality and the posed portrait (chapter 4); universalism and the network narrative (chapter 5); disappearance and ruinous imagery (chapter 6). Whereas these couplings are not mutually exclusive, it is my hope that the adoption of these ordering descriptors will provide a simultaneously rigorous and capacious conceptual approach where a number of mediums, discourses and ideas can be productively brought together in terms of their world-making affiliations and proclivities.

Third, these pairings are motivated by a quest to enlarge the timeframe and accordingly provide methodological bridges through which contemporary planetary imaginaries can be illuminated in terms of meaningful divergences and continuities with earlier imaginaries. Some issues related to terminology are, however, in need of clarification before I explore the rationale for this comparative methodology and issues of corpus selection and historical periodisation in more detail.

Earth · World · Globe · Planet

Earth, world, globe, planet: we can use a number of words to refer to our terrestrial home, each of which carries a distinct semiotic baggage.[22] The most capacious and flexible signifier of these is *world*: one can be or make a world, worlds can be many and everywhere, one can world a world. When preceded by the definite article, *the world* can still disturb and elude the imagination in its impossibly simultaneous embrace of all things, peoples, connections and relations crisscrossing the planet. World is formless. By contrast, *globe* has an irreducibly spherical shape that denotes spatiality: doubtless the most maligned of these descriptors, it generates associations with maritime routes, digital networks and electronic signals spreading

22 My understanding of these terms is informed by the following essay and books: W. J. T. Mitchell, 'World Pictures: Globalization and Visual Culture', *Neohelicon* 34:2 (2007): 49–59; Oliver, *Earth and World*; Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*; Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*.

over the world's surface, from global imperial expansionism all the way to global finance capital. *Earth* and *planet*, for their part, partly resist abstract and anthropocentric connotations by evoking materialities, temporalities and processes above and beyond the human. Whereas Earth shares its name with the ground and soil, thus producing an adherence to ideas of land nourishment, rootedness and organic life, to speak of the world as a planet is also to picture it as a physical entity, but as a rounded, solid object floating in outer space alongside other celestial bodies.

As a result of the physicality inherent in Earth and planet, these two descriptors have latterly gained a renewed significance thanks to another increasingly widespread but also increasingly maligned concept: the Anthropocene. Coined in 2000 by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, the Anthropocene describes a new geological phase the planet has entered because of momentous human-induced changes in its biogeophysical constitution, including ocean acidification, deforestation and biodiversity loss.[23] According to this idea, humanity has remodelled the planet to such an extent that it now comprises a geological force in its own right, paradoxically jeopardising the conditions that make possible the existence and sustenance of human life on Earth. In this sense, the Anthropocene functions as a bifurcating discourse of human supremacism and insignificance: elevated to the status of a telluric force on the one hand (the Anthropos), humanity is reduced on the other to a brief interlude in the planet's temporal trajectory due to the geological periodicity of the concept (the '-ocene').

One could argue that the Anthropocene, or at least the age of the Anthropocene, has precipitated a crisis of the 'age of the world picture'. As we know, this was an expression famously coined by Martin Heidegger in relation to what he saw as the technological instrumentalisation of the world – a world that, rather than lived and felt in its unknowable worldliness, was instead 'conceived and grasped as a picture', that is, as an enclosed totality that stood rationally 'at man's disposal as conquered'.[24] For Hannah Arendt, the Archimedean sight of the Earth in space made available in the 1960s crystallised this techno-imperialist world view whilst contravening our phenomenological and cognitive limitations as Earth-bound humans.[25] There is no doubt that a utilitarian and objectifying perspective on the

23 Paul J. Crutzen, 'The "Anthropocene"', *Journal de Physique IV*, 12:10 (2002): 1–6.

24 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland, 1977), 127, 133.

25 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]); Hannah Arendt, 'Man's Conquest of Space', *The American Scholar* 32:4 (Autumn 1963): 527–540. For an illuminating study of Heidegger's and Arendt's Earth and world thinking,

planet still prevails in our time: one needs only to turn to military optics, satellite surveillance and discourses of geoengineering for actualisations of this perspective.[26] Yet, in a philosophical sense, there is also the growing perception that the idea of the world as an enframed picture one can measure and control from a distance is becoming untenable.[27] Or, to cite Jean-Luc Nancy and Aurélien Barrau, that 'we can no longer be certain of a distinction between "the world" and "us", between some thing that is in front of or around us and ourselves as "subjects" of this object', a process that is as much the result of 'the complexity of our interactions with the given (matter, life, space, and time)' as of 'the upheavals that affect all forms of civilization (knowledge, power, and values)'.[28]

The curious career of the Anthropocene during its 20-year span is that it has managed to escape the confines of the biological and Earth sciences and successfully migrate to the humanities as a concept that can illuminate the scalar transmutations of human-world relationships. Yet, as with any concept that proves too fashionable, the Anthropocene has generated important counter-arguments rejecting its universalising bent according to which 'we' – that is to say, the whole of humanity – are responsible for the current state of the world. Underlining the intertwined histories of colonialism, genocide, racism, slavery, industrial capitalism, extractivism and current ecological calamities, these arguments have ranged from outright rejections of the concept through to terminological adjustments intended to more adequately reflect on the real causes, agents and factors of the global environmental crisis.[29]

see Oliver, *Earth and World*, esp. 71–161. For an equally insightful discussion, see Brooke Belisle, 'Whole World Within Reach: Google VR', *Journal of Visual Culture* 19:1 (2020): 112–136; 125–131.

26 On geoengineering, see Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (London: Verso, 2017), 79–96. On global military surveillance, see Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 18–22.

27 See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life under Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015); Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017).

28 Jean-Luc Nancy and Aurélien Barrau, *What's These Worlds Coming to?*, trans. Travis Holloway and Flor Méchain (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 5.

29 See, for example, Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*; Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016); T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2017); Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'It's Not the Anthropocene, It's the

Although this book shares many of the concerns voiced by these critiques and rejects the all-levelling rhetoric that the Anthropocene can assume, to provide nomenclatural or conceptual replacements for it is not one of my goals. This book instead takes *the occasion* of the Anthropocene – or however one may wish to name it – as a valuable opportunity to rethink how we understand and conceptualise the world away from 'world', and towards the Earth both in terms of its life-sustaining and life-generating processes and as a planet with its own past and future. This is in no way a suggestion to turn a blind eye to the violent histories of exclusion, domination and exploitation of which the global ecological breakdown is but a consequence, but it is a suggestion that, in addition to confronting these histories, there is the urgent need to confront the planet Earth as *a planet* and as *the Earth*.[30]

If world and the global may be deemed inadequate terms to account for the irruption of planetarity ushered in by the Anthropocene, when it comes to the cinema such concepts have never enjoyed as much prominence as they do today. Now established sub-disciplines within film studies, 'world cinema' and 'global cinema' feature across university curricula worldwide and stamp an ever-growing number of anthologies.[31] Whereas world cinema has gained currency since the early 2000s in studies that, broadly speaking, have attempted to reclaim or refigure its positive valence away from the market-driven exoticism with which it was identified (as with 'world music' and 'world literature'), global cinema has emerged as an alternative but related concept to account for the networks of transnationalism upon which film cultures and industries have indelibly relied. Yet, regardless of their differences, both terms have been recruited so as to underline the circulation, distribution and flows of films and directors as they break national

White Supremacy Scene; or, The Geological Color Line' in Richard Grusin (ed.) *After Extinction* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 123–149.

30 This is moreover where my approach differs from Jameson's 'cognitive mapping', which is concerned with mapping out the invisibility of global capitalism rather than the physical planet as such. I have expanded on this in 'Earth Networks: *The Human Surge* and Cognitive Mapping', *NECSUS* 7:2 (2018): 121–140, https://necsus-ejms.org/earth-networks-the-human-surge-and-cognitive-mapping/.

31 Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (eds.), *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006); Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (eds.), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009); Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (eds.), *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Rob Stone et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Elena Gorfinkel and Tami Williams (eds.), *Global Cinema Networks* (New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark, NJ. and London: Rutgers University Press, 2018).

barriers, travel across the globe and precipitate transcultural processes of hybridisation. Although it is hard to overestimate the importance of this scholarship in making film studies a more pluralistic and democratic discipline, it does lend credence to a concern raised by W. J. T. Mitchell already in 2007, when he noted that 'the general tendency has been to talk about the global *distribution* of images, their circulation in forms of mass media such as cinema, television, advertising, and the internet' rather than about 'images of the world and the global as such'. Mitchell proposed: 'We need to begin, then, by asking ourselves: How do we imagine, depict or know the global?'[32]

This book takes up this call. But it instead embraces the planetary as its organising descriptor as a way to provide a theoretical alternative to the circulation bias of world/global cinema and accordingly treat the world as a representational and physical entity in its own right.[33] In this, the book might seem to resonate with another current strand in film studies concerned with aesthetic and ethical processes of 'world-making'.[34] But its purchase on the concept must be primarily viewed in alignment with current ecological discussions of worlding, or 'cinema's powerful production of worlds in relation to *the* world', to cite Adrian J. Ivakhiv in his illuminating *Ecologies of the Moving Image* (2013).[35] Engaging in dialogue with the recent field of 'ecocinema' as a cinema that compels us 'to reflect upon what it means to inhabit this planet: that is, to be a member of the planetary ecosystem',

32 Mitchell, 'World Pictures', 50.

33 The term 'planetary cinema' has also been embraced by the duo Geocinema (Asia Bazdyrieva and Solveig Suess), although their focus and outputs (including moving-image experimental works) are significantly different from mine, considering as they do 'planetary-scale networks – cell phones, surveillance cameras, satellites, geosensors – as a vastly distributed cinematic apparatus'. See their website here: https://geocinema.network/ (last accessed 4 June 2021).

34 Daniel Yacavone, *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, *Queer Cinema in the World* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016). See also V. F. Perkins, 'Where's the World? The Horizon of Events in Movie Fiction' in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.) *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 16–41.

35 Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 8. Marchessault also explores many postwar world-building projects in relation to the planet as such in her excellent *Ecstatic Worlds*. See also Paula Willoquet-Maricondi (ed.), *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2015). For a foundational collection on ecocinema, see Stephen Rust, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt (eds.), *Ecocinema Theory and Practice* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).

Planetary Cinema hopes to contribute to this conversation both in its focus on current films that literally attempt to imagine the planet itself and in its contention that we must historicise such a planetary impetus within a temporally larger media constellation.[36]

The works examined in the following pages include: IMAX films (*Blue Planet*, 1990; *A Beautiful Planet*, 2016, both directed by Toni Myers), the experimental film-essay *Medium Earth* (The Otolith Group, 2013) and the documentary *Earth* (*Erde*, Nikolaus Geyrhalter, 2019), all examined in chapter 1 in juxtaposition with the global panoramas of the past; contemporary BBC Earth series such as *Frozen Planet* (2011) and *Blue Planet* (2017), explored in chapter 2 within a natural-history cinematic lineage that includes the pioneering, early British films by Martin Duncan, Percy Smith and Cherry Kearton; collaborative documentary and web-based projects, including *The Global Remake: Man with a Movie Camera* (Perry Bard, 2007–2014), *Mass Ornament* (Natalie Bookchin, 2009) and *In Praise of Nothing* (Boris Mitić, 2016), placed in chapter 3 within a genealogy that includes the world symphonies *A Sixth Part of the World* (*Shestaya chast mira*, Dziga Vertov, 1926) and *Melody of the World* (*Melodie der Welt*, Walter Ruttmann, 1929), as well as Charles Urban's early cinema catalogues and stereocard collections; global documentaries inventorying the human face, such as *Samsara* (Ron Fricke, 2011) and *Human* (Yann Arthus-Bertrand, 2016), discussed in chapter 5 in relation to nineteenth-century photographic galleries of humanity; network films such as *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006) and *The Human Surge* (*El auge del humano*, Eduardo Williams, 2016), examined in chapter 5 alongside D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) as a precursor of the genre; and end-of-the-world projects such as *The Last Pictures* (Trevor Paglen, 2012) and *Homo Sapiens* (Nikolaus Geyrhalter, 2016), whose archival impetus is explored in chapter 6 in relation to Kahn's Archives de la Planète.

A few things are perhaps already clear from my corpus. First, the book combines a variety of genres, modes and texts, ranging from the popular to the experimental. These were selected on the basis of the degree to which they engage in a fruitful aesthetic conversation with earlier global imaginaries via the specific philosophical categories and concepts organising each chapter. As a result, many of the selected contemporary works, whether we think of the authors or companies behind them, emerge from the West, including Canada, the UK, the US, Austria and France. Yet there

36 Paula Willoquet-Maricondi (ed.), 'From Literary to Cinematic Ecocritcism' in *Framing the World*, 1–22; 10.

are some exceptions, and in many cases, the global circuits of financing and distribution upon which some of these current works rely complicate a facile correlation between nationality and worldview. For example, the 'British' duo The Otolith Group consists of a British-Ghanaian (Kodwo Eshun) and a British-Indian (Anjalika Sagar) national. Alejandro González Iñárritu is a filmmaker from Mexico, although most of his films, including *Babel*, are now largely made with US money and for a global market. Eduardo Williams is from Argentina, but his films are dependent upon the European film festival circuit. And this is not to mention that many of the texts selected compile images filmed all over the world, often to instantiate global conceptions of authorship, examples including *The Global Remake* and *In Praise of Nothing*, respectively conceived by the Canadian artist Perry Bard and the Serbian filmmaker Boris Mitić.

Second, I am not interested in how the Earth has been pictured from space or deployed in the science fiction film, which would be the topic of a different book.[37] Although some of my contemporary case studies do occasionally rely on the image of the planet from afar enclosed in one single frame, most of them, past and present, activate a synecdochal mechanism whereby individual frames, shots and films are conceptually and structurally tied to a wider whole that is the idea of the whole world. In so doing, they resonate with what both André Bazin and Stanley Cavell have theorised as lens-based media's ability to reproduce 'an image of the world' that implies and implicates the rest of the world (see chapter 6).[38] As Cavell notes, cinema's worlding is different from that of painting insofar as 'a photograph is *of* the world': 'When a photograph is cropped, the rest of the world is cut out. The implied presence of the rest of the world, and its explicit rejection, are as essential in the experience of a photograph as what it explicitly presents'.[39] Something similar is at stake in Bazin's 'myth of total cinema', which, while recognising that a reproduction of the world is ultimately impossible due to technical encumbrances, nevertheless concedes that cinema's mythical goal is the recreation of the 'world in its own image'.[40]

37 See, in this regard, Adrian Ivakhiv, 'The Age of the World Motion Picture: Cosmic Visions in the Post-Earthrise Era' in Stanley D. Brunn (ed.) *The Changing World Religion Map: Status, Literature and Challenges* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 129–144.

38 André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* volume 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 13; Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 20.

39 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 24.

40 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, 21.

To be sure, neither Bazin nor Cavell espoused an all-seeing and alienating vision of the world. On the contrary, if their thinking is relevant here, this is because they highlight the material locatedness and limited perspective of images as they are produced in the world and reproduce specific portions of the world. As Ivakhiv argues, cinema is 'geomorphic': films 'produce a *segmentation* or *fragmentation* of the world in that we are shown disconnected bits of world – pieces, images or glimpses that are woven together into a Cubist-like assemblage'.[41] But whereas some projects contemplated in this book tend to mask this fragmentation in an attempt to construct a smooth and undifferentiated picture of the world – or an enframed 'world picture', to cite again Heidegger – others acknowledge the impossibility of such a project by highlighting instead the fissures, cracks and dividing lines in their necessarily incomplete – or 'cropped', to use Cavell's term – rendition of the planet.[42] For, indeed, there are as many differences between an early-cinema programme promising to 'put the world before you' and an 'archive of the planet' personally funded by a millionaire, as there are between BBC Earth series and experimental documentaries – differences that range from the representational and the aesthetic all the way to the discursive and the ideological. I will return to some of these questions in the last section of this introduction; now it is time to provide a justification for this book's historical periodisation and its promiscuous mixing of a variety of media texts, genres and forms.

Multiple Media Worlds

Most chapters in the book juxtapose visual and audiovisual artefacts produced in different historical periods. The methodological reasoning for this comparative approach is borne out of two fields of enquiry, developed over the last decades, which this book hopes to combine into a third intellectual stream with the guiding help of philosophical concepts. These fields broadly pertain to globalisation and media history studies, and they have emphasised

41 Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image*, 74, emphasis in original.

42 I am not the first to make a connection between Heidegger's and Cavell's conceptions of worlding. See Brian Price, 'Heidegger and Cinema' in Temenuga Trifonova (ed.) *European Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 108–121. However, whereas Price contends that the 'logic of film studies [...] has only ever been synechdocal [*sic*]' as their 'use of "world"' in 'theories of the indexicality of the photographic image' hinge on 'the insistent relation of part to whole' (109), this book instead emerges from the belief that film studies has not been synecdochal enough when it comes to matters of worlding.

continuities between the late nineteenth century and our own time, even if in relation to different phenomena and not necessarily in conversation with one another. One of the aims of this book is to forge such a conversation.

Regarding globalisation, a growing number of studies is concerned with debunking the perception that it is a contemporary phenomenon whose beginning coincides with the end of the Cold War and the dawn of the digital revolution. These studies, coming as they do from an array of disciplines, aim instead to demonstrate that many of the structures, epistemologies, organisations and experiences associated with globalisation largely defined as a 'a concept [that] refers both to the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' – in Roland Robertson's much-cited definition – finds a number of technological, socio-economic, geopolitical and cultural precedents starting in the second half of the nineteenth century.[43] As historian Jürgen Osterhammel summarises in his suitably monumental *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (2009), 'contemporary historians on the lookout for early traces of "globalization" are not the first to have discovered transnational, transcontinental, or transcultural elements in the nineteenth century, often described as the century of nationalism and the nation-state'.[44]

Thus, in their anthology *Nineteenth-Century Worlds: Global Formations Past and Present* (2008), Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich note the correspondences between what they 'call nineteenth-century "global formations" and the phenomenon of globalization today', a comparison of which, they propose, can 'illuminate some of the salient features, problematics, and arguable benefits of one the most significant early stages of globalization during the nineteenth century'.[45] Other accounts further show that seismic changes in international relations were cemented as the conjoined result of the rise of nation-states as sovereign political units, European imperialism, global industrialisation, economic integration, intercontinental migration, and transportation and communication networks – all justified and supported by the entwined, racist ideologies of 'progress' and 'civilisation'. As George Lawson and Barry Buzan contend: 'Not until the nineteenth century

43 Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1992), 8.

44 Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), xv.

45 Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich, 'Introduction: Global Formations and Recalcitrances' in Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich (eds.) *Nineteenth-Century Worlds: Global Formations Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 1–16; 1–2.

did the world become a global system in which core states could quickly and decisively project the new mode of power around the world', a system that was 'both intensely connected and deeply divided'.[46]

Variously referred to as 'the second industrial revolution', 'the first globalization', 'the fin de siècle' or the 'long turn of the century', the periodicity of this historical moment, as with any historical periodisation, is to some extent artificial and varies depending on the focus of the study.[47] Yet by and large studies of nineteenth-century globalisation often agree on the period 1880–1919 to account for the peak of the transformations outlined above, or in some cases, the longer timeframe 1850–1930 to highlight that these transformations did not simply appear or disappear out of nowhere. And all of these studies concur that the operational center of such transformations was Europe, and more specifically Britain and France. Osterhammel sums up: 'The history of the nineteenth century was made in and by Europe' and no country before 'had projected their power to the farthest corner of the earth and had such a powerful cultural impact on "the Others" as Britain and France did in the nineteenth century'.[48]

This meant that if you happened to be in Britain or in France, and especially their capitals London and Paris, you would have been exposed to an effusive cultural globalism that was both part and parcel of these countries' geopolitical, economic and cultural influence worldwide. This is one of the reasons why these two countries, and especially Britain, constitute the core of this book when it comes to its historical focus, which coincides moreover with the periodicity mentioned above. Whereas the bulk of the chapters, especially those focusing on cinema, explores films and related projects within the period 1880–1919 as a 'long turn of the century', in chapters that deal more extensively with other mediums, such as the panorama and photography (chapters 1 and 4), there was the need to go further back in time, sometimes as early as the 1850s, in order to properly account for the gradual development and consolidation of a planetary imaginary. Conversely, my analysis of a cinema of things (chapter 3) stretches the timeframe to the late 1920s so as to consider Walter Ruttmann's *Melody of the World* and

46 Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2–3.

47 On 'the second industrial revolution', see Miriam R. Levin et al., *Urban Modernity: Cultural Innovation in the Second Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2010); on the 'first globalisation', see Miguel Suárez Bosa (ed.), *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation c. 1850–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); on 'the fin de siècle' and the 'long turn of the century', see Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World,* 58.

48 Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, xx.

Dziga Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World*: the former as the last vestiges of an interwar globalism and the latter as the cinematic formulation of a utopian global socialism. This being not a history book, however, it claims no intervention in issues of periodisation. Rather, my aim is to show that the social, economic and political changes described above could not have gone unexpressed in cultural and discursive realms and that they accordingly found manifestation in a number of media artefacts that both mirrored and contributed to an increased perception of the world as a wider, and increasingly interconnected, totality.

In some ways this was an optimistic story. To cite Miriam R. Levin, 'the future [was] generally portrayed as the linear result of scientific and technical progress – safe, increasingly prosperous, congenial and controllable'.[49] And that future was global: georamas, world exhibitions, photographic catalogues, and later, film programmes all, in one way or another, held the promise of a more organised, compartmentalised and controlled world.[50] Yet such a quest for management and order was itself the symptom of wider anxieties relating to a world that threatened to spin out of control as its parameters were enlarged due to economic and expansive imperatives, especially in Victorian Britain. Confidence and anxiety thus were, as Paul Young has shown in his study of the Great Exhibition (1851) and globalisation, often the two sides of the same global coin: 'given that the world was so clearly changing for the Victorians, and given that the Victorians were so clearly changing the world, was it possible to get this changing world into perspective?'[51]

However, this book claims that globalisation as a concept is also insufficient in itself to grasp the contours of this changing world. For, as I explore in chapter 1, the nineteenth century equally witnessed a *geologisation* of the Earth that stretched its timeline into a nonhuman past, with a sense of earthwide expansion thus felt on both a spatial and temporal level. The wildly popular framework of natural history, discussed in chapter 2, similarly entailed a broadening of earthly horizons into nonhuman realms, whereas Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète, examined in chapter 6, was already informed by an acute sense of human-induced physical transformations on the planet thanks to its epistemological foundations in the discipline of

49 Miriam R. Levin, 'Dynamic Triad: City, Exposition, and Museum' in Levin et al. *Urban Modernity*, 1–12; 3.

50 On this quest to organise the world as an 'exhibit', see Timothy Mitchell, 'The World as Exhibition', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:2 (1989): 217–236.

51 Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 3.

'human geography'. It thus makes sense to attribute to this historical period the formation not only of a global but also of a 'planetary consciousness', as Joyce E. Chaplin has argued in her *Round about the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (2012):

> Global is social – it implies the social relations that extend over the globe. In contrast, planetary is physical, implying the physical planet itself. Far more studies have focused on the former than the latter. This is because human-to-human interactions have been historians' major focus. Only recently have human relations with the non-human parts of nature have been put into dialogue with those human relationships; only recently have scholars begun to reread historical documents to discover our past sense of our place within nature.[52]

For Chaplin, the planetary consciousness that resulted from around-the-world travels in the late nineteenth century finds an equivalent in our time, though the sense of 'confidence' which defined that consciousness then, she maintains, has now been replaced by 'doubt', as 'the environmental costs of planetary domination have begun to haunt us'.[53] This book follows in these footsteps both in its embrace of the planetary as propelled by the current ecological emergency and as an organising and comparative descriptor that can allow us to reread historical documents with a 'planetary' lens, in my case media and film artefacts.

As a matter of fact, the idea that our contemporary media culture is comparable to that emerging in the late nineteenth century has been advanced by some of the most eminent film theorists of our time. Already in 1993, Miriam Hansen postulated a correlation between what she calls 'early cinema' and 'late cinema' in terms of 'parallels between pre-classical and post-classical forms of spectatorship, between early modern and postmodern forms of distraction and diversity'.[54] For Tom Gunning, 'the two ends of the Twentieth Century hail each other like long lost twins', both being eras of 'technological acceleration and transformation of the environment', and

52 Joyce E. Chaplin, *Round about the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), xix. Before Chaplin, the term 'planetary consciousness' was coined by Mary Louise Pratt in relation to the European project of natural history, which I explore in chapter 2. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 15–36.

53 Chaplin, *Round about the Earth*, xxi.

54 Miriam Hansen, 'Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Permutations of the Public Sphere', *Screen* 34:3 (1993): 197–210; 200.

both testifying to a 'voraciously competitive media environment' within which cinema finds itself.[55] Thomas Elsaesser has likewise noted that digital cinema has become 'the explicit reference point in the present from which to seek out precedents and parallels across a hundred-year span', given the 'equally rapid changes in the overall mediascape' of both periods.[56]

Inspired by, or in tune with, these ideas, a number of comparative methodologies have emerged with the intent of exploring cinema's intermingling with other medial and artistic entities, including 'media archaeology', 'media genealogy', 'parallax historiography' and 'intermediality'.[57] Their many differences notwithstanding, these approaches are keen on forging anti-canonical, anti-evolutionary, anti-chronological and anti-teleological film and media histories, often drawing on Benjamin and/or Foucault for inspiration and following in the footsteps of the New Film History approach launched in the now landmark 1978 FIAF Brighton Conference.[58] But they have also raised suspicions concerning issues of methodological promiscuity by downplaying medium specificity and contextual markers.[59]

As far as this book is concerned, it shares with these approaches a commitment to parallelisms and even anachronisms that can rekindle our understanding of film and media history away from linear determinisms

55 Tom Gunning, 'Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century' in David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (eds.) *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2003), 39–60; 42, 51; Gunning, 'Moving Away from the Index', 35–36.

56 Thomas Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 41, 354.

57 On 'media archaeology', see Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2011); Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012). On 'intermediality', see Jeffrey Geiger and Karin Littau (eds.), *Cinematicity in Media History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Ágnes Pethő, 'Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies', *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* 2 (2010): 39–72. On 'parallax historiography', see Catherine Russell, 'Parallax Historiography: The Flâneuse as Cyberfeminist' in Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds.) *A Feminist Reader in Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 552–570; Paul Flaig and Katherine Groo (eds.), *New Silent Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016). On 'media genealogy', see Alexander Monea and Jeremy Packer, 'Media Genealogy and the Politics of Archaeology', *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016): 3141–3159.

58 For the importance of New Film History for media archaeology and variants, see Wanda Strauven, 'Media Archaeology: Where Film History, Media Art, and New Media (Can) Meet' in Julia Noordegraaf et al. (eds.) *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 59–79; 61–63.

59 See Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?*, 10; Thomas Elsaesser, 'Media Archaeology as Symptom', *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14:2 (2016): 181–215.

and neat evolutionisms. And it follows Elsaesser in his contention that methodological unruliness can be averted via a 'more restricted focus that puts cinema tactically at the center while extending the scope of the medium in new directions'.[60] But *Planetary Cinema* also proposes a methodological intervention via its recruitment of specific philosophical categories – sublimity, wonder, things, faciality, network and disappearance – as a way to open up coherent conceptual pathways through which one can chart the continuities and disjunctures between planetary visions old and new. Engaging with the thinking of Alexander von Humboldt, Siegfried Kracauer, Hannah Arendt, Bruno Latour, Alain Badiou, Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, among others, *Planetary Cinema* thus sits at the intersection of film/media history and theory/philosophy, and it claims, as a contribution to ecocinema, that we need this combined historical approach and expansive textual focus in order to understand the planetary in film and media.

At the same time, the book hopes to consolidate new sets of historical understanding on two main fronts. The first, as mentioned earlier, relates to its goal of challenging traditional historical genealogies that postulate the Apollo pictures of the Earth as the genesis for a planetary awareness (see also chapter 1). The second concerns the idea that 'the narrative of "modernity"', as Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski summarise, 'has provided one of the most useful discursive frames for making sense of the relationship between visual experience and cultural hegemony in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' through to 'current discussions of visual culture in the twenty-first century'.[61] This book starts from the premise that this narrative has not only been exhausted, but that modernity, to cite Buzan and Lawson, 'was a global process both in terms of its origins and outcome'.[62] I therefore take globality to be the ontological and epistemological precondition of modernity and not simply its backdrop, a figure-ground conceptual reversal which, I hope, can cast new light on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century media culture.

For, indeed, whereas Parikka is right to warn, via Elsaesser, that 'the multiple worlds of visual culture of the nineteenth century, with its "vaudeville, panoramas, dioramas, stereoscopic home entertainment, Hale's tours and

60 Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 21.

61 Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, 'Visual Culture's History: Twenty-First Century Interdisplinarity and Its Nineteenth-Century Objects' in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski (eds.) *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 3–14; 8.

62 Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation,* 7.

world fairs", [...] are a further good reminder of the dangers of homogenization', what is striking about these multiple worlds is that they often latched on to 'the world' as their discursive, conceptual and representational horizon.[63] In so doing, they both drew upon and contributed to globality as it was variously and differently formulated in a variety of domains and disciplines: geological, geographical, natural-historical, anthropological, cultural and technological. Today, planetary tropes and imagery are everywhere in our audiovisual landscape, no doubt as a response to an increasing awareness of the Earth's fragility in the context of an Anthropocene-induced uncertain future.

Although this book claims no intervention in Foucauldian studies, one way of understanding the pervasiveness of the global and the planetary in these two historical periods might be in terms of what Foucault conceptualises as historically situated discursive formations, which he termed 'epistemes'. Contra historiographic linearity, Foucault's archaeological method aims to uncover the breaks and ruptures between discourses as they manifest themselves at different moments in time. But as he hastens to add: 'To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another is not to say that a whole world of absolutely new objects, enunciations, concepts, and theoretical choices emerges fully armed and fully organized' and that others disappear completely in their wake. Rather, 'it is to say that a general transformation of relations has occurred, but that it does not necessarily alter all the elements', and in so doing, 'one can, on the basis of these new rules, describe and analyse phenomena of continuity, return, and repetition'.[64] For Elsaesser, a media history approach can only gain from this model, 'describing and reconnecting historical phenomena in a different conceptual space, either by positing distinct epistemes and discursive formations, or by a conjecture or a constellation that "makes new sense" explicitly from the point of view of the present'.[65]

Often likened to notions of progress, futurity and an unquenchable thirst to dominate the Earth's natural resources, the planetary of nineteenth-century discourses and figures may appear to be radically distinct from the planetary of our time, where uncertainty, doubt and anxiety about the future often prevail. This is to a large extent true. But as the following chapters will attest, there are also many 'phenomena of continuity, return,

63 Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?*, 10.

64 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 492.

65 Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 34.

and repetition' across these two historical periods: whether we look at embryonic and proto-ecological conceptualisations of disappearance and human-induced change on a global scale in the late nineteenth century, or whether we look at how some colonial tropes, techniques and tools of globality have survived to this date – hence the necessity to disentangle the imperial from the global. By tracking the similarities and ruptures across these two periods, *Planetary Cinema* takes the environmental crisis and its ushering forth of the planetary as an opportunity to make new sense of the past in order to understand our present: hopefully this may lead us to a better future.

Towards the Planetary

The challenge facing us today is that, while planetary thinking is of the utmost urgency, the discourses that could provide models for this endeavour are implicated in troubling histories and lineages. Globalism is justifiably maligned in its networking of the world so as to maximise the flows of capital. Predicated on a supposed universality of all human beings inhabiting this Earth, Western discourses of universalism have often operated either as a negative principle that measured itself against those who were not considered humans, such as women and nonwhite peoples, or as a hierarchic system according to which some humans – white and male – were deemed far more intelligent and worthier than others. In this context, as Naomi Schor remarked in 1995: 'The dismantling of the universal is widely considered one of the founding gestures of twentieth-century thought'.[66] As the idea of someone who is at home anywhere on the planet, cosmopolitanism has also not gone unchallenged, accused of being a shorthand for the historical experience of the European male traveller who could tour around the world by trailing on the colonial networks of his country of origin.[67] As a result, global figurations and epistemologies are often likened to an 'imperial imaginary', 'imperial eyes', an 'imperial visuality', or an 'Apollonian vision' that sees expressly with the aim of surveying, demarcating and appropriating the world.[68]

66 Naomi Schor, *Bad Objects: Essays Popular and Unpopular* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 3.

67 See Ursula K. Heise, *Imagining Extinction: the Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2016), 225.

68 I am referring here to expressions from Pratt *Imperial Eyes*, Cosgrove *Apollo's Eye* and Mirzoeff *The Right to Look*. On the connection between the global and an 'imperial imaginary',

The question, then, becomes: can we disentangle these discourses from Eurocentric premises and presuppositions while retaining their collective thrust? For some thinkers, the answer is yes. Seeing 'the rise of gene-oriented or genomic constructions of "race"' as a 'welcome cue to free ourselves from the bonds of all raciology', Paul Gilroy has proposed the concept of 'planetary humanism' as one that offers 'the basis for belonging to one another and acting in concert'.[69] New cosmopolitanisms, as Paula Amad has shown, have equally aimed to 'reform the term from its connotations of elite, enlightened universalism [...] all the while remaining critical of global capital's negative effects'.[70] Universalism itself has been repackaged as a 'negative universalism', to cite Dipesh Chakrabarty, in order to account for the fact that the unprecedented environmental transformation currently on course 'poses for us a question of a human collectivity, an us, pointing to a figure of the universal that escapes our capacity to experience the world. It is more like a universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe. It calls for a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity'.[71]

But suspicions remain. Nicholas Mirzoeff, for example, has replied to Chakrabarty by stressing that 'while climate change certainly affects the entire planet, its impact is very different in different places, consistent with the usual indicators of wealth', which begs the question of 'how such universal history might be written'.[72] Mirzoeff's rebuke in turn draws on Denise Ferreira da Silva's important *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), which defines raciality and globality as mutually constitutive and segregational onto-epistemological categories (see chapter 4). For Ferreira da Silva, Gilroy's 'planetary humanism' is 'the best example of the perverse effects' of a desire 'to recuperate the racial subaltern into an unbounded humanity'.[73]

There is no denying that racism – and for that matter the exclusion and discrimination of all minority groups – is very much alive and well in the world. But to simply reject planetary ontologies and epistemologies is, for me, not the solution, not only because it disregards the fact that these forms are

see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), 100–136.

69 Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000), 15.

70 Paula Amad, 'Experimental Cosmopolitanism: The Limits of Autour du Monde-ism in the Kahn Archive' in Trond Erik Bjorli and Kjetil Ansgar Jakobsen (eds.) *Cosmpolitics of the Camera: Albert Kahn's Archives of the Planet* (Bristol, UK, and Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2020), 133–154; 133.

71 Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Climate of History', *Critical Inquiry* 35:2 (2009): 197–222; 222.

72 Mirzoeff, 'It's Not the Anthropocene', 127.

73 Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 8.

not univocal or immutable but also because it denies the pressing urgency and uniqueness of our particular moment, which immediately calls for collective solutions on the global scale. As a number of thinkers have also alerted us, including the philosopher Alain Badiou in his *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (2003), aversion to the universal has resulted in extreme forms of identitarianism that subscribe to the logic of the market and reproduce a neoliberal ideology that trumps the individual over the collective.[74] To cite Amitav Ghosh, in his inspiring *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016): 'The political is no longer about the commonweal or the "body politic" and the making of collective decisions', and yet climate change is an 'issue that concerns our collective survival'.[75]

To be clear: I am not proposing one should forget the ways in which universalisms and globalisms have acted in concert with exclusionary forces of power that persist to this day, nor am I saying that the environmental crisis affects everyone in equal measure. I therefore concur with Mirzoeff that 'while climate change certainly affects the entire planet, its impact is very different in different places'.[76] My problem with this line of argument is that the second part of this sentence is often seen as the justification to disregard the first part, as if they were mutually exclusive and as if we could afford to not think about the planet as a whole because some places are the first to bear the brunt of environmental disasters. As Eva-Lynn Jagoe rightly notes, the present ecological crisis, with its hurricanes and wildfires, 'spreads and subsumes differences in its urgency', hence the need 'to think collectively across racialized, gendered, and embodied identities'.[77] In other words, to acknowledge and come to terms with all the injustices that have been done in the name of the global and the universal still leaves us with a massive problem: one that is the size of the whole world.

At this point the reader may be asking himself or herself how a book that attempts to juxtapose nineteenth-century global imaginaries with contemporary

74 Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 10–11. See also Eva Lynn-Jagoe, 'Jumping the Break: Wildfire and the Logic of Separation', *Discourse* 40:2 (2018): 231–251; 235, 237. Lynn-Jagoes's article, which reflects on the 2017 Banff Research in Culture (BRiC) she co-organised, generated a response from its participants. See Rosa Aiello et al., 'Staying with the Breaks: Dispropriating the Universal: A Response to Eva-Lynn Jagoe', *Discourse* 41:1 (Winter 2019): 167–175. Lynn-Jagoe's response to this response was published in the same issue of *Discourse*, titled 'Broken? Notes toward 2067', 176–180.

75 Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 125–127.

76 Mirzoeff, 'It's Not the Anthropocene', 127.

77 Lynn-Jagoe, 'Jumping the Break', 237, 247.

ones can contribute to this debate. After all, are not many of these imaginaries responsible for the suspicion attached to global figures and ideas? As Cosgrove argues, current 'one-world' and 'whole-earth' discourses – the former related to the idea of globalisation, the latter to the global environmental crisis – 'inherit the most persistent and contradictory feature of the Western global imagination, its sense of global mission', and must 'therefore be treated with scepticism in the light of the genealogy of Apollonian vision'.[78] I do not deny this problematic genealogy: in fact, many chapters in this book prove that universalism and globality were corrupted in their supposedly egalitarian premises (chapters 4 and 5). My point is that by confronting earlier global imaginaries and constructions we can be better equipped to explore their legacies as they persist in our time. For, indeed, as Bruno Latour observes in his *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climactic Regime* (2018), while Europe 'can no longer claim to dictate the world order', it 'can offer an example of what it means to rediscover inhabitable ground'.[79] He goes on:

> After all, it is indeed Europe that claims to have invented the Globe, in the sense of space captured by the instruments of cartography. A system of coordinates so powerful – too powerful – that it makes it possible to record, preserve, and store the multiplicity of life forms. This is the first representation of a common world: simplified, of course, but common; ethnocentric, of course, but common; objectivizing, of course, but common.[80]

As this book argues, this global invention equally necessitated other instruments for its construction and delineation: media artefacts that both imaged and imagined, produced and reproduced the world. However contentious in their simplified, ethnocentric and objectifying dimensions, these artefacts may offer useful resources, or at the very least they ought to be thoroughly assessed as we confront the urgent need to build a common world.

The worlding examined in this book is therefore not one evenly distributed across the globe, but one that largely arises and survives in the West, with all the implications in terms of positionality and power relations that this location entails. There is no doubt that we need, now more than ever, different ways of conceptualising a shared planet, and Amerindian,

78 Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, 265–266.

79 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climactic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 101.

80 Ibid.

diasporic and non-Western cultures and communities can certainly help us with the task of imagining different worlds, or at least imagining this world differently.[81] But this would be a different study. For no book, not even, or perhaps especially, a book about the world, could claim to include worldviews from all parts of the world. Whereas it is my hope that the present work will spark different conversations and take media world-making in new directions, *Planetary Cinema* is primarily devoted to exploring the formation of a Western planetary consciousness in the second half of the nineteenth century and its significance and repercussions for our contemporary moment.

However, this is not to say that the texts and forms discussed in the following pages form a monolithic bloc. On the one hand, as I hope to show, nineteenth-century global visions and projects can be imperial, but not unilaterally. Here, I follow in the dialectical footsteps of Bruce Robbins, Jay Winter, Janine Marchessault, Tanya Agathocleous and Brooke Belisle, all of whom have recognised, in relation to different techniques and projects, that utopian energies can underpin conceptions of globality and sometimes uneasily co-exist with expansionist ideologies.[82] As Robbins summarises, any perspective from any angle is subject to contradictions and inconsistencies, meaning that in and of itself 'the global scale is not ethically and politically distinct from other, smaller scales'.[83] As I explore in chapter 1, Alexander von Humboldt's breathtaking holistic worldview, forged in the mid-nineteenth century, is remarkably useful for many of the planetary issues that afflict us now and cannot be reduced to an overdetermined imperial rhetoric. Marx's global utopianism, which was formulated as a response to the worldwide encroachment of Western capitalism, is similarly an essential framework to consider when exploring Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World* and his dreams of a world cinema – one that has been given a new lease of life by Perry Bard's *The Global Remake*, as I discuss in chapter 3. As outlined in the same chapter,

81 On the contribution of Amerindian cultures to conceptions of worlding (and the end of the world), see Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, 61–78. See also Salma Monani and Joni Adamson (eds.) *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: From Earth to Cosmos* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Davi Kopenawa Yanomami and Bruce Albert, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, trans. Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

82 Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*; Bruce Richards, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 7; Marchessault, *Ecstatic Worlds*; Belisle, 'Whole World Within Reach', 130; Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the 20th Century* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2006).

83 Robbins, *Feeling Global*, 5.

a thinker such as Kracauer, not unlike Benjamin, championed the need to reflect on the affects and effects of global media culture through a direct confrontation with, rather than a dismissal of, their sensory-perceptual reorganisation of the world.

On the other hand, many recent audiovisual works examined in the following chapters eschew the traps of what Martin Roberts defines as 'coffee-table globalism' by engaging critically with the treacherous proclivities of the global.[84] Natalie Bookchin's multichannel *Mass Ornament* (chapter 3), for example, is not only made up of amateur videos she sources from the Internet but is itself an astute reflection on a world of proliferating images. The oeuvre of the Austrian filmmaker Nikolaus Geyrhalter is also replete with attempts to document the exclusionary forces of globalisation and the destruction of the Earth, as exemplified by his *Earth* (chapter 1) and *Homo Sapiens* (chapter 6). Similarly, The Otolith Group's *Medium Earth* (chapter 1) and Eduardo Williams's *The Human Surge* (chapter 5) ponder over earthly forces that both underpin and exceed humanity in the context of an unequal Anthropocene and an unequal globalisation. Taken together, these works affirm the existence of an interconnected world that includes the human and the nonhuman, while never succumbing to a glossy, homogenising globalism. They likewise eschew myopic localism and point to the necessity of a visualisation of the planet as a singular whole that necessitates attention and care for the future.

This book is therefore both critical and affirmative. Without overlooking the problematic histories of world visions, it also includes works and projects that advance generative and transformative world thinking. *Planetary Cinema*'s main goal is to examine, historicise and theorise the role of cinema and related media in both shaping and responding to a planetary consciousness. It emerges from the belief that we must confront figures and figurations of the planetary in all their complexities and intricacies so that we can better understand our world in order to change it.

The Chapters

The undergirding concept of chapter 1, 'Sublime Earth', is the sublime, which is explored with recourse to Alexander von Humboldt's planetary philosophy as outlined in his magnum opus *Cosmos: Sketch of a Physical Description*

84 Martin Roberts, '*Baraka*: World Cinema and the Global Culture Industry', *Cinema Journal* 37:3 (1998): 62–82; 66.

of the Earth (1845–1862). While tracing the connections between a sublime aesthetics and the panorama, the chapter pays particular attention to its sister medium, the georama, including a consideration of its ambivalences in the context of imperialism, globalisation and an awakened geological consciousness in the second part of the nineteenth century. These considerations provide the conceptual substratum for the chapter's contemporary focus, which first turns to the IMAX Earth films *Blue Planet* (1990) and *A Beautiful Planet* (2016) as panoramic visions that conflate the natural and the technological sublimes into a distanced and distancing view of the planet. The last two sections of the chapter look at two films that counter such a view through a visualising of the Earth as ground and soil: whereas *Medium Earth* (2013) reinstitutes the sublime geological stirrings of the Earth's strata through a focus on the cracks and fissures on the planetary surface, the documentary *Earth* (2019) turns its camera to extractive activities carving out holes and vaults in the inner structure of our planet.

Wonder is the organising philosophical idea connecting two different eras in chapter 2, 'The Unseen World Across the World'. The concept is first explored in relation to natural-history visual culture in Victorian Britain and then two early-cinema strands that revitalised that culture: the popular science genre, as seen in the microscopic and time-lapse visualisations of organic phenomena masterminded by Martin Duncan and Percy Smith; and the global expedition genre, as seen in Cherry Kearton's quest to capture unperturbed wildlife across the world. I argue that these first forays into natural history filmmaking are crucially relevant for an understanding of current BBC Earth series, such as *Frozen Planet* (2011) and *Blue Planet* (2017). These series enact a technological rekindling of a never-before-seen aesthetic that paradoxically necessitates the idea that some things may never be seen again due to the speed at which the environmental crisis advances. I suggest that this paradox can be understood as a struggle on these series' part to keep their foundations intact within a natural history paradigm in the age of the Anthropocene, according to which a distinction between human and natural histories is no longer tenable.

Cinema's capacious ability to record and catalogue anything and everything is the focus of chapter 3, 'The Universal Equality of Things'. Adopting Kracauer's reflections on photography and cinema's rapport with 'things' as a methodological guide, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first looks at around-the-world stereocard boxes, as well as the early-cinema catalogues of UK-based entrepreneur Charles Urban, as foundational and rudimentary efforts to inventory the staggering wealth of subjects and objects captured by photography and cinema. The second section turns to

what I term the 'world symphony' genre in a reference to the city symphony film, looking specifically at Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926) and Ruttmann's *Melody of the World* (1929) as comparable montage efforts to rearrange the catalogue into a more tightly integrated whole. The last section looks at contemporary web-based and -sourced projects dealing with the avalanche of images flooding the Internet, including Perry Bard's *The Global Remake: The Man with a Movie Camera* (2007–2014), Natalie Bookchin's *Mass Ornament* (2009), and the YouTube documentary *Life in a Day* (2011). Despite their divergences, these projects are all concerned with assuaging the loss of meaning identified with the contingent; and in this context, I conclude, the parodic global symphony *In Praise of Nothing* (2017) gains in significance due to its stated if ultimately unsuccessful attempt to embrace the no-thingness of the world.

Chapter 4, 'The Face of the World', explores the trope of faciality in relation to extinction discourse. The chapter first examines the advent of photography and the way it was recruited to the typological project of classifying the faces of humanity according to nineteenth-century biological theories of race. I show how the head-on facial portraiture, ranging from carte de visite collections through to anthropometric photography, lent visual concreteness to the idea that supposedly inferior races were to vanish thanks to their presumed inability to catch up with 'civilisation' and 'progress'. I then examine the longevity of this trope by looking at two recent documentaries, *Samsara* (2011) and *Human* (2015), that give a new lease of life to the facing face as the global signifier of a soon-to-be perishing human life. Although both films try to distance themselves from evolutionary human hierarchies, their programmatic adherence to the codes of nineteenth-century still portraiture, I suggest, reveals the persistence of colonial modes of looking in contemporary galleries of humanity.

In chapter 5, 'A Networked Humanity', the discourse of film as universal language is investigated in relation to the network narrative. I contend that D. W. Griffith's infamous quest to transmute such a discourse into a quadripartite textual structure in *Intolerance* (1916) constitutes an illustrious precursor of the global network narrative genre. This is not only because of its world-historical mixing of four autonomous stories but also because of its contemporary narrative, in which the networks of modernity – roads, railways and telephone signals – prove crucial for the film's happy ending. This analysis is substantiated by my reading of Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006), a film that bears remarkable resemblance to *Intolerance* in its unashamed belief in the idea of cinema as a universal language – one that is correspondingly supported by a multinarrative textual design and

visualised through a focus on corporeal suffering as the lingua franca of a helpless humanity. The chapter closes with a consideration of Eduardo Williams's small-budget, roaming *The Human Surge* (2016), a film in which totalising ideas of humanity and globality are also mapped onto a networked narrative configuration. Here, however, miserabilism plays no part and digital online networks are not only debunked in terms of their universal pretences but they are also relativised in a wider system of nonhuman networks that materially constitute the Earth itself.

How lens-based media such as photography and film have confronted the task of recording disappearance, often via ruinous imagery, is the subject of the last chapter, 'A Disappearing Planet'. I first explore Albert Kahn's colossal Archives de la Planète (1909–1931), a multimedia project whose raison-d'être was the capturing of disappearing realities owing to a sweeping global modernisation. Kahn's Archive is the most eloquent example of the historical value accorded to indexical images as they promise the preservation of lives and lifeworlds for the future. Yet, as I also show, disappearance appears in another, equally significant guise in the Archives de la Planète, which contains not only one of the most exhaustive collections of warfare destruction on French soil but also films of natural calamities, thus cementing a conception of planetary time as both irreversible variability and unpredictable rupture. These considerations provide the backdrop for my analysis of contemporary works interested in archiving the planet for a nonhuman future. Looking in particular at Geyrhalter's hybrid fiction-documentary *Homo Sapiens* (2016) and Trevor Paglen's *The Last Pictures* (2012) project, I explore their attachment to the indexical image as the radicalisation of a world-archiving enterprise, sometimes as a way to sidestep the inexorable force of terrestrial time.

The films, projects and artefacts explored in this book testify to the uses and abuses to which cinema and related media have been put as they bring into view the lands, peoples, nonhuman animals and entities that make up this world. Often revelatory, sometimes shameful, these planetary visions remind us that there is beauty and horror in this world, but ultimately that we still have a world – and that it is our only world.