JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS & CULTURE
2023, VOL. 15, 2196808
https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2023.2196808

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

# Stray aesthetic in the cinema of Andrea Arnold

Katarzyna Paszkiewicz

University of the Balearic Islands, Palma, Spain

**ABSTRACT**

This paper seeks to contribute to the scholarly examination of the nonhuman in the cinema of Andrea Arnold by reading her work through the figure of the "stray", proposed by Julia Kristeva and developed by Barbara Creed in her exploration of "stray ethics" in the Anthropocene. Through a close analysis of Arnold's three films, *Dog* (2001), *Wasp* (2003) and *Fish Tank* (2009), I argue that Arnold's sensory-driven cinema transcends the focus on the human body and its phenomenological rhythms through which it is commonly read by offering instances of what I dub non-anthropocentric "stray visuality", realised through her treatment of the environment (both "built" and "natural") and the nonhuman beings that inhabit it. I assert that Arnold's filmmaking confounds these overlapping binary oppositions in complex ways that are deeply implicated in current philosophical debates about the ecological.

**ARTICLE HISTORY**
Received 10 April 2022
Accepted 27 March 2023

**KEYWORDS**
stray visuality; ecology; aesthetics; Andrea Arnold; animals; non-anthropocentric cinema

The cinema of Andrea Arnold is driven by the dramas of the everyday and features a consistently tactile and kinaesthetic focus on (mostly female) bodies filmed in landscapes. Critics and scholars have described her films as "raw" (Bolton 2016, 82), "corporeal" (Horeck 2011, 171), "sensation-based" (Jacobs 2016, 163), as well as "visceral" and "immersive" (Forrest 2020, 90), often to argue that they "do not function as overt 'social problem' movies" (Horeck 2011, 171), with some claiming that films like *Fish Tank* display a depoliticised understanding of class and are "escapist" in their celebration of individual over collective experience (Nwonka 2014). For others, the sensuous qualities of her films are precisely the source of their "striking political reach" (Jacobs 2016, 163).

Arnold's sensory-driven cinema, fascinated by the actions, desires and experiences of female protagonists, does not adopt an exclusively anthropocentric perspective. That is, Arnold's films are uniquely attuned to the questions of ecology and the nonhuman. As Amy Raphael states, the filmmaker "is always happy to lean heavily on nature as a symbol of innermost and often unarticulated feelings" (2011, 35). For Michael Lawrence (2016), however, Arnold's treatment of landscape goes far beyond the symbolic. Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* illustrates, according to Lawrence, posthumanist "ecological attentiveness",[1] as "in its expansive interest in flora and fauna, [the film] exceeds the perspectives of its human protagonists" (2016, 178). Also commenting on *Wuthering Heights*, Sue Thornham examines Arnold's imaginings of landscape through Laura Marks's (2000) theory of the haptic, showing how the filmmaker's focus on visceral details and the tactile nature of cinematic looking can be read as a sustained critique of "a process of Othering that operates through the distanced gaze at a feminised space" (2016, 226).

In this article, I seek to contribute to the burgeoning scholarly examination of the nonhuman in the cinema of Andrea Arnold by reading her films through the concept of the "stray", proposed by Julia Kristeva and developed by Barbara Creed in her exploration of a state of being that both human and nonhuman beings might share: the stray are those "who have drifted from their normal path, separated themselves from their kin, or been banished, rejected or abjected" (2017, 7-8). Creed observes how capacious the term can become when we look at its rich etymology: "from Old French *estraier*, from Vulgar Latin *estragāre* (unattested), from Latin *extrā-* outside + *vagārī* to roam" (2017, 8). The word can refer to a domestic animal, most commonly a cat or a dog, that has strayed away from its place of keeping, or to a lost or homeless person, for example a child (as in the expression "waifs and strays"). It is also employed to denote those who are "abandoned" by their family, society and nation (2017, 10), or those who wander away, as from a given area or from a "correct" path. In keeping with Kristeva's concept of abjection, the stray can be thought of as uncanny, liminal and borderless, and as such, it is closely related to animality: "The abject confronts us [. . .] with those fragile states where man

**CONTACT** Katarzyna Paszkiewicz katarzyna.paszkiewicz@uib.es University of the Balearic Islands, Palma, Spain

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

strays on the territories of *animal*" (Kristeva 1982, 12).[2] Straying presupposes an act of separation: "to stray is essential to the definition of what does not stray, what is at home in the world, steady and fixed. [...] The stray is the 'other' of the symbolic order" (Creed 2017, 8). Yet, crucially, for Creed "straying [...] can potentially unite human and animal, particularly woman and animal, living at the fringes of society" (Creed 2017, 9).[3] Reaching to examples from philosophy, literature and art, Creed (2017, 101) argues for a "stray ethics" in the Anthropocene, prompted by a new aesthetic that would unsettle anthropocentric hierarchies and ask us to see the multispecies world as thoroughly interconnected.

The figure[4] of the stray, I contend, offers a particularly fruitful lens through which to consider Arnold's cinema, which is populated with a variety of strays: impoverished, unwanted or uncared-for humans, as well as neglected companion species that are similarly seen as trespassers in "civilised" spaces.[5] Arnold's aesthetic is profoundly stray not only because her films are *about* human and nonhuman strays, but also because they are predicated upon a consistent formal and stylistic engagement with stray-ness. In particular, I argue that, while deeply invested in the human body, Arnold's sensuous cinema is characterised by a non-anthropocentric "stray visuality" realised through her treatment of environments (both "built" and "natural") inhabited by human and nonhuman beings. Arnold's filmmaking confounds these overlapping binary oppositions in complex ways, thereby resonating with the liminality implied in the concept of the stray. On the one hand, her straying camera unsettles the hierarchical human-animal divide by focusing on the shared states of marginalization, and in the process, it potentially gives rise to cross-species recognition, which according to Creed lays the foundation of stray ethics. Concurrently, Arnold's lingering preoccupation with "natural" landscapes—which has been dealt with by scholars applying the notion of the haptic—subtly questions the nature/culture divide, envisaging what Donna Haraway terms *natureculture* to insist on their inseparability in ecological relationships (Haraway 2003, 20). When following female protagonists traversing the landscape, the camera tends to stray away from them or to merge them with the environment through sonorous or visual textures. In doing so, it foregrounds the ambiguity inherent in fragile boundaries that separate us from the nonhuman, whether animals, plants, landscapes or the "vibrant matter" of things (Bennett 2010).

Arnold's interest in the nonhuman can be traced to several films, in the midst of which *Red Road* and *Wuthering Heights* have attracted the most scholarly attention to date. However, in addressing Arnold's stray aesthetic, this article focuses on the two short films *Dog* (2001) and *Wasp* (2003) as well as her second feature film *Fish Tank* (2009)—all of which deal with contemporary women living in estates—to explore the connection elaborated by Kristeva between straying, woman and the animal world (Creed 2017, 8). Selected for the Cannes Film Festival and shot on London's Thamesmead estate, *Dog* tells the story of an adolescent girl named Leah (Joanne Hill) and her tense encounters with her boyfriend, John (Freddie Cunliffe). The latter violently kills a stray dog (Fidget) after the creature eats his supply of drugs. The Oscar-winning *Wasp*, set in Arnold's hometown of Dartford, depicts Zoë (Natalie Press), a struggling young single mother who leaves her four children in the parking of a pub to revive a relationship with her old friend, Dave (Danny Dyer). *Fish Tank*, which was awarded the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and a BAFTA in the category of Outstanding British Film, was shot in housing estates in Essex. It centres on Mia (Katie Jarvis), a 15-year-old who dreams of becoming a professional dancer, and her complicated relationship with her mother's new lover, Conor (Michael Fassbender). With their focus on dilapidated tower blocks—a recognisably social realist setting—the films foreground everyday life in council estates, and more specifically, women's struggles for survival in impoverished urban environments (see, for example, Bolton 2016). Most importantly, all three films complicate the overlapping of human and nonhuman worlds, and they are profoundly interconnected in the way they offer glimpses of coexisting lives.[6] Arnold's poetic envisioning of the "ecologies of the estate", as David Forrest (2020) puts it, extends beyond the tower blocks to encompass so-called "edgelands", a term coined by Marion Shoard, who defines it as an "apparently unplanned, certainly uncelebrated and largely incomprehensible territory where town and country meet" (Shoard 2002, 118).[7] The focus on these liminal spaces of precarity between settlements contributes to Arnold's stray aesthetic and it further redraws the boundary line of the nature/culture binary.

While the films studied here are clearly concerned with the desires of the young female protagonists—such as Leah's attachment to her violent boyfriend, Zoë's hope to reconnect with Dave, Mia's desire to succeed as a dancer and establish a durable intimacy with Conor—they also display what Laura McMahon identifies in her discussion of the cinema of Claire Denis as an "ecological impulse" (2014b). That is, by momentarily decentring an exclusively human perspective, the films evoke "a democratic attentiveness to different realms of being" (McMahon 2014b). The word "impulse" is particularly relevant to Arnold's work, which is often described by scholars in terms of the visceral drives, pulses and tendencies existing

between humans. Yet, I wish to examine how these three films transcend the focus on the human body and its phenomenological rhythms through which they are commonly read[8] and imagine the broader meaning of “the fragility of things” (Connolly 2013). Therefore, although on first inspection Arnold’s films do not appear to radically decentre the human, they do succeed at reorganising “our modes of attentiveness” (Lawrence 2016, 185): they resist positioning the nonhuman as *mere* object of looking and knowledge, or simply as metaphors for the feelings of human characters.

I contextualise my argument within the recent ecological turn in film studies and in the humanities more broadly. Rethinking human entanglements with the nonhuman has been fundamental in questioning human exceptionalism and formulating a new relational ontology, as well as postanthropocentric multispecies ethics and politics. This ethico-political aim, shared by several posthumanisms, critical animal studies and new materialisms, is intertwined with the reconsideration of the concept of “nature”, which—as Stacy Alaimo reminds us—should always be approached with caution, given that “it has long been enlisted to support racism, sexism, colonialism, homophobia, and essentialisms” (Alaimo 2016, 11). In his oft-quoted *Ecology without Nature*, Timothy Morton (2009) proposes that, in order to adopt a truly ecological perspective, we need to abandon the concept of “nature” entirely. Several other thinkers have argued for new understandings of the relationship between humans, nonhuman animals and environments by foregrounding the “messiness” of complex materialities (see, for instance, Bennett 2010; Braidotti 2013; Haraway 2016, among others).

In line with ecological thinking in philosophy and related disciplines, in the last decade film studies has shown an increased interest in cinema understood as a realm that can cultivate “the arts of noticing” (Tsing 2015) by attending to the worlds beyond the anthropocentric. This interest has resulted in theorisations of different forms of ecocinema that defy dominant watching habits (Willoquet-Maricondi 2010), as well as in conceptualisations of cinema’s “corporeal zoomorphic quality”, which is enabled by its nonhierarchical mode of looking and its inherent capacity to transform all living beings, including humans, into creatures (Pick 2011, 106). In contrast to the “pro-conservation” or “pro-sustainability” perspective of “environmentalist film”, which “affirms, rather than challenges, the culture’s fundamental anthropocentric ethos” (Willoquet-Maricondi 2010, 47), ecocinema refers to a wider range of approaches that shift our perception to question the entrenched dichotomies that have kept us apart from the “environment”.[9] Jane Bennett’s “vital materialist theory of democracy” (Bennett 2010, 108), as part of her larger project of undoing “the onto-theological binaries of life/matter, human/animal, will/determination, and organic/inorganic” (Bennett 2010, ix-x), has been of particular relevance for film scholars, who have become increasingly concerned with exploring how cinema can illuminate the interconnections across animals, plants and things in nonhierarchical ways (see, for instance, McMahon 2014b, as well as Lawrence 2016 specifically in the context of Arnold’s cinema). As Bennett highlights, “such a newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers will not solve the problem of human exploitation or oppression, but it can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relationships” (Bennett 2010, 13). Anat Pick’s notion of “creaturely poetics” provides theoretical tools for thinking about films as “a powerful antidote to anthropocentrism”, capable of redirecting our attention towards what has traditionally been obscured by “Cartesian abstractionism” (Pick 2011, 6).[10] In unpacking these issues, Pick connects the idea of “creatureliness” with the concepts of temporality, materiality and the condition of radical exposure to death that we share with other animals.[11] While Pick’s treatment of the animal remains in part within the domain of Agamben’s “bare life” (Agamben 1998),[12] Laura McMahon raises questions concerning cinema’s potential to align viewers with nonhuman perceptual worlds: the sentient and agential lifeworlds that “co-exist with, and extend beyond, the human” (McMahon 2019, 89). Her attention to the various symbolic and metaphorical modes mobilised by representations of animals on screen, as well as the multiple power relations, the recognition of which she argues protects against “the idealisation of a ‘prediscursive’ animal” (McMahon 2019, 19), is particularly important for my argument and I return to it in due course.

As mentioned earlier, Arnold’s filmmaking has often been read through phenomenological realist film theories and the concept of the haptic.[13] Certainly, Vivian Sobchack’s discussion of “modes of embodied existence” (Sobchack 1992, 5), Laura Marks’s (2000) reflections on the tactile relationship between the viewer and the image, and Jennifer Barker’s (2009) extension of the haptic to encompass the musculature and the viscera, are particularly apt for thinking about Arnold’s sensuous aesthetic, which enables an embodied mode of spectatorship and a “phenomenological sharing of ‘lived time’” (McMahon 2019, 100). This focalization on the affective dimension of film viewing redresses the ocularcentric paradigm in the accounts of the cinematic experience, advocating instead for a somatic, embodied and multisensory perception of films. By stressing the “powers of relation and affection, whether

these powers are referred to phenomenological ideas on reciprocity/reversibility between subject and object, or whether they are derived from the intense connectivity among bodies that characterizes a Spinozist/Deleuzian affective body" (Río 2008, 116), these approaches offer valuable tools for reflecting on the nonhuman in cinema. For instance, they provide means of challenging the objectification of the environment and its nonhuman inhabitants, which have often been relegated to a position of "to-be-looked-at-ness" similar to that of the female body in classical Hollywood cinema, as discussed by Laura Mulvey (1975). As I show, Arnold's stray visuality produces a visceral, embodied viewing experience, opening us to a series of engagements with the human and nonhuman bodies on screen. Her cinematic techniques, which tend to merge the protagonist with animals, plants and landscapes, open up space to reconsider Creed's concept of the stray in terms of a phenomenology of film viewing, as they make us, viewers, stray into the nonhuman—if only to remind us that we *are* already ecological, that is, already enmeshed in the environment.[14] While my own reading is indebted to phenomenological and haptic approaches to Arnold's cinema, I wish to extend this analytical framework to address questions of power and domination in the context of the multiple material-semiotic discourses at play in Arnold's work. This decision is influenced, in part, by the conviction that the consideration of sensory perception should be complemented with a reflection on different degrees of vulnerability, responsibility and risk within which different bodies are situated. The concept of the stray results particularly useful in keeping these power dynamics in view, while simultaneously bringing to light the non-anthropocentric dimension of Arnold's films. As this article will make evident, Arnold's stray aesthetic is deeply implicated in the current philosophical debates about the ecological: the human protagonists' status as liminal strays seems to foster their intensified affinity with nonhuman animals, as proposed by critical animal studies; Arnold's straying camera movement can be read through Bennett's (2010) call for the democratisation of attention, which is redirected towards the materiality of landscape; the latter is framed as a liminal, uncanny territory, marked by the experience of loss and negativity, raising several questions that are in line with "dark ecology" (Morton 2010, 16).[15]

In what follows, I consider how Arnold's films employ the figure of the stray to blur the hierarchical distinctions structuring the human/animal relationship while underscoring the ways in which different beings, both human and nonhuman, are always differentially exposed to death. Even though animals in Arnold's work are metaphorically associated with the entrapment of young women living in council estates, their tangible, material presences intimate larger questions of ontological precariousness, vulnerability and exposure, as well as what Creed (2018) calls "entangled looking".[16] I subsequently progress to an analysis of representations of "nature", and demonstrate how Arnold complicates the dichotomies underpinning anthropocentric discourse through the extensive use of edgelands, drawing attention to the liminal, leftover spaces traversed by human and nonhuman strays. Although the camera appears consistently tethered to protagonists' bodies as they traverse the diegetic space of the estate and surrounding edgelands, generating, as Amber Jacobs (2016) observes, an ethics of being-with, it also "stretches its sensory regimes beyond the human" (McMahon 2014b) illustrating how cinema can "perform disanthropocentrically" (Alaimo 2016, 6). It is primarily due to Arnold's stray visuality, consisting of changes in depth of focus, juxtaposition of long-shots and close-ups, haptic attention to textures and, crucially, highly mobile camera movements which stray away from the human subject, that her films display a non-anthropocentric impulse. Arnold's sensuous cinema implicates the viewer phenomenologically in the "straying" process (reminding us, as Kristeva seems to suggest, that we are all potentially stray in the sense that we straddle borders between humanity and animality), which is particularly at stake in the Anthropocene, a time when all species are at risk of losing a home or habitat. As Claire Colebrook puts it, "literally, the concept of the Anthropocene is that of an irrevocable and inhuman humanity: man is that animal who has detached himself from putative ecological animality and lived in such a way that his life is destructive of his milieu" (Colebrook 2012, 207). Arnold's stray aesthetic asks us not only to recognise our own fluid, liminal state, but also to pay attention to the lives of the marginalised, those who have already lost "a place where living things can settle and flourish" (Creed 2017, 167).

## The stray: radical exposure, vulnerability and precariousness

Arnold's council estate films draw on the British realist cinema trope of claustrophobic domestic spaces that emphasise social confinement. The filmmaker combines this trope with open landscapes and visual motifs that symbolise the struggle of working-class female protagonists to escape restrictive societal expectations. The camera follows them as they wander across the liminal spaces of their estates, but their movement is divorced from "the luxury of meandering drift or time luxuriated usually associated with modernist *flânerie* and its senses of drift" (Gorfinkel 2016, 130).[17] Their walking-straying, emphasised by

the straying camera movement, often denotes endurance and resilience rather than freedom.[18]

In the opening sequence of *Dog*, a handheld camera tracks a bird flying from left to right across the screen, first over some trees and then over the tower blocks visible in the distance. The film cuts to Leah in her council flat getting dressed for her date with John, framed against a window with sunlight shining through. She grabs some money from her mother's purse in a similar way to Mia, who steals from Conor in *Fish Tank*. After a tense exchange with her mother, Leah is shown running down a narrow corridor before walking through wasteland spaces which surround her estate and passing by a stray dog. The camera follows her mostly from behind or the side, or through close-up tracking shots of her feet. The images of the opening sequence alternate, as Forrest notes, between a "visceral, participatory framing and more painterly and observational compositions" (Forrest 2020, 93). The way Leah is captured by the camera is highly reminiscent of both *Wasp* and *Fish Tank* in how they convey Arnold's primary formal and thematic concerns.

*Wasp* starts *in medias res* with a mid-length shot of Zoë's legs as she rapidly descends a flight of stairs barefooted holding a baby while her three children follow behind her, struggling to keep up. After getting into a violent argument with her neighbour and deciding to head home, her old boyfriend pulls up in a car. The titular wasp appears when Zoë returns to her flat: she notices it flying near one of the kitchen windows, which she ultimately opens to release it.[19] The extreme close-up of the insect on the glass trying to escape can be read as a metaphor for her difficult situation. Dave asks her if she wants to go out for a drink, but she is unable to arrange childcare for the night. Her socio-economic status is plainly revealed when she is feeding her children sugar—the only "food" she has apart from a few slices of bread covered in green mould—while grimly searching through her coin purse to find some money for the date. The camera oscillates between Zoë, her children and decorations on the wall, many of which include animals: we see a picture of a butterfly, a child's drawing of some bears, a ladybird, a flower with a wasp, a cut-out photograph of David Beckham,[20] and a sticker that says "I want to be Barbie, the Bitch has everything". Much like the bird and the canine in *Dog*, the animals seem metaphors for social precarity and the desire to flee in search of a better life, bringing into relief the intersecting constraints of class and gender imposed on the protagonist.

These visual and thematic reference points are more fully realised in *Fish Tank*. Not unlike Zoë in *Wasp*, at the beginning of the film Mia gets into a fight with her peers who also live on the estate. Similar to Leah in *Dog*, she has a violent encounter with her mother. One of the first images of the film is Mia's dark silhouette centrally framed by a half-open window offering a view of an urban landscape—a composition which recalls the moment when Zoë frees the wasp by opening a window through which a block of flats can be seen. Much has been written about the trope of a woman looking out from a window as a symbol of (specifically female) entrapment. In *Fish Tank*, this is reinforced through the use of a nearly square aspect ratio (4:3) and the claustrophobic sensation generated by the proximity of the handheld camera to the subject. Arnold combines this trope with domestic details of Mia's bedroom featured in another sequence, including photos of Mia as a baby and young girl located next to a miniature Eiffel Tower and a crystal ball containing a pink bunny. Later, a large tiger poster that adorns her door is shown, which—in combination with the blue and green colours of her bedroom—evokes her entrapment (like zoo animal, she is restricted to walking along the perimeter of her estate) and her desire for the freedom of the wildscapes beyond the estate.[21] Mia strides through narrow corridors in her building and its surroundings, with her gait resembling both Leah's and Zoë's energetic strides, all of which are removed from the cinematic representations of *flânerie*. Her entrapment is reinforced by other symbolic tropes, such as the skinny white mare chained up at the travellers' encampment, the horse caravan suspended in a state of motionlessness, the cage of her sister's hamster, and prison-like imagery in the form of bars and barriers seen throughout the film. Just like Zoë allows the wasp to fly away through the window, Mia attempts twice to free the horse (in the first 13 minutes of the film), but on both occasions her actions are impeded.

From this vantage point, it makes perfect sense to read Arnold's animals as stand-ins for the marginalised protagonists, whose vital energies are stifled by the grim social conditions in which they find themselves. Such a figurative reading, however, does not exhaust the potential of the stray aesthetic in Arnold's work. Crucially, Arnold does not simply position animals as symbols of entrapment, but offers moments of entangled looking, as conceptualised by Creed (2018). Drawing on Darwin's view of life as "the inextricable web of affinities", which makes reference to the rich interplay of connections between all forms of life (human, animal and vegetable), Creed (2018) understands "entangled looking" as a form of "looking with animals", as opposed to merely "looking at animals". For John Berger (1980), animals have become the "bearers of the human look" (Pick 2011, 103–104), namely, the objects of mastery and knowledge: "animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. [...] What we know about them is an index of our

power, and thus an index of what separates us from them" (Berger 1980, 16). Yet, Arnold's strategies of framing and "witnessing" (Pick 2011, 28) as well as haptic (rather than optical) approach to looking at animals enable different modes of relationality than those conceptualised by Berger. Take, for example, the following scenes [Figures 1–6]: the exchange of looks between Leah and the dog where the camera's kinaesthetic energy places the animal and the young woman on equal terms, reflecting cross-species relationality[22]; the extreme close-up of the wasp just before being liberated, with the camera gently tracing its movement; and Mia's careful touch during her encounters with the horse, which is accompanied by a mode of seeing that responds to the texture of the image, moving over the surface rather than "plunging into illusionistic depth" (Marks 2000, 162).

As other scholars have commented, Arnold's tactile vocabulary (the interplay of surfaces through changes in depth of focus, lighting contrasts and flowing handheld camerawork) is crucial to her aesthetic, and arguably, the ethics of the "caressing gaze" by which the camera and the viewer are "able to relinquish some of the power of the perceiver" (Marks 2000, 169).[23] Jacobs observes that "the camera, in its close following of Mia, emits a sense of care, a being-with-ness" and "avoids any voyeuristic, objectifying, judging, surveying or superior gaze" (Jacobs 2016, 173). However, in the examples mentioned above, the camera's "caressing gaze" clearly reaches out towards the nonhuman as well. It does not fix the animal in place as an object of the gaze, but rather attempts to look *with* it, offering what McMahon refers to in her analysis of Denis Côté's *Bestiaire* as "a glimpse of meaningful, perceptual life-worlds that extend beyond the anthropocentric" (McMahon 2014a, 196). In *Fish Tank*, for instance, the scenes with the horse move beyond the ocular-centric framing of animal presence and instead rely on haptic strategies. For an instant, the background is out of focus and the sunlight saturates the frame. The sound is muted. The roaming handheld camera, the use of the close-up and the tactile engagement with the horse all pull the viewer closer to the image, which itself seems to "breathe" in unison with Mia and the animal.[24] In contrast to *Bestiaire*, such scenes in Arnold's films are not defined in strictly durational terms typical of slow cinema, but rather feature intensely mobile camerawork that, when combined with tactile aesthetic, produces kinaesthetic co-habitation and opens up spaces for looking-with.[25]

It is within these brief moments that Arnold's work manifests its creatureliness, which as Pick (2011) suggests, brings into focus the materiality and vulnerability underlying all life. Jacobs argues, following Pick, that Arnold's cinema is characterised

**Figures 1-6.** Looking-with in *Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank*.

by "creaturely ethics" in the way it "transmits to the viewer a mode of ethical relatedness, or hospitality towards the stranger/other" (Jacobs 2016, 160). Whereas Jacobs links the creaturely to the cinematic treatment of the maternal body and "a specifically maternal, embodied viewing experience" (Jacobs 2016, 161), I return to Pick's original attention to the realm of the animal and "the recognition of the materiality and vulnerability of all living bodies, whether human or not" (Pick 2011, 193). Such an understanding of vulnerability is in line with Creed's "stray ethics", which foregrounds the shared cross-species experiences of abandonment and marginalization.[26]

Indeed, Arnold's cinematic treatment of animals underscores their visceral vulnerability, which brings together the human with the nonhuman in more than just symbolic or metaphorical ways. For Jacobs, the "experience of the 'nearly'"—the proximity of life to death—"emanates from the female characters' bodies on screen" (Jacobs 2016, 175). However, I contend that such experience of the "nearly" is most powerfully transmitted through the complex interrelating of the human and more-than-human corporeal vulnerability, and sometimes death. After John kicks the stray dog to death, Leah, filmed in a long shot, is shown running away across the wastelands, but not before the camera lingers on the image of the dead dog's eye [Figure 7]. In an unnerving scene from *Wasp*, we see an insect crawl into a baby's mouth while Zoë desperately pleads "Don't sting him!" [Figure 8]. In *Fish Tank*, death is visualised in a disturbing close-up of a fish convulsing at the edge of a pond, soon to be brutally speared with a long branch by Conor [Figure 9]. The viscerality and materiality of human/nonhuman entanglements in these scenes exceed the figurative meanings of the animals and thus contribute to, as McMahon puts it, "redressing a tendency to figure the onscreen animal as a sign without a body" (McMahon 2015, 83). The uncanniness of these scenes—which, as Creed notes, is "central to the concept of the stray" (Creed 2017, 19)—confronts the viewer with the threatening world of death.

However, while the three films appeal to the radical ontological vulnerability of all life, these scenes are also powerfully connected to the gendered and classed vulnerability of the human protagonists, who are particularly susceptible to subjugation and precarity, and thus likely to become stray, due to their social position. The homeless dog appears immediately after John orders Leah to lie down on a discarded sofa and have sex with him while refusing to kiss her. Her longing for a heterosexual relationship is bound up with her status as the object of the male gaze in the drug dealers' flat, where three men brazenly stare at her

Figures 7-9. Radical exposure to death in *Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank*.

for an uncomfortably long moment. It is also intertwined with John's possessive behaviour and demeaning comments about her clothes. In *Wasp*, Zoë is also the object of men's stares in a pub. Her status of "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 1975) intersects with her social position as a single mother struggling to feed her children (Arnold chooses to film a wasp twice in the film and on both occasions the kids complain that they are hungry). Conor's cruel treatment of the carp in *Fish Tank* prefigures his future relationship with Mia (see also Bolton 2016, 80). When Mia performs her dance routine for Conor later in the film, she is codified as the object of his gendered and classed looking, and the episode ends with Conor having sex with Mia, a situation which places her in great vulnerability. Ultimately, the unsettling close-ups of animals prompt us to reflect on the relationship between gendered, classed and speciesist hierarchies. By

interrogating these intersections, these narratives extend the bounds of human precarity, understood as a sense of uncertainty that originates from the protagonists' social environments, to encompass a shared interspecies ontological precariousness.[27] In this sense, Arnold's cinematic animals can be considered "zoopoetical", to use Kári Driscoll's generative formulation, as they constitute the complex interplay of "real" and "figurative" presences, which gesture, nonetheless, beyond the narrow anthropocentric view (Driscoll 2018, 33).[28]

The characters' visceral (and not only metaphorical) proximity to animals is further complicated by the process of their own animalisation,[29] which dissolves the clear hierarchy of species without necessarily dissolving the multiple differences separating living beings (Pick 2011). That is, Arnold's characters often stray into what Kristeva calls the "fragile state" in which human and animal meet (Creed 2017, 9). Forrest suggests that Arnold blurs these distinctions "as a mechanism to enable the exploration of carnal instincts" (Forrest 2020, 116).[30] This is certainly true, particularly in *Red Road*, *Wuthering Heights* and Arnold's most recent feature film, *American Honey*. However, in the films under discussion here this device operates primarily to mark the extreme, ontological vulnerability that links the human with the nonhuman, potentially even redrawing these dichotomies. The killing of the dog "seems to trigger Leah's empowered move towards animality", as Forrest points out (Forrest 2020, 93). Upon returning home, she confronts her mother, barking like a dog, and the scene concludes with a close-up shot resting on Leah's distressed face, which recalls the earlier close-up shot of the dead animal. Zoë's children bear a resemblance to stray nonhuman animals when they scavenge for discarded food in a parking lot. Mia's process of animalisation is worth dealing with in detail, as she merges with a number of nonhuman beings in the film. The close-up of the fish struggling to breathe is preceded by Mia cutting her foot in a pond and then climbing up on shore with a sound of distress. A grunt from Mia coming from off screen is again audible at the precise moment the camera focuses on the dying fish, giving auditory form to what Bennett terms "affinities across [...] differences" (Bennett 2010, 104).[31] Towards the end of the film a boy Mia befriends, Billy, tells her they had to shoot the white horse Mia had tried to rescue. The horse's death is not shown; it is expressed only through Mia's mournful sob. The film traces the animal's being-towards-death from the beginning, when we see it chained up in the travellers' encampment. It is significant that Mia's own vulnerability is expressed through her emotional connection with, and even blending with the animal, and underscored by the surface affinities between her and the horse, signalled visually, for example, through the correspondence between the animal's grey coat and Mia's everyday clothes, grey hoodie and tracksuit, or her hair in the wind and the horse's mane.

This visual merging of human and nonhuman strays is marked by a particular camerawork, which according to Jacobs is itself "creaturely". Jacobs writes: "the camera becomes like a companion species to the female leads, a benign presence, like a loyal dog staying close to its owner in a mode of companionship and protection" (Jacobs 2016, 172). Jacobs's observations on *Milk* and *Fish Tank* can be applied to *Wasp* and *Dog*, too, where the camera acts like "a dog breathlessly following up to keep up" (Jacobs 2016, 172) with the female protagonists' restless pacing throughout their estates. This "canine" camera movement is the driving force behind all these films, emphasising resonances between human, animal and cinematic rhythms. As such, human-animal relations are central not only to the films' narrative meanings, but also to their sensory aesthetic.[32] However, while Jacobs associates the affective-aesthetic work of the camera with the human subjects, arguing that "the camera lets them live" (Jacobs 2016, 172), I extend this reflection to various forms of life, thereby rethinking Arnold's "creaturely" filmmaking in "critterly" terms.[33] Asking for whom and for what exactly Arnold's camera makes space to live (and die) is to pay attention to how the filmmaker's non-anthropocentric impulse is developed in relation not only to nonhuman animals but also to other "vibrant" things: plants, wind, discarded furniture, pylons, leftovers and so on. In what follows, I show that Arnold's signature filming of the landscape relies heavily on stray visuality, which is central to the filmmaker's stray aesthetic.

## To stray: wandering through the edgelands

Anat Pick's (2011, 5) readings of creaturely cinema build on the modality that Simone Weil names "attention" and Walter Benjamin terms "attentiveness", which recalls Jane Bennett's argument for "a more *distributed* attention" in her theorisation of agency and affect, and which she elaborates on as "an aesthetic-affective openness to material vitality" (Bennett 2010, x). However, Bennett significantly extends her concept of attention from nonhuman animals to include what she names "the vibrant matter", an overlooked "actant" with which human worlds intersect and interact. As Lawrence (2016, 184) suggests, drawing on Bennett, Arnold's "ecological eye" manifests itself through such an aesthetic-affective openness to the world. In his reading of *Wuthering Heights*, he points to how "a preponderance of unmotivated shots of the countryside and its nonhuman inhabitants demonstrates a posthumanist

Figures 10-13. Posthumanist distribution of attention in *Dog*.

distribution of attention" (2016, 178). He also notices how in Arnold's *Dog* "a succession of close-ups of plants and foliage", in which the camera lingers in a space devoid of a human or even animal presence, is particularly suggestive of *Wuthering Heights* and its iconic ferns and thistles blowing in the wind (2016, 189).

Such "posthumanist distribution of attention" is made possible due to haptic strategies that emphasise textures while often eschewing "visual plenitude" (Marks 2000, 177) and the camera movement that, as already mentioned, often strays away from its human subject [Figures 10–13]. For example, in the closing shot of *Dog*, the camera peers through trees to observe birds flying amidst tower blocks, adopting a perspective that departs from the human experiential frame. Unfastened from the main character's point of view, these brief shots are significant because they evoke the realm of the Deleuzian time-image, in which "the emphasis is often on 'world' rather than 'subject'" (McMahon 2019, 122).

In the shots of the housing estate, usually captured in a long take, "natural" and "built" environments are often presented together, as in the diegetically unmotivated shots in *Dog* in which the tower blocks are shown through blades of grass or tree branches. In *Wasp*, nature penetrates not only the territory of the estate but also the tower blocks themselves. In the opening sequence, as the last of Zoë's children leaves down the communal staircase, the camera briefly strays from her to linger on a cloth flapping in the wind in synchrony with the foliage that threatens to invade the hallway, before resuming its pursuit of the protagonist [Figure 14]. In her discussion of *Fish Tank*, Marie Puysségur addresses the openness and permeability of the estate, pointing to the contrast of Conor's and Mia's flats. Conor's place "suggests the self-contained enclosure of private property and a middle-class existence" (Puysségur 2020, 122), whereas the door to the outside is always open at Mia's place, thus rendering Mia and her family vulnerable to numerous threats. However, these kinds of images, which pervade Arnold's cinematographic rendering of the estate in her early work, can also be understood as thresholds or liminal zones that destabilise the dichotomies of inside/outside and culture/nature in compelling ways.

As yet another technique for undermining these boundaries, Arnold also alternates the depth of focus. Later in *Wasp*, after Zoë talks to Dave, the camera captures a wild rose at a low angle (out of focus and in the foreground), while in the background and in a long shot we see some red brick buildings [Figure 15]. When Zoë and the children walk to the pub, Arnold frames a motorway in a long shot, with the family seen at a distance crossing a bridge. Meanwhile, out of focus yellow flowers gently sway in the foreground [Figure 16]. This is followed by a close-up of a ladybird mounted on a blade of grass beside the road, with blurry passing cars filling the back of the frame [Figure 17]. Forrest points to how

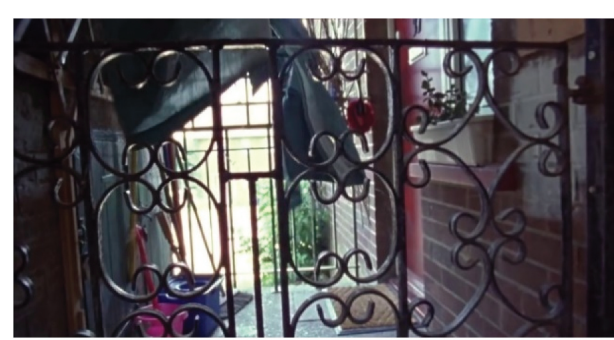
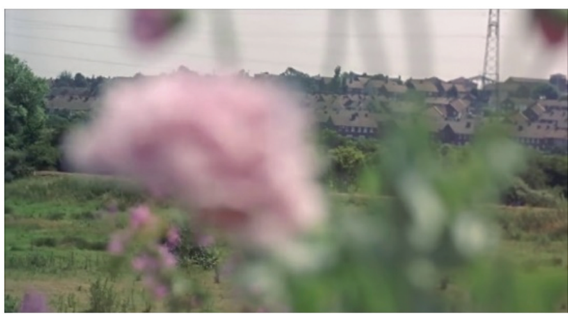


Figure 14. Permeability of the estate in *Wasp*.



Figures 15-17. Alternations in depth of focus in *Wasp*.

"the variations in depth work to both emphasise the layers of the landscape and its human and nonhuman constituents, and realise the potential for beauty in the setting", fostering "a sense of the estate as a kind of ecosystem of multiple entities" (Forrest 2020, 93-94). However, it could also be argued that these moments, which exist outside of Zoë's perspective and draw our attention away from her narrative, signal the dispossession of narrative agency and thus intimate a subtle decentring of the subject, while also unravelling the boundaries between human and nonhuman realms.

Lawrence makes a similar point regarding the scene with the bridge in *Wasp*. Such "ecologically" oriented filmmaking, as he observes, is intimately related with perspectives informed by ecocriticism and posthumanism. For Lawrence, one of Arnold's key techniques for accomplishing an ecological recasting of nature and the nonhuman is "scale-switching grammar" (Lawrence 2016, 184)—the combination of long shots and close-ups as well as the use of focus techniques—which challenges a rigid anthropocentric perspective, or at least divides and retrains our attention.[34] Similarly, Jenny Bavidge emphasises, in reference to *Wuthering Heights*, Arnold's reliance on several strategies borrowed from documentary ecocinema, which "can be felt in her minute attention to the details of the natural environment and its larger rhythms" (Bavidge 2016, 129). While these techniques are perhaps more prevalent in *Wuthering Heights*, in *Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank* Arnold also tends to switch between long shots showing entire landscapes and close-ups of nonhuman life.

In *Fish Tank*, signs of "nature" show up in windows of dimly lit apartments in the estate buildings, during Mia's angry walks, or in the sequence where Conor drives Mia's family to a pond in the lush, green countryside and where Taylor sees a dragonfly for the first time in her life. In this film, Arnold develops her ecological aesthetic further than in her short features, using visual strategies similar to those later employed in *Wuthering Heights* to create spectacles of Mia merging with the landscape. That is, Arnold's straying camera not only "disperses its attention between humans, non-humans and natural landscapes" (Lawrence 2016, 186), but also kinaesthetically blurs these distinctions. In her discussion of the scenes of horse riding in *Wuthering Heights*, Sophie Mayer observes that when Catherine teaches Heathcliff to ride,

> they share sensory experiences through the body and movement of the horse. Close-ups of the horse's muscles even convey a cinesthetic sense of *being* the horse, and of the horse's being as movement, energy, scent and place […] Through Robbie Ryan's tight framing and handheld camera, the horse subsumes Cathy and Heathcliff so that the three become one flesh, and moreover, one being with the moor, rather than the human/animal/landscape. (Mayer 2016, 38)

This sort of non-anthropocentric merging of human/animal/landscape into "one being" also occurs in *Fish Tank*, perhaps most strikingly in one of the dance scenes, filmed in an abandoned flat at sundown, which is marked as a space of liminality and non-belonging. Arnold connects Mia's body, through the use of light, camera movement and sonorous textures that produce an uncanny underwater effect, with the titular fish in a tank. She also links her body with the swaying of

**Figures 18-20.** The "underwater" dance sequence in *Fish Tank*.

the tall trees shown in the next sequence by visually mirroring Mia's flowing arm movements with the tree branches [Figures 18–20]. Forrest observes that in *Fish Tank* breathing acts as a unifying poetic theme (Forrest 2020, 105); indeed, in this moment in the film, the air seems to traverse the cuts between the shots themselves. Although the trees are filmed in real time, the movement of the wind across the branches has the effect of slow motion, which, in Deleuze's words, "frees movement from its moving body to make a sliding of the world" (Deleuze 1989, 59).

In the sequence where Mia breaks into Conor's home and kidnaps Keira, a similar array of visual techniques is employed to evoke the sensation of wind sweeping through the forest. Both Mia and Keira become stray, or, thinking back to Kristeva's term in French, they become *égaré*, which means diverted, disoriented, led astray, untraceable or lost in nature. At one point, the tiny figures of Mia and Keira appear in a long shot, lost amidst the grassland. However, Arnold soon makes use of her signature camerawork, staying close to Mia's body, with the camera pulling in and out of focus. The use of slow motion shots and the mingling of the sounds of Mia's and Keira's breathing with the breathing rhythms of the grass as they advance through the Essex countryside produce an eerie feeling, recalling the aesthetic of the dance scene and the sequences depicting Mia's attempt to free the horse. Even though these synchronised movements trace the linkages between place and Mia's subjectivity, her desires and disappointments (she is rejected by Conor and wants to exact revenge), they also suggest something more than the human —that is, in McMahon's words, "a form of worldly resonance that extends beyond the anthropocentric" (McMahon 2014b). According to Lawrence, Arnold's films refuse to reduce the role of landscape to simply being a backdrop for the action or a mirror for reflecting the inner experiences of human characters, and instead they often conflate the natural environment with its human and nonhuman inhabitants (Lawrence 2016, 179, 183). In Stacy Alaimo's terms, they "perform disanthropocentrically" by "extending the human outward [. . .] or even imaginatively dissolving the human as such" (Alaimo 2016, 8), as is the case with *Fish Tank*, when Keira and Mia merge, visually and sonorously, into the landscape.

It is perhaps due to these poetic shots, combined with the kinetic camerawork, that Arnold's filmmaking is seen as challenging the strict focus on the "social" in the British realist tradition. Writing on *Dog*, Forrest specifically mentions Arnold's "sensitivity for ecologies of the estate", observing how "the camera [often] rests in low angle amongst foliage with sharply contrasting focus depths alternating foreground detail and clarity in the distant landscape, with wildlife and the flats themselves presented not in isolation but as part of a living, textured landscape" (Forrest 2020, 93). I extend this observation further to suggest that rather than a harmonious co-existence of "natural" and "built" environments, Arnold's straying camerawork subtly undermines this very binary opposition, thereby offering up a more nuanced perspective that aligns with Haraway's concept of *natureculture* (Haraway 2003). This critical reorientation is perhaps more patent in *Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank* than in *Wuthering Heights*, partly because the former films are set in the twenty-first century and frame encounters between human and nonhuman inhabitants of the estate through the liminal space of edgelands, as conceptualised by Marion Shoard:

> Often vast in area, though hardly noticed, it is characterised by rubbish tips and warehouses, superstores and derelict industrial plants, office parks and gypsy encampments, golf courses, allotments and fragmented, frequently scruffy farmland. All these heterogeneous elements are arranged in an unruly and often apparently chaotic fashion against a background of unkempt wasteland frequently swathed in riotous growths of colourful plants. (Shoard 2002, 117)

*Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank* are rich in their visual exploration of edgelands, which are at the core of Arnold's stray aesthetic. Importantly, it is in these spaces where most of the encounters between human and nonhuman strays take place. Leah's

engagement with the dog is framed by a quasi-apocalyptic wasteland. The near-death experience of Zoë's child is staged in a parking lot, which, although not exactly an edgeland landscape, is a marginal non-place (Augé 1995) that exists at the interstices of the urban, which is evidenced by the presence of insects and its proximity to edgeland-like spaces. Finally, Mia's encounters with the horse are set in the travellers' encampment, a semi-rural patch of wasteland situated next to a motorway.

In his illuminating analysis of *Fish Tank*, Lance Hanson argues that Arnold's work is itself characterised by an aesthetic of the edgelands,[35] which differentiates it from the dominant conventions of both urban and rural cinema in the British context. He writes: "Aesthetically, rural space is often captured in wide shots indicating open vistas and desolate bucolic landscapes; the urban milieu on the other hand is characterised by a mise-en-scène of entrapment and claustrophobia, [and] the [compressed] cinematic frame" (Hanson 2015, 73). *Fish Tank* conflates both "open" and "closed" spaces, with edgelands acting as the site of Mia's transition, rather than as a sterile space imbued with negative preconceptions. Hanson interprets the travellers' camp to be "an almost liminal space of magic" (Hanson 2015, 81), as Mia ultimately escapes with Billy and sets off on her metaphorical journey of self-discovery. His reading of the film parallels recent scholarly re-evaluation of edgelands. While traditionally perceived as abject spaces of urban decay that threaten the stability of the social (Sibley 1995), more recent scholarship has redefined and even celebrated edgelands as highly mutable spaces with the potential to challenge normative ways of organising urban life and as "forgotten forms of collectivity and solidarity [...], ways of behaving and feeling"[36] (Edensor 2005, 166–167). Arnold herself objects to seeing the Essex estate where *Fish Tank* was filmed and the wastelands that surround it as "grim", an adjective she heard repeatedly at film festivals. Rather than a menace to the social order, she proclaims them to be spaces where inhabitants are "more connected to the world than in some gated, isolated middle-class place" (quoted in Gritten 2009). However, despite pushing back against cultural stigmatisations of these places, she also refrains from romanticising them:

> It's brutal, it's maybe difficult, it's got a sadness to it, that particular place where they live in the film. There used to be a lot of industry and it's all closed down. There's a lot of unemployment. There used to be a big Ford factory, and great huge car parks. All those car lots are empty now and the grass is growing up in the tarmac. But it's got a wilderness, and huge, great skies. It's a mixed thing. (Arnold quoted in Smith 2010)[37]

While I concur with Hanson's argument that Arnold challenges the subordination of edgelands within the dominant modes of the rural/urban dichotomy, these spaces are also intertwined with considerable sources of threat, violence and even death, underscoring both the sense of futility and resilience that permeates the lives of the female protagonists.[38] In *Fish Tank*, the deteriorating furniture that Billy uses outside of his caravan resembles the discarded sofa on which Leah is coerced to have sex with John. Even though Billy does not seem to be abusive towards Mia in the way John is with Leah, at one point Mia is attacked by his brothers. They grab her, toss her handbag aside and attempt to grope her as she fiercely fights back. In both cases, the broken and cast-off objects associated with domesticity (television, old rugs, cooker, chairs) become stray themselves, as they are clearly "out of place", "polluting" or "trespassing" in natural spaces, creating a provisional and yet extremely dangerous home for a variety of human and nonhuman strays.

Arnold's stray visuality, which reframes landscapes as something uncanny, liminal, even haunting, resonates deeply with Mark Fisher's (2016) work on the "eerie", a term which Fisher distinguishes from Freud's *unheimlich*. The latter has been translated into English as the "uncanny", yet for Fisher the word that better captures Freud's term is the "unhomely", that is, "the strange within the familiar" or "the way in which the domestic world does not coincide with itself". By contrast, "the eerie" is associated with the "outside":

> A sense of the eerie seldom clings to enclosed and inhabited domestic spaces; we find the eerie more readily in landscapes partially emptied of the human. What happened to produce these ruins, this disappearance? What kind of entity was involved? [...] What kind of agent is acting here? Is there an agent at all? (Fisher 2016)

As Fisher further argues, these questions about agency can be posed on several levels: the agency of the landscape and "the way that 'we' 'ourselves' are caught up in the rhythms, pulsions and patternings of non-human forces" (Fisher 2016), or the agency of the forces of capital, which is itself an eerie entity.[39]

Arnold's stray camerawork, employed to capture edgelands, momentarily decentres the human subject, suggesting the dispossession of its agency, and, in the process, it produces an eerie effect that can be seen as a specific kind of aesthetic experience associated with ruins or other abandoned structures, in which "the forces governing capitalist society" (Fisher 2016) remain hauntingly present within the frame. The quotation from Arnold above, about abandoned factories and car lots, and the growing unemployment as a result of the industry's decline, indicates that

edgelands often lay bare the failures of capitalist society, failures that are largely responsible for producing strays. Tim Edensor makes a similar argument in his work on industrial ruins: "Whilst they testify to the unevenness of capitalist expansion, revealing sudden local economic recessions within a broader global dynamism which creates grateful recipients of capital flow elsewhere, ruins also signify the sheer waste and inefficiency of using up places, materials and people" (Edensor 2005, 165).[40] Like industrial ruins, the borderline sites shown in *Wasp* operate almost as "left-over spaces",[41] especially toward the end of the film, when the socially marginalised children are waiting for their mother outside the pub for hours, occupying the periphery of the more "legitimate" urban space of the pub. The incident with a wasp occurs because the children have been hungry all day. When four men exit the pub, one of them drops some fries and ribs on the floor, which Kelly, one of Zoë's daughters, retrieves intending to share it with her siblings. It is the smell of this food which attracts the wasp. Earlier in the film the kids were begging her mom to take them to McDonald's, reciting the fast food chain's advertisement touting affordable food. In the parking lot, one of the girls chants the jingles of other fast food companies, such as Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken. At some point, the camera delivers a contemplative close-up of wasps flying over an empty box of McDonald's fries (a visual detail also featured in the wasteland of *Dog* moments after John complains about the lack of jobs in his area).

*Fish Tank* is also replete with "left-over spaces". In addition to the travellers' camp, Mia is shown walking across scrapyards, semi-rural woodlands, retail parks, industrial zones and traffic-packed motorways. Along with contemplative images of flora and fauna, Arnold includes several shots of objects associated with edgelands, such as wind turbines and electricity pylons, which as Hanson argues building on Timothy Morton, symbolise energy and industrialisation and embody "an aesthetic of the sublime" (Hanson 2015, 82). As Forrest also observes, in Arnold's work "blades of grass, flowers, fences, pylons, the material elements of quotidian experience, are elevated and transformed, enacting a process of poetic animation and re-animation" (Forrest 2020, 82). However, the featuring of inanimate objects, both in natural and industrial environments, does something more than contribute to the poetics of the everyday. In the sequence where Mia abducts Keira, an agricultural landscape is shown punctuated by farm vehicles in a long shot before the camera tilts down to a close-up of the long grass, thus visually connecting the "industrial" and the "natural" in a single frame. Their walk through the scrublands bordering the River Thames concludes with a contemplative full shot of waves crashing against the coastline with pylons and power stations visible in the background [Figure 21]. Hanson interprets this "post-diegetic emphasis on the waves lapping against the shore and the stillness of the industry behind [...] as a space of redemption" for Mia, who at some point attempts to drown Keira only to then save her (Hanson 2015, 83–84). Yet I would suggest that this still shot, divorced from the perspective of any character, once again unites the supposedly distinct realms of nature and culture, whilst staging the tensions inherent in such liminal, neglected and depopulated spaces. Arnold's "ecological attentiveness" (McMahon 2014b) is, as Lawrence also observes, "starkly opposed to the aesthetic and ideological ideas of Nature and Nation" commonly embodied by "'idyllic' rural spaces" (Lawrence 2016, 192). Indeed, her films do not romanticise the landscape, but rather acknowledge the material realities of the estate and edgelands jointly inhabited by vulnerable strays.

Figure 21. Liminal spaces in *Fish Tank*.

## Conclusion

*Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank* are dramas featuring young women living in poverty-stricken council estates. The titular animals are bound up with these thematic concerns and, at first glance, seem to serve a primarily symbolic function within the meanings of human narratives, as suggested by the scholarly readings of these films within the context of British (social-)realist cinema or phenomenological realism. While it could be argued that the nonhuman animals are "domesticated" by the dominant narrative arcs that maintain the speciesist hierarchies, their visceral presences—the lives and deaths witnessed intensely, if only for a moment—exist in excess of their symbolic functions within the films' narratives. This is not to say that we should necessarily reject the semiotic aspects embodied by Arnold's cinematic animals

or claim "to recover the animals 'themselves'" (Driscoll and Hoffmann 2018, 4), driven by the "fantasy" of "unmediated access to animals" (McHugh 2009, 36). Arnold's treatment of nonhuman animals is multidimensional, as they appear both as a metaphorical figuration directing the trajectory of the films' heroines *and* as intrinsic to Arnold's non-anthropocentric stray aesthetic, which reminds us that we all stray "on the territories of animal" (Kristeva 1982, 12). The filmmaker traces the interconnectedness of different lives, with its ontological-ethical implications, in ways that foreground the ecological dimension of her work. The correspondences (in the double sense of the word, as similarities and affinities) between the human and the nonhuman worlds run deep, by means of the camera's careful observation of female and animal bodies which are equally material and vulnerable. Yet, while Arnold's stray aesthetic undoes the clear distinctions separating the human and the animal (and in *Fish Tank* the "natural" more broadly), it also underscores the ways in which different beings are always differently exposed to death in relation to species, class, gender and so on.

*Dog*, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank*—three films about human and nonhuman strays—are, I suggest, films of our contemporary moment. As Creed observes, in view of constant precarity, instability and insecurity brought by climate emergency, accelerated urbanization, pollution, scarcity of resources and war, "the vast majority of creatures living in the Anthropocene may become stray" (Creed 2017, 168). At a time when habitat loss is threatening all forms of life, paying attention to human-nonhuman entanglements and weakening anthropocentric hierarchies underlying the humanist conception of the full subject are particularly pressing.[42] The formal and stylistic elements of the films that I have conceptualised here as representative of Arnold's stray visuality, such as the alteration between long and close-up shots, focus techniques, rich sonorous and visual textures, as well as highly mobile cinematographic style, foster our attunement to the inter-dependence and co-constitution of the human and nonhuman worlds. Nevertheless, the filmmaker does not invest uncritically in the "natural", as seen in her complex exploration of edgelands as liminal spaces where the natural and the cultural, the human and the nonhuman conflate. In her films, edgelands become the stray's uncanny territory, in which the forces of capitalism are hauntingly present. Arnold's stray visuality attends to the fragility of human and nonhuman survival in a damaged world (Tsing 2015), while countering the exclusionary foundations of the Anthropocene. It is in her attention to visual and sonorous detail, against the implicit backdrop of the current environmental and other crises, that Arnold's "ecological impulse" (McMahon 2014b) can be best apprehended.

## Funding

The work was supported by the research project "Cinema and Environment: Affective Ecologies in the Anthropocene" (PID2019-110068 GA-I00 / MCIN / AEI / 10.13039/501100011033), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

## Notes

1. Lawrence borrows the term "ecological attentiveness" from McMahon's (2014b) study of the cinema of Claire Denis, which itself builds on what Jane Bennett refers to as "a more *distributive* agency" in her work *Vibrant Matter* (2010, ix; emphasis in original).
2. Kristeva continues: "Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder" (Kristeva 1982, 12–13). In Kristeva's thinking, "straying" is part of human condition, that is to say, we always straddle borders between animal and human, nature and culture. Yet, as Creed observes, if we fail to return to the symbolic order, we will be banished (Creed 2017, 27).
3. Creed observes that "when a woman becomes an exile, she exchanges the male symbolic of law and language for a female landscape, which is closer to the natural, organic world" (Creed 2017, 35). Such a remark could be linked with Thornham's (2016) exploration of landscape in *Wuthering Heights* through the concept of the haptic. Yet, as Marks (2000) observes, haptic visuality cannot be limited to the assumed "feminine" qualities, and should be viewed through strategic lens.
4. I use the word "figure" in Donna Haraway's sense, as a "material-semiotic knot" (Haraway 2008, 4), to explore the entanglement of the material and the semiotic. That is, the stray as a figure is not to be understood as a mere representation of something, but rather as a creature that is both human and animal, natural and cultural, real and imagined.
5. Examples are not hard to come by in Arnold's cinema: Mia, as well as travellers, in *Fish Tank*, Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, Star and her homeless human and nonhuman companions in *American Honey*.
6. What is more, two of these films, *Wasp* and *Fish Tank*, share Arnold's frequent collaborator, the director of photography Robbie Ryan. He also worked with Arnold on *Red Road*, *Wuthering Heights* and *American Honey*, and undoubtedly contributed to Arnold's aesthetic (which she often dubs in interviews "poetic realism").
7. See also Hanson's (2015) examination of "edgelands" in *Fish Tank*.
8. Scholars have focused, for example, on Arnold's phenomenological representations of adolescent female experience (Hirsch 2014; Bolton 2016; Ince 2017) and her transgressive depictions of the sexual encounter (Horeck 2011).

9. For a summary of the field, see McMahon (2015). As Cassandra Guan and Adam O'Brien observe in their *Screen* dossier dedicated to cinema's natural aesthetics, an ecological approach to the study of moving-image media is not easy to define: "In some scholarly accounts, ecology stands for a concern with the material conditions and environmental impact of cinema as a mass-based industrial medium, while in others it signals a commitment to post-human ontologies and affective networks, sometimes in opposition to socio-semiotic modes of interpretation. Similarly, the production category of 'eco-cinema' has been largely held together by topical concerns rather than by any coherent approach to film form" (Guan and O'Brien 2020, 273). My own approach privileges the questions of film aesthetics and representation, with close reading as a method, and emphasises the manifold material-semiotic discourses at work in Arnold's films.
10. In her study of *Milk* and *Fish Tank*, Jacobs (2016) draws on both phenomenological understandings of film viewing and Pick's (2011) notion of "creaturely cinema" in order to explore the ethical dimensions of Arnold's treatment of the sexual maternal body, which Jacob argues enables a particular affective and embodied experience of corporeal vulnerability.
11. Interestingly, the cover image of Pick's book shows a stray fox on a tombstone in the Jewish cemetery in Hackney.
12. There are several possible problems of understanding vulnerability as a universal mode of exposure and, as Pick herself acknowledges, of approaching animals in a "powerless way" (Pick 2011, 5). See McMahon's (2019) conceptualization of "animal worlds" for a different approach.
13. Bolton calls *Fish Tank* "phenomenological experimentation" (Bolton 2016, 76); for Jacobs, Arnold's films operate on "a tactile, phenomenological level" to produce "an embodied alignment between the projected subject and the viewing subject" (Jacobs 2016, 161).
14. In this sense, straying can be considered not only a mode of artistic creation but also a mode of reception. In this article, for the lack of space, I focus mostly on the former.
15. As one of the peer reviewers observed, it would be possible to think about the stray in connection to process philosophy, and not as a mere tension between symbolic order and its disruption. Stray-ness might operate, for instance, according to Donna Haraway's conceptualisation of sympoietic emergence, as becoming-with a variety of "expandable set of players" (Haraway 2016, 65). See also Komsta and Atasoy's (2022) recent reading of Diane Cook's novel *The New Wilderness* through the lens of the figure of the female stray and stray ethics, which the authors associate with the non-anthropocentric relationship between human and nonhuman animals. Drawing on Haraway, they propose that "the figure of the stray has the capacity to function as an important model of Anthropocene identity", that is, a sympoietic identity (Komsta and Atasoy 2022, 4). While I agree with the authors' observation that straying could be associated with conscious "acts of defiance directed at the dominant power structures [and] the anthropocentric exploitation of human as well as nonhuman actants" (Komsta and Atasoy 2022, 4), Arnold's films push the figure of the stray in a different direction.
16. As Creed defines it: "Entangled looking is about becoming animal, about asking us to adopt a look of greater reciprocity supporting common histories, origins, sensibilities, desires and (perhaps more diversely inscribed) forms of intelligence" (Creed 2018).
17. As Gorfinkel reminds us (2016, 130), wandering is a primary feature of modern art cinema.
18. This is in contrast to Walter Benjamin, who in a tribute to *flânerie* famously said "Paris taught me this art of straying" (quoted in Creed 2017, 17). Interestingly, as Creed reminds us, in nineteen-century Paris many artists and intellectuals romanticised the stray dog due to its outsider status (Creed 2017, 159).
19. The scene evokes Star's similar liberation of an insect in Arnold's most recent feature film to date, *American Honey* (2016).
20. The children say earlier in the film that their mother's love interest, Dave, looks like the famous footballer, and Zoë resembles Victoria Beckham.
21. This desire is also expressed in more open compositions including birds and a floating balloon towards the end (a visual detail also appearing in *Dog*).
22. Leah's encounter with the stray dog brings to mind Levinas's encounter with Bobby, when he was a Jewish prisoner of war. As Creed relates, "only the dog understood, or acknowledged, one creature to another, that the Jewish prisoners were fellow beings. Bobby did not do this through facial expressions—or at least any facial expressions Levinas recognised—but through gesture and body language (waiting, jumping, barking in delight)" (Creed 2017, 91).
23. Nwonka, conversely, has argued that Arnold's aesthetic produces an "objectification of the subject", rendering characters like Mia as "insects under a magnifying glass" (Nwonka 2017, 74). Nwonka links Arnold's poetic realism to a disavowal of class politics. See Forrest (2020) for a contrasting view.
24. At the moment of writing, Arnold has released a documentary film entitled *Cow* (2021), in which we are offered another instance of looking with animals.
25. In this sense, Arnold's eco-aesthetic goes beyond an ecocinematic tendency that privileges duration. See Landreville's (2019) critique of the normalised association between long takes and environmental ethics stemming from Bazin's idea of cinematic realism.
26. For Creed, "to stray is a possibility for all living creatures, whether human animals, nonhuman animals—such as birds, fish, insects, spiders—or plants" (Creed 2017, 7). Indeed, many animals in Arnold's films can be seen as "anthropogenic strays", that is, as "a result of the effects of human actions on nature" (Creed 2017, 11). For example, wasps—which are as ecologically relevant and endangered as bees—are increasingly threatened with the loss of habitat due to human activity. In addition, in Arnold's short film, they are represented as wandering away from where they are "supposed" to be. The dog, the humankind's companion-species par excellence, is in Arnold's short film homeless and left to its own fate, and thus linked to a broader commentary on social precarity under neoliberalism. The caravan of travellers in *Fish Tank* visually associates the horse with labour. As McMahon

reminds us in her reading of *The Turin Horse*, a film that references the whipping of a horse that was said to have caused Nietzsche's mental breakdown, animal labour was essential in the staggering rate of human development achieved during the agricultural and industrial revolutions: "Horses worked hard, for incredibly long hours, and suffered intensely, as suggested by their drastically shortened working-life spans" (McMahon 2019, 104). The image of the horse in *Fish Tank*, as a traditional motif of rural transport opposed to the modernity of the car, evokes a preindustrial agricultural world. Here, however, the horse becomes stray, in a similar way to his stray owners. The horse might also be read, at least implicitly, as gesturing towards the contemporary relations between labour, survival and precarity.

27. Precarity and precariousness are distinct, if overlapping, terms. While precarity and precariousness tend to be used interchangeably, in this article I understand precarity as closely intertwined with the sense of insecurity, induced by neoliberal violence, and precariousness as an ontological condition shared by all human beings, as theorised by Butler (2012), and here extended to all forms of life. Needless to say, human beings are not the only affected by neoliberal violence, as scholarly reflections on the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene clearly demonstrate. However, as Creed proposes, the stray is both marginalised and resistant: "The stray is not necessarily a victim, a creature unable to assert or defend a position. [...] A stray ethics reminds us that many (but not all) strays are both vulnerable and strong. Fragility does not mean a loss of resilience" (Creed 2017, 100).
28. As Driscoll and Hoffmann explain in reference to zoopoetic reading, "we need not fear or mistrust the metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical meanings embodied by literary animals, so long as we do not make the mistake of reading these nonhuman presences *only* or *simply* as metaphors" (Driscoll and Hoffmann 2018, 4). They write: "our encounters with animals in 'real' world are also *both* material *and* semiotic, and hence [...] the relationship between 'real' animals and 'literary' animals is not that of an original to a copy, but rather reciprocal and irreducibly entangled" (Driscoll and Hoffmann 2018, 6).
29. This corporeal mimesis might be read as problematic, due to the historical animalisation of both women and working-classes, the latter routinely branded as untamed, abject and dangerous even within 21st-century social discourses. Arnold simultaneously acknowledges and subtly challenges such class-related prejudice, for example through dialogue that is full of animal-inspired insults (in the *Fish Tank*'s opening line Mia tells her friend: "ring me back, you bitch" and later tells Conor that he smells like "fox piss").
30. In *Red Road*, *Wuthering Heights* and *American Honey*, animals are associated with male protagonists' sexual desire: Clyde is visually associated with a fox, Heathcliff with dogs and rabbits, while Jake with a wolf (he literally howls at the moon).
31. Mia's sister, Tyler, asks if the fish is dying, to which their mother responds sarcastically that it is "dancing", thus linking the struggling creature to Mia's earlier dance performances.
32. Arnold's "animal filming" is akin to Hélène Cixous's conception of "animal writing": "[To write] You need a body that uses all its senses, that feels its heart beat, that follows the path of the blood under the skin, that follows the rhythm of the breath. [...] A bit like a dog in nature: they do not trample it, they scratch it, smell it, listen to it" (quoted in Segarra 2021, 56).
33. Haraway's usage of the term extends the meaning of "creature" to all life forms, including "microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans and sometimes even to machines" (Haraway 2016, 169), while silencing its association with "creation".
34. See also MacDonald's (2013) reflection on ecocinema and its "retraining of perception".
35. Other contemporary British directors engaging with edgelands include Lynne Ramsay, Shane Meadows and Clio Barnard, among others.
36. In *Fish Tank* and in *Wasp* this being-with is underscored in dance scenes (Mia dancing with her mother and her sister, and Zoë dancing with her children in the parking lot).
37. See also Hanson's (2015) discussion of this quote in the context of Hamid Naficy's "accented cinema".
38. Arnold's stray aesthetic, which refuses to idealize edgelands while bringing to the fore their liveliness, resonates with what Matthew Fuller and Olga Goriunova conceptualise as the "bleak joy", understood as "a way of thinking things that are commonly and culturally figured as negative without losing the force of their impact but also without succumbing to the luster of mere doom" (Fuller and Goriunova 2019, xii). In their book on ecological aesthetics, which gives special consideration to "the aesthetic dimensions of 'bad things'" (xii), such as ecological damage, they argue for the fruitfulness of an approach that establishes "an interplay between an ecological materialism that is necessarily bleak, mineral, and appreciative of disaster on the one hand and the inheritance of the monist theorists of affirmation that find potentials and actualizations of a joyful *conatus* in being on the other" (xii). I thank the peer reviewer for bringing this book, as well as Mark Fisher's work on the weird and the eerie, to my attention.
39. As Fisher claims, "conjured out of nothing, capital nevertheless exerts more influence than any allegedly substantial entity" (Fisher 2016).
40. In his later work on edgelands, Edensor views these spaces as specifically English. He writes about *Fish Tank*: "[it] evokes a generic English contemporary landscape replete with a host of mundane settings that diverge from any notion of a romantic urban and rural Englishness [...]. There are poorly maintained post-war housing estates, with their scruffy communal play areas and run-down stairways and balconies, and the low-key shopping precincts typical of many urban English areas" (Edensor 2015, 68).
41. See Dillet and Puri (2013) on "left-over spaces" in the Dardennes's films. In contrast to *Dog* and *Fish Tank*, the non-place of the parking lot in *Wasp* is

posited as a space hope, given the film's implied happy ending.

42. This is what Creed refers to as "unsettling the settled" (Creed 2017, 101). As she writes, "the project of erecting boundaries to keep the other (strays, animals, refugees, indigenous peoples, exiles, women, the poor) at bay in order to assert the primacy of the so-called civilised human animal over all other signifies a failure of empathy that now threatens to undermine all forms of life in the Anthropocene" (Creed 2017, 100).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Author note

Katarzyna Paszkiewicz is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of the Balearic Islands. Her primary research is in film studies and cultural studies, with an emphasis on women's cinema in the USA, UK and Spain. She also has an interest in questions of embodiment, affect and the senses, as well as in ecological thought. She has published several book chapters and journal articles on Kathryn Bigelow, Andrea Arnold, Sofia Coppola and Isabel Coixet in *Film-Philosophy*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, among others. She has co-edited, with Mary Harrod, *Women Do Genre in Film and Television* (Routledge, 2017, winner of first Prize in the BAFTSS Best Edited Collection competition) and published her monograph *Genre, Authorship and Contemporary Women Filmmakers* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018, Honourable Mention in the ESSE Awards). In May 2020, she was awarded a "Knowledge Generation R&D" Grant to be Principal Investigator on the 3-year research project, "Cinema and Environment: Affective Ecologies in the Anthropocene", funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

## ORCID

Katarzyna Paszkiewicz http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2931-2839

## References

Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Alaimo, S. 2016. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Augé, M. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London and New York: Verso.

Barker, J. M. 2009. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bavidge, J. 2016. "Brontë Soundscapes: The Role of Soundtracks in Adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* in Brontë Heritage Discourses." In *English Topographies in Literature and Culture*, edited by I. Habermann and D. Keller, 116–133. Boston: Brill.

Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Berger, J. 1980. "Why Look at Animals?" In *About Looking*, 3–28. London: Bloomsbury.

Bolton, L. 2016. "A Phenomenology of Girlhood: Being Mia in *Fish Tank*." In *International Cinema and the Girl*, edited by F. Handyside and K. T. Jones, 75–84. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braidotti, R. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Butler, J. 2012. "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26 (2): 134–151. doi:10.5325/jspecphil.26.2.0134.

Colebrook, C. 2012. "Not Symbiosis, Not Now: Why Anthropogenic Change is Not Really Human." *Oxford Literary Review* 34 (2): 185–209. doi:10.3366/olr.2012.0041.

Connolly, W. 2013. *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Creed, B. 2017. *Stray: Human-Animal Ethics in the Anthropocene*. Sydney: Power Publications.

Creed, B. 2018. "Entangled Looking: The Crisis of the Animal." *Artlink*, March 1. https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4662/entangled-looking-the-crisis-of-the-animal/.

Deleuze, G. 1989. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dillet, B., and T. Puri. 2013. "Left-Over Spaces: The Cinema of the Dardenne Brothers." *Film-Philosophy* 17 (1): 367–382. doi:10.3366/film.2013.0021.

Driscoll, K. 2018. "Second Glance at the Panther, Or: What Does It Mean to Read Zoopoetically?" *Frame* 31 (1): 29–47.

Driscoll, K., and E. Hoffmann. 2018. "Introduction: What is Zoopoetics?" In *What is Zoopoetics?*, edited by K. Driscoll and E. Hoffmann, 1–13. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edensor, T. 2005. *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*. Oxford: Berg.

Edensor, T. 2015. "Sensing National Spaces: Representing the Mundane in English Film and Television." In *European Cinema and Television*, edited by I. Bondebjerg, E. N. Redvall, and A. Higson, 58–77. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fisher, M. 2016. *The Weird and the Eerie*. London: Repeater Books, ebook.

Forrest, D. 2020. *New Realism: Contemporary British Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Fuller, M., and O. Goriunova. 2019. *Bleak Joys: Aesthetics of Ecology and Impossibility*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Gorfinkel, E. 2016. "Exhausted Drift: Austerity, Dispossession and the Politics of Slow in Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff*." In *Slow Cinema*, edited by T. de Luca and J. N. Barradas, 123–136. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gritten, D. 2009. "Andrea Arnold: 'I Wish Cinema Could Be Braver'." *The Telegraph*. August 28, 2009. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/starsandstories/6093303/Andrea-Arnold-I-wish-cinema-could-be-braver.html.

Guan, C., and A. O'Brien. 2020. "Cinema's Natural Aesthetics: Environments and Perspectives in Contemporary Film Theory." *Screen* 61 (2): 272–279. doi:10.1093/screen/hjaa014.

Hanson, L. 2015. "Edgelands Aesthetics: Exploring the Liminal in Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* (2009)." *Writing Visual Culture* 6: 65–89.

Haraway, D. 2003. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Haraway, D. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Haraway, D. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hirsch, P. 2014. "Written on the Body: A Reasonable Exit?" *Feminist Media Studies* 14 (3): 470–484. doi:10.1080/14680777.2012.737345.

Horeck, T. 2011. "A 'Passion for the Real': Sex, Affect and Performance in the Films of Andrea Arnold." In *The New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe*, edited by T. Horeck and T. Kendall, 169–179. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ince, K. 2017. *The Body and the Screen: Female Subjectivities in Contemporary Women's Cinema*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Jacobs, A. 2016. "On the Maternal 'Creaturely' Cinema of Andrea Arnold." *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 13 (1): 160–176. doi:10.3366/jbctv.2016.0305.

Komsta, M., and E. Atasoy. 2022. "Against Anthropocentrism: A Stray's Quest in Diane Cook's *The New Wilderness*." *Critique - Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (online): 1–14. doi:10.1080/00111619.2022.2144109.

Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Landreville, J. 2019. "Alternative Ethics for Ecocinema: *The Tree of Life* and Post-Continuity Aesthetics." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 17 (1): 99–119. doi:10.1080/17400309.2019.1563365.

Lawrence, M. 2016. "Nature and the Non-Human in Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*." *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 13 (1): 177–194. doi:10.3366/jbctv.2016.0306.

MacDonald, S. 2013. "The Ecocinema Experience." In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, edited by S. Rust, S. Monani, and S. Cubitt, 17–42. New York: Routledge.

Marks, L. 2000. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mayer, S. 2016. *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema*. London: I.B. Tauris.

McHugh, S. 2009. "Animal Farm's Lessons for Literary (And) Animal Studies." *Humanimalia* 1 (1): 24–39. doi:10.52537/humanimalia.10115.

McMahon, L. 2014a. "Animal Worlds: Denis Côté's *Bestiaire* (2012)." *Studies in French Cinema* 14 (3): 195–215. doi:10.1080/14715880.2014.949457.

McMahon, L. 2014b. "Beyond the Human Body: Claire Denis's Ecologies." *Alphaville* 7 (7): 94–111. doi:10.33178/alpha.7.06.

McMahon, L. 2015. "Screen Animals Dossier: Introduction." *Screen* 56 (1): 81–87. doi:10.1093/screen/hjv007.

McMahon, L. 2019. *Animal Worlds: Film, Philosophy and Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Morton, T. 2009. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Morton, T. 2010. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mulvey, L. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (3): 6–18. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6.

Nwonka, C. J. 2014. "'You're What's Wrong with Me': *Fish Tank*, *The Selfish Giant* and the Language of Contemporary British Social Realism." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 12 (3): 205–223. doi:10.1386/ncin.12.3.205_1.

Nwonka, C. J. 2017. "Estate of the Nation: Social Housing as Cultural Verisimilitude in British Social Realism." In *Filmurbia*, edited by D. Forrest, G. Harper, and J. Rayner, 65–78. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pick, A. 2011. *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Puysségur, M. 2020. "Space, Gender, and Identity in Sciamma's *Girlhood* and Arnold's *Fish Tank*." *Girlhood Studies* 13 (1): 117–132. doi:10.3167/ghs.2020.130109.

Raphael, A. 2011. "Love Will Tear Us Apart." *Sight & Sound* 21: 34–36.

Río, E. D. 2008. *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Segarra, M. 2021. "Hélène Cixous's Creaturely *Poethics*." *Word and Text* XI: 55–67. doi:10.51865/JLSL.2021.04.

Shoard, M. 2002. "Edgelands." In *Remaking the Landscape: The Changing Face of Britain*, edited by J. Jenkins, 117–146. London: Profile Books.

Sibley, D. 1995. *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.

Smith, D. 2010. "Andrea Arnold, *Fish Tank*." *Filmmaker Magazine*. https://filmmakermagazine.com/1403-andrea-arnold-fish-tank/.

Sobchack, V. 1992. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press.

Thornham, S. 2016. "'Not a Country at All': Landscape and *Wuthering Heights*." *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 13 (1): 214–231. doi:10.3366/jbctv.2016.0308.

Tsing, A. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Willoquet-Maricondi, P., ed. 2010. *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.