In the wings of the dove: bird's-eye view and more-than- human gaze in the wildlife documentary series *Earthflight*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores deterritorialisation of the human gaze and negotiations of animal life and environment through nonhuman vision. The article focuses on the aerial view and aesthetics of the wildlife documentary series *Earthflight* and the nature of the gaze in a more-than-human sense. Wildlife documentaries tend to represent animals in a way that imitates human vision while the anthropocentric gaze produces speciesed animals. However, the series *Earthflight* produces a perspective of a bird's-eye view through small cameras attached to birds' backs or drones gliding among a flock, providing images of flying in close proximity to birds' movements and bodies. I argue that with the concept of the 'more-than-human gaze,' it is possible to examine a perspective that binds together technology, nonhuman animals, and human viewers. The aerial filming extend a perceived territory towards nonanthropocentric vision. The bird's-eye view as the more-than-human gaze deterritorialises the human ways of looking, while showing that birds are not just objects to be looked at but rather active subjects to gaze with. This kind of assembled gaze produces new unfoldings of the environment, perceived not merely as a distant landscape to be admired but as a lived, material environment shared with other nonhuman animals.

> Contact with animals turns human beings into other, effecting a metamorphosis. Animality is, in this sense, a kind of seduction, a magnetic force or gaze that brings humanity to the threshold of its subjectivity. (Akira M. Lippit in Electric Animal, 2000, 51)

When we watch birds on film, we usually see them from the same viewpoint we would perceive them from in real life. A camera films on the human eye level, and when birds fly, the camera typically stays on the ground. However, what happens when the camera follows the birds up in the air? Advanced technology such as GoPro cameras and drones enables us to see the images from high above, following the birds' flyway and movements. *Earthflight* (2011) is a good example

of this kind of imagery. But images of a camera attached to bird's back are also been used in other wildlife documentaries such as *Winged Migration* (2011), and shortly in *The Life of Birds* (episode 2, 'Mastery of Flight') (1998), and *Planet Earth II* (episode 2, 'Mountains') (2016).

This article maps out the possibilities of bird's-eye view to undo the human-centred gaze. How does this kind of a viewpoint, which is becoming more common in mainstream television wildlife documentaries, function? The main question is, how is a more-than- human gaze produced and does this kind of gaze have the potential to create visions of nonanthropocentric environments? There is a camera eye recording a landscape and birds; there is also a bird's vision as well as a human gazing upon the image. This is an assemblage to begin with. The assemblage of a moving image has the capacity to decentre human vision and emphasises 'the otherness of cinematic life' (Galt 2015, 43). Cinema and other imagery of animals do not just reflect relations between humans and animals, but can also change these relations (Burt 2002, 15). As Fay (2008, 55) points out, the moving image can ease the human-animal intersubjectivity and lean towards change in the order of things.

In this article, I analyse the documentary series *Earthflight* (2011). The series focuses on birds and follows, for example, birds' migration, while the visual narration takes their per- spective in the air. Cameras follow birds' flyways from Central America or Africa to their breeding grounds to the north or show their search for food in cities such as Rome, Jodhpur, and Sydney as well as on the open sea and in rural areas. In the series, the air becomes the main environment and the cameras fly with the birds, although occasionally the visual narration takes a more traditional form, filming birds from the ground as well.

Laura Mulvey states in her famous essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) that 'conventions of a mainstream film focus attention to a human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic.' In wildlife films, animals are often represented in frames that imitate the human vision. The human gaze produces 'speciesed' (Ladino 2013, 130) animals by framing the image through the human eye, and animals are objectified to be looked at by the human. John Berger states in Why Look at Animals? (2009) that animals are under human gaze and observance: '[t]he fact that they can observe us has lost all significance' (2009, 27). Burt (2005, 207) criticises Berger's statement, and notes that the idea of looking includes 'the idea being looked at in turn' and that it is not matter of

‘straightforward objectification’. Rather, for Burt, the look is ‘an active component in the establishment of relations’ also between humans and animals. Derrida (2002) has also discussed the gaze from the perspective of his own cat who was assumedly looking at his naked body. Derrida emphasises that we should acknowledge that we live under animals’ vision as well and not conceive animals merely as the ones who are always the observed, as Berger (2009) states. There are other gazes beside the (male) humanist gaze, such as the female, queer, and animal gaze (Pick 2015, 108). Elizabeth Grosz has also stressed the need for a topology of looking in addition to the concept of gaze and a plurality of possible visions ‘that dictates how objects are seen and even which ones are seen’ (2006, 198–199). This opens the possibility for a gaze that is not only human but rather more-than-human in the way it creates prehensions with the world and makes non- human processes visible. Lippit (2000) states that while in modernity animals disappear in everyday life of humans, they start to appear more and more in virtual form, for example in cinema. However, as Belinda Smaill notes (2017, 12) ‘both Lippit and Berger emphasize the animal as metaphor (albeit with a critique of this status) or epistemological object [...]’. She on the other hand emphasises how cinema brings forth animal embodiment and materiality. I follow Smaill’s path and take an interest in animal as embodied being in this article. As Barbara Creed and Maarten Reesink state (2015, 101), focusing on human-animal relationships offers new challenges for thinking the nature of the gaze. As Burt (2002, 47–48) notes:

> [nature films] seem more like the point of entry for our engagement with the natural worlds: and active moral gaze made possible, even structured, by the technology of modernity. The question is, does such a gaze do anything more than simply look?

This challenge of thinking the nature of the gaze with nonhuman others, especially from aerial view, is something I focus in the article.

Vision is the most important sense for birds, as it is for humans. This resemblance gives a starting point to think about the visions to environment that both species share. What if we do not want animals to gaze at us for our narcissistic pleasure or displeasure (it is not about us), but what if we think about the gaze as a framing: as production of a territory, not so much as production of an identity. A gaze presents a frame, a viewpoint from which something is perceived: it produces territories of what is seen and what is not. In their geosophy, Deleuze and Guattari perceive territory as an order or a system while deterritorialisation is a process of secession or an expansion of a territory. Their thinking seeks to undo the traditional

dichotomy between humans as subject and nature as object by plane of immanence, 'which absorbs the Earth, that is, bonds together with it without eliminating the singularity, uniqueness, or difference of each thing that is part of this relationship' (Hayden 2008, 29). With the notion of territory, I want to emphasise the idea of shared environment where humans are not the only agents but animals and environmental factors have agency as well. In my analysis, I stress that the aesthetics of the series are connected to the material possibilities of nature (cf. Pick and Narraway 2013, 6). In this article I demonstrate the gaze as active and that it also produces relations and connections (as well as differentiation) in human-animal-technology assemblages. I outline the more-than-human gaze as the counter gaze to the human(ist)-centred gaze of wildlife documentaries and the tradition of aerial view.

Wildlife documentaries have a strong role in creating environmental values (Mitman 1999). As Jonathan Burt (2002, 47–48) notes, that the imagery of nature films imply that it is 'seeing' that makes relations to natural world and because we look, the viewers become part of these depictions. Obviously, wildlife documentaries and programmes are not homogenous genre, but have variations like narrator-led documentaries, an American tradition deriving from narratives like Disney's True-Life Adventures, and a British tradition like BBC's blue chip documentaries. Blue chip documentaries have a high production value, humans and their habitats are framed out of the image, and environmental politics are avoided (Bousé 2000, 14–15). Usually, the dramatic story lines, using voice- over narration, deal with megafauna, such as large mammals, without any historical refer- ence points (Bousé 2000). Richards (2013) states, that wildlife documentaries have recently gone through a change that she calls 'green chip', while wildlife films have become more aware of their position with environmentalism and climate change science. I count *Earthflight* in to be a green chip documentary in a sense it does has a voice-over narration and high production value, but humans and their habitat is not framed out but a part of the visual splendour.

In the age of species lost and environmental change, when it comes to ethics and politics, we need new ways to relate to the environment and our nonhuman others, to see and imagine the world from a different perspective. The present environmental crisis is a 'problem of narrative' as well (Mikulak 2008, 66). Zylinska (2015, 15) states in her recent work on nonhuman photography that nonhuman vision has ethico-political aspects as 'the recent explicit recognition

that the human vision and nonhuman viewpoint are too narrow and too parochial [...] in light of the debates on climate change, extinction, and the Anthropocene'. According to her (2015, 15), we can learn from other nonhuman beings and things to see and perceive differently. Applying Zylinska's ideas of nonhuman (photography) images to a moving image and aerial view, I pay attention to nonhuman vision and its potential to see otherwise with more-than-human gaze.

In the next section, I pay focus on technology and the possibilities of the assemblage of the more-than-human gaze. Later I discuss the nonhuman agency of the bird's-eye view in relation to the conceptualisations of the aerial perspective. The last section of this article reflects how a bird's-eye view extends a perceived territory towards nonhuman vision and hence deconstructs the anthropocentrism of the gaze while also producing reterritorialisations of a landscape.

Technological eye

In the beginning of the making-of episode, Flying high, a man is holding hatching goose eggs in his hand. The chicks imprint on him, and he will later fly among them on a glider. Later, the goslings are introduced to a parasol and a chainsaw, resembling a microlight and its sound, so that they feel safe around a large shade and the noise of an engine. The birds are trained to fly around a microlight to get perfect images of flying for the documentary series. In this sense, the series not only provides imagery of 'the wilderness', but as the making-of episode represents, some of the birds are 'tame', sharing living spaces with humans. Goslings are brought up as companion species, as Haraway (2003) defines the nonhuman animals with whom we share our daily life. Birds do not grow up with just humans but with technology as well, as kind of nonhuman digital natives. I will get back to these encounters of humans, birds, and technology later in this section.

Many wildlife documentaries, especially blue-chip films, have a habit of framing humans and technology out of the image (cf. Bousé 2000). As Mitman (1999, 4) notes on the ways of looking at the wildlife films: '[W]e are drawn to the spectacle of wildlife untainted by human intervention and will. Yet, we cannot observe this world of nature without such interventions. The camera lens must impose itself, select its subject, and frame its vision.' Mitman's notion includes the idea of nonhuman agency: the camera selecting its subject and framing. Whether this notion is intentional or meant to include the human behind the camera lens, it

introduces the idea of technology as an enabler of a vision beyond human. If there are no humans behind the camera controlling the framing, it opens up spaces and frames that are not intentional but rather out of the human focus. These aspects of nonhuman agency and vision are not outside the human, although they 'challenge the limitations of the human senses and produce images which defy human perception', and the human is rather part of these assemblages (Zylinska 2017, 14).

Mitman (1999, 27) notes that film has been a technology of art and entertainment, but also of scientific research, like early studies of animal movements and behaviour. So, films about wildlife are also knowledge-producing technologies that have an impact of what we know about nonhuman world. The practice of blue chip documentaries to frame out the humans and technology suggests that there would be a pristine nature unattached to humans and culture. However, in *Earthflight*, the lives of the birds are not separated from human habitat; birds encounter humans and inhabit the same places and spaces as humans. Many different techniques in filming were used: some of the birds imprinted on humans and were filmed from microlights, while wild flocks were filmed from model gliders and silent drones. There were also full-sized helicopters with stabilised mounts and cameras on the backs of trained birds. There are many more traditional shots and sequences in the series as well, but in the article, I pay attention to aerial filming and shots that somehow reterritorialise the humanist tradition of wildlife documentary moving images as.

Technology like Lite Drones and small GoPro cameras enable filming in close proximity to birds, which expands the potential for perceiving otherwise, shaping ways of seeing. The technological development of the moving image made it possible to experience a feeling of flight and movement while observing the earth from an unusual point of view (Castro 2013, 119) and creating a new sensation of space (Lodder 2013, 109). The aerial view is about vision that is in itself almost always mediated, whether through an airplane, a hot air balloon, or a drone. Hence the aerial view creates a landscape and perspective that are out of mundane human vision. Technology is not just medium, but rather a full partner in the world-making process, as Haraway (2007, 249) states.

Filming from an animal's point of view has long been the wildlife filmmaker's dream (Cottle 2004, 98). This dream, to see like 'the other', also carries negative connotations of colonial thought and the 'symbolic violence of the question [how

does the other see?]' as Galt (2015, 54) notes. Even though cameras cannot record the exact eye move- ments of the birds or the specificity of their vision, cameras record environments and animal behaviours out of human focus and framing. As Haraway (2007, 252) points out, an 'immediate experience of otherness' cannot be evoked just by attaching cameras to animals. However, a camera that is carried by an animal can produce imagery and framing unfamiliar to audiovisual narration. Technological eye of the film camera enables us to see and imagine spaces out of our everyday experience, extending perceived territory out of human vision. It is not about to see like 'the other' per se, but rather to see otherwise. As Lawrence and McMahon (2015, 9) argue: 'Just as moving images configure animal worlds, so animals actively shape moving image worlds'. *Earthflight*'s aerial filming is shaped by the embodied animals, while the cameras have to be fitted for the birds' bodies, and therefore the animals' needs are also shaping the images and framing. As Burt (2002, 53) notes the idea of technology as enabler of seeing:

> The fantasy of looking through the camera as if through the eye of an animal to reveal further those realms of nature invisible to the human eye is an extension of this idea. At a more technical level, the very act of making a film using trained animals is premised on some form of mutual intelligibility in the look between human and animal.

This mutual intelligibility is obviously very present in the making-of episode.To get back to geese and the imagery in the documentary I talked about in the beginning of this section, the making-of episode shows us another sequence of interaction of humans, birds, and technology. The trainers and cameramen try to get the geese to fly past the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan, as the wild geese do on their flight path. Their trainer lifts her arm, imitating flying, the geese take off, and the camera starts filming while they fly past the Statue of Liberty. One of the geese is trained to carry a small HD camera attached to his back and he takes off and joins the other geese. The image shakes with the rhythm of his movement while wings frame the image on both edges. Soon he lands back on the boat and walks onboard. Other geese keep flying and start to ignore their trainers' calls, heading towards Brooklyn. One of the geese is carrying a transmitter so that the trainers can follow the signal when they lose sight of them. The trainers have to get into a car to follow the flock and have difficulties finding the signal around the high buildings. Once the signal is found, the trainers try to track it down on the streets by walking and running. Finally, they find the geese in a park, where they have landed to graze. The trainer says into a mobile phone: 'We got them, we got them. Obviously, we don't have them, but we are with them in a little park.' The

sequence of the making-of episode points out the embodiment of birds, humans, and technologies as well as their relations. The sequence demonstrates the agency of the birds in the filmmaking, not just as nonhuman cameramen and companion species (Haraway 2003) but also as having minds and intentions of their own beyond human control. When technology and animals are used to provide this kind of imagery, the technology and animals also challenge us and are, in a way, using the humans who must adapt to the nonhumans' specific needs (Haraway 2007, 262–263).

Through the shaky imagery of cameras on birds' back, the viewer is aware of technology, so that even if we do not see the actual camera, the images shake and wobble in away it does not provide an idea of 'pristine nature' without interference of technology (cf. Mitman 1999). The viewers are aware of a technological eye pointing and framing the environment in a point of view that is not controlled by humans. This opening of the vision beyond human may challenge the customary practice of looking of wildlife documentaries, and produce an assemblage, what I call here a more-than-human gaze. In the next section, I discuss the agency in the bird's-eye view and analyse the difference between the aesthetic tradition of aerial filming and the embodied perspective of the bird-camera.

Bird's-eye view and nonhuman agency

In discussions about aerial view, the figure of speech 'to look down upon' has been domi- nant, at least in early visualisations of the viewpoint (Dorrian 2007, 1). This kind of magis- terial gaze allows a panoramic view from on high and distance from an actual environment while the viewer possesses the seen object (Ivakhiv 2003, 298). Lorimer (2010, 247) states that by the use of aerial photography in wildlife films, 'individuation and audience identification are discouraged'. He refers to sweeping establishing shots and panoramas of 'objectified landscapes' filmed in the air. However, the traditional aerial image is altered in *Earthflight*. The idea of the distinct, active Cartesian subject who gazes at a passive object without any interconnectedness (Ivakhiv 2003, 297) is altered in the series by the images from a bird's-eye view.

In *Earthflight*, the bird's-eye view is in many cases created by cameras attached to birds' backs. There is also another kind of first-person perspective that is used to simulate the exact view that a bird would see, a POV shot. This kind of first-person shot is not often used in wildlife films or even in narrative fiction films.

Galloway has theorised about the first-person perspective in gaming, where the perspective is not marginalised as in cinema but 'it is commonly used to achieve an intuitive sense of affective motion. It is but one of the many ways in which video games represent action' (Galloway 2006, 69, emphasis mine). So this kind of perspective creates a vision like looking through birds' movements. Wildlife films tend to focus on action, such as mating and hunting (Bousé 2000, 4). In *Earthflight* the images address action but action is not necessarily a starting or ending point in a dramatic storyline. Flying, gliding, and landing are continuous action and repetitions, not really an action narrative in traditional sense. The bird's point of view when the camera is gliding through the air or in the middle of a flock, beside the birds, emphasises action and affective motion in relation to the environment. It is not an unattached vision like an aerial view usually is (Warner 2013, 12) but an affective assemblage of birds, technology and humans. Contrary to this kind of distanced look, the imagery of the bird camera produces a more-than-human gaze that is embodied and material while not being unattached from the environment around it. The bird becomes an active character for viewers to follow along, closing the idea of agency of the bird's-eye view. Burt (2002, 31) notes that when discussing about 'animal agency' we must keep in mind power we have over them. However, he addresses as well that animals also have an impact on us, and we must focus on their agency too, rather than always seeing them just passive objects. Focusing on the animal's body as a part of the cinematic process emphasises and rethinks not only animal life, but human narratives and perception as well (Smaill 2017, 18).

In blue chip wildlife films, first-person perspective and POV shots are rare. The perspective dismantles the division between the looking subject and the object to be looked at. The bird with a camera on her back is not an object to be looked at but rather a subject with agency in a narrative process. As Marina Warner has noted, an aerial view can be detached from action, as a kind of omniscient third-person point of view, and it can also be a first-person perspective with all-seeing qualities (Warner 2013, 12). However, here the images produce a perspective that is not omniscient, but rather material in its relation to the environment around it. The images are not detached from action but rather involve it. When birds are flying or landing, the camera is shaking and the image is strongly attached to the bird's movements, depending on landscape, weather, and air cur- rents. The aerial view does not imply power or a see-it-all quality but produces material encounters between animals, technology, and the environment that produces sensations in the

viewer. The close proximity to the birds that is enabled by advanced technology emphasises the embodiment of the birds in the images: the birds are not objects to be looked at, but rather they are co-makers of the visual material of the series. They are not filmed from a distance or the technology would be hidden from them; rather the encounters of the technology and birds are the focus. The birds have interaction with the cameras and they are imprinted and trained to work with technology in a way they could be called nonhuman digital natives. In the aerial POV and first-person perspective shots, the gaze cannot be detached from movements of birds and technology.

Recordings of a camera from a bird's back enable close-up and panorama views at the same time, as in the shots from a camera carried by a bald eagle. The camera is attached to the bird's back, and we see the eagle's head and wings—and the landscape – through a fisheye lens. The eagle is gliding in the air and whipping her wings while the camera is shaking to the rhythm of eagle's movements. In the image, between the eagle's wings, there are mountains and trees, or sloping ground, depending on the camera angle. POV shots, a long shot of the eagle flying over mountains and desert in front of the camera, and the first-person perspective shot from the eagle's back alternate in the sequence. Therefore the gaze alters between human and animal, depending on shots and cuts, and whether the framing shows the bird in the front of the camera, first-person perspective, or POV shot. The image functions as a close-up as we see her feathers shivering and head turning in close proximity, but we see also a landscape that is changing depending on the bird's movements. The first-person perspective (from the camera on the bird's back) creates the most material interactions in the image and emphasises the action, materiality, subjectivity, and landscape in the same shot.

Friedberg (1993, 184–185) notes that films virtually mobilise viewer's body and identities, like gender and race, and a viewer can wear different identities while watching a film. Bousé states (2003, 124) that viewers can identify to the character on the screen because of, for example, close-ups, point-of-view shots and reaction shots 'even if that character is an animal'. He calls this 'false intimacy', a relation that is never possible in real life between humans and wild animals. It is not an easy task for a viewer to wear an identity of nonhuman, like a bird in this case. However, the viewer gets glimpses of how it is to move and fly like a bird, and how their bodies relate to environment and air currents. Here, the gaze we place is not about wearing an identity of the bird or seeing them as merely objects but rather the images of bird-camera can make the viewer to relate not just to the

camera and the bird but to environment present in the image as well, and to gaze environment differently, out of humancentered perception, while imagery produces deterritorialisations of ways of seeing. And as I stated in the introduction, if we do not consider gaze so much as identity, but as territory, it opens up a potential to more-than-human gaze.

In the sequences with first-person perspective, when the camera has been placed on a bird's back, the sound is also part of the subject-making process. When the framing is shaky and attached to a bird's movement, the soundscape imitates the sounds of the environment where birds are flying. There is no non-diegetic music in the background in most cases – just wind, the sound of wings flapping, and birds' utterances. So it is not only a vision that is attached to an agency and subject-making process, but also a sound and materiality, kind of a haptic image. The haptic image is not just about seeing, but it involves other senses as well. Lowenstein (2015, 62) states that post- human spectatorship consists of this kind of 'technologically mediated but also affective and embodied aspects of "touch"': a sequence with geese flying over a rural countryside with cameras on their backs; birds landing on a field where we have a view of the bird's head and wings; human habitat, such as the yard of a farmhouse and garden, as back- ground for a bird's action. The image is unstable and randomly framed. The audio world is produced by wind and birds' voices, while there is no non-diegetic music. The air pressure is strongly present in an image and audio world while the goose is landing: it is flapping its wings while stopping the speed and when its feet hit the ground, the image is shaking even more as the speed declines and the bird starts walking on the ground. The film material is very different than if the cameras were controlled by humans all the time. Images follow the animals' rhythms and bring the nonhuman move- ment of birds and technology to the centre of the film's audiovisual aesthetics in these shots.

The sequence emphasises how human action has actually improved the environment for geese while the voice-over narration stresses how environmental change has affected to the geese's flyway:

> Snow geese taking the Mississippi route pass over Nebraska. Here, over the last 150 years, natural grasslands have been transformed into America's greenbelt. From the goose's per- spective, the changes are a major improvement, and now the snow geese population is booming.

The environment is shared with many other nonhumans, and human action is not

always as positive as represented here. While understanding the posthuman as a process of inter- relation and transformation with multiple 'others' (Braidotti 2011, 53), the more-than- human gaze is also a production of interspecies rhizomatics, tangled perceptions, and connections between humans and birds that stresses the processes of framing and production of a territory out of human focus. Unlike in the traditional blue chip documentaries which are referring to nature as unchangeable and unhistorical (Bousé 2000, 14–15; Pick and Narraway 2013, 8; Smaill 2017, 141), here the human-made change in the environment is mentioned and discussed in relation to geese's flyways while showing images from the bird-camera. The sequence brings together the environmental change made by humans and the bird's-eye view in such a way that a nonhuman point of view and vision become part of historical change with not only a past but also a possible future.

Birds have subjectivity in relation to the environment, and the subjectivity is compounded to action within a frame; the birds are active agents, not just objects to be looked at. The images offer glimpses of 'avimorphism', a subjectivity of birds (Ivakhiv 2013, 11), a way of seeing that is not anthropocentric: haptic flow of air currents and landscapes that are not defined by human needs. Haraway (2007, 258) states that the material from a crittercam, a camera attached to an animal, does not make much sense without voice-over narration. This might be the case with the images filmed underwater to which Haraway refers, but in aerial filming, the images are easier to interpret, even if they are shaky; the overall landscape offers a set point for a viewer's gaze to follow along: it has a horizon or ground as a focus point, unlike underwater. Here the environment has a great impact on how the gaze is focused. The gaze in bird's-eye view here is not unattached from the environment but rather emphasises the interconnectedness of animals and the environment. It is not an unattached vision from high above, but it produces a lived environment out of human focus. At least occasionally in *Earthflight*, the viewer is not just looking at birds, but birds become active agents to gaze with: they are pointing out a territory or a landscape that is not defined by humans' needs, but rather birds' needs. In the next section I discuss the landscape as a material, lived environment out of human focus and how the gaze is altered when the environment is not a stage where action takes place but rather an agent that affects birds, technology, and humans as well.

Visions on material landscapes

To get back to the making-of episode: the sequence where a vulture is carrying a

camera over a Kenyan landscape. The vulture was first trained to fly in the winds and air currents in Belgium and filmed later in Kenya. The vulture is about to take off from a plane and the voice-over describes:

> For her safety, the engines of the plane are stopped just before she flies. This is her first take on African skies and she is clearly enjoying the view. The on-board camera [the camera on the bird's back] reveals the bird is turning in a thermal, soaring upwards. But thermals are far stronger here than in Europe. It is time to call her back down. But the strong winds are taking the vulture away. She's heading to the peak of a very high hill.

In the images from the camera the vulture carries, she is first seen gliding in the air, while her wings frame the image. The camera shakes every time she lifts her wings, and the land- scape outlines green and brown plains and a lake. After she has landed, she walks slowly in the bushes and gazes around, the image from her back showing the head turning, the dry bushes and brown, rocky soil around her. Her trainers are trying to locate her with the help of the images from the camera on her back. In the sequence, the emphasis is on the animal agency and technology but also specific environmental factors, like air currents and weather conditions. So, instead of aspects of mastery and domination, like the conceptualisations of the aerial view often emphasise (Ivakhiv 2003; Lorimer 2010; Warner 2013), the bird's-eye view here is fragile and present in a moment.

The concept of the gaze is very much attached to landscape. What we see in the frames of an image creates some sort of a landscape, a territory. As Wylie (2004, 531) points out:

> Given that the subject is for the world – it makes no sense to speak of the gaze, or perception more generally, as a separate, 'unworldly' activity undertaken by a subject distanced from the world. Perception involves the unfolding of the world as landscape.

Landscape, in its classical understanding, has been comprehended as a human view of nature with aesthetic attraction; hence the natural environment has been normalised as an 'observed phenomenon' (Soper 2003, 339). Landscape has been something to be admired from a distance: there is a subject that gazes upon a landscape outside of and detached from the actual environment (Wylie 2004, 522). Objectifying environment into a representation, landscape produces tension between the material and the subjective as well as between inside and outside (Dorrian and Rose 2003, 16). In this sense, the images from the nonhuman, aerial view of the bird-camera challenge the idea of landscape as something to be seen from a distance. Rather these images move between object and subject and alter

the gaze of an outsider.

The imagery of *Earthflight* brings forth a way of looking in which we cannot maintain the distinction between subject and object because the gaze is immersed in the birds' point of view. And this is when the environment unfolds in different rhythms, movements, and perspective than if we were simply looking at a landscape with birds doing something in front of a camera – rather we are looking with the birds. One such example is a scene in which cranes fly over Venice. The camera is gliding in the air beside the birds, among the flock, becoming one of the birds. The city and the human habitat are seen in the back- ground, and the birds fly in front of the camera. In this case, the camera is part of the birds' movement and flies with them, getting very close to the birds to time to time, so that the wings are in a close-up, emphasising the movements of the feathers and wind. The background of the scene is still and even the birds seem not to be moving fast or even at all; only their wings are moving. The sequence is not a traditional aerial shot of the city but represents the air above the city as lived environment through birds.

In blue chip wildlife films, images of landscapes are usually establishing shots that rep- resent the territory where the action is taking place when the narrative focuses on animals, but here landscape functions as part of the narrative that cannot simply be cut out. The vision is attached to the camera's and the birds' movements, creating an unfamiliar perspective, deterritorialising the viewer's perception as a distant observer. This vision, a more-than-human gaze produces territories that are compound. These kinds of images of affective perceptions enable 'people to come, not a public, an audience, but something inhuman' (Grosz 2008, 77). While the camera flies beside the birds, the birds are in such close proximity that we are able to see the wrinkles of their feet and the shivering of their feathers. It is not possible to just watch the landscape from a distant position, but the landscape becomes a more material, lived enviroment because we perceive it – not only through tehcnology – but also through birds' movement in close proximity to their bodies.

Reflecting the world from above, as in *Earthflight*, enables us to see expansive land- scapes that would not be otherwise possible. *Earthflight* creates views of cities from above, through birds that fly over the human habitat. Human action is not the focal point. Rather, it is marginalised, while the emphasis is on the way in which birds benefit from the human habitat. The series does not differentiate between cities, rural, and natural landscapes in its bird's-eye view. The scenes of

these different environments do not make a distinction between nature and culture, but rather they represent the cities and the human habitat as the birds' 'natural' environment in the same way as forests and other sites not populated by humans. In a sequence where storks are flying over a city, it is emphasised how they benefit from the cities and the heat rising from rooftops and high- ways. The narrator explains the environment thus, normalising the idea of urban environments as the natural habitat of birds:

> Cities are an essential part of their flight plan. Hard, reflective surfaces are better at creating thermals than the surrounding countryside. Roofs act like storage heaters, pumping out heat even when the sun is behind a cloud. Sun-baked roads form a matching highway of hot air in the sky above. In fact, our urban sprawl now helps storks migrate.

The sequence creates a gaze to the cities that is birds' perspective, out of human focus. In the series, human-made constructions become more like geographical landmarks such as mountains and rivers, parts of the birds' environment to navigate through, deterritorialising the functions of human-made objects that now take a new shape. As stated in the voice-over, birds learn their flyways from other birds, and not all the birds use the same flyways. They navigate according to the Earth's magnetic fields as well as by sight. Cities and other human-made landmarks are part of their navigational maps which indicates that birds use, in a way, culturally learned gazing for the purpose of their migration. These images deterritorialise cities as only human habitat since birds live there as well sharing the environment. These depictions reframe the anthropocentric cinematic gaze on animals and transform the ways in which we see the environment – not only as a space inhabited by humans, but also by nonhuman animals. This creates different interpretations of city landscapes, everyday environments, and human-made buildings, because from the birds' point of view, the functions of human-dwellings do not differ from geographical landmarks. While this deterritorialises human-centred uses of urban or rural landscapes, it brings the focus to nonhuman subjects who utilise the same space. In a way, this transformation renarrativises (Ivakhiv 2003, 297) the landscape and the environment. The more-than-human gaze produced by imagery of bird cameras and cameras flying among the flock reterritorialise the vision on the landscape as it is usually understood. This also extends the perceived territory out of the anthropocentric gaze and human use, emphasising nonhuman perspectives.

Towards more-than-human gaze

To answer Burt's question (2002, 48) posed in the introduction: '[D]oes such a gaze do anything more than simply look?, my answer is "yes, it does"'. In the case of *Earthflight*, the imagery of bird cameras and the bird's-eye view rethink the tradition of aerial vision as magisterial gaze and its see-it-all qualities. The aerial view here becomes embodied and material, and it cannot be distinguished from animals who carry the camera and the materiality of technology. Technologies that work this way in a specific environment, do not necessarily function the same aesthetical ways somewhere else, like difference between underwater and aerial imagery of cameras carried by animals, like Haraway (2007, 258) notes about underwater films. This also emphasises the materiality of technology and its relations to specific environments, making these reterritorialisations visible. Animals here are an essential part of making of the imagery: they have agency and they could be described as nonhuman digital natives because they are aware of technology around them and because of their interaction with cameras and technology. Ways of watching this kind of imagery, interaction of birds and technology, our vision becomes compound with these nonhumans. But this kind of posthuman spectatorship it is not so much about taking an identity of birds because the viewer stays aware of the technologies, like shaky cameras, but rather the imagery produces more-than-human gaze: the vision to environ-ment without humancenteredness. The tradition of aerial view (Ivakhiv 2003; Lorimer 2010; Warner 2013) is altered.

This kind of aerial filming is a technology, which assists the processes of more-than- human gaze and human-animal intersubjectivity, and through this, brings into question the relationships among humans, animals, and the environment. Images of *Earthflight* do not just constrain the birds under the human vision, but bring forth a gaze that looks with the birds, stressing the agency of the birds as well as technology. This more- than-human gaze becomes something that is active, relational (recognising relations between humans and nonhuman animals, and is not anthropocentrically pre-given), and emphasises the shared environment. The audiovisuals of *Earthflight* cannot produce realistic images of how the birds themselves would perceive the environment. However, the series brings forth imagery of how to perceive otherwise. And these attempts to see and perceive differently are important, since our anhtropocentric way of perceiving is not sustainable one.

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Notes on contributor

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