HARTS & Minds

‘BEING IS AN OCTOPUS: EXPLORING OCTOPUSES, ORGANS, AND OUTSIDES IN JEAN PAINLEVÉ’S *LES AMOURS DE LA PIEUVRE* [THE LOVE LIFE OF THE OCTOPUS] AND PHILIP WARNELL’S *OUTLANDISH*.’

Jessica Barnfield

HARTS & Minds:
The Journal of Humanities and Arts

Vol. 2, No. 3 (Issue 7, 2016)

BEING IS AN OCTOPUS: EXPLORING OCTOPUSES, ORGANS, AND OUTSIDES IN JEAN PAINLEVE'S *LES AMOURS DE LA PIEUVRE* AND PHILIP WARNELL'S *OUTLANDISH*

Jessica Barnfield

Abstract

The artist and film-maker Philip Warnell asks, 'Temporary dwellings, spectral states, wandering organs – how can this help us to elucidate what has come to be deemed the 'animal'?' Focusing on Warnell's work in collaboration with Jean-Luc Nancy, *Etranges corps étrangers* [*Strange Foreign Bodies / Outlandish*] and Jean Painlevé's *Les Amours de la pieuvre* [*The Love Life of the Octopus*], I respond to Warnell's question, exploring these films alongside Nancy's writing on the body in *Corpus* and *L'intrus* [*The Intruder*], and raising questions about the displacement of the anthropocentric subject and the body's relation to its outside.

This article explores Nancy's writing on the body and senses in conjunction with thoughts on embodied cinema and the animal. The meeting of these strands in the films of Painlevé and Warnell troubles and blurs distinctions between interior and exterior, using the figure of the octopus to present something that is both resolutely outside and intimately inside. I discuss both visual and philosophical engagements with these ideas through Nancy's writings and his direct appearance in Warnell's film, as well as exploring other theorists' writings on questions of the body, animal and cinema.

This article focuses on the philosophy of touch and the examination of embodied reflections on the senses in order to examine the anthropocentric roots of our perception of touch and the ways we interact with the world.

Key Words: Nancy, Senses, Haptics, Film, Organs, Transplant, Octopus

****

'Le monde est étrangeté que n'a précédé aucune familiarité.'[1]
- Jean-Luc Nancy

Jean Painlevé's *Les Amours de la pieuvre* [*The Love Life of the Octopus*] (1965) bridges the gap between the scientific and the artistic. Painlevé creates an eerie space where the otherworldly and yet overtly corporeal existence of the octopus is demonstrated through the animated reading of a scientific narrative. This narrative is layered over images of the octopus, which vary from alien-like slithering over the sand to elegant flight through the water. Focusing more abstractly on the octopus, Phillip Warnell's *Outlandish* (2009) uses a philosophical text rather than scientific facts as the basis for narration. The reading of the philosophical text by Jean-Luc Nancy accompanies images of a boat adrift at sea; an octopus in a tank; a heart during surgery; and Nancy himself, whose image slips in and out of harmony with the audio.

Rather than tracing the extent to which *Outlandish* is directly influenced by *Les Amours de la Pieuvre,* this article brings the two films into dialogue in light of Nancy's philosophical writing on the body.[2] In doing so, I draw upon theories of embodied spectatorship and current research in cultural animal studies. By bringing themes of the animal, film, and philosophy of the body into dialogue, this study questions how the octopus body might pose a creaturely challenge to both Nancy's philosophy on the body and ideas of embodied spectatorship. It also examines how the octopus' body both problematises and supports such theories, whilst

exploring to what extent the intersection of philosophy, film and animal open up a new space for configuring interaction with the octopuses, organs, and outsides.

I

'If octopuses did not exist, it would be necessary to invent them.'[3]
- Peter Godfrey Smith

In describing the body, Nancy maintains that the body is an image, an exterior offered to other beings (and ourselves), whilst simultaneously chronicling a deeply rich and seemingly infinite list of fragments that extend from it. Nancy describes the body as:

> An image offered to other bodies, a whole body of images stretching from body to body, colours, shadows, fragments, grains, areolas, lunules, nails, hair, tendons, skulls, ratings, pelvis centers meatus, scum, tears, teeth, drooling, slots, blocks, languages, sweating, liqueurs, veins, pains and joys, and me and you.[4]

This anatomical and fleshly description demonstrates that the image of the body is not static and contained but rather a material reality that is proffered and sensed through touch and inter-bodily exchange. Laura McMahon explains that, 'whilst to consider the body as substance is to think in terms of interiority and depth, to configure the body as exposure is to think in terms of exteriority and surface'.[5] Whilst Nancy's philosophy focuses on this exteriority and surface that is existence as the limit between beings, his rich and substantive descriptions of the 'corpus d'images' [corpus of images] stretching from one body to the next nevertheless seems to imply an almost infinite interior depth. Nancy concludes that 'un corps est donc une tension' [a body is therefore a tension],[6] and it is this tension between the singular and plural, between intrusion and contact, and between surface and depth, which pulls Nancy to the central question in *L'Intrus*: 'Qui 'je'? […] Quel est ce sujet de l'énonciation, toujours étranger au sujet de son énoncé ?' [What 'I'? What is this subject of utterance, always estranged from the subject that utters it?].[7] In *Etre singulier pluriel*, Nancy also addresses the question of the 'I' directly, maintaining that 'I' cannot be separated from 'we', and that existence is always necessarily co-existence, being is always 'being-with'. Whilst focusing on the body as exposure and 'being-with', Nancy resists the fusion with foreign bodies, maintaining a difference between 'me' and 'you'. The limits between bodies mean that, rather than fusion of the self with the world, being is necessarily being-with; our bodies are implicated in a mutual co-exposure.

Yet this thinking of co-exposure and being-with seems to focus, implicitly if not explicitly, on a form of *human* co-exposure.[8] A reading of Nancy's earlier work in conjunction with animal bodies, in this case the body of the octopus, provides insights that trouble his philosophy even as they give supportive examples to some of his theories of co-exposure and co-existence. In the way that they touch, sense, and exist within the world around them, the octopus body and human body are vastly different. Whereas humans rely heavily on the eyes to form images and perceptions of their surroundings, octopuses use their many arms and the sense of touch to form a visual sense of the world around them. Nancy's thinking of 'ex-peausition' as a combination of the French 'peau' (skin), folded within a verb traditionally associated with sight, demonstrates the way in which Nancy configures the revelation of the visual through the sensual. Whilst humans demonstrate a certain synaesthesia, the octopus

takes this idea to its extreme.[9] Octopus arms, spotted with suckers that are loaded with chemicals, also taste whatever they touch. It is not at all clear whether, in the consciousness of an octopus, the sensations of sight, touch, and taste are separated at all or whether they converge easily, in a way that the human perspective finds hard to imagine.

At the surface level of the skin, for example, the octopus' body does not seem to be configured as a tension in the same way the human body is. Human skin is a complex surface that can change colour to reflect the internal, blushing in embarrassment, for example, as well as showing marks of the external; be it the gentle wrinkles of time or the more violent scarring of injury or surgery. In this way there is porosity to the human skin, which is evidenced via marks from both the outside and inside simultaneously. The octopus is, again, almost a parody of this aspect of the human, not only pushing porosity to an extreme but also taking it in new directions. For example, the octopus' skin also displays interior states, such as turning white when it feels threatened or angry and pink when it is amorous. Yet its reactions to its external surroundings are what really set the octopus apart, as its skin changes not only colour but also shape and texture in order to camouflage itself. The limit or tension between the octopus' insides, skin and surroundings is therefore unclear. Whereas the human wears the weathering of the exterior world upon the skin, the octopus' camouflage incorporates its surroundings giving the impression that the skin is almost fused with the material world. The outside does not leave a lasting mark on the skin, rather the skin senses and almost literally becomes the colour and texture of that which it touches. The octopus also possesses greater agency over its surface; whereas the human skin is inexorably wrinkled by time, the octopus changes its surface skin at will, depending on its situation.[10]

In using camouflage both for evading predators and for disguising itself in order to corner its own prey, the octopus demonstrates Elizabeth Grosz's description of the lingus, whose similar use of camouflage:

> […] makes it clear that body image provides the subject with an experience, not of its own body, but of the ways in which its body is perceived by others. The subject's experience of the body is irreducibly bound up with both the body's social status and its status in the eyes of others.[11]

The octopus therefore embodies Nancy's thinking of the body as awareness of the self from the outside. At the same time, the octopus' physical body pushes back against Nancy's understanding of the body. It is not clear, for example, that animals experience the same limits and spacing between themselves and their surroundings as the human body does. Grosz describes an insect as '[living] its camouflaged existence as not quite itself, as another.'[12] The octopus has a similar capacity for camouflage, obscuring the boundaries between self and exterior and leading us to question whether the animal conceives of itself as a 'self', that is to say, as separate from its surroundings.

Akira Lippit has suggested that the octopus has 'an inability to keep its insides out of view'.[13] However, it seems that from the octopus' simultaneous ability to display its interior life and subsume itself into its exterior surroundings, it also has an inability to keep the outside entirely separated from its own body. It is perhaps for this reason that the octopus is a 'figure of deviant visuality, a scene from the outside but also of the outside that glares back in the full splendour of a perverse and impossible visuality'.[14] This impossible visuality is almost a literal visualisation of Nancy's writing on the body; the philosophical corpus made physical corpus. The octopus also troubles the notion of separation between self and surroundings, adding more fusional dimensions to ideas of co-exposure and being-with. Thus, whilst the octopus seems to embody Nancy's thought on ex-peausition, it also subtly challenges the anthropocentric focus of his philosophy.

***

In wondering what it is like to experience the world through a body other than our own, and specifically a body of another species to our own, technology can be a valuable tool. Nancy describes technology as 'making sense or making visible the absence of reason'.[15] Cinema in particular is useful when considering questions pertaining to the animal because it works in and beyond language and reason, engaging instead with the body, the image, sound, movement, time, and space. Philosophy has often dismissed the notion of animal agency and selfhood due to the animal's inability to linguistically express itself. What cinema does, by incorporating these visual and embodied aspects, is allow for a space where the animal subject might express agency in terms outside of reason.

Theories of cinematic embodiment, and the affect of the cinematic image, are essential to the discussion of films that centre on animal subjects, as the theory focuses not on psychoanalytic interpretations founded in symbolism and language but on physical embodied ones. As contemporary film theorists Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks have argued, the cinematic image extends beyond the optical: Sobchack's theory of embodied spectatorship posits that far from being a flat visual surface from which we extrapolate intellectual meaning through symbols, cinema also engages with the senses of the spectator. Exploring what she calls 'cinema's sensual address', Sobchack studies our corporeal reactions to film, pointing to 'a body that, *in experience*, lives vision always in cooperation and significant exchange with other sensorial means of access to the world, a body that makes meaning before it makes conscious, reflective thought'.[16] There is therefore a corporeal engagement between screen and spectator that precedes an intellectual response. This reflects the previously discussed synaesthesia of the octopus insofar as the spectator has an experience rooted in the body and its senses, which combine to create a visual and bodily identification with the film.

Our bodies are therefore not just visual objects to be seen on the screen, they are also the sense-making subjects of cinema. Sobchack describes the cinematic experience as being able 'to be *both* the subject *and* the object of tactile desire', going as far as to say that 'there remains no basis for preserving the mutual exclusivity of the categories subject and object, inner and outer, I and world'.[17] This takes her one step beyond Nancy, and closer to the octopus, as the limit between 'me' and 'you' is dissolved.

The visuality of the octopus pushes back against this absolute dissolution between self and other through the cinematic screen if, as Sobchack suggests, cinematic bodies 'subvert their own fixity from within, commingling flesh and consciousness, reversing the human and technological sensorium, so that meaning, and where it is made, does not have a discrete origin in either spectators' bodies or cinematic representation but rather emerges in their conjunction.'[18] What, then, does the spectator feel when confronted with the octopus body on screen?

Sobchack describes the cinematic uncanny as 'an experience of disjuncture between the spectators' lived body and cinematic representation.'[19] This description seems particularly apt when considered alongside the cinematic animal body. The physical octopus body destabilises Nancy's thinking on the body by exposing itself as both eerily human and eerily other. Similarly, the animal body, and in particular the octopus body on film, creates an uncanny space where the spectator can both relate to the cinematic image through embodiment and yet simultaneously pull away from the foreign animal body displayed on the screen. If, as Sobchack suggests, we experience the cinema as an immediate sensory reaction due to our bodies' recognition of themselves on screen, then the confrontation with the alien-like octopus body involves a simultaneous touching and withdrawal.

Whilst echoes of Nancy's ideas of the body as sensuous exposure resonate in Sobchack's writing, her theory rejects a preservation of the limits between bodies. As McMahon points

out, 'Touch is primarily considered by […] Sobchack in terms of presence, fusion, and immediacy. The work of Nancy provides a useful intervention for qualifying this touch […] with an irreducible spacing'.[20] On the one hand, the octopus body seems to resonate strongly with Sobchack's theory of embodied, synaesthesic cinema as fused and intimately connected with others around them. On the other, Nancy's thinking of touch as always containing a withdrawal troubles the fusion of embodied cinema and resonates with the irreducible spacing we feel between our own body and the octopus body on screen. What is more, recognition of one's own body as withdrawing from those on the screen chimes with the biology of the octopus, which recognises its own skin and therefore does not stick to it as it does to other surfaces. The octopus is visually fused, but tactilely independent.

Writing specifically on the animal body within the context of theories of embodied spectatorship, Laura Marks states that 'cinematic conventions have a lot to do with our powers of putting ourselves in the other's paws'.[21] Marks discusses our conflicted and often hypocritical relationships with animals in cinema, highlighting the fetishistic and appropriative elements of many documentaries and films featuring animals. These films, argues Marks, are designed to deny the uncanny moment when 'the other, the absolutely alter, erupts into your space'.[22] They do this, according to Marks, by either enforcing the division between animal and human, or else by anthropomorphising animals to the extent that they are caricatures of human attributes. In the films discussed by Marks, the animal is seen either as a commodity, or as an entirely know-able body that the human spectator can relate to. As Marks phrases it, 'animals are mirrors, or they are meat'.[23] Marks' theory seems to resonate with that put forward by Lippit: the animal is the photographic prosthesis, which enmeshes with Sobchack's fleshly cinema screen confronting us with its uncanny portrayal of our unconscious.

Marks turns instead to Inuit films, which depict an altogether different approach to animals that 'asserts their *difference* to human beings'.[24] Marks champions these films where 'animals have a lot of humanlike qualities, [but] they are not necessarily the set of qualities that western humans like to project onto animals'.[25] She argues for the human depiction of animals on film overcoming the 'perversion' of petishism[26], and instead respecting 'the opacity of other creatures.'[27] Marks ends her powerful essay with the thought that; 'Unable to make assumptions about these furry and feathery others, we may be pulled into a more material understanding of our connections with them'.[28] This material understanding seems to stand in contrast with Lippit's idea of the animal as nature's unconscious – a stance which further mythologises the animal, forcing it to retreat into a symbolic rather than a material reality. Instead Marks roots us in our material exposure to, and being-with, these other creatures, an exposure that might take place through cinema.

***

What about those animals that do not fall into the category of 'furry and feathery'?[29] The octopus, in particular, presents a problem not only to Nancy's philosophy of the body and Sobchack's explanation of embodied spectatorship but pushes a probing tentacle into Marks' essay as well. The animals she discusses are primarily mammals, and her argument for the 'possibility not of identifying across a chasm but establishing communication along a continuum' appears to relate directly to those animals with which human communities must interact on various levels.[30]

The otherworldly existence of the octopus poses a problem here, seeming to present itself if not across a chasm, then at least as lying on the farthest horizon of the continuum. Suggesting the 'impossibility of cohabitation',[31] the octopus is perhaps one of the farthest beings from the human that we can conceive of.[32] Octopuses are foreign bodies in every

sense. However, increasingly 'human' attributes continue to be discovered in the octopus: its problem-solving skills, certain species' ability to build dwellings using tools, as well as its ability to recognise and form emotional responses to individual humans. Lippit's description of the octopus as 'more or less and more and less human' seems particularly apt: the disquieting and uncanny nature of the octopus is that it has both an entirely alien and yet strangely intimate relation to the human.[33]

Octopuses are creatures of the deep; therefore very few people prior to technology would come into contact with them on any kind of regular basis. In the modern age, through technology such as diving equipment, cameras, and tanks, the public is able to see and interact with octopuses like never before. Octopuses are, however, famously difficult to breed in captivity, and require highly specialised care in artificial conditions. They therefore pose serious questions to aquariums and zoos that claim to keep animals captive for breeding programs and wildlife protection. Simply put, octopuses are better off when left to their own devices.

The difficulty in containing the octopus therefore poses complex questions to both *Les Amours* and *Outlandish.* Whilst cinema allows for identification with the animal through embodied spectatorship, our withdrawal from the octopus' body also paradoxically reinforces the limits and spacing between species, leading us to question our anthropocentric understanding of the world around us.

II

'Reality is at the heart of all great art […] everything the artist creates originates in nature'.[34]
- Goll

Both Painleve's *Les Amours de la Pieuvre,* and Warnell's *Outlandish* subvert the traditional cinematic structure, in that they allow for a significant gap between the narrative text and the visual image. Into this gap slithers the octopus body which questions the role of language in the exposition of the body, particularly that of the animal. In the excess of images afforded to the viewer in *Les Amours,* the octopuses appear at once overtly corporeal and otherworldly. This links to Nancy's writing on *exscription* and its relation to the body in *Corpus,* where he suggests: 'The body, without doubt, is *what one writes,* but it is absolutely not *where* one writes, and nor is the body *what* one writes – but always what writing exscribes'.[35] According to Nancy, writing as *exscription* is a movement of sense, which is always in excess of the inscribed meaning. Likewise, the octopus body is inscribed in the world and yet its overt visuality through the cinematic image eludes linguistic representation, and is in excess of the narrative. It is in excess because it does not directly reflect what is being described in the narrative; rather it extends above and beyond the narrative prose to offer a new image and meaning to the viewer. The octopus is exscribed in both *Les Amours* and *Outlandish.*

Les Amours plays with language's capacity to both explain and obscure, imbuing its narrative with an eerie and otherworldly reading, which functions in excess of the purely objective signification of the scientific narrative. Whilst the words themselves remain scientifically objective with splashes of humour, the actual reading of the text in the voiceover denotes the physicality of the narrator. Painlevé describes the man who read the text for *Les Amours:* 'He was an old man who […] refused to wear glasses. He was therefore obliged to stick his face […] close to the microphone, where one could hear his emphysema'.[36] As the physicality of the narrator is emphasised here, the spectator is drawn closer to the audio through the technologies of cinema and of the microphone, which capture this particular

material reality. Here we see the way in which the transient power of language to signify, abstract and stand-in for physical realities is interrupted by its immanent (physical) articulation.

The physicality of the narrative in *Les Amours* gives rise to an audible text that is so close it whispers in the viewers' ear. The viewer cannot help but almost recoil at this closeness to a voice that carries with it, as Ralph Rugoff has suggested, 'an alternating rhythm of seduction and repulsion.'[37] The seductive repulsion of the audio is reflected in the curiously haptic images of the octopuses. These images invite us at once to feel the tactile unfurling of tentacles and also to recoil from their sheer strangeness, emphasising the gap between the human body of the spectator and the octopus body on screen, as well as using the image to express qualities of the octopus that exceed inscription through the textual narrative. This is a sort of textual 'transimmanence'; on the one hand the written text transcends the physical reality of the corporeal images in the ideas it expresses, on the other it is dependent on the physical materiality of its expression, and is interrupted by the physical failings of the body (such as emphysema) when read aloud.

The ways in which body and language interrupt each other is reflected in *Outlandish* through the interplay between presence and absence at work between textual corpus and bodily image. As Maeve Connolly points out: 'Both film and text dramatize the "inside" of philosophical thought as its outside so that the body of the philosopher is encountered as written corpus, as actor, and as assemblage of organs'.[38] This dramatization of the inside of philosophical thought is encountered in the cadence of the text itself, read by Nancy; as the film progresses we cannot help but notice a rhythmic mirroring in Nancy's text, his voice, and the boat that is buoyed along by the waves even as dissonance is created between image and audio. In reflecting the cadence of the waves and the boat in both the written text and its oral incarnation, Nancy and Warnell highlight this connection between the written text and its outside.

In *Outlandish,* the text is not contained within the human body but extends beyond it, and is in excess of it. Nancy's voiceover forms the narrative for the film, appearing in the opening scene as a disembodied voice that echoes in the image of the sky and sea that meet to form an almost limitless horizon. This opening scene shows the voice that should sound from the body instead disembodied and almost God-like, emanating not from the image of a body on screen but instead from the exteriority of nature; rocks, sea, sky, and endless horizon. The body therefore becomes the outside, and the voice emitting from the body mirrors, or is mirrored in, the external surroundings shown in the film.

We move from the rugged exteriority of the very opening shot into the extreme interiority of the first section, 'Etranges corps étrangers' ['Strange Foreign Bodies'], which situates Nancy's body behind a desk, surrounded by a seemingly limitless sea of books. Nancy's position as walled in by the written word over-emphasises his position as a philosopher, as well as highlighting the unique relationship between humankind and written language. Nancy's voice now appears to emanate from his image, giving the sense that this is a body at home in this literary and linguistic space. By displacing Nancy's voice from his body in the opening scene and then reuniting them here, Warnell draws our attention to the technology of cinema, reminding the viewer that there is often a physical disjuncture between the audio recording and the recorded image on film, thus constantly interrupting our transcendent connection with the images and audio.

It is interaction of the abstract act of comprehension and the physical materiality of the world that is made evident in both films. As Andrea Lissoni has suggested in reference to *Outlandish*, 'it is a work that reveals a rare capacity […] of "thought in action"', and this thought is troubled and interrupted by frequent cinematic meditations on the octopus body, and the *partes extra partes* symbolised by the 'wandering heart' which we see in its in-

between state moving from one body to another.[39] The usually interior and invisible act of thought is made visible through the body of the film which shows images that are related in a dreamlike, almost unconscious way, and woven together or made coherent by a spoken narrative, which is nevertheless slightly disjointed from them.

Disjuncture and its relation to bodily exscription are seen in the first section of *Outlandish,* where a shot of an empty chair from which Nancy's body has vanished coincides with a distinct popping sound. The coincidence of the empty chair with the popping sound gives the impression that Nancy's body has almost reduced and vanished, referring to a later moment in the film where Nancy describes extension as saving us from 'la condition irréelle du point' [The unreal condition of being a dot].[40] What seems to be suggested here is the exscription of the body through language and image, and the way that writing in excess of signification extends the body; it is as though Nancy's body has dissolved or extended into the bodies of books behind him. The vanished body exists in the written and audible text that floods the cinematic image in the absence of the body. Lissoni suggests that, 'among sounds and images, what literally enters into resonance is the human body'.[41] In this particular sequence of the film as elsewhere, the absence of the human body can simultaneously make us reflect on its physicality, as the body enters into resonance as sound and tactility, as well as image.

Entering into resonance alongside the human body is, of course, the octopus body. Whilst the absence of the human body makes us reflect upon its physicality and tactility through sound, both Warnell and Painlevé use the overt visuality of the octopus alongside carefully constructed soundtracks to allow the viewer to reflect on the corporeality of the octopus itself. The concluding section of this article discusses the ways in which the films use embodied spectatorship, and the bodies of the films themselves, to draw the viewer towards the octopus body, emphasising the distinctions between what we see on screen and our sense of self.

***

Whilst the spoken texts in both films express a human voice and human thoughts surrounding their animal subjects, the physical construction of both films draws us into the world and body of the octopuses they portray. *Outlandish,* for example, is split physically into eight sections mimicking the octopus' eight arms. Therefore whilst identification is drawn with the human at the level of language, the body of the film itself expresses the corporeality of the octopus. Mimicking the tactile arms seen in detail in *Les Amours,* the segments in *Outlandish* unfurl and brush against each other but resist fusing into a wholly contained singularity. Like the octopus' eight arms, the eight segments of the film function semi-autonomously, informing but not relying upon each other.

Whilst drawing our attention to the differences and limits between the spectator and the octopuses, both films simultaneously draw us into the creatures' worlds and bodies. Marks points out that: 'the belief in radical alterity, that it is absolutely impossible to share the experience of an Other, be it cultural or species Other, ironically leads to collapsing the difference between us and them'.[42] Whilst Marks critiques this collapse, it is true that the cinematic camera and the scientific microscope allow these films to cut across species divides and embody the experience of the animal by portraying its un-relatable otherness. In *Les Amours,* Painlevé films the growth and hatching of the octopus' eggs in a sequence that is accelerated so that a month's hatching takes place in just over two minutes. The camera not only allows an extension of the human eye, but the extreme close-up also blurs species' divisions for a while, as the fertilised eggs and rapid embryo growth could, in the early stages, be the close-up viewing of a number of species (including the human).

Les Amours mimics the ineffable quality of the octopus: furtive, mysterious, playful and ethereal. Ralf Rugoff describes Painlevé's films as 'ironically anthropomorphic', using

humorous tropes of the scientific narrative to displace and disconcert the viewer.[43] Over images of the octopuses mating, Painlevé's narrator informs us that 'there is no recommended position for doing this'. The idea of a recommended position for the octopus appears ridiculous as we are confronted with its many arms and mutable body, so different to our own. As suggested in the previous chapter, Painlevé draws our attention simultaneously to the alien bodies and the shared, universal act of mating, thus subverting anthropocentric power. As Rugoff points out, 'Painlevé delights in presenting his subjects as uncanny hybrids that, for all their foreignness, call to mind things close to home'.[44] This familiar foreignness is highlighted in the mating scenes; one of the male octopus' three hearts races when confronted with the female octopus in the tank. We might be anthropomorphically inclined to attribute this to a kind of human 'heart fluttering'; however, it is much more likely a result of his fear of being ingested. Therefore the scene we watch is not (only) a romantic and erotic engagement between the animals, but (also) one of life and death. Whilst this might seem entirely alien to the human, the intensity of these erotic relations reaches across species boundaries.

Such uncanny alignments are also at work in *Outlandish* as comparisons are carefully drawn between both the animal body and the cinematic body, as well as between the octopus and the heart. No organ could be more 'close to home', more central in the human's thinking of itself and its desires, than the heart which is the focus of *L'intrus* and is often a symbol for the truth of the human spirit as much as it is an organ. The heart, like the animal, has been abstracted from its material reality and turned instead into a symbol in collective consciousness.

In Warnell's film, comparisons are drawn not between the way the hearts function in both human and octopus bodies, but between the heart as a physical organ and the material body of the octopus. It has been stated of Warnell's film that:

> The heart, removed from its arterial chamber, is little different from the squid flagellating in its artificial vitrine, a being whose insidedness is suddenly 'excoriated', dispirited, thus revealing itself as an outside, a creature without shelter, a body which only embodies.[45]

The similarities between the octopus body and the heart are drawn through the juxtaposition of visual images in the film; for example the scene 'Greffe' [Graft] in which we see human hands working on a beating, flagellating human heart in a metal dish, are directly followed by the scene 'Sirène' [Siren] in which we see the octopus close up, being propelled around its container by the waves. A connection is thus drawn between the visuality of the octopus and the visuality of the heart.

The use of disembodied hands throughout *Outlandish* carefully links the philosopher's body with the body of the octopus and the heart in transition. Disembodied hands are used in three situations in the film*:* the hands on the clapperboard, the hands operating on the human heart, and the hands placing the octopus in its tank.

In the first section, hands snapping a clapperboard shut briefly obscure a close-up of Nancy's face, thus interrupting the intimacy of the shot. These hands appear again shortly after Nancy has described the tumour as a mystery that 'garde encore pour nous le secret sur sa provenance exacte' [guards for us the secret of its exact provenance], where we see a close-up of the tank.[46] Into this cloudy water is placed the octopus that enters, like the tumour, without a reference to its secret origin. A pair of human hands places the octopus in the tank, briefly caressing its tentacles with their gloved fingers. The image of these gloved human hands without body is found again in the hands that work on the human heart; in an almost octopus-like fashion, the hands of several people work autonomously, but also as part of a harmonious whole, with instruments and tools that act as extensions of their own bodies.

In linking the octopus with the human heart as well as Nancy's body through images of hands caressing, prodding, and pulling, Warnell links the octopus, heart, and philosopher through a tactility – a fragility and shared finitude. As Connolly has pointed out, both the status of the organ on the operating table in 'Greffe' and the octopus body in the tank in 'Sirène' are open to question. They hover somewhere between life and death, pulled at by exterior forces.[47] The heart is in the transitional moment where its physical wellbeing and viability are more important than its subjective identity. The heart is thus dislocated from its symbolic or emotional meaning within the body and its insidedness is excoriated. Similarly, the octopus is taken from the sea and placed in the tank, and Nancy is 'placed' in the film by the hands on the clapperboard. This placing of Nancy's body appears to make the philosopher 'less-than-human'; Nancy is in the process of becoming-animal. He is a being whose insidedness (philosophical thought and the heart) is suddenly excoriated, like the octopus removed from the depths of the sea and placed in the transparent tank.

There are dual forces at work, however: whilst the human body might be said to become less-than-human, the non-human elements in the film become alive with their own agency and subjectivity. In the scene 'Sirène' ['Siren'] the octopus remains still, buoyed only by the external forces of the waves and the rhythm of the boat, which is mirrored in the rhythm of Nancy's voice, reflecting the way the externalised heart is kept alive only by the external technology of instruments and hands. Warnell thus encourages a comparison between the most intimate organ, the heart, and the most alien of animals, the octopus. In so doing he succeeds in both making foreign the intimate heart, and making intimate the foreign octopus.

Conclusion

Cinema is thus perhaps an example of what Nancy refers to as 'l'incalculable' [the incalculable] in *L'equivalence des catastrophes* [The Equivalence of Catastrophes]; it is always in excess of the inscribed signification of sound and images; it is exscribed. For example, in *Outlandish* the final section contains a scene in which Nancy talks about the ineffability of the animated body, as the cinematic screen remains completely black and non-representational. This juxtaposition of a discussion of the ineffability of the body alongside a black screen demonstrates the limits of cinematic representation, and of the image itself, signalling instead the ineffable space that exists between spectator, cinematic image, and identification – a space interestingly created by Painlevé through an excess of images rather than a lack of them.

These infinite spaces seen in *Les Amours* extend both within and outside the body, meeting at the skin's surface and illustrating the 'infiniment grand cosmique aussi bien que l'infiniment petit subatomique' [infinitely grand comsic as well as the infinitely small subatomic].[48] In showing visuals that are an excess of images which brush against each other without ever fusing into a visual narrative, both Painlevé and Warnell exscribe the octopus body which resists and pushes against inscription into each film's respective scientific and philosophical narratives. Anat Pick points to 'vulnerability as a universal mode of exposure' and it is this universal vulnerability beneath the cinematic lens that is explored in both films as they trouble distinctions between species. [49]

According to Pick: 'The human-animal distinction is a site of contestation, anxiety, and ritual (philosophical, scientific, religious, and artistic)'.[50] Many of these rituals are at work in *Les Amours* and *Outlandish*. However, by enacting the rituals of scientific, artistic, and philosophical thought in a visual and corporeal way, the films succeed in blurring the human-animal distinction. The animal is both mythologised, and pulled from its mythic status into a material reality; the centrality of the human is troubled as the human body finds itself fragmented, materialised, and abstracted from the visual narrative. In this way both Painlevé

and Warnell succeed in configuring a world that is multicentric, a philosophical space where octopuses, organs, and outsides communicate along a cinematic continuum.

Notes

[1] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Etranges Corps Etrangers', in *Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies* (London: Calverts, 2010), p. 31 [The world is strangeness that is not preceded by any familiarity].
[2] Warnell writes: 'the peculiarities of sea life are perhaps most successfully witnessed in the extraordinary, pioneering marine cinematography and sunken cinema of Jean Painlevé, epitomized by his curious masterpiece, *The Love Life of the Octopus* in 'The Sea With Corners'. See *Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies,* p. 39.
[3] Peter Godfrey-Smith, 'On Being an Octopus', *The Boston Review*, 3 June 2013. <http://www.bostonreview.net/books-ideas/peter-godfrey-smith-being-octopus> [accessed 1 June 2015].
[4] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Paris: A. m. Metaille, 1992), p. 105 [Une image offerte à d'autres corps, tout un corpus d'images tendues de corps en corps, couleurs, ombres locales, fragments, grains, aréoles, lunules, ongles, poils, tendons, crânes, cotes, pelvis, centres, méats, écumes, larmes, dents, baves, fentes, blocs, langues, sueurs, liqueurs, veines, peines et joies, et moi, et toi].
[5] Laura McMahon, *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda, 2012), p. 16.
[6] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus,* p. 126.
[7] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Intrus* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2000), p. 13.
[8] In his essay 'The Human Without', Martin Crowley addresses Nancy's conflicted relationship with humanism, and with the animal. Recounting a conversation between Derrida and Nancy, Nancy is portrayed as light-heartedly brushing away the question of the animal stating that, 'Jacques looks after the animals' (Derrida and Nancy, *Sense en tous sense* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2004), p. 199). Crowley explains that 'Nancy's version of deconstruction insistently refers itself to the human, humanity, man'. See Martin Crowley, 'The Human Without', in *Exposures: Critical Essays on Jean-Luc Nancy*, Special Issue of *The Oxford Literary Review*, ed. by Patrick ffrench and Ian James (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 67–81 (p. 69). This quote refers solely to the human, appearing to stand in contradiction to Nancy's idea of co-existence and co-exposure which surely should encompass all beings, not solely humans.
[9] Human synaesthesia being the way in which certain senses such as touch being stimulated by other senses such as sight or smell.
[10] Roland C. Anderson, Jennifer A. Mather, James B. Wood, *Octopus: The Ocean's Intelligent Invertebrate* (London: Timber Press, 2010).
[11] Elizabeth Grosz, 'Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism,* edited by Elizabeth Grosz & Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 278–29 (p. 285).
[12] Grosz, 'Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death', p. 281.
[13] Akira Lippit, 'Oectopus', *A Visual Studies Journal,* (2005), 9–13 (p. 10).
[14] Lippit, 'Oectopus', p. 13.
[15] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Self Deconstruction of Christianity: An Open Discussion with Jean Luc Nancy', The European Graduate School, (August 2000), <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/the-self-deconstruction-of-christianity/> [accessed 25 May 2015].
[16] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts* (London: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 55 and 59.
[17] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts,* p. 66.
[18]Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts,* p. 67.
[19] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts,* p. 74.
[20] McMahon, *Cinema and Contact*, p. 7.
[21] Laura Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 25.
[22] Marks, *Touch*, p. 32.
[23] Marks, *Touch*, p. 32.
[24] Marks, *Touch*, p. 34.
[25] Marks, *Touch*, p. 38.
[26] Petishism meaning here an excessive love of animals that are kept as pets, bordering on an unhealthy obsession, which stands in stark contrast to the treatment of animals in other spheres.
[27] Marks, *Touch*, p. 39.
[28] Marks, *Touch*, p. 39.
[29] Marks, *Touch*, p. 39.
[30] Marks, *Touch*, p. 39.

[31] Lippit, 'Oectopus', p. 10.
[32] Peter Godrey-Smith explains in 'On Being an Octopus', that our closest evolutionary touchstone with the octopus is estimated to be a sea-worm around 600-million years ago. From then, both octopus and humans have evolved in vastly different ways. The octopus has taken on an almost alien-like status within human culture – from sailing folklore where the octopus often figures as the mysterious and monstrous Kraken, to the Hawaiian myth that considers the octopus the last surviving race of an alien world that predates this one.
[33] Lippit, 'Octopus', p. 10.
[34]Andy Masaki Belolows and Marina McDougall (eds.), *Science is Fiction* (USA: Brico Press, 2000), p. 12.
[35] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus,* p. 76 ['Le corps, sans doute, c'est *qu'on écrit,* mais ce n'est absolument pas *ou* on écrit, et le corps n'est pas non plus *ce* qu'on écrit- mais toujours ce que l'écriture *excrit*'].
[36] Belolows and McDougall, *Science is Fiction*, p. 50.
[37] Belolows and McDougall, *Science is Fiction*, p. 50.
[38] Maeve Connolly, 'Outlandish: Introduction by Maeve Connolly', <http://www.vdrome.org/warnell.html> [accessed 14 May 2015].
[39] Andrea Lissoni, 'The Meaning of the World Outside the World', first published in *Mousse Contemporary Art* (2011) <http://phillipwarnell.com/The-Girl-with-X-ray-Eyes> [accessed 6 January 2016], p. 26.
[40] Nancy, 'Etranges corps étrangers', p. 30.
[41] Lissoni, 'The Meaning of the World Outside the World', p. 26.
[42] Marks, *Touch*, p. 24.
[43] Belolows and McDougall, *Science is Fiction*, p. 50.
[44] Belolows and McDougall, *Science is Fiction*, p. 50.
[45] 'Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies', *Frieze Publishing*, January 2011, <http://blog.frieze.com/outlandish-strange-foreign-bodies> [accessed 10 June 2015].
[46] Nancy, 'Etranges corps étrangers', p. 29.
[47] Maeve Connolly, 'Outlandish: Introduction by Maeve Connolly'.
[48] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'equivalence des catastrophes* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2012), p. 49.
[49] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 5.
[50] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, p. 1.

Bibliography

Anderson, Roland C., Mather, Jennifer A., and Wood James B, eds. *Octopus: The Ocean's Intelligent Invertebrate* (London: Timber Press, 2010).

Belolows, Andy Masaki, and McDougall, Marina. *Science is Fiction* (USA: Brico Press, 2000).

Connolly, Maeve. 'Outlandish: Introduction by Maeve Connolly', <http://www.vdrome.org/warnell.html> [accessed 14 May 2015].

Crowley, Martin. 'The Human Without', in *Exposures: Critical Essays on Jean-Luc Nancy*, Special Issue of *The Oxford Literary Review,* ed. by Patrick ffrench and Ian James (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 67–81.

Derrida, Jacques and Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Sens en tous sens*, (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2004).

Frieze. 'Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies', Frieze Publishing, January 2011, <http://blog.frieze.com/outlandish-strange-foreign-bodies/> [accessed 1 June 2015].

Godfrey Smith, Peter. 'On Being an Octopus', in *The Boston Review*, June 2013 <http://www.bostonreview.net/books-ideas/peter-godfrey-smith-being-octopus> [accessed 1 June 2015].

Grosz, Elizabeth. 'Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Elizabeth Grosz & Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 2005).

Hayward, Eva. 'Enfolding Vision: Refracting The Love Life of the Octopus', *A Visual Studies Journal*, (2005), pp. 29– 44.

Lippit, Akira. *Electric Animal* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

Lippit, Akira. 'Oectopus'. *A Visual Studies Journal* (2005).

Lissoni, Andrea. 'The Meaning of the World Outside the World', *Mousse Contemporary Art* (2011) <http://phillipwarnell.com/The-Girl-with-X-ray-Eyes> [accessed 6 January 2016].

Marks, Laura. *Touch* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

McMahon, Laura. *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda, 2012).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Corpus* (Paris: Editions Métailié, 2006),

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 'Outlandish étrangers', in *Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies* (London: Calverts, 2010).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Etre singulier pluriel* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1996).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *L'equivalence des catastrophes* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2012).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *L'Intrus* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 2000).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Une Pensée finie* (Paris: Editions Galilé, 1990).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Le Sens du monde* (Editions Galilée: Paris, 1993).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 'The Self Deconstruction of Christianity: An Open Discussion with Jean-LucNancy', The European Graduate School, (August 2000), <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/the-self-deconstruction-of-christianity/> [accessed 25 May 2015].

Painlevé, Jean. *Les Amours de la pieuvre*, France, 1965, <https://youtube/nzclhRnlC08>, [accessed 6 January 2016].

Pick, Anat. *Creaturely Poetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts* (London: University of California Press, 2004).

Warnell, Phillip. 'Intimate Distances: Mediating Mutuality, Contestation and Exchange Between Bodies', *Leonardo* (2009), pp. 28–35.

Warnell, Phillip. *Outlandish*, UK, 2009 (Currently unavailable to view online, to view please contact the filmmaker directly via <http://www.phillipwarnell.com/>).

Warnell, Phillip. 'The Sea with Corners', in *Outlandish: Strange Foreign Bodies* (London: Calverts, 2010).

*****

Biography

Jessica Barnfield studied French and Spanish Literature at the University of Edinburgh before going to Queens' College Cambridge. Here she gained a distinction in the European Literature and Culture MPhil and became increasingly fascinated by the relationship between human culture and animals. She now works in publishing, in London.