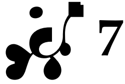 7

Filming the Frozen South

Animals in Early Antarctic Exploration Films

Elizabeth Leane and Stephen Nicol

At the beginning of *90˚ South* (1933), Herbert Ponting appears on screen to introduce viewers to his visual narrative of Robert F. Scott's second expedition (1910 to 1913):

> I would like to say just a word or two about the great white south. The Antarctic continent is the home of nature in her wildest and most relentless moods, and it is there that the hurricane and blizzard are born. Though much larger than Europe, that vast continent has never been inhabited by man. It is utterly devoid of vegetation, and no land animals of any kind exist there. The only living creatures are those that come out of the sea, and the heart of that ice-bound wilderness has been trodden by only ten men since the creation. It is the uttermost end of the Earth.

In a period when cinema had recently begun to attract substantial audiences, and when safari films set in exotic locales were particularly popular, footage of 'nature in her wildest and most relentless moods' was bound to create interest (Bousé 2000: 46–57). Yet British and American audiences who had recently thrilled to dramatic scenes of animal hunt in far-flung expanses such as Africa and the Arctic – *Polar Bear Hunt* (1907), *Arctic Hunt* (1911), *Paul J. Rainey's African Hunt* (1912) – were not likely to be content merely with *human* heroics and tragedy played out in this remote southern environment. A key cinematic drawcard of the time was the inclusion of 'quaint scenes of animal life' (McKernan 2000: 100). Ponting and his counterparts, officially employed to document human endeavour, were thus required by commercial necessity to foreground animal life in the very region where it was sparsest.

In this chapter, we analyse the representation of animals in Ponting's film – a 1933 reworking of material shot over twenty years previously – alongside another prominent Antarctic exploration film of the same period, Frank Hurley's *South* (1919), the film of Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic (or *Endurance*) Expedition (1914 to 1917). In response to contemporary interest, Hurley and Ponting tried to create films that combined human drama with footage of exotic animals, with

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limited success. While there was no lack of human drama, it was not always possible to film it; and animal drama, where it could be captured or manufactured, did not intersect with the human narrative in easy or palatable ways. The gaps and incoherencies in these influential films reveal the complex and problematic nature of human–animal relations in what historians sometimes term the 'Heroic Era' of Antarctic exploration.

The images that Antarctic cinematographers and photographers took of native Antarctic species were for many people their first visual encounter with these animals. Luke McKernan (2000: 92) observes: 'The classical era of polar exploration and the start of motion pictures took place at almost the same time'. The earliest land-based Antarctic expedition, which departed in 1898, reportedly took with it a 'kinematograph camera' first manufactured only the previous year (McKernan 2000: 92; Bottomore 2005: 523). Ernest Shackleton certainly took a 'cinematograph machine' on his *Nimrod* expedition of 1907 to 1909, 'in order that we might place on record the curious movements and habits of seals and penguins, and give the people at home a graphic idea of what it means to haul sledges over ice and snow' (Shackleton 1909: 26). His expedition film, now lost, was shown extensively and was a commercial success (McKernan 2000: 93–94). Numerous other expeditions followed suit, including those led by Jean-Baptiste Charcot, Roald Amundsen, Robert F. Scott, Douglas Mawson and Nobu Shirase. The latter three also included a professional cameraman, with Scott being the first leader (just) to take this step. Thus, uniquely, the public encountered films and photographs of the continent at roughly the same time as it encountered the first written, oral and artistic responses.[1]

Little was known about some Antarctic species, such as the emperor penguin, before the early twentieth century, so photographs and films were central to the initial public perception of these animals. The first penguins seen outside the southern hemisphere were the king penguins exhibited at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park, London, in 1865 (Martin 2009: 78); they were described by one contemporary reporter as 'singularly misshapen' and 'grotesque' (*The Times*, 18 April 1865: 10). Rockhoppers – also a subantarctic species – were in the same zoo later in the century (Martin 2009: 86). But the two penguin species that breed in the Antarctic continent – Adélies and emperors – were much harder to transport. The first of these to reach northern hemisphere cities alive were brought to the U.S. by Richard Byrd's second expedition in 1935, and it was only in the 1940s and 1950s that zoos began to maintain them for any length of time.

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Antarctic animals were therefore a novel attraction for cinemagoers. But complicating this was the primary role they played in Antarctic expeditions. In a continent 'utterly devoid of vegetation', the only source of fresh food was animals, native or imported. Isolated from human communities, the expeditioners became very fond of their sledge dogs and the latter feature prominently, often as individualised subjects, in exploration films. Yet dogs (and also ponies) were not infrequently consumed, either by each other or by the men, both by plan and by the exigencies of circumstance. While their deaths were not shown or mentioned on screen, audience members familiar with these celebrated expeditions would have known of their fate from other sources, adding a disquieting element to their fond portrayal.

Native animals, which represented exotic and unusual life forms for audiences at home, also provided companionship of a kind for men living in an otherwise desolate region (this was especially the case for penguins [ibid.: 89–90]). But they, too, could likewise be reduced to supplies shortly after their images were captured. Wild animal death was admittedly a normal, indeed highly popular, component of films at the time. Yet in most cases the animal killed was a fierce predator, hunted down and shot. The killing of marine animals, such as emperor and Adélie penguins and Weddell seals, that were slow and clumsy on land, had little of the drama of the conventional big-game hunting scene so beloved by audiences of the period. As cultural historian Brigid Hains (2002: 60–61) writes: '[I]t was hard to extract much manly adventure from shooting a Weddell seal . . . there was little honour, and no courage, required . . . Ironic humour was probably a more honest response to the strange helplessness of Antarctic wildlife than triumphal slaughter'. Thus, the central narrative link between wildlife and the human drama – the reduction of the former to food to enable the latter – was not one that the expeditions were keen to showcase visually.[2]

For all of these reasons, the contradictions and incongruities that frequently characterise human relationships with animals become evident in early Antarctic exploration films in unique ways. In the following, we examine how these incongruities play out specifically in Ponting's and Hurley's films.

90˚ South

Like those before him, Scott knew the value of photography and film on a polar expedition, not only as a scientific record of a new environment

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but also as a means of promoting and generating funds. Ponting, who was selected from around one hundred applicants for the position of Photographic Officer (Lynch 1989: 294), had established himself as a professional travel photographer over the previous decade, travelling widely in Europe and Asia. Unsurprisingly, images of animals were central to his work: at the beginning of his photographic career he won a prize for a photograph entitled 'Mules at a California Roundup' (ibid.: 292) and during his later travels would take risks to capture wild animals in their natural habitat. Photographing alligators in Calcutta in 1907, he ignored the Indian locals' repeated advice and approached the animals at close range: 'I took a leap and then ran. I was not a fraction of a second too soon, for the brute's jaws came together with a loud snap that fairly made my blood chill' (Ponting 1908: 354). As this description indicates, Ponting was happy to adopt the discursive conventions of the safari hunt, with the photographer/hunter portrayed as daring and adventurous, and the animal subject as a hostile enemy.[3] In an earlier attempt to photograph alligators, he had given up and shot one instead (ibid.: 353). One photograph in his collection (circa 1910) shows him on a ship's deck surrounded by hunting trophies: antlers, whale bones, a mounted polar-bear head and a mounted walrus head.[4]

While a veteran of wildlife photography, Ponting was new to cinematography in 1910. He learned the skill for Scott's expedition, taking with him two film cameras, two kinds of cine film and a developing machine, and shooting twenty-five thousand feet of film during his time in the far south (Lynch 1989: 298). The resulting footage was put to various purposes. Scenes of the sea voyage down to Antarctica and the establishing of the base hut were sent back with the expedition ship in early 1911, edited by the Gaumont company (who had agreed to produce and distribute the film in exchange for forty per cent of the proceeds) and screened under the title *With Captain Scott, R.N. to the South Pole* (McKernan 2000: 95; Lynch 1990: 222). A further batch of film was screened as a 'second series' in late 1912, by which time Ponting himself had also returned.[5] Both screenings were very popular, although Amundsen had, according to Ponting, 'knocked the bottom out' of the market for the latter by reaching the Pole first (Huntford 2001: x; Jones 2003: 182). After the announcement of the death of Scott and his companions in 1913, the material was reedited and released as *The Undying Story of Captain Scott* – although the lack of actual footage of the polar journey (Ponting had accompanied Scott's party only a short way) would always create problems for the filmic recreation of the story. In early 1914 Ponting launched into a series of highly popular lectures using photographs and footage, and the same year he purchased

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Gaumont's rights to the film (Lynch 1990: 222). In 1924 he reedited and combined the earlier series into a longer feature with the title *The Great White Silence* (Jones 2003: 262) and, near the end of his life, added music and a voiceover to yet another edit, released as *90° South* – the version with which present-day viewers are most familiar.[6] Although neither of the later features was a commercial success, Ponting's work was critically acclaimed both at the time of its first release and retrospectively. McKernan, for instance, deems Ponting's film in both its silent and sound versions, 'one of the certain masterpieces of documentary in the earliest years of cinema' (2000: 96).

Animals – both those native to Antarctica and those the expedition brought with them – were central to Ponting's work. Historian Max Jones (2003: 185) notes that 'animals were the leading actors in Ponting's lectures, with sections devoted to seals, skua gulls, and penguins'. Ponting believed that 'the masses' needed to be entertained if they were to be educated, and that key to this was the introduction of 'numerous animal scenes, without which the "show" would be a total failure' (cited in Jones 2003: 185). Penguins were particularly popular, with the *Daily Telegraph* observing that they provided 'scene after scene of inimitable comedy' (ibid.: 186). Penguins were also used to promote the series: a toy penguin named Ponko (the nickname bestowed upon Ponting by his fellow expeditioners) produced for the lectures formed 'one of the earliest examples of film merchandise' (McKernan 2000: 96). *The Great White Silence* likewise features 'a marked emphasis on animals, particular penguins (inevitably), to what seems to [modern audiences] the surprising detriment of the human story' (McKernan 2010).

90° South is similar in its foregrounding of animals, with native Antarctic species (skuas, Weddell seals and Adélie penguins) taking up at least a fifth of the live-action content. Derek Bousé (2000: 48), in distinguishing the 'expeditionary documentary' such as *90° South* from the safari film, notes that the former concentrates on 'historically distinct' events while the latter features 'straight wildlife footage' that has a 'seeming detachment from the events of history'. He notes however that Ponting's film does include 'some straight wildlife scenes' which, given the 'noncooperation of the animals', form a contrast with the 'expeditionary footage' – the 'carefully composed' scenes of Scott and his men. Bousé's observation points to the problem Ponting faced in his attempt to incorporate commercially popular animal scenes into his narrative of the attempt to reach the Pole: the lack of any role for native Antarctic species on the journey, except as fodder for the men and dogs. Situated at Cape Evans on Ross Island, he had access primarily to nearby Adélie penguins and Weddell seals, neither of which

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posed any kind of threat to humans. The fiercest animals in the region from a human perspective are leopard seals and killer whales, but, largely confined to the ocean, these did not present many opportunities for an early cinematographer. Ponting certainly had his share of dangerous encounters – a close call with killer whales is often related in accounts of the expedition, a blow from a swooping skua gull made him fear the loss of his eye, and a bite from a Weddell seal drew blood (Ponting 2001: 63–65; 213–14; 221–22) – but all of these incidents were dramas of his own cinematographic efforts rather than the endeavours of Scott's exploratory activities, and were not, obviously, themselves filmed. One of the expedition's most dramatic animal narratives – a three-man expedition to an emperor penguin colony at Cape Crozier, famously recounted in Apsley Cherry-Garrard's book *The Worst Journey in the World* – could have provided wonderful photo opportunities, but Ponting was not a member of the team, which at any rate undertook the task in the darkness of the Antarctic winter. But Scott's primary focus and efforts centred on the interior plateau, where animal life is entirely absent. Dogs were part of the depot-laying support team, but not the polar party itself. The narrative of the polar journey is one in which, as human drama heightens, both native and domestic animals inevitably disappear.

In compensation, Ponting had to manufacture some drama of human–animal encounter in *90° South*. He employs the familiar dynamic described by Bousé (2000: 153) in which viewers of wildlife films are '"teamed" emotionally with one or the other of the animals involved' in predation scenes. One of the most arresting sequences of Ponting's film, shot from the expedition ship the *Terra Nova*, shows images of killer whales' dorsal fins cutting through the ocean, with Ponting noting in voiceover that this was a 'sinister sight' for those familiar with the 'evil record' of the fins' 'owners below'. On the ice edge is a Weddell seal, encouraging her baby out of the water to escape the approaching killer whales. Ponting emphasises her bravery as, 'frenzied with fear', she hurls herself 'almost into the jaws of the terrible creatures, to try to lure them from her cub'. With the chase reaching its height, the drama is resolved by a deus ex machina: 'The killers are drawing nearer every moment, but we are waiting by the loaded whale gun [the *Terra Nova* was an old Dundee whaler]. There, the harpoon strikes! Then the frightened monsters dive under the ice, and mother and baby are saved'. The same incident is described in Ponting's book of the expedition, *The Great White South* (1921), in much the same language (Ponting 2001: 214–16), but with a different ending: mother and baby disappear beneath the water 'not five yards ahead' of the orcas, with no animals

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to be seen again. Ponting can 'only conjecture the tragedy that was perhaps being enacted below the ice', and reflect that 'the love of some wild creatures for their young is not inferior to that of human beings' (ibid.: 216). As a postscript, he notes that a Sydney newspaper reporter to whom he related the story embellished it with a bloody ending; but Ponting himself seems to have done the opposite in *90° South*, inserting a cut to the harpoon scene (showing nothing of the seals) to create a composite event, to use Bousé's term (2000: 10). The happy ending thus produced casts the expeditioners as the seals' rescuers and the killer whales as expendable 'monsters'. This scene is the only point in the film where comparisons to the traditional big game hunt can be drawn.

No doubt aware of the bathetic potential of attempts to construct thrilling or daring encounters with penguins and seals, Ponting for the most part contextualises his footage of native animals as domestic and comedic, as 'behaviourally typical' (ibid.: 48) scenes rather than narrative dramas with beginnings and endings. There are brief references to the scientific value of the footage – behaviours recorded for the first time – but highly anthropomorphised scenes of courtship and family life dominate; and, although some attention is paid to the interaction of female seals and their cubs, most of the domestic focus is placed on penguins. This accords with Bousé's (ibid.: 154) observation that, while family and mating scenes were unusual in wildlife films of the early twentieth century, films about birds formed an exception. Against medium shots of pairs or groups of penguins, Ponting provides an interpretative voiceover, paying much attention to courtship (the 'proposal of marriage' from a 'gentleman' to a 'lady' by the offering of a stone, the 'settl[ing] down' of the 'newly-weds') and child-rearing (females are keen to 'adopt' and 'kidnap' chicks). He makes no mention of the penguins' egalitarian division of labour, in which each parent incubates the egg alternatively, while the other adds stones to the nest and goes for food (Ainley, LeResche and Sladen 1983: 79). In *90° South*, it is only females who sit on eggs and males who roam: 'One often sees nice little domestic scenes, such as this: the wife sitting on the eggs whilst the husband keeps guard'. The 'wives' are shown 'calling their husbands home'. It is notoriously difficult to determine the sex of Adélie penguins and techniques for doing so were not fully established until the 1950s (ibid.: 20), so Ponting's assigning of sex to the birds he filmed would likely have been based on a combination of conjecture, anthropomorphism and Edwardian gender stereotypes.[7] Conflict is represented by the stealing of eggs by other penguins and by skua gulls, designated as 'thieves'. The expeditioners themselves are shown interacting with the penguins in one comic scene: they 'liven

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[the penguins] up a bit!' by doing the 'penguin trot', in which the men appear to herd the birds in random directions, an activity 'they seemed to enjoy as much as we did'. Unsurprisingly, nothing is shown or mentioned of one of the expeditioners' main domestic interactions with penguins – the one which occurred at the dinner table. The fact that 'seal meat' forms most of the men's meals is mentioned in passing, with a still showing the cook stirring 'seal soup'; there is no recognition of the incongruity of this activity with the heroic rescue of a mother and baby seal from killer whales intent on much the same thing.

If, as the *Daily Telegraph* observed (cited in Jones 2003: 186), scenes of novel and amusing native animals provided some relief from the human tragedy of Scott's expedition, the introduced animals provided some relief from the unrelentingly alien environment of the continent. These animals are presented in terms of their closeness to humans. The ship's mascot, a black cat named 'Nigger', is shown in the arms of an expeditioner, who pets him playfully. The dogs receive inserted individual still portraits (a privilege offered to few of the human crew). The named Siberian ponies are paired with expeditioners: 'Wilson always worked with Nobby, the best-looking of all our shaggy little Russian broncos . . . Lieutenant Bowers with Victor . . . and Petty Officer Evans . . . with Snatcher'. There is an implicit parallel constructed between the men and the non-native animals. Scenes of dogs hauling supplies immediately cut to scenes of men doing the same; the dogs are 'gluttons for exercise' – as, presumably, were their human companions. Disembarked from the ship, 'Nigger' is shown energetic and in 'fine spirits' – qualities also attached to the men throughout the film. The introduced animals are visually quarantined from the native ones. Conspicuously absent to those familiar with written narratives of the expedition are violent carnivorous encounters: orcas menaced ponies who had become trapped on a floe (Scott 2006: 140–41), dogs attacked penguins (Ponting 2001: 61–62). The only sign of this relationship is one scene in which the excited dogs are tossed seal meat.

The relatively nonchalant way in which the consumption of seals is mentioned, in contrast with the lack of any mention of penguin meat (which, as Scott's diary makes clear, was regularly in their larder along with mutton and seal), reflects changing attitudes towards penguins at the time. While sailors in earlier periods had eaten astounding numbers of penguins when rations ran low, by the turn of the twentieth century large-scale killing of the birds for utilitarian purposes was becoming increasingly unacceptable (Martin 2009: 44–46, 84–86). Penguins, as bipedal flightless birds, were easily anthropomorphised and during

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the later nineteenth century they had 'established their roles as entertainers in zoos'. Their image as an exotic creature was gradually being 'defused', or at least combined with a sense of affection and appreciation of their perceived comic value (ibid.: 79–80). Ponting's film itself formed part of this process, with his narrative reinforcing the image of the 'queer little penguin' as 'a corpulent old gentleman, dressed in immaculate white waistcoat with satiny top coat' (Ponting 1913: 568). It is not surprising, then, that when Douglas Mawson, at exactly the time Scott's expedition was in the Antarctic, observed the boiling down of huge numbers of king penguins for oil on Macquarie Island, he was filled with disgust and anger. The penguins' plight became a cause cèlébre over coming decades, and prominent among their champions was Ponting's most famous counterpart, Australian cinematographer and photographer Frank Hurley.[8]

South

Hurley had already been south as cinematographer and photographer for Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) when in 1914 Shackleton secured him for his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which aimed to make the first crossing of the continent. Footage from the AAE had been shown in Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. from 1912 to 1915 (Turnour 2007: 12), with promotion emphasising animal content. Audiences in the U.S., for example, were encouraged by promotional posters to see 'Sir Douglas Mawson's Marvelous Bird, Animal and Travel Motion Picture' (cited in Hains 2002: 72). These showings were a success, and a syndicate offered the cash-strapped Shackleton funds in exchange for photographic, cinematograph and press rights for coverage of his proposed expedition, with a stipulation that Hurley shoot it (McKernan 2000: 99).

As events transpired, Hurley was forced to film under conditions very different from those expected. Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* never reached land, becoming wedged in the sea ice and eventually sinking.[9] The men lived on ice floes for months before taking to boats and reaching the inhospitable Elephant Island, whence Shackleton and a small group made a remarkable boat journey to South Georgia and organised the rescue of the others, including Hurley. As the *Endurance* was being crushed and the men shifting onto the ice, Hurley was required to abandon all of his cine film and plates. He later dramatically returned to the ship, diving below the waterline to salvage plates and a canister of film. His cine camera had to be discarded (ibid.), but

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not before he had taken footage of the men camping nearby on the ice floes.

Hurley's situation, then, was both like and unlike Ponting's. He shared with Ponting the absence of any shots of the expedition's exciting climax: the scenes of the men's time on Elephant Island, the boat journey to South Georgia and the crossing of its mountainous terrain, and the final rescue are all missing from his film, for obvious reasons. But where Ponting, living on the continent's coast, had regular access to animals, Hurley, trapped by the sea ice, could access only those who happened by. Animal encounters would have been comparatively rare deep in the Weddell Sea, particularly in winter, so there would have been fewer opportunities to film the seals and penguins that audiences craved. Thus the scenes taken of the voyage south focus heavily on dogs, again individualised and named.[10] Wildlife is far less in evidence; even penguins are for a long time conspicuously absent. The intertitles of *South* sport penguins in their artwork, but none are seen onscreen until almost half an hour into the eighty-eight-minute film, and then it is a very brief shot of a group of four emperors. These penguins, the intertitles explain, '[f]or some reason or other . . . refused to make friends with the party'. The penguins had reason to be standoffish: although no mention of it is made in the film, they were killed and skinned shortly afterwards. Shackleton hoped to take the skins back home as gifts and the meat was presumably consumed: one of Hurley's photographs shows the cook about to cut steaks from an emperor hanging upside down in the galley (Hurley 2001: 268, 278). Seals feature even less: a group of crabeater seals is shown porpoising through the ocean about a quarter of an hour in, but the next (and only other) shot of seals (probably Weddells) shows them as long, frozen slabs of meat – 'for feeding the dogs', notes the intertitles, but the men regularly consumed seal as well. Therefore, in an environment where native animal encounters were relatively rare and usually ended violently, Hurley's cinematographic opportunities were limited. Even the dogs became part of the problem: when seal and penguin meat began to run low, they began to be shot, and all were dead by the time the men took to the boats. No mention of their fate is made in *South*; as McKernan (2002) observes, after a certain point they simply disappear from the film.

Thus Hurley returned from the Antarctic in late 1916 with two ingredients missing from his film: images of the climactic ending of the expedition drama and live footage of animals. The latter seemed to worry him most. The same day that his ship docked in Liverpool, Hurley was in London handing over his work and talking to one of the directors of

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the film syndicate. His diary entry for the following day reads: 'Deeply considered film affair, and arrived at the decision that it would be inadvisable to have it projected or marketed in anyway [sic] whatsoever, until an addition of suitable animal life in which the film is lacking be secured'. He determined to return to South Georgia to 'take the necessary subjects', which would increase the film's value 'tenfold' (Hurley 1917: 15 November 1916). Departing the following February, he took with him 'two beautiful Pomerian pups . . . for stage effects', although there is no sign of them in the footage (ibid., 11 February 1917).

The abundant wildlife of the subantarctic island more than compensated, quantitatively at least, for the missing Antarctic animals: Hurley shot footage of albatrosses, elephant seals, king and gentoo penguins, shags, giant petrels and cape pigeons.[11] Before his return to the far south, he had attended Ponting's lectures multiple times; he was 'in raptures' over them and noted in his diary the way Ponting's splendid 'patter' gave 'the impression the penguins were actually performing to his words' (ibid.: 11 December and 18 November 1916). His own footage of seals and penguins is similar to Ponting's, using mainly medium shots of individuals or small groups of animals; although there are slow pans over larger groups, there are few long, establishing shots, and none showing whole colonies, of which there are many at South Georgia. Scenes of family life are prominent, with the intertitles providing the inevitable anthropomorphism. This is particularly the case with penguins, which are by now inevitably dubbed 'Charlie Chaplins'[12]: there are scenes of 'The Foundling', 'Adopted', 'Mother and perambulator combined' and 'When Father says swim we all swim'. Again, there are no scenes of narrative drama; some baring of teeth by elephant seals, including an 'enraged' bull backing away from the camera, is the only sign of apparent hostility or danger.

These images of native animals are all shown in a long (twenty-minute) sequence that runs to very nearly the end of the narrative. The result, as one modern reviewer notes, is that a 'compelling adventure film wraps up as a quirky general interest nature film' (Siebel 2003: 176). All of the burden of constructing narrative links with the expedition falls on the intertitle writer who, as McKernan wryly observes (2002), shows 'some ingenuity' in this task. The primary link between the expedition drama and the South Georgia animal scenes is food: a medium shot of a young albatross on a nest is juxtaposed, bathetically, with the comment that 'Shackleton and his men made their first meal off these birds, when they landed on South Georgia'. Similar gastronomic links are made with elephant seals. This long, late sequence of animal scenes, with their tenuous and carnivorous connection to

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the exploration drama, might draw a puzzled smile from the modern viewer, for whom superbly filmed wildlife footage is easily accessible. For contemporary viewers, relatively unused to subantarctic wildlife, they were a drawcard rather than a distraction – scenes without which (Hurley believed) the remarkable human narrative of the *Endurance* was not worth coming to see.

Both *South* and *90˚ South* demonstrate the multiple, and often incongruous, relations into which humans and animals were put when the former first entered the Antarctic continent, and the challenges that expedition cinematographers faced as a result. For the reasons outlined above, neither Ponting nor Hurley could coherently integrate the commercially necessary animal scenes into the human narrative each had been employed to depict. Yet, despite these constraints, both men produced films that were popular when first screened and are still regularly seen today.[13]

Their achievement is even more significant when contextualised within the history of the perception and treatment of Antarctic wildlife over the last two centuries. Ruthlessly exploited by sailors, sealers, whalers and seabird hunters until the mid nineteenth century (and in some instances beyond), Antarctic animals are, in the early twentieth-first century, protected like few others. The Antarctic Treaty System (in particular the 1991 Protocol on the Environment) strictly limits human interaction with them, and excludes all non-native life from the continent (except humans). Ponting's and Hurley's films were thus shot during a transitional period in human attitudes towards these animals, and were themselves part of this transition, bringing the first moving images of the animals to the public and establishing visual conventions that persist until the present day. Around the same time that Ponting and Hurley were taking their footage, the 'natural history film' was first being recognised as a genre, and in the decades following the release of *90˚ South* this genre – now called the wildlife film – developed coherent, distinctive conventions (Bousé 2000: 38). While a detailed analysis of later Antarctic wildlife film is beyond the scope of this chapter, the most cursory glance at recent prominent examples, such as the blue-chip *March of the Penguins* (2005) and even narrative animations such as *Happy Feet* (2006) show strong connections: the focus on the anthropomorphised penguin family and on courtship and gender relations; the vilification of 'enemies' such as killer whales or skuas. *South* and *90˚ South* are not only important in the history of early cinema, they are significant in the evolving history of human–animal relations in the world's largest wilderness.

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Notes

1. The first series of photographs of any animals (penguins and albatrosses) was taken by the Antarctic *Challenger* expedition of 1872 to 1876 (Bousé 2000: 40).
2. The cinema version of the film produced by Roald Amundsen's Norwegian Antarctic Expedition does include a scene of the men preparing a pig for slaughter (on the ship), although it stops short of showing the actual death, which was filmed. The lecture version (shown to both English and Norwegian audiences) has footage of the shooting of seals. This may indicate different national attitudes towards the public visibility of animal slaughter at the time. The lecture version also has scenes of dogs attacking seals. See Diesen (2010: 181–82).
3. As Finis Dunaway (2000: 216) has shown, 'the idioms of the gun and the camera' were not as 'polarised' at the time as might be thought: 'photography offered similar pleasures, excitements, and thrills of the chase relished by hunters'.
4. See P2005/5/1401, Scott Polar Research Institute Picture Library, University of Cambridge.
5. These early releases of Ponting's footage have unfortunately now been lost (McKernan 2000: 96).
6. This might change: a restoration of the longer 1924 version, *The Great White Silence*, premiered at the London Film Festival in October 2010, and has recently become available on DVD.
7. Ponting could have known from his fellow expeditioner Murray Levick's scientific study *Antarctic Penguins* (1914) that incubation was shared between the male and female parents (91–93), but the film does not give this impression.
8. In the wake of the success of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition film, Hurley (along with Mawson and Cherry-Garrard) 'used his growing celebrity' to campaign against the penguin-oil industry on Macquarie Island, targeting the press and business groups. The island was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1933 (McGregor 2004: 207).
9. The expedition consisted of two parties: in addition to the men with Shackleton there was a depot-laying party at the Ross Sea on the opposite side of the continent. They had their own still and cinematograph cameras. Some unedited footage (about eight minutes) of the party survives ('Recently Discovered Footage'), and animals play a prominent part in this cinematic record too.
10. There is no sign of the ship's cat, Mrs Chippy, who later became enough of an icon of the journey to have his 'diary' published in 1997 (see Alexander), although Hurley certainly took his photograph.
11. The cape pigeons feed on whale offal, and images of blue whales – being flensed at the Stromness station – are also included, with an explanatory comment noting that their blubber was used to make munitions.

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12 Chaplin's first film, *Making a Living*, had screened in 1914, at the same time that Ponting was giving his highly popular lectures. Chaplin denied basing his walk on that of the penguin (Martin 2009: 110).

13 Hurley's film, shown as an accompaniment to Shackleton's lectures in 1919, did not draw large crowds in the postwar climate (Huntford 1996: 673). However, retitled *In the Grip of the Polar Ice*, it achieved 'outstanding success' in Australia, where Hurley himself lectured to it (McKernan 2000: 101).

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