

Imagining and Imaging Coastal Change - Communicating the Climate Crisis Through Documentary Style

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Introduction

My research considers the coast as an evocative site in documentary film. I use formal analysis to understand issues related to the ocean and society. I draw attention to the spatial and temporal qualities of the coast as a site where multiple meanings can be made. The project focusses on films from the past two decades as the climate crises becomes an increasingly urgent issue and I am interested in how modern documentaries envisage the interconnectedness, as well as the divisions between land and sea. These considerations are crucial in aiding our understanding of past, present and future ecological and societal issues.

Tiago De Luca in his recent book *Planetary Cinema* (2022), pursues the problematic implications of grand, global visions of the environment and investigates how we might come to unified perspectives 'by confronting earlier global imaginaries and constructions' and how in doing so, 'we can be better equipped to explore their legacies as they persist in our time.' So... what might this confrontation entail?

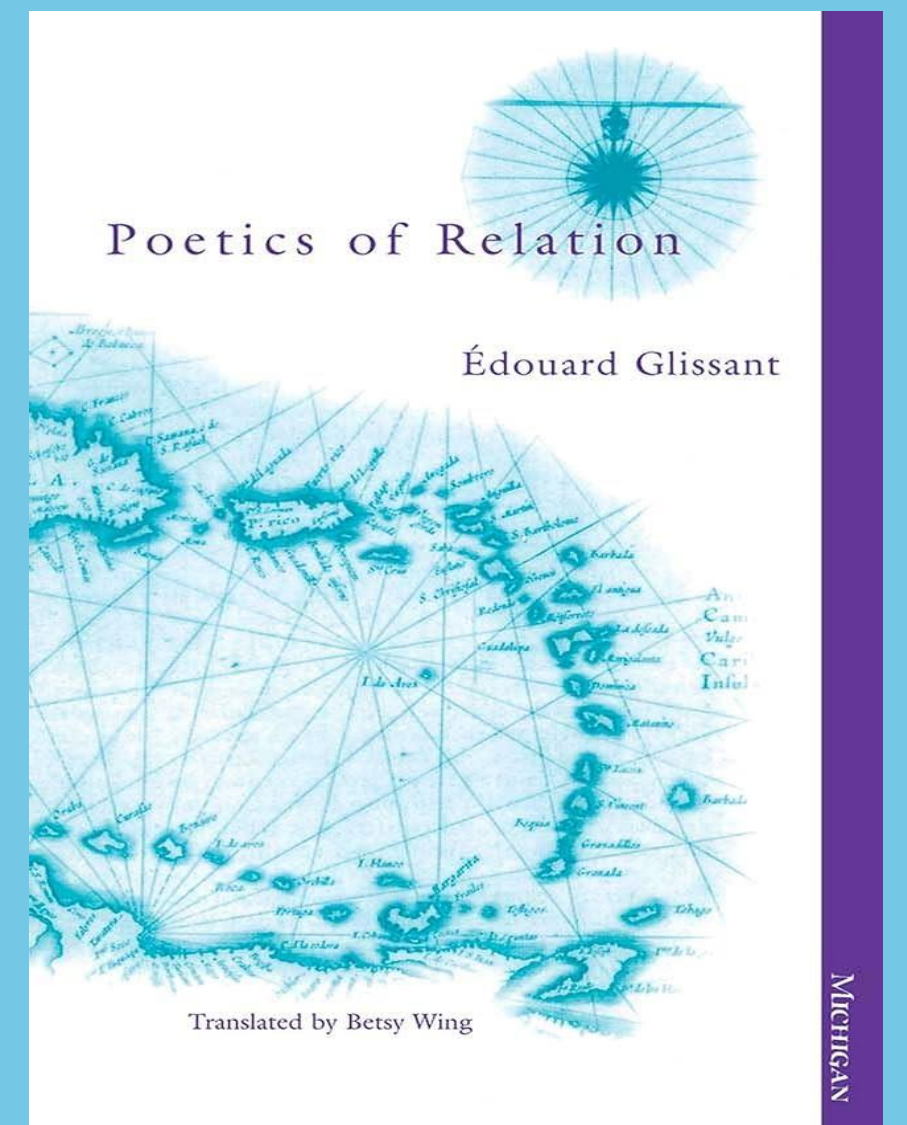
In counteracting the legacies of western global visual imaginaries, I pursue visuality as activism through forms related to documentary poetics.

Method

Looking towards perspectives which aim to deconstruct colonial scales of land and sea, I follow the 20th century Caribbean philosopher Édouard Glissant's focus on the figure of the archipelago. Archipelagic thinking looks to islands not as isolated land but as sites connected by a dynamic sea. This framework envisions the sharing of materials and thought through the sea, where relation alongside opacity is acknowledged. Archipelagic thinking can also be thought of as an interdisciplinary methodology, relating to disciplines and objects not as isolated, but as connected through nearly endless transtextual associations

Aims

- To demonstrate poetic documentaries as important media forms in communicating global coastal relations during a time of climate crisis.
- To establish archipelagic thinking as a transnational methodology in film studies.



References

De Luca, T., 2022. *Planetary Cinema: Film, Media and the Earth*. Amsterdam University Press.

Glissant, Édouard., 1997. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor :University of Michigan Press

Filmography

Dadli (Shabier Kirchner, Antigua, 2018)

Dulce (Guille Isa and Angello Faccini, Colombia, USA, 2018)

From the Wild Sea (Robin Petré, Denmark, 2021)

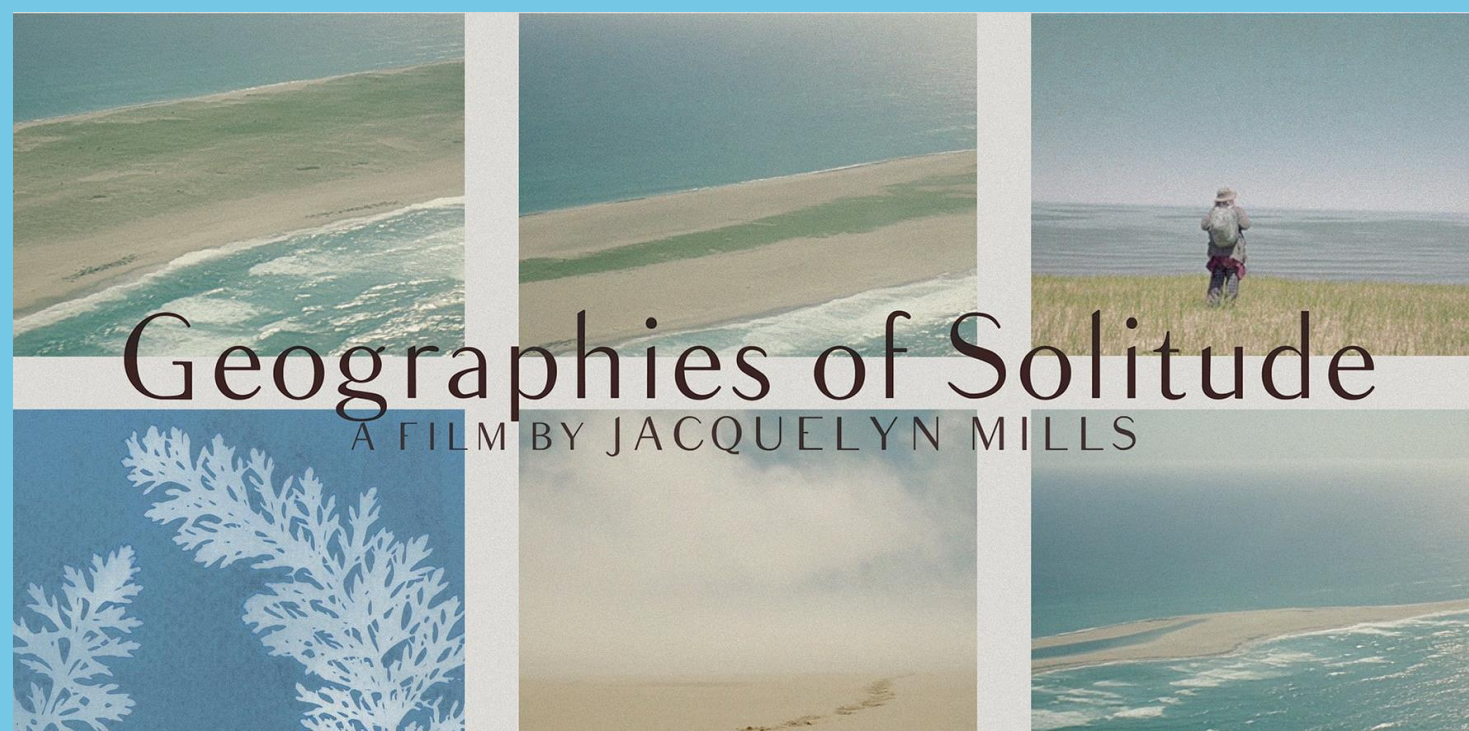
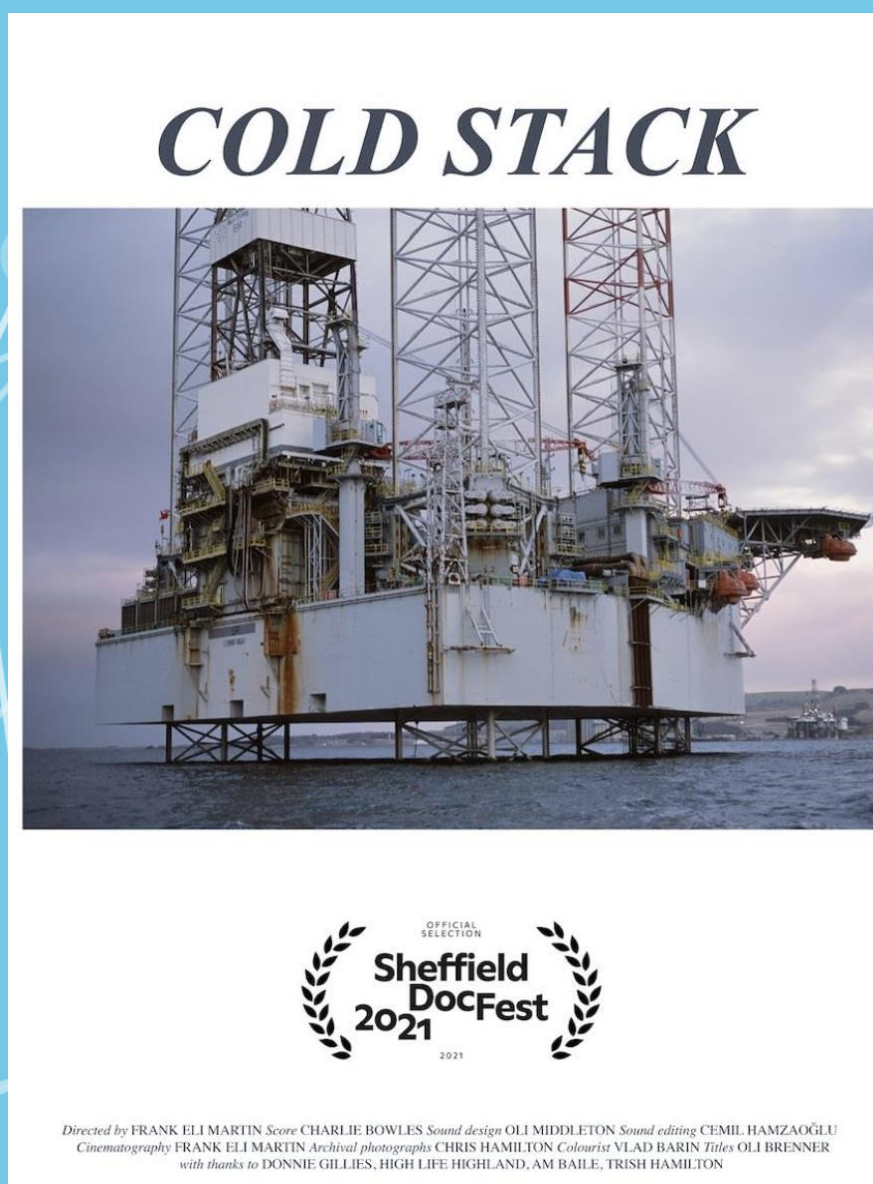
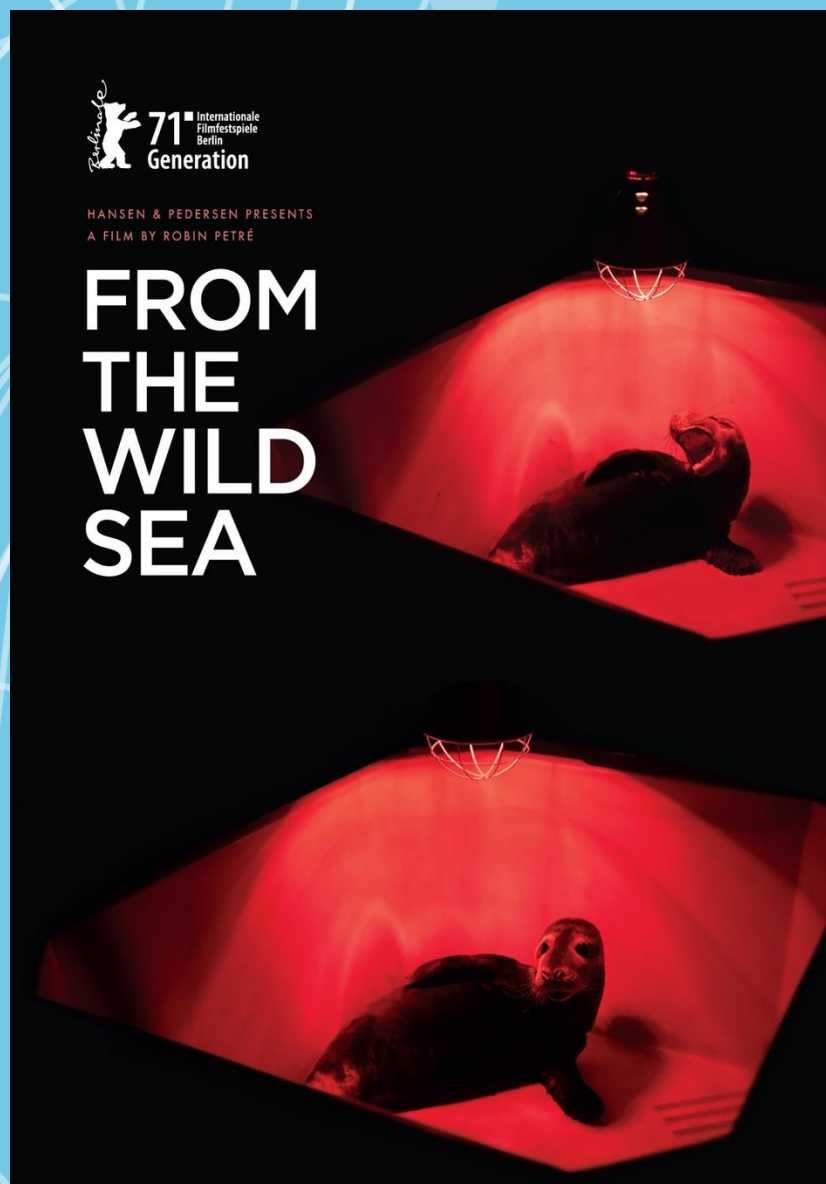
Iorram (Boat Song) (Alastair Cole, UK, 2021)

Lowland Kids (Sandra Winther, USA, 2019)

matni – Towards the Ocean, Towards the Shore (Sky Hopinka, USA, 2020)

Cold Stack (Frank Martin, UK, 2021)

Geographies of Solitude (Jacquelyn Mills, Canada, 2022)



Chapters / Themes

1) Archipelagic Documentary Form

In this chapter I explain Glissant's thought and my transposal of this to aid documentary analysis. I explore themes related to language, labour, cultural experience and environmental belonging framed by the meeting point of the coast.

2) Coming-Of-Age and the Coastal Anthropocene

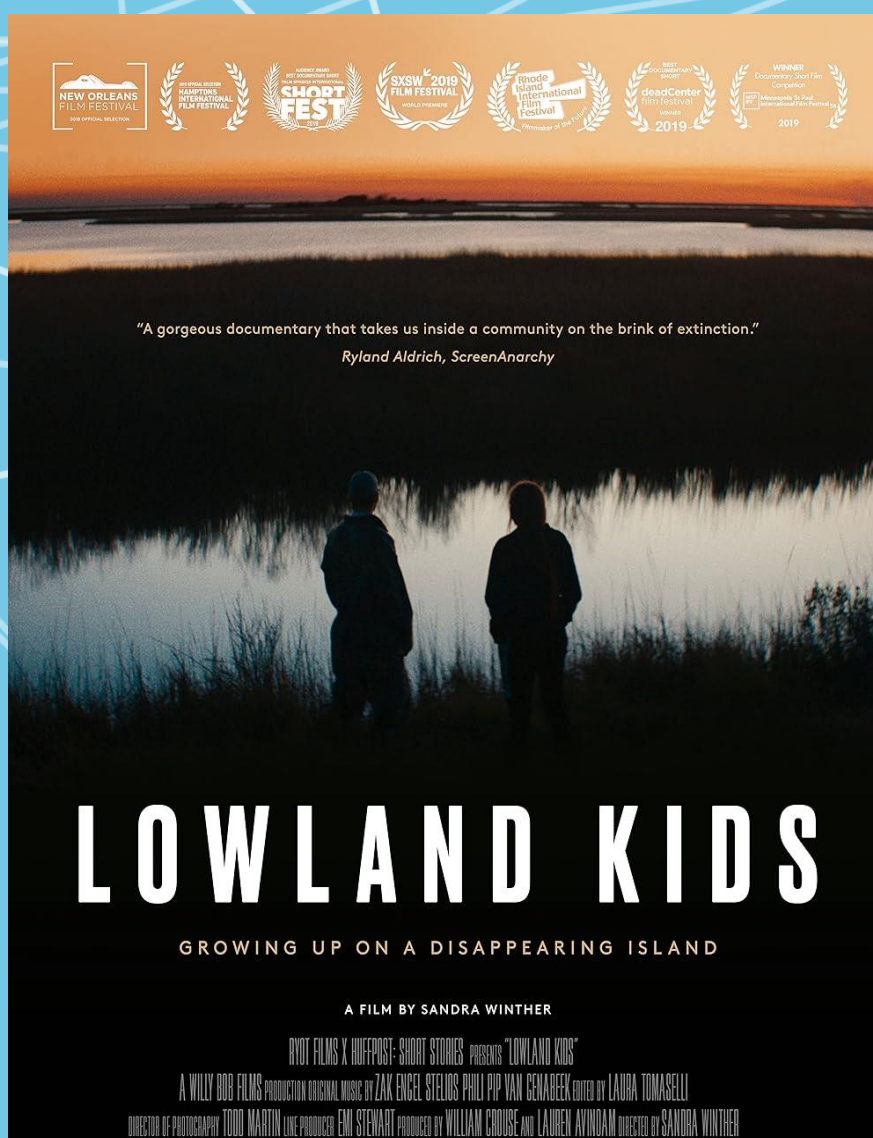
Coming-of-age films put into relief the urgency of transformational moments. I argue that documentary depictions of childhood and adolescence around the coast hold themes which provide space for translocal forms of relation.

3) More-than-Human Coasts and Conservation Relations

I argue that conservation documentaries demonstrate varied ways of communing with the more-than-human. By expanding 'sociality' to encompass all, we are faced with the limits of ontological experience. The coast is a vivid site to demonstrate e.g. symbiotic, parasitic and commensal relations where oceanic and land-based forms meet, influencing one another whilst maintaining difference.

4) Coastal Infrastructure and Industry - The Past and Futurity

During a time of climate emergency, documentary representations of infrastructure are torn between the past and future. As we deem industrial modernity unsustainable, structures erected around fossil fuels contrast against technocratic visions of hope. Energy industries oft-placed around coastal regions now struggle with a shifting identity.



Acknowledgement(s)

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