

COMING SOON...
PAUL BETTANY • JENNIFER CONNELLY
CREATION
THE FILM ABOUT
CHARLES DARWIN
IN CINEMAS SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

film education

Extract from Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, Robert Chambers, 1844

Unprepared as most men may be for such an announcement, there can be no doubt that we are able, in this limited sphere, to form some satisfactory conclusions as to the plants and animals of those other spheres which move at such immense distances from us. Suppose that the first persons of an early nation who made a ship and ventured to sea in it, observed, as they sailed along, a set of objects which they had never before seen – namely, a fleet of other ships – would they not have been justified in supposing that those ships were occupied, like their own, by human beings possessing hands to row and steer, eyes to watch the signs of the weather, intelligence to guide them from one place to another – in short, beings in all respects like themselves, or only shewing such differences as they knew to be producible by difference of climate and habits of life. Precisely in this manner we can speculate on the inhabitants of remote spheres. We see that matter has originally been diffused in one mass, of which the spheres are portions. Consequently, inorganic matter must be presumed to be everywhere the same, although probably with differences in the proportions of ingredients in different globes, and also some difference of conditions. Out of a certain number of the elements of inorganic matter are composed organic bodies, both vegetable and animal; such must be the rule in Jupiter and in Sirius, as it is here. We, therefore, are all but certain that herbaceous and ligneous fibre, that flesh and blood, are the constituents of the organic beings of all those spheres which are as yet seats of life. Gravitation we see to be an all-pervading principle: therefore there must be a relation between the spheres and their respective organic occupants, by virtue of which they are fixed, as far as necessary, on the surface. Such a relation, of course, involves details as to the density and elasticity of structure, as well as size, of the organic tenants, in proportion to the gravity of the respective planets – peculiarities, however, which may quite well consist with the idea of a universality of general types, to which we are about to come. Electricity we also see to be universal; if, therefore, it be a principle concerned in life and in mental action, as science strongly suggests, life and mental action must everywhere be of one general character. We come to comparatively a matter of detail, when we advert to heat and light; yet it is important to consider that these are universal agents, and that, as they bear marked relations to organic life and structure on earth, they may be presumed to do so in other spheres also. The considerations as to light are particularly interesting, for, on our globe, the structure of one important organ, almost universally distributed in the animal kingdom, is in direct and precise relation to it. Where there is light there will be eyes, and these, in other spheres, will be the same in all respects as the eyes of tellurian animals, with only such differences as may be necessary to accord with minor peculiarities of condition and of situation. It is but a small stretch of the argument to suppose that, one conspicuous organ of a large portion of our animal kingdom being thus universal, a parity in all the other organs – species for species, class for class, kingdom for kingdom – is highly likely, and that thus the inhabitants of all the other globes of space bear not only a general, but a particular resemblance to those of our own.

Glossary

- shewing: showing
- tellurian: from Earth