Editorial

Animation Studies

By Thomas Lamarre

Animation has always had its champions. Animators and fans have often proved eager to sing the praises of animation and especially to laud it over and above cinema. To give examples: French animation director René Laloux (2006) famously declared animation to be the true cinema, and in a humourous yet profound essay exploring the 'evolution' of Mickey Mouse from adult to juvenile, renowned biologist Stephen Jay Gould (1992) parenthetically remarked that he still preferred *Pinocchio* to *Citizen Kane.* Yet, for all that its enthusiasts remind us that animation is at least as old as cinema (some would give animation historical priority over cinema); still, animation has only recently begun to produce a groundswell of activity within the university. This is not to say that animation has not previously garnered any serious attention. There have been books, and very good ones, largely centred on major studios or famous animators. In the course of the 1990s, however, animation began to feel important enough that today animation studies is frequently presented as a field of analysis distinct from other fields, even from film studies. New journals dedicated to the study of animation have emerged, and in coming years we can expect a host of new books dealing with various aspects of animation.

It is impossible to foresee what will characterize or constitute animation studies. Much as René Laloux declared animation to be the true cinema, animation studies may pronounce itself the true film studies. Or, in the manner of Stephen Jay Gould's preference for animated films, animation studies may be predicated on an open-ended preference that fortuitously opens new kinds of questions about the moving image. But why now? What has changed that animation is calling for new or renewed attention?

By the late 1990s, the ascendancy of animation became associated with the rise of digital. New media theorist Lev Manovich, for instance, wrote, "the opposition between the styles of animation and cinema defined the culture of moving images in the twentieth century" (1999:298). Famously, Manovich spun a tale of the relation between cinema and animation in which animation, once subsumed by cinema, had now succeeded in subsuming cinema. Japanese animation director Oshii Mamoru (2004) expressed a similar sentiment, announcing that all cinema is becoming animation. Oshii, of course, is renowned for his use digital technologies to experiment with the boundary between cinema and animation.

Such explanations of the new centrality and popularity of animation are surely correct to call attention to the importance of digital technologies and new media in transforming (although maybe not subsuming) cinema and spurring animation. Yet, because their emphasis falls on a sort of digital avant-gardism, questions about the broader field of animation or animation studies tend to drop out of the picture.

In this context, a recently published volume of essays on animation, *The Illusion of Life II: More Essays on Animation*, is especially interesting because, although it only recently appeared in print, in 2007 (all quotes from which are noted by page number only in the body of this editorial), its essays derive from a conference held in 1995 in Sydney, Australia. What is more, the conference and the essays build on a prior conference held in 1988 and published in 1991 under the title *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* also edited by Alan Cholodenko. The essays in *The Illusion of Life II* thus precede the contemporary boom of scholarly interest in animation, building on and responding to the astonishing popularity of animated forms in mass-targeted and globally disseminated entertainments of the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as video games, television series, music videos, and special effects films. *The Illusion of Life II* speaks to a moment when animation had begun its meteoric rise within global media, while animation studies remained low on the theoretical horizon.

As with any set of responses, the essays are exceedingly heterogeneous in their approaches and concerns, and yet they merit consideration both as a whole and separately, precisely because they anticipate basic questions about animation that will haunt animation theory for some time. Two emphases distinguish the volume as a whole from prior discussions of animation.

On the one hand, an aura of urgency surrounds animation criticism. We get the feeling that animation opens pressing questions about contemporary media conditions that could not otherwise be posed. There is also a sense that cinema and film studies are no longer suited to, or sufficient for, understanding contemporary media. Simulation becomes a key word, in response to the sense of a collapse in the distinction between cinema and animation, or more precisely, between capturing reality and generating reality. In this respect, *Illusion of Life* anticipates of some of the points that became central in new media and digital theory.

On the other hand, *The Illusion of Life II* is unusual in its endorsement of the importance of Japanese animation (anime), at a time when anime had barely begun to garner scholarly attention. Explicitly, and implicitly in the choice of materials, the collection entertains the idea that American *and* Japanese animations are the crucial site for analyzing current media conditions.

Taken as a whole, *The Illusion of Life II* seems to announce a fundamental shift from a 'cinema formation' to an 'animation formation'. At the same time, its emphasis on Japanese animation introduces questions about the transnational, about relations between place of production and reception, which in turn raises questions about where and how 'animation cultures' are formed. The essays are not necessarily in agreement about how this shift to animation or the emergence of animation culture should be articulated: some articulate it historically, others ontologically, and others heuristically. But to situate the volume and the emergence of animation studies I will begin somewhat historically, with stories about the formation of cinema and its subsequent expansion to the point of dissolution.

The Cinema Formation

Cinema has changed dramatically over the past twenty-five years. Whether we look at production, distribution or reception, it is clear that cinema today is not what it was. The advent of the VCR and DVD players created the possibility of film rental and home theatre. Distribution laws changed, repertory or art film theatres closed, and the cineplex made its appearance, even as new sorts of image-based entertainment (video games, comics, animation, manga, anime) vied for attention, and new technologies of editing and imaging transformed the moving image itself. The emergence of digital technologies and the Internet permitted a film to be distributed and received in various formats at various times and places. What had formerly appeared as a stand-alone film became another information file in a media network. Films were and are still being made, and film continued to be an important medium and form of mass entertainment, but its coherence and salience had been radically altered.

Film studies, too, underwent important changes. After years of petitioning for serious intellectual and academic attention, film suddenly became almost ubiquitous in the North American university: videocassettes and disks made copies of various kinds of films from documentaries to television programs readily available, and professors in a range disciplines introduced film into the classroom. From needing to prove its intellectual worthiness, film became source material. Just as historians and sociologists often include novels in their courses without fussing over literary analysis, so it is with films: anyone can use film in the classroom without addressing film theory and analysis. Film simultaneously won credibility and lost a sense of specificity.

Not surprisingly, around the same time, a debate over theory ran through film studies. A number of scholars expressed strong objections to film theory, especially its psychoanalytic conceits, which had in their heyday contributed greatly to the scholarly importance of cinema. Film scholars who proposed to jettison theory often insisted that theory tended to totalize the film, to introduce overarching paradigms that ignored the material complexity and diversity of cinema. To counter such allegedly totalizing tendencies, the anti-theory scholars proposed a turn to cognitive sciences and statistical analysis, leaning on modes of classical empiricism that, although frequently taken for scientific in the humanities, have never held sway in the sciences. Reductively speaking, the result was a standoff between psychoanalytic theory and cognitive empiricism.

Significantly, the debate over film theory made manifest a new degree of uncertainty about the ground for the study of film. Was there any reason to insist on the specificity of film as distinct from other media or modes of expression?

Somewhat paradoxically, even as the anti-theorists posited the ground for the study of film outside film itself (for example, in statistics and cognitive science), they did not question the coherence of film as an object of study. At the same time, film theory developed a new awareness of its tendency to presume an historical impulse toward unity and totality within the film industry, in the guise of 'classical cinema' or 'classical Hollywood style'. It was in this context that the new film history, with renewed attention to 'early cinema', appeared to resolve or at least to bypass the impasse that had appeared in the debate over theory.

Theoretically, the new film history found in early cinema a useful point of departure for talking about the emergence of modernity and modern modes of perception, especially in the urban metropolis, by turning to a time before cinema was cinema. Prior to the formation and institutionalization of certain cinematic conventions that made cinema into a distinctive and autonomous form of expression (the classical style), moving pictures meshed readily with other forms of popular entertainment such as magic acts, side shows, vaudeville theatre, popular opera, magic lantern displays, fairs, festivals and exhibitions. In fact there was no cinema as such; moving pictures, as one medium among others, contributed to the production of modern forms of perception and the modern urban experience. While resolutely historical, such research strove to get out of teleological, linear or deterministic histories of the birth of cinema, by situating itself at a moment when cinema as such did not exist. André Gaudreault (2007) writes directly about this historical problem.

Needless to say, bracketing questions about the material specificity of cinema and looking at moving pictures within a broader framework of modern perception presents a new set of questions. A certain paradox arises vis-à-vis the specificity of cinema in early film studies. Historically, arguments about the specificity of cinema in contrast to other media were crucial not only to the industrial establishment of the so-called 'classical style' but also to the development of film theory and film studies. Noel Carroll (2004) calls this the 'specificity thesis', only to argue against it. He feels that the specificity thesis constrains each art or medium to pursue only what it can do best — as the critic defines it. In effect, Carroll calls attention to the prescriptive and teleological implications of the specificity thesis.

Rather than dispense with the specificity thesis altogether, however, early film studies tends to bracket the specificity of cinema. In other words, early film studies accepts the history of the emergence of a set of specific formal conventions and industrial measures that made 'cinema' what it is, but turns to a time before cinema in order to step outside the prescriptive and teleological implications of the specificity thesis. In effect, however, it holds the specificity of cinema under erasure. Specificity is presumed to come later. Bracketing the specificity of cinema allows early film scholars to look at moving pictures as one medium among others within a broader field of modern perception. As a result, as Ben Singer (2001) notes, such studies tend toward a 'modernity thesis'. It is as if the specificity thesis of cinema had been displaced onto a specificity thesis of Western modernity. This is where this manner of thinking film history presents some new challenges and impasses.

Either ignorant of or uninterested in the historical and theoretical debates about formations of modernity and the status of the West, this manner of thinking film history runs the risk of replacing the teleological history of cinema with a massive Western modernity thesis, in which modernity emerges in the West and diffuses to the Rest. Emphasis thus falls on the emergence and diffusion of Western forms (usually Hollywood cinema, which gradually came to dominate global markets in 1920s) to the Rest. In other words, such film histories presume a centre and a periphery without considering how some areas come to be constructed as peripheries, and how the West (or even Hollywood style) might emerge as a relation between centre and periphery to begin with. There is, simply put, a tendency to replicate modernization theory, however unwittingly. Yet part of the challenge of cinema, even in its early days, lies in effects of synchronicity among urban centres, which poses a challenge to diffusion theories and centre-periphery models, encouraging us to address the temporality that unfurls diverse formations of modernity. Miriam Hansen's (1999) notion of vernacular modernism is a gesture in this direction. She sees Hollywood cinema as fractured with modernist ambiguities, with anxieties about modernity that can be reiterated or recombined with other ambivalent modernisms in non-Western locales. Still, the gesture remains predicated on diffusion theory and leans toward a massive Western modernity thesis.

If I linger over (and somewhat reductively extract) this oscillation between the specificity thesis and the modernity thesis in film history and theory, it is because this is precisely where animation studies emerges, posing a very similar set of questions. Animation studies gathers steam, for instance, at the same time that film history begins to bracket the specificity of cinema, opening cinema into media studies and into general theories of the moving image, with film as one medium among others. Animation studies arrives in conjunction with the modernity thesis of cinema, as if ideally suited to contribute to general histories of the moving image and discussions of modern media conditions and perceptual formations. Nevertheless questions about the distinctiveness or specificity of animation inevitably arise.

The Limited Field

In his introduction to *The Illusion of Life II*, Alan Cholodenko initially situates the volume as a needed response to the historical boom in animation, contrasting the ubiquity and centrality of animated forms with the dearth of intellectual inquiry. Subsequently, however, Cholodenko makes clear that the study of animation cannot rest content with responding to new historical conditions, describing new objects, rectifying scholarly neglect, or with filling gaps in our knowledge. Instead he unabashedly proposes to privilege poststructuralist and postmodernist theory, seeing in animation a way to reanimate Grand Theory. First, he argues, we need to theorize "film 'as such' as a form of animation", and second, we must begin to theorize "animation as a form of 'philosophy'" (45). The study of animation, then, entails a two-fold movement. On the one hand, Cholodenko calls for an inversion of current priorities: the neglected term (animation) is given precedence over the privileged term (film), not only historically but also ontologically. In a often vertiginous style that favours chiasmus and temporal inversions, Cholodenko stages the relation between cinema and animation as a form of 'mise-en-abime' in which cinema is not never animation, and film studies are always already animation studies. Animation almost seems to become a privileged term. On the other hand, in the manner of deconstruction, this inversion of priorities is not intended to privilege and thus ground animation but rather to open ontological inquiry. The study of animation thus promises to renew the grand theoretical questions that film studies, in Cholodenko's opinion, formerly raised but subsequently failed to pursue in earnest.

Such an approach resonates with Derrida's deconstruction, and as such, raises questions about what exactly is at stake in deconstructing the cinema/animation construct. After all, Derrida's critique of metaphysics meticulously unraveled the tautological constructions that grounded power formations associated with Western modernity. But what kind of metaphysics is associated with cinema/animation? Because Cholodenko's work insistently refers to simulation and to life, it would seem that life and reality themselves demand philosophical reconsideration, even though it is not entirely clear in his account if a specific formation of power is at stake. I will return to this. Suffice it to say at this juncture, Cholodenko's view of animation reprises the oscillation between a specificity thesis and a modernity thesis. On the one hand, his account tends not simply to bracket the specificity of animation or cinema but to situate animation as *the* site of non-specificity or indeterminacy vis-à-vis cinema. Animation comes before film, subsumes and underlies it, and opens and extends it. On the other hand, not surprisingly in light of Cholodenko's vision of animation as a site of ontological indeterminacy at the heart of cinema, he associates animation primarily with the postmodern. Much as Lyotard came to see postmodernity as a site or moment of perpetual indeterminacy nascent within modernity, Cholodenko inclines toward a rather massive postmodernity thesis in which animation at once anticipates and comes after the modernity of cinema.

As an introduction to an exceedingly diverse collection of essays, this is a cannily ambitious and capacious vision of animation. Cholodenko's is a Janus-faced vision that allows animation at once to ground and to 'unground' any particular study of animation. Animation is at once a new object of study and the anti-disciplinary object par excellence. Thus we are invited to read any essay on animation, however localized and specific, from the angle of an inoperative

specificity that foils and complicates any attempt at a disciplinary formation such as animation studies.

As if echoing the two-pronged gesture of their editor, the essays in *The Illusion of Life II* fall neatly under two general headings, heading in two directions. The first nine essays, grouped under such national rubrics as 'Japan,' 'the United States' and 'Japan and the United States', not only rely on received national identities but also deal largely with 'traditional' cel animation, that is, animation composed primarily by applying ink and colour to celluloid 'cels' that are then photographed. The latter seven essays in *The Illusion of Life II*, under the general aegis of the 'expanded' field of animation, focus more on CGI, computer games, and flight simulation, as well as animation in a broader field of operations (such as character licensing). Simply put, it is as if there existed two fields of animation — an expanded field and a contracted or limited field. The expanded field conjures up a postmodernity thesis (or a series of postmodernity theses) in which animation is a sort of omnivorous mediator ideally suited to technologies that capture and recombine different media digitally. Animation is a central contributor to the formation of a general mediatic or techno-economic condition. In contrast, the limited field presumes defined places and identities that become manifest in specific instances of animation. In effect, the limited field gravitates toward a specificity thesis for animation; but rather than demonstrate or argue for the specificity of animation, the essays tend to attribute its specificity to underlying formations of national culture. This tendency is most evident when Japanese animation or anime is in question.

Significantly, Japanese animation does not make an appearance within the expanded field of animation, even though, as Cholodenko observes, Japan is the world's largest producer of animation. Anime is constrained to the contracted and limited field of animation, as if inherently. What is more, the essays on Japanese animation consistently place it in dialogue with American animation and generally shore up a sense of its unity and identity rather than its diversity or multiplicity. Kosei Ono's contribution, for instance, offers a brief anecdotal history of animation in Japan in which American animation is a constant point of reference. He calls attention to citations of American cartoon characters in prewar Japanese animation and, even though he wishes to acknowledge the diversity of animation and individuality of Japanese animators, he nonetheless defines Japanese society (as homogeneity) in contrast to American society. In other words, in place of a specificity thesis or modernity thesis of animation, Ono provides a nation thesis, a Japan thesis, in which Japanese animation tells us more about Japan than about animation.

Pauline Moore also uses Japanese animation to talk about Japan, but her discussion greatly complicates our image of Japan. She proposes that forms like manga and anime "live out, that is, reanimate the trauma of The Bomb, as do the cute characters found therein" (23). For Moore, the cute characters of manga and anime are undecidable in terms of location or place, neither Japan nor America, neither East nor West. Yet her evocation of 'The Bomb' also implies a historically specific origin to this non-locatable cute, even if that origin is traumatic and thus difficult to represent. Moore makes clear that cute comes from America, as did the atomic bombs. In other words, the trauma inherent in Japanese cute implies a real origin and direction; it is trauma vis-à-vis American power. Interestingly enough, Moore's interpretation recalls arguments made popular by conservative and rightwing commentators in Japan in the 1990s. They argue that the trauma of postwar defeat, symbolised in the atomic bombs, has so thoroughly distorted postwar Japan that younger generations have no sense of nation, history, or responsibility. Some commentators see in Japanese cute a refusal to grow up that derives from nuclear trauma and Japan's defeat. Artist Murakami Takashi enshrined this logic in his 2005 'Little Boy' exhibition. Simply put, evocations of Japan's nuclear trauma frequently imply an ideology of national victomology.

Moore, however, steers clear of victomology, striving to move beyond her initial investment in the logic of origins whereby Japan borrows or adapts American forms. Ultimately, in anime, she detects Japan coming into its own, no longer a passive borrower or adapter but now an active exchanger and trader. While she presents this transformation in a relatively positive light, I think that there are bleaker implications. For instance, Moore articulates this Japanese trading and exchanging vis-à-vis America, as if it were only possible for Japan to act on the world via a US-Japan circuit. What is more, to transform the US-Japan relation from dominator-dominated to equal partners, Moore must somehow lessen or domesticate the trauma of the atomic bombs. This is precisely what she notes in Japanese manga and anime: a transformation of nuclear trauma into a general critique of technology. The full implication of her observations is that Japan emerges as a full trading partner with the US by transforming its traumatic experience of the atomic bombs into a generalized vision of a technologized world suitable for export. It seems that mutations in cute make nuclear trauma exportable and exchangeable within the US-Japan global partnership.

If Moore appears more cheerful than I about such developments, it is because at some level her discussion picks up on a self/other dialectics of recognition (and a cultural hermeneutics) that almost invariably comes into play in discussions of Japan. Japan's values must be posited as different from those of the U.S. and at the same time must be recognized by the US. American fans often express a desire for fuller recognition of the artistry and other virtues of Japanese animations, and the new visibility of anime within the American mainstream commonly became cause for celebration in the 1990s. A politics of identity and recognition frequently arises around anime. For instance, in a painstakingly researched essay that addresses allegations that Disney's *Lion King* borrowed directly from Tezuka Osamu's *Jungle Emperor* (aka *Kimba the White Lion*), without acknowledging its debt to the Japanese master, Fred Patten ultimately concludes that the real scandal is not that Disney borrowed from Tezuka but that Disney refused to admit that its animators knew of Tezuka. He writes, "it was Disney management's insistence that, despite its worldwide animation expertise, it had never heard of Tezuka or of *Kimba* – that they were not worthy of knowing about – which caused the entire controversy" (311).

Such a politics of recognition feels decidedly at odds with the deconstructive play of animation envisioned by Cholodenko, and in which "a spectre haunts the animatic relation between the two nations, one… called 'Jap*anime*rica'" (55). The concern for recognition and identity that commonly arises around Japanese animations does not countenance a third spectral term as the condition of (im)possibility for differentiating Japan and America. It gives identities priority, and its logic is, in deconstructive terms, supplemental. As such, discussions that explore specific features of anime can easily turn into proclamations of Japanese difference or even Oriental difference. The specificity thesis can quickly morph into the nation thesis or the exoticism of the Oriental supplement.

In a lively and inspired exploration of how anime visualises the invisible yet palpable energies of sound, for instance, Philip Brophy turns to differences between Western and Eastern thinking about matter and energy in an attempt to bring specificity to anime. He suggests that the visualization of sounds and forces in anime derive from an Oriental tradition that gives force priority over matter, the invisible over the visible, and by extension, the spiritual over the material, and the metaphysical over the physical. Here it is not so much Japanese identity as Eastern spirituality that is at stake, and across a series of very different anime, Brophy finds that their depictions of the sonic are consonant with Oriental thought. Oddly, however, many of the features of Oriental thought in Brophy's essay — the vibrational whole, the reverberation of the past in the present, the emphasis on forces acting on forces — are central concerns of *modern* philosophy in Japan and the West. William Routt's essay, for instance, is also concerned with how the manga and anime versions of *Gunmu* present something invisible yet somehow perceptible — the soul and life. Like Brophy, he poses a phenomenological question — how do we experience something invisible or imperceptible in anime? Thus, alongside Brophy's account, Routt's essay serves as a reminder that the crucial question is not whether anime is, in essence, traditional or modern, or Eastern or Western. Rather, the question is one of why resolutely modern questions, when posed in the context of manga or anime, so often imply a movement beyond Western modernity – either toward the postmodern or toward the ancient East or both at once. Here, too, Cholodenko's deconstructive sensibility invites us to detect a movement of supplementation vis-à-vis anime, calculated to delimit and manage its surplus.

In an essay that delves into the dynamics of dualism in animation (in the form of innocence versus experience), Jane Goodall uses an anime film, the soft porn rape monster fantasy *Urotsukidoji*, to exemplify a worldly and experienced mode of address. Calling attention to quasi-mythic structures of dualism in animation, Goodall largely brackets questions about culture until the end of the essay where she cites, for 'cultural context', Karel van Wolferen on how the

"alleged absence of any fundamental dualism in traditional Japanese thought is extolled even today" (169). The implication is that the anime film can thus stage or perform dualism to mock it, and Goodall challenges us to think about this humourous manner of enacting dualism as fundamentally different from poststructuralism. Yet, because Goodall turns to traditional Japanese thought to make her point, her observations about 'mock dualism' raise questions about how she stages identities and oppositions, about their performative status. What would it mean to see Japan animation as staging and constructing 'Japan' rather than embodying or reflecting a received identity (traditional Japanese thought)?

This is the other face of deconstruction, the flipside of Cholodenko's Jap*anime*rica. The deconstructive sensibility encourages us not merely to expose the tautological nature of received identities but to account for how something becomes present to begin with. In this respect it is noteworthy that the three essays grouped under the rubric 'The United States' do not fuss about American identity or cultural context. Rather these essays address basic conflicts in value that emerge across varieties of animation. Interesting enough, it is Disney animation (or something like it) that provides the point of reference for articulating a critical modernism within American animation. With great subtlety, Edward Colless shows how "the story of the little mermaid is an impure thing that excuses the image of a carnal embrace" (239-40), deftly revealing the sly machinations of desire that make Disney's *Little Mermaid* something very different from a sentimental child's tale. Richard Thompson explores transformations in the postwar American cartoon, grounding the shift from prewar to postwar through a contrast between Disney and Warner Bros. While *Duck Amuck* makes evident the breakdown in prewar unities of character and narrative, it is ultimately in Robert Clampett's *The Great Piggy Bank Robbery* that Thompson sees the deepest realization of the empty quest film, built on a series of deferrals and the futility of desire — in other words, a true cinematic modernism comparable to *Citizen Kane*. Freida Riggs defends Ralph Bakshi's use of rotoscoping of live action footage in *The Lord of the Rings*, which critics almost universally maligned. She sees in this alleged failure of animation a raid on Ideals that recalls Husserl's vain search for a foundation for philosophy, wherein she detects the outlines of a practical and conceptual emphasis on process, and endless quest.

Alongside the individual merits of these essays, what interests me is the overall tendency to discover, or rather to re-discover, modernism through highly localized discussions of examples of animation. Film studies historically developed an emphasis on film's specificity, which spurred the production of a 'classical film style' or an 'institutionalized mode of representation' (to use Noel Burch's term), as well as a critique of classical institutionalized conventions. In contrast, the above essays on animation at once presume and bypass the articulation of a specificity thesis for animation. Yet it seems that Disney animation comes to stand in for a 'classical animation style' or an 'institutionalized mode of animation.' It is vis-à-vis Disney that modernism emerges, as if by default. This default specificity thesis has consequences for situating anime within animation studies. Japanese animations tend to be defined as modernist in advance rather than as 'classical' or 'institutionalized', which means that their modernism is also an identity, a cultural context, a limited field, and is thus constrained to yearn for recognition within the expanded field (transnational postmodernity), even while its triumph there is presumed.

Film theory and postcolonial theory have registered a similar impasse. In film theory, the insistence on the classical Hollywood style encouraged the notion that everything that did not strictly accord with Hollywood form constituted a modernist response or even resistance. Entire national cinemas as well as American films that disturbed the classical style might equally well be construed as modernist. Somewhat analogously, postcolonial scholars have recently begun to express concern that deconstruction, as used in postcolonial theory, has tended to generate ever more sophisticated studies of the West while unwittingly discovering pretty much the same kind of otherness in every discussion of the non-West. Needless to say, the fault may not lay with deconstruction per se but with a general deconstructive manner of thinking, where difference is posited as difference vis-à-vis American or Western norms and conventions — explicitly or by default. In the essays on animation grouped under national rubrics in *Illusion of Life II*, something similar happens, partly because the specificity of animation is assumed and yet remains largely unspecified. As a consequence, to speak deconstructively, animation *surplus* is staged as *supplement*. While this tendency becomes most evident in discussions of Japanese animation, it is indicative of a general tendency to imagine animation not in terms of a specific ground, material conditions or orientations, technologies, discourses, power formations, or even modernity. Instead animation appears ideally suited to a renewal of modernism and its modalities (vernacular nationalism, Orientalism, supra-humanism). The material limits of animation studies appear almost synonymous with those of modernism. The limited field thus forces us to ask: what is the future of modernism? Why modernism today?

The Expanded Field

While the essays grouped under the expanded field are equally diverse, as a whole they present a shift toward questions of power. Rex Butler's essay makes for a good transition, for, in a manner reminiscent of Zizek and psychoanalytic theory, Butler sees in animation a point of departure for a careful reading of the work of negativity within popular American films. An animation-like moment in *Schindler's List* — a girl hand-coloured in red within the black-and-white film – disturbs and exposes the mechanisms of fantasy for it bears "some analogy to what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan spoke of as the 'stain', that place in the image from which the image looks at you" (320). Butler finds analogous negativity in the figure of the extraterrestrial in *E.T.* and in the king-father in *The Lion King*. In the latter instance, he concludes, "the king is the place holder of void. It is only through the king that we come to understand there is no actual locus of power" (329). In other words, the king is like the phallus in Lacan, and animation the stain that forces a reckoning with castration. Thus Butler feels that "the 'idealism' of Spielberg and Disney offers a far more radical deconstruction of capitalist ideology…". They are "great critics of the postmodern" (330).

Butler does not elaborate on capitalist ideology or the postmodern, but because his emphasis is on subject formation via the structuration of the visual field in general (rather than animation specifically), one surmises that ideology here refers to any structuration of visual field (subject formation) that hides or does not acknowledge its fundamental impossibility, its illusory and tautological nature, its point of internal otherness. In contrast, by staging an illusion of illusion, Spielberg and Disney expose "this world itself as an illusion" (330). Butler thus brings new theoretical rigor to the modernism implicit in prior essays, finding modernist texts and auteurs engaged in a struggle against the illusion of plenitude (the imaginary) that masks the lack at the heart of subject formation.

Likewise, in an essay discussing at length Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics that gives ontological priority to speech over writing, Annemarie Jonson finds in Porky Pig's stutter a deconstruction of plenitude, life without death, and life without difference that "hyberbolises *non*plenitude, disclosing the thantic interval" (447). Much as Butler explores the articulation of an internal material limit to the illusion of visual plenitude, Jonson discovers in the pig's stutter an internal material limit on spoken plenitude within animation — to wit, the stain as the condition of (im)possibility for seeing, writing as the condition of (im)possibility for speech, and death as the condition of (im)possibility for life. For me, the interest of these kinds of deconstructive thought lies in their insistence on looking at the internal limit of a material formation or modality. What strikes me as odd, however, is their lack of interest in animation specifically — one might say the essence or ontology of animation. Instead what comes to the fore is a deconstruction of the essence or ontology of the human.

Thus, in a beautifully turned deconstruction of mechanism versus animism in the history of Western thought, Cholodenko shows how the mechanism has operated as the unacknowledged condition of (im)possibility for animistic schools of thought, and conversely the living or animated for mechanistic thought, which tautology extends into film and animation theory. He then proposes a third term, the automaton, as a sort of impossible ground for both schools of thought. Here, too, deconstruction of ontology moves toward the human, and the human automaton takes priority. He writes, "man is always already hybrid, 'man-machine' — 'animate inanimate'…, what operates in both domains of artificing the human — the animistic and the mechanistic — is simulation, the human is always already a simulation…" (494). While Cholodenko's account opens into broader questions about the fascination with life and movement as well as the ground for mimesis, it nonetheless dwells on the human

face to face with humanoid automatons, dolls, demons, cyborgs, and other folds of the human.

At stake in these variations on the deconstructive turn, then, is the status of the human and humanism. While one might well ask if such approaches to animation are not narrowly axed on the human (anthropocentrism) to the exclusion of other material essences and ontologies (cinema, animation, media), there also seems to be something about animation that returns us to a confrontation with the human, which might productively be taken up in greater detail. The other essays within the expanded field which address power formations also consistently return to questions about the human. Patrick Crogan, for instance, provides an overview and finely honed analysis of the military development of flight simulation and its impact on virtual reality. Insofar as he focuses on technologies, his point of departure promises to part with anthropocentrism. At the same time, perhaps because Virilio's discussion of the logistics of perception consistently provides a point of reference for him, Crogan's critique of technology implies a sense of the complete loss of a human-scaled and human-centred life world, albeit less explicitly than Virilio. But it is still the human that is at stake, almost nostalgically. Crogan's emphasis makes us think about what is at stake in the deconstructive turn of other essays. How does the deconstruction of the human respond to the technological derealization of the human world announced in Crogan and Virilio?

The human also stages its return in a brilliant essay that considers in detail the ontology of animation (the essence of its technology, as it were). William Schaffer considers the consequences of the immobility of the camera in animation. With Gilles Deleuze's ontology of cinema and its emphasis on camera movement as a point of reference, Schaffer stresses "the performance of an invisible hand" (466) in animation, different from yet analogous to the mobile camera of cinema. For Schaffer, animation thus entails a tension between the animator's control over the character and the animator's invisibility, resulting in a control image in which the "position of the controller, invulnerable and all powerful, is the one all characters strive to capture for themselves as their chaotic encounters unfold…" (471). Thus the ontology of the human reappears, in the form of allegories of 'divine creative freedom' versus 'impotence'. While Schaffer nicely avoids psychologising this relation, the promise of looking at the ontology of animation gradually gives way to an account of how animated characters find themselves in an *animatic abyss* (which contrasts sharply with Deleuze's divergent series). It is as if the indeterminacy proper to animation becomes displaced onto the characters' experience of a crisis in authority or 'natural' sovereignty. But that crisis is as much an effect of anthropomorphism in analysis as it is of animation.

An equally challenging essay by Ben Crawford on character licensing and animation is especially provocative in light of Schaffer's emphasis on animator and character. Crawford stresses "a collaborative, corporate model of authorship, one conceived of as operating within strategic responses to competitive marketplaces around the globe" (421). On the hand, he sees the enforcement of intellectual property and copyright laws as the basic operating reality of the animation industry. On the other hand, he considers the seven main criticisms of licensed merchandise, finding that such criticism typically entailed an elitism blind to its own practices and values, while projecting them onto children. Countering such criticisms, Schaffer concludes, "at the heart of merchandising and children's entertainment lies not the rejection of humanism in a festival of aimless effect but rather the recruitment of the power of affect liberated from its humanistic bonds" (421). In contrast to Schaffer's emphasis on the image, Crawford, for strategic reasons, wishes to dispense with image analysis to underscore the impact of character properties. Yet surely the dynamics of the image are as real as those of the market and corporate law. If we take up the challenges issued by both Schaffer and Crawford, both the 'production machine' and the 'image machine' demand further attention, as does the relation (and non-relation) between them. Crawford indicates as much when he puts forth the question of "the power of the persona rendered as image".

In assessing the video game *Street Fighter*, accused of inciting racial violence in the wake of the Rodney King riots, David Ellison first considers how the impulse toward privatisation and securitisation has been extended to information, such screens and data flows have become as much a part of protective siege-resistant architectures as metal or other materials. Critical attention, he notes, gravitated toward video games, particularly those featuring combat, as a convenient scapegoat – whence the notion of the Gulf War as a Nintendo War. Ellison, however, finds that *Street Fighter* "utterly subverts" the "kind of racist typology" in which "their body speaks the truth of their character", a mode that he sees prevalent in other visions of interactive or immersive technologies (360-61). Once again, as if ineluctably, questions about animation in relation to power formations direct attention toward the human, here articulated in character 'types'. While I am not sure that I agree with Ellison that *Street Fighter* subverts racist typology by assuming that "all races and species are capable of violence" (360), his comments are especially interesting in light of the emphasis in other discussions of animation on character properties, humanoid automatons, the invisible control of characters, and even stuttering humanoid animals.

The study of animation in the expanded field of power relations consistently gestures toward the conditions of (im)possibility for human existence — but not simply as universal ontology but as biopolitics. Maybe it is here that studies addressing animation in its specificity might shed new light on contemporary power formations by focusing an inquiry on the material limits of animation. One of the strengths of *The Illusion of Life II* as a collection anticipating the current boom of interest in transnational flows of animation comes of its demonstration that it is not simply the illusion of life that is at stake but the politics of life. Thus the reappearance of modernist and humanist conceits around the study of animation promises something more than a simple repetition of modernism and humanism, potentially inviting us to confront the physiology of power inherent in the intersection of the animate typologies with new information technologies and transnational capital.

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