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There seems to be something about animation that draws its practitioners to the theory as well as it draws theoreticians to its practice. Recent years have seen an explosion of amateur research collecting ephemera and artifacts from animation's early years, most notably at the virtual archive hosted by ASIFA-Hollywood. Never before has so much information about animation process and history been available to the student or scholar. The opposite trend can be seen in academia, where the same theories applied to other, live-action films are applied to animated ones in an attempt to establish the legitimacy of animation scholarship.

So it is a great relief that the articles that form issue one of *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* are not only well researched and well conceived, but they show a consistent familiarity with the techniques, tools, and technology of animation. Editor Suzanne Buchan seems to be deliberately bridging the gap between older styles of film scholarship with a newer emphasis on production and history, leading to a thought-provoking and dynamic journal. The editor's quest for this kind of depth is relayed by her opening introduction:

The scope... (of the journal)... is very comprehensive, yet its focus is clear and simple. Through its editorial aims, it addresses and includes all animation made using known (and perhaps yet to be revealed) techniques since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century up to the

digital shift and beyond, reveals its implications on other time-based media expression – past, present and future – and illuminates how these affect our lives. (5)

To that end, the first issue has a wild array of divergent topics, from an appreciation of lesser known works of animation pioneer Ub Iwerks to a survey of the state of South Korean animation. The result is exactly what editor Buchan promised – an eclectic mix of topics and views, but one that points to an overall comprehensive and inclusive scope. The issue's first essay, J.P. Telotte's "Ub Iwerks' (Multi)Plain Cinema," attempts a rather difficult historical revision: to see the failure of Iwerks's independent work as a casualty of socio-political forces which favored realism over the avant-garde.

However, the facts of Ub Iwerks's departure from his friend and employer's company are well documented by numerous sources. Film distributor Pat Powers offered to bankroll Ub's own studio if he would leave Disney. Iwerks took the chance, ran his own studio for a few years until it collapsed, and then rejoined Disney. The usual historical conclusions are that Iwerks (or Powers) was bad at selling the films, that Disney, furious at being betrayed, drove Iwerks out of business, or that the public did not warm to Iwerks's style. None of these are ultimately provable, and all may be true or have pieces of truth to them.

Telotte's notion, that Iwerks was out of touch with the zeitgeist, is interesting, as it asks one to consider the Iwerks cartoons as if one could reconstruct an entire world view from them – as an anthropologist might divine the nature of a civilization with a set of curious artifacts. Telotte clearly likes Iwerks's constructed worldview, equating it with a force that "celebrated film's power not as a representative form, but as a fantastically creative and transformative medium" (22). Iwerks's plasticity with 2D forms, and his attention to the "flatness" of two-dimensional forms is, for Telotte, akin to avant-garde practice.

At the same time, Telotte devotes considerable length to establishing Iwerks's mechanical genius, and his fascination with creating three-dimensional forms in his cartoons. That Iwerks made use of the multiplane camera (which he invented) as well as he employed various *trompe l'oeil* strategies to suggest depth and dimensionality signal to Telotte that a drive towards realism and representation was also at work in Iwerks's cartoons.

Telotte builds a matrix of oppositions: flat vs. 3D, avant-garde vs. realism, imaginative vs. representative, and even possibly individualistic/existential vs. governed-by-mechanical-capitalist-production. These are possibly misleading; it would be something of a leap to suggest that a 3D animated film is inherently more capitalist or less avant-garde simply

because of the technology or style used to present the material. Even more, the application of this matrix to the Iwerks Studio failure, which could have been a simple matter of bad business or the fickle, indefinable public taste, is perhaps off the mark. This is a fascinating argument, but one that is caught up in its own terms to such a degree that its bearing on the historical realities of the case seem strained.

Lev Manovich's article "Image Future" begins with a description of John Gaeta's "Universal Capture" method used on the last two "Matrix" films and develops some implications of that technology to future image making. The technique itself is remarkably simple: an actor's performance is captured by five different video cameras set at various angles around the head. These captured performances are combined in the computer, extrapolated and used as a projection on a 3D model of the actor. When the 3D head turns to the left, we would see the image from the left side camera. When the camera swoops above or below the head, we see the image from the appropriately placed above or below camera. Computer imaging algorithms take care of the in between steps and much of the lighting and shading is controlled in the computer-simulated environment.

Even so, that deceptively simplistic explanation does not account for the rather detailed math – and even the manual corrections – that are required to make any given effects shot look good. Manovich's aim is to show how the Universal Capture technique is typical of a growing trend – one in which "animation" as a set of ideas and techniques, is becoming so much a part of mainstream filmmaking and image culture as to render the division between animation and live-action not only imperceptible, but useless.

Universal Capture is innovative in that it is a hybrid technology, marrying 3D modeling with a taped performance. It is also remarkable in that it follows a path of development outside the industry norm – which industry has been pursuing the more complex creation of virtual actors, built in a 3D space that is more elaborately constructed. Conversely, Universal Capture is what its creators call "reality sampling," the use of *smaller* but more *relevant* pools of data to create an illusion.

Manovich's interest in Universal Capture is that it is emblematic of a new paradigm for problem solving in film production. It is typical of methods, which are neither "animation" in the traditional sense (whereby a human operator determines the movement of images frame by frame) nor simulation (by which a computer generates the specific movements of an object based on algorithms and other guidelines). Manovich predicts the day when "animation" is

considered a set of processes not just for making two-dimensional drawings appear to move, but for “new methods and new visual styles” (43) in any kind of filmmaking, and that it be “one of the coordinate axes of this new space of hybridity,”(39)

Thomas Lamarre’s “Platonic Sex: Perversion and Shojo Anime (Part One),” is perhaps the single essay in this collection that suffers from a reliance on older methods of criticism. Whereas Lamarre seems well versed in the culture of Japan, his observations on the “non-human women” characters in anime is composed largely of psychoanalytic conjecture on the subject. Considering Lamarre’s publications and interests, one would not suppose he needed such imprecision to make his point.

To be fair, Lamarre has not declared any particular intention other than to discuss gender and genre, two subjects to which neo-Freudianism has certainly adapted itself. Nor should Lamarre be expected take up any interests that do not appeal to him. But his article is the one that sticks out – the one mired in outdated and solipsistic notions of spectatorship rather than in production-based, researched criticism. It does round the journal out, fulfilling the promise of what editor Buchan calls “interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies” (6) in her introduction, but the comparison to other works in the journal is striking.

To be even more fair, Lamarre is probably the only essayist in the journal who addresses the editor’s stated intention of “illuminat(ing) how these (animated works) affect our lives.” (6) Lamarre is clearly interested in the effect of shojo anime on the viewer, and the current state of the critical art offers few tools to explore notions of gender and genre besides psychoanalysis. Lamarre is working well within the conventional norm; it is just that the conventional norm looks anemic compared to the possibilities generated by other approaches.

Despite this reviewer’s methodological qualms, Lamarre’s article is full of interesting observations. Taking the anime series *Chobits* as his emblematic example, Lamarre is fascinated with the idea of a “non-human woman,” here a robot designed to look like a girl. The authors of both the graphic novel that *Chobits* is based on and of the anime Lamarre takes as his example offer up strange sexualized content (the robot’s “on” button is situated in her vagina, for example) that begs for analysis and commentary.

Unfortunately Lamarre, either through overenthusiastic adoption of the critical tendency to personify texts, or through a deep belief in his analysis, ends up making some fairly outrageous statements without much to back them up. That *Chobits* “endorses pornography as a solution to the problem of human sexuality,” (58) for example, makes the

cartoon sound like an outright advertisement for sleazy magazines, rather than a work that merely suggests certain implications – which implications are, in fact, the results of Lamarre’s own reading of *Chobits*. This tends to obscure Lamarre’s more important points – his presentation of “platonic sex” as an active concept in *Chobits* for instance.

In contrast, Joon-Yang Kim’s article “Critique of the New Historical Landscape of South Korean Animation” is a mostly historical approach to Korean animation that provides a much-wanted introduction to a little-known subject. Kim’s work is an encapsulated history of South Korean animation, suggesting the need for a longer, more thorough work. It is to be hoped that inclusion in this journal is the first step towards that work, either by Kim or his followers.

Korea does not boast the animation pioneers found in other countries. It is a country riddled by wars and colonization throughout much of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so its own animation history begins in the late year of 1956. Still, Kim shows us who the Korean innovators were and explains the socioeconomic trends that either enabled or inhibited certain kinds of production in Korea. Mindful of avoiding a “master narrative” of South Korean animation, gives the facts without attempting any interpretations.

Kim has even suggested what his own methodological missteps might be, concluding his article with a review of the article itself, detailing the improvement that could be made on his presentation. One hopes others will pick up this gauntlet.

Scott Bukatman offers an historical analysis of the development of both comics and animation as natural outgrowths of photography experiments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his essay “Comics and the Critique of Chronophotography, or ‘He Never Knew When It Was Coming!’” The premise is that in the wake of photographic experiments by Muybridge and Marey comics artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century responded to and incorporated aspects of that research into the styles and narratives of their comics.

This contrast of Muybridge and Marey is one that Bukatman and others seem to take for granted. In fact, no fewer than three out of the six articles that comprise this journal refer to some kind of opposition of the two men. Manovich, for example, characterizes Muybridge as a man interested in the study of continuous movement while Marey is concerned with discrete units of movement.

Muybridge had already developed a way to take successive photographs of a moving object such as a horse; eventually the Lumieres and others figured out a way to take enough samples so that, when projected, they perceptually fuse into continuous motion. Being a scientist, Marey was driven by an opposite desire; not to create a

seamless illusion of the visible world, but rather to be able to understand its structure by keeping subsequent samples discrete. (41)

In Bukatman, however, we find that

For Braun, Muybridge's use of multiple, spatially organized cameras, as well as his characteristic array of discretely bounded, pleasingly composed images, privileged a scene of time as divisible and discrete. Contained parcels of space become analogous to contained parcels of time. Marey's single plates, by contrast, emphasized a temporal continuum, with the chronophotograph capturing instants along the axis of time's arrow. (88)

Yes, they are by two different authors and they are quoting yet other authors, but the comparison is interesting. In one, Marey is the discrete guy; in the other it's Muybridge. And, of course, it is vice versa for continuous movement.

Though Bukatman and his sources (Marta Braun, Tom Gunning) recognize that Muybridge invented the zoopraxinoscope so that he could show his photos moving, and seem to acknowledge that the goal of Muybridge's research was always to reveal the movement of animals (and people) by means of photography, these are overlooked in favor of characterizing Muybridge as interested only in a frozen instant, or, alternately, an arrangement of such instants. For Gunning in particular, "Muybridge's concern was with narration, not with movement," (88) - a remarkable thing to say about a man whose published works are catalogues analyzing the motion of animals or humans. Bukatman takes Muybridge even further far afield by claiming that the mere publication of his photographs establishes Muybridge as being interested in the sequence of still images, rather than the totality of motion suggested by Marey's work.

It is well known that Muybridge and Marey were working on the same problem of photographing and analyzing motion, that they knew each other and that they knew each other's work. The tidiness of the two photographers occupying opposite ends of a critical dichotomy must be irresistible, but the argument fails to convince, especially when either man seems to be able to occupy either position.

The connection, however, between these motion studies and an adaptation of the techniques and styles into comics of Wilhelm Busch, A.B. Frost, and Winsor McCay is solid and well presented. Bukatman even invokes Scott McCloud for his thesis. As comics scholarship is in its infancy, it has few luminaries. McCloud's text practically dominates the field and provides valuable critical structures for Bukatman's arguments - in particular, Bukatman's

discussion of the narrative use of space across the comics page. His assertion that the visual grammar of comics changed radically in response to these photographic experiments is virtually unassailable.

The last essay in this collection, Dennis Dollens's "The Cathedral is Alive: Animating Biomimetic Architecture," is perhaps the most complex and interdisciplinary of the series. Dollens is a designer whose background is in architecture, so he brings a wide range of influences to his analysis of Tomek Baginski's 2002 short "The Cathedral." The first of these is the way in which "The Cathedral" demonstrates the power of computer-aided design, chiefly designs based on natural life forms and cellular growth. Algorithms developed for scientific research can be employed to create not only the structure of architectural spaces, but can be used to simulate them, make them grow, and to move them.

This has its obvious applications to entertainment, but Dollens seems more energized to think of animation as a part of the development process for bold new architecture. He includes three case studies in which 3D modeling and animation tools normally considered for use in filmmaking have applications in the development and visualization of building projects. As he writes, "These working animations provide a fast way to visualize and think about movement, relationships between materials, transitions between forms and massing, as well as ideas concerning light and shadow..." (115)

Thus, the short film "The Cathedral" becomes for Dollens a kind of tangent point for thinking about animation tools, normally reserved for the creation of photorealistic materials in entertainment as valuable brainstorming techniques for developing cutting-edge architecture. It is perhaps fitting that this essay, the one most removed from traditional film scholarship, ends the journal.

*Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* has an auspicious debut, offering a wide variety of articles. Though part of the aim of this review has included criticisms as well as congratulations, it should be stressed that this journal offers plenty to criticize and compliment – and that is no mean feat. Buchan has assembled a group of eager, energetic thinkers willing to take on numerous issues spanning a vast range of topics. One can expect successive issues of the journal to be a valuable resource for animation scholarship the way that traditional venues have been for live-action films.