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Alan Cholodenko

Animation (Theory) as the Poematic

A Reply to the Cognitivists

This essay has two projects.

The first is intrinsic to the very question of what constitutes legitimate scholarly inquiry in the study of film and of animation, marking out something ostensibly especially contentious in and for the study of the latter: theory. Proceeding from two related queries – Why theory? And why animation theory? – the paper offers responses based in and on my own theory-driven and theory-focused work.¹

The second project constitutes a reply to the cognitivists, or more particularly, those scholars who propound and promote a cognitive theory of film and especially of animation, notably, those who have wielded cognitivism as a weapon of total destruction against my work. Given the nature of the paper, this reply is of a general and in any case partial character.

Let me pause to say: I ordinarily do not respond to criticism of my work. But given *where* these criticisms have been published and their *purport*, I felt I have had to make an exception to my rule.

Theory is a subject near and dear to my heart.

I don't stand outside what I theorise.

I theorise what I live, and I live what I theorise.

To ask – Why theory? Why animation theory? – these are of course themselves theoretical questions, questions of theory, of the theory of theory.

Theory for me proceeds from a double inescapability, at once the inescapable necessity and inescapable impossibility of knowing (that is, knowing anything fully), including answers to these two theoretical questions I have just posed.

Put otherwise, theory proceeds from a double necessity and a double impossibility, the at once impossible necessity of knowing fully and the necessary impossibility of knowing fully.

The necessity animates the impossibility and the impossibility the necessity, and so on,

One word for knowing is cognition, from the Latin *cognoscere*, to know.

What I have just said about knowing, about its nature and limits, applies for me to cognition, to the cognitive, and will inform my reply to the cognitivists, whose very name derives from the word cognition.

Another key point: theory is for me a form of animation.

It is animate, animated and animating, including of the theorist.

And theory for me is a form of speculation.

Happily, that's one of its definitions.

¹ This paper takes off from my elaboration of my theoretical approaches to animation in my Introductions to *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (1991) and *The Illusion of Life 2: More Essays on Animation* (2007) and in my articles 'Animation-Film and Media Studies' "Blind Spot" and "Why Animation, Alan?" in *Society for Animation Studies Newsletters* (Cholodenko, 2007a and 2008). I obviously cannot here rehearse all their points regarding theory, all that is for me at stake in theory in general and in my approaches to theory in particular, including the theory of animation and the animation of theory, including all the aspects therein pertaining to my paper's two projects, only ask the reader to consult them, should they wish to learn more.

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It comes from the Greek *theoria*, a looking at, viewing, contemplation, speculation, also a sight, a spectacle, from *theoros*, spectator, looker on, from stem *thea*... to look on, view contemplate...

Which means that there's an implied spectator in every theory.

And for those who have read my work on the Derridean spectre and the Homeric spectre *psuché*,² there's a spectre in every spectator-speculator, and in every theory, too – something Jacques Derrida acknowledges in his declaration of the spectre as 'perhaps the hidden figure of all figures' (Derrida, 1994 p.120).

As for the word 'speculate', of all its meanings, the one that most attracts me is: 'to undertake, to take part or invest in, a business enterprise or transaction of a risky nature in the expectation of considerable gain', especially as it inflects with its risk other of speculate's meanings – 'to observe or view mentally' and 'to conjecture'.

As speculation, as a kind of 'risky business', my work is what I call after Derrida and Jean Baudrillard a kind of 'reality-fiction', 'theory-fiction', including of course this paper.

Let me add: for me, theory is never not there, operating and animating, whether explicitly stated or not.

All propositions, all discourses, all practices, all ideas have a theoretical support, basis, 'ground'...

Even those who might think theory has no place in animation studies have thereby a theory, a theory not only about animation studies but about theory itself!

So not only is theory inescapable, those who think they *can* escape theory, *have* escaped theory, are arguably the most in thrall to it (analogous to how Louis Althusser theorises ideology (Althusser, 1970)).

And for me there is no meta-'anything', including of theory, that would be the ground of all, including of all theory, no transcendental signified where all knowledge would at last achieve its final form, its resolution and definitiveness. Put otherwise, there is no theory that subsumes every theory, no final theory, no TOE (Theory of Everything), except perhaps the TOE that there is no TOE.³

I should also note: in being linked to Greek *thea*, theory is also linked to theatre, to spectacle, to mimesis.

I come out of film theory, as I indicated in my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (1991), where I explicitly stated that my work in film theory was a critique of late '60s French film theory from the perspective of 'poststructuralist' and 'postmodernist' approaches to film.⁴ As for my theorising of animation, I marked in my Introduction that it was to serve as *supplement – supplément* – to the scholarship already done on animation. It was and is a theorising likewise 'poststructuralist' and 'postmodernist', foregrounding 'animation's special association with the "abject", the double, the "uncanny", the sublime, seduction, *différance*, disappearance and death...' (Cholodenko, 1991a p.14).⁵ Why do I and others privilege such approaches for the

² My articles on the Derridean spectre include 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema', 'The Nutty Universe of Animation, the "Discipline" of All "Disciplines", And That's Not All, Folks!', 'Still Photography?' and '(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix', Parts I (soon to appear on the SAS website) and II. My articles on the Homeric spectre *psuché* include 'Still Photography?' and '(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix', Part II.

³ On the TOE, see my 'The Nutty Universe of Animation, the "Discipline" of All "Disciplines", And That's Not All, Folks!'.

⁴ I include its English avatar whenever I write of late '60s French film theory in this essay.

⁵ In this sentence 'seduction' specifically references Baudrillard, '*différance*' Derrida. See page 14 of my Introduction for the full text.

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theorising of animation in our two volumes? Because we believe they not only offer the richest ways to theorize animation (and the animatic), they are the most isomorphic with it, the most, as it were, informed by and performing it.

Mine has been a theorising seeking to reanimate not only film theory, Film Studies but animation theory, animation studies, indeed the very idea of film. To that end, my first key, apparently still radical, proposal of that Introduction is: not only is animation a form of film, film, all film, film ‘as such’, is a form of animation.

No matter to the ‘cognitivists’ Jayne Pilling, in her Introduction to *A Reader in Animation Studies* (1997) and Andrew Darley, in his article ‘Bones of Contention: Thoughts on the Study of Animation’, in *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, that I stated my work was a *critique* of late ’60s French film theory. Disregarding that, they illogically make my work subject to cognitive film theorists David Bordwell and Noël Carroll’s so-called ‘critique of Grand Theory’ (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996 pp.xiii-xvii; Bordwell, 1996; Carroll, 1996), which critique is, ironically, *just like my work*, a critique of late ’60s French film theory (though approached from a dramatically different direction).⁶ Nor do Pilling and Darley argue any case for so identifying my work as Grand Theory, which, once done, is meant automatically to spell its banishment from the magic kingdom of animation studies or even its liquidation. Say the magic words ‘Grand Theory’ and poof! You’re ‘history’! Terminated with extreme prejudice.

Nor, significantly, do Bordwell and Carroll name the work of Baudrillard and Derrida – the *lynchpins* of my work – Grand Theory. Nor – ironically, inconsistently, given they do identify my work as Grand Theory – do Pilling and Darley so name that of these lynchpins of my work. While Pilling says nothing on the matter, Darley takes a different tack. He declares deconstruction (the term associated with Derrida’s work) a crucial approach to ‘culture per se’, while at the same time insinuating my kind of work *perverts* deconstruction, becoming ironically, inexplicably, thereby, as he puts it, ‘so-called “theory”’ (Darley, 2007 p.71), the dreaded ‘theory’ (short for ‘Grand Theory’)!

Needless to say, I challenge this charge.

For a start, I would refer him to my ‘*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, or The Framing of Animation’ essay in *The Illusion of Life*, an essay that is a ‘meeting place’ of animation and deconstruction. In fact, in that essay I deliberately quote Derrida’s use of the term ‘cinematography’ as form of what he calls writing to valorise my deconstructive theorising of film and animation (Cholodenko, 1991b p.214). I would add: not that it is conclusive but years ago Derrida told me he liked *The Illusion of Life* book and my ‘*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*’ essay in it; and more recently, he told me he thought my likewise Derridean essay ‘The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema’ (Cholodenko, 2004), which like *The Illusion of Life* I had given him to read, was ‘wonderful’. His word.

Some cynics might suggest that my citing here of Derrida’s approval is purely gratuitous, self-fulfilling, that it was automatically guaranteed that Derrida would be nothing other than acknowledging of my work for the simple reason that I drew upon his. But the matter is not nearly so simple. It would not have been enough to draw upon Derrida’s work to gain such a response, one would have had to do so in a way that respected and accorded with that work’s testing complex-

⁶ Pilling so subjects my work on pages xiii-xiv, plus xviii, note 19; Darley on pages 70-75. A large-scale, focused critique of cognitive film theory’s ‘critique of Grand Theory’ is unfortunately beyond the reach of this essay. But I must say that Christian Metz told me in 1982 that, while he aspired to a science of cinema – what would qualify for me as a TOE of it – through the adding of the economic instance of cinema to his psycho-analytic semiotics of cinema, it had not yet been achieved. Not only did he never to my knowledge elaborate that economic instance or otherwise declare the goal had been reached, he also told me at that time that there was a tremendous amount of work to be done in the theorising of film, work which I took to be part and parcel of what would have to be done before a science of cinema could for him be achieved.

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ity, richness, and rigour, that understood, represented and used its challenging logics correctly. It is a fact that the demanding complexity, richness and rigour of the work of theorists like Derrida and Baudrillard means that their work, including their exacting logics, can all too easily be not only misunderstood and misrepresented but used incorrectly. I have seen that aplenty. Even the term ‘deconstruction’ is almost as commonly misused as used (Cholodenko, 2007c pp.47-48). So Derrida’s acknowledgement of my work, to say nothing of praise of it, means I got it right for him, which likewise means, contrary to Darley’s insinuation, I did not pervert Derrida’s work, as well as argues that at best Darley does not understand deconstruction.

To pursue that further, it seems rather perverse in general and rather a perversion of Derrida’s work in particular for Darley to declare ‘deconstruction ... crucial’ for the understanding of ‘culture per se’ (p.73), yet at the same time to state ‘I’m afraid I view rather conservatively attempts to import, willy-nilly, so-called “theory” (usually French and post-structuralist) into the study and understanding of animation’ (p.70). Since Derrida, an Algerian born French citizen, was the founder of deconstruction and deconstruction is a mode, indeed one of the most prominent modes, of French poststructuralism, how can Darley at once declare deconstruction crucial and issue a blanket savaging of French poststructuralism as ‘so-called “theory”’?! There is no logic, no sense here. Is he saying not merely that my work perverts deconstruction but *Derrida’s* work perverts deconstruction?! (Certainly the one time he names Derrida he speaks of ‘Derrida’s approach to deconstruction’ and of a discussion in my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life* as ‘inspired’ by ‘Derrida’s approach’ to it (Darley, 2007 p.71).) Is he saying deconstruction is fine for understanding culture per se but not for understanding animation per se?! If so, is he suggesting culture per se and animation per se are totally unrelated?! These propositions make no sense either. And beyond that, since deconstruction challenges the very notion and being of the ‘per se’, the in-itself that would be entire to itself, how can Darley even claim ‘deconstruction...crucial’ for the understanding of ‘culture per se’?! The only way is if he believes erroneously that deconstruction is allied, isomorphic, one with the ontological rather than is the at once enabling and *disenabling* condition of the ontological.

In light of these queries around Derrida, deconstruction and theory, I must pause here to contextualise briefly Darley’s ‘cognitivist’ critique of my work in terms of its theoretical framework and philosophical commitments, his assertion of Bordwell’s and Carroll’s approaches as the measure of ‘the ultimate worth’ (Darley, 2007 p.75, note 15) of ‘theory’ in respect to film studies and his bringing of them to assess animation studies. Cognitive film theory, as formulated in the Introduction to Bordwell and Carroll’s anthology *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996) is based in ‘the field of cognitive science – [which spans] linguistics, anthropology, psychology, aesthetics, and philosophy of mind’ (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996 p.xvi)-neuroscience and artificial intelligence, too – is not a unified field but rather one of ‘vivid and irreconcilable differences’ (Ibid) and ‘A cognitivist analysis or explanation seeks to understand human thought, emotion, and action by appeal to processes of mental representation, naturalistic processes, and (some sense of) rational agency’ (Ibid).⁷ The one thing that binds differing, even diametrically opposed, cognitive film theories is their rejection of ‘the psychoanalytic framework that dominated film academia’ (Ibid). Anti Grand Theory, Bordwell and Carroll promote what they term ‘middle-level’ and ‘piecemeal’ theories, respectively (Bordwell, 1996 p.3, pp.26-30; Carroll, 1996 p.40). I must say, I find their characterisation of late ’60s French film theory in large measure a caricature of it, as does Slavoj Žižek (Žižek, 2001), as I likewise find risible Bordwell’s characterisations of Derrida,

⁷ For an explication of these terms, see Bordwell’s ‘A Case For Cognitivism’, *Iris* 9, Spring 1989.

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Baudrillard, poststructuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism (Bordwell, 1996). Crucially too, I see Bordwell and Carroll's work as a continuation in its own way of the 100 Years War (!), especially as Carroll is also an 'Anglo-American' analytic philosopher, and he and Bordwell – American cognitivists – are attacking continental (i.e. French) philosophy and theory. And Darley in his own way as their avatar continues that war.

My work, as an astute person said recently, is a philosophy of animation. Yes, and based in continental philosophy, but with this crucial qualification. Insofar as my work is that of Derridean deconstruction, what I said of Derrida's work when introducing him in 1999 at Sydney Town Hall to 2000 people applies also to my work. Declaring that his work had *reanimated* philosophy, I said:

'Deconstruction' is at once both most faithful to philosophy and most violent to it. Operating on both sides of the horizon of philosophy at the same time, 'deconstruction' is at once both philosophy and not-philosophy, therefore neither simply philosophy nor simply not-philosophy. 'It' is the frame, the hymen, the pharmakon, [etc.,] of philosophy. 'It' not only 'thinks' the limit, the between, the undecidable, the impossible, including of philosophy, but performs them, and vice versa.

This is why I refer to my work as theory, not simply philosophy – a theory of animation, of animation as the *animatic*.⁸

Derrida is a thinker of the limits; deconstruction a recognition, a re-cognition, of limits, *including of cognition*. The purport of Derrida's famous statement 'The concept of writing exceeds and comprehends that of language' (Derrida, 1967 p.8) is that no matter how 'well-made', even if by cognitive scientists and analytic philosophers drawing upon linguistics,⁹ language cannot surmount the play of writing – writing for Derrida 'the structure always already inhabited by the trace' (Spivak, 1967 p.xxxix) – and of *différance* – for Derrida the systematic and regulated play of differing and deferring in and of language, and more.¹⁰ Nor can definition surmount that play, especially the pursuit of a definitive, final definition of animation, the call for which has rung insistently of late in e-mails to the Society for Animation Studies mailing list.¹¹ In other words, knowledge, language and definition come up against their limits.¹²

⁸ For my definition of the animatic, see my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life 2: More Essays on Animation*, pages 43-44.

⁹ Here I reference Suzanne Buchan's advocacy of Bordwell and Carroll's 'critique of Grand Theory' and promotion of "piecemeal" approaches' (Buchan, 2006a p.viii; Buchan, 2006b p.22), though her call for the concentration of such approaches on individual films (Buchan, 2006a p.viii) flies in the face of Bordwell and Carroll's turn away from the one film-one essay format, for that for them in fact characterises work under the banner of 'Grand Theory'! I reference here as well her championing of the goals for animation studies that Etienne Souriau sought for film: 1. animation studies' being a science, a 'scientific discipline' (Buchan, 2006a p.vii), one for Buchan modelled on Souriau's structuralist science, *filmologie*, and enlisted by her to a cognitivist science of animation; and 2. the precondition to film's being a science, a scientific discipline, that is, the development for Souriau, after Condillac, of a 'well-made language', enlisted by Buchan to a 'well-made language' of animation (Buchan, 2006a p.vii; Buchan, 2006b p.36)), one 'specific to the animated form' (Ibid), including definitions, terminology, etc. In both her Introduction to and essay in *Animated 'Worlds'*, 'The Animated Spectator: Watching the Quay Brothers' "Worlds"', Buchan cites Souriau's 'La Structure de l'univers filmique et le vocabulaire de la filmologie' as support for her call for a science, scientific discipline and 'well-made language' of animation, all three for me always already deconstructed. As well, she explicitly names eight cognitive film theorists in her essay in that book (p.22) in support of that work of cognitive film theory, which theory for her represents a major turn and a major discourse in Film Studies (which is for me and many others a most questionable understanding), and of that work's application to animation theory.

¹⁰ It is especially anti-Derrideans who continue to purvey the false idea that for Derrida all there is is textuality, ignoring, or perhaps being ignorant of, just for openers, what is known as Derrida's 'affirmative' phase from 1990 on, where he takes up such subjects as the gift, responsibility, friendship, justice, hospitality, etc.

¹¹ Here I reference Brian Wells' northern hemisphere Spring 2008 e-mails to the SAS mailing list on the subject, calling for that definitive, final definition of animation. At the same time, I am pleased to acknowledge his recognition in his e-mails of the inextricable complication of theory and practice and his call for such recognition on the part of the SAS, including in its 'mission statement' and by explicit promotion of scholarship in both areas, a recognition for him and for myself integral to an understanding of animation.

¹² Put in terms of animation, language and definition come up against animation as the animatic. The animatic not only perturbs language, it perturbs the very possibility of definition, including of itself. It disseminates itself, as it does all it 'defines'.

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But Derrida is not saying that such efforts to know fully and finally should not be made. To the contrary. They will and *must* be, and must be as complex, sophisticated and rigorous as possible.¹³ But that will not prevent these efforts from meeting their limits, from failing to accomplish or fulfil their desire for presence, for essence, for identity, for self-identity, for closure, all of which are, pardon the pun, foreclosed. And fortunately so. Their accomplishment or fulfilment, says Derrida, ‘would be death itself; the good, the absolute good, would be identical with death’ (Derrida, 1987 p.260). So their failure becomes their paradoxical success, even as their success would be the ultimate failure.

In other words, it is the irresolvability of the question of who authored Felix that keeps the theorist and what the theorist theorises animate, animated and animating.¹⁴ The irresolvability animates research and scholarship, keeps them going. Its resolution, on the other hand, would render that animation inanimate.

Here another crucial point, one marked in my use of the term *supplement* earlier: my work, like Derrida’s, is not opposed to traditional scholarship. What Derrida declares of philosophers I say of animation scholars. He states:

I do not think we need to choose between the two. We should have philosophers trained as philosophers, as rigorously as possible, and at the same time audacious philosophers who cross the borders and discover new connections, new fields, not only interdisciplinary researches but themes that are not even interdisciplinary. (Derrida, 1997 p.7)

Such themes (and problems and objects, too) would be ‘new’, of no legitimacy, recognition or even identity in existing academic fields and universities, necessitating the invention of ‘a new competency, a new type of research, a new discipline’ (Derrida, 1997 p.8). Such new entities would be constitutively at once faithful to and disturbing of the propriety and authority of existing understandings, forms, systems, discourses, institutions, etc.

So we need traditional animation scholars doing their ‘time-honoured work’, animation scholars doing interdisciplinary work and for me animation scholars deconstructing that work!

And fortunately, whether theorists theorise it or not, deconstruction as process of world is always going on.

You see, Derrida is a ‘robust pluralist’¹⁵ when it comes to theorising, as am I. Too, I say of my approaches what he says of his: ‘No one is obliged to be interested in what interests me’ (Derrida, 1992 p.65).

And to say ‘approaches’ means that in this essay I must confine my remarks mostly to the work of Derrida, leaving Baudrillard for another day.

¹³ This, of course, includes my own work, in which I insist on bringing as much sophistication and rigor as possible to bear upon analysis, which includes for me striving for as much clarity as possible. So I dispute Ethan de Seife’s criticising, in his e-mail to the SAS mailing list on April 7, 2008, my use of terms such as ‘animatic’ as ‘a further, jargonistic blurring of terms which could, frankly, use more clarity, if anything’. The same goes for Darley’s accusation against that ‘indiscriminate blending as “Theory”...that has led ‘some to esoteric and jargon-ridden flights of elliptical rhetoric...’ (p.73). I am relentless in the pursuit of clarity in what I write, including in the elaboration of the term ‘animatic’, while at the same time not traducing the complexity required by the object of analysis, even if de Seife and Darley do not see it. And beyond that, there is a clarity that comes in the use of terms of art of a field, too. This is to say that I dispute the notion that, while it is legitimate that professions and disciplines such as the sciences each have their own language that their practitioners use to speak with and among each other, this is barred to the arts and humanities, even terms from philosophy, deconstruction, etc., being characterised by definition as jargon. To attack jargon can be a highly loaded, ideological tactic, a mode of war against the ideas of others.

¹⁴ See my ‘(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix’, Part II, *Animation Studies*, vol. 2, 2007.

¹⁵ Here I inscribe Carroll’s distinction, in ‘Prospects for Film Theory’, pages 62-63 and 67-68, between ‘robust methodological pluralism’ and ‘peaceful coexistence pluralism’.

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The biggest critique people seem to make of my work is that it evacuates ‘animation’ from the discourse of animation film and animation studies in order to prioritise my own philosophic meditations on theory. I disagree on multiple grounds, for openers evidenced by the historical work on animation film in my Introductions to the two anthologies. Furthermore, insofar as my work opens the term ‘animation’ to the history of its ideation, it cannot but enrich the understanding of the pertinence ‘animation’ in *animation* film and *animation* studies.

Moreover, I see my work in accord with Paul Ward’s crucial suggestion in his apt article ‘Some Thoughts on Theory-Practice Relationships in Animation Studies’ that this whole debate is not just about how other disciplines can be used to illuminate animation but how animation can and should be used to illuminate other disciplines, ideas and concepts. That’s what I am never not doing.¹⁶ My work is never not facing at least two ways at once, as one can see from my working between animation film and live action film, between animation theory and film theory, between animation studies and Film Studies, arguing for their inextricable complication, as well as between animation and other ‘disciplines’, not only bringing the work of Derrida, Baudrillard et al. to the theorising of animation but animation to the theorising of their work. And that of others. Two points: the in-between is for me the very domain of animation, operating not only between disciplines but within them, making every discipline interdisciplinary.¹⁷ Second, in terms of the work of the theorists I privilege, through my work their theories can be seen – ‘for the first time’, as it were – as themselves of the order of animation, making these theorists not only theorists of animation and the animatic but animatic theorists of them.

Having said this, I will now return to Darley’s text for further elucidation of its terms of criticism and to offer my responses to them. To facilitate that process for the reader and myself, I will quote a key portion of Darley’s condemnation:

In particular, one wants to believe that the kind of diversions into so-called ‘theory’ which occurred in relation to live action would not be repeated in animation studies. For the increasingly poetic character of such ‘theorizing’ – its reliance on metaphorical, associative and speculative routines which are divorced from real phenomena and practices – leads not to rational understanding, but rather to forms of rhetorical extemporization: a kind of poetical ‘riffing’ with theoretical concepts and ideas that bear very little relation to the real-world practices into which they are being ‘shoe-horned’.

¹⁶ The importance of Ward’s article has been acknowledged, and boosted thereby, by its being awarded the 2008 SAS’s McLaren-Lambart Prize for Best Scholarly Article on Animation. So what it says, including on the theory of animation, has every chance of being influential in the thinking by many animation and other scholars on the subject. Given that, I would be remiss in not stating that for me the Mike Wayne typology of cultural practitioners – reflexive, theoretical and critical (from least to most self-conscious and desirable) – that Ward endorses for application to animation studies in his essay needs qualification and challenge, at least its initial characterization by Ward. For two pages later that characterization undergoes not one but two shifts, shifts that for me dramatically reanimate it. First, *theoretical* suddenly shifts to join *critical* as ‘broader’, as follows: ‘the broader theoretical and contextual dimensions’. Then, *critical* suddenly becomes itself subject to the *theoretical*, as follows: ‘There is little theorizing of the broader contextual issues at stake’. Which means that Ward’s Wayne model suddenly metamorphoses into one much closer to my modeling, in which theory is not separate from but rather at work, or better, both at work and at play, in all three of Ward’s categories, where none of them can escape theory, and where text and context are always already imbricated, so a simple either/or opposition of text and context is always already deconstructed, as is any belief in context as an escape from theory.

As well, of course, the Marxist model that dominated late ’60s French and English film theory and that Ward promotes for animation studies insofar as that model informs his use and elaboration of this typology in particular, at least in its initial characterization, and his essay in general – one where production, including cultural production, is privileged, dialectics is the watchword, and critique, *critical practice*, as the interrogating of ‘the politics of representation’, becomes the highest activity – is one with which my work parts company. That includes his notion that ‘animation... needs to offer a critique in order to define itself...’ (p.239), which implies that animation that does not do so is by definition not animation for him. See my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life 2*, pp. 39-40, for my criticisms of Marxist film theory, including of its either/or modellings.

¹⁷ On animation as in-between, as of the order of the in-between, see my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life*, pp. 13-14, and my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life 2*, pp. 70-71.

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An example of such ‘theorizing’ occurs in the introduction to *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (Cholodenko, 1991), where, in a discussion inspired by Derrida’s approach to deconstruction, it is claimed that a theoretical account of ‘animation film’ implies a deliberate collapsing and liquefaction of distinct categories and senses of the idea of animation. Thus we are informed that

to account for animation film, the theorist would be compelled to approach the idea of animation precisely not as delimited to and by the animation film ... but as a notion ... implicating the most profound, complex and challenging questions of our culture, questions in the areas of being and becoming, time, space, motion, change – indeed, life itself. (Darley, 2007 p.71)

Now, to reply further to Darley’s critique, first of my work in general, then of my work as poetry in particular. Let me begin by pointing to a few additional ironies. First, while my deconstructive writings on animation foreground animation as (non)essence, which means that I qualifiedly share with Darley his stated anti-essentialist stance,¹⁸ he ironically nonetheless issues a total, blanket denunciation of my work, as Pilling did before him!¹⁹ Second, their denunciations ironically exemplify a Grand Theory on *their* part, the Grand, that is, totalising, overarching, Theory that Grand Theory is per se unacceptable, void, of no value.²⁰ Third, while he mistakes my work for Bordwell and Carroll’s ‘Grand Theory’, nominating and condemning it as sole exemplar of ‘theory’ ‘in’ the field of animation studies, at the same time he does not notice or ignores that their ‘Grand Theory’ *is* in animation studies but in a form different from mine. To wit, insofar as Paul Ward and others draw their modeling of animation from late ’60s French and English Marxist film theory and promote that for animation studies, despite Darley’s wish ‘to believe that the kind of diversions into so-called “theory” which occurred in relation to live action would not be repeated in animation studies’ (Ibid) – in other words, that the incursion of ‘theory’ that my work represents would not be repeated – the film theory ‘virus’ is already in animation studies *in this form*, even as those promulgating it become subject to the ‘critique of Grand Theory’!

And a fourth irony: Darley mounts his polemic against *all* my work while explicitly referencing *only* my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life*!²¹ This is a far cry from scholarly and professional practice. And a fifth: though published in 2007, his article addresses all of its criticisms to pre-2000 publications, as with my 1991 Introduction, while presenting itself as a response to not only the past but the current state of affairs in the field! Like my own post-2000 publications, Paul Wells’ publications after *Understanding Animation* (1998) go unaddressed, too. This is another telling deficiency on Darley’s part.

¹⁸ And I as well share his and Carroll’s fallibilism (see Carroll, 1996 p.60), the belief that no system of thought is or can be conclusive, which I have already referenced in terms of the TOE and Kurt Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem in ‘The Nutty Universe of Animation’.

¹⁹ Given both their blanket disparagements of essays in *The Illusion of Life*, and without their even naming those essays, when I say ‘my work’, at points I mean to include those essays. A further and crucial point must be made. For me, there is a key issue here of what criticism is, how one does criticism. I believe in an approach that looks for what is good as well as what one finds problematic, acknowledging the former as well as indicating the latter. As Stanley Cavell has famously said, there is no knowledge without acknowledgment. Which is why I part company with those who engage in blanket denunciations of the work of others, who find not one good word to say about that work. And that necessity of acknowledgement as precondition to knowledge must as well include for me acknowledging the work of others upon which one has drawn, to which one owes a debt, something I find too often absent in recent ‘scholarship’.

²⁰ See my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life 2*, p. 44, for what I call a corollary Grand Theory, that is, that only ‘piecemeal theorising’ (Carroll) and “piecemeal” approaches that concentrate on individual films’ (Buchan’s Animation Research Centre’s web announcement for her *Animated Worlds* conference in 2003) are worthwhile and legitimate.

²¹ I use the word ‘polemic’ advisedly here. Polemic is from the Greek *polemikos*, meaning war. I reply in kind, as Carroll requests of his interlocutors, for he wants such an agonistic debate among theories. See Carroll, ‘Prospects for Film Theory’, pp. 62-63 and 67-68. Darley himself identifies his approach in ‘Bones of Contention’ as ‘the polemic’ (p.72). The abstract of the article calls it ‘a polemical response’ (p.63). And Buchan, in her Introduction to the issue, calls Darley’s article ‘a welcome polemic’ (p.6), though welcome to whom is the question I pose. On the other hand, while Carroll favours speculation, Darley is averse to it.

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And beyond that, Darley operates from the self-appointed, superior position of not only judge determining guilt, adjudicating what is legitimate and what is not, but executioner, casting out from animation studies what he finds illegitimate. But I would ask what qualifies him to assume such a role, especially when he himself ironically declares in his opening paragraph that the article ‘involves what are still only partially resolved reactions to a variety of claims made in and for the field’! (Darley, 2007 p.63). Not that for me one ever achieves a resolution, but this reads as decidedly premature! He is the grand poobah, the grand legitimator and deligitimator, whose article announces and denounces, or, as the abstract at the head of his article declares, ‘confronts what it views as significant obstacles (and cul-de-sacs) with respect to the progress and consolidation of the subject as a legitimate field of scholarship’ (Ibid). The body of his text is *only* criticising, *only* negative, except for registering agreement with Mark Langer on a point (only in the endnote then to criticize Langer), and his tone is pompous and derogatory. Apart from the nod to Langer, Darley has not one good word to say about scholarly work done in animation studies in the body of his essay, including not one acknowledgment of good aspects of what he criticizes. Nor, I would add, does he seem to think he needs to justify his criticisms with reasoned explanation and argumentation, his mere assertion of them being enough to carry conviction!

For me, there is a key issue here of what criticism is, how one does criticism. I believe in an approach that looks for what is good as well as what one finds problematic, acknowledging the former as well as indicating the latter. As Stanley Cavell has famously said, there is no knowledge without acknowledgment. Which is why I part company with those who engage in blanket denunciations of the work of others, who find not one good word to say about that work. (And that necessity of acknowledgement as precondition to knowledge must as well include for me acknowledging the work of others upon which one has drawn, to which one owes a debt, something I find too often absent in recent ‘scholarship’.)

What praise Darley gives to animation scholars is, apart from the Langer in the text, saved for the endnotes, Suzanne Buchan receiving acknowledgement in endnote 8, and then the following in endnote 16: ‘Of course, it goes without saying that I do not wish to deny the considerable work that has already been undertaken by – to name but a few – Crafton (1984), Thompson (1980), Langer (1992), Klein (1993), Pilling (1997), Furniss (1998) and Wells (1998)’ (Darley, 2007 p.75). Coming as it does in the penultimate endnote of the article, this reads as but an ersatz afterthought, too little, too late.

Furthermore, though the abstract at the head of the article states ‘An overall approach is suggested...’ in it, the only overall approach I can discern is the negative one, what is *not* to be done, not what *is* to be done. Of course, the very figuring of the ‘overall approach’ raises the spectre of ‘Grand Theory’!, his ‘overall approach’ deducible as following on from Bordwell’s and Carroll’s approaches. In that regard, one of the oddest moments for me is his endnote 8’s praise of Buchan for looking for similarities as well as differences, when that is what *he* has *not* done in terms of my work, as for example, his attributing the critique of essentialism to Noel Carroll’s 2000 discussion (Darley, 2007 p.66), when I offer that in ‘The Illusion of the Beginning: A Theory of Drawing and Animation’, likewise published in 2000. But, as I indicated, he mounts his blanket critique of my work on the basis of only my 1991 Introduction to *The Illusion of Life*; and an acknowledgment of my article would have to perturb the total negativity he has toward my work.

As for my 1991 Introduction, Darley’s treatment of it constitutes a totalising, ‘tendentious’ misrepresentation of what I claim there, which misrepresentation does to my work what he says I do to animation, that is, ‘shoe-horns’, ‘collapses’ and ‘liquefies’ (Darley, 2007 p.71) it, or better – liquidates it! For the record, nowhere do I claim that a theory of animation film implies a deliber-

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ate collapsing and liquefaction of distinct categories and senses of the idea of animation nor does such a theory operate in my thinking of animation. Nor could it, since distinct categories alone provide the material with and through which deconstruction operates, unless the mere *opening* of animation film to the idea of animation, and vice versa, would be such a collapsing and liquefaction for him! Or unless, by 'liquefaction', he means dissemination, deconstruction! But they are radically different, as different as are 'anything goes' and 'the systematic and regulated play of differing and deferring in and of language' that is *différance*.

My idea was that animation as idea (concept, process, etc.) informs the animation film, and vice versa, so the animation film is *open* to the idea of animation, and vice versa. While Darley accuses me and many of the essays in *The Illusion of Life* of 'appropriating animation' (Ibid), it is arguable that he seeks to do so with his own sequestering vision, wanting to keep animation film safe, safe from animation as idea!, indeed not only closing it off from animation as idea but confining it to 'a mode of representation and art' (Ibid), as 'a particular cultural practice of film making' (p.73). Such a sequestering and confining would supposedly for Darley keep animation free from theory, styled by him 'theory'. This is of course *his theory*. But for me, insofar as there is no proper, no essence, to animation, animation is always already expropriated. This means that, despite Darley's theory that my approach appropriates and subjugates animation to 'theory' (pp.71, 72), exploiting animation as 'alibi' (p.71), 'mere grist to the mill' (p.72) and 'pretext or illustrative crutch' (p.73) for 'theory', animation cannot be appropriated nor subjugated by any one or any thing to any agenda, including that of trying to keep it safe, and any effort to do so only expropriates and liberates it all the more (as that effort to protect it as well demonstrates for me a very condescending attitude not only toward idea, toward theory, but toward animation).

Here I turn to Darley's critique, indeed condemnation, of my work as poetry. For me, Plato's animus toward *psuché* (the spectre), including *poetry as spectre*, as second order mimesis, as pernicious, duplicitous evil simulacrum lying at two removes from reality, finds an avatar in Darley's denunciation of poetry in and as my theorising of animation, including his characterising my kind of work as a 'diversion' (p.71). Mark Edmundson, in his book *Literature Against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida*, tell us that for Plato, 'poetry is a harmful diversion, best repudiated in the self and cast from the state' (Edmundson, 1995 p.7), as 'the poets must lie, for they live among phantoms' (Edmundson, 1995 p.4).

Poetry is a pejorative term for Darley, but I thank him for identifying my work with poetry, giving me the lead to align it shortly with Derrida's notion of the poematic and in contrast to Bordwell's notion of poetics.

But before I do that, I first have to sketch and reply to the constellation of terms of criticism that Darley models and mounts against my work as poetry. Here I take a cue from his apparent identifying of my work with intoxication, too (Darley, 2007 p.73), another thing censured by Plato, another thing I thank him for. Perhaps it is that intoxication that leads Darley beyond merely criticising my work as poetry to censoring it as 'rhetorical extemporization' (p.71), i.e. improvisation! And as 'poetical "riffing"' (Ibid.)! But, and here we have to counter any notion of an exclusive operation of intoxication here, to see my work as only intoxicating – perhaps he means playful, seductive even – is to miss the other side of it, for it is a very rigorous, painstaking form of thinking and writing, attentive to the mind-challenging complexities, *including of logic*, that animation sets in play and requires for its theorising. Indeed, I would argue that, though Darley contrasts his cultivation of reason and logic against my putative lack of it, ironically my work pushes logic further than he does in his attack on it.

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Which is to say that, despite his criticism of “either-or” ways of looking as “oversimplistic” (Darley, 2007 p.73) – and my criticism of either/or logics in a number of articles, another thing he and I ‘share’ – Darley ironically models and structures his critique with the self-same simple either/or logics (Bordwell and Carroll’s, too), such as: rational understanding vs. rhetorical extemporization and poetical ‘riffing’; real phenomena and practices vs. speculative routines; real-world practices vs. theoretical concepts and ideas – including his demarcating and centering of animation in the rational and the real, the ‘real-world’ (p.71), and his commingling of the rational with reality. For me, such simple, reductive bi-polar modellings do an injustice to the complexity of animation (and of the subject and the world, and of the commingled relations among them) and hence to the theoretical work called for by that complexity, work I and others have tried to undertake.

Such an injustice is done too in another aspect of Darley’s simple anti-poetry approach to animation, his centering it in and confining it to reason and logic as ultimate guarantors of truth – an example of what Derrida calls logocentrism (from Greek *logos*, meaning word, speech, reason, logic). Logocentrism is part and parcel of philosophy – as ontology, as a metaphysics of *presence* – ‘from Plato on’; and it is that which Derrida’s work deconstructs. In centering everything in reason and logic, logocentrism seeks to exclude all that is not reason and logic; but what it seeks to exclude, to repress, is irrepressible, that which is not only ‘opposed’ to logocentrism but ‘anterior’ to it, indeed its very enabling and *at the same time disabling* condition, as it is of what logocentrism seeks to center, that is, reason and logic. Let us call that excluded condition poetry, speculation, theory. What is traced in, what spectres, logocentrism, reason and logic is their at once excluded and included radical other, what cannot be subsumed by logocentrism, reason and logic but rather subsumes them, instituting and at the same time destituting them, never not animating, disseminating and seducing them, what I call the animatic. It is what Plato wishes to exclude to establish his Republic of Reason, including in the form of poetry, which is not only informed by but performing of it, but which cannot be excluded, by him or anyone.

Here lies the injustice to animation in Darley’s easy associating of animation solely with the ontological, the simple ‘per se’ of animation as form of presence, essence, being, etc. (Darley, 2007 p.70), to say nothing of his possible and staggering insinuation that my work, and/or work like mine, seeks ‘ontological/metaphysical legitimation’ (Ibid.)! The ontological, and the simple association of animation with it, are precisely what after Derrida my work deconstructs, including with the trace, the spectre, the hauntological.²² In consequence, while Darley criticises the work of others for reductivism and essentialism, he ironically falls prey to those critiques himself. Indeed, for a person espousing exclusively reason and logic, he seems to have rather a few nonreasoned and nonlogical aspects and elements to his text.

Another such injustice lies in Darley’s simple, total condemnation of the speculative. The speculative is not the opposite of real, rational, logical, as Darley believes and would have the reader believe. It is of the order of the in-between-in-between the real and non-real, the rational and non-rational, the logical and non-logical, like the animatic. And theory for me, after Gilles Deleuze, is not the opposite of practice, it is itself a practice, a practice of concepts that for us animation gives rise to,²³ even as the practice of animation is itself never not in-formed by theory, at

²² In terms of the hauntological, see my ‘The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema’, ‘The Nutty Universe of Animation’, ‘Still Photography?’ and ‘(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: the Felicity of Felix’, Parts I and II.

²³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 280. Here a crucial, indeed radical, point: the one paragraph in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* where Deleuze explicitly addresses animation (p.5) serves for us to reanimate his two volumes on cinema as volumes on cinema as form of animation!

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the least theory of animation and theory of theory. For me, for the cognitivists to make reason, including in the form of classical Aristotelian logic, formal logic and/or Carroll's normal, ordinary, 'garden variety' (Carroll, 1996 p.54) type, the rule, the authority, for the thinking of film – this central Platonic principle of cognitive film theory – to make it the rule, the authority, for the thinking of animation!, indeed of anything, means that the *limits* of reason are the *limits* of such thinking of these objects.

In light of the great decentrings of western culture I marked in my last SAS paper, '(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix', Part II, including the decenterings wrought not only by Derrida but before him by Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Einstein, chaos theory, quantum science (with *its non-classical logics, counter-intuitive modellings, violations of Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction, non-deterministic processes, confoundings of cause and effect, etc.*), etc. – such a reasonable and rational limitation and limitation to the reasonable and rational by cognitivist theorists seems quite unreasonable and quite irrational! And quite unreal, given the 'real world' (i.e. the quantum world, which at once makes possible and impossible Darley's 'real-world')! And quite anachronistic! The ostensible cognitivist wish to erase those great decenterings, to conduct an 'Operational Whitewash' (Baudrillard, 1993a p.44) of the last 150 plus years!, a reversal of history nostalgic for what has disappeared or is increasingly disappearing, just won't wash, no matter how hard they redouble their efforts to preserve what has disappeared or is disappearing.²⁴

I must add: at the same time, the cognitivists' hyperrationalism, hyperlogics and hyperproductivism, and connections of some to AI (Artificial Intelligence), are very much a part of Baudrillard's third order, that of our contemporary hyperreality, perfect for today's hyperreal, virtual, simulation university – today's hyperacademy – for me the hyperreal form of Michel Foucault's disciplinary regime of power/knowledge, where now the human is treated as more computer than computer, his 'mind' as information processor, and knowledge as information and data, which is precisely the model of cognition of some cognitivist theorists. Perfect for an accountancy, a Quality Assurance Process, or rather 'Quantity Assurance Process' (where quantity is the new quality) of animation, missing but one thing for me: animation 'itself'.

Now, having deconstructed key elements of Darley's rationalist, Platonic animosity toward poetry, I will turn to Bordwell's and Derrida's takes on poetry. Against that form of Grand Theory he calls 'SLAB' theory (for Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Roland Barthes) (Bordwell, 1989a pp.385-392) and drawing upon the definition of Greek *poiesis* as '*active making*' (Bordwell, 1989a p.371), Bordwell aims to construct a cognitive film theory that he calls a 'historical poetics of cinema' (Bordwell, 1989a p.369), a poetics avatar of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which work for Edmundson served as cure to Plato's banishing of poetry (that is, mimetic arts and literature) from the ideal Republic centred in and ruled by reason and at the same time for Edmundson served as poison insofar as in the *Poetics* Aristotle reinstates poetry as a set of formal categories, structures, species (Edmundson, 1995 pp.8-10) – for me poetry thereby ostensibly tamed, domesticated, fixed, rendered inanimate. Hardly the best model for the theorising of animation!

²⁴ This recalls Stalin's efforts to whitewash Soviet history that Timo Linsenmaier tells us about in his article, 'Why Animation Historiography? Or: Why the Commissar Shouldn't Vanish', *Animation Studies*, vol. 3, 2008. I must note: in his article Linsenmaier less felicitously characterises my statement of 'the felicity of Felix' in my '(The) Death (of) the Animator' as 'not entirely unaffected by aspects of the aforementioned indefinite language-games that we have seen to curtail research-based modes of investigation'. But I ask: have we seen that curtailment or is this not simply an assertion, indeed a theory, on Linsenmaier's part? For me it is the latter, and it therefore begs the question, or rather questions, historian's questions even: What and whose research has been curtailed? Is he implying my work has done that? Where is the evidence for such curtailment? Is it not possible that, instead of a simple 'curtailment', even if such could be proven to exist, research might as well and at the same time have been stimulated by such language-games? Let me add: I find much to challenge in Linsenmaier's for me theory of history and in his critique of Derrida, but this is not the place to elucidate those criticisms.

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I counterpose to both Darley's Platonic dismissal of poetry and Bordwell's Aristotelian formal, categorial, structuralist, productivist, *constructional* poetics, which subordinates poetry to reason, the inescapability, and indeed superiority, of the 'poststructuralist', *deconstructionist* poematics of Derrida, deconstruction being the condition of possibility and at the same time impossibility, the limit of possibility, of construction, of constructional poetics, of cognitivist science and cognitive film theory. Put otherwise, deconstruction re-cognises cognition, re-cognises what it is 'to know' (here we return to the nature and limits of knowing, of cognition and cognitivism), recognizing what comes from and of the other that precedes, subtends, enables and at the same time dis-enables – that is, disseminates, seduces – cognition and that cognition does not and cannot recognise, except when 'looking awry'.

The experience of the poematic is near and dear to Derrida's heart. This – to quote Derrida multiply (Derrida, 1991 pp.223-237) – 'demon of the heart' 'teaches, invents, the heart'. At once singular and iterable (that is, repeatable), it is the lifedeath of poetry, of constructional poetics, of *poiesis*, 'a benediction dictated from and of the other', 'a stranger to all production, especially to creation' ('creation' meaning for me the creationist vitalism of Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze). 'Its event always interrupts or derails absolute knowledge'. It is 'a certain passion of the singular mark, the signature that repeats its dispersion, each time beyond the *logos*, ahuman, barely domestic'. While for Plato and Aristotle, Darley and Bordwell, passion, including as poetry, ought always to be controlled by reason, the poematic is never controlled, including by reason, It 'never gathers itself together', rather 'it loses itself', 'gets off the track (delirium or mania)', 'exposes itself to chance'. Its play (*jeu* in French) is not at all 'well-ordered', you see.²⁵

The poematic is animated and animatic, of the order of my Cryptic Complex – the uncanny, the return of death as spectre, endless mourning and melancholia and cryptic incorporation. The poematic makes the heart its crypt, the poematic crypt the 'innermost heart of hearts' (Rand, 1986 p.lxviii). It and its heart lie beyond the knowledge of sciences and technologies, 'of philosophies and bio-ethico-juridical discourses' (Derrida, 1991 p.225). The poematic is a catastrophic event, event for Derrida of the *strophe*, the turn. Of wound, of trauma, of *pathos*, of *peripeteia*! Ir-reconciled and irreconcilable, the poematic turns on itself, like deconstruction, like seduction.²⁶

The poematic is at once the condition of possibility and impossibility of poetry, constructional poetics and *poiesis*; as the animatic is of animation; as dissemination is of presence; as *différance* is of essence; as deconstruction is of construction and of philosophy (as *logos*); as seduction is of production; as *psuché* is of psyche (soul, spirit, mind!, as in science of mind-psychology – and philosophy of mind!) – the second of each couple the special case, the reduced, conditional form, of the first. Insofar as the poematic is animatic, and vice versa, and insofar as it can attach to any word, to any language, it deconstructs them, reanimating them with its spectres, its *psuchai*, its 'demons', its singular leave-taking of the singular.²⁷

As Derrida declares, 'The life of language ... is the life of spectres; it is also the work of mourning; it is also impossible mourning' (Derrida, 2005 p.103).²⁸

²⁵ On the *jeu* and 'Che cos'è la poesia?', see Derrida, 'This Strange Institution Called Literature', pp. 64-67.

²⁶ Like Baudelaire's figure and poet's experience of the widow in black-the *passante*-as marked in my 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema' and 'Still Photography?', and like Benjamin's aura, as traced in the latter, On Baudelaire's *passante* and Benjamin's aura, see too Samuel Weber, 'Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin', *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, Alan Cholodenko (ed), Power Publications/Stanford University Press, Sydney/Stanford, 1996.

²⁷ On the singular leave-taking of the singular as Benjamin's second notion of aura, see Weber's 'Mass Mediauras', pp. 104-105, and my 'Still Photography?', p. 5.

²⁸ While a large-scale, focused critique of cognitive film theory's 'critique of Grand Theory' is unfortunately beyond the reach of this essay, I must note this regarding the games the spectering, animatic life of writing can play on the theorist, despite the best efforts of cognitivists even: instead of situating poststructuralism, which conventionally includes Derrida's work (though he rejected the term for his work), and postmodernism, which


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And like Derrida, ‘I’, ‘I’ the theorist am the crypt, ‘the haunt of a host of [such] ghosts’ (Derrida, 1986 p.xxiii), whose theorising is poetic, not simply constructional poetics, *poiesis*.

If theory is speculative, a kind of risk, gamble, game, then why not play, as well as be played? For one will be played, as is the photographer/scholar/theorist (including of the Platonic, Aristotelian and cognitivist varieties) by the butterfly in Karl Armen’s exemplary allegory *Birdie*, an animation film for me uncannily ‘at home’ on the home page of the SAS’s web site and even carrying the Society’s name – near and dear to its heart, one might say. Its butterfly cannot but remind me of the one whose name in Latin is *Leptosia nina* but which is called, uncannily so, by the Greek word Psyche, whose equivalent in Latin would be *anima*, which term gives us animation. The butterfly called *animation*. But which I call Psuché, the animatic, poetic butterfly, given how it makes all too painfully, tragically, yet happily, clear the limits of all modalities the human establishes to achieve mastery over the world and its objects, including by means of reason, logic, language, cognition, perception, science and technology, how it eludes all the ‘nets’ deployed by the human to capture it and ‘pin it down’, to know it, especially those of psychology, including a cognitivism based in and on psychology, for me, like psychoanalysis, deconstructed and seduced by *psuché*.

In such a light, Psuché the butterfly figures for me the ‘ill’- or ‘a-logical’ butterfly of chaos theory that flaps its wings on one side of the planet, causing a hurricane on the other, as well as the revenging object of quantum theory on the subject,²⁹ on all knowledge, including scientific, telling us that, as Baudrillard proposes, science aims not at certainty but at uncertainty (see Baudrillard, 1993b pp.42-43), including by definition sciences of language and of cognition, of mind – demonstrating for me the *animus* never not in *anima* (soul, spirit, mind) – and that one cannot theorise animation by theorising just the life of the subject but must as well theorise *the life of objects*, their superior, seductive, disseminative, animatic, poetic, nutty³⁰ life.

As the croupiers announce at the roulette tables at the Casino of Monte Carlo: ‘Faites vos jeux’. Place your bets, make your play, your move, your gambit, your bid.

And with this thought I bid you *adieu, au revoir*, or rather, *aux renvois* – to the sendings back, returnings, deferrals, echoes. 

Alan Cholodenko is an Honorary Associate of the Department of Art History and Film Studies at the University of Sydney. This paper was presented at Animation Unlimited, the 20th annual SAS conference, held at the Art Institute at Bournemouth, 18-20 July, 2007.

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conventionally includes Baudrillard’s work (though he too rejected the term for his work), as themselves ‘Grand Theory’, Bordwell claims these as movements that can be present in not only the two ‘overarching’ (Bordwell, 1996 p.3) modes of Grand Theory-late ‘60s French film theory (what he calls ‘subject-position theory’) and ‘culturalism’ (‘overarching’ being his damning descriptor of Grand Theory)-but in, as he puts it, the ‘*three overarching trends*’ [my italics] (Bordwell, 1996 p.4) (!), the third being what *he* barracks for (!), ‘middle-level’ research. With that damning descriptor he ostensibly, unwittingly thereby turns ‘middle-level’ research into ‘Grand Theory’ and poststructuralism (Derrida) and postmodernism (Baudrillard) into movements whose multiple ‘conceptual affinities and historical connections’ (Ibid) include ‘middle-level’ research and which are not only not themselves ‘Grand Theory’ but are all the more not requisite for ‘Grand Theory’ to be ‘Grand Theory’.

²⁹ In classic quantum theory, the disturbance of the observed by the observer is matched at the least by the disturbance *by the observed* of the observer.

³⁰ On the nutty, see my ‘The Nutty Universe of Animation’.

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