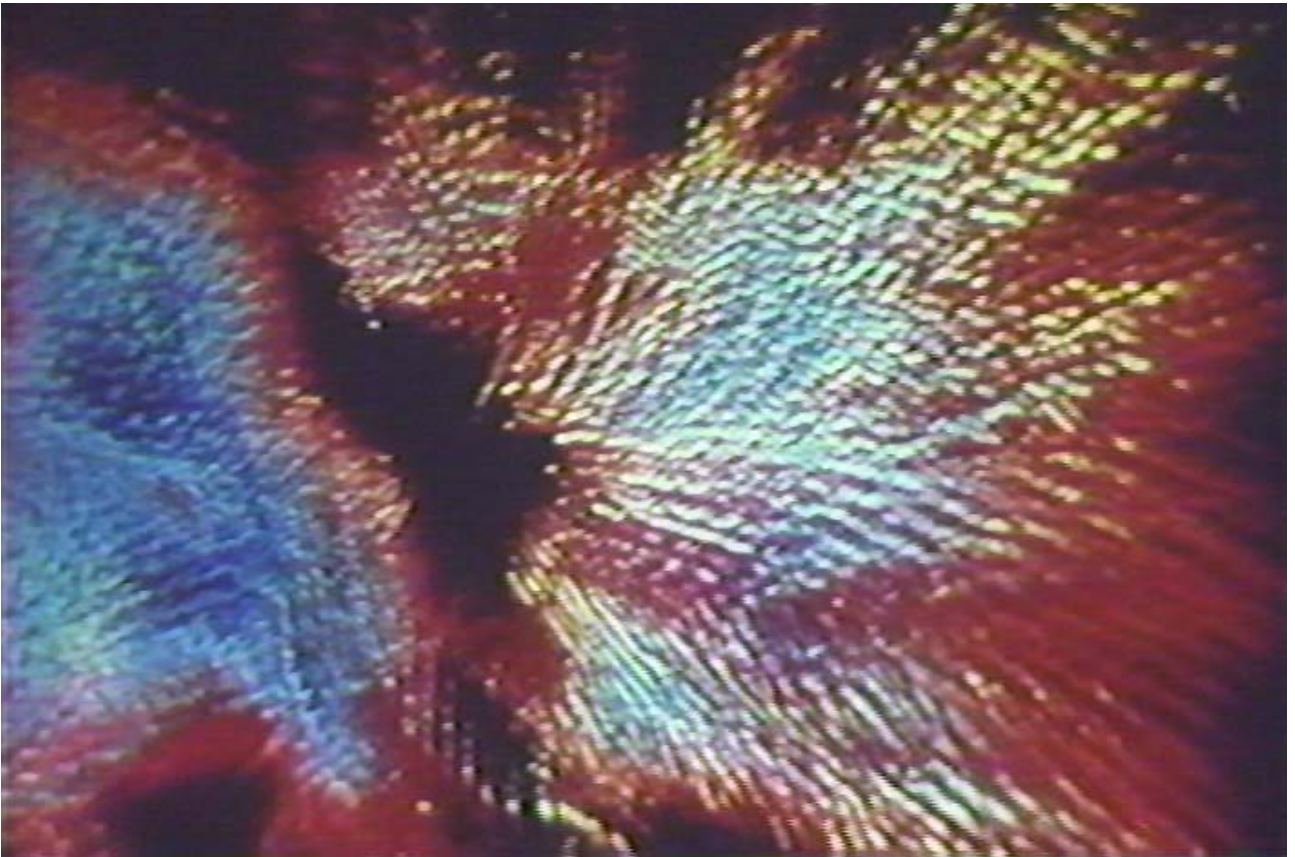


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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Volume 2 of Animation Studies. 2007 was a very busy year, with another excellent conference, this time in Portland, Oregon. The range of papers presented was wider than ever and we have been fortunate to receive several of them for this year's volume.

With the cumulative addition of papers, a few of them have already been available on our site for a little while but now we have closed the volume with seven excellent papers. Others from this conference are in the pipeline for publication in the next volume so look out for them, too.

With more papers submitted in 2007 the board were very busy with the reviewing process – thanks again to them for all their hard work. Thanks also to the authors for working so efficiently with me to get the papers ready for publication.

The papers cover most aspects of animation studies from practise based implications of movement, and technological development to animator histories, representation in film and the cycles of the animated music video. I think they represent the rich work that the society is doing. Let me encourage you all to enjoy these papers and continue submitting your own.

Nichola Dobson

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Tom Klein

Animated Appeal

A Survey of Production Methods in Children's Software

Introduction

The graphical style of children's software has often strongly resembled that of traditional cel animation, yet the requirements for implementing graphics into computer games necessitated changes in the working practices of animators. In some of the earliest videogames for the home market, the means of creating sequential moving images was far removed from traditional methods of animation as a hand-drawn art. Computer graphics had to be manually typed in as lines of code which provided display instructions instead of actually being drawn. The earliest credited role of an artist in a videogame was for Atari's *E.T.* in 1982. At that time, the only way to see if the programmed lines resulted in animation was to compile the code and assemble the game. (Warshaw, 2003) Eventually software was written which was more intuitive for artists to use and which displayed the artwork they drew. This made it feasible for animators to work in a more familiar visual context.

However, the graphic limitations of personal computers remained a barrier through much of the 1980s. This changed in the early 1990s when PC manufacturers adopted the CD-ROM format. Whereas software developers had previously worked within the storage constraints of floppy discs and within the performance limitations of pre-Wintel PCs, the data storage capacity of compact discs coupled with increases in processor speeds rapidly allowed them to create more complex and compelling media. The early 1990s witnessed a rush of CD-ROM development, as consumers were eager to purchase content to make use of the new disc drives in home computers. Many of the rushed-to-market titles were more informational than entertaining, or were considered multimedia titles, not necessarily games. As the initial novelty aspect of CD-ROMs wore off, consumers became more discriminating in their purchases. Animation began to play an important role in the appeal of computer entertainment.

With the visual sophistication of software becoming a benchmark of quality to consumers, more companies hired staffs of animators to create captivating products. This article describes the contribution of animators and the practical working methods employed at the most prominent North American studios creating children's educational and entertainment titles from the early 1990s to the early 2000s. This genre of games grew to be commonly referred to as edutainment.

Edutainment Publishers

As sales of software shifted away from computer specialty stores to big-box superstores like Best Buy and Costco, a consolidation of the industry occurred. Only those products which demonstrated strong branding and consumer loyalty were able to secure a continued retail presence at these chains. (Ito, 2007) The shakeout which followed reduced the field of major players by the mid-90s, and since the best-selling software was typically branded with cartoon characters who served as hosts of the game, the major American publishers of computer edutainment during this period will be identified not only by company name but also by their popular brands for children. They are, in alphabetical order, Broderbund (*Living Books*, *Carmen Sandiego*), Davidson & Associates (*Math Blaster*), Disney Interactive (*Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Mickey Mouse*), Humongous Entertainment (*Putt-Putt*, *Freddi Fish*, *Pajama Sam*), Knowledge Adventure (*JumpStart*), and The Learning Company (*Reader Rabbit*). These companies all rose above the

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crowded field of competitors to achieve great success, though there are some other companies who arguably could merit inclusion, such as Scholastic, Sierra, DK Multimedia, and Edmark. In Europe, Coktel Vision had success with its ADI line of children's software.

Broderbund, Davidson, Disney, Humongous, Knowledge Adventure, and The Learning Company all owned the rights to the characters within their games. Ownership of this intellectual property provided a basis from which to easily expand brands without licensing expenses. It also offered a great deal of creative authority to the producers and animation staffs working at these studios. With the exception of Disney, whose characters were already well-established, the designs and evolving personalities of characters were managed internally by the software developers. It should be pointed out that, although these companies all owned the intellectual property of the characters within their core product lines, nearly all of them also released some titles using outside licensed brands, such as The Learning Company publishing with *Sesame Street* characters or Humongous publishing *Blue's Clues* games.

Production Methods

The working practice of animation at these studios in many ways offered a dynamic environment for young American animators. One should recall that, in this same period of the early 1990s, the sudden boom in feature and television animation spurred by such hits as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *The Simpsons* (1989) provided employment for many artists, but typically these traditional jobs did not yet involve individual usage of computers by animators and the best of these jobs often went to seasoned professionals. By contrast, game studios generally required artists to have both character animation skills (yet were more tolerant of limited professional experience) and proficiency with graphic software. This confluence of factors led many companies to hire young artists, especially since certain college programs were reliably turning out graduates with these requisite skills.

These young artists, mostly in their twenties, were providing the design, layout and final character animation for the games. Because of the technical particulars of delivering art assets for programmers, the animation for CD-ROMs was not as easily outsourced as it had become for TV, giving rise to new full time employment opportunities. Although 3D computer animation was a burgeoning new field during this period, the primary character work for children's software among the major brands was usually done as traditionally drawn art. 3D animation had a strong enough association with violent videogames at that point to keep edutainment publishers largely aligned with the aesthetic sensibilities of a classic family brand like Walt Disney.

Even though CD-ROM games were perceived as new media at that time, such companies as Humongous Entertainment and Knowledge Adventure were heavily invested in paper animation, effectively the same process as a Hollywood studio animator would have used even in the 1930s. However, instead of a traditional ink and paint staff preparing cels of the art to be shot to film, a Humongous animator would have his or her paper drawings scanned into a computer by production artists. The animation was then reassembled in order using proprietary software called *Splat*. After review by the animator, the *Splat* file went to the Ink and Paint department, where the final lines and color fills were digitally applied. At Knowledge Adventure, *Director* (commercial software from Macromedia) was used to reassemble the scanned frames.

Another digital animation process was the use of drawing tablets. At Davidson & Associates, the publisher of *Math Blaster* games, this became the exclusive method of animation. This bypassed the need for scanning paper and most cleanup work because the gestures of an animator's stylus on the surface of a tablet were recorded in the computer. In the early years of

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CD-ROM games, tablets were considered costly, yet they proved to be worthwhile expenses because of the production efficiencies they introduced. The most widely used tablets were from Wacom, which released the UD series in 1993 and the *ArtPad* in 1994.

An animator named Ben Harrison came to Davidson from American Film Technology in San Diego. AFT was most famous for its process of digitizing classic black-and-white films into color, but it had also expanded its business to include paperless digital animation provided for Gahan Wilson's Diner and the first entirely computer-generated TV show, Fox Kids' *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. Harrison demonstrated the paperless method for staff members at Davidson, and proprietary software named *SpriteMaker* was then created to allow the direct import of tablet animation into the Atlas game engine. Initially, animators used *SpriteMaker* to also process the resulting layers of art for programmers. This generated a sprite, a bitmap graphic of an on-screen moving image. However, when it was eventually realized that this was employing a considerable amount of the animators' time, the role of graphic technician was established to offload this more technical chore (Kreidel, 2007).

Animation at a number of smaller studios was also paperless, using a mouse or tablet, including Fanfare Software, which developed the first *JumpStart* games for Knowledge Adventure. This technique often led to some shortcomings in quality, though, as the learning curve of producing fluid animation in this manner was challenging at first to most animators, and those without formal backgrounds in animation who might instead have been hired on technical merits were more likely to create limited sequences without smooth motion.

The argument in favor of paper drawings, however, was less credible in regards to anything that was not principal character animation. If a game graphic needed to appear small on-screen, then the opposite was true because the artwork would have to be more carefully finessed at the level of its pixels. In essence, the scanned source image became problematic because a production artist would have to exert so much creative license over the miniaturized details of it. It made more sense to simply animate it entirely digitally, and this led to a separation of work methods even at paper-based studios. *Deluxe Paint* (often just called *DPaint*) was a software application that grew to be especially useful for just this purpose. At Humongous, these specialized animators were called clickpoint artists. They made the smaller, non-character gags (sometimes called "clickables") that were activated when a player clicked around in a game environment.

The division of labor in a full animation hierarchy, the way the craft had been practiced on feature films for over fifty years, was a luxury that few software companies could afford. Also, considering the smaller sizes of most production teams, an economy of scale usually precluded this approach. A game animator needed to draw every frame of his or her sequence, not just roughs or key poses that were handed to assistants the way it was done on features. Humongous Entertainment, viewed as the gold standard in the business, was notable for its large budgets and large staff, yet it too adhered to this industry practice. Edward Pun, a Senior Artist for many years at Humongous, described that "an Art Lead might draw in the root or one or two key frames in the scene, but the animator was responsible for every frame of an assigned scene."

Disney Interactive maintained a high quality of animation in its titles, yet it was reliant on contracting most of its art production to outside studios, finding talented traditional animators at the nearby company Creative Capers, as well as from companies in both Ottawa and Wisconsin. Because of the consumer expectation for Disney animation, producers were demanding in regards to quality. However, Disney was a relative latecomer to educational games. Its grade-based line of software, originally an innovation of Knowledge Adventure, was not more advanced or compelling than competitors' curricular titles, but their branding with Mickey Mouse and

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Winnie-the-Pooh allowed them a strong introduction into the retail market. Disney also released storybook and arcade-style games that took advantage of the great success of its feature animated films at that time.

There were compromises that animators faced in the making of games. One of the frustrations was the unexpected result that might occur when the assets were implemented into the programming. In effect, the animator lost control of his timing. This is as an inherent aspect of interactivity. Because a player's actions during gameplay are intended to control the playback of animation, the animator needed to anticipate how sequences would link together in the game. Usually an asset list was provided by the producer with all of the states that were needed for a particular character, such as a walk, run, blink, idle, etc. As the animator completed work on the different states of action, he or she would have to convey information such as how many frames composed each state, whether there were repeating or held frames, and whether there were frame layers.

A paper animator would usually describe the desired playback of frames and the linking order of states by filling out a form or template called an exposure sheet. This term was lifted from the vernacular of film animators because of its similarities to a traditional exposure sheet. Usually there was staff that acted as a liaison between art and programming, and communication problems could lead to undesired results with the final in-game animation. At Humongous, for example, an animator could review work in *Splat* to see if his animation had been properly interpreted from the exposure sheet, but that did not necessarily ensure that a mistake of some sort would not subsequently occur during programming.

Sometimes problems occurred if no one had anticipated the need for certain states to act as transitions between existing actions, especially when creating arcade-style play, for which it was always more challenging to create seamless animation. As production teams became more experienced, lead animators grew more capable at working with producers and staff to anticipate these oversights, but it should be realized that game development was always an iterative process that required staffs to constantly adjust to changes and to review the various builds of a game in-progress in order to refine the results.

Another limitation was the use of 8-bit color palettes, a restriction that only 256 colors could be on-screen at any given time. For animators, this color restriction could be even more imposing, as a lot of the color slots in a palette might have to be reserved for an illustrative background. A "common palette," potentially just a few dozen colors, would be chosen by a lead animator or art director at the start of a project. The final animation for all characters in the game then needed to exclusively use these colors.

Additionally, the final line quality of the art in a game had to be dealt with to mitigate the visual compromise of pixelation, as the screen art was ultimately displayed at a 640x480 resolution. Pixel edges of sprites were blocky and aliased, not smoothed. Different approaches could be used to improve the appearance of sprites. One that was used in the original iterations of *JumpStart*, among others, was to keep the outline thin, only a single pixel width. This was also used on *Reader Rabbit* titles, but was more consistently softened by stroking the inside of those black outlines with a mid-tone color. A similar approach, seen in the first two *Putt-Putt* games, was to use colored outlines and shading, as this could reduce the contrast with the background art and interior color fill. Many of the titles released by Humongous in the late 1990s were notable for another approach, the use of black aliased outlines with variable thickness. This called attention to the pixel edges, but the comic book aesthetic of brush-like line weights added to the classic cartoon appeal of its animated characters. Considering these various limitations, game

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animators experienced a very real sense of satisfaction when their work was appreciated simply as good animation, when they had worked past the likelihood of compromise, often owing to the supporting role of production artists.

Every aspect of a finished game, from the art to the audio to the flow of play, was managed in the computer by a game engine. Macromedia Director was a widely used application for multimedia authoring, and although it worked well for simpler interactivity such as Broderbund's *Living Books* titles, it did not stand up to the rigors of most of the major brands in children's software. Instead of a commercially available engine like *Director*, the main developers of children's software built and maintained their own proprietary engines. Having a good engine was vital to a company's success, as this ensured fast click and response times, fast playback rates for animation, and efficient memory management.

Millennial Trends

Retailers and consumers preferred those software brands which provided long hours of gameplay, and developers responded by expanding budgets to ensure that CD-ROMs fulfilled these expectations. In the case of Humongous, it created very engaging games that required logical reasoning for kids to navigate their way through a story-driven adventure. Its most popular brands for children, ages 3-8, were *Freddi Fish*, *Putt-Putt*, and *Pajama Sam*, and for older kids, *SpyFox* and *Backyard Sports*.

By the late 1990s, the educational publishers were finding greatest success not with specialty titles (topics like reading or math, for instance) but rather with grade-based titles. A brand such as JumpStart would release titles named Preschool, Pre-K, Kindergarten, First Grade, etc. Each title would contain a range of curricular material for a student at that level of education. By playing different games, children would learn and would reinforce their learning through repetition. Knowledge Adventure, Disney Interactive, and The Learning Company all produced extended lines of grade-based software. The *JumpStart* line, touted as the "#1 educational software," (Simone, 2002) had cumulative sales of over \$330 million by 2001, and was translated and sold in many different countries around the world.

This then capped a kind of "Golden Age" for children's software that had been on-going through the 1990s. Retail sales were booming for the major publishers and this allowed for generous production budgets. The budget for a *JumpStart* game was typically just under a million dollars, and for one of Humongous Entertainment's bigger titles it could go as high as several million. At its peak in 2000, Humongous employed 80 animation artists and had sold 16 million titles of its games (Kubin, 2000).

Also by the new millennium, the software *Flash* was growing very popular as a tool for animators, especially owing to its vector capabilities that allowed Flash cartoons to flourish on the internet. Software companies began using Flash primarily to make promotional content for children or parents browsing on the web. Because the Flash Player was embedded in Microsoft's Internet Explorer, no special installations were required to begin viewing animated sites.

The animation staff at Knowledge Adventure changed its production methods to embrace the benefits of Flash, and all animators made the transition to drawing directly on tablets leading up to the merger with the staff of Davidson & Associates at new company headquarters in Los Angeles in June 2001. Flash was a welcome change of software for the Davidson animators, who had been using SpriteMaker since 1994. Although SpriteMaker had been innovative and allowed

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for the efficient implementation of layers of character art within games, its interface had frustrated many artists.ⁱ By contrast, Flash was a newer and more versatile application. It provided a digital work environment that felt more intuitive to most animators.

Knowledge Adventure embarked on a complete re-introduction of its grade-based JumpStart line. This was an ambitious task because previous titles were produced consecutively, whereas this new line would release to market simultaneously. Working with technical staff, a new process was created to convert the vector art of Flash into pixel sprites in a manner that would not overtax the production pipeline. The shared libraries of vector graphics created numerous advantages for repurposing art and building up from a foundation of existing animation. The JumpStart Advanced titles were released in 2002 and performed very well in the retail market.

Edutainment accounted for up to 20% of PC software sales in 2001-02¹. (NPD Group, 2002) However, the industry became something of a victim of its own success. The strong sales and popular brands of the major children's software developers had led to acquisitions by outside companies, in part because of the enduring shelf-life of these brands. Children did not easily distinguish older titles from newer ones, and so they would just as eagerly play old CD-ROM games. While sales from other game genres might diminish quickly after an initial release, children's software could remain evergreen and continue to notch persistent sales for several years.

The toy company Mattel was so optimistic about projected growth in edutainment that it purchased The Learning Company for the unprecedented sum of \$3.8 billion. This represented such an overvaluation of the acquired company's worth that profit expectations simply could not be met, and the huge resulting shortfalls led to the resignation of Mattel's CEO in February 2000. (Hays, 2000) This quickly changed the landscape of the children's software business. The acquisitions made by the company Riverdeep then crystallized this perception of an industry in retreat when The Learning Company, Broderbund, and Edmark were all bought out and became subsidiaries. Riverdeep laid off the development staff at each studio so expenditures would not be a draw on profits, and it focused on re-publishing from its acquired CD-ROM catalogues, using bargain pricing and bundled software to stimulate sales.

Infogrames bought Humongous in 1999, at least having the good intention of continuing to develop new games. However, the debt of the acquisition coupled with downward trending for sales across most of its brands led to a sharp reversal in its plans. In June 2001 it laid off more than 40% of its development staff. Sadly, this hastened an end to its classic adventure games and with it the studio's emphasis on traditional character animation. In 2005, Humongous was closed altogether.

Knowledge Adventure was heading toward a similar fate under the ownership of Vivendi-Universal Games, which very nearly dismantled it entirely, but the president of Knowledge Adventure, Leslie House, was steadfast in attracting a sale of the division. Her efforts won out, and in 2004 it was sold to an investment group with an interest in the possibilities for extending the JumpStart brand. However, by that point, under pressure from Vivendi-Universal to enact significant cost reductions, the entire staff of 2D animators had already been laid off, in November 2003. From that point on, primary character animation would be done using Maya, popular 3D software. At Humongous Entertainment, following its big layoffs, there had also been a transition to 3D production.

¹ For the period 2001–2002, the genres of Children (13%) and Family Entertainment (7%) accounted for 20% of overall sales.

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The CD-ROM era of big-budget children's games with traditional animation had drawn to a close. The paradigm of edutainment was changing, yet the achievements of this period linger on. Many elementary schools continue to run old JumpStart and Reader Rabbit software on classroom computers. The games of Humongous Entertainment still enthrall young players. Yet, the games are becoming obsolete. Some companies have invested in upgrading old software for compatibility with recent PC operating systems, but the release of Microsoft's Vista (2007) perhaps changes the equation. Leslie House mentioned that "when porting to Vista, just changing the Director install makes the art look worse; it's actually obsoleting the old product." (House, 2007) As endearing as they are, characters like Putt-Putt will likely fade from popular memory. Nonetheless, the initial promise of what could be done in the realms of children's software was largely realized, and the very best CD-ROM games from this period will attest to that. The challenge to achieve what remains unfulfilled is the province of current and future developers.

Conclusion

The porting of old software is ending. More and more, edutainment is not only played via CD-ROM, but also on *LeapFrog* handhelds, portable game systems, and on the internet. Subscription models are becoming more prevalent, and kids are joining online or virtual worlds. Knowledge Adventure has even launched its own, *JumpStart World* (May 2007), a realtime 3D environment where children explore, play and learn.

JumpStart World, among others, is an example of a game that has pushed the production of children's software more closely into the realm of videogames. This might have once raised parental concerns, but over time this is changing. 3D has simply become associated with having a more contemporary or modern appeal than the flatter graphics of traditional animation. The charm of Pixar films and the widespread use of 3D imagery in children's television have served to soften its earlier association with violent videogames for adolescents and adults.

Whatever the future holds for children's software, and on whatever platform it is played, the same things will continue to determine the success of a game animator: an ability to recognize and work within the limitations of technology, an ability to communicate with technical staff to ensure that his or her work conforms to the needs of the game design, and an ability to animate characters in a way that makes them engaging and appealing.

The great divide that used to exist between animating for children's games or for cartoons has diminished. In many respects, the production methods of television animation now resemble that of software companies from the 1990s. Today, so much of the film and television industry is digital-driven. Professional animators are expected to have proficiency with computers, and traditional animation is produced with software like Toon Boom Studio and Flash. The tools of the digital workplace have become so ubiquitous that a more common ground of production methods now exists between various animated media. 

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Edited by Nichola Dobson

Alan Cholodenko

(The) Death (of) the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix¹

Part II: A Difficulty in the Path of Animation Studies²

Before I set out on the work of this paper (Part II) I will briefly reprise Part I to orient the reader. Subtitled 'Kingdom of Shadows', Part I argues the singular importance of animation to cinema and to film, and the singular importance of death to animation, hence to cinema and to film.

Part I is a return engagement with Tom Gunning's canonical article, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator', an article establishing Gunning's notion of the cinema of attractions as the now orthodox understanding of what early cinema is in Film Studies.

I had first taken up his article in my piece 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema', published in *Cultural Studies Review* (2004). That article extends, qualifies and recasts Gunning's formulation of his cinema of attractions, including by rereading Maxim Gorky's review of his experience of the Lumière Bros cinematograph at the Nizhni-Novgorod fair in Russia July 4, 1896, a review that is for Gunning as for ourself not only the first substantial account of cinema but one that is paradigmatic in and for its understanding of it.

The most significant point in this return engagement with Gunning is that in elaborating the nature of his cinema of attractions, Gunning unwittingly makes animation the first attraction of cinema, the last attraction of cinema and the enduring attraction of cinema, thereby likewise unwittingly makes his cinema of attractions animation of attractions.

In so doing, Gunning confirms our still apparently radical notion, articulated in so many publications, that not only is animation a form of film, all film, including cinema by definition, is a form of animation.

For the largest reach on what this animation of attractions – of shocks, thrills and chills – and these attractions of animation would be, it is to Gorky's review we turned, with its famous opening lines:

Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows. If you only knew how strange it is to be there. It is a world without sound, without colour. Everything there – the earth, the trees, the people, the water and the air – is dipped in monotonous grey. Grey rays of the sun across the grey sky, grey eyes in grey faces, and the leaves of the trees are ashen grey. It is not life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre.

Here I shall try to explain myself, lest I be suspected of madness or indulgence in symbolism. I was at Aumont's and saw Lumière's cinématograph – moving photography. (Gorky, 1996 p.5)

'Not life but its shadow', 'not motion but its soundless spectre'. As I argue in 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema', Gorky's paradigmatic experience of cinema *makes the spectre 'ur' figure of cinema* and *the uncanny 'ur' experience of cinema*. Put simply, the first, last and enduring

¹ The title of this paper is to be read 'Death the Animator, the Death of the Animator, or: The Felicity of Felix'.

² The first part of this paper, subtitled 'Kingdom of Shadows', was presented at the *Animated Dialogues* conference in Melbourne 17-19 June, 2007.

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attraction of cinema as form of animation as form of what we call the animatic is the uncanny reanimation of the dead as living dead, of what after Jacques Derrida we call lifedead. Indeed, we propose in that article that what Gorky describes as his experience of cinema would be the effect of the spectre, the spectre of cinema and its whole set of affects/shocks/attractions composing the 'ur' experience of cinema as form of animation as form of the animatic for us – making that 'ur' experience what we call the Cryptic Complex of the uncanny, the return of death as spectre, endless mourning and melancholia and cryptic incorporation.

Such would be the primal experience of cinema, a shocking, traumatic experience of animation, of reanimation – of the animation, reanimation, of death – that even the sophisticated Gorky rehearses for us in his for us account of the unaccountable, account of Freud's most striking example of the uncanny – haunting – the 'relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts', as Derrida puts it (Derrida, 1994 p.195, note 38), making cinema – the crypt, the haunted house, of cinema – privileged example of Freud's 'unheimlich' (haunted) house. House of the living dead, a house, never a home.

(Part I of this article is published in "Animated Dialogues, Melbourne" edition of *Animation Studies*).

I

Taking off from our claim that it is the uncanny sense of the dead returning to life and at the same time the living returning to death, reanimated likewise as living dead, that informs Maxim Gorky's response to his first sight and experience of cinema – a response that repeatedly characterises these living moving forms as shadows, spectres – the work of the first section of Part II is to extend the reach of this spectre for any thinking of animation. Then, in the second section, we will cast its shadow over something that has been fundamental to animation studies, the thinking of the subject as form of presence, of essence, as unified and as centred, a subject that for animation studies achieves its fullest expression in the figure of the animator.

It is to etymology that we now turn to embark upon the work of this first section.

While the word animation is rooted in Latin *anima*, it goes by another name in Greek, whose significance for our argument cannot be overstated. The 'equivalent' for *anima* in Greek is *psuché*. *Psuché*, as Jean-Pierre Vernant tells us (Vernant, 1991, p.186), is a form of *eidolon*. *Eidolon* in Greek means double. *Psuché* is the simulacral figure, the spectre, that leaves the body of the dead one to wander as flitting shade in Hades, which is, not insignificantly for us, Gorky's Kingdom of Shadows, his (for us) Kingdom of Cinema, of Animation. No matter that Plato 'turned' *psuché* the spectre into psyche the soul, he for us was never able to master the spectre – who could?! – a failure reanimated in every attempt by all his avatars to be *master of the games* played by the world and its objects, including *master of cinema, of film animation* – be it maker, analyst, theorist, spectator – an aspiration and failure so chillingly marked and victoriously mocked by that *psuché* of Norman Bates/mother/skull that 'ends' Hitchcock's aptly titled *Psycho* (1960), that shade/shadow laughing at all efforts to psychoanalyse, explain and rationalise it and turning the subject and all it 'commands' towards what is superior, anterior and never not returning to it: death.³

³ For an analysis of a singular precedent for us for such a turn, see Jacques Lacan's treatment of the anamorphic skull in Hans Holbein's famous painting *The Ambassadors* (1533) in his *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, and Slavoj Žižek's treatment of it after Lacan in *Looking Awry*.

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Which is to say that *psuché*, the hauntological, spectres psyche, the ontological, as it does all rooted in psyche and the ontological, including psychoanalysis, psychological narrative (including the ‘integration’ defining Gunning’s cinema of narrative integration), the Imaginary thought as plenum, the subject, identity, self-identity and the individual thought as forms of presence, essence, wholeness, etc., making them the special case, the reduced, conditional form, of *psuché*, of the hauntological.

Here, at the ‘origin’ of animation, *psuché* as spectral simulacral eidolon animates, spectring and exorcising with its apparition, its *trompe l’oeil*, its nothingness, all forms of ontology, including all efforts to ontologise ‘itself’, most notably, as we mentioned, Plato’s reversal and ontologizing of the Homeric *psuché* as soul, inherited in the Latin *anima* (air, breath, soul, spirit, mind) and in the soul of Christianity.⁴ And in animation thought as ontological, that is, of the order of presence, essence, the Platonic psyche, the Latin *anima*, the soul of Christianity. Animation – as what we call the animatic (the very singularity of animation, anterior and superior to animation, the condition of possibility and at the same time impossibility of animation, at once the inanimation in and of animation and animation in and of inanimation, that nonessence at once enabling and disabling animation as essence, at once the life of death and death of life) – is of the order of the hauntological, of *psuché*, the Homeric *eidolon* – of at once this world and ‘an inaccessible elsewhere’ (Vernant, 1991 p.187). It marks for us what Gunning calls (though with what appears to be a decidedly disparaging idea of cinematic illusion) ‘the hollow centre of the cinematic illusion’ (Gunning, 1989, 42), for us the atopos of cryptic incorporation, the Cryptic Complex – the dead point, blind spot, black hole that marks for Baudrillard ‘that absence at the heart of the system’, ‘the Nothing which haunts it’, ‘that shadow running alongside it’ (Baudrillard, 2001 p. 149).⁵

Which means that cinema as form of animation as form of the animatic calls not simply for a psychoanalysis but a ‘*psuché*-“analysis”’, an analysis by definition impossible of resolution, for *psuché*, even as it enables such a possibility, at the same time spells its death, as it does that of a science of the psyche, ie., psychology, which would be an impossible science of the double, of spectres, turning that ‘science’ into a séance.

We therefore propose that what Gorky ‘saw’ and so terrified him, so much so that he sought to repress, exclude and disavow it, were *psuchai*, ‘saw’ his own *psuché*, ‘saw’ the image of *psuché* and the *psuché* that is the image, the image ‘as such’ – the image not merely as appearance (for Plato) but as apparition – and ‘saw’ the ‘blind spot’ ‘as such’ – the *psuché* ‘as such’ – of the image as apparition.⁶ In other words, he ‘saw’ death,⁷ the fate that awaits us all, a fate never not

⁴ Inherited in all ontologies of cinema, most famously André Bazin’s.

⁵ Indeed, Vernant writes, ‘The *psuché* is a nothing, an empty thing, an ungraspable evanescence, a shade...’ (1991 p.189)

⁶ On animation as ‘blind spot’ of cinema and media studies, see my ‘Animation – Film and Media Studies’ “Blind Spot”, published in the *Society for Animation Studies Newsletter*, vol. 20, no. 1, Spring 2007. The notion of ‘blind spot’, and of animation as ‘blind spot’, posited here is radically different from what is broached there. In the sense posited here, blind spot is that device that is at once unseen, in fact is never seen, but that allows one to see, is the very condition of possibility of ‘sight’ – the blindness that make sight at once possible and impossible. In such a light, animation becomes the blind spot of the blind spot, the blind spot ‘as such’. No longer something Film Studies, or anything or anybody, for that matter, does not wish to see but rather can not, can never, see, wish to or not. By the by, that blind spot makes seeing oneself seeing oneself – the very premise of self-reflexivity, of auto-reflection – impossible per se.

⁷ In other words, he saw Death in its penultimate form, as did the soldier who unexpectedly encountered Death in the marketplace before his rendez-vous with Death in Samarkand, a tale related by Baudrillard in his book *Seduction*.

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happening, as it is to Gilles Deleuze's philosopher, in the here and now, thanks to animation, to the animatic.⁸ Put simply, death spectres cinema, film animation, indeed animation 'as such', as the animatic.

Thanks to cinema, to film animation, reanimating animation in multiplicitous ways, including reanimating Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* and its 'climactic' image – none other than 'The Fate that Awaits Us All' – death is always already returned, a *fait* (fate!) *accompli*, the rule of animation as the animatic over cinema from its advent – cinema as Kingdom of Shadows, as crypt, as haunted house, as Gorky's 'train of shadows' (Gorky, 1996 p.5), marking cinema's allegiance to the dark side, its nature as one of the unhallowed arts, as occult science, as 'child of the night', even as it privileges genres associated with and figures drawn from the crypt, never not allied with it, with cryptic incorporation, with haunting – the 'children of the night', the undead.

So, to reiterate a key conclusion from Part I of my paper, ironically, paradoxically, animation as the animatic privileges death over life, and makes every encounter with cinema as form of animation as form of the animatic an encounter with death. Thanks to the animatic, the excluded, the 'blind spot' – animation – and the excluded of all excluded, the 'blind spot' of the 'blind spot' – death – are always already reanimated and reanimating, are always already back.

II

Here our second issue of singular importance for animation studies (one we have implicitly canvassed already). That issue is the way animation studies places the individual at the 'very core' of animation in the figure of the animator, envisioned as all-controlling, *master* subject, the subject par excellence. It does so and for a field that reads animation almost exclusively through the subject and the subject's desires, intentions, affects and effects, where identity is the key if not sole model, focus and attractor, strangely drawing to it, while at the same time subordinating to it, all else, at the same time ignoring the other, and for us superior, side of the 'equation': the object and its games, the games of the world, with which for us animation has privileged, superior, indeed singular, relation, marked in our very figure of the animatic. Likewise, any thinking of cinema and animation cannot delimit itself to treating them as only modes of production and appearance⁹ but must as well consider them as modes of seduction, dissemination, disappearance and death – likewise for us superior processes associated with the animatic.

For us, animation studies, in largely reading up to today all through the subject and/as individual, and through the animator as the very essence of the subject and/as individual, and through identity and self-identity, propounds and is wedded to an understanding partial at best and radically deficient at worst. And more, to an understanding that is dramatically, and seemingly unknowingly, retrograde in terms of Film Studies, film criticism and film theory and their history insofar as it – animation studies – poses, embraces and models the animator as the very limit case of the filmmaker, that is, as *auteur*. To use the French term, as *auteur*, that

⁸ Indeed, for us, Deleuze's definition in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1986), p. 5, of how the cartoon film, that is, animation, can be cinema is a definition of how cinema is animation(!) – a definition for us that is remarkably avatar of Norman McLaren's famous one – even as Deleuze makes the time-image 'the phantom which has always haunted the cinema...' (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 41), haunting, strangely returning to and reanimating his movement-image, which is never not time-image for him. In other words, for Deleuze cinema is never not spectre, never not for us therefore of the order of animation as the animatic.

⁹ This limitation is typical of Anglo-American Film Studies, too. See my Introduction to *THE ILLUSION OF LIFE: Essays on Animation* (Sydney: Power Publications in association with the Australian Film Commission, 1991), pp. 14 and 21, and my "OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR": The Virtual Reality of *Jurassic Park* and Jean Baudrillard', in *Jean Baudrillard, Art and Artefact*, ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (London: Sage Publications, 1997), pp. 82-83, note 19, republished in *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 2005, on the web. (ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies).

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invention of French film criticism of the 1950s that spread to the English-speaking world and was the watchword of film writing in the '50s and '60s, that is, until the advent of late '60s French film theory and its conjugations with structuralism and structural linguistics, Althusserian Marxism, Saussurean and Barthesian semiology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, etc., each of which 'knowledges' brought with them massive critiques of the notion of the *auteur*, critiques informing late '60s French film theory and the English film theory derived from it, critiques which 'poststructuralist' and 'postmodernist' approaches perpetuated and which approaches for us offer the richest ways to theorise animation, approaches the most isomorphic with animation and the animatic, approaches the most informed by and performing them.

Only a small number of animation scholars seem aware of such approaches, an even smaller number mobilise them in their work. For us, it is incumbent upon animation scholars to acquaint themselves with (such) film theory and its history rather than ignore it, for animation studies and Film Studies are for us inextricably commingled, despite the general lack of acknowledgement of that on the part of either.

So for animation studies, the animator would be the very essence of the author. And why not, since to author, from the Latin *auctor*, meaning creator, is a term of animation! The animator would be the author of the author, the *auteur* of the *auteur* – not only the master and commander, the ruler/controller, of all within his dominion but its absolute creator, a figure fashioned in the mold of God himself, creator/animator of the universe and all within. In such a divine light, the human animator is envisioned as supreme human being, individual, master, who gives birth to worlds, to universes, made to his measure – Romantic and existential hero, humanist individual, pure origin, pure punctual source, pure unified subject, pure subjectivity, pure intentionality, pure autonomy, par excellence; and what he engenders, what he originates – thanks to frame by frame construction, that modality that animation theorists claim as what uniquely defines animation – is his total, pure creation.¹⁰

'Against' this article of faith in and of animation studies, 'against' this purist, utopian, idealist, mythicising ontology of the animator as singular *master*, as *auteur*, we raise not only the challenges to it of 'poststructuralist' and 'postmodernist' thought but those akin to such 'thought' that go by the name of the great decenterers and decenterings of the human species and/or individual in the history of the world: our list includes Copernicus, Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Einstein, quantum mechanics, quantum cosmology, chaos theory, cybernetics, systems theory, computer codes, molecular biology (the DNA code), robotics, structuralism, semiology, etc.

With each of these approaches, the human no longer stands at the centre, sovereign, all-controlling and alone, no longer stands exempt from and master of the object, the world, the universe – the animation universe.

In 1917 Freud mobilised three of these great decenterings in his key essay 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis', calling them 'the three blows' to man's narcissism, his self-love: Copernicus' cosmological death blow, death blow to geocentrism; Darwin's biological death blow, death blow to anthropocentrism; and Freud's own psychological death blow, death blow to

¹⁰ For our critique of the ontologising of frame-by-frame construction, see the Introduction to *THE ILLUSION OF LIFE*, p. 36, note 34, and my 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit, or The Framing of Animation' essay in the book, p. 237, note 13. For other responses to that construction, consult the essays in *THE ILLUSION OF LIFE 2: More Essays on Animation* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2007) by Pauline Moore and Annemarie Jonson.

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egocentrism, the unconscious as death blow to the self as unified, as full consciousness master of itself, indeed death blow to the omnipotence and omniscience of thought he Freud arguably projected onto primitives.

So, as with my proposal of a quantum cosmological Cryptic Complex in ‘The Nutty Universe of Animation, the “Discipline” of All “Disciplines”, And That’s Not All, Folks!’ (Cholodenko, 2006), a cosmological death blow forever denying humans a Theory of Everything, hence mastery of the universe, indeed as in all my work, I privilege an other reading, one in league with these great decenterings, one deconstructing and seducing not only the sovereignty, the mastery, of the human but the human ‘as such’, as well as the individual, identity and self-identity, hence the model of the animator as *auteur*, the *master* individual, identity and self-identity, and that does so with (reference to and by mobilizing) the very logics, processes, and operations of animation, of the animatic – of the nutty animatic universe.

In the animatic universe, even as animation is prior to and animator of all disciplines, the animatic is prior to and ‘animator’ of all animation, with the most profoundly deconstructive and seductive consequences therefore for not only animation but all disciplines, individually and collectively, indeed for all entities conceived of as entire unto and master of themselves.

Another key deconstructive text which we can consider – like Freud’s, ghosting and ghosted by the title of this article – is Roland Barthes’ famous, provocatively titled 1968 essay ‘The Death of the Author’. That essay circumscribes for us the death of the animator as author and author as animator, but with this qualification: for us, Barthes does not simply liquidate the Author to reanimate him as the Reader. Rather, Barthes sets in train the reanimation of both Reader and Author as spectres, spectres ghosting and ghosted by, cryptically incorporated in and cryptically incorporating, the text, the text for Derrida veritably ‘a lodging, the haunt of a host of ghosts’ (Derrida, 1986, xxiii), making both reader and author, like the text ‘itself’, spectral animators animating animatically with their lifedeath, turning spectatorship – of both author and reader – into spectreship. Do we need to say that such an author, reinstated as spectre, is by definition impossible to track down?¹¹

To Descartes’ famous dictum, ‘I think, therefore I am’, Freud responded: ‘The ego is not master in its own house’ (Freud, 1955, 143), the mind. Even as Jacques Lacan will come to say: ‘I is an other’ (*‘Je est un autre’*) (Lacan, 1991 p.7). As Baudrillard will speak of ‘a sort of invention of the subject by the object’, where ‘the object becomes the horizon of the subject’s disappearance’ (Baudrillard, 2000 pp.76-77).

Insofar as *psuché* spectres psyche as mind, it makes of thoughts ghosts. And insofar as for us Freud’s house of the ego is crypt, haunted house, house of uncanny, spectral, cryptic incorporations, whose paradigmatic model for us is the cinema, is film animation as the animatic, it is not the ego but *psuché*, the spectre, death as lifedeath, that is ‘master’ in this house. Or, as Renfield says of Dracula, ‘The master comes’, a master who is for us never not returned and returning.

Oh, yes, the felicity of Felix.

To the perennial question bedeviling animation scholars – who animated, authored, originated Felix? – Pat Sullivan or Otto Messmer? – for us, Felix is the very answer to the question.

¹¹ See the Introduction to *THE ILLUSION OF LIFE 2*, p. 83, note 65, which this last paragraph extends and complicates in terms of Barthes’ article. That note also references several key thinkers in animation studies who promulgate the orthodox notion of the sovereignty and total control of the animation *auteur*.

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The felicity of Felix is that, as a figure of metamorphosis, of plasmaticness, as Eisenstein called the ‘essence’ of animation – that formless form that, giving all form, is itself *never* givable ‘as such’ – as figure therefore of the animatic, he gives the lie to any attempt to fix, arrest, isolate and thereby render inanimate (such a figure of) animation in any particular creator/ animator/ author of him, in any determinate origin. Felix exemplifies and performs animation, the animatic, in the at once necessity and impossibility of defining, finalising on, resolving, an origin, including of animation. In this sense, plasmaticness, the animatic, would be that nothing that enables and at the same time disables everything, a nothing that would include not only the human animator’s ‘self-figuration’ (Crafton, 1982 p.11) – Donald Crafton’s term for that distinctive feature of the animated film, the animator’s ‘interjecting’ himself as a kind of self-projection into the film – but, to recast Crafton’s term, the animatic apparatus’ “self”-figuring’(!) in film animation.

What lies for us before and beyond that projection, as it lies before and beyond introjection, is cryptic incorporation, the crypt, the haunted house, of cinema, a crypt, a haunted house, turning all into spectres, including ‘itself’.



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Caroline Ruddell

Breaking Boundaries

The Representation of Split Identity in Anime

This article addresses the representation of unstable identity in examples of anime. Split identities in the cinema generally (live action and animation) are often indicative of specific cultural concerns or perhaps mediate contemporary attitudes towards issues of identity in society; the dichotomy that is often apparent in the animation discussed in this paper is that of the past intruding on the present (or even future) and vice versa (which relates to aspects such as technology, urban space, postmodernism and the post-human). For example, modernity and the changing of the world in to a perhaps more global, international, consumerist, even 'Americanised' society is a problem that haunts anime and suggests there is still unease that sits with an increasingly modern and consumer-based society; this has implications for both individual identity and the issue of nationality and is expressed in many instances through a split identity, or mapped onto fractured identities in anime. It is also likely, however, that the split subject in anime brings to light many cultural concerns that are transnational, which is arguably bound tightly to the transnational nature of the media industry and increasing popularity of anime internationally.

X (1996, Japan) is an anime film (based on a Manga comic) that centres on the problems that occur between the past and present told through two doubled characters. The film tells the tale of Kamui, a young Japanese man who returns to Tokyo in order to fulfil his destiny as protector of Tokyo and everyone who lives there. Kamui must become a Dragon of Heaven and protect the people, while his nemesis will become a Dragon of Earth and will seek to destroy all the people in the world in order to save the planet from destruction. Kamui may take either position initially, and once he has chosen another will take up the opposite position as either protector of people or protector of the Earth. The film introduces the theme of doubling almost instantly as the film opens with the idea that there may be two Kamuis. As the narrative progresses it becomes apparent that Kamui's friend Fuma takes up his oppositional nemesis position, but he begins to look exactly like Kamui and dresses the same way. Several other characters mention that they find it difficult to tell them apart, and in dream worlds they appear as one and the same person. The film figures the protagonist as embodying very different characteristics split in to two versions of himself: simply put as good and as evil. A divide between good and evil is suggestive of Manichaeism¹ which may well derive from Western morality and horror film conventions. It is also worth noting the use of visual devices such as fade-ins in the film that have a distinctly 'cinematic quality' and yet the depiction of space and time also smacks of Manga comics²; *X* demonstrates 'frozen moments' and disruption of time and space.

By splitting the protagonist in two, the film makes use of the idea of separating one person's characteristics in to two different bodily entities. However, the film bases this around the dichotomy of the past and present. *X* places narrative tensions around a split character, but the two halves of this character have very different ideas about the current state of Tokyo (and the world). The good Kamui wishes to save all the people and preserve the world as it is now in the

¹ Manichaeism is a system of belief that invests in the idea that God can only exist in opposition to Satan and vice versa: within such a system one can either be a 'good' person or a 'bad' person, i.e. good versus evil in horror narratives for example.

² For more on the tensions between the cinematic and the 'anime-ic' see Thomas Lamarre's 2002 article 'From animation to anime: drawing movements and moving drawings' in *Japan Forum* 14(2), pp. 329-367.

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present, while the bad Kamui (Fuma) wishes to kill all the humans on the planet in order to save it by reverting to its former state. *X* figures the embodiment of the past as an evil force while the figure of the present, and therefore modernity, is represented as good, honest and sincere. While such a Manichean theme seems likely to be deployed in order to appeal to a horror genre audience, perhaps there are further cultural resonating issues at stake. As Paul Wells argues, “different cultural inflections can result in a re-working of the genre which suggests more about the culture in which it is produced [...] than the genre itself” (2002, p. 47). In anime the past as a force of evil may stem from the dread that might be apparent in modern Japanese culture of losing older traditional values. Alternatively perhaps by figuring the past as an evil force these films are expressing the pressures that older ways of life put on modern society. It seems likely that both these explanations can describe to a certain extent what is at stake in the past / present binary of this psychological anime film, a binary which is mapped onto problematic issues of identity.

By infiltrating the past in to the present a film such as *X* draws upon the loss of traditional values in contemporary culture. This is perhaps most apparent in cultures such as Japan due to the forced infiltration of Western values in the postwar period into a society that previously upheld tradition over modernity. A link here can be drawn to the cinema in Japan being directly influenced into becoming more ‘modern’ and leaving behind older and more traditional themes by the American occupation. Film production in post war Japan was continuously monitored, as Morton suggests “[m]ovies made in the immediate postwar era were subject to censorship by American occupation authorities and thus period dramas or samurai dramas...were more or less banned on the grounds that they smacked of prewar military ideology” (2003, p. 221). During this period, then, older traditional themes were forcibly removed by American authorities from the cinema screen in order for modernisation to preside. The removal of themes such as the Samurai from the cinema screen was a direct attempt on the part of the Americans to modernise Japan.

Modernity and the changing of the world in to a perhaps more ‘Americanised’ or global society is a problem that haunts anime, yet such tensions can also be detected in examples of live-action Japanese films, particularly horror cinema. For example in *Ringu* [*Ring*] (1998, Japan) villain Sadako is a ghostly, menacing force from the past who attacks through modern technology in the form of the videotape. Sadako is monstrous and unrelenting in her continual strike at modernity and youth culture; it is largely teenagers who, through hearsay akin to an urban legend, watch the video that curses them to a horrific death within seven days. Such a violent haunting, which is carried out through technology, suggests that there is still unease that sits with an increasingly modern and consumer-based society; this has implications for both individual identity and the issue of nationality. Alistair Phillips argues, for example, that modernity and the past have a rather complex relationship whereby it is more than simply a matter of “a clearly separable set of differences between the old and the new.” (2003, p. 163). Rather the past becomes mediated through the process of modernisation and traditions are “being renegotiated by a new interpretation of a nationally specific modernity” (p. 154).

In the live-action *Ringu* the past, figured as eerie and deadly, is mediated through modern technology. In many anime examples issues related to modernisation are often mapped onto landscapes, which make use of an urban/country dichotomy that can be read as modernity polarised with tradition. Such a discord relates to Japanese culture more generally, for example Buddhism is often regarded as being more prominent in the countryside than in cities. Ian Reader argues that often literature on Buddhism (specifically Zen Buddhism) is: “nostalgic, drawing

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pictures of idyllic traditional life in the countryside contrasted with the unease of modern, westernised, cities” (1991, pp. 104-105). It seems that, in relation to representation, the past is both nostalgic but also a rather foreboding presence on contemporary times; it could be argued that Reader’s statement suggests that contemporary modern lifestyles in cities moves away from aspects such as religion altogether and away from traditional lifestyles (however they may be defined). Such tensions are not only apparent in fantasy, horror (as in *X*) or mecha anime, but a children’s anime film such as Sen to *Chihiro no kamikakushi* [*Spirited Away*] (2001, Japan) links the nostalgic past with menacing characters and images.

The seemingly idyllic space in *Spirited Away* is at the same time magical and foreboding, filled with spirit and ghosts. The opening of this feature length anime film shows protagonist Chihiro with her parents stopping at a peaceful spot on the way to their new house. Chihiro finds herself in a magical place where witches and spectres roam, where her parents are transformed into animals and where she is often afraid; the site for these events appears to be a serene space with religious statues dotted about in lush scenery. Chihiro’s fear and intrigue is linked to such a space that is untouched and unspoiled by modernisation or industrialisation. In *Princess Mononoke* San is associated continually with the wolves of the mysterious forest space; she is further linked to the natural world through her animalistic qualities of movement and action, she thinks of herself as wolf rather than human. In *Princess Mononoke*, while the forest is a magical and untarnished place, it is also rather foreboding and frightening; similarly although the mining colony are destroying the land in the aim of industrialisation they are not depicted as ‘evil’ or villainous. Idyllic countryside locations become polarised with urban, or industrial, environments, and yet in a film such as *Princess Mononoke* where discord between the two spaces provides narrative drive there is no simple identification of either as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ (good or evil). In much of Studio Ghibli anime examples the protagonists are also doubled with an animal ‘sidekick’ of some sort, linked to nature, the land and at once idyllic and sometimes menacing spaces³. Animal companions serve to link the protagonists to both nature and childhood. The key point is that such representations appear nostalgic for a time long past, and perhaps lost, yet in many anime examples both images of the past and present are linked with menace and horror as suggested in relation to examples from Studio Ghibli. In *X* (where due to generic conventions perhaps a Manichean divide is more present) it is the modern urban presence with all its advancements that is linked with the ‘good’, not the seemingly tranquil past linked to nature and unspoilt lands.

Friction connected to modernisation also relates to live-action film and it is often through a fractured character in some examples of live action that tensions between past and present are articulated, for example the figure of the ghost. In relation to the double, Andrew J. Webber argues that:

the Doppelgänger embodies a dislocation in time, always coming after its proper event...[l]ike all ghosts, it is at once an historical figure, re-presenting past times, and a profoundly anti-historical phenomenon, resisting temporal change by stepping out of time and then stepping back in as revenant (Webber, 1996: 9-10) (italics in original)

³ For example Kiki has her cat companion Jiji in *Majo no takkyûbin* [*Kiki’s Delivery Service*] (1989, Japan) or San is linked with the wolves in *Mononoke-hime* [*Princess Mononoke*] (1997, Japan).

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In terms of representation, the tensions between the past and the present in horror, fantasy and psychological genres can be articulated through the process of split characters and the splitting theme, which as Webber points out has a particular relationship to the past and present; through the twinning or doubling of characters a dual representation of the two ideologies of past/present are shown to be at odds and indeed to have specific cultural intimations. In relation to anime, doubling is also apparent in the twinning of characters with animal counterparts (as noted above), or in *X* where a split character is mapped onto different spaces/timelines, one unspoilt and one modern. However conflict between modernity and tradition is evident in many examples of popular culture; the following analysis of *Gin gwai* [*The Eye*] (2002, HK, UK, Singapore) is useful for showing how split identity can be mapped onto past/present tensions in live-action horror cinema. Outlining how fractured identity can be figured in live-action cinema allows for further understanding of how fractured identity is represented in anime. As the film is a co-production from Hong Kong, UK and Singapore it also serves to address the transnational nature of the film industry and question issues of context and nationally specific questions of identity, which will provide a useful point of reference to Japanese animation.

The Eye tells the story of a young girl named Wong Kar Mun (Angelica Lee) who, at the age of twenty, undergoes corneal transplants and regains her sight after eighteen years of being blind. Initially it seems that Mun's surgery has been successful as she gradually regains her sight and begins to adjust to the visual world. She begins therapy with Dr Lo (Edmund Chen) who helps her to interpret what she sees visually rather than relying on touch to find her way around. Soon after her surgery, however, Mun begins to see what she quickly realises are ghosts; it is apparent that she is beginning to witness what the previous owner of her eyes had seen. Mun therefore has a supernatural access to the past. Dr Lo helps Mun to track down the donor of her corneas, Thai-born Ling (Chutchua Rujinanon), whom they discover could foresee death and disaster. Although Ling had tried to help the people in her village by warning them of when something was going to happen, she was treated with hostility by all the villagers and ostracised as a result of her warnings. Only her mother remained kind and supportive of her, although this proved not to be enough and Ling hung herself through desperation of being so isolated, and through devastation at not being able to prevent the disasters she foresees. Mun, then, has in many ways become possessed through her eyes by a figure of the past, and through the narrative the two become twinned or doubled through the connection of Mun's/Ling's eyes; Mun and Ling therefore can be seen as an embodiment of the irreparable split between the past and the present. The concept of fracture becomes twofold in this instance: not only is the past/present divide introduced through twin characters, the film hints at all social orders being subject to fracture, fissures and contradictions through this melding of past and present which are essentially irreconcilable.

The discordance between the past and the present is a theme that underpins the film, suggesting that there is a tension between older traditions and the contemporary modern world. For example, Mun goes to a teacher to learn calligraphy and her teacher tells her that not many people wish to learn such a traditional style of writing anymore. He had previously taught three classes a week while Mun is being taught on her own, which implies that Mun is his sole student at this time. The scene keys in to the fact that older traditions are being lost in the face of the modern world, which is further driven home by the presence of many ghosts; as figures of the past they perhaps represent a literal embodiment of the loss of particular traditions. The discordance between the past and present works in this live-action film in a similar way to that in the anime example of *X* where the past is a foreboding presence on contemporary times; Fuma embodies the ideals of a past landscape unspoilt by technology and the human race and he

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disrupts the modernity of Tokyo through attacking its representative Kamui. In these two examples links between live action and anime can be drawn through the theme of doubling as well as mapping tensions onto a past/present divide.

The past/present binary is articulated in a horror film such as *The Eye* through a splitting of identity mapped across two timelines; this fracture speaks of the fears surrounding a consumerist and modern society and can perhaps be linked to the cultural context that the film was produced in. However, this is problematised by the fact that the film is a co-production and suggests that aspects such as genre also play a role in channelling themes through certain formats. The figure of the ghost is familiar to horror cinema worldwide and through its very nature can be linked to the haunting past. Like the anime examples discussed, as well as ghost narratives such as *Dark Water* (2002, Japan), *The Eye* (although produced in a different context) invokes the dread and creeping unease that sits with the loss of the traditional past. Such tensions are arguably relevant globally and are certainly clear in recent anime from Studio Ghibli; tensions surrounding (national) identity are bound in to cultural and national locations to a degree yet are also subject to the global nature of the media industry where genre and narrative conventions, for example, play a key role in shaping examples of the moving image.

While in *X* it is the urban space of Tokyo that is linked with modernity, in many anime examples it is more specifically technology that can be seen as clashing with the traditional past. For example in *Akira* bodies fuse with technology in a rather terrifying manner. Identity becomes monstrosity in *Akira*; Napier discusses this in relation to metamorphosis and the antihero Tetsuo, who at times accepts and glorifies in his transformation (2005). Technology is a key factor when thinking about the dualism of characters in anime, as Napier suggests “the fusion of human pilot inside armoured machine leads to bizarre combinations of mechanical/organic violence...” (p. 89). Examples like *Akira* provide a further dimension of fractured identity in anime; metamorphosis becomes key to the plot and to Tetsuo’s character whose monstrous transformation towards the end of the film blurs any concrete notion of who he is. The representation of such monstrous metamorphosis (related to character identity) is arguably afforded through the medium of animation. Questions of identity in anime are therefore lent further resonance through the fact that they are animated; arguably fractured identity cannot be articulated in quite the same way in live-action film (despite similarities in relation to genre etc).

Moist and Bartholow have recently noted that “issues surrounding the status of the individual seem to be especially culturally resonant for Japanese society. In much anime, this general theme is expressed in futuristic tales in which postmodern and post-human themes dominate” (2007, p. 39). Napier posits this preoccupation with apocalyptic themes, which although particularly prominent in anime (which Napier links to post Hiroshima & Nagasaki) is also arguably present in many examples of pop culture internationally. Yet in anime binaries such as human/machine; reality/fantasy; body/mind and body/soul are played with continually (particularly in the fantasy and horror genres). Blurring of divisions is also the case in the highly popular *Kôkaku kidôtai* [*Ghost in the Shell*] (1995, Japan/UK) but it is not a source of terror here, rather one of reflection and insight into the ‘human condition’, and what it ‘means’ to be human. Doubling in this film is present in the figure of Major Motoko, a cyborg who is on the trail of the Puppet Master, a high-tech hacker. Themes of identity and psychological issues are articulated through ‘cinematic’ tropes such as reflections in glass or water, as well as the sci-fi narrative of the cyborg figure and problems for remaining ‘human’ in the midst of technological advancement.


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While the film is often considered solely as a Japanese production due to its anime status, it should also be remembered that it is a joint production with the UK. The film is therefore testimony to the transnational nature of the media business (and the increasing international popularity of anime and Manga) where not only the economic aspects of the industry cross national boundaries, but narrative, stylistics and film form bleed into one another. In live-action cinema of certain genres the double is also articulated through reflective surfaces, for example in *Secret Window* (2004, USA) the split identity of Mort (Johnny Depp) is made prominent through the use of mirrors throughout the film. Devices such as mirroring are also prominent in classic tales of split identity as in the many renditions of the Jekyll and Hyde story. For example in *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971, UK) mirrors form a major storytelling device to depict the two differing personalities contained within the one body. This film also links problems with retaining a knowable identity quite specifically with gender identity. More subtly in *Ghost in the Shell* we have many reflective moments of 'stillness' that draw attention to the Major's preoccupation with self, the body and what it means to be human or not, in essence her 'life', soul or 'ghost'. Her issues with who she is are made apparent with sequences where the Major is inanimate, and some of these sequences last for several frames drawing attention to her psychological state of mind. *Ghost in the Shell's* preoccupation with identity and gender identity issues, as well as the use of reflective surfaces and images to depict fragmentary identity, is perhaps suggestive of the cross over of narrative theme and stylistics between cinema globally, but perhaps more importantly also the cross over of theme and narrative between anime and live-action (which is arguably linked to generic traits).

In conclusion, Paul Ward argues that animated texts "can represent to viewers not some stylised fantasy world, but reveal something about the world of actuality. The animated worlds depicted are, actually, part and parcel of our world" (2006, p. 114). Ward is discussing animation in relation to documentary, but it seems likely that such an argument extends to anime also; here animation can indeed allow for the 'real' to be represented as identity is at times figured as frighteningly fissured, which is arguably metaphorical of how identity can be experienced in the 'real' rather than continually 'whole' and unproblematic. In terms of experience of identity in the 'real', animation allows for expressing fracture in ways that in some instances are similar to live-action film, for example uses of dissolves, fade-ins and reflections in water or glass, as well as generic traits. However, anime also provides differing methods of articulating problematic identity. For example the lavish representation of metamorphosis in *Akira* is arguably only afforded through the medium of animation, or the intriguingly elongated moments of stillness in *Ghost in the Shell* that draw on anime stylistics. As Wells suggests "animation is especially persuasive in depicting such states of consciousness – memory, fantasy, dream, and so on – because it can easily resist the conventions of the material world and the 'realist' representation that characterises live-action cinema" (2002, p. 49). In anime psychological flux and fracture is a thematic and narrative trope and while articulation of such themes bear similarity to live-action cinema the style of anime also creates a further resonance in relation to the representation of identity.

Fractured identity in any form of the moving image invokes a psychological interpretation; narratives based on issues of identity are particularly prominent in anime. All the examples discussed invoke a psychological interpretation because the narrative centres on a splitting or fracturing of a central character, and audiences from many cultures are clearly familiar with such storylines, which is evident in the popularity of the films discussed (at least among the fandom of anime). Psychological reflection and what it 'means to be human', in narratives based on split

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identity, is frequently articulated through the ‘personal’, through a subjective view of what it means to experience ourselves in the world, which in many of these texts (particularly the horror genre) is depicted thematically and narratively as chillingly splintered. Anime allows for understanding identity as not whole through its narrative and generic leanings (and where it departs from these). In the examples discussed, psychological issues are also mapped onto fissured landscapes which provide a comment on national contexts and issues of both individual and national identity. However, the increasingly global nature of the film industry cannot be ignored; while cultural contexts and issues provide an understanding of some of the tensions apparent in these texts, particularly in relation to past and present dichotomies, the transnational qualities of cinema allow for positioning the films discussed in a global context where aspects such as generic conventions are likely to channel issues into certain familiar formats. 

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Leslie Bishko

The Uses and Abuses of Cartoon Style in Animation

Introduction

“Cartoon style” in animation broadly refers to animation design and movement that adheres to the 12 Principles of Animation, defined and developed at the Disney Studios. The Principles evolved through trial and error, by observing motion on-screen and noting what aspects of animated movement served the believability of the characters. To this day, the 12 Principles of Animation are known by all animators and used as a benchmark for good animation. Yet, these principles are not complete movement concepts. They influence specific movement patterns that are often applied without consideration of their effects, resulting in characterization that lacks authenticity.

Viewers have come to expect that animated character performances portray the illusion of a living being. As a determining factor for believability in animation, authenticity functions on two levels. First, we suspend our disbelief and engage with the character; there is no question of the character’s aliveness. Second, through characterization, we experience an authentic being whose inner intent is communicated outwardly, and made unmistakably clear.

Originating from the roots of 20th century modern dance, Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a conceptual framework for the observation, description and interpretation of human movement that offers a robust movement vocabulary. Where Animation Principles can potentially impose a specific style of animated movement, LMA is style-neutral and therefore excels at articulating components of style. Additionally, LMA addresses the relationship of intent to action, an innovative feature that aids us in the observation of authenticity which the Animation Principles lack.

This paper has a three-fold objective:

- 1) To observe how cartoon style animation imposes limitations on what animators create and how they express through movement within the genre.
- 2) To demonstrate that LMA is a useful methodology towards understanding the impact that cartoon style has made on animation.
- 3) To introduce the terminology of LMA so that it can be referenced and applied to the creation and discussion of animation by artists and theorists.

To achieve these goals, the paper begins with a definition of criteria for authenticity in animation. Disney and LMA-based terminology are introduced to define a vocabulary for the discussion of animated movement. Cartoon style is outlined through its progression from Disney through Hanna Barbera, and the influence of contemporary commercial production practices. LMA is used to dissect cartoon style, reduce it to its bare essentials and articulate its purpose. This becomes the basis for a critique of the various ways that cartoon style is employed, for better or for worse, in contemporary animation.

The methodology of Laban Movement Analysis is essentially to observe movement, describe it in terms of LMA parameters and make meaning from our observations. This paper emphasizes an introduction of the terminology of LMA (indicated with bold lettering), while I employ the methodology of observation, description and interpretation throughout, by example.

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Authenticity

The Iron Giant and Hogarth are seated on a woodland floor having their first conversation. Holding a rock with outstretched arms, Hogarth inclines his body forwards and upwards as he lifts the rock for the giant to see, and explains, “This is a ROCK!” The Giant repeats, “ROCK,” with a forwards and upwards inclination of his head that seems to say, “Now I know what this is.” Next he learns to differentiate between a rock and a tree. He lowers and raises the rock in his left hand, as if to sense its weight and confirm what he knows: ROCK. With head inclined towards a tree held in his right hand, he extends his arm sideways and upwards, then rises and retreats through the upper torso, head and neck as he proclaims, “TREE!”

The Iron Giant is a character that engages the audience through a quality of *authenticity*. Fundamentally, we believe in this character because all elements of the animated illusion are unified, promoting the suspension of disbelief, as animation viewers have come to expect. We *empathize* with the character because the dramatic context engages our emotions; Hogarth has saved the Giant’s life, and as they begin to communicate and establish a friendship, we sense the Giant’s vulnerability and dependency on Hogarth. Beyond these key ingredients, we experience the authenticity of the character through his movement, which integrates a matrix of qualities that presents a statement the character feels with his whole body. It is a moment of full commitment to what he is expressing.

In the film *Robots* (2005), the character Ratchet exhibits dramatically readable movement, yet this character does not appear authentic. We first meet Ratchet in a scene where he is asserting his power over employees who are still loyal to the company’s previous leader. He is a dark, negative and controlling character, yet the broad spatial range of his gestures and sudden, forceful transitions from one extreme to another give the impression that the animator has taken the movement far beyond the qualities imbued by the vocal actor—creating a character that is *out* of control. At one point during his speech to the employees, Ratchet does a short “dance” in which he is imitating what he perceives as childlike, whiny behavior, using a squeaky voice and shaking his hips back and forth with elbows flexed close to his ribcage and hands dangling limply. These movement qualities are highly inconsistent with what we have seen so far. Furthermore, the repetitive rhythm of his movement phrases is quite similar to the movement of other characters throughout the film. With all of these factors combined, Ratchet’s dialogue says one thing, but his movement says something else. A style of movement has been used without attention to its appropriateness for this character.

For the following discussion of cartoon style, this notion of authenticity in character animation encompasses the following criteria:

- In the context of craft, congruence of design with expression: when line, shape, form, color, composition, voice acting and movement are aligned with content, forming a fluid and meaningful whole.
- In the context of characterization, congruence between a character’s intent and its resulting action.
- Alignment of style with content, as opposed to adoption of style without connecting it to its subject.

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On Defining Cartoon Style

It is problematic, yet necessary, to attempt a definition of cartoon style in order to proceed with a discussion of it. The problem lies in the need to elaborate on animation's early origins, and the evolution of subject matter and production methods, which could be the subject of its own paper. Therefore, rather than a definition, I put forward the following description of the type of work I am referring to as cartoon style:

- Animated movement that adheres to the Principles of Animation, which is most fully realized through hand-drawn animation methods.
- Depiction of characters in some dramatic context, where the intent is to promote believable character performances.
- Comedic as opposed to expressionistic content.

Non-drawn animation is typically referred to by its production method (puppet, 3D computer), and is said to have “cartoony” movement, but not referred to as a “cartoon” per se. Where puppet, 3D computer or other animation methods employ Principles of Animation, it is generally considered that they are emulating the “cartooniness” of hand-drawn animation.

Principles of Animation

The evolution of animated movement at the Disney studio during the 1930's is pivotal to the formalization of cartoon movement parameters. During this era, a core team of animators began to experiment with animated movement. As reported by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston in *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (1981), Walt Disney pushed the animators to develop their skills and create a more physically believable animated world. Gradually, a terminology, or language of animated movement evolved, which became known as the Principles of Animation (pp.45-47). As these precepts are widely known and can be referenced in *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*, I will list them here and apply them in context throughout this paper:

1. Squash and Stretch
2. Anticipation
3. Staging
4. Straight Ahead Action and Pose to Pose
5. Follow Through and Overlapping Action
6. Slow In and Slow Out
7. Arcs
8. Secondary Action
9. Timing
10. Exaggeration
11. Solid Drawing
12. Appeal

Through action analysis classes held on-site, the Disney animators scrutinized live-action footage frame by frame and honed their craft. A richly detailed, full animation style evolved that promoted the physical properties of objects and characters in motion as the basis for believability.

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The goal was to bring drawings to life and create believable characters through realistic characterization and acting. While the Principles of Animation can be applied to non-character movement, they are specifically geared to support the illusion of life. Note that as soon as you move an inanimate object with Anticipation or Squash and Stretch, it acquires characteristics of motivation and intent!

In recent years, several people have theorized additional Principles of Animation in an attempt to reflect continued developments in animation practice, as well as the limitations of the original twelve (Kerlow, 2004) (Comet, 2007). Walt Stanchfield taught life drawing classes for animators from 1970-1990. He is well known for his expanded 28 Principles of Animation which have been published informally on the internet (Animation Meat, 2007). While worth noting in the context of this paper, for the sake of simplicity I will save a discussion of these extended principles for another study.

Laban Movement Analysis

While the Disney animators were defining Animation Principles and conducting frame-by-frame action analysis, Rudolf Laban was giving birth to expressionist dance in Europe, developing Labanotation, a notation system for human movement, and planting the seeds for what has today evolved into Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). Laban intuitively understood aspects of the body/mind connection that have become hot topics among cognitive scientists, somatic practitioners, psychoanalysts, athletes, dancers and actors alike. Together with his students and collaborators, he was able to distill the ingredients that are part of all movement patterns, formulating a rich and robust movement language that has withstood the rigors of broad applicability. LMA is a language that applies to all living beings, which, for our purposes, certainly includes animated characters.

LMA provides a conceptual framework through which we can observe, describe and interpret the intentionality of movement. It possesses one key attribute that the Animation Principles are without – the link between how people move and what their movement communicates to others. The following broad introduction to LMA, and its correlations with Animation Principles, will support my application of LMA concepts to further the discussion of cartoon style.

Five categories of movement delineate the full spectrum of LMA's movement parameters: **Body, Effort, Shape, Space** and **Phrasing**. Phrasing describes how we sequence and layer the components of movement over time. A movement phrase is analogous to a verbal sentence, or to a phrase of music, in which a complete idea or theme is represented. A phrase unit involves three main stages: **Preparation, Action** and **Recuperation**. Our uniqueness is expressed through our movement phrases: individualized rhythmic patterns and preferences of Body, Effort, Shape and Space. How one initiates a phrase of movement organizes intent and patterns the neuromuscular coordination of the action (Hackney, 1998).

We can use the language of Phrasing to describe a typical cartoon movement: the "take," which is a moment of extreme surprise. The character, having seen and taken in the thing that causes surprise, Prepares by slightly rising up before Squashing down and Stretching upwards into an extreme pose. This extreme pose constitutes the main action of the phrase, showing his reaction to the stimulus. As the pose is held, Secondary Action of hair or clothing may continue to move along the upward trajectory with Follow Through and Overlapping action. The character then releases the pose, sinking into a Recuperative moment of Squash before returning to neutral and preparing for the next decision to act.

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The **Body** category describes structural aspects of the body in motion: which parts are moving or held, how movement flows from one part to the next (which is the essence of Follow Through and Overlapping), how the kinetic chains of the body are being patterned and coordinated, and postural habits from which gestural expression emerges¹. While this category has a focus on functional, or biomechanical aspects of movement, its parameters help us observe the degree of ease within the body and the ways in which the body serves authentic expression as the vehicle of its outward manifestation.

The **Effort** category has become the most widely known aspect of LMA due to its extensive practice within theater. Effort delineates qualities of movement as ongoing fluctuations between **Light** and **Strong Weight**, **Indirect** or **Direct Space**, **Sustained** or **Sudden Time**, and **Free** or **Bound Flow**. The four Effort Factors of Weight, Space, Time and Flow are linked with C. G. Jung’s four ego functions: sensing, thinking, intuiting and feeling. From these associations, we observe that a mover’s Flow of Weight in Space and Time communicates information about physical sensations and the agency to mobilize one’s weight with delicacy or force, the broadness or focus of thought, the intuitive leisureliness or urgency of decisions, and the release or control of feelings (Bloom, 2006). The eight Effort qualities emerge in combinations of two elements, forming “states,” three elements, creating “drives,” and in the rare case of an extreme and compelling movement, four elements combine in a “full Effort action.”

FLOW	Feeling, Progression, “How” Feeling for how movement progresses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free: external releasing of energy, going with the flow • Bound: contained and inward, resisting the flow
WEIGHT	Sensing, Intention, “What” How you sense and adjust to pulls of gravity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light: delicate, sensitive, buoyant, easy intention • Strong: bold, forceful, powerful, determined intention • Weight Sensing: <u>sensing</u> the weight of your body, as opposed to <u>using</u> it. • Passive Weight – surrendering to gravity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limp: weak, wilting, flaccid • Heavy: collapse, giving up
SPACE	Thinking, Attention, “Where” Thinking, or attention to spatial orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect: flexibility of the joints, three-dimensionality of space, all-around awareness • Direct: linear actions, focused and specific, attention to a singular spatial possibility
TIME	Intuition, Decision, “When” Intuitive decisions concerning <u>when</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained: continuous, lingering, indulging in time, leisurely • Sudden: unexpected, isolated, surprising, urgent

Table 1: Effort

Of particular importance for animation, LMA delineates three more Weight parameters: the sensing of one’s body weight (a feature of the double-bounce walk), and the Passive Weight components of Limp and Heavy. Weight is a term that is constantly bandied about when

¹ Preston Blair articulates “line of action” as key to creating strong poses that support action (Blair, 1994). This is similar to the concept of Posture Gesture Merging, in which intent appears to be expressed with authenticity (Moore, 2005).

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discussing animation, because the illusion of the qualities of weight provides information about the materiality of form in motion. Materiality is intricately bound with intent because the motivation to move and act requires us to mobilize our body mass in constant negotiation with the affects of gravity. You may recognize this negotiation in the difference between the struggle to rise up out of bed in the morning, verses the way you feel on the tennis court later that day as you swing your signature serve!

It is typical for a definition of Squash and Stretch to include mention of weight, stating that Squash and Stretch movement gives weight to objects. This is a limited view of both Squash and Stretch, and of weight. The only time this occurs is when an object or character moves upwards, against gravity, or downwards, when yielding to gravity. Both weight and Squash and Stretch movement can exist independently of each other.

Shape is the one area of LMA that has the most in common with animation as it describes the process of shape change over time. Shape reveals how one's inner attitude and relationship with the external environment molds the changing plastic form of the body. Shape change may initiate as an adjustment of the body in relationship to self (just as Squash and Stretch represents the shifting of inner volumes), or as a bridge from self to other through **Arc-like** (pitching a baseball), **Spoke-like** (punching a punching bag) or **Carving** (molding a clay pot) Modes of Shape Change.

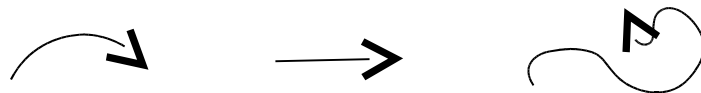


Figure 1: Arc-like, Spoke-like and Carving Modes of Shape Change

Laban and his collaborators observed that the eight Shape qualities of **Rising, Sinking, Spreading, Enclosing, Advancing, Retreating, Scattering** and **Gathering** are frequently clustered with corresponding Efforts, such as rising with Light Weight, or sinking with Strong Weight.



UNIPOLAR		BIPOLAR			
SPREADING TO SIDES	ENCLOSING SIDES TOWARDS CENTER	GROWING TO RIGHT SIDE	GROWING TO LEFT SIDE	SHRINKING LEFT SIDE	SHRINKING RIGHT SIDE
LENGTHENING UP AND DOWN	SHORTENING UP AND DOWN	LENGTHENING UPWARDS	SHORTENING UPWARDS	LENGTHENING DOWNWARDS	SHORTENING DOWNWARDS

Figure 2: KMP variations of left/right and up/down Shape Flow

These Effort/Shape “affinities” represent natural or accessible clusterings of Effort and Shape, yet counter-affinities (such as forcefully punching a fist upwards, or delicately lowering a kitten to the ground) bring texture and richness to the expressive range of movement choices.

The interplay of Flow and Shape forms the basis of elasticity we can observe in subtle shape changes in the torso. With our breath, we respond to inner feelings of comfort/safety or discomfort/danger. The resulting fluctuations of tension and release allow the torso to grow and shrink three-dimensionally. The Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) is an application of LMA theory that has particular relevance for animation. Based on the observation of qualities of elasticity in infants, the KMP articulates 18 variations of how the flow of breath supports plastic shape adjustments. It can be viewed as an expanded theory of Squash and Stretch! (Kestenberg, 1977)

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Space describes the mover's involvement in the three-dimensional external environment, creating spatial pulls and countertensions that stabilize or mobilize the body. The range of movement varies within the **Kinesphere**, which is the

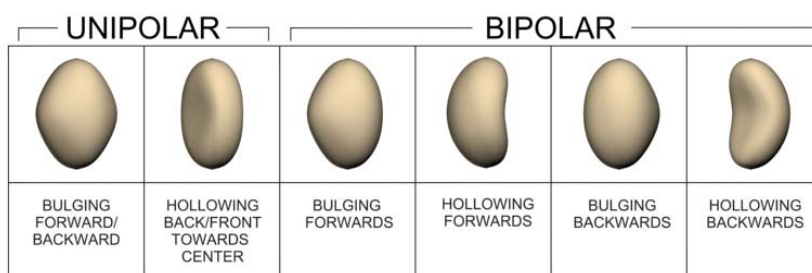


Figure 3: KMP variations of front/back Shape Flow viewed from slight angle

reach space around the body. Tex Avery's extreme poses are known for wild expansions beyond the limits of a character's Kinesphere. It can also be said that Avery's characters have highly elastic Kinespheres. Laban observed that movers form complex spatial patterns that can be one-dimensional, two-dimensional (planar) or, in the case of three-dimensions, can take on the forms of various polyhedra: the octahedron, cube, icosahedron and dodecahedron. For example, as Bob Incredible's boss at the insurance company lectures angrily about Bob's performance on the job, he repeatedly punches his fists downwards, on either side of his body, indicating the lower corners of the **Vertical** plane, thrusts a fist up and forwards to a corner of the **Sagittal** plane, and wipes both hands sideways, suggesting the **Horizontal** plane. This geometrical component of LMA is core to Laban's view that inner intent participates in the reciprocal relationship between self and environment through movement.

LMA offers us a framework of movement constructs that excel at delineating the elements of expressive style in movement. Where the Principles of Animation simply tell us that Squash and Stretch creates weight, LMA names the permutations of Squash and Stretch, observes them in the context of a movement phrase, notes what other movement components are combining with and affecting the particular qualities of Squash and Stretch, and allows us to interpret meaning from all of the above. Furthermore, where Squash and Stretch is promoted as the way to create qualities of weight in animation, LMA does NOT prescribe! Its immense value as a tool for animators is its style-neutrality, which supports authentic communication.

One of several overarching principles of LMA is the ebb and flow relationship between **Function** and **Expression**: while biomechanical body function supports the range of expressive movement patterns, the inner expressive drive influences and patterns the body. I view the Principles of Animation as serving mostly the Functional aspects of movement, with LMA serving the integration of Function with Expression. Story and characterization set the contextual and emotional arena in which theories of acting place Expression into dramatic perspective.

Styles of cartoon style

In his role as director, Walt Disney demanded perfection from his animators, who developed a refined, sugar-coated realism in characterization and acting through the Principles of Animation. Designed for a broad family audience, the early Disney content was safe, satisfying and easy to digest.² In films such as *Snow White*, this was epitomized through Snow White's goodness, the evilness of the Queen, and the comic relief provided by seven distinctively unique dwarves. Describing this era, Thomas and Johnston wrote:

² "If animation tends to suggest 'cartoons for kiddies' this is clearly due, in great part, to Disney. Following Disney's audacious gamble on the animated feature film, animation became defined by the Disney model – that of the cartoon as child/family entertainment, and as such, a no-go era for most film critics and theorists other than as material for ideological/social analysis." (Pilling, 1997, p. xi.)

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“...a more subtle kind of action with more complex acting and more meaningful expressions developed. The animation became so sophisticated that it was almost impossible to recognize the basic principles. The medium had developed into an art form.” (1981, p. 95)

To me this statement hints at the need for more movement parameters. But it also underscores Walt Disney himself as a creative force behind the content and style that emerged from his studio. In the context of commercial production, this model has prevailed in contemporary studios.

The Warner Brothers animators are legendary for their part in pushing the stylistic variations of cartoon animation. Their initial creative motivation came through an irreverent desire to move as far away from the Disney style as possible. Their content was directed towards an adult audience, and their gags developed a style of extreme physical comedy only possible in the imaginary world they created on screen. Tex Avery pushed the limits of physical extremes through his signature cartoon takes, whose main action typically involve extremes of Sudden, Strong, Direct and Bound Effort (a full Effort action), perhaps with a Rising and Retreating shape change that pulls the character beyond the boundaries of their Kinesphere. Bob Clampett, whose light-hearted zaniness exemplifies the Warner Brothers spirit, was known for a rubbery style of elasticity in his Squash and Stretch movement (Schneider, 1988).

With thoughtful attention to timing, gesture and facial expression, Chuck Jones explored the inner motivations of a character through subtle details of line, form and action. Through the Coyote and Roadrunner characters, Jones became master of the “moving hold” allowing his characters to suspend all action while thoughts register and responses are prepared. He used these held poses to create dynamic tension, exploring the comic elements of duration, while timing, with great precision, when the next action would occur. In *Feed the Kitty* (1952), Jones moves a bulldog named Marc Anthony through an astonishing range of emotions when the otherwise ferocious dog decides to take care of an adorable kitten. We enter an enjoyable empathy with this character through facial expressions in which muscles in one part of the face are pinched in contraction (corners of the eyes, nose, mouth, or the brows) with the rest of the face contrastingly slack. Handled in this way, the facial expressions reveal the complex of emotions such as pain mixed with affection when the kitty kneads the dog’s back with her claws. The animators created beautiful qualities of Weight in the face, as the dog’s floppy, elastic skin becomes alternately active, then passive, through changing facial expressions. We find it precious and endearing when Marc Anthony cuddles and kisses the kitten, pressing her into the bulging folds of his saggy jowls.

Further rebellion against the influence of Disney emerged at the UPA studio, where the constraints of volumetric form and the believable effects of gravity on mass were abandoned altogether in service to the graphic image. Called the “modernist style,” (Amidi, 2006), the work created at UPA, and other studios of the 1950’s, prioritizes design, color, line and composition. Animation principles such as Anticipation, Squash and Stretch, Follow through and Overlapping, if used at all, are extremely minimal. Yet, movement in these cartoons is not without its expressive qualities. In *Gerald McBoing Boing*, the mother’s sewing action creates a feeling of light tension as she pulls the thread, even though the shape of the arm gesture goes “off model” by Disney standards. In the kitchen reading a note from Gerald’s teacher, she collapses into a limp slump in frustration. Yet at other times, Shape changes are instantaneous – a held pose

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carries the idea, rather than the process of change. This creates a stylistic economy in which popping to a precisely posed expression operates on an evocative or metaphoric, as opposed to a visceral level.

The talented designers of the 1950's made their way to the Hanna Barbera studio, where "limited animation" revolutionized production for low budget television broadcast. Expressive characterization was emphasized through voice acting, while movement was kept minimal to enable quick completion of episodes and minimize the high labor costs associated with full animation. Movement in cartoon series such as the Flintstones has no Exaggeration and only subtle hints of Anticipation, Squash and Stretch or Follow Through. Contemporary vector-based animation for TV and the internet is built on these three basic Animation Principles.

Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy embraces cartoon style through its nostalgia for 1940's Warner Brothers irreverence, 1950's design and 1960's limited production. His style varies back and forth between highly visceral movement, making frequent use of held Bound Flow with grotesquely distorted shapes, and graphic stylization in which tension neutralizes and form has no boundaries. Kricfalusi takes great pleasure in prolonging images and movement that present bizarre moments of discomfort! The back and forth play between visceral and graphic qualities somehow adds to this unease.

Uses and abuses of cartoon style

Through this progression from the full animation of 1930's Disney style, to the extremes and refinements of Warner Brothers, the graphic emphasis at UPA and finally to the limited techniques of TV animation at Hanna Barbera, we find that there has been a gradual economization of movement. Three core Animation Principles remain throughout: Anticipation, Squash and Stretch, and Follow Through and Overlapping. Their function is to support aliveness, believability and characterization. As such, they form the building blocks of style and expression.

What makes these three Principles essential? Anticipation is the clearest signifier of intent. In Laban terms, Anticipation is the Preparation of a phrase, where the mover's intent initiates and organizes the motor pattern that follows. Squash and Stretch comes in second because, initiated by breath, it represents the modulating flow of feelings and their effect on the plastic form of the body. Squash and Stretch is often used to represent breath itself. It also serves the use of breath to integrate posture with gesture, and supports the flow of movement through the body within a phrase. When used in the context of spatial locomotion and gravity, it represents the mass and material quality of the character's body. These multiple functions of Squash and Stretch make it the main qualifier of aliveness—keeping in mind that we need Anticipation along with Squash and Stretch to embody characters with intent. Follow Through and Overlapping is about the details of body part articulation: where movement initiates in the body, and how it sequences from one part to the next. The initiation and sequencing serve to visually locate the center of mass and indicates the transfer of weight through the joints. Combined with Squash and Stretch, it supports the physical materiality of forms in motion.

Anticipation, Squash and Stretch, and Follow Through and Overlapping are often seen together as the Preparation, Action and Recuperation of a Phrase. Phrases represent complete expressive units that place movement in the broader context of unfolding narrative events. Phrased together, these Animation Principles provide the building blocks for creating authentic character performances.

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Abuse of cartoon style occurs when Animation Principles are used as a matter of course, without specifically crafting the movement to develop unique characterization and style. If not integrated with Expression, the Principles risk being treated as a formula that only offers a quick path to creating Functional movement. This happens frequently in education, where fundamental exercises such as the Bouncing Ball and Waving Flag teach the Principles from a Functional perspective. At the early stages of learning to animate, if you get Function wrong, Expression won't happen. However, if Expression is clearly defined before starting to animate, the Function will often take care of itself. This is where animators can turn to the craft of acting for tools that will clarify intent, before getting lost in the frame-by-frame process.³

Clarity of Expression remains critical for experienced animators and directors when the movement characterization somehow doesn't match the voice performance or dramatic context, as with the earlier example of Ratchet. While this can certainly occur in theater or live action, it is a unique challenge for animators who create characters that are separate entities from the voices that embody them. In addition to Robots, we see this occurring in recent computer animated character performances such as Alex in *Madagascar* (2005), or RJ in *Over the Hedge* (2006). Here, the Animation Principles feel applied for the sake of creating a "cartoony look," but seem way over the top in terms of what the characters are expressing. As a result, the action feels hyperactive and predictable, and the characters shallow.⁴

We can also encounter a situation in which the director does not possess the terminology needed to communicate with the animators about movement. The director may have clear expressive goals but may not know what kind of movement will create that expression. Or, the director who employs the language of Animation Principles may become limited by their emphasis on Function. Issues of consistency can also occur when one character is animated by multiple animators. LMA terminology can provide a clear movement signature, defining the specifics of characterization that animators can reference, like a "model sheet" for movement.

Animation Principles become a unifying factor for cartoon style in the context of commercial classical animation production. Studio production necessitates a standardization of stylistic signifiers in both visual and movement design. Particularly when production becomes spread across continents, stylistic consistency becomes the priority over stylistic creativity.

Another place where cartoon style is at risk of abuse is on the internet, in part due to the proliferation of vector-based interpolation methods that create Squash and Stretch by scaling as opposed to morphing. Websites and animated greeting cards are rampant with brightly colored text that Squashes and Stretches around the screen. The abusers "apply" this movement as a signifier of fun, entertainment and comedy implied by the cartoon style. This creates a condition in which cartoon style itself becomes a signifier for what it used to be back in the Golden Age at Warner Brothers. It is as if the "idea" of Bugs Bunny has been extracted from its source and used as cartoon seasoning. Audiences widely accept this misuse and chuckle at even the slightest amount of cartoony-ness. This cartoon-chuckle-reflex may also be a signal of the aliveness promoted through cartoon style movement, which creates in us a non-verbal moment of recognition. Yet, in this scenario, cartoon style doesn't deliver authenticity because it has not been used intentionally, creatively, or with a sophisticated sense of design, which are the hallmarks of style and expression.

³ We have Ed Hooks to thank for bringing the world of acting to animators (Hooks, 2003).


⁴ Another aspect to consider for *Madagascar* is the newness of the Squash and Stretch capabilities for 3D computer animation, which took some adjusting to for animators raised on a diet of 3D. *Madagascar* was among the first 3D computer animations to gain technical mastery over the ability to create Squash and Stretch movement in 3D. While some of its animation seems "forced," it contains many wonderful character performances.

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Conclusion

Through the evolution of cartoon style, we have gained insights into its purpose and value for character animation. The Animation Principles originated out of the need to articulate a method for creating believable movement and authentic characterization, and has served this purpose very well over the years. Animated movement has the potential to communicate subtle layers of meaning, yet the terminology and tradition of cartoon style can pose limitations when used without artistry. Animators are encouraged to take creative responsibility for the movement design of their characters, towards creating authentic, embodied character performances. This is an essential aspect of creative invention within the art form.

Cartoon style is a specific configuration of movement qualities, and has become, to a certain extent, the “default” movement style of animated film. Through the movement vocabulary of Laban Movement Analysis, we have the potential to expand our understanding of animated movement. LMA is directly applicable to the creative process of animation, where it teaches us about the richness and complexity of communication through movement. As animation for visual effects and games continues to strive towards the qualities of live action, there has never been a stronger need for a complete framework of movement concepts.

Movement is the raw material of animated film. Through movement we can read an animated film, just as we can “read” music through its melody or rhythm, or a painting through color, line and shape. Observing animated film in terms of movement provides a direct connection to the creative source: the frame-by-frame process of designing movement. In animation studies, we are obligated to consider movement as the fundamental vehicle of expression in animated film, and to feature it as part of any theoretical discussion. 

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María Lorenzo Hernández

The *Double Sense* of Animated Images

A View on the Paradoxes of Animation as a Visual Language

“The cartoon is a playful art. [...] A false devotion to the cinematic approach inexorably stifles the draftman’s imagination.”
LINDVALL & MELTON (1997, p. 204)

“Once upon a time, or maybe twice....”
GEORGE DUNNING, *YELLOW SUBMARINE*, 1968

Introduction

Representation in the visual arts, such as cinematography – and in particular animation – contains a degree of ambivalence because they reconstruct the continuity of movement as the result of a visual trick, indeed the term *moving picture* contains a contradiction, linking stillness and motion in the same sequence. While this paradox remains dormant in most live action films, in animation it acquires what I term in this paper, a “double sense”, the duplication of a virtual image.

The double sense of animated images is a conceptual movement that calls attention to the surface of representation, instead of its actual contents. From the earliest age of cartoons, their high degree of self-reflexivity has reinforced the status of animation as an invented environment, building what has been labelled as the *language* of animation. In addition, the evidence of these images as an optical illusion has accelerated a formalist search for narrative processes, questioning the conventions of filmmaking as can be noticed on a heterogeneous but characteristic corpus of works: the independent short animated films, which lines exceed the regular routines of screenwriting.

Contrary to live action cinema, animation is a medium of uncommon plasticity that frequently avoids a semblance to reality and steadiness. As Lindvall and Melton suggest in the opening quote, the artist’s imagination needs to break the codes of representation, focusing attention on the particularities of their art work. The ambivalence of images supplies the breeding ground of a noticeable simultaneity that disrupts the identity of fictional beings and destabilizes the uniqueness and coherency of time and space, stressing the autonomy of animation to generate its own codes of representation.

By analysing specific examples of animated films, this paper will discuss the extent to which visual ambiguity contributes to animated storytelling and will be divided into the following sections:

- 1) The generation of a dual language through the plastic and cinematic foundations of animation;
- 2) The implementation of this deceptiveness in the hidden aspects of a whole storyline; and
- 3) The appliance of visual ambiguity in the form of storytelling, stimulating innovative formulas for narrative continuity.

Most of the study cases on this issue are extracted from a broad but characteristic category of works suitable for narrative experimentation: the independent animation films, from classic filmmakers such as Chuck Jones or Tex Avery – who can be considered as *auteurs* since they

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enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy –, to acclaimed contemporary artists and talents revealed in festivals, these animators give another turn of the screw in the search for a revolutionary, even transgressional style of representation.

1. The Ambivalence of Visual Objects: Foundations of Animation as a Dual Language

This section will focus on the misleading constituents of animated images that subvert the viewer's expectations about fiction, from the creation of sight gags to the possibilities of a symbolic language. Animation manipulates the unawareness of the audience about the staged situations as the most regular manifestation of visual humour, when fiction is re-addressed in a different context. For Henri Bergson, "is comical every incident that turns our attention to the physical aspect of a person, when we were regarding his moral aspect" (1899, p.840). Moreover, Freud finds the origins of laughter "a deviation of the mental process, the displacement of the psychic accent towards a different theme from the initiated" (1905, p.1055). Then, visual humour is related to the teasing discrepancies between figure and background, the visual form and its regular meaning, causing a momentary incongruity, a variation between *the uncanny* – the unsuited relationships aroused by images – and its possible interpretations, which produces the conciliatory reaction of laughter (Carroll 1991, pp.146-147).

Defined as an optical equivalent of wordplays, visual puns are intimately linked to the double sense of animation because they turn our attention to its particularities as a visual code (Wells 1998, p.132). For example, in *Chromophobia* (Raoul Servais, 1966), an artist hides himself inside the canvas he is painting; since both elements belong to the same pictorial universe, the visual pun provides a conceptual interchange among the actual contents of fiction and their most noticeable surface, only justified through the sudden consciousness of the act of watching a cartoon. In each case, these twists are primarily provided by one of the following catalysts:

- a) The *low degree of iconicity of images*, that reinforces the idea of animation as an invented, arbitrary universe;
- b) The *manipulation of animated movement*, which set up unforeseen reactions from characters and objects; and
- c) The *relativity of the viewpoint*, when the frame shows an equivocal fragment of the fiction context.

Firstly, the prevalence of smooth colours and linear silhouettes enlarges the potential falseness of representation. Due to the absence of dialogues, an oversimplified visual depiction becomes the most powerful instrument for distortion of information about the characters or their surroundings. Above all techniques, the cartoon is especially suitable for these astounding twists, because its degree of iconicity is lower than other animation processes restrained by their innate or virtual volume – as in stop-motion or 3D Computer Animation.

Although some perceptual dilemmas are solved within a plausible context, other puns set up irrational outcomes: freed from the need of reliability, consistent objects can arbitrarily change into misleading surfaces, raising the paradoxes of a two-dimensional image that codifies a volumetric space – as in an M.C. Escher's maze. Perhaps the most celebrated moment of Richard Williams' *The Thief and the Cobbler* (1993) is the pursuit at the Arabian palace, when the real depth of lounges and corridors is revealed – when not transformed – by the trajectories of characters, disestablishing the principles of graphic representation.

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Secondly, as Norman McLaren's classic definition suggests, "animation is not the art of drawings that move, but rather the art of movements that are drawn" (Solomon 1987, p.11). The interpretation of movement by the artist is indeed more powerful than their resemblance to real models, reproducing their specific behaviour to dissolve the uncertainty about their nature, or produce confusion about them.

Despite their obvious flatness, drawn characters are usually conceived in volume and move with consistency; nonetheless, motion can be manipulated in ways betraying the resemblance to real models, setting up an irony, a mocking reaction from their animated counterpart. For example, the paper inhabitants of *Flat World* (Daniel Greaves, 1997) arbitrarily act as three-dimensional beings or purely plain creatures –sticking themselves to the elevator's doors, or literally folding their neck to look backwards. Other puns describe the idiosyncrasy of this imaginary universe, setting objects out of context: for instance, fishes do not live in bowls but in pictures hanging on the wall. Likewise, motion can create funny parallelisms, when triplets are born as a paper garland that unfolds; these visual ironies do not obey normal cause and effect principles but rather to a non-written regulation of cartoons: if you handle an object in any eccentric way, most probably it will reply according to this incongruous usage. The possible changes of sound also play an important role, emphasizing the uncanny changes of behaviour of these animated objects.

Thirdly, the relativity of the viewpoint is a powerful instrument to create distraction and error in the audience's expectations. This relativity of context is given by the frame size and the camera angle – and is not dissolved until the frame moves to a more enlightening position, providing the correct interpretation. But this restricted view may also involve all intricate twists that defy the coherency of *mise-en-scène*. Animated camera movements are mostly generated frame-by-frame, imitating their cinematographic equivalents – as travelling, zoom or tilt shots –, although they contain the possibility of subverting their effects: Chuck Jones' *Duck Amuck* (1953) sets up a hilarious situation when the camera follows Daffy dressed as a French musketeer, but the background landscape progressively blurs into white to mock the poor duck, attaining an ironic duplication of the cinematographic space that sabotages representation codes.

Eventually, as animated puns emerge from the unexpected among unrelated objects, finding a new context for their usage, this eccentric use of visual signs also evokes the meaning renovation of regular words through poetry – as "the *pearls* of your mouth" operate as "your perfect, immaculate *teeth*". Visual metaphors and metonymies arise from any community of form or function, which creates rhetorical links. The discovery of a secondary meaning enables a double speech, operating through parallelism, substitution, or even euphemism as, for instance, those eyeballs enlarging greatly and the pupils popping out, for John Canemaker representing "a metaphor of lust as well as Avery's meditation on all the ways an erect penis can be implied without actually drawing one" (1998, p.33).

The absurdity of puns can transcend a purely hilarious purpose, reinforcing the properties of animation as a symbolic language, a divergent dimension of reality. Since animators purposely re-invent reality to satisfy, in the words of Phil Denslow, "the desire to make real that which exists in the imagination", (1992, p.4) their creation encircles an autonomous universe, unfastened from factual existence. The double sense of images provides a suitable context for a lyrical storytelling that recalls animation as an autonomous, essentially visual universe.

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2. Focusing the Storyline: the Visual Twist as a Narrative Outcome

This section regards the implementation of double visual code in the hidden aspects of the storyline, when the outcome reveals an irony about the original premise of the fiction. Since the storyline basically exists in the mind of the viewer and needs to be continuously rebuilt (Bordwell 1985, p.14), filmmakers can cheat with the need to set up an initial situation and subvert it later. In this sense, the sight gag behaves as an autonomous cell of narration, a micro-tale purposefully aimed towards the final twist; this phenomenon can be echoed on larger structures, when ambiguity underlies the entire storyline. These transcendent twists of narration, expressed through any visual irony or metamorphosis, become a distinctive symptom of short animated films, achieving their resolution when unconnected objects are suddenly linked or the nature of a mysterious context is discovered.

There are three basic elements in animated storytelling, whose unexpected evolution produces such an adjustment of interpretation to the narrative climax: *characters*, *backgrounds* and –maybe the most contrived –, the *fiction genres*, whose twists re-address the discourse to a different category of representation.

The element of characters and their evolution, or metamorphosis can be divided into *equivocal identities* and *symbolic transformations*. In the first category, the narrative pretext lies on the audience's initial mistake regarding the situation, eventually mitigated by the sudden emergence of the character's authentic nature, making the animated short film an elongated gag. The second case relates to more subtle ambiguities, inherent to the character's conception or the special relationships among figure and background; symbolic transformations are actually unreliable in a medium other than animation, since they essentially work within a context of allegory or lyric narration.

The allegoric tone of some noteworthy films raises storytelling to a visual fable where every metamorphosis –even graphic metamorphosis – is feasible. As a poem is written considering its last line, the pulse of lyrical films is addressed to a final emblematic image, a symbolic transformation. Totally animated in black and white plain surfaces, the Portuguese film *Estória do gato e da lua* (*Story of the Cat and the Moon*, Pedro Serrazina, 1995) stresses the idea that perfect happiness is unattainable for human beings – as the moon is for the cat. Nonetheless, due to the relativity of structural depth, the cat's tragic obsession is solved through visual means that strictly belong to imagination: the final transformation of the cat reconciles the storyline to its outcome, when the waxing moon descends to the roofs and invites him to jump onto her; then both melt to form together the full moon, as the emerging solution of a riddle.

Furthermore, when the scenery remains ambiguous or undetermined, the source of amusement consists in discovering its nature to restore the context itself of narration. The initial perception of *equivocal backgrounds* can be restored by a camera rotation, showing a different, inventive point of view about the things that we do not usually perceive. In the 3D computer animation film *Maestro* (Géza M. Tóth, 2004), a bird inside an hypothetical dressing room prepares its voice like an Opera singer; after this five-minute-long ritual, the bird goes out to sing his aria – at no other time than the noon hour, since he lives in a cuckoo clock. The sudden readjustment of perspective at the outcome offers an unpredictable focus on a customary object, an independent microcosm that briefly converges with the human sphere.

Other equivocal situations rather emphasize disturbing paradoxes provided by the collision between alternative views or dimensions. The Hungarian film *Labyrinth* (Ferenc Cakó, 1998) describes a human exodus, all crossing over a pretend maze, a mysterious surrounding which is

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not real architecture but the cipher “1999”, revealed by the final aerial shoot, symbolizing this uncanny space as a tragic century that finishes and a new millennium’s ironic beginning. The restoration of the viewpoint breaks the coherence of the stage, becoming the abstract environment of a visual allegory.

Finally, this section must include those films that show unexpected *swings of narrative genre*, interrupting the representation principles established at the beginning. This mocking strategy is fairly regular when the storyline starts as an archetypal genre – drama, thriller, and science-fiction – reproducing their specific atmosphere through the corresponding soundtrack, lighting, iconography, and so forth. When any new element reveals the original cause of misunderstanding, the opening premise and the subsequent development of the fiction are definitively cancelled.

These swings in narrative genre raise a whole discussion about filmmaking, turning attention to the production processes. For instance, the clay animation film *El ladrón navideño* (Javier Tostado, 2002) pretends to be a mystery story, setting up an initial context – the daily life at a school –, introduces a suspicious character, and even shows the first distressing events that anticipate the film’s crucial conflict; however, at this point the producer of the film – a well-known Spanish actor – rushes into the scene and interacts with the clay characters to report that there is not enough budget to finish the film; since the starting line never arrives at its corresponding conclusion, the story remains open, focusing on intertextuality as the real pretext of storytelling.

3. The Form of Storytelling: Visual Evolution vs. Cutting

This section will consider the application of the double sense as a powerful key for narrative continuity, discovering avant-garde mechanisms of storytelling. This experimental impulse helps to distinguish filmmakers as *auteurs*, becoming recognizable through their personal depiction of time and space evolution. In their works, the form of narration may even precede the story itself, which in most of the cases becomes a pretext to develop a daring visual concept.

These varieties of animation filmmaking can be categorised in the following broad terms:

- a) *One-shot films*: the oneness of the shot-scene is offset by the fictional stage’s fluency and versatility, implementing all kinds of stage transformations to enlarge the possibilities of a theatre-like *mise-en-scène*.
- b) *Animated camera movements*: the conventional editing – standardized by live action cinematography – is replaced by visual metamorphoses, which suggest paradoxical junctions among consecutive shoots or sequences.
- c) *The formalistic progression as the film pretext*: this definition embraces experimental attempts in which the film form prevails over storytelling, constituting a genuine contribution to atonal cinematography – emphasizing animated movement as a deconstruction of its material and static foundations.

One-shot animated films are formulated from the potential changes of the scenery, running without cutting interruptions. To overcome this narrative restriction, the singularity of the shot is mitigated by the fluency of transitions and transformations at a blank stage, and the division of the frame to support simultaneous storytelling. The uniqueness and continuity of animated narration recalls the fluency of *mise-en-scène* in contemporary theatre. In many senses, animation is actually a language closer to the stylized representation of theatre -where the incredulity of the public is temporarily cancelled – than to live action cinematography; for instance, animation can simplify the scenery so much that characters may move convincingly even in the most neutral

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landscapes, insofar as the viewer's imagination is activated by this undetermined space. Raimund Krumme's films supply excellent examples of this, since this German animator uses simplified means to describe the evolution of his Beckett-like sceneries. In his first personal film, *Seiltänzer* (*Ropedancers*, 1987), the only object dressing the stage is a square that helps to define an imaginary architecture with amusing unsteadiness, becomes a serious metaphor of the struggle for authority; the players of this tragicomedy provoke its continuous evolution, becoming a carpet, a window, a wall, a pit, and so on. These transformations are uttered through slight changes of sound, behaviour, or the introduction of soft chiaroscuro signs as, for instance, projected shadows, continuously redefining the dimensions of space.

Otherwise, split-panel narrations are employed to develop multiple storylines. Paul Driessen's lifework is well-known for this narrative style, splitting the fictional universe into independent parts – which can be recombined. Split-panel films contain original alternatives to cinematographic intercutting, devising multidirectional stories that eventually converge or are recombined –as, for instance, *Ter Land, ter Zee en in de Lucht* (*On Land, at Sea and in the Air*, 1980). While these stories independently progress in the film, they reach balance and reunification at the outcome, when the real connection between the characters emerges to resolve the mistake about their nature and scale.

Animated camera movements condense time intervals, suggesting a formal continuity among consecutive scenes. Animated camera movements establish a peculiar atmosphere for experimental storytelling, since these metamorphoses do not simply imitate the cinematographic travelling or zoom, but are rather designed to break the continuity of fictional space. Moreover, these metamorphoses have been extended through animation techniques focused on form and colour. The watery impression of reality achieved by liquid mediums like glycerine, oil painting, or even malleable substances like sand, clay or plasticine underlines the subjective perception of time, developing a particular style of camera movements. Paul Wells (1998, p.69-70) notices this relationship among the subjective atmosphere of the tale and the morphing pictures in Caroline Leaf's *The Street* (1976), where the evolution of a painting on glass provides an economical, fluent storytelling that reinforces the disturbing nature of this tale.

Turning around an object, or focusing on a motif shared by two successive sequences, animated camera movements can evoke strong emotions contained in the unsteady shelves of memory, eradicating the linearity of narration to release the animator's creative intuition and improvisation. In *78 Tours* (Georges Schwizgebel, *78 R.P.M.*, 1985), the visual rhymes assemble the story development, when the roundness of a cup of coffee, a spiral staircase, or a merry-go-round spinning, provide visual connections among the different memories and regrets from the main character's existence. This characteristic style of transitions come close to what Gilles Deleuze called *Time-Image*, when visual transformations become a rhetorical line which connects what is disconnected, while keeping it disconnected (1985, p.242).

Finally, the visual wrapping of the film arranges revolutionary ideas for experimental animation, starting a formalistic evolution. This progression points to the film form, stressing the correlation between visual terms – such as figurativeness and abstraction; motion and immobility; live action and animation –, and undermines the borders between storytelling and atonality. Although these films are not exactly abstract, they bring into question essential components of storytelling such as characters or scenery – while they are not completely absent –, focusing on movement, aesthetics, rhythm and climax – a sensorial experience that involves a specific idea or philosophy.


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These works generate a characteristic variation and repetition of visual patterns; therefore, the fragment, the collage, the kaleidoscope, and the cycle, become stylistic indications. Equally, the progression of motion makes evident the material constituent of images; a similar phenomenon occurs when amplified photographs of Impressionist painters highlight the brushstrokes and the mass of pigment: no matter if they depict an eye or a necklace, anything contained in a picture by Monet or Velázquez is strictly *painting*. As figurative shapes become abstract, the rhythmic evolution raises the film to a new representational level; for instance, *Copenhagen Cycles* (Eric Dyer, 2006) was shot from a number of photographic zoetropes in and around the Danish city, although the consecutive turns of these machineries are deliberately aimed at an abstract blur. The film displays a double code: photography in movement is not still photography anymore, but it is neither cinema, nor lifelike motion, since they are fastened to endless re-beginning. The manipulation of the kinetic rhythm switches on the sense of the uncanny, the phantom of life flying over a tragically still postcard, to literally embody that which exists in imagination.

Conclusions

Although the creative power of visual ambiguity has been formulated from these independent films, this philosophy has been gradually apprehended by more widespread genres: from short narrations – such as TV spots and video-clips – to live action features, the double sense of animated images set up a whole perspective to contemporary thinking: while reality is attached to uniqueness, continuity and coherence of cause-and-effect, the morphing of identities and the variability of time and space destroy the traditional boundaries of motion pictures.

Although this paper has focused attention on the two-dimensional appearance of animation, generating unexpected metamorphoses, the ambiguity of representation can be articulated through the intense mimesis of Computer Graphics – in the same sense that Baroque painters pointed to the falseness of the physical world through the hyperrealism of *trompe l'oeils*. Moreover, the recent emergence of digital editing has approached live action cinema with the versatility of drawn images, as can be noticed in a significant number of resources to depict the evolution of time, or the inner reality of beings, as the result of a growing interchange of resources among animation and live action cinema – which deserves to be analyzed in subsequent extensions of this research.

Under the general name of *double sense of animated images*, the previous discussion reflects all those durable sensations inspired by animation, shaking the consciousness through an unexpected reaction, an irrational transformation, any twist that suspends reality to trap the viewer into watching that which happens on the screen. This witchcraft expels the implicit surrealism of animation, detaching all its humour and melancholy. Live action cinema does not remain aloof to this incongruity, it is only withdrawn when necessary; motion pictures are always the result of human work; the capture of movement is actually as old as painting. I agree with Alan Cholodenko when he asserts: “Not only is animation a form of cinema, cinema – all cinema – is a form of animation” (2005, p.5). The sudden realisation of its double sense is a call for great joy, the will of creativity, the variety of means, the divergence of thought – that becomes profoundly human. 

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Pamela Turner

Early Connections Between Film and Emerging Media as Evidenced in the Animated Worlds of Adam Beckett

Making a “film” today rarely involves a journey to the lab as images are more often recorded digitally and not on celluloid. Even video’s electromagnetic record is transformed to bits and bytes. There is no frame to splice. The visual material exists as a virtual reference only. As McLuhan points out, new media doesn’t replace the old, existing media, but changes it. Theorists often point to the photograph and its impact on the painting. A similar event was the emergence of video technology and its ensuing relationship with film, a relationship whose differences have become increasingly transparent.

Looking at the work of Adam K. Beckett offers an opportunity to examine the dialogue between these technologies during the 1970s and to consider the relationship between avant-garde filmmaking and experimental animation. He is an artist whose work deserves to be reconsidered in the ongoing discussion of animation and media art. His animation, unlike that of many of his colleagues, was steeped in process and technical innovation, a proclivity akin to those filmmakers whose paramount concern was the structure and material of film, and video artists who were exploring the electronic signal of video.

Adam Beckett was nationally recognized as a new emerging talent in experimental animation in the 1970s.¹ He was in the inaugural class of the California Institute of the Arts, which opened its doors in 1970, and while there made six ground-breaking films: *Dear Janice*, *Evolution of the Red Star*, *Heavy-Light*, *Flesh Flows*, *Sausage City*, and *Kitsch in Synch*. His animations were screened alongside experimental films but resisted fitting into any specific film theory that was being touted during that time.

Structural/Materialist theory was prevalent, as well as parallel thoughts and practice in the new media of video. Gene Youngblood’s seminal text *Expanded Cinema* was published in 1970 followed by P. Adams Sitney’s *Visionary Film* in 1974, and Peter Gidal’s *Structural Film Anthology* in 1976.

Beckett’s primary instructors at CalArts were the animator/artist Jules Engel and experimental filmmaker Pat O’Neill. He also took a course called “Expanded Cinema” taught by Gene Youngblood, and a video course by Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe. Youngblood’s class introduced Beckett to a rich assortment of experimental cinema, and also to a broad way of

¹ Beckett collaborated with James Gore on the award-winning animation *The Letter*, and also made *Quacked Jokes: Early Animations* at Antioch College, before attending CalArts. The last five of the six films made at CalArts were award-winning pieces, playing in festivals such as the Ann Arbor Film Festival, Sinking Creek Film and Video Festival, 9th Tournee of Animation, Animafest Zagreb, and the Chicago International Film Festival. Three of his films were included in the 1974 Whitney Museum’s New American Filmmaker’s program, curated by John Hanhardt, and his *Evolution of the Red Star* was selected as one of six films for the NEA pilot program Short Film Showcase in 1977. The other five films were James’ Whitney’s *Lapis*, Robert Breer’s *Gulls and Buoys*, Jordan Belson’s *Light, Clay* by Eliot Noyes, Jr., and *Frank Film* by Frank Mouris. Significantly, Beckett was included in the first edition of Russett and Starr’s “Experimental Animation”, in the section “A Rising Generation of Independent Animators”, along with such notables as Caroline Leaf, Frank Mouris, John Stehura, and Dennis Pies. Unlike them, he was not included in the second edition from 1988 due to his early death in 1979 leaving no new work to announce, and no one to push the distribution of his work. His contribution was noted, later in 1994, in the section “Innovators of tradition: the independent par excellence” of Giannalberto Bendazzi’s *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Animation*. Five of his films were restored in 2006. Three were included in two Museum of Modern Art programs, and all five screened in programs dedicated exclusively to his work at the National Gallery of Art in D.C., at REDCAT in Los Angeles, and in Chicago, as part of Animation World’s Fair, all in 2006. Two more films were restored in 2007.

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thinking about cinema. Youngblood's approach reinstates the broader meaning of cinema as relating to its origin, 'kinesis', referring to images that include the dimension of movement. For Youngblood, the phrase "expanded cinema" is not limited to performed or executed images.

Youngblood (1970, p.11), declared that:

"When we say expanded cinema we actually mean expanded consciousness. Expanded cinema does not mean computer films, video phosphors, atomic light, or spherical projections. Expanded cinema isn't a movie at all: like life it's a process of becoming, man's ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes."

This perspective of expanded cinema, and understanding how different media practices inform each other, offers the best vantage points for examining the work of Adam K. Beckett. While his work is undeniably animated, it resists being defined solely as such. The imagery he creates refers to the electronic media of video and computer graphics, and his technique reaches beyond the – then – orthodox methods of animation. He relied not on drawing so much as what he did with the drawings on the animation stand and then with the animated footage on the optical printer. His films did not constitute a narrative, but rather a loosely structured journey through abstracted space and forms.

Beckett worked in close proximity to video artists working with image processing in Paik's video class. Paik and Abe were building their video synthesizer, and with it the students were working with the video signal, altering it, layering it, or in some fashion changing it. Michael Scroggins, a fellow classmate, recalls, "Nam June was holding up tin foil and blinking Christmas lights in front of this amazing image generator and saying 'ahhh beautiful, beautiful' and the students were scratching their heads like 'what's this, it's so cheesy' and of course Nam June was trying to say it's all cheesy, in his Fluxus way."²

Paik was accompanied by a number of other Fluxus³ artists, including Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, and Emmett Williams. Beckett had a silkscreen printing class with Knowles, and a "Language Happenings" class with Emmett Williams. It is in this non-traditional setting that Beckett developed his "one and only original film discovery – animation of a cycle under the camera" (Russett 1976, p. 11), which became the trademark of his work. Beckett would draw an initial cycle, shoot the cycle then continue to draw, under the camera, as he repeated the cycle. So if he started with 24 separate animation drawings, after weeks of shooting and animating under the camera he would finish with the same number of drawings. In this way complex, animated forms would be created.⁴

Once recorded on film, the animation would then be taken to the optical printer, where he re-photographed the frames, phasing the image in time, changing the colours and scale of the image. Multiple passes were made, layering the image onto itself, slightly altered, creating a new version of itself. It is easy to see here a connection to video image processing and the idea of feedback.

² Michael Scroggins, telephone interview, September 2, 2005.

³ Fluxus was – and still is – an international collective of artists influenced by the ideas of John Cage. George Maciunas is credited with naming and organizing early Fluxus events. It can best be described as a creative force rather than a particular style of art. Fluxus art during the 1970s tended to not be affiliated with a gallery but instead featured events and happenings in other spaces. See <http://www.fluxus.org>.

⁴ Beckett was aware of earlier artists who animated under the camera. He referred to the earlier work of McLaren and Fischinger's *Motion Painting No. 1* when describing his process, pointing out that while they worked on a single image under the camera, he worked on a cycle, which added a different set of issues. See Russett, p. 11.

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The results were groundbreaking at that time. As his teacher, and colleague, Pat O'Neill noted, Beckett was drawing from stream of consciousness. "You look at it and it's so complicated that you think you're seeing a continuous animation but you realize that there're phrases that you recognize. Experienced animators looked at it and they couldn't figure it out."⁵

In *Dear Janice* (1972) Beckett used 24 separate drawings and, as the title suggests, it is a letter of sorts to a friend. The text of the letter provides the structural foundation, and the space is



Fig. 1: *Dear Janice*, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

gradually filled with objects such as hearts morphing into breasts, blobs of colour changing shape and unfolding geometric shapes. He is animating a continuous cycle and also changing the camera position so that the frame, at times, follows selected shapes around a circular path, or moves 'back' (up on the animation stand) to reveal the complex animated universe in motion. The circular path of the animation leaves the centre space empty and after the animated sequence is completed, Beckett optically prints live action into this area. Here we see several elements that are consistent in Beckett's films – specifically humour, the influence of pop culture imagery, and the absence of 'subject' as the imagery is present for its graphic content, not to convey larger meaning. The exception to the above is his film *Heavy-Light* which is serious and mysterious, with no overt humour or connection to pop imagery.

Evolution of the Red Star (1973) is a cycle of only six drawings and demonstrates increased involvement with the optical printer. The opening shot is a static image of Chairman Mao who is crying animated red stars while blue lines emanate from his head. This is the only 'real' image in the film. The body of the animation is of concentric star shapes, and other geometric forms, with negative spaces filled by a progressing, organic tube-like form. Again, he repositions the camera to focus on specific developing areas of the animation, and then he takes the film to the optical printer. Here, almost as an alchemist attempting to transfigure the original into a new form, he layers the imagery, alters the tones, shifts the position and time between layers. This creates an electronic-like, pulsing, mutating image that at times appears embossed, monochromatic, and/or inverted.



Fig. 2: *Evolution of the Red Star*, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

⁵ Pat O'Neill, personal interview, July 26, 2003.

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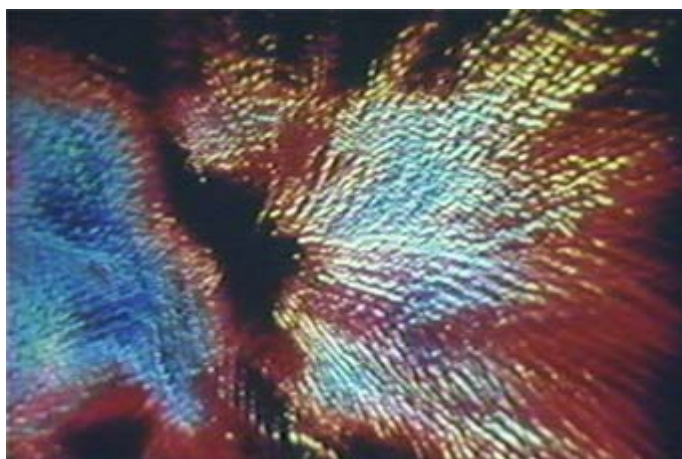


Fig. 3: *Heavy-Light*, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

films, *Heavy-Light's* source is drawn. The incredible variety of shapes and movements seen here come from a cycle of thirteen drawings.⁶ This is perhaps the apex of Beckett's mastery of the optical printer.

Flesh Flows (1974) is based on recognizable, imaginative forms that are somewhat erotic, and that change into other shapes, or create a landscape of sorts. This film is unique in that it is not based on a cycle. Instead the entire animation sequence is repeated three times, with the second and third repetitions transformed into a more ethereal, abstracted space via his work on the optical printer. The resulting abstracted imagery takes on a life of its own, becoming seething, nebulous trails of color that briefly redefine as the original shape emerges, then disintegrate into the changing mass.

With *Sausage City* (1974) Beckett returns to the additive cycle technique, this time using 48 animated drawings.⁷ Beckett's description in the Canyon Cinema catalogue (1976, p.17) reads:

“Starting with a white screen a city of interlocking boxes evolves, always moving, constantly changing perspective. After a while, this group of sausages begins to emerge... As time passes there get to be a whole bunch of sausages; in fact, the screen becomes one mass of seething, throbbing, pullulating life. The ending is a surprise.”

Heavy-Light (1973) stands apart from Beckett's others in that it is completely abstract, having no reference to an actual form and no recognizable image. It appears to be made of pure, coloured light, traveling through the screen space in a variety of movements. At times the light forms appear to dart around on a triangular path, and sometimes they swirl and float, and engulf the viewer. Suggesting light in motion, the images have an electric quality and resemble imagery created via video feedback or perhaps computer graphics. However, like all of his



Fig. 4: *Flesh Flows* – Before optical printer effects, image courtesy of The iotaCenter



Fig. 5: *Flesh Flows* – After optical printer effects, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

⁶ Barry Schrader, personal interview, October 10, 2004. The drawings have not been found and the animation is so complex there is no way to isolate the 13 drawings. Schrader worked closely with Beckett while making the sound score and was able to provide this, and other important information on this film.

⁷ David Berry, personal interview, February 11, 2003.

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Fig. 6: *Sausage City*, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

The amorphous shapes are reminiscent of *Dear Janice* and it doesn't include the sophisticated optical printing transformation of his previous three films. Here the optical printing is more traditional, compositing a character onto the animation. A thin man wearing a hat peers at us from the left edge of the frame then steps into the work, which we now see as an animating plane of images on the animation stand. The registration pegs and the wooden table outside of the animating area are briefly visible.

The last film that Beckett completed was actually a collaborative effort. *Kitsch in Synchron* (1975) was made while he was teaching both animation and optical printing at CalArts and he directed the students as they created the sound track, the animated sequences and the initial optical printing. The animation students made black and white cut-outs and colour – brilliant colour – was added in the printer. Images are mirrored, each side having different colours to offset the symmetry, and layered. These shapes, propelled by the unique sound-track, create a riotous cacophony of sound, colour and form.

Many artists were experimenting with alternative approaches to animation, both in use of media and content. As Giannalberto Bendazzi noted, observing the work of independent animators in United States from 1970s and 80s, "A diversification of themes and techniques was the main characteristic of this wave of animators. Everything was subject to experimentation, from drawing on simple sheets of paper to clay puppets, to computer animation, to collages, to retouched photographs, to object animation." (1994, p. 238)



Fig. 7: *Kitsch in Synchron*, image courtesy of The iotaCenter

The aspect of Beckett's work that really set him apart is that he used the printer, and abstraction, to the extreme.

The optical printer, to most, was a post-production tool; Beckett used it for the production of his primary imagery, transforming the material from the usual realm of animation to the more cosmic realm of avant-garde film, or a graphic, psychedelic cinema experience. Evolution of the Red Star, Heavy-Light, and Flesh Flows are the films that best demonstrate Beckett's unique artistry with the optical printer and suggest a connection to other media practices from the time period.

Connections: image processing in video art

Video was still in its infancy as an art form at that time, as the Sony Portapak had only been introduced at the end of the 1960's. Yet artists had quickly co-opted this technology and already a variety of approaches were evolving, with some entering a critique of television, while others

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looked to the inherent physical nature of the video signal itself. Inherent artifacts of the electronic video signal, such as glitches, were utilized and exploited. Devices were created to act upon the electro-magnetic signal adding colour, instability, distortion or abstraction.

Audio synthesizers preceded video synthesizers and early artists and engineers realized a parallel between the synthesis of electronic music and electronic image. The audio synthesizers generated tones, altered pitches, and modulated waves – sounds were created and processed, layered and used to create textures. The same ideas compelled video artists, assisted by engineers, to create instruments to electronically alter – or generate – the video signal.

Beckett was well aware of both technologies, and the processes they motivated, from a first hand perspective. He had access to the Buchla 100, an early audio synthesizer, at CalArts.⁸ The sound score to *Evolution of the Red Star* and *Heavy Light* were created by electronic composition artists - Carl Stone, a student, and Barry Schrader, an instructor. Adam worked closely with Stone and Schrader and was familiar with the audio synthesizer and the processes it enabled. Stone, in fact, points to the relationship of what Adam was doing with the optical printer and what he was doing on the Buchla, and to video feedback:

“I mean basically what he was doing was a kind of analog feedback. Heavy-Light is feedback - a feedback system. You’d take an image and process it, you’d shoot it again, changing a little bit and it’s feedback. So I think that somehow, tangibly or intangibly, the work that the video guys were doing crossed over.”⁹

This thinking across processes, with one process informing the other is apparent not just from video to animation, but also from animation to audio composition, as Stone notes Beckett’s influence on his approach to music composition. “...the processes that he was using I felt great resonance with and I continue to use, in a way, to this day. It’s the idea of the sort of additive looping where he would create a film loop - an animation loop - and then add material, as it would loop.” Loops with additions could translate into a system integrated into music composition, especially with the presence of electronic audio synthesizers and tape recorders.

Michael Scroggins, who migrated towards the new media of video and computer graphics, recalls that Beckett was directly motivated by what he was seeing happen in the video studio, and the dialogue around that.

“He said ‘I can do this same video feedback stuff with the optical printer. You don’t need video.’ Many of us were saying this is pure video art, right. It’s all about video it’s not a film thing. Actually Tony Conrad made a feedback film to make that same point.”¹⁰

The two media, film and video, were indeed rubbing up against each other. While very different technically and materially, the image content they captured and created often overlapped, and some artists easily migrated back and forth between the two mediums. Many, of course, had worked in film before video was available. Also, artists working in video had to rely

⁸ Morton Subotnick, who was the assistant dean of the Composition area, with Ramon Sender commissioned the building of The Buchla synthesizer. Sender and Subotnick had founded the musique concrète center, San Francisco Tape Music Center, and desired a way to get around the tediousness of splicing tape and manual editing.

⁹ Carl Stone, personal interview, March 5, 2003.

¹⁰ Scroggins, telephone interview, September 3, 2005. He also noted that Tony Conrad made *Film Feedback* in 1974 to make the same point. It was a black and white 16mm film, running for fourteen minutes, and was created by re-filming the projected film. This title is also dated at 1972, and is credited as being a class project while teaching at Antioch College, two years after Adam had left for CalArts.

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on film to record the image from the video monitor before the time base corrector appeared to stabilize the signal and allow dependable recording onto tape. This hybrid of video-film can be seen in work by Nam June Paik, working with Jud Yalkut from the mid to late '60s.¹¹ The immediacy of the recorded movie image – and its ability to record in more challenging light situations – made it appealing. Beckett, while not discounting the work being created in video and computer graphics, remained with film.

The whole of his work – including the many exercises and loops he made – attests to a developing language that centres on process and discovery. This desire to create new images and to see what the collaboration between the artist and the machine would conjure was also a direction many video artists were taking. They were pushing and pulling at the video signal, via the camera/monitor relation and electronic modulation, while the material for Beckett was light on film, through the drawn image, explored via the camera and the optical printer. Like the video artists, he was interested in generating images that had not been seen before, by taking a source and sending it through a device, multiple times, to see what the image could make from itself.

Richard Herskowitz (1988) relates a kindred approach in the video work of Woody and Steina Vasulka, working at the Center for Media Study (CMS) at SUNY Buffalo in the early seventies, noting, “The Vasulkas were engaged in ‘dialogues with tools’, and their path-breaking experiments with image processing (colorizing, keying, and otherwise transforming the video image) were intended to discover images which their minds could not preconceive.” This can be seen in *Matrix I* and *Matrix II*, installations based on their exploration of the inherent, electronic properties of video between 1970 and 1972.

In order to manipulate video's electric signal many artists built – or got an engineer to build – devices to massage and bend the signal. An array of box-like instruments with patch cables, meters and knobs – synthesizers, processors and colorizers – emerged. Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe, mentioned earlier, were pioneers in this effort, designing and building the Paik-Abe synthesizer in 1969 and 1970. Peter Donebauer and Richard Monkhouse designed the Videokalos Image Processor in 1975 with the idea of using it as a live performance instrument. As Donebauer noted, “I felt that getting involved with the integrated circuits, chips and transistors and all the rest of it, would get me closer to the heart of the medium” (Meigh-Andrews, 2000).

We can see a relationship between Beckett's *Evolution of the Red Star* and *Heavy-Light* and Donebauer's *Circling and Teeming*, from 1975. What these works have in common, formally, is a contemplation of the abstract transcending what can be seen through the camera aimed at the external world. The visual plane is a place for revealing forms derived from a dialogue between the image, the technology and the artist. Both begin with an identifiable image, but only as a source for processing. Donebauer explains that in *Teeming*, “External imagery only appears at the beginning and end of the tape; all other imagery was generated by feedback i.e. the electronics looking in upon itself”. (Donebauer.net)

In *Circling* there is a shared attention to the cycle as Donebauer notes that it “was inspired by the cyclical processes that occur in all natural events.” Beckett developed the cycle as his central theme, both conceptually and technically.

¹¹ This was brought to my attention by Stephen Vitiello, a sound artist who worked with Paik for several years and also worked as archivist at the Kitchen and at Electronic Arts Intermix.

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The idea of cycling has, needless to say, many obvious philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific implications. Cycles occur in nature on all levels from the astronomical to the psychological. The filmic idea of cyclical evolution mirrors the anti-entropic process of biological evolution. It provides an escape from static repetition by a process of positive feedback or continual addition (Beckett in Russett, 1976, p.11).

Note Beckett's use of the term "feedback" and also how he saw the cycle as a stabilizing force, pointing to the regenerative behaviour of nature, where video artists often were intrigued with artifacts and the degeneration of the image. Donebauer often referenced nature in talking about his work, looking at what would soon become known as chaos theory. In his manipulation of the electronic image, he was intrigued by the way the results mirrored permutations in the biological world.

Within avant-garde film theory

Focus on the materiality of the medium in the newly available technology of video, had a parallel in film. The new medium encouraged artists to challenge the boundaries and rethink the form of existing media, as can be seen directly in Beckett's response to video feedback in his creation of *Heavy-Light*. In the world of avant-garde filmmaking, work that did not follow traditional narrative structures but examined the actual material of film and its process, became known as *Structural and Materialist film*. This has been thoroughly addressed in two texts by Peter Gidal, *Structural Film Anthology* and *Materialist Film*, and also by P. Adams Sitney in *Visionary Film*.

Sitney places the crux of structural film on its shape, "the primal impression of the film". This is in contrast to formal art films in which the shape is formed to "explore the facets of the material" (p. 369). He goes on to explain that:

"The structural film insists on its shape, and what content it had is minimal and subsidiary to the outline. Four characteristics of the structural film are its fixed camera position (fixed frame from the viewer's perspective), the flicker effect, loop printing, and rephotography off the screen." (p.369-370)

Structural influence was seen in film emerging from CalArts, particularly in the work of David Wilson, who was in the film/video graduate program in the mid-1970s. Wilson made a number of films, but two in particular relate to the ideas around Structural film: *Stasis* (1976), and *Dead Reckoning* (1980). Both films employ footage shot in a landscape of sorts, without narrative content. The 'event' of the film is the gradual changing of the film through optical printing.

Dead Reckoning has a fixed object within a landscape, a cross shape, like a cross-hair, on a dark beach. The film is structured in three sections. The first section of the film is footage that is apparently hand-held – we can see the wobble of the camera in relation to this object. The optical printer is the subject of the middle section. It is not shown in real time but filmed so that we see a fast, time-compacted version of the printer at work. The third, and last, section shows the same footage but with the 'crosshair' lined up frame by frame through the 'corrections' made on the optical printer, seen at work in the previous section. The result is a subtle film whose content is not the actual footage but rather about the process of filming and rephotography.

In view of Sitney's criteria, we can see that *Dead Reckoning* could be considered a Structural film. The fixed camera position is simulated via the optical printer, stabilizing the hand-held imagery. There is no flicker effect, *per se*, or loop printing that is obvious. The re-photography,

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while not off of the screen is present as the optical printer prints directly from the backlit film. The shape of the film is initially the “primal impression of the film.” What tends to linger is an underlying, deeper impression, which may or may not be Wilson’s intent. It seems to refer to the rawness of experience and our attempt, or desire, to fix some aspects of that experience. Leaving room for allusion would question its fit in the structural/materialist film camp for some theorists.

Gidal (1976, p.14) puts forward a more stringent demarcation in his *Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film*, contesting the “romantic base” of American structural theory as put forward by Sitney. He asserts that there is no element of illusion in the Structural/Materialist film, instead film is clearly film and it is a “record of its own making” (p. 2). He includes, among many additional conditions, the concept of reflexivity, explaining, “A film practice in which one watches oneself watching is reflexive.” This involves a certain self-perception or consciousness of the production of the film itself. He makes clear that this self-consciousness “must in no way imply transcendence or transcendent subjectivity” (p.11).

It is in considering *Dead Reckoning* with Gidal’s criteria in mind, that the difficulties lie in determining if this work is truly structural/materialist or not. When does the content “imply transcendence” and what if it does for some viewers and not for others? Clearly the cross-hair on the beach is not a ‘subject’ per se, but rather a singular element whose purpose is determined by the filmic process. This is true as well in *Stasis* where the landscape itself is not overly significant.

This is echoed in the drawn elements of Beckett’s films. While the image plane of Beckett’s films can often be described as a cacophony of seething shapes, the actual content is minimal. The star in *Evolution of the Red Star* serves as a focal point to be acted upon but in and of itself serves no narrative purpose, conveys no meaning. Once the forms are determined there is no introduction (with minor exception) of new material, no cuts to another set of imagery, another treatment, no building of a mythic or symbolic vocabulary within the film. The material is there to be acted upon, via multiple passes through the optical printer with time, scale and position offsets, and colour changes. The content is minimal and subsidiary to the outline of the whole.

While Beckett’s work does not fit comfortably in the structural camp, those ideas would have been part of the discussion happening around him and influential to some degree in his own thinking about film. Beckett’s concern with ‘film material’ is more about exploring “the facets of the material”, which for Sitney would make it a formal art film. Beckett’s work is not self-reflexive, as defined in the structural/materialist view. Yes, the re-photography of the animation is a sort of “animation looking at itself”, but this is taken to such an extreme that the original is transformed. Here the objective is not to show the process but to use the process to transcend the original. The reflexive intention isn’t the same as watching the optical printer in motion in the middle section of David Wilson’s *Dead Reckoning*. Wilson is creating more of a “record of its own making” while Beckett is playing with the audience and in a way emphasizing the ‘other-worldliness’ available through the illusion of animation. The “element of illusion” that Gidal said must be absent was definitely present. And Beckett, especially in the films from 1973-1974, was aiming for a cosmic encounter for the viewer, an evolution of thought and experience, of transcendence via the material of the film.

Belson and Brakhage – transcending the external

The question of transcendence in a film such as Beckett’s *Heavy-Light* is most aptly considered by looking at two other films from 1973 and 1974: Jordan Belson’s *Light* and Stan Brakhage’s *The Text of Light*, respectively. ‘Light’ as a physiological occurrence on film as well as a

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metaphor for seeing, for revelation, was concurrently a preoccupation with all three. Here the film medium was a conduit, affording access to the experience of images that would not be readily available in the external world.

Jordan Belson's film is, as William Wees points out, about the physiological and psychological being of light (1992, p.136). As in most of Belson's films, this work expresses an inner vision, informed by his experience with eastern philosophical traditions. He looks to the physical phenomena of light to represent a spiritual, metaphysical passage. He points the camera at real objects on what is, according to Youngblood, a sort of optical bench (1970, , p.158). He is interested in what illusion may occur, pulled from real physical space into the other internal experience. In describing Belson's more geometric, ethereal composition, Wees notes that "The effect is like an animation of Turner's most abstract seascapes, or a slowed down and smoothed out passage from Brakhage's *Text of Light*" (Wees, 1992, p.135).

Youngblood's evocative description of Belson's work could just as easily be referring to Beckett's *Heavy-Light*. "In their amorphous, gaseous, cloudlike imagery it is colour, not line, which defines the forms that ebb and flow across the frame with uncanny impact. It is this stunning emotional force that lifts the films far beyond any realm of "purity" into the most evocative and metaphysical dimensions of sight and sound" (1970, p.157-158).

Brakhage's *The Text of Light* (1974) stands out in his prolific body of work, as it has a more singular image source, which is the fracturing of light through a large crystal ashtray. The kinship to Beckett's *Heavy-Light* can be easily detected in this description Sitney gives of Brakhage's piece. "This magnificent film – a slow montage of iridescent sprays of light and shifting landscapes of sheer colour, which acknowledges debts to Turner and American Romantic landscape painters as well as to James Davis, the pioneer filmmaker of light projections..." (1974, p.421).

Brakhage was very articulate regarding his approach to film, writing manifestos and addressing the possibilities offered through a pure film experience. Beckett didn't ascribe deeper meanings to his work, perhaps because of his young age – he was 24 when *Heavy-Light* was completed – and because the tendency to theorize about one's work wasn't as prevalent in animation as in avant-garde film. They were what they were.

Heavy-Light provides a cosmic journey, a meditation or trance of sorts, but this is not prescribed or informed by an underlying philosophy or study. His intent is to create something new, something unique. He seems to acknowledge that his 'unique' film is not so distinctive after all and supplies a straight-forward description in the Canyon Cinema catalogue.

This is one of those abstract animated films in which coloured, richly textured light moves in a black, three-dimensional space. The pictures and the electronic score are unified in a strict structure made of three main sections which progressively develop three subsections. (Beckett in Canyon Cinema, 1976, p.17)

Beckett's intent lies closer to Brakhage's than Belson's in that he is concerned with the physiological, and the pure experience of the visual space. His approach is intuitive and mathematical as he sets up a structure of three parts, with three sub-phases within each part. His work on the optical printer is precise, with slight variations across an extreme number of layers and passes through the printer. He is an alchemist, but remaining in the science and Math realm without an overt interest in metaphysics. His magic lies in his intuitive understanding of the innate language of the tools he used, and his ability to collaborate with them beautifully.

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Post note

Like the work of John Whitney, Sr. and Jordan Belson, Beckett's abstract animations were noticed by the commercial visual effects industry. He put aside his personal work while he was employed briefly by Robert Abel and Associates doing effects for television commercials. He left there to become the head of animation and rotoscope for the first Star Wars movie. Due to his eccentricities and artistic vision, the effects industry was not fulfilling for Beckett. He was attempting to finish two films, *Knotte Grosse* and *Life in the Atom*, and also create a shorter version of *Dear Janice*, when he died suddenly and tragically on March 6, 1979 in a house fire. ☹

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Gunnar Strøm

The Two Golden Ages of Animated Music Video

Music videos have been being made since the mid 1960s and had their breakthrough in the mid 1970s. Since then it has been the main marketing tool for breaking new pop and rock artists in the international market. When MTV opened on August 1st 1981 by showing the video *Video Killed the Radio Star* (Russel Mulcahy, 1979) it was prophetic programming. Within a couple of years MTV was the main source for an artist to reach the American market. The enormous success of Michael Jackson and Madonna in the 1980s was at least partly caused by their clever use of the music video medium. Since then almost all pop and rock artists have music videos. The prestige of the medium has been variable, since the first golden period in the 1980s to the subsequent loss of this prestige in the 1990s. However new dance music, rap and hip hop have continued to use it extensively, and there is a new attention given to the videos in the last ten years, both as an underground phenomenon, an internet medium and as traditional advertising for popular music.

While animated images to music have been made all through film history, the animated music video did not arrive until the mid 1980s with highlights like *Sledgehammer* by Peter Gabriel and *Take on Me* by A-ha. They initiated what I call the first golden age of animated music video. Many of the best and most celebrated music videos are animated. I believe there is a correlation between animation and music video quality. *Sledgehammer* and *Take on Me* are always high on lists of 'best music videos ever'. Many of the other videos on the top of such lists are animated as well. In the first part of this essay I will discuss the surprisingly late arrival of the animated music video and the quality of the animated music videos of the late 1980s.

In the 1990s, when the prestige of the music video format declined, the animated music videos virtually disappeared. In the last decade they have come back with magnificent animated music videos by directors and producers like Michel Gondry, Jonas Odell, Jonathan Dayton/Valerie Faris, Shynola and H5. The last part of this essay will discuss these new animated music videos and compare them with the 'classic' videos of the first golden age.

Using a triangle model for analyses of music videos (Strøm 1989, Strøm 1995) an argument will be made that both groups of golden age videos belong to the concept kind of music videos (as different from concert and collage videos) and where the directors (more than the artists or the record companies) are the major creative reason for the success of the videos.

Take on Me

As a Norwegian animation scholar with a long-time passionate interest for rock and pop music, the groundbreaking animated music video *Take on Me* by the Norwegian band A-ha is for me, the ultimate example of the peak performance of the mid 1980s music video boom. This video is an excellent example of how a well produced music video could push an unknown pop group (from Norway!) to the top of the hit lists all over the world.

The story begins at the graduation show at California Institute of the Arts in 1984 when Michael Patterson was screening his diploma work *Commuter* for an enthusiastic audience. With elegant use of the rotoscope technique Patterson had made a thrilling combination of live action and realistic drawn animation on paper. In the audience were representatives from Warner Brothers records and Senior Vice President of WB, Jeff Ayeroff, was so impressed by the film and

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the technique it was made in, that he agreed with Patterson to make a music video in the same technique when the right opportunity appeared. This happened when Warner Brothers was about to release the Norwegian band A-ha on the American (and international) market in 1985 (Marcussen 1985 p.73).

In 1983 the three members of A-ha moved from Oslo to London to be international rock stars. It took them two and a half years to reach No.1 on the Billboard list.¹ A first version of *Take on Me* had been recorded in the autumn 1984, but it didn't make it. When Ayeroff was visiting the London WB office in early 1985 he saw a photo of the band – three beautiful Scandinavian youngsters. His reaction is remembered as: “Who are these guys? You can't look like this! They are cartoon figures!” (Omdal 2004 p.28). A new version of *Take on Me* was produced and Ayeroff got the well established music video director Steve Barron to make the new video for the song. He teamed Barron up with Michael Patterson and one of the classic videos in music video history was born.

The *Take on Me* video is also an illustrative example of the marketing power of the new music channel MTV in the mid 1980s. Warner Brothers saw the marketing potential of the video and sent it to TV stations weeks before the record was released. MTV liked the video and put it into “heavy rotation”. It started to climb the MTV charts and had reached the top of the chart when Warner Brothers finally released the single. The public demand for the song was then well established, and the song went straight to the top of the single list.

Take on Me was exceptional as a music video in many ways. The song is a well written, performed and produced pop song, but it would hardly been such an international No.1 if it wasn't for the outstanding video. The realistic, almost photographic, animated pencil drawings were stunning visuals which the music video audience had rarely seen before.² It told a charming love story between an ordinary working class girl and her successful dream to be pop star Morten Harket's lover. It was told as a traditional narrative quite different from the collage-dominated dreamlike visuals that dominated the music videos at the time. And the efficient combination of live action and animation was closely thematically connected to the two worlds of dream and reality in the story. The video is a regular on most best of music video lists even today.

Steve Barron, together with Julien Temple, was the leading director at the London studio Limelight Film and Video. Barron also directed one of the other pioneering animated music videos of 1985: *Money for Nothing* for the British band Dire Straits. *Money for Nothing* is a comment on the central position MTV had achieved in the music world of the mid 1980s, and the video is an early example of computer animated images in a music video. Another Dire Straits video from the same year and album, *Brothers in Arms*, directed by Bill Mather, is another rotoscoped video where shots of the band playing and aerial live action tracking shots are made into impressive animated images. In 1986 the *Sledgehammer* video for Peter Gabriel premièred, and together with the three animated videos mentioned above, were the final breakthrough for the use of animation in music videos.

¹ October 9th 1985 *Take on Me* reached the top of the Billboard chart.

² Of course the rotoscope technique was patented by Max Fleischer already in 1915, but the way Patterson and Barron used it was new to the MTV audience.

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The Beginning of Music Video

Several days and events are often referred to as the beginning of music video. Nowadays August 1st 1981 when MTV premièred in the US is referred to as the final breakthrough for the medium. It is probably correct when we speak about when music video became part of American youth's daily life. But American bands like DEVO and Residents were well established music video stars years before MTV. Also Talking Heads made excellent videos before MTV.³ In the UK *Bohemian Rhapsody* (1975) by Queen is often referred to as the breakthrough for music video. This is the first time a video was given the honour as a main reason for the success of a pop song. The British TV stations did not want to show music videos on their pop shows like Top of the Pops. They believed that the audience wanted to “meet” their favourite artists “live” on TV, not to see a pre-produced film clip. *Bohemian Rhapsody* proved them wrong. When the song entered the British charts as no.30 and Queen was invited to the Top of the Pops studio, they refused to come and sent the video instead. Next week the song was in Top 5. Again Queen sent the video. Then it went to no.1 and stayed there for 9 weeks – the longest no.1 position by any artist since Paul Anka's *Diana* (9 weeks in 1957) and Slim Whitman's *Rosemarie* (11 weeks in 1955) (Gillett & Frith 1976).

Bohemian Rhapsody made by the TV producer Bruce Gowers, was not a typical video in the mid-1970s. It was a performance clip closely linked to the musical development in the song. The editing followed the singer Freddy Mercury and the other artists in the band through a magnificent play-back-performance. The peak of the video was the inventive use of new technology and video feedback during the opera sequence in the song. These technical experiments may seem dated today, but they made a huge impact in 1975.

Most popular videos from the 1970s were dominated by a rapid editing pace and non-narrative storytelling. The Australian music video director and experimental filmmaker Russel Mulcahy came to London in 1976 and was involved in music video production for the record company Virgin. His combination of experimental film and music video production had made him a career as a successful video director in Australia. In the UK he became the leading exponent for the rapid editing and non-narrative storytelling that characterised the typical collage music video of the late 1970s. These videos became hugely successful when New Wave and New Romantics artists like Duran Duran, Human League, Ultravox and XTC replaced the punk bands of the mid 1970s at the end of the decade. In 1979 Mulcahy made the video for *Video Killed the Radio Star* by the Buggles. In a few years the title of the song had become the truth with help from MTV and other music TV channels. *Video Killed the Radio Star* was the first music video ever screened on MTV.

In Australia, Scandinavia and other parts of the world where the artists behind the songs that were on top of the national hit lists were not easily accessible for the TV stations, special music videos shows were common in the early 1970s. Here music videos by major stars like Rolling Stones and Elton John were screened regularly as a substitute for the missing “live” performance in the TV studio. These videos were made mainly for the foreign market. But music video history goes even further back. In the mid 1960s popular bands like Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks and The Who made promo films to accompany their songs. In the US Doors were music video pioneers. Even Bob Dylan made a music video for *Subterranean Homesick Blues* (1965).

³ For an informing presentation of early music video and the beginning of MTV see Steven Levy's article in *Rolling Stone Magazine* no. 410 (Levy 1983).

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No animation

Around 1980 the music video was well established as the most important marketing tool for new popular music in Europe. At the same time the use of animation in these music videos was almost non-existent. This is highly surprising when we think about the strong connection there has been between popular music and animation through animation history. Since the beginning of sound film animated films made as illustrations to music has been made. That was the idea behind Disney's *Silly Symphonies*. This close connection is illustrated by the name of the parallel animation series the other studios made in US in the 1930s: *Merrie Melodies*, *Looney Tunes*, *Happy Harmonies*, *Color Rhapsodies*. The Fleischer studio made superb Betty Boop "music videos" for Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong in animated shorts like *Minnie the Moocher* (1932), *Snow White (St. James' Infirmary Blues)*, 1933) and *I'll Be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You* (1933). In Germany Oskar Fischinger made animated illustrations to popular jazz music of the day in several of his *Studie* films (1929-32). Norman McLaren's *Begone Dull Care* (1949) with music by Oscar Peterson is another example.

Even better examples are the animated TV-series about The Beatles (1965-1969) and The Archies (1968-1977). And of course George Dunning's feature *Yellow Submarine* (1968). In every episode of the TV-series and for every song in *Yellow Submarine* there are early examples of animated music videos, but they were never thought of as music videos, and neither are they today.

Seaside Woman (1978) is a striking example of the non-animation presence in late 1970s music video. This animated cartoon made by British animator Oscar Grillo, is a straight music animated music video made for Linda McCartney's record *Seaside Woman*. In 1978 it won the Golden Palm in Cannes as best short film, an award that will never go to a music video. To be considered as a music video will disqualify any short film from the Cannes competition. *Seaside Woman* won in 1978. Geoff Dunbar made a longer animated cartoon for Paul McCartney's *Rupert the Frog Song* (1984), a traditional narrative cartoon that ends with the song by McCartney. A shorter music video version was also made where live action shorts of McCartney playing is mixed with cartoon scenes from the film. Neither *Rupert the Frog Song* nor John Halas' excellent computer animated film illustrating Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* (1979) is made to promote the song. But *Seaside Woman* is a music video even though it was not considered so at the time.

Both DEVO and the Residents used animation in their early videos like *Beautiful World* (1981) and *It's a Man's Man's Man's World* (1984). The real pioneers of the animated music video were Annabelle Janckel & Rocky Morton. Their film *Accidents Will Happen* (1979) for Elvis Costello is often cited as the first animated music video. Janckel and Morton started their Cucumber Studios in the mid 1970s, and their impressive animated TV ads had won them solid exposure. But when they showed *Accidents Will Happen* at the Cambridge animation festival in 1979, the audience did not know how to react. The first animated music videos were looked upon as something between animated shorts and music videos. And this scepticism towards animated music videos did not disappear until *Take on Me*, *Money for Nothing* and *Sledgehammer* in the mid 1980s. With further animated music videos for artists like Tom Tom Club and Donald Fagen among others, Janckel and Morton had made the ground for the animated music video as a sub-genre around 1980. They pushed the medium still further in 1983, when they introduced the computer-generated VJ (video jockey) Max Headroom for the UK's Channel 4.

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Why so late?

There are probably several reasons why animation did not play a part in music video history before the mid 1980s. The animated music videos that did exist were considered Art. A real compliment for animation as an art form, but still hard to understand when we look at the central place animation has in the music videos of today. This is a parallel to the early animated advertising films that especially flourished in Germany and other Central European states in the 1920s and 1930s. In the tradition of the Bauhaus movement, advertising and Fine Art lived closely together. Pioneering abstract animators and Fine Artists like Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann, Lotte Reiniger and Oskar Fischinger made advertising films using the same aesthetics as they used in their experimental art films. Fischinger's *Kreise* (*Circles*, 1933) and *Muratti greift ein* (*Muratti intervenes*, 1934) were both early colour experiments using the new technology Gasparcolor. They are considered early examples of colour animation art. At the same time they were advertising films for advertising company Tolirag and the Muratti cigarette brand. This well established connection between animation, music and advertising as Art can be one reason why the early animated music videos were not considered music videos proper. As for the entertainment aspect of animated cinema, Disney's *Silly Symphonies* and *Fantasia* had placed the convergence of animation and music as a natural combination in the minds of the cinema audience.

The very early music videos had other inspirations than the combination of animation and music. The Beatles, The Stones, The Kinks and The Who wanted to make small live action films to accompany their music. The Kinks and The Who were inspired by slapstick comedies in their *Dead End Street* (1966) and *Happy Jack* (1967). The Beatles were inspired by experimental films and psychedelia in *Strawberry Fields Forever* (1967). The Beatles were not very happy with the Beatles cartoon series, and they never really actively participated in the production of *Yellow Submarine* (1968). When their musical universe was to be transferred to film they preferred surrealistic live action combined with a cinema variété approach in *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester 1964) and funny gags in *Help!* (Richard Lester, 1965).

A more practical reason for the lack of animation in the music videos around 1980 was the need to make the videos quickly. The videos should be ready when the song was ready for release. And to make an impressive animated music video, more labour and longer production time was needed. Most important though was the need to show the artists themselves in the videos. Around 1980 music video showed its potential in breaking new artists to a wide audience. These new New Wave and New Romantics artists were also very conscious about the look and their visual image. The 'Art of Posing' and the 'Art of Nightclubbing' were important factors in artist image building around 1980. And for this purpose, music video was perfect. As Nick Rhodes from Duran Duran has said: "Video was for us like stereo was for Pink Floyd" (Henke 1984 p. 26). To sell this image, live action was better suited than animation. But this was before A-Ha and Take on Me.

The First Golden Age

Music video was at the height of its popularity in the mid 1980s. The record companies put big money into video production. Artists like Michael Jackson and Madonna were becoming huge stars partly because of well planned and ambitious use of music videos. Established film directors were engaged to make prestigious videos. John Landis and Martin Scorsese made videos for Michael Jackson. Derek Jarman made several videos for The Smiths. Steven Spielberg made a video for Cyndi Lauper. New computer technology opened new possibilities for film and video

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production. These techniques were tested out in prestigious music videos. A good example is Jeff Stein's special effects video for *The Cars You Might Think* (1984) that won as best video of the year in the MTV awards. With higher budgets, more prestige and longer production time it was time for the animated music video. The basic purpose of all music videos is to sell the music and the image of the pop stars. They are advertising films where the product to be bought is the soundtrack of the advertising film. In the 1980s this fits well with the commodity acceptance of the postmodern culture understanding. These were good times for a new product which fit so nicely in postmodern life.⁴

Among the many excellent animated music videos from the mid 1980s are several videos made by Portland based animator Jim Blashfield made in his typical cut-out technique. Most famous is perhaps *And She Was* (1985) for Talking Heads. But he also made music videos for Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel & Kate Bush, Michael Jackson and Tears for Fears in the second half of the 1980s. Zbigniew Rybczynski made a dozen groundbreaking videos in his matte single frame technique in the late 1980s. Aardman Animations are best known for *Sledgehammer*, but Peter Lord's *My Baby Just Cares for Me* (1987) for Nina Simone is another masterpiece. Ralph Bakshi makes the cartoon video *Harlem Shuffle* for Rolling Stones. And the experimental animator Robert Breer made *Blue Monday* 1988 (1988) for New Order. All these videos are made by strong directors in their personal animation style. It is typical for most animated music videos are that they are strongly defined by the visual ideas and animation film careers of their directors. Peter Gabriel is among the most visually concerned rock artists, he's an artist that has put a lot of prestige into his music videos. At the same time are they very different in the way they look. It seems like Gabriel has chosen directors for his videos from the visual record and personal work of the directors.

Academic interest

With the huge attention given to the music videos in the 1980s, academia started to pay attention to the new medium. Special attention was given to the fresh editing and non-narrative storytelling that represented something new to the television language. A serious media scholar such as John Fiske describes the music videos as "visual orgasm" in his enthusiasm for the revolutionary TV language they were told in (Fiske 1986 p.75). The music videos fitted perfectly into the post-modern theories of the time. American film scholar E. Ann Kaplan published her book *Rocking Around the Clock on MTV, music video and post-modernism* in 1987 (Kaplan 1987).

Marsha Kinder wrote her famous article *Music Video and the Spectator* in 1984 (Kinder 1984). In this article Kinder presents her three main categories of music video. Also E. Ann Kaplan tries to arrange the different types of videos into distinct categories, but Kinder's categories were already established as the standard reference when I published my book on music video in 1989. According to Marsha Kinder music videos in the early 1980s can be divided into three main categories of videos: "performance videos", "narrative videos" and "dreamlike visuals". The first two categories are dominated either by the artist performing the song in the video, or they are traditional storytelling small films based on classic narrative style. The third category which was the most common around 1980 was the collage-dominated non-narrative videos like the ones pioneered by Russel Mulcahy. Kinder see these videos as parallels to the non-

⁴ E. Ann Kaplan's study *Rocking around the Clock: music television, postmodernism and consumer culture* (Routledge, London: 1988) is one of several books and articles discussing music videos in the light of postmodern theory in the late 1980s.

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coherent narration and images we experience in our dreams. It is this last category that interests Kinder the most. It is also such “dreamlike visuals” that makes John Fiske draw parallels to orgasms.

Most of the videos from the early 1980s fall neatly into Kinder’s categories. Usually the videos do not strictly belong to just one of the categories, most videos have signs of all three. But usually their focus is put to the side of one of the three main categories. Many of the music video classics from the mid 1980s on the other hand are difficult to put into Kinder’s formula. Huge video successes as Kevin Godley and Lol Crème’s *Cry* (1985) for their own song and Mick Haggerty’s *The Old Man down the Road* for John Fogerty (1984) do not fit into the form. *Cry* shows a long row of faces which is dissolved into each other in one long take. Also the Fogerty video is shot in one take. It follows the speaker cable from the loudspeaker along a road, under cars, through the woods and all the way to John Fogerty’s amplifier at the end of the cable. Many of the best videos from the mid 1980s are composed around such visual concepts. They are neither performance, narrative nor dreamlike visuals.

Most animated music videos do not fit easily into Marsha Kinder’s categories. The A-Ha video *Take on Me* is told in a quite traditional narrative form with a beginning, middle and an end. A-Ha is performing in the video and it is unclear if the story is dream or reality. Probably it is both. And when it comes to Kinder’s categories it has elements of all three. But the most striking element in the A-Ha video is the use of rotoscoped animation. And as I have discussed in the opening part of this article, the conceptual animation idea was fundamental for the whole video. To be able to include videos like those above in a model of categorisation, Kinder’s model has to be adjusted.

Three Triangles

I have made my own model for categorisation of music videos that is based on Kinder’s categories. As Kinder I divide the music videos into three basic categories which I place in a triangle model. I also include two more triangles in this model in an attempt to describe content and structural form in music videos (Strøm 1989: 88ff, Strøm 1995).

While it is common to talk about image and sound when we discuss film and TV, I find it more correct to say that the music video speaks through three different channels: text, music and image. Most attention has been given to the visuals when academics have discussed the music video medium. In later years an interest in the music video as a medium that combines music and images arrived. The phenomenologist Kevin Williams argues that it is impossible to separate the images from the music: “...sights and sound interpenetrate creating a third expressive domain that I call musical visuality: Sight becomes musical and what you listen to is visualized. Seeing, then, becomes nonlogocentric experience, a sensuous (indeed, cross-sensual), tactile, sonorous, and visual activity.” He describes this activity as “the synaesthetic interplay and communicative interpenetration of music with vision, sight with sound, whereby visual images ‘dance’ to music and sound is manifest visually.” (Williams 2003 p.13).

For analysing music videos it will still be useful and even necessary to separate the three channels text, music and image. The basic element for any video is the song itself. That is the content the video is going to sell. The song itself consists usually of both a text and music and both can be influential when the visuals are designed. For many artists the lyrics of the songs are essential. But in many music videos the lyrics drown in visuals and music. In Bill Konersman’s video *Sign’O the Times* by Prince (1987) this problem is solved by making the text of the song the

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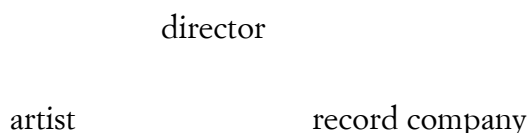
images of the video. This animated video is an excellent example of a concept video. It is also a good example of how text, music and visuals work together as a kind of synaesthesia, a kind of musical visuality that even includes the lyrics.



What Kinder calls “performance” videos I call “concert”, what Kinder calls “dreamlike visuals” I call “collage”. Kinder’s last category “narrative” is in many ways the opposite of what I call collage. In number they are very few. Traditional narratives are in a way what music video is not. Music videos of the late 1970s and early 1980s are a reaction against classic narration. It works as an alternative to “collage” but I find the category a bit narrow. To include the visual concepts by the videos discussed above, I call my third category “concept”. A straight classic narration like in *Happy Jack* by The Who (1967) will then be a concept and belong to the same category as a one shot video following a red guitar cable like in John Fogerty’s *The Old Man Down the Road* (1984).

There is a lack of logic in my three category model. When narration is included in the concept category, aren’t then both concert and collage videos concepts in a similar way? What I like about these categories is that they describe well the videos included in the respective categories and most important I find that this map correlates well with the actual video scenery. In my opinion there are three main types of music video: videos based on the artists performing, videos told as a non-narrative collage and videos structured around another visual, often cinematic, concept. Very few videos are plain examples of one of these categories; most videos include elements from all three. But usually it is quite easy to decide what category a video belongs most to. And mostly all animated music videos belong to the concept category. The very decision to make an animated music video is often a key decision in the development of the visual side of the video.

The first triangle is saying something about WHAT the video is all about. The content of the video is told through text, music and image. The second triangle is about HOW the video is told. In 1995 I added a third triangle about WHY the video look the way it does. The final look of the A-Ha video *Take on Me* is dependent on three different individuals/institutions that all has had major influence on the final product. Firstly it is the artists themselves who performs the song, secondly it is the record company responsible for the production and last but not least it is the director that is responsible for the visual side of the video. This gives us this last triangle:



The artist, the director and the record company have different interests in how the finished video shall look. The record company wants to sell as many records as possible. It wants the artist to be as attractive as possible to as big an audience as possible. The artist can feel this as a threat to his or her credibility as a serious artist. Bruce Springsteen was for a long time reluctant to make music videos, and when he had to do them, many of them were performing videos like *Dancing in*

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the Dark (Brian De Palma, 1984) made as close as possible to a documentary from a concert. Every effort is made to make this video look like real concert footage, the goal is to let the spectators feel they are watching a real live concert, but Springsteen and his band is miming to a play back of the studio recording that was released on the single record. The director is concerned about his own career as a visual filmmaker. In a very broad sense I think it is to some extent correct to say that when the record company wants to make the video as commercial and attractive to the buying audience as possible, the artist will very often go for the performance aspect. The video director, who very often considers himself a filmmaker, will try to create a visual concept for the video that makes it interesting as a filmic artistic expression. The typical animated music video is very dependent on the artistic choices of the director. The classic videos of the mid 1980s can also in most cases be categorised as director driven concept videos.

In *Bohemian Rhapsody* Queen are singing 'Is this the real life?/ Is this fantasy?'. Is a music video reality or fantasy? From being advertising made to sell popular songs, music videos very quickly became attractive TV programming speaking to a large audience. As music TV entertainment, they are real. They are even sold as separate goods in music stores as DVDs. The first video collection to be sold on the commercial market was DEVO's *The Men Who Make the Music* from 1979.

As advertising the music videos are just as real as any advertising films. But as portraits of popular artists, many of them stand out as small documentaries. Many of the most popular direct cinema films of the 1960s were music documentaries reaching a wide audience because of the popularity of the artists they were portraying. *Lonely Boy* (Paul Anka, 1962) and *Don't Look Back* (Bob Dylan, 1966) are good examples. A collection of music videos by a popular band/artist serves some of the same purposes for the fan wanting a closer look at his or her idols. Is it the real world or just fantasy? For the fan, it is a world where the fan can get closer to the hero. The girl in *Take on Me* is crossing the border from the 'real' world where she is reading the comic book about A-ha to the animated fantasy world of A-ha. But also A-ha performs in two different worlds in the video; the cartoon fantasy world and the 'real' world where they are performing the song in play back. For the video audience, the girl is our representative in our meeting with A-ha. But still it is all a fantasy world selling an experience about popular artists to an audience who are ready to spend its money on popular culture.

Does animation make a music video more realistic or not? I don't think it matters as much as one should believe. In the article *The Animated Documentary* (Strøm 2003) I have argued that an animated film can be just as "true" towards the subject it portrays as a live action documentary. What matters is if the audience believes you or not. Almost all music videos are illustrations of the song they are advertising. If you illustrate the song with a play back performance, some live action shots showing an attractive location, a dance floor or some animated images does not make the video more or less "real". If you are an ambitious musician who wants an artistic music video that fits with your credibility as an artist, to choose animation may be a good choice. To work with an ambitious director to achieve this, may be another smart move. The music video history is full of such successful collaborations. Many of them have been made in the last ten years.

Intermission and New Dawn

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s the prestige of the music video was falling. Every new pop song needed a music video for its promotion, but the excitement for the medium was gone. Budgets went down and directors with artistic ambitions found other outlets for their art. The concept videos were almost gone. The most vivid music scene was the rap and hip hop scene, and

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the videos made for these new artists were based on performance and dance. In the more established rock and pop scene the rare stunning and inventive music video were few. Even on MTV the heyday of the music videos was over. Saul Austerlitz writes in his book *Money for Nothing*: “If you turned on MTV any time starting in the mid 1990s a striking thing would have happened: in all likelihood, the channel was not showing a video” (Austerlitz 2007 p.183).

However changes were happening in the late 1990s. The rapid development of the computer technology had made it both cheaper and more accessible to make videos. The data technology had also opened up for a convergence between different artistic expressions. The Apple computer became the core of any creative youngster. The boundaries between music and visual arts were getting blurred. Electronica, contemporary music, jazz and rock met in new inventive music. Visuals were added to the music experience both in videos and to the stage performances, and a new generation of music video directors were coming out of film schools and art colleges. The musicians and video directors considered themselves more like artists than entertainers. Their credibility was rising and more attention was given to design. Special magazines like the music magazine *The Wire* and the film/video magazine *RES* wrote about the new scene. Lev Manovich discussing the aesthetics of this new generation of internet filmmakers declared: “This generation does not care if their work is called art or design.” (Manovich 2006 p.209).

New outlets for music video distribution also developed this change. One of Saul Austerlitz major points in his new music video history *Money for nothing* (2007) is that today you hardly find music videos on MTV any more. The best way to watch music videos in 2007 is over the internet on special sites like YouTube, Yahoo!, Google Video and MySpace. The new technology has also made the production facilities to make music videos much more accessible. Young filmmakers and musicians of today can make their own videos and reach a huge audience with their small music films. A good example is the Norwegian artist Lasse Gjertsen whose videos are seen by millions on MTV. Music video is there as an underground movement.

Matt Hanson celebrates the new age of music video in his book *Reinventing Music Video*: “I can’t believe that music video isn’t a more studied area, because the work captured within these pages is awe-inspiring. And currently the form stands in a tremendously exciting time – with the advent of the video-enabled iPod, the PSP, and other portable video playback devices, music video is going through a transitional time of upheaval and mayhem – always nice to watch” (2006 p.7).

At the same time a new generation of musicians with huge interest in their visual performances including the production of their videos has entered the scene. Artists like Björk, Beck, Röyksopp, Air, Daft Punk and Chemical Brothers are among the many top international stars that have made fabulous videos over the last 10 years. The new generation of music video directors includes Michel Gondry, Spike Jonze, Chris Cunningham and Jonathan Dayton/Valerie Faris. With these directors the concept video is back. A good example is Michel Gondry’s one shot street ballet, filmed from the roof of a skyscraper, in *Mad World* (2004) by Michael Andrews and Gary Jules. According to Saul Austerlitz: “Never satisfied with simplicity where complexity would do, Gondry’s music-video work embraced the tangled, gnarled aesthetic of modernism, alleviating the form’s fatal seriousness with a soupçon of Gallic humour and a twist of sheer oddity” (Austerlitz 2007:163f).

A new serious interest in music videos is born. Books are again written on the subject (Feineman & Reiss 2000), Williams (2003), Vernallis (2004), Fraser (2005), Hanson (2006), Austerlitz (2007). In magazines in a wide variety of fields, music videos and their directors are

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being discussed. DVDs devoted to different video directors are being released.⁵ Music videos win prizes at film festivals, more and more festivals include a separate music video category in the programs. And the music video directors (Spike Jonze, Michel Gondry, Jonathan Glazer) are becoming stars and are offered feature film projects like the leading directors Russel Mulcahy, Steve Barron and Julian Temple in the 1980s.

The Second Golden Age

In this revitalised music video scene there is room for a new boom of animated music video. While animation was absent in the early development of music video, it is at the core of this new vitalisation of the medium. In the convergence between music and visuals the computer and the animated image are central. And a new generation of animated music video directors and producers are entering the scene.

One of the few studios producing quality animated music videos in the early 1990s was the London company Bermuda Shorts. Run Wrake's video for *Music for Babies* by Howie B (1986) is one of their famous videos. Bermuda has been joined by other London companies like Shynola that is well known for their work with artists like Radiohead and Beck. In Paris the company H5 has made creative graphic videos for Röyksopp, Audiolibulys and Massive Attack. Jonas Odell and Filmtecknarna in Stockholm have been very successful with animated videos for Franz Ferdinand and U2. Jonathan Faris and Valerie Dayton are best known for their videos for Red Hot Chili Pepper's *Californication* album (2001). Also Jim Blashfield is back with a new animated music video *Pancreas* (2006) for Weird Al Yankovic. Many of Michel Gondry's videos are animated as well. Animation plays an important part in several of his videos for Björk. In *Fell in Love with a Girl* (2002) for White Stripes he tells the love story with the help of animated Lego bricks. In another animated video for White Stripes, *The Hardest Button to Button* (2003) he moves drum kits around in a stunning stop motion ballet. In *Walkie Talkie Man* (2005) for New Zealand band Stereogram the whole video is knitted.⁶

In *Reinventing Music Video. Next Generation Directors, Their Inspiration and Work* Matt Hanson presents 15 new directors that are inspired by Jonze and Gondry and their contemporaries, and who represent the new blood in the music video art form of today (Hanson 2006). On the list we find animators like Bessy & Combe, Ben Dawkins, Hideaki Motoki, Jonas Odell and +Cruz. Most of the other directors presented in the book are also using animation in their sophisticated modern music videos.

In his description of these new directors and their videos Matt Hanson gives special attention to the animated image. It seems to him, that the typical visual image of the modern "quality" music video image is animated: "The best videos can appropriate myriad animated styles from 3D, motion graphics, computer gaming, and VJing to vivid effect." He continues by giving credit to the concept videos: "Yet these videos can also be simplistic, stark visual haiku – bringing forth the essences of things, tracing wondrously pure forms." (Hanson 2006 p.7).


As in the mid 1980s these new music video directors are building names for themselves as music video director stars among the connoisseurs. They make videos for a wide range of different artists and bands. Common to the artists though is their visual consciousness and their excitement in making music videos that stand out and fulfil their artistic ambitions. Still the

⁵ E.g. video collections released in the *Directors Label Series* by Palm Video in 2003–2005.

⁶ For more examples and information on videos from this Second Golden Age, see Strøm 2006. At the Zagreb Animation Festival in 2006 I programmed a total of 50 animated music videos under the title *The Best Animated Music Videos...Ever*.

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videos bear the mark of their directors more than the musicians. It seems like the artists choose the director for his visual style more than the directors chose artists from their music. Typically most of these videos are more and more being considered as a piece of art signed by the directors than just another music video for the pop or rock artist.

As in the first Golden Age also the videos of the Second Golden Age are director driven concept videos. And as in the mid 1980s many of the very best music videos of today are animated. 

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