Review

Animating Film Theory. *Edited by Karen Beckman.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. 376 pp. ISBN: 9780822356523.

The *Animating Film Theory* collection edited by Karen Beckman offers a percipient overview of the correlations between animation and film theory, and their symbiotic historical development by calling for a more interdisciplinary approach to cinema and media studies. This volume's partial aim is to dispel the notion of animation as a marginalized phenomenon and instead to focus on *how* the "language" and production of animation have shaped the history of film and its potential to expand cinematic and digital practices. The volume's interdisciplinary quality surfaces through Beckman's deliberate structuring of the essays under four themes, titled Time and Space, Cinema and Animation, The Experiment (about experimentation), and Animation and the World (the globalized context). Collectively, the chapters draw out continuities and respond to underdeveloped questions as a way of forming a counter-discourse and offering alternatives to the influential theoretical models that have come to define the legacy of animated films.

The ways to approach this volume is to view it as a collaboration of essays that uncover *how* animation's relationship with cinema is problematized when its ontologies are studied in relation to the shifting borders of animation and cinematic narration. Tapping into Sergei Eisenstein's and Walter Benjamin's respective conceptualizations of animation, Esther Leslie positions animation history as a hybridized, animistic parallel world of "alternativity" and subversion that reinvents the viewer's relationship with nature and offers a sense of "plasmaticness" and diversity of mediation forms. Chapters by Christopher P. Lehman and Bishnupriya Ghosh push Leslie's debate even further by suggesting that this "plasmaticness" offers a source of utopian possibility where the theory and history of animation must be recognized as an ongoing site of interconnectedness and ideological work. For Gertrud Koch, discussion of Eisenstein's "plasmaticness" and "poetics of film" is related to kinesthetic and emotional cognition, where she

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locates cinema's changing role as a membrane that simultaneously explores and limits generative experimentation when it comes to spectatorship and "emotional thinking."

Taking on a more media-oriented approach, Alan Cholodenko points out, in the same vein as theorist Lev Manovich, that all cinema must be understood as a subset of animation, and that this classification "re-animation" becomes especially poignant once considered within the context of digital cinema. Cholodenko uses the work of Baudrillard and Émile Reynaud, film animator and creator of the praxinoscope, to conclude that in the post–Second World War "hyperreality," animation and its theoretical discourse are vital for an understanding of television, video, computer, and other technologies grounded in "hypermediation." A chapter by Joubert-Laurencin also sheds some light on the problematic nature of animation classification through a study of André Martin's writing and the terminological shifts framing history of animation. Working from a different perspective that addresses animation's marginalization, Suzanne Buchan likewise calls for a new interdisciplinary scholarship that does not ignore animation's rich perceptual, aesthetic, and ideological values and influences.

Picking up on film critic Richard Thompson's line of inquiry, this volume tries to resist the compulsion to preserve the borders between animated and live-action film by allowing cinema, animation, photography, and other media to be considered alongside each other in terms of movement, space, time, genre, and intertextuality. For instance, Tom Gunning's essay formulates a relationship of "secret symmetry" between photography and animation, where both reveal a common grounding in their control of time and the cinematic "production of the instant" (p. 42). Likewise pursuing the crucial role of photography in the theorization of animation practices, Alexander R. Galloway offers an experimental approach that moves away from the cinematic and toward 3-D animation and computer media history. Galloway forms a genealogy of animation based on "photosculpture" and "anticinematic" ways of seeing in order to subvert the traditional mapping of space by anticipating computer modelling. This genealogy is illustrated through a case study of François Willème's experimental *Photosculpture de France*, where twenty-four camera apparatuses were mounted in a rotunda, effectively combining the arts of sculpture and photography. Oliver Gaycken's chapter relates the "tempo" of animation to time-lapse photography, 3-D modelling, and the "decomposition of time" within the context of early animated cartoons and their capacity to reveal the unnoticed processes at the core of animation.

The collection also includes essays by Marc Steinberg, Yuriko Furuhata, and Tess Takahashi that raise awareness about animation and the need to both understand and theorize its relationship to other media practices through the lens of movement, framing, narrative, and aesthetic technique. Steinberg draws on the work of Otsuka Eiji and Azuma Hiroki to suggest that, in order to comprehend aesthetic realism in anime and to re-invigorate canonical animation theory, researchers must acknowledge the broader "media ecology" contexts, such as manga and the fandom culture of *otaku.* Both Furuhata and Takahashi explore the potential that exists in animated letters, intertitles, and various photographic processes to destabilize established patterns of signification defining formal postmodern media theory. For instance, Takahashi relies on animation to examine and complicate the intersection of experimental video-ani-

mation, personal documentary, domestic ethnography, and the identity politics of the 1980s and 1990s. By applying Benjamin's conceptions of "reproduction" and "copying" within the context of Japanese design practices of the 1960s and 1970s, Furuhata's chapter evaluates the technological and aesthetic conditions that allow the rethinking of animation's relationship to art theory and the Xerox photocopy machine.

Concerns with the interdisciplinary scholarship of animation likewise surface through Scott Bukatman's discussion of fundamental "cartoon physics" and Thomas LaMarre's chapter on Imamura Taihei's animation theory and documentaries that emphasize the photographic, temporal, and material dimensions of cartoons. Andrew R. Johnston's essay on the possibilities of the "mobile line" connects "direct animation" with Len Lye's "sensory-ballet" and "abstract motion" cinema. Another study in the volume, by Mihaela Mihailova and John MacKay, proposes that Alexander Rodchenko's spinning intertitles, for Dziga Vertov's experimental newsreel series *Kino-Pravda*, both embody a revolutionary component and offer an ideological alternative where animated film techniques can be effectively mobilized for purposes beyond political agitation. Collectively, these chapters set the terrain for an interdisciplinary study of animation. By mapping out the co-evolving relationship of animation with photographic, digital, and cinematic practices, the volume functions as a welcome resource for both animation and film scholars.

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