

Capitalism and the 'Animated Image': Politics of Morphing on the 'Culture' of Animation

Kaustubh Ray

Abstract

The early animated image under industrial production was intrinsically antirealist in nature and was informed by the dialectics of class conflict. It was the result of the exploited labouring body working alongside the repressed erotogenic body within the industrial process of cinema animation. This was done under the logic of just exchange and wage labour. The dialectics of class conflicts manifests in early animation as the dialectics of morphing in the freedom of creative expression of the subject. Morphing not only talks of ideological freedom but also acts as the harbinger of counter-ideologies by destabilizing the animated image, literally and figuratively; thus creating the revolting animator and the curious spectator. Hence, the morph becomes a threat to property structure, acts beyond the logic of private interest of capital, resulting in the creation of the uncanny. Nevertheless, capital preempts morphing in animation by bringing it within the logic of capital, by rationalizing it. Capital in the form of technological advancements, being unable to push further into the classical two-dimensional process, took a leap towards the digital processes that changed the relations of production. This alienation was made absolute as the virtual space literally removed the animator from the tactile processes of hand drawn or stop motion techniques. The digital process came to the rescue of capital by gradually removing morphs from the animated image thereby altering the culture of animation in cinema.

Keywords

Cinema animation, morphing, animated bodies, culture, metamorphosis, ossification, plasmaticness, spectacle, uncanny, digital process

Introduction

Nearly every day words disappear, because they are forbidden
They are replaced by new words expressing new ideas
- *Alphaville*, Jean Luc Godard

The primary concern with two-dimensional (2D) classical animation within the industrial process and the eventual shift in industry trends towards computer-generated animation with the resultant change in animated imagery needs careful scrutiny. This is because technical constraints are minimal under these processes, the animator's mind being the only constraint within the cinematic chronotope. The virtual, both in terms of computer-generated space and otherwise, is an imaginary and created space that is not confined within the technical constraints of the denotative camera. Under such circumstances, where freedom of expression is only limited

by the artist's imagination, the shifting nature of the animated image—animated bodies in particular—should be of significance as it tells us of the politics that locates the animated image within the industrial process under the aegis of late capitalism.

The Nature of the Animated Image

As Klein (1993) states, 'Above all, the animation narrative was built around expressive possibilities of the anarchic. They are another deterritorialising object, a tribute to the power of the naked line as transgressor' (Klein, 1993, p. 12). The genesis of animation lies in irrationality and defying reality. Mitchell considers the ontological nature of animation being about resurrection in opposition to the

mortifying nature of the photographic camera, the moving image being endowed with animism that defies the natural order in becoming alive (Bazin, 1967, p. 14). He also notes the binary nature of simultaneous mortification and resurrection of the image in the very act of creation, citing the example of Winsor McCays's magical feat of animating a dinosaur through film animation.¹ While reality is mortified in photography, it gets reproduced in live action cinema and is defied in resurrection of the animated image. Classical animation was also characterized by the absence of a camera, subsequently with the notion of a 'free' camera. This idea is to go along with a frame that would imply an imaginary lens and position, in dialectical opposition to the 'realist' perspective of the photographic camera whose all pervading influence was significant and dominant in live action cinema. The notion of the free camera comes by extending the idea of the cinematic frame; framing implies the presence of the observer, although not necessarily privileging a particular point of view.

Cartoon animation was fairly distant from reality where absurdity had a major role to play, representative of its anarchic character, more importantly of a multidimensionality which only an imaginary point of view could posit. It defied the 'scientific' perspective of the denotative imagery of the photographic image. The irrationality and impossibility of images becoming alive, defying gravity and solidity was antagonistic to the photographic recording of the world. Additionally, the absence of a camera gave the necessary character of antilogy that sustained the narrative as a fantastic and sensuous order situated against the natural order, the unity being sustained in the disunity of the fantastically animated. The supporting imagery was likewise fantastical, alogical and belonging to the order of the sensuous. It might be noted at this point that the industrial process had preferred hand-drawn animation over stop motion animation. Although they had contemporaneous roots, this was done ostensibly for increased production speeds, as also pertaining to the availability of large number of cartoonists and illustrators for classical 2D animation. This eventually became what Wells terms as 'orthodox' animation (Wells, 1998, p. 8). This was primarily due to the proliferation of mass produced cell animation. Stop motion animation instead got routed into the live action industry, primarily being similar in process and in the nature of the image space reproduced with a photographic camera.

The early animated image was antirealist and de-territorialized and the animated cartoon was drawn specifically for the flat screen. It drew heavily from the graphic art style of cartoon illustration in the form of a

graphic narrative, an assemblage of gags with the main focus on surface, rhythm and line (Klein, 1993, p. 5). Screen depth was non-existent, perspectives were defied and there was no existence of gravity. The notion of the three-dimensional (3D) space within the classical tradition was unexplored and was largely based on the scaling of characters. A small size meant that the character was away from the audience, while scaling it up would bring it nearer. Within the constraints or freedom of the flat screen, the early animated characters were ideogrammatic and flat. Words had character and the images were ideogrammatic and seamlessly interchangeable on the flat surface. It took cues from the print cartoon styles, yet presenting a new formal system of animation. As a result, the play of forms on the flat screen surface created anarchic aspects in the animation space as also the material of the landscapes and buildings, which were flexible enough to bend and characters could freely exchange forms with ideograms (Klein, 1993, pp. 6, 7). Animation was characterized by the ideogrammatic punctuations emphatic in the visual form within an unreliable animation space, a visual dialectical relationship between the surface of the screen and the animated object.² Eisenstein found the aforementioned traits of the early animated image immensely attractive, the prerequisites for attractiveness being the 'rejection of once-and-forever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form' (Eisenstein, 1986, p. 20). This ability, he termed 'plasmaticness' was characteristic of a being that was of definite appearance, however, behaving like a primal protoplasm bereft of a stable form and 'which, skipping along the rungs of the evolutionary ladder, attaches itself to any and all forms of animal existence' (Eisenstein, 1986, p. 21). Eisenstein further deciphers the traits in Disney's imagery as 'doubly animated', both in the sense of the animation of the immobile drawing, and in the sense of animals being attributed with human traits and emotions, animated both physically and spiritually. This strong tendency of the transformation of stable forms into fluid materiality, transcends the boundaries of the image to the realms of the subject and theme heralding change that instigates a liminal state of thought between the irrational and the rational (Eisenstein, 1986, p. 40). It also reflects on the nature of free expression, where ideology translates into the free movement of bodies. The possibility of bodies being able to transgress their pre-assigned boundaries at will was a sign of 'omnipotence' or the ability to become 'whatever you wish'. To paraphrase Eisenstein, metamorphoses is a direct protest against the standardly immutable (1986, p. 43). He recognized

the same in Disney's drawings with its innate plasmaticness being a natural reaction to a mechanical and standardized society (America under capitalism) that promotes conformism and homogeneity in standardization.³

Why Analyze the Form?

The idea of form in animation is in itself 'ideological'. Form is indeed the content. There is no inside or outside with every component functioning within the overall pattern of a formal system. Whatever might be deemed as content is indeed a dynamic interaction of individual elements in the perceiver's mind that creates meanings (Bordwell et al., 1997, p. 25). It is in the human mind that a segregation and resultant dichotomy of the content from the relegated form is conceived of. This also establishes that perceptions of such meanings are not in isolation of their context, in other words symptomatic of their social contexts. The sense of aesthetic relies heavily on prior experience. Prior experience creates conventions and rules of the experience of the form and the notion of correct emotional response or perceived meanings. The meanings, implicit or explicit are in a dynamic formal relation with one another within a formal system of the medium. The film's aggregate system and hence its meaning is larger than the individual meanings they posit.

Images being representation are carriers of meanings coloured by the perceiver who possesses a particular set of social values and within a context. The animated image, although ostensibly innocent of ideological biases is indeed a carrier of complicated meanings. It should be stated at this instance that although there is no supreme modality of representation, what might be of importance is to understand how a particular modality becomes the dominant mode of representation. Since everything in the animated image is created, a formal analysis of the animated image might be limiting and limited to the codified form, the context rendered secondary by the formal aspects of the image. On the other hand, the expression of ideological biases or constraints upon the animated image may not be apparent on textual analysis, since the codified forms of the animated image are not easily decoded, primarily due to the absence of clear and well-defined rules.

The focus is on the more comprehensible rhetoric and ideological biases of the narrative aspects. The analysis of the animation form as an object of close scrutiny has been relegated to the category of the 'form' as depoliticized and hence dismissible. Or it is elevated to the altar of being

beyond ideological biases, being an aesthetic code that is innocent de facto, or simply subsumed by the analysis of 'content' skewed towards the narrative. In fact, Eisenstein had proposed Disney to be beyond good and evil.⁴ Nevertheless, this simplistic understanding of the animated image would call for closer attention as the nature of change of the animated image takes a certain direction over the years thereby creating a culture of mainstream tendencies. These tendencies, under the increasing influx of capital into the production process, create the myths and notions of the animated image.

The Animator under the Industrial Process

The early discourse of animation was about a natural recourse to onscreen dialectics of forms possessing an anarchic potential, entropic in its essence since it reflected the nature of class conflict within the confines of the industrial process. The screen being the final site of the reproduction was also representative of the limiting structure of the manifest content. The industrial process exploits the body as an instrument of production in exchange for wage labour under the logic of just exchange (Brenkman, 1979, pp. 94–95). Wage labour separates the erotogenic body from the labouring body. However, within the animation process, capitalism has to accept the services of the libidinal body becoming the labouring body in creative endeavours. The erotogenic body, however, in free expression creates the problem of bringing the 'un-manifest' into the realms of the said. The movement of the image lies in the void between frames that foreshadows the unknown and the unsaid, the unsaid being ubiquitous and the basis for communication. The visual may not be easily decipherable as the norms of codification may apparently be absent or opaque, especially when the focus of scrutiny—the change between frames that creates the illusion of motion—lies in the void. The void is the unknown and the void connects the accrued change of the passing frames that translates into motion. The void thus also contains the germs of understanding and exploring change, both for the animator and the spectator. The affective that finds sublimated expressions in creative work under the command and control of capital also creates the problem of bringing the unknown within the unsaid. The unknown lies outside the logic of capital and that is the logic of private interest.

Capital, in a bid to assign a value to the affective, fails to understand its true nature. Instead, it displaces the idea

of creativity to the notion of skills, skills being equated with a particular sense of representation, that of verisimilitude with the viewpoint of the photographic lens. The ability to draw is universal, and there can be no basis for deciding whether a particular form of drawing is superior to another, or whether the ability to conform to an assigned style of representation makes for superior animation. Nevertheless, animators under the industrial process would be classified on the basis of their artistic skill sets, in their ability to produce the storytelling frame, namely the 'key frame' as opposed to the 'in between' frame purportedly of lesser importance. The imposition of 'pose-to-pose' techniques privileging the narrative structure that was introduced by Disney Studios immediately created the dichotomy of specialized labour within the 2D animation process into 'key frame' animators and 'in-betweeners' for the frames in between the key frames, ostensibly less important, that translated into disparities in wage distribution with associated power hierarchies. The spin-off of this structure was the eventual dispensability of labour under specialization. It should be noted that classical 2D animation was simultaneously tending towards neorealist representations and character animation.

Experiences of alienation are pronounced to the animator as subject in the stultified expressions of his/her true skills within the industrial process. The artworks of individual animators who are endowed with different sense of aesthetics that are unique are forced into homogeneity for the sake of unity of the final product. Although the individual frames in an animated film is unique, the individual frame as a work of art is relegated to the value of a lesser 'frame' within a body of images that constitute a shot, unique renderings ignored as non-existent changes or insignificant in their incremental variance. Hence, although the individual frames are unique pieces of artwork, their differences are disregarded ostensibly of verisimilitude if not being already subsumed within the framework of the complex production process. The 'aura' of the animated frame is removed through a system of recursions and tautologies, the basis being the ephemeral and passing state of the animated frame that occupies an insignificant fraction of the film's duration, further undermining individual contribution (Benjamin, 1986, p. 221). The near non-existent aura is exacerbated in its plenitude, a second animation constituting of 24 renderings. Added to that, Disney, one of the pioneers of the industrial process, being notoriously dismissive of individual talent⁵ and likewise imitated by other studios, rendered the animator a mere cog in the greater machinery of the specialized

production process, thereby denying individual achievement and its associated gratification. Technology further alienates the artwork from the animator both figuratively and literally, the resultant animated sequence being always ephemeral and visible only in the absence of materiality like that of a painting, which can be possessed. Finally, the animator is never directly benefitted from her/his product, which is appropriated for profits through direct sale by the employer.

Metamorphosis and the Uncanny

An image transmutes, as if by alchemy, into many others; its atomic structure seemingly comes unglued.⁶

Mitchell states that the ontology of animation in itself might initiate the uncanny as it also gives rise to the notion of the undead, of that which was never alive, but has come to life.⁷ Eisenstein's concept of Disney's animation, on the other hand, was an understanding of 'double animated' and not of the uncanny, being animated both 'physically' and 'spiritually'.⁸ Eisenstein considered the animated image as a pointer to the atavistic tendencies of drawings in the plasmaticness of contour, and also in metamorphosis, not confined to the form but extending to the subject as well. Wells talks about metamorphosis as a core constituent of the animated form, as a fluid linkage of images (1998, p. 69). This fluidity represents an abstract stage that lies between the fixed properties of images at the ends of the transition, the abstraction a pointer towards the unknown. It also legitimizes the process of connecting apparently unrelated images that resists logical developments and linearities of the narrative structure predicated on linkages and relationships between forms thus destabilizing the image (Wells, 1998, p. 69). Thus, although the fluid transition might be looked at as seamless, nevertheless, it is a collapse of the logical structure of the cinematic chronotope, both literal and figurative. Metamorphosis of the animated image has been intrinsic, instinctual and a natural extension of the subject from inception. Metamorphosis is an unanticipated change that is unprecedented and hence new and unfamiliar. This anticipation, that also translates into the animation vocabulary in a more limited way as a visual trope for subsequent action although not limited by it, is the arrival of the unfamiliar, and hence a source of the unheimlich, or the uncanny in the Freudian sense (Freud, 1919).

Metamorphosis additionally is a quick change.⁹ A change that is known, however, is too fast to predict and

hence treads into the realms of the unknown. Whatever is unknown is unsettling since it is outside the framework of the already known and familiar. Any hint of change that is unknown is *unheimlich* to the private interest or capital, a change that is a threat to property structure. There are no rules of metamorphosis, and hence the change incurred cannot be fathomed or be brought into the realms of the rational logic of capital. Metamorphosis thus creates an intellectual uncertainty as an abundance of sublimated expression of the affective on the part of the subject, the animator.¹⁰ This liminality being unprecedented and irrational simultaneously raises the possibility of generating curiosity in the mind of the spectator. The subject, who has been exploited under the pretext of just exchange that is wage labour, is now able to express the otherwise utopian idea of real change in the animated world, a counter-ideology predicated on the uncanny fluidity of the morphing form. However, this imaginary world which is already established as the natural has room for any sort of imagination save one that is the idea of real change, the change that can upturn property structure. This imaginary world which has effaced reality is the creation of both the erotogenic and the labouring body of the subject, the contradictions of the industrial process being reproduced as visual conflicts as a signification of class conflicts in the dynamics of the lines as movements, as a dialectical process in metamorphosis. However, this dynamism arising of the visual conflict was not about violence, but about sublimation of the affective. The morph, which was not part of a logical and linear narrative, was the site of expressions of the subject.

The labouring body is exploited, whereas the libidinal body is repressed.¹¹ The labouring and the desiring body under the control of the economics of capital and the illusion of the divided subject seek unity in the epiphany of metamorphosis, the libidinal body being the same as the labouring body. Metamorphosis, in a polemic stance reacts against the ossified structure of capitalism as immediate change and rupture of the divided subject, who is under the illusion of just exchange. Quick change also hints at class struggle and the potential to overturn established structures in revolution, as well as a caveat of anarchic possibilities against the liberal taste. The entropy of morphing bodies is thus informed by the possibility of real change. Sublimation in the form of the morphing image as an outlet of free expression thus needs to be occluded by the economics of production.

The uncanny thus generated in morphing shapes disrupts the seamless rationality of the 'interpellated'

narrative structure of the film, creating a set of unknown expressions, which result in an interactive chronotope encouraging audience curiosity and participation. Eastern European films (that also includes stop motion films despite technical constraints associated with clay animation) show a significant usage of metamorphosis of bodies transgressing pre-assigned forms more as a reaction to the repressive state apparatuses that were visibly manifest in all forms of totalitarian state control. In such a society, where the ideological state apparatus is flagrant alongside the repressive state, the animated body inexorably reacts to its ideological confinement in literal breaches as metamorphosis of bodies transgressing their pre-assigned forms. Under such circumstances, morphing bodies react to the repressive other being manifest in all forms of ideological control. However, late capitalism works differently by obfuscating the notion of the other through a series of tautologies and dependencies through symbolic mediation instituted in the complexity of the technological process, mainly through stratification and introduction of associated power hierarchies. In the blurring of a crisis to react to, since the idea of the 'repressive other' is indistinct, the subject is unable to gauge the divisive consciousness, thereby not reacting at the immediate level of image construction. Wage labour, in the form of salary and associated power hierarchies, gets institutionalized, as symbolic mediation of private interest blurring the line between the collective rights or social interest of labour and the private interest of capital (Brenkman, 1979, p. 98).

Capitalism has to survive by taking pre-emptive measures to either bring metamorphosis into knowledge and assuming control of change or simply to obliterate it. In effect, the erotogenic body has to be subsumed by the economics of the production process. Hence, metamorphosis needs to be attributed with functionality within the narrative structure. Change is acceptable in so far that it does not delve into the realms of the uncanny. However, this still leaves room for the uncanny to reside in the fluidity of change, although it has been brought into the domain of rational knowledge. Morphing thus has to be justified, in other words brought within the logic of capital. Hence, any change of bodily structure should be accompanied by violence on the body by an external agent, the deformation determined by the deforming force. External force can only rationalize change, but does not initiate real change. Change is acceptable as long as it does not violate property structure, small accrued changes being insignificant under the overarching ossified structure of the narrative film. Or, in other words, the animated image must be ossified

in order to remove the uncanny, which also means the form extending on to the subject. This also means that the body has to undergo metamorphosis with accompanying violence. This is noticed in subsequent changes in chase cartoons, although bodies were no longer plasmatic, or plasmatic with qualifications, nevertheless largely constrained.

Capital and the Animated Image: Ossification

A drawing was free from the denotative illusion of a photograph ... This freedom from the denotative photograph or film is essential to the cartoon, and often noted by animators, viewers and critics alike. When live action becomes the model instead, the freedom is reduced almost immediately ... (Klein, 1993, pp. 15–18)

The industrial process defines the area of freedom into a catalogue of rules that are all pervading and once established; should be all powerful to the last detail. The realities on screen has to be able to flawlessly duplicate the world outside and reproduce it so that it becomes a natural extension of the real outside as much as being able to create the illusion of an uncomplicated and straightforward world as a natural extension of the screen. The animated space thus had to be modified as a natural extension of a reproduced world that is scientific and rational. The mathematical techniques of linear perspective by Brunelleschi and the artificial perspective codified by Alberti as a characteristic of the Western cultural worldview later became the convention for pictorial representation of 'reality'. This was in fact a historical invention and illusory by nature. Artificial perspective distorts the familiar size and shape of things, adds depth and scientific rationality to vision.

However, this kind of representation of a viewpoint privileging the individual is symptomatic of the rise of the subject or ego in focus along with the rise of entrepreneurial capitalism (Nichols, 1981, p. 53). The natural mode of representation eventually tends towards creating allegories thereby becoming similar to pictograms or hieroglyphs that occlude mimetic representation (Mitchell, 2005, p. 42). The invention of artificial perspective systematized the notion of the scientific; and hence rational understanding of 3D perspective and consequently claimed to be the natural representation of 'the way things really are'.¹² The subject being the creation of culture has to be constructed under the aegis of the dominant discourse privileging the rational predicated on the scientific. This is furthered in the creation of the virtual space conforming

to the aesthetics of the photographic lens that mimics the perspectives of the human eye, adds depth and hence estranges the observer from the observed, the knower from the known in 'distanciation'.

The presence of the photographic camera is an act of penetration of reality, whereas the artist maintains a natural distance from reality (Benjamin, 1986). Capital enters the image and the imaginary camera is gradually forced into conforming to the photographic image, the privileged viewpoint of capitalism.¹³ The animated space likewise is subjugated by the hegemony of the photographic image over and above the erstwhile absence of and subsequent usage of the imaginary camera. It is free in its ability to traverse through spaces, ability to collapse three-dimensionality by its already endowed amorphous lensing, or a more mimetic representation that is closer to a holistic perception of reality. The resultant image is equivocal in both the alienating 'distanciation from reality' alongside the penetration of the same, the contradiction furthering the ambiguity of appropriation of the image. Wage labour, now symbolic of the assimilation of labour as private interest would gradually restrain plasmaticness, a sign of the increasing hegemony of liberal culture. The power of the natural perspective thus seems to represent the visible world of the rational soul and the hegemony of these images have successfully subsumed the irrationalities and the artistic efforts that had erstwhile been used to show more than meets the eye.

The influx of capital brought in a new set of rules that would control the nature of the animated image, consequently the animation vocabulary. 'Pose-to-pose' animation introduced by Disney as a move towards better storytelling techniques, precise timing and character animation in opposition to straight ahead animation techniques, put into leash the exploratory nature of animation and consequently created the planned animated image more attuned to syncopated movements with music. A significant offshoot of the introduction of synchronous sound was the impregnation of materiality to forms, which immediately separated the body from the environment. Plasmaticness got restrained to scientific properties of matter, buildings became rigid structures, fluids retained certain amorphous qualities (e.g., smoke, fire or water); sounds became pointers to masses infused with materiality and weight, that is, gravity. The arrival of sound and thus the syncopation of animated bodies to foley sounds was to further the banality of the already anticipated motion that can be predictably apprehended by the audience simultaneously making them passive to onscreen developments. Synchronous sound eliminated the intrinsic property of animated bodies to

change at will, instead introduced the idea of action associated with accompanying sound. Corresponding to the development of sound in film evolved the concept of a deeper movie space and characters with more joints imitating movements of mammals, characters subsequently becoming more humanlike. With the complete intersection between electronic media and architectural space, mainstream animation traversed towards ever-greater notions of realism and dexterity in a particular kind of representation became a prerequisite. The graphic and narrational anarchy was subsumed within the realistic scenarios of 'normalcy'; the natural order of the animated image consequently tending towards realism.

Late capitalism for its perpetuation adopted a series of codes that would both redefine and consequently recodify the animation devices in order to create the culture of animation. Any change has to be made redundant either through familiarity, or simply through removal of the progenitor of the change, namely the morph. The 12 principles of animation started by Disney that enhanced the movement of the animated image through conformity to physical laws, emphatically being predicated on the maintenance of constant volume, eventually became the flagship of correct animation (Thomas et al., pp. 47–70). The illusion of free movement conforming to physical laws in terms of locomotion however does not necessarily translate into free movement of ideas. In fact, the seemingly seamless preplanned movements at the cost of free exploration by the animator resulted in spectacular moving images that would gradually take over as the only modality of representation of mainstream animation. These rules gradually subsumed the erstwhile devices of animation that (d)evolved in order to be contained through the propagation of an essentialist notion of natural correctness predicated on the rationality of physical laws, occluding the pre-logical morph.

Animation nevertheless had to retain the characteristic of childlike innocence in its simplified 'cartoonishness', the ideology of innocence retained in simplified geometric forms extending on to the narrative, an offshoot of the industrial process (Callahan, 1988, p. 226; Thompson as cited in Callahan, 1988, pp. 226, 227). The uncanniness of the form thus has to be tamed by maintaining the notion of comic innocence in propagating an ostensibly depoliticized form. Ossification thus extends beyond the body, into the realms of the narrative, which renders the story or plot buildup centred on the hero reaching his personal goals in the apotheosis of violence and eventual resolution. This is especially true in the feature length

format. It is concomitant with the shift towards character-based narratives revolving around the hero, following a three act structure and the basic pattern of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2004, p. 28), or problem solving in the episodic versions.

The literal ossification may also be understood figuratively in the creation of the 'ossified forms—such as the sketch, short story, problem film, or hit song' being the standard of late liberal taste (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The power of this perspective, both literally and figuratively thus seems to represent the visible world and the hegemony of these images has successfully subsumed the irrationalities of erstwhile forms. The business goals of monopolies are sustained along predictable lines, uncertainty and antilogy made redundant.

The forced injection of capital within the industrial process is the introduction of violence. As Benjamin notes, the masses have to be diverted from their true wants, which is the need to subvert the property relations. The introduction of aesthetics into political life placated the need for the change of property structure in the illusion of self-expression. The animated form took recourse to the aesthetics of violence subsequently to naturalize the same, 'in the natural utilisation of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilisation, and this is found in war' (Benjamin, 1986). Violence on screen, imminent violence from the onset of the narrative structure, violence on bodies and violence of the animated space in general, are the ramifications of destruction at will that is needed simply to justify the influx of capital.

Bodies can only morph under the act of external violence, but never under volition as technological reason takes over the previous mainstay of fantasy and irrationality. Resurrection gets transferred into recuperation after violence on the body, thereby preparing itself to be inflicted on with further violence. This revival is qualitatively different from resurrection, since the body retains its original form without possessing the capability of plasmaticness. Instead, the ossified body in deforming resists change; nevertheless breaks down in violence. 'The enjoyment of the violence suffered by the movie character turns into violence against the spectator... ' (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The alienation of the animator becomes so intense that the audience is made to accept violence inflicted on them in the guise of the spectacle. Meaningless violence is condoned off ostensibly for economic reasons, the tried and tested violence on the body being the source of

entertainment and audience approval. The motive behind the bombarding of such graphic violence is the establishment of a natural order, where the collective is supposed to understand a singular reality of friction in their living conditions, a condition imposed under the guise of the rational order that can never be subverted since any individual resistance breaks down in the apotheosis of violence. Any action against this natural order would lead to punishment of the unfortunate in society (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). Capital thus has to rationalize its prodigality in the most extreme form of the spectacle of violence as an aesthetic pleasure.

The Digital Process: Ossification becomes Absolute

Since there is a limit to which capital can justify its inundation in the traditional process, it takes a leap to newer technologies—in this case—to the digital process that redefines the relations of production. Electronic media comes to the rescue of capital as the animated image takes the specific role of showcasing technological superiority, its hegemony forcing a singular modality of representation. This has literal implications since classical animation using traditional hand-drawn methods were tactile and directly involved the animator in the creative process of drawing, organic expressions being translated into the image.

Animation, characterized by literal representations of ideas through symbolisms, extends to the literal separation of the artist from the work of art in the very production process. Consequently, the process literally alienates the subject in the act of replacing the pencil and paper with digital tools. This would help the new production relations, since the animator has got limited access to the character, which has been initially designed in the traditional process, reproduced or created by the modelling artist within the virtual space, the virtual character literally ossified by the rigging artist, eye balls placed inside eye sockets, bones, muscles, skins and texture added to the last detail, subsequently clothed and staged in the virtual environment before animating (Slick, n.d.). This kind of controlled access furthers the fragmentation within the animated image, bodies in particular. Nevertheless, the complexity of the process in the form of the software tool inhibits a holistic understanding of the problem involved. It removes association between artists into a series of software operators who are more concerned about perfection of details in their individual domains, but nevertheless lack a holistic

understanding of animation. The software tool becomes the end in itself, the focus of animation being diverted into the goal of mastering the software albeit in fragments, understanding similarly confined to its parts. The software likewise grows in complexity with frequent upgrades and newer versions, which may not be necessary in the first place, nevertheless creating the panic of redundancy of associated skill sets.

The digital process has overwhelmed the artist with the absence of a crisis to react to, in the absence of permanency of action brought about by the simple act of ‘edit>undo’, arguably the most important attribute of the computer in the ability to rectify mistakes. Consequently, the digital tools remove the notion of finality of execution and since the hyperreal spectacle is always incomplete, nevertheless feigning completeness. Every aspect of the affective form has been brought into the domain of the mechanically and scientifically known—forms, shapes and colours being brought down to the logic of algorithms and numbers. Visual effects are but mathematical computations, technological effects that are indeed alienated expressions of capital. Hyperrealist details bring bodily textures to the knowable and predictable so that the room for imagination is confined within the spectacle of formal details. This is a modality that corroborates the alienation as detached as the mouse click, unlike the tactile experience of drawing or sculpting. The animated image is further separated from the subject in an act of dispossession, impalpable in being virtually created, spectacular in its ‘distanciation’ and grandeur. This ‘distanciation’ is not the Brechtian estrangement questioning dominant ideologies, but a de-politicized spectacle in its presence. Although violence had already become standardized within the classical process, the revival of the body is shod off from the digital process. The extent of ossification makes the body in animation a verisimilitude of real bodies and direct violence would rather be eliminated as it translates into death under the logic of capital, as the bodies are not malleable enough to be deformed. Capital in the digital process instead furthers its application into alternative streams such as in visual effects, violence immanent in the spectacle.

Capital has to create the absence of the crisis, the absence of the knowable crisis, in the crisis of the culture of ‘what if’ in an environment providing for nuanced variations of the same representation. At the same time, it takes away the confidence of the animation artist from reaching conclusive representations using organic skills or understanding definitive imagery using tactile methods like the brush or pencil. The images, which upon correction

using tactile methods like the eraser, always palimpsest of previous imperfections, has been replaced with the option of 'undo', absolute and flawless. The crisis has shape-shifted into the perpetual angst towards achieving perfection at the level of aesthetics, the codified layers of the image being successful in occluding the end of perfection, which was never there in the first place. Hence, capital tries to reach imperfection in creating randomizations, although with mathematical algorithms. Futile are the attempts of computer generated animation in its perfect reproduction of the real world, since the imperfections of the world outside does *not* conform to mathematical models.

A perceived lack is the harbinger of change. Economics has subsumed technology for its intended ends: the absence of a crisis. The meaning-making aspects of the image, the signified has to be subsumed by the overarching presence of the signifier, the ensuing interpretation being the end of meaning or further interrogation. The aesthetics of the form with the artificial perspective and hyperrealism becomes an end in itself, becomes the end of context. Capital moves and manifests into all aspects of the animated image. 'The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image' (Debord, 1967).

It has but one goal, which is the homogenization of the animated image, which is not the animator's artwork or an individual work of art, instead representing the private interest of capital. This automatic homogenization and subsequent commandeering of animation by the power structures creates myths that obfuscate peripheral perspectives of looking at discourses outside dominant frameworks that readapt and redefine in order to perpetuate. It renders a form that is not only a spectacle, that is the image of capital that an independent production is overwhelmed by and simultaneously would wish to emulate but would also be intimidated enough to or not be able to acquire the necessary technologies, nevertheless striving for it.

In the absence of symptomatic readings in contexts, the portrayed enormity and grandeur of the form creates an overpowering monolith that reiterates itself through myths that subsume alternative viewpoints of consuming and understanding animation. This defines the image, which in turn re-appropriates the animated space to redefine the notions of the animated form. This would ensure that the form and philosophy of animation would never be persuasive enough to transcend the domains of the immanent power structures. Since capital becomes the image myth, all notions of acceptance or resistance to the dominant form is predicated on comparison, resistance is equated as overt reaction to the accepted superiority of

the hegemonic form. Consequently, the failure of subaltern forms to emulate becomes natural. As subaltern perspectives and counter-ideologies fail to decipher the encrypted image of capital, morphing gets placated as the spectacle obfuscates the understanding of class exploitation, but also blurs the exploiting other in the logic of distributed power hierarchies and fragmented involvements in the production process. The subject is forced to reject the morphing body, as the essentialist cultural understanding of computer generated animation divides into the formal aesthetics of differentiated processes and consequent outcomes in the image.

Conclusion

The digital body thus comes to be placed in frigid 3D environments that are indeed ossified to all intents and purposes; the absence of morphing justified as a technical impossibility. 2D or quasi 3D productions are not bereft of such technological interventions either. The initial resulting bodies were not different from inanimate automatons trudging across lifeless landscapes with near humanlike characteristics. Confusions ensue, as their existence was torn between the animation of the inanimate and the mortification of the almost animated, a figure too close to verisimilitude with living organisms. Nevertheless, the audience was quick to reject such shortfalls of 3D characters that could match up neither to photographic reality, although which imitated the human anatomy to the last detail but nevertheless remained lesser than being 'humanlike', nor in the motion capture that was mimicking human locomotion. Instead, it fell into the 'uncanny valley', a phenomenon that warns human likeness or being 'too real' as a fall into the valley of the uncanny (Mori, 1970).

As a safer solution, 3D imagery eventually had to become a simulacrum of their classical predecessors. It is essential in order to retain the myth of animation being innocent and a medium for the innocent. Thus, contemporary mainstream commercial animation is about the notion of the simulacrum of classical cartoon characters within 3D hyperreal spaces. The idea is also to get as close to the denotative image as possible, hence the reproduction of photographic reality foregrounds and subsumes the ontological antirealism of animation. This also means reproducing the imperfections of reality, which has become a goal in itself, as the digital processes have subsumed the organic process of stop motion with the introduction of 3D printing technologies.

The culmination of such endeavours would result in the most convenient image of the three worlds brought together under the logic of capital. Namely, a de-politicized cartoon innocence of orthodox animation that becomes denotative and realist in the creation of computer generated 3D cartoon characters and spaces; which in turn are reproduced in 3D printed models and sets for stop motion processes—reproduction of imperfection as part of the spectacle and ossification as a necessity. Organic touches of the animator are removed as the 3D printed puppets are printed in all possible postures within the animated sequence. This mortifies every step, simultaneously distancing the animator from tactile processes at the immediate level of the model, which is replaced by another fragment of another model possessing another posture. The ensuing shifts would eventually attempt to absolutely remove the animator from the image making process.

Thus, capital traverses from the mimetic drawing to virtual three-dimensionality and finally reproduces itself as the real world under the control of the photographic camera. Capital justifies the metamorphosis of the animated image, from the antirealist resurrection to the mortified and already ossified puppet, a verisimilitude of ‘cartoonness’ attributed with humanlike qualities, in the guise of a simulacrum of reproduced reality of live action cinema. The complete removal of the atavistic tropes makes the animated image showcase the grandeur of capital simultaneously making the culture of animation poorer.

Notes

1. Mitchell notes: ‘If Winsor McCay’s animation brought the fossilized creature back to life, Bazin’s images do just the opposite: photography “preserve[s] the object, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact ... in amber”, and the cinematic image is “change mummified, as it were”’ (Mitchell, 2005, p. 54).
‘To make an image is to mortify and resurrect in the same gesture. Film animation begins, as is well known, not with just any old image material but with the fossil, and the reanimation of extinct life. Winsor McCay, the father of animation, films himself in “live action” sequences viewing the skeleton of a dinosaur in a natural history museum, and wagering his fellow artists that he can bring this creature back to life in three months, a magical feat he pulls off with one of the earliest examples of film animation (ibid.)’
2. Titles and characters become interchangeable, like workers on an assembly line in a Ford factory of 1916, or Russian immigrants trapped in sweatshops at their sewing machines, in New York’s garment district in 1916 (Klein, 1993, p. 7).
3. Eisenstein notes: ‘In a country and social order with such a mercilessly standardized and mechanically measured existence, which is difficult to call life, the sight of such “omnipotence” (that is the ability to become “whatever you wish”), cannot but hold a sharp degree of attractiveness ... A lost changeability, fluidity, suddenness of formations—that’s the “subtext” brought to the viewer who lacks all this by these seemingly strange traits which permeate folktales, cartoons, the spineless circus performer and the seemingly groundless scattering of extremities in Disney’s drawings.’ Eisenstein further posits, ‘America and the formal logic of standardization had to give birth to Disney as a natural reaction to the prelogical’ positing Disney as an example of ‘formal ecstasy’ (Eisenstein, 1986, p. 42).
4. ‘Disney is simply “beyond good and evil”’. Like the sun, like trees, like birds, like the ducks and mice, deer and pigeons that run across his screen’ (Eisenstein, 1986, p. 9).
5. Throughout his career, Disney systematically suppressed or diminished the credit due to his artists and writers. Even when obliged by Union regulations to list them in the titles, Disney made sure his was the only name to receive real prominence. When a top animator was individually awarded an Oscar for a short, it was Disney who stepped forward to receive it (Dorfman & Mattleart, 1975, pp. 19, 20).
6. (Klein, 1993, p. 64).
7. One might begin by thinking through the category of life itself in terms of the square of opposition that governs its dialectics:

Living	dead
Inanimate	undead

 The living organism has two logical opposites or contraries: that dead object (the corpse, mummy or fossil), which was once alive, and the inanimate object (inert, inorganic), which was never alive. The third opposition is, then, the negation of the negation, the return (or arrival) of life in the non-living substance, or the mortification of life in the image (as in a *tableau vivant*, where living human beings impersonate the inanimate figures of painting or sculpture). The figure of the ‘undead’ is perhaps the obvious place where the uncanniness of the image comes into play in ordinary language and popular narrative, especially the tale of horror, when that which should be dead, or should never have lived, is suddenly perceived as alive (Mitchell, 2005, p. 55).
8. First, let’s enumerate the traits found in Disney’s pictures:
 - A. They are animated drawings.
 - B. Stroke drawings.
 - C. Humanized animals.
 - D. Further animated* (with humanlike souls).
 - E. Absolutely synesthetic (audio-visually).
 - F. Metamorphic, and again in two (both) senses—both a subject and as form:
 1. Things like *Merbabies* (octopuses ‘playing’ elephants, the striped goldfish—a tiger).
 2. The primal plasmatic origin, that is, the use of polymorphic capabilities of an *object: fire*, assuming all possible guises.
Doesn’t the attractiveness of fire lie in this, the *one* of the ‘mysteries’ of fire-worship?
This is substantiated in Gorky (*Fires*), where fire takes the form of beasts.
9. ‘A picture changes into something impossible, but too quickly for the eye to see how’ (Klein, 1993, p. 23).

10. As Freud understands, '... this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression ... which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light' (Freud, 1919).
 11. 'The secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfillment as a broken promise. The culture industry does not sublimate; it represses' (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944).
 12. The revolution I am thinking of here was, of course, the invention of artificial perspective, first systematized by Alberti in 1435. The effect of this invention was nothing less than to convince an entire civilization that it possessed an infallible method of representation, a system for the automatic and mechanical production of truths about the material and the mental worlds. The best index to the hegemony of artificial perspective is the way it denies its own artificiality and lays claims to being a 'natural' representation of 'the way things look', 'the way we see', or (in a phrase that turns Maimonides on his head) 'the way things really are'. Aided by the political and economic ascendance of Western Europe, artificial perspective conquered the world of representation under the banner of reason, science, and objectivity. No amount of counterdemonstration from artists that there are other ways of picturing what 'we really see' has been able to shake the conviction that these pictures have a kind of identity with natural human vision and objective external space. And the invention of a machine (the camera) built to produce this sort of image has, ironically, only reinforced the conviction that this is the natural mode of representation. What is natural is, evidently, what we can build a machine to do for us (Mitchell, 1986, p. 37).
 13. 'Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.' (Benjamin, 1986: 233).
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