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Jacqueline Ristola – Realist Film Theory and Flowers of Evil: Exploring the Philosophical Possibilities of Rotoscoped Animation (winner)

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Film theorization, particularly classical film theory, has been obsessed with the concept of indexi-cality, the idea that cinema can capture the real world. From this concept has emerged theories that position realism as the essence of cinema. Film scholar Noël Carroll sees these arguments as based around a "medium specificity thesis," in that classic film theorists assume an essence of cinema specific to the medium. For André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Stanley Cavell, and D.N. Rodowick, realism is the medium's essence, and answers the question "What is cinema?" But in examining these arguments, it is apparent that few to no attempts are made by such theorists to in-clude animation within their scope of film theory, purposefully excluding animation as a "minor genre" (Rodowick 2007, p.121) because it disrupts their essentialist views of film. This paper will interrogate each of these writers in how their theories of cinema either exclude or diminish the role of animation, while investigating the technique of rotoscoped animation, as seen in the anime *Flowers of Evil*, for its philosophical potentials in regards to realist film theory.

While the theorizations of Bazin, Kracauer, Cavell, and Rodowick all have their individual arguments for asserting realism as the essence of cinema, their writings all echo the same themes, and come to very similar conclusions. It would be beneficial to briefly explore why. For Bazin and Kracauer, they were writing at a time where realist cinema was quite popular. Italian neorealist cin-ema was at its peak, something Bazin took to quite fervently, as the majority of *What is Cinema? Volume 2* is consumed by essays on Italian neorealist films and directors. Contemporary realist movements in cinema deeply influenced their writings, with Bazin and Kracauer excluding other styles of cinema from their theorizations as a result. As Carroll (2008) asserts, these realist theories

were really critical characterizations – couched as theory – of different stylistic tendencies that had crystallized at different points in the history of the movie image. . . Both [Bazin and Kracauer], in other words, mistook certain period-specific developments in motion picture history to reveal the essence of cinema. (p.204)

By contrast, Cavell and Rodowick appreciate realist cinema in a different fashion. As primarily philosophers, their preoccupation with realism traces specifically to the influence of writers like Bazin and Kracauer. Cavell's *The World Viewed* (1979) replicates the realist axiom of Bazin and Kracauer, in that "the basis of the medium [of film] is photographic, and a photograph is of reality or nature" (Sesonske 1974, p.526). Rodowick takes this approach as well, and his book The Virtual Life of Film (2007) is deeply indebted to Cavell's writing, functioning like "a meditation on Cavell's *The World Viewed*" (Schmerheim 2014, p.417). While film theorists Bazin and Kracauer were primarily influenced by contemporary film styles, philosophers Cavell and Rodowick took inspiration from the writings of these film theorists, creating a long history of classical film theory concerned with indexicality. It is this realist film theory to which we will now turn.

To begin, it's important to note that realist film theory is grounded in the physical aspects of film itself. As Rodowick (2007) notes, "most of the key debates on the representational nature of photographic and filmic media – and indeed whether and how they could be defined as an art – were deduced, rightly or wrongly, from the basic photographic/cinematographic process" (p.9). This not only includes the physical machinery of the camera, but

also the role of light in the capturing and processing of the image, and most importantly, the real world and how it is captured onto film. Realists focus on the materiality of cinema, improperly ignoring animation, mistaking it as separate from cinema. As the heir to the classical film realists, Rodowick actually addresses this, asserting that

Regardless of the wonderfully imaginative uses to which they are put, and the spatial plasticity they record, cell animations obviously have a strong indexical quality. Simply speaking, each photographed frame records an event and its result: the succession of hand-drawn images and cells reproduced as artificial movement through the automatism of succession. Here, as in all other cases, the camera records and documents a past process that took place in the physical world (p.121).

Rodowick refers to the fact that cel animation was filmed with cameras and projected on film, so excluding animation from realist film theory on grounds of a perceived immaterially, of being "not of the real world," is an inaccurate assumption. While realist film theories largely exclude animation as a whole, Bazin's theory in particular does offer up some possibilities for rotoscoped animation.

While Bazin's realist film theory largely excludes animation, it does logically include roto-scoped animation within his essence of cinema. Bazin's devotion to the ontology of the moving image concerns its psychological impact, as he notes that "the essential factor in the transition from the baroque to photography is not the perfecting of a physical process . . . rather does it lie in a psychological fact, to wit, in completely satisfying our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part" (1967, p.12). Photographs, and by extension film, assure us of their veracity because of their mechanical production. It is this aspect of the cinematic production of images that allows Bazin's theorization to extend to rotoscoped animation, animation that is drawn frame by frame from live action footage. As Dudley Andrew (2014) as-serts, "so long as we credit the direct and automatic participation of reality at some point in what we see, even a rotoscoped movie like Richard Linklater's 2001 *Waking Life* (which features a scene all about Bazin) partakes of this particular ontology of cinema" (p.335). Through Bazin's frame-work, rotoscoped animation, when presenting itself as rotoscoped animation (i.e. making its pro-duction process obvious to the audience), still has an indexicality embedded within it.

At the very least, by Bazin's own logic, rotoscoped animation should be included in his theorizations of cinema. And by Rodowick's own admission, so should the rest of cel-based ani-mation, as cameras filmed the hand painted cels, recording their physical existence in the world, and thus creating indexical images capturing the artistic process. But as Andrew notes, "despite writing about it often as an art and as a social phenomenon, Bazin's ontology should exclude [ani-mation] from what we identify as cinema" (p.338). Even though cel animation, rotoscoped or not, holds indexical ties to the world by the logic of realists, animation's similarity to previous artistic creative processes, such as painting, causes Bazin (and other realists like Kracauer and Cavell) to bar it from their discussions of cinema. This is ultimately, as Rodowick points out, problematic by their own logic of indexicality, and further illustrates Carroll's assertion that these theorists reify stylistic trends in cinema rather than producing concrete theorizations for cinema in general.

While Bazin's theory largely fails to address animation any concrete way, aside from a problematic, assumed exclusion, Kracauer actually does address animation a few times in his work Theory of Film: The Physical Redemption of Reality (1960). His references to animation, however, are scant, and are mostly done to continuously exclude animation from his definition of cinema. Kracauer's text, like the books of other realists, works from the axiom that film is an extension of photography, and therefore other aspects of film should support this photographic realism. There-fore, for a film to be cinematic for Kracauer, it must also be realistic. Kracauer largely excludes an-imation from his discussions on cinema entirely because he perceives it to be incapable of achiev-ing realism, and employs reductionistic claims about animation to both diminish and deny anima-tion's presence within cinema.

The first of the few instances Kracauer mentions animation is in a criticism of Disney's in-creasingly realist house style that developed since its first feature film outing *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1927). Kracauer (1997) asserts that animation is "called upon to picture the unreal" (p.89), demarcating the essence of (live action) film to be realism, and the essence of animation to be fantasy. Kracauer then states that "Walt Disney's increasing attempts to express fantasy in realistic terms are aesthetically questionable precisely because they comply with the cinematic approach" (ibid.). Again, Kracauer is dividing between film and animation, implying that only live action film, because of its ontological connection to the world and thus its ability to reveal reality, may only use cinematic elements. In other words, cinematic approaches are, by definition of cine-ma's realist essence, only suitable for cinema. And Kracauer does not consider animation to be cinema.

This assertion is problematic on numerous levels. It excludes animation from the realm of cinema on grounds of indexicality, a claim Rodowick himself debunked using the same logic of the indexical. Kracauer's assertion also presumes that animation is only suited for fantasy, failing to realize the vast aesthetic potentials within the art form to embrace realism as well. It also assumes that other stylistic choices other than realism are by definition non-cinematic, and are therefore ex-cluded from cinema. Thus the formalism favoured by Rudolph Arnheim is on the whole rejected, and with it numerous masterpieces by filmmakers who favour artifice over realism. This assertion also completely ignores rotoscoping, a technique of animation deeply connected to the indexical, and has existed since its invention by Max Fleischer in 1915. While these comments excluding an-imation are enough to seriously unsettle Kracauer's theory of realism, further comments criticizing animation disrupt his conceptions even further.

Kracauer continues lambasting Disney, lamenting that realism in animation limits Disney's creativity, asserting that his animation is "peopled with the counterparts of real landscapes and real human beings, [but] they are not so much 'drawings brought to life' as life reproduced in drawings" (p.90). Kracauer then dismisses Disney's attempts at naturalism, asserting that, using cine-matic approaches Kracauer deems only suitable for live action, "Disney shoots his sham nature" (ibid.). The implication within Kracauer's text is that live action footage is the only suitable expres-sion of the real world in cinema, tied up with his theorization on the redemption of reality. He finishes his criticisms of Disney describing such use of cinematic aesthetics, noting that he shoots his animated films "as he would [a] real one . . . the [cinematic] effects thus produced make us time and again forget the crowd and the face in it have been devised on a drawing board. They might have been photographed as well. In these cartoons false devotion to the cinematic approach inexorably stifles the draftsman's imagination" (ibid.).

In this segment, Kracauer taps into a larger assumption many have about animation, in that animated films often have to justify their own existence through stylization. Kracauer questions the need for realist animation, or rather, non-fantasy animation, ignoring the potentials of style and substance animation holds. This assertion can be summed up in one question: "Why is this film animated instead of live action?" This assumes that the choice to have a film animated is only tied to its content and execution. In short, an animated film must validate its choice to be animated, and in Kracauer's view, animation's attempts at realism are by his definition invalid. Instead of applauding the animator's aesthetic ability to draw an audience into the film's world, it's notable that Kracauer instead chastises Disney animators for daring to use techniques belonging only to, in his view, actual filmmakers. Kracauer once again relegates animation outside the realm of serious cinema.

Kracauer's final notable comment on animation is his most damning one. He discusses animation briefly again in the context of experimental and avant-garde cinema, but instead of extend-ing animation within these sections of cinema, Kracauer explicitly excludes animation from cinema entirely. Kracauer begins asserting that "the question is whether [films like *Fantasia*], fully abstract or not, should be considered cinema at all. To the extent that they are animated cartoons they con-stitute a genre outside the photographic film proper and can therefore be disregarded at once" (p.186). In other words, animation does not align within Kracauer's theory of realist film,

and therefore he disregards it entirely. It's a tactic of exclusion preformed by many of the realists. He also makes the the terrible mistake, which Rodowick also repeats, in calling animation a genre, ra-ther recognizing it as an art form.

Kracauer asserts that all other animations outside of musically synchronous works like *Fantasia* "are not even intended as films; rather, they are intended as an extension of contemporary art into the dimension of movement and time" (p.186-187). Here he further expels animation, particularly experimental animation, from his definition of cinema, instead pushing animation towards the medium of painting. Rodowick repeats this assertion when addressing Stan Brakhage's work *Mothlight*, calling Brakhage's film merely motion sculpture, rather than recognizing the animating process of film itself, a claim to be interrogated below. Both Kracauer and Rodowick redefine animation forms, pushing them from cinema towards other mediums. These are assertions that don't make sense because films like Mothlight are animated by the very processes of the projection of film. They create the illusion of movement through the variation of images frame by frame, just like all films. In sum, Kracauer protects his realist theory of film by excluding certain films styles and forms from his definition of cinema, in this case, animation.

Let us turn now to Stanley Cavell and his major work, *The World Viewed*, in our exploration of the realist film theorists. Cavell's work draws upon Bazin, and while he doesn't agree with everything Bazin says, Cavell (1979) does endorse Bazin's observation of the automatic photo-graph apparatus, affirming that "photographs are not hand-made; they are manufactured. And what is manufactured is an image of the world" (p.20, emphasis in original). Like Bazin and Kracauer, who believe in the power of realist filmmaking to reveal the truth of the world, Cavell too believes in the power of (realist) film in connecting us, the audience, to the real world, saving us from our alienation. Cavell describes this process, this "material basis of the media of movies . . . [as] a succession of automatic world projections" (p.72, emphasis in original). However, Cavell's descriptions of these automatic world projections never includes animation, an exclusion Alexander Sesonske rightly addresses in his review of the text.

Sesonske (1974) notes that "we experienced [animated] films in just the way we did all others- as a world present to us while we were not present to it, in Cavell's terms, with the same immediacy and conviction, the same sense of moving through its space, the same feeling of intimate acquaintance with its inhabitants" (p. 563). In response, Cavell (1974) clarified that he views (non-animated) films as "projections of the real world," (p. 576) and frames animation as "succession of animated world projections" (p.580, emphasis added). This new definition divides animation from live action, asserting that animation involves a world, but not the world. Animations, in Cavell's mind, revokes the corporeal, and are therefore not projections of the real world. Cavell's response acknowledges the existence of animation, but ultimately displaces it from his discussions of cinema, leaving the issue unresolved. As the previous discussions with Bazin and Kracauer have demonstrated, animation's various claims to the indexical and to cinema are numerous and persuasive, making Cavell's dismissive treatment of animation disappointing. As Philipp Schmerheim (2014) aptly summarizes, animation, particularly with the rise of CG technologies, and "the integral role of animation in digital cinema challenges Cavell's philosophy of film, which works with a narrow set of realist or neorealist films or character-centered screwball comedies, all of which deliberately avoid extensive use of visual effect or props" (p.416). Schmerheim's assess-ment echo Carroll's critiques of the realists once more, explaining that Cavell uses his particular preferences in film to support his realist film theory, preferences that do not include animation.

From these explorations, it's clear that animation's role in cinema actively disrupts many of the normative assumptions within realist film theory. Each theorist, from Bazin to Kracauer to Cavell, either ignore or exclude animation from their theorizations, or engage with them only to bury them outside the realms of cinema. As a successor all to these theorists, and a contemporary advocate for the indexicality of the filmed image, Rodowick

too fails to grapple with animation in a satisfactory way. However, his various comments around animation require a more thorough in-vestigation.

As a contemporary proponent of the indexical potentials of film, D. N. Rodowick does actually address animation within his book *The Virtual Life of Film*, but primarily to illustrate the precarity of the physical substance of film, and mourn its death. By contrast, Rodowick asserts that digital cinema creates new worlds rather than recording our own, using the rise of CG animated films and blockbuster special effects as examples. Rodowick's compare and contrast approach to analyzing analogue and digital media has its faults, particularly when he uses animation to ground his analysis, and he ends up producing contradictions within his argument.

Rodowick asserts early on in his book that digital images can't be considered autographic, that is, completely artistic objects bearing the marks of the artist's handiwork. Instead, digital images, such as CG animations, are "'synthetic images'" and "cannot be considered the physical act of the author's hand, nor do they result in an end product" (p.15). However, later in the book, he quotes Thomas Elsaesser, who notes that as a graphic mode, digital cinema joins painting also in another respect: it requires a new kind of individual input, indeed manual application of craft and skill, which is to say, it marks the return of the 'artist' as source and origin of the image. In this respect, the digital image should be regarded as an expressive, rather than reproductive medium, with both the software and the 'effects' it produces bearing the imprint and signature of the creator. (Elsaesser, cited in Rodowick, p.105-106).

This completely contradicts Rodowick's earlier statement that digital cinema lacks the signature of the artist, as this quote re-asserts role of the artist in making digital images, something Rodowick had dismissed. To compound this contradiction, Rodowick later emphasizes again that the indexical capabilities of the digital are questionable, noting that "weakening or eliminating the indexical powers of [digital] photography shifts the balance, then, between causation and intention" (p. 106). In other words, the construction of digital images and worlds, such as those in animated CG films, is an intentional process creating, intentional images, arising from a person whom holds the intent, that is to say, the artist. Thus, Rodowick both argues for and against artistic intentionality within the digitally animated image.

Rodowick compounds the issue of the status of animation further by asserting that films like Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* are "motion sculpture[s] animated by the projection apparatus" (p.59) rather than being considered films, animated or otherwise. Rodowick explains his position, stating that "scratch films remain for me painterly objects animated by projectors" (ibid.). His rejection of scratch films as cinema comes from his dedication to the photographed image. Rodowick excludes *Mothlight* and other scratch films such as Brakhage's *The Dark Tower* (1999) or *Night Music* (1986) because there are not photographed by film, but rather are drawn or painted directly onto the film itself, circumventing photographic processes altogether. Rodowick rejects this form of animation as non-cinematic because Rodowick, like the realists before him, asserts the axiom that film arises as an extension of photography, and the essence of photography is its ability to capture reality through photographic processes. Scratch films, in eschewing photographic processes, are therefore not considered analogue films. By renaming them painterly objects, Rodowick no longer considers them to be cinema either.

Rodowick, like the realists before him, excludes certain forms of animation because they disrupt his realist theory of film. This redefinition of *Mothlight* is also inaccurate, as you could rename all analogue film as motion sculpture animated by a projector, as the physical materials of film stock are set into motion by an apparatus. It is not just Brakhage's experimental animations that are animated by the apparatus, but the entirety of analogue film as well. After all, Rodowick believes that the "act of projection may be fundamental to the visual experience of film" (p.32). The advent of digital cinema also brings further questions to this inaccurate redefinition, as we can

now view digital reproductions of *Mothlight* and other Brakhage films courtesy of the Criterion Collection. Does *Mothlight* regain its status as cinema when it takes on a digital cinematic form? Denying a digital version of *Mothlight* as a form of cinema would only complicate matters more.

One would question why Rodowick makes such an assertion to redefine *Mothlight* as a work of sculpture the first place. Rodowick is not just denying *Mothlight* its status as a form of cinema, but also as a form of animation within cinema. *Mothlight*, along with other scratch films that circumvent photographic processes, upset his definitions of animation on which he relies to distinguish analogue and digital cinema. Within his book, Rodowick defines animated film as the "photographing such [handmade] images frame by frame and producing the illusion of motion by projecting them at a constant rate of movement" (p.121). The emphasis once again is on the photographic processes capturing the animation. By contrast, Brakhage animates directly onto the film strip, avoiding the photographic process, and thus the indexical claims Rodowick asserts over traditional cel animation. To fully capture how scratch films unsettle Rodowick's arguments, we must also explore Rodowick's use of animation in distinguishing analogue cinema from digital cinema.

Rodowick does propose something radical about the status of animation within his assertions about analogy and digital media. He forwards the argument that, by definition, animation is the illusion of movement created frame by frame, "every film is an animated film" (p.53), and that "animation, in the sense of reconstituting movement from a series of still images, is at the heart of all analogical moving-image practices" (p.54). By contrast, he observes that digital cinema is also animation, pointing out that "ninety-five percent of the information in The Phantom Menace (1999), for example, was digitally synthesized—practically speaking, it is no more nor less an animated film than Madagascar (2005)" (p.106). Rodowick makes the latter comment to distinguish live action digital cinema, with its digital effects, from film, instead making it akin to animation. He is also essentially saying that all of cinema is animation.

On the surface level, Rodowick's implied assertion that all of cinema is animation would seem to unsettle all the differences Rodowick is emphasizing between the digital and the analogue. After all, how can the analogue and the digital be so different if they are united under the category of animation? But we must clarify a few things, as Rodowick is actually implying that analogue and digital cinemas represent different forms of animation. Analogue film is likened to "traditional" forms of animation, photographed by cameras to create the illusion of movement. Digital cinema, by contrast, is likened to digital animation, from CG films to computerized special effects. This divide between animation forms is implied, as Rodowick does not explicitly mention that Madagas-car is a digital animated/CG film. While Rodowick essentially implies that all cinema is some form of animation, an overarching statement that would seem to undo the contrasting statements he's made in distinguishing analogue and digital cinemas, what he is actually asserting is that analogue and digital cinemas use different forms of animation – one indexical, one not.

Rodowick's claims are not fully sweeping, as he contends that digital cinema has a flexibility in representation that analogue cinema does not, asserting that "the process of automatic analogical causation is indeed necessarily tied to physically existing spaces and times, even though captured elements may be recombined to produce imaginative worlds and counterfactual senses. Alternatively, digital synthesis is only optionally tied to the physical world through its capacity to construct spatial semblance" (p.106-107, emphasis in original). In Rodowick's view, digital cinema can choose what worlds to simulate, whether it be a fantasy of the mind or a reproduction of the real, whereas analogue media is always tethered to the real world, no matter what.

We might ask then about forms of digital cinema that do not opt to create other worlds, but rather photograph the real world. In Rodowick's framework, where do cel animated or stop motion films that are shot with digital

cameras belong? Presumably, digital cameras are not capable of capturing the indexical, but the world it reflects is the real world, not a computer generated image. However, digital cameras themselves are a digital machine, not an analogue apparatus, and Rodowick argues that therefore digital cinema does not contain the indexical, but creates symbolic expressions instead. For the digital, Rodowick argues, "the basis of all representation is virtuality: mathematical abstractions that render all signs as equivalent regardless of their out- put medium. Digital media are neither visual, nor textual, nor musical—they are simulations" (p.10). Presuma-bly, this implies that digital media can replicate the real world or fantasy worlds, but is only capable of referring to the real world, and unable to hold any indexical ties to it, whereas traditional cel an-imations, processed through photographical means, do hold indexical ties to the world.

This is where *Mothlight* fits into the conversation, as *Mothlight* and other scratch films use the analogue medium of film, but avoid the photographical processes that inscribe indexicality, a process in which realists like Rodowick are deeply invested. He asserts the indexicality of the filmed animated images, noting that the camera records the real world, and the processes within it. By contrast, digital animation is simulation, without ties to the indexical. Rodowick's argument distinguishes between the analogue and digital through animation, creating a binary between them, a binary broken by the avant-garde animated works of filmmakers like Brakhage. While Rodowick employs animation to cleanly distinguish between analogue and digital cinema, his exclusion of scratch films and other avant-garde animations is an attempt to belie his argument's weakness.
Rodowick deliberately excludes another form of animation from his arguments between the analogue and the digital: rotoscoped animation.

Rodowick does refer to it in one line of his book, tucked within a parentheses: "(From the reverse perspective, rotoscoping and motion capture re-main important tools for digital animation, since computers still have difficulty synthesizing "natural" movements— they require some kind of analog input)" (p.112). The failure to address this topic further undoes his arguments about analogue indexicality, as the processes of motion-capture and rotoscoping disturb the argument that the digital cannot capture the indexical. It also fails to address to what extent cel-based rotoscoped animation can be termed indexical. Rodowick is truly an heir to the realist film theorists, for he too excludes animation when it disrupts his arguments about the indexicality of film. Thus, from Bazin, to Kracauer, to Cavell, and finally Rodowick, forms of animation are excluded from their discussions of cinema because they disrupt essentialist claims on the nature of cinema. In response, I will now briefly explicate rotoscoped animation and what it has to offer film theory in terms of indexical and realist potentials through the Japanese anime Flowers of Evil. Consider this my effort to undo the exclusion of the realists and illustrate animation's potential contributions to film theory, realist or otherwise.

Of the many examples of rotoscoping to explore, *Flowers of Evil* stands out in its thematically and philosophically profound use of rotoscoped animation, and resonates deeply with this paper's exploration of realist ontology. The series aired in Japan from 2013 to 2014, the first and (so far) only anime series to use rotoscoping. The story centres around Kasuga, a Japanese high school student obsessed with the writings of the Western literary luminaries, such as André Breton and Charles Baudelaire. He is also obsessed with his classmate, Saeki, an ideal student in his class. The tension begins when Kasuga returns to school after classes are done to pick up his favourite book, Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*, and finds Saeki's gym uniform on the floor. After trying to resist, Kasuga steals the uniform in a fit of panic, only later to find another secluded classmate, Nakamura, witnessed the event. From there, Nakamura uses her knowledge as leverage against Kasuga, bullying him and forcing him to reveal his true, corrupt self to the world.
The thirteen episode series is adapted from a popular manga series of the same name, and was controversial because of the liberties it took with the source material, including the use of rotoscoped animation that differs from the aesthetics of the manga. The choice to rotoscope is not a flippant decision, but rather a deeply thematic

move on the part of director Hiroshi Nagahama to visually represent the series' themes: the divide between the private and the public, the use of masks in society, the sense of alienation, and the concealment of one's 'true self'. In short, the series uses the artificial surface of rotoscoped animation to reflect upon the themes within the show, and provoke philosophical questions of being and representation.

"I loathe all movement that displaces line," Kasuga states in the first episode, quoting from Charles Baudelaire's own *Flowers of Evil*. Kasuga understands more than he may realize, as the rotoscoped animation throughout Flowers of Evil captures the defining lines of characters as contingent and unstable. The animation creates a sense of anxiety and unease, amplified by the story's dark turns and impeccable sound design. The animation was traced at eight frames per second, four frames per second slower than most productions, making movements feel rougher and charged with anxiety. As a result, character outlines can waver, and faces drawn in the distance can become featureless. Faces feel flat and without depth, as they rarely have no features aside from eyes, a nose and a mouth. Often Kasuga's classmates are held in static shots as they gossip, amplifying both the power of judgment they represent as social pressures, and the alienation Kasuga feels from them. In short, the animation is all about the displaced lines of the characters, creating a sense of dread as characters never seem to quite 'look right', perfectly encapsulating the themes and anxieties of the series.

Figure 1: Kasuga holding his favourite book, Charles Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*

Flowers of Evil's rotoscoped animation also literally masks the character in animated, ab-stracted forms, echoing the series themes concerning the hidden 'true self.' Nakamura obsesses over revealing the true reality within the small town they live in, and in particular the embodied lusts society hides in private spaces. This obsession with surfaces is reflected through the use of rotoscope acting as a slippery surface over the live action footage. Flowers of Evil is all about surface, from the divide between the private and public, to the clothes we wear. As Nakamura forces Kasuga to wear the stolen gym clothes under his regular outfit when going on a date with crush Saeki, the animators fade through the layers of clothing to reveal the uniform he wears underneath in particularly tense scenes, engaging in the very removing of layers that Nakamura desires. While the narrative is concerned with peeling back layers of reality, so too is the animation, itself acting as a layer of remediation over the live action film.

Flowers of Evil is also concerned with the power of the gaze. The act of seeing is highlighted by the flower of evil's design that graces the cover of Kasuga's book (See Figure 1 above). Throughout the series, there are occasional images of such flowers of evil in bloom, with the series ending with the flower's eyes fully opening for the first time. The ability of sight is charged with power, particularly expressed through the character Nakamura. When her teacher tries to publicly shame her for her poor test results, Nakamura instead silences him through the power of her defiant stare. It is also her act of witnessing Kasuga's theft that gives her power over him, and her ability to see beyond the masks of society gives her wisdom, however blighted by nihilism. The interplay between the shifting surface and the penetrating gaze thus highlights the construction of being within society, with the rotoscoped animation echoing these themes.

A philosophical approach to this interplay draw fascinating conclusions regarding the in-dexical. In rotoscoped animation, such as Flowers of Evil, the source of the indexical is literally traced over by ink and paint. For Bazin, the indexical is not only an ontological effect of photographic media, but also a psychological effect created by the mechanical production of the photo-graphic image. His theorization logically extends towards rotoscoped animation, as "the objective nature of photography" used in rotoscoping "confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making," such as traditional forms of animation (1967, p.13). Furthermore, Flowers of Evil illustrates to the realists the potentials for realism with animation.

While *Flowers of Evil* alienates viewers though its dark story, atypical animation, and moody sound design, the series holds a sense of realism through its animation style. Rotoscoped animation captures the contingent and the ephemeral, such as the jostling of clothes and the shifting of faces, natural movements that can be difficult to replicate in other forms of animation. The series itself was first filmed in live action first over a period of three months, double the normal amount of time for a typical anime series. Director Hiroshi Nagahama stated that, through rotoscope, he want-ed to capture "something realistic and close to our daily lives" (Chuang 2013). The audio is also captured to emphasis realism, with an omni directional mic used to record more natural voice act-ing, in contrast to typical archetypal voice performances usually heard in anime. The series also uses long takes, such as in episode eight, which opened with five minutes of long takes of charac-ters slowly walking through a desolate town early in the morning. While the rotoscoped animation layers an abstract skin of ink and paint onto the live action footage, such methods of abstraction magnify the realist aesthetic of the series, emphasizing the ephemeral qualities of real life. To the realists, then, we might emphasize that this is a show that takes a deep examination of reality in Japan, and illuminates the suffocating divide between public and private life. In other words, *Flowers of Evil* illuminates real life by using real life and amplifying it through animation, magnifying reality for maximum effect.

Stella Bruzzi (2000) observes that the argument over indexicality has come full circle with the rise of digital media, adding that both Bazin and Baudrillard "argue for the erosion of any differentiation between the image and reality, Bazin because he believe reality could be recorded, Baudrillard because he believes reality is just another image" (p.6). Rotoscoped animation certainly blurs the line between both sides, functioning as an indexical remediation of the world. Animation, particularly hybrid forms of animation like rotoscoped animation or avant-garde forms like scratch films, break the binaries that realist proponents such as Bazin, Kracauer, Cavell, and Rodowick rely on to support their theories of film. Because of their attempts to distill the polymorphic art of cinema to a discreet essence, the realists end up excluding large portions of filmmaking that doesn't fit their theory––in particular, animation. It's clear the realists could not adequately grasp animation to varying degrees, from Kracauer's outright exile of animation from cinema, to Rodowick's mis-perception that animation is a minor genre. Animation as a form of cinema has long been disregard by the classical film theory, and film theory in general. The hope is that we can begin addressing animation's vital role within theorizations of film and open broader discussion for questions about animation's claim over the real.

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NOTES

[1] Rodowick refers to cels (short for celluloid) and cel animation mistakenly as "cell animation" throughout his book. Spelling in quotes has been retained for simplicity.

[2] This also helps explain why audiences often react negatively to rotoscoped animation when not used as an obvious stylistic choice, as they feel "duped" by the animation when they later learn of its production process.

[3] Perhaps a reference to Disney's use of rotoscope, or use of live action referents, which is another fascinating discussion of indexicality entirely.

[4] This is a preconception still held today, as many critics question why the stop-motion animated adult drama film *Anomalisa* (2015) wasn't live action.

[5] A spirited defines of rotoscoped animation in the face of cliches that it is lazy, cheap, or inartistic could be made, but for the sake of brevity, I will defer those arguments for another time.

Edited by Amy Ratelle

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