Question:

Describe an animated work or object that you encountered recently and the situation of this interaction. It can be an episode, a film, a character, a gif, an emoji, an interactive interface, or an animated world. You may also try to come up with one or two descriptive, sensory words or images that capture the feeling it elicits.

LTCH 101 - Readings in Contemporary Chinese Literature: Transmedia Practices

University of California San Diego

Animation

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Part 1:

Classical Animation Form **+** Light Media

Why animation today?

Animation ceases to be a genre or a form of cinema—"animation appeared to be everything that was not cinema" for the following historical transformations (126):

Digital filmmaking technologies: "First, the increasingly integral role of digital technologies in filmmaking served to blur the accepted distinction between cinema and animation."

他害羞的多好看
He looks so cute when he blushes!

Monster Hunt 《捉妖记》 (2015), directed by Raman Hui 许诚毅 23:58-25:10

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Broadening of bandwidth: "Second, the continuous expansion of possibilities for delivering and receiving media, from the multiplication of channels due to satellite and cable television to the broadening of bandwidth that enabled media streaming, made way for a plethora of animation to be viewed, either on television sets or computers."

"Today's fiber-optic cables still play an important role in transmitting news. They enable the cheap bandwidth that makes practical the worldwide dissemination of Twitter updates and blog posts detailing global events in real time, alongside the online content of traditional news outlets. They also significantly shape the possibilities for bandwidth-intensive networked audiovisual media industries, including film and television. Immediate and reliable Internet access is critical, for example, for on-location film productions that require real-time communication. Cities that aspire to support intensive international media collaborations likewise need fiber-optic infrastructure. **Cables are especially important for work that depends on digitization, including digital animation and special effects, since these high-speed links render the frequent and instantaneous sharing of high-resolution video effective and economical**. " (Starosielski, 58)

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The proliferation of screens interfaces: "Third, screen interfaces and applications for computers and mobile phones often deployed animated icons as well as stacked windows that meshed with some of the basic operations of animation, such as techniques for compositing image layers or components."

Transformers: the Premake (2014) 13:00-13:21;21:35 – 22:11

light media   mega-film animation

While mega-film animation is associated with the classical film form as well as its studio production and theatrical exhibition, Lamarre situates light media within the genealogy of the televisual, which he sees as the precursor of the digital.

animation as light media

mega-film animation

distributive capacity exceeds the production of contents; or amateur

studio production: Shanghai Animation Film Studio, Coloroom Pictures, Studio Ghibli, Toei studios, Disney, Pixar, etc.

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limited, small, light, ephemeral, episodic forms	full, feature-length, refined and sophisticated in stylistic terms

Sailor Moon TV series 美少女戦士セーラームーン (1992–93)

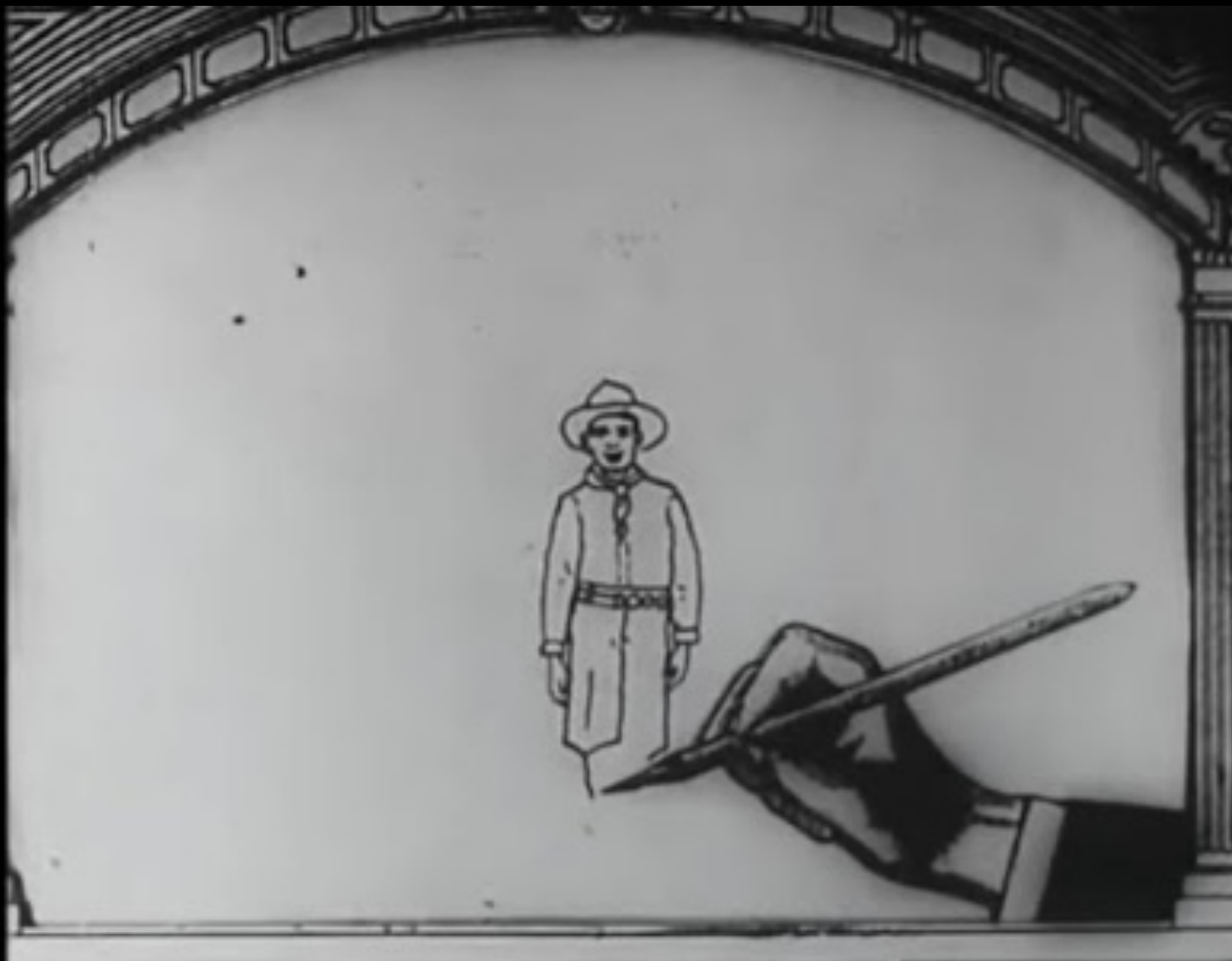| animation as light media	mega-film animation
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attractions	linear and developmental narrative conventions

Le Voyage dans la Lune (1902) 7:09-9:33

A String of Pearls 一串珍珠 (1925)

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non-Newtonian levity	quasi-Cartesian perspectivism

non-Newtonian levity

"When stop-motion animation uses apparently heavy objects, it delights in making them seem to float or soar, or at very least, to be endowed with the capacity for self-movement, which belies their weightiness. " (133)

The Cartesian space has to do with the movement into depth, a technical difficulty that both stop-motion and CGI animation encounter. What they generate is hence a quasi-cartesian space.

"(the technical difficulty) is obvious with cel animation, which used a camera fixed on the rostrum to photograph down through layers, encouraging lateral movement (of the camera or of layers) over movement in depth… Even with contemporary big-budget high-tech 3D cinematic fare, there are always those moments when the apparently seamless volumetric three-dimensional space seems to separate into distinct planes. " (133)

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Japanese TV animation; fan-based animated short video; post-digital animation	*Princess Iron Fan* (1941); *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (2015); *Ne Zha* (2019); *Jiang Ziya: Legend of Deification* (2020)
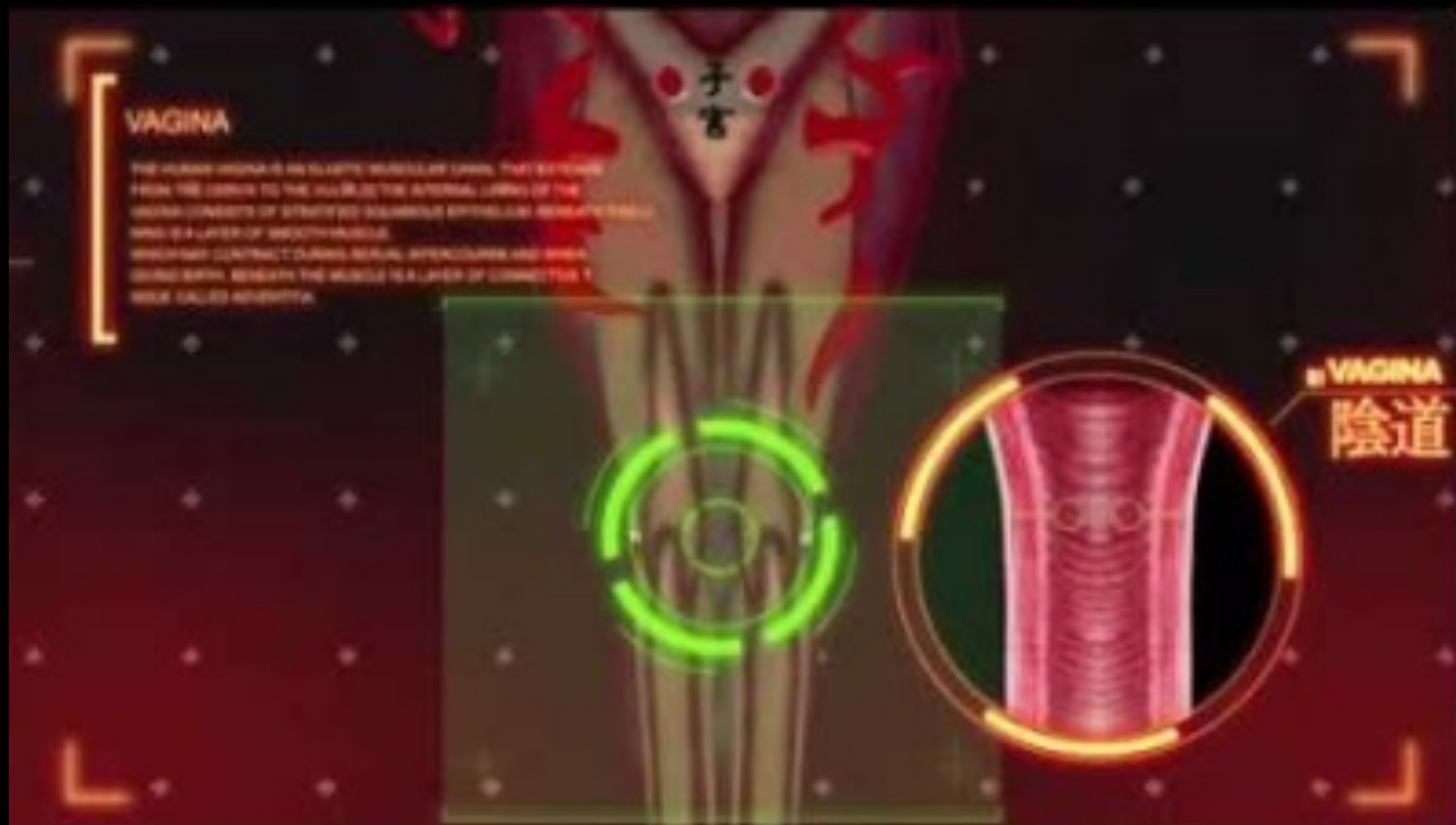
Uterus Man 子宫战士（2013） 10:02-10:56

Jiang Ziya: Legend of Deification 《姜子牙》 (2020) 1：28-3：32； 58:20-1:00:13

Two types of animation are staged in these sequences.

The first has to do with cel-animation, which is characterized by the arrangement of multiple layers and the relative, lateral movements among these layers.

We rarely notice any movement into depth—events seem to emerge on the surface.

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Super flat and ukiyo-e　浮世絵

Fine art animation 美术电影

Takashi Murakami 村上 隆

Hulu Brothers《葫芦兄弟》(1986-87)

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We rarely notice any movement into depth—events seem to appear on the surface.

The second has to do with 3D modelling and CGI animation. The world of CGI animation seems to gravitate towards a three-dimensional world, but with the physics that differs largely from the very Newtonian reality. It gives rise to the feeling of disorientation and freedom of omnidirectional and gravity-free movement.

While classical film animation and animation as light media as two different tendencies that contrast with one another, they do not assume a negating force.

Although animation as light media may seem to be closely tied to new and digital media in our contemporary social life and mega film animation can be traced back to the emergence of classical film in the early 20th century, this technical mode of existence of animation does not merely replace the classical form--they should not be considered as progressions in a linear history.

Quite the contrary, Lamarre shows that neither the lightness or the gravity of animation alone can hold together the multiple layers of animation. They have to work together, in a "disjunctive synthesis across heteronomous ways of constructing reality" (134).

Genealogy

Because of the tension between animation's disparate ways of organizing reality and distributing senses, Lamarre proposes a genealogical approach to study animation. He cites the film and media scholar Weihong Bao's discussion of media genealogy:

"genealogy is meant as a remedy for the archaeological method's inability to account for the causes of historical transitions as anything beyond a series of discontinuous discursive and epistemic formations" (136)

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Mege-film animation and light media assume different genealogies that are in their historical becomings. Lamarre writes,

"Classical film form is not over and done; it has incorporated attractions to become mega-form. The contemporary boom of feature-length animated films, widely distributed in theatres and online, suggests that classical animation form may only now be coming into its own, and as a mega-film form. But this mega-form animation is not different in nature from light media. They are different in kind or degree – hence genealogy." (136)

Part 2:

Monkey King and Animation

1940s

Princess Iron Fan 铁扇公主 (1941)

1950s

Cartoon *Journey to the West* 西游漫记 by Zhang Guangyu 张光宇

1960s

Uproar in Heaven 大闹天宫 (1961, 1964)

……

2010s

Monkey King: Hero is Back 大圣归来 (2015)

Princess Iron Fan 铁扇公主 (1941) 14:59- 17:49

Uproar in Heaven 大闹天宫 (1961, 1964)1：35：10-1:38:11

The Wan Brothers

Wan Laiming (1900–1997), Wan Guchan (1900–1995), Wan Chaochen (1906–1992), and Wan Dihuan (dates unknown)

Animators and directors of *Princess Iron Fan* and *Uproar in Heaven*

Sean Macdonald shows how Sun Wukong was reconfigured as "the people"—the figure of/for the masses—in the Chinese socialist period.

He uses the Eisenstein's notion of "plasmatics" to approach *Uproar in Heaven*.

"*Uproar* contains very good examples of what Sergei Eisenstein called "plasmatics" in visual design. Eisenstein was referring to the way the illustrator can play with shapes and forms, the way a human figure, for example, can be manipulated in illustration. But Eisenstein was especially concerned with early animation and the way animators could stretch and distort figures for comical effect. " (40)

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The plasmatic quality of character design is then extended to animation's ambiguous ways of dealing with history:

"In a sense Eisenstein draws a parallel between the 'plasmatics' of visual form and the illogic of plot in animation derived from 'folkloric, mythological, prelogical thought' (1986: 23). The plot of *Uproar* is derived from earlier mythological material but given a contemporary, if not rationalist, at least a structured historical twist. And like the Disney fantasies Eisenstein praises, the Sun Wukong of *Uproar* could also be said to bestow on the spectator a 'momentary, imaginary, comical liberation' from everyday life. " (42)

Monkey King: Hero is Back 大圣归来 (2015) 22:26:24:08; 1:16:20-1:18:36

Characters	**Narratives**	**Worlds**
Sun Wukong/Monkey King	Obtain Buddhist sutras	Magics
Xuanzang	Cultivate immortality	Metamorphosis
Zhu Bajie/Pig	Growing up	Supernatural
Sha Wujing/Monk		Fantasy
		Talking animals

What to make out of the statement that "It all started with a monkey"?