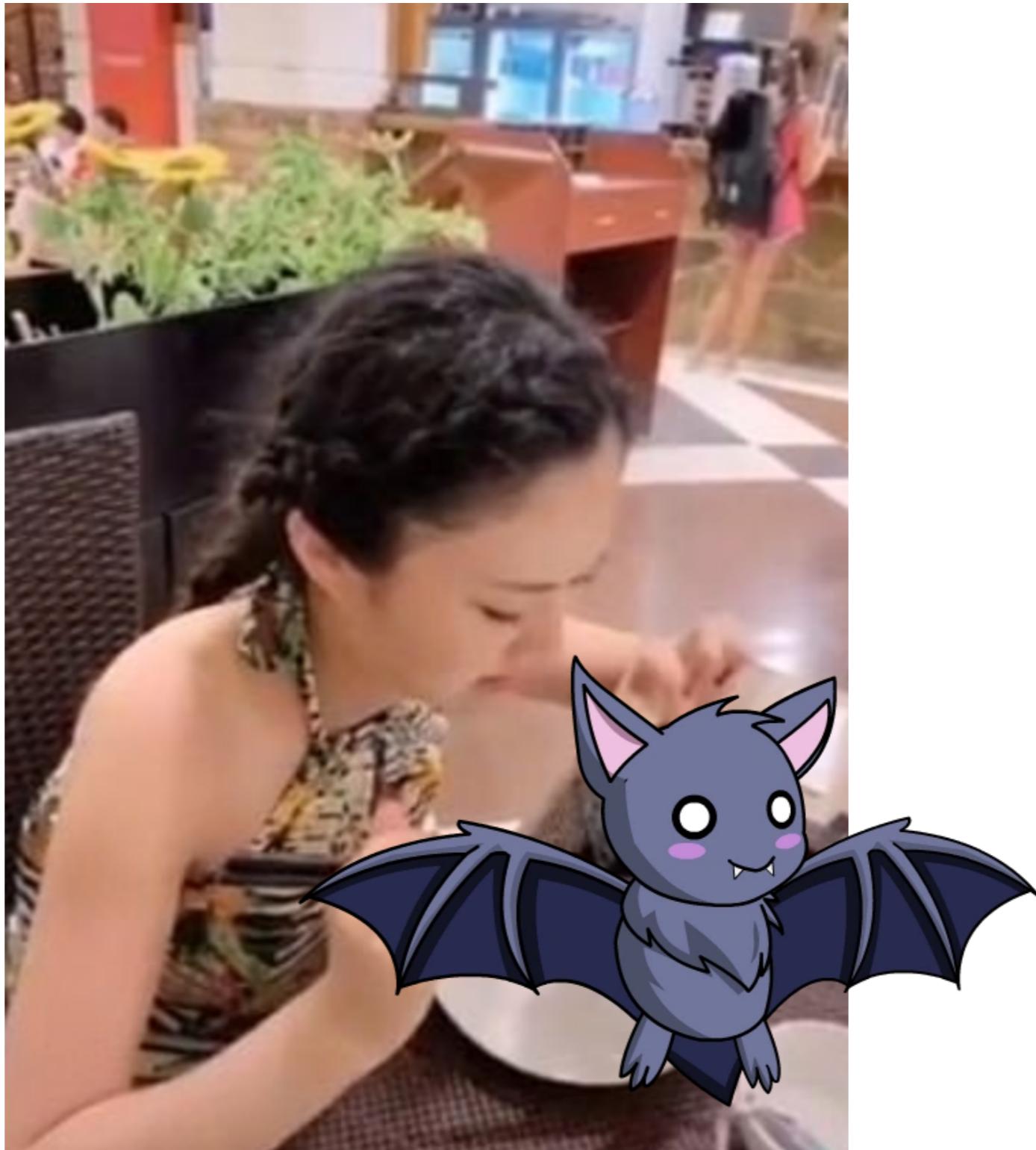


# animal & media

EAST 250 Introduction to East Asian Media Studies (Feb 17)  
Guest Lecture: Hang Wu

Bat and pangolin are identified as sources of the continuing coronavirus (2019-NCoV) outbreak.





## Overview

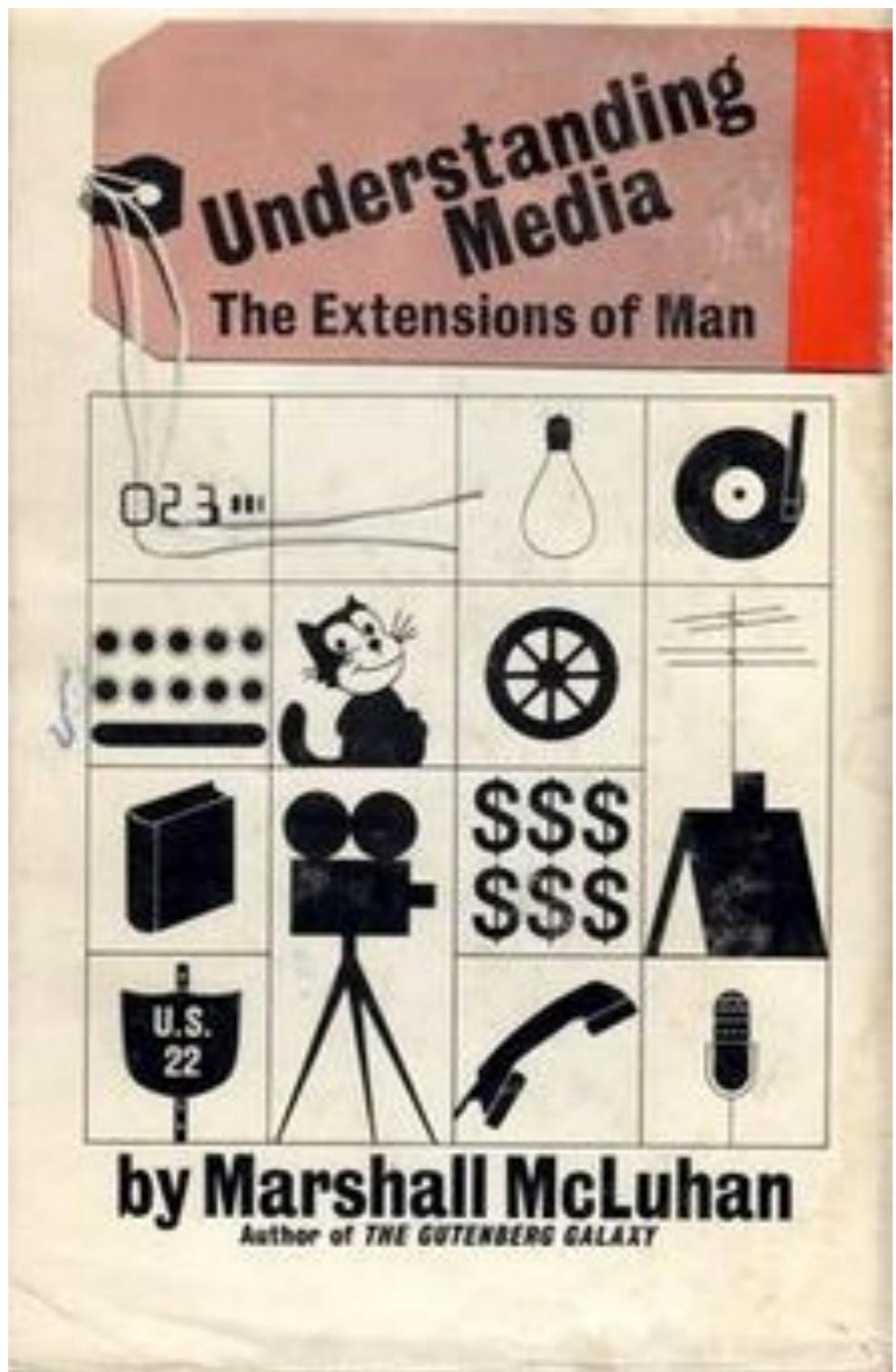
### Part 1. Animal and media technology

- (1) The animal as medium
- (2) Visual effects and the nonhuman
- (3) Spectral animals

### Part 2. The disappearance of animal

- (1) A war against nature in socialist China
- (2) The double disappearance of animal

part 1 animal and media technology



Marshall McLuhan

Marshall McLuhan: media as a form of forming relationships

“The medium is the message”.

“This assumption (a dominant focus on the content of media) blinds people to the aspect of communication as participation in a common situation. It leads to ignoring the *form* of communication as the basic art situation which is more important than the basic idea or information ‘transmitted’”.

“A medium does not just transmit something from one party to another, or from one to many; it is part of forming a relationship or set of relationships, while sensually as well as socially shaping the subjects who participate in it. New media forms engender new relational processes”.

Jody Berland: “Assembling the (non)human: the animals as medium”

Berland: Men coexist with other modes of beings in a “common situation”

“Consider this premise at the simplest level: if you have a dog, your relationship with neighbours and the neighbourhood is different than if you do not have a dog. You share a particular ‘common situation’ with other people and animals and with the spaces around you when your pet mediates your relationships with them... In a different but not unrelated manner, you share a common situation with people to whom you are connected online who post cat pictures that you like to view and share”.

the online digital (re)production of LOL cats

its mine



has my name on it

SAY NOTHING

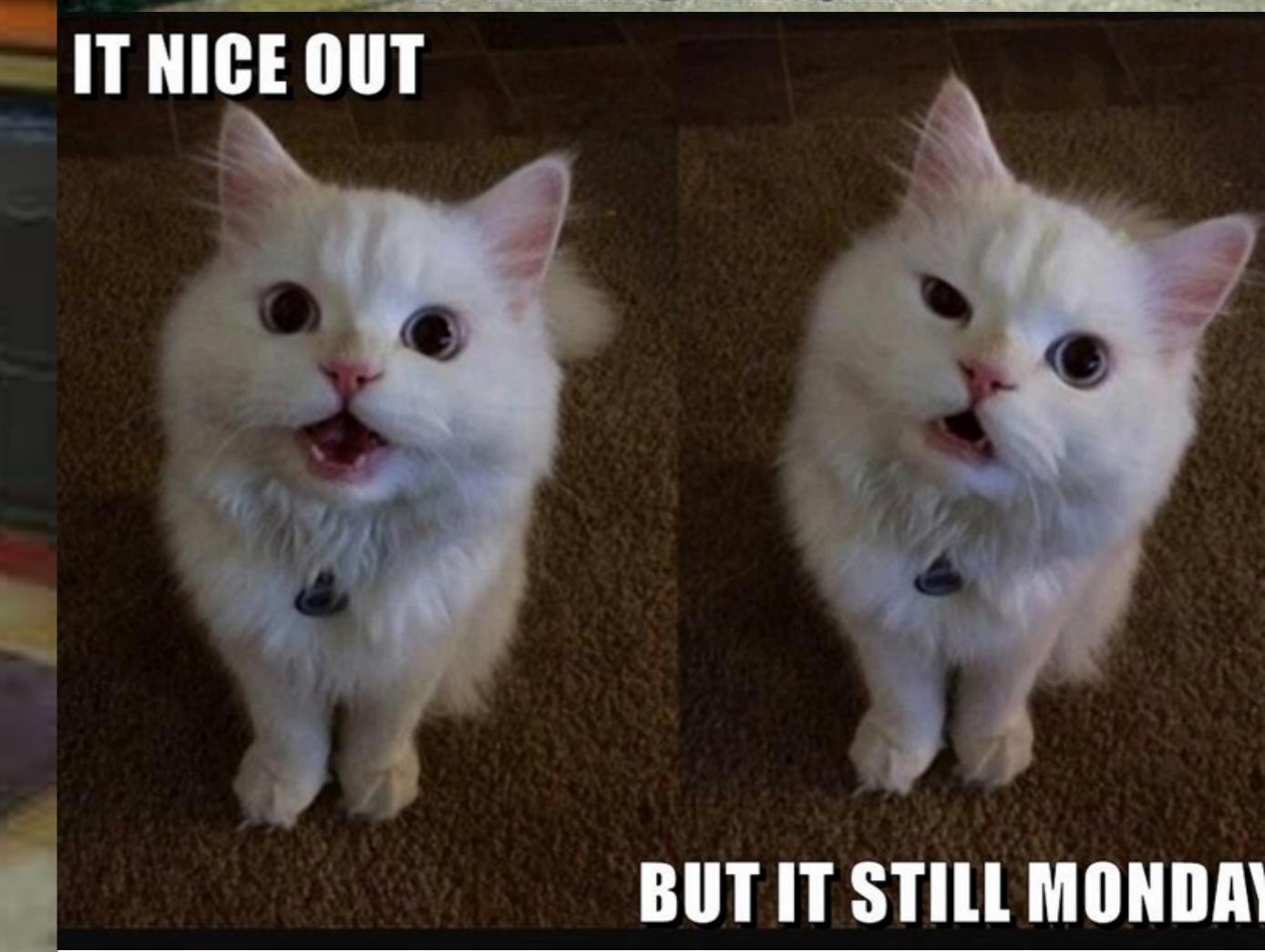


THEY'LL BLAME THE DOG

UNGRATEFUL HUMAN



IT WAS A GIFT  
IT NICE OUT



BUT IT STILL MONDAY

more cats gifs and videos with cheesy visual effects



# *Nyan Cat*



## Berland: bringing together the animal and the technological

“The idea of media affordances and the way they alter our shared environment takes on a particular intensity when faced with our damaged culture-nature habitus. We do not think of animals as media because we think of media as technology and animals as nature within an epistemology that still insists on separating them. So much of what we habitually consider to be ‘natural’ is shaped, though, by interactions with human and technological activities and interventions. It is easy enough to point out the human agency that contributed to forming an animal such as a dog, or more broadly to see how plants, animals, foods, and households are shaped by human activities. Indeed, nature is always-already nature-culture; the world of nature is equally co-constituted by our culture and technology. These concepts are so porous that our understanding of nature-culture has been thoroughly complicated, especially in the last several decades”.

the animal and the VFX (visual effects) technologies

# Trailer *Ashes of Love* (2018)



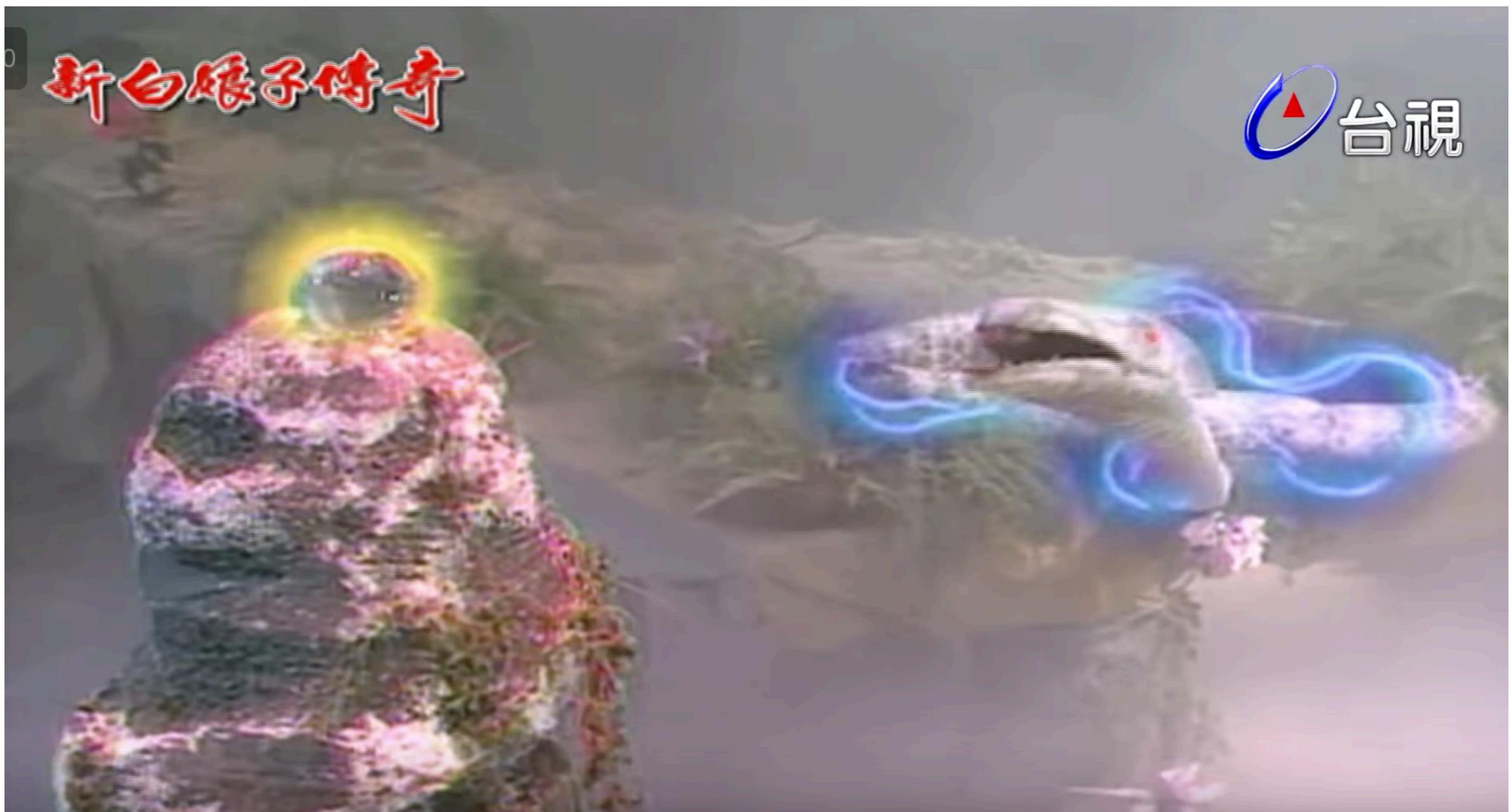
# Trailer *White Snake* (2019)



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新白娘子傳奇

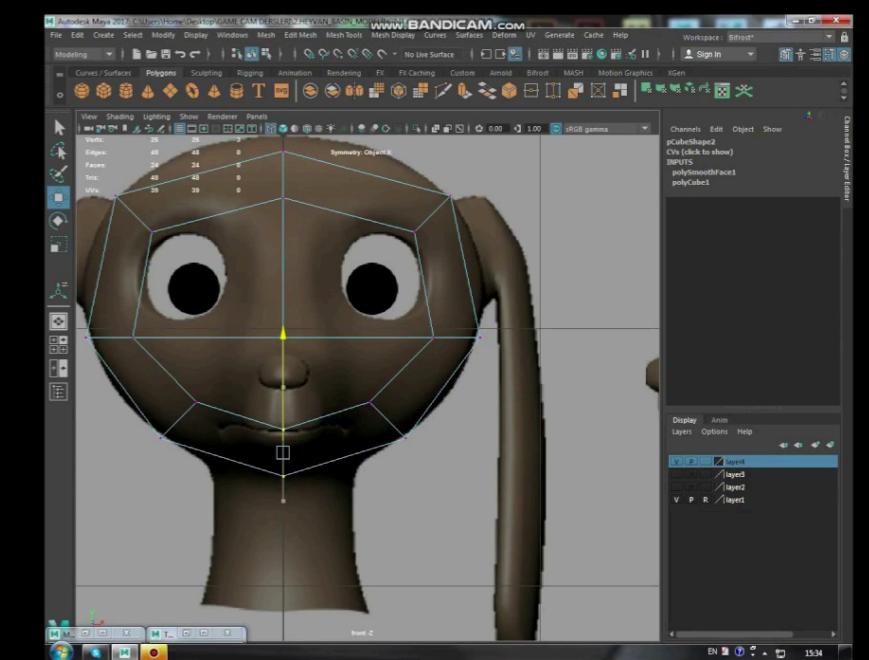
台視



original painting



modelling



movement (motion capture, etc.)

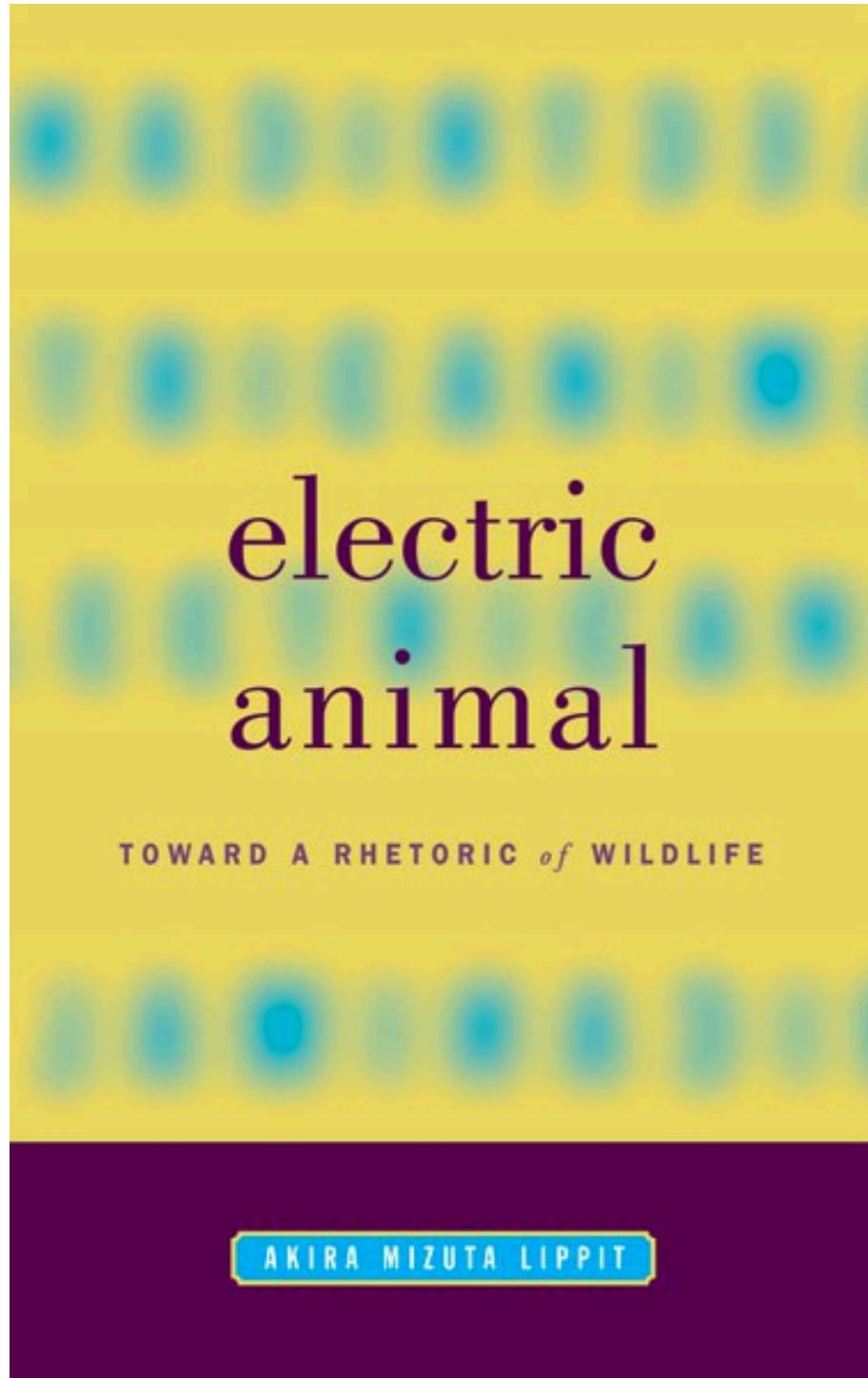


visual effects (simulation & rendering)

compositing

# VXF breakdown in *Destiny: The Tale of Kamakura* (2017)





## Spectral animal

“animals never *entirely* vanish. Rather, they exist in a state of *perpetual vanishing*. Animals enter a new economy of being during the modern period, one that is no longer sacrificial in the traditional sense of the term but, considering modern technological media generally and the cinema more specifically, *spectral*. In supernatural terms, modernity finds animals lingering in the world *undead*”.

Akria Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*

## Lippit: the disappearance of animal

“Animals once contributed to the constitution of human ontology; now their absence contributes to a dehumanized ontology. Put another way, although animals have always haunted the topology of human subjectivity, the nature of the animal has shifted in the modern era from a metaphysic to a phantasm; from a body to an image; from a living voice to a technical echo”.

## Lippit: animal and cinema

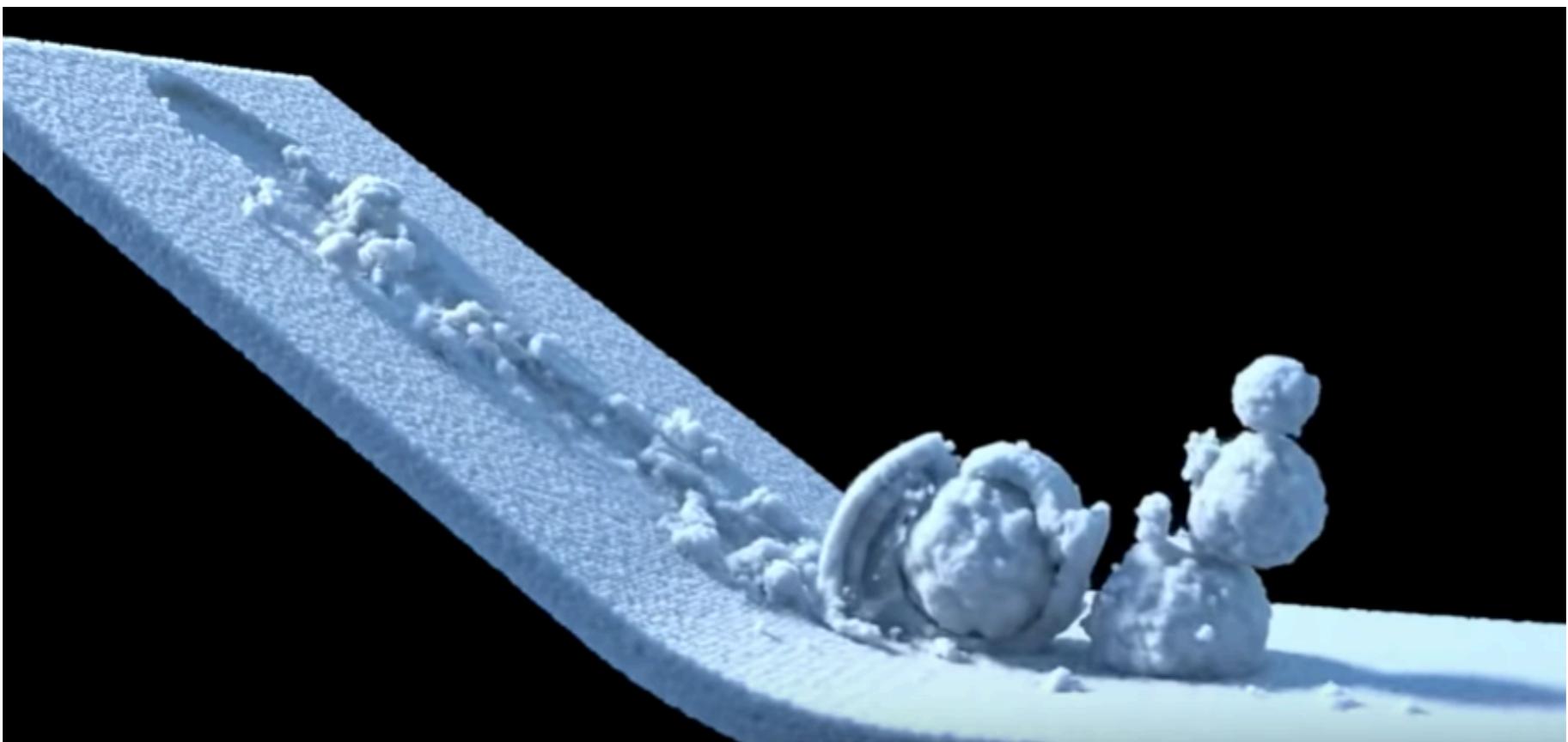
The alliance between animals and cinema brings together two poles of a traditional opposition, animals and technology. Not surprisingly, then, early cinema frequently thematizes animals. And thus while animals were disappearing from the immediate world, they were reappearing in the mediated world of technological reproduction. Undying, animals seemed to fuel the phantom thermodynamic engines that would run perpetually. Animals and their figures had come full circle in the modern era, from philosophy to technology. Animals had found a proper habitat or world in the recording devices of the technological media. The capacities of the technological media in general and the photographic media in particular to record and recall served as a mnemonic supplement that allowed modern culture to preserve animals.

# Clip from *Monster Hunt* (2015) on human eating monsters



animating the nonhuman: simulation of natural elements and particles

snow simulation in *Frozen*



# *The Grandmaster*



take a break

part 2 the disappearance of animal

a war against nature

Early 1950s: national security and the biological warfare in the Korean War (1950-53)



# 美军细菌武器

对原子、化学、细菌  
武器的防护常设挂图

第14集 第13号

## 细菌武器使用的主要菌种



## 细菌战使用的媒介物



Biological Weapons of the U.S. Army



"Resolutely Cut off the Bloody and Criminal Hand of the American Aggressor that Spreads Germs! (Jianjue zhanduan Meiguo qinluezhe sabu xijunde zui'e xueshou!)".

# The Four Pests Campaign

Also known as “Wipe out the Four Pests”, the four pests campaign was a component of China’s Great Leap Forward (1958-1961). It was set in motion by the Chinese Communist Party in the late 1950s to eradicate sparrows, rats, mosquitoes, and flies. This campaign became a form of the annihilation of the four species for the purpose of promoting modern health concept as well as protecting grains, which led to great damage to the natural environment of the early 1960s



## Socialist new man 1940s-70s

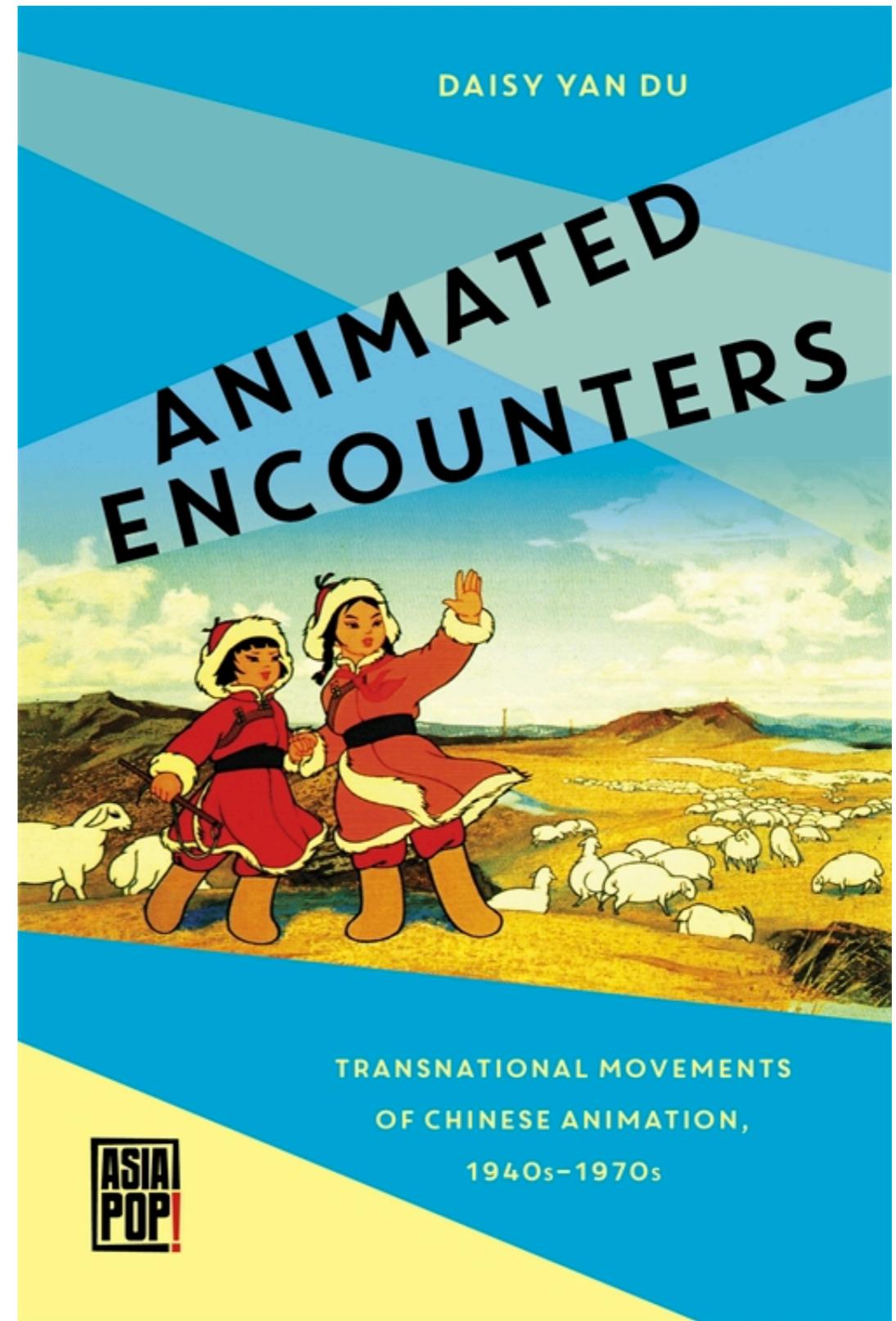
“It (creating the socialist new man) includes a calculated and systematic cultivation of ideas and perceptions, consciousness and subconsciousness, personal character, psychology, and even physical constitution. The new man was created not just to ensure that new ideas would replace old ones and that the party’s tasks would be carried out, thus avoiding becoming merely a topic in political history, but also to stand up as an alternative human model that dwarfed all prior or contemporary types of human being. In this sense the new man obtained a significance in world history or even beyond, as a new stage in human evolution.”

Yinghong Cheng: *Creating the New Man: From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*

# Disciplining the animal as the ideal socialist subject



Daisy Yan Du: the double disappearance of animals during the Cultural Revolution



Du:

“Drawing on Lippit, I contend that in the context of socialist modernity during China’s Cultural Revolution, wild animals not only disappeared significantly in the real world as Mao launched series of wars against nature but also vanished from the silver screen as a result of the radical artistic forms and cultural policies adopted at the time. The Cultural Revolution was thus characterized by a double disappearance”.

## Clip from *Princess Iron Fan* (1941)



Clip from *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grasslands* (1964)



## Du: the banning of fantasy and anthropomorphic animals

“The degree to which animals are invisible or absent marks the revolution’s intensity and vice versa. The disappearance of the anthropomorphic sheep in the model-animated version of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* indicates the penetration of the Cultural Revolution into animation. The absence of animals from *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* reflects intensified revolutionary conflict. The ballet effectively transformed the animated film into a de facto Maoist model work, the most prominent and the most invisible feature of which is the absence of animals.



Jin Xi, the prominent animator in socialist China, contends that animation follows a law of its own.

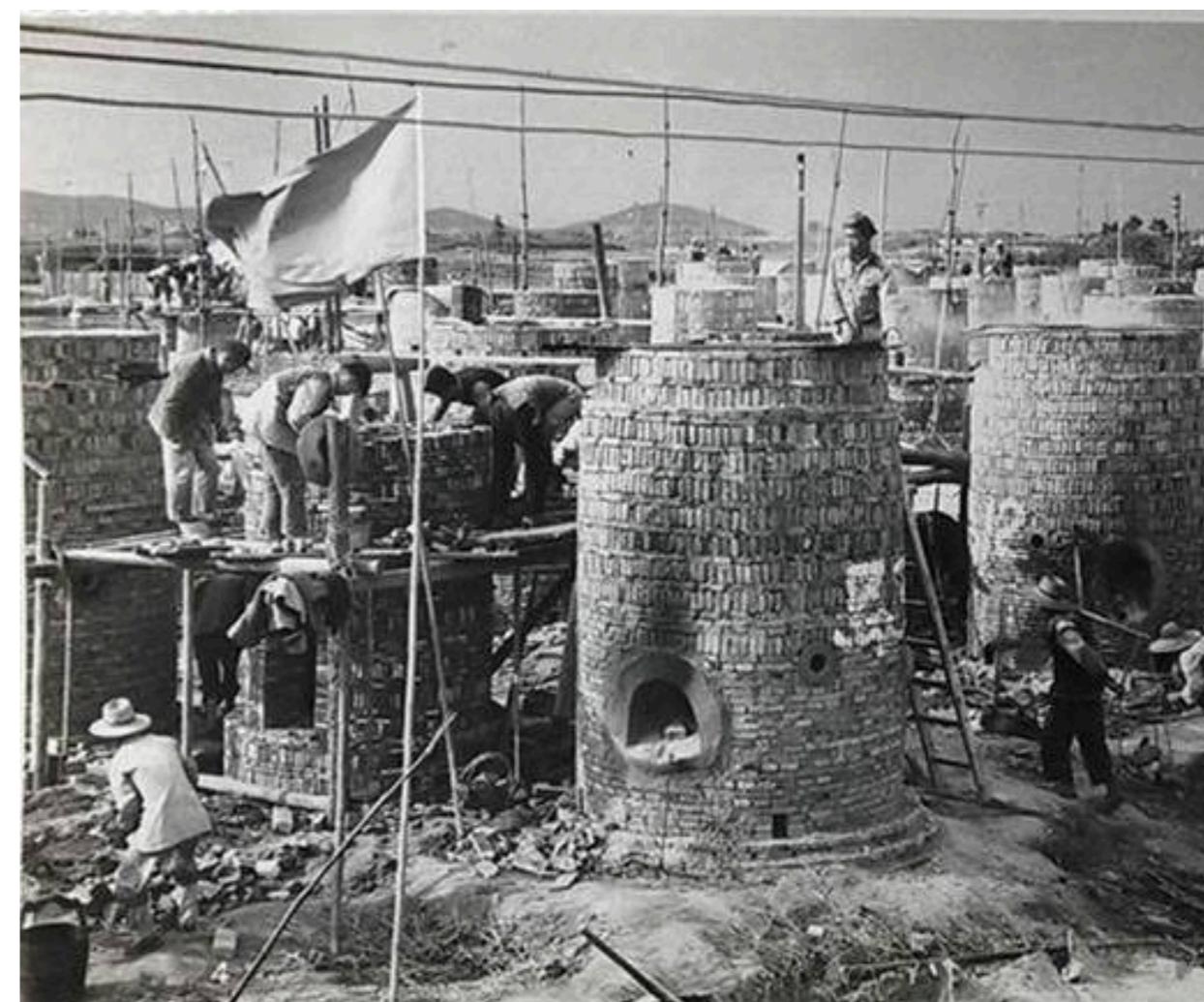
He regards animation as an artistic form of high supposition and an art of fantasy and hallucinations.

Animation allows for fantastic elements and must be highly fictional due to its own material limitations, as compared with live-action cinema.

## Du: the fetishization of machines

“the official disappearance of animals also gave rise to the “fetishization” of machines—telegraph poles, power lines, ship, tractors, trains, and helicopters—as icons of socialist modernity. Telegraph poles and power lines in the landscape take on prominent roles in the various versions of *Heroic Little Sisters* for example, to valorize socialist modernity and its industrial achievements”.

# The steel-making campaign during the Great Leap Forward movement

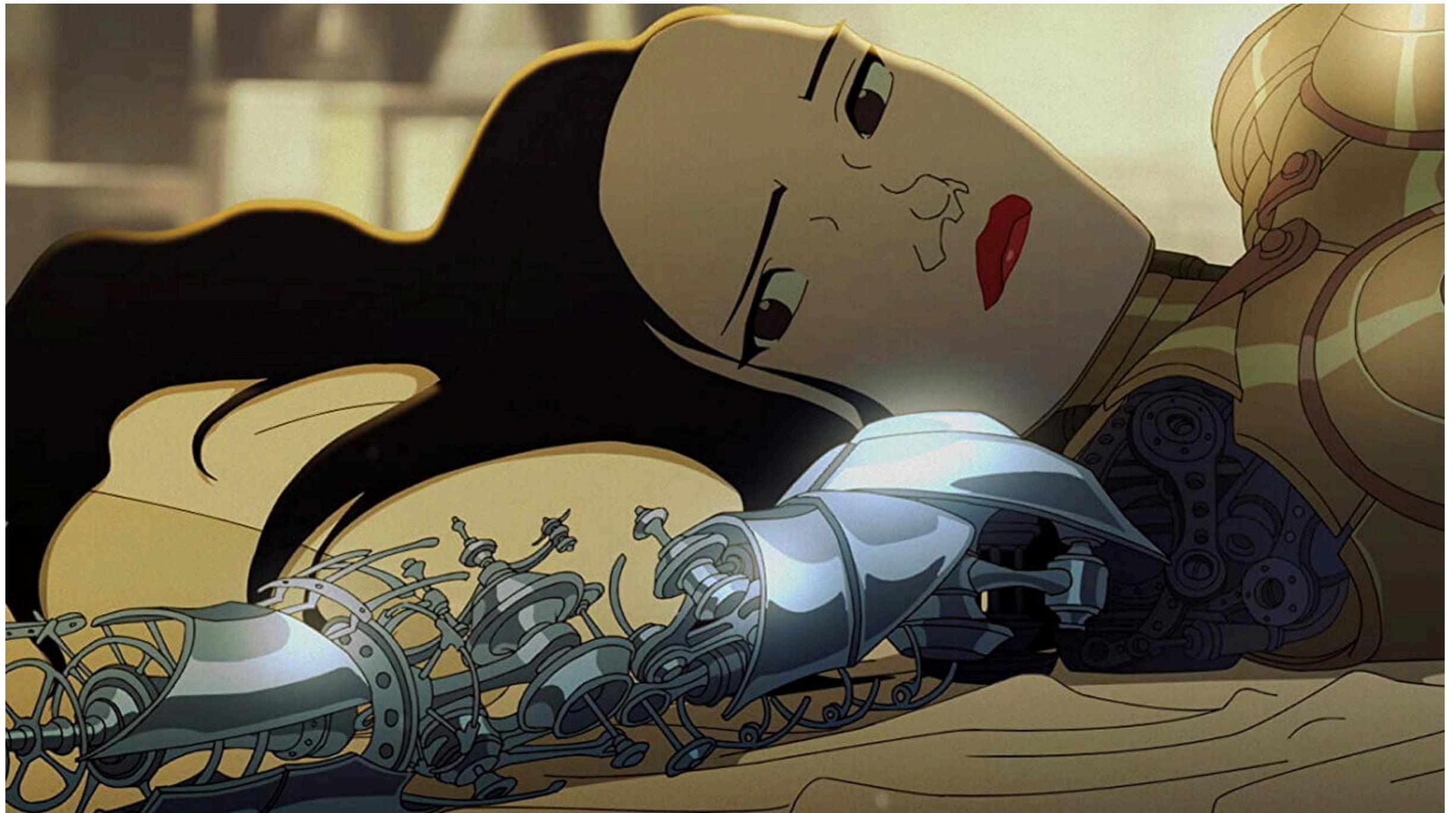




草原英雄小姐妹



“Love, Death & Robots” *Good Hunting* (2019)



The end