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"A Foul Lump Started Making Promises in My Voice": Race, Affect, and the Animated Subject

> **an-i-mate *vt*: 1:** to give spirit and support to: ENCOURAGE **2a:** to give life to **b:** to give vigor and zest to **3:** to move to action **4a**: to make or design in such a way as to create apparently spontaneous lifelike movement **b:** to produce in the form of an animated cartoon **syn** see QUICKEN
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> **an-i-mat-ed *adj*: 1a:** endowed with life or the qualities of life : ALIVE . . . **b:** full of movement and activity **c:** full of vigor and spirit: LIVELY . . . **2:** having the appearance of something alive **3:** made in the form of an animated cartoon—*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, 1995

"A foul lump started making promises in my voice," notes the speaker in John Yau's poetic series "Genghis Chan: Private Eye" (1989), giving new "life," "spirit," or "zest" to a clichéd expression for the inability to speak due to excessive emotion: a lump in the throat.[1] In fact, the cliché seems reinvigorated here to the extent that the "lump," the inhuman entity obstructing speech, comes to assume a life of its own, perversely ventriloquizing the Asian American speaker. We thus move from a racially marked subject who is "all choked up" to a situation in which the inhuman object restricting his speech becomes a subject dangerously capable of speaking *for* him, purportedly on his behalf. Insofar as we often regard the cliché as a "dead image"—what Robert Stonum calls a "fossilized" metaphor whose "expired figurative life" is rarely capable of being "restored or reinvented"—Yau's announcement dramatizes "giving life" in more ways than one, reanimating by rhetorically doubling the dis-

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turbing scene of animation it depicts.[2] Moreover, in presenting the transformation of this inanimate, "foul lump" into a living, speaking agent within a series of poems whose title marries Genghis Khan with Charlie Chan—the American cinema icon from the 1940s turned into a television cartoon in the 1970s through Hanna-Barbera's *The Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan*—Yau's statement amazingly encompasses all the definitions of *animate* and *animated* provided by *Webster's*.

An interesting slippage occurs as each term is elaborated. In both definitions, we move from biological existence, articulated in nouns signifying vitality ("life," "movement," "action"), to socially valenced, emotional qualities ("lively," "spontaneous," "zest"), and finally to a historically specific mode of cinematic or televisual representation (the "cartoon"). While all these meanings become spectacularly condensed in Yau's anthropomorphized, voice-stealing "lump" (an image that, on one level, endows lifelike qualities to insensible matter and, on another, figuratively reinvigorates a "dead metaphor" for the deverbalizing effects of an emotional excess), the already counterintuitive connections in the standard dictionary definition of *animated*—between the organic-vitalistic and the technological-mechanical, and between the technological-mechanical and the emotional—are further complicated by the way in which the orientalized and cartoonish Genghis Chan introduces race into the equation.

In this manner, Yau's Asian American subject, overcome by emotion and unable to speak while ventriloquized—transformed into a puppet for the verbal expressions of the very object responsible for obstructing his own speech—calls attention not only to animation's role in impassioning subjects but also to its capacity to racialize them. For just as the caricature of the raced subject as excessively earnest, emotional, and expressive continues to haunt the American cultural imagination, the affective qualities that surface in the dictionary entry for *animated*—"lively," "full of activity, . . . vigor and spirit"—have a long history of bearing racial connotations, not only in American screen traditions (and particularly in cartoons) but in American literature as well. Epitomized in figures ranging from Harriet Beecher Stowe's ebullient Topsy (1852) to Warner Brothers's hyperactive Speedy Gonzales (who first emerged in the 1950s), the ostensibly positive qualities of liveliness, effusiveness, spontaneity, and zeal become affects harnessed to a disturbing racial epistemology, such that these emo-

tional qualities—all variants of what we might call animatedness—are made to function as bodily, hence self-evident, signs of the raced subject's naturalness or authenticity. The animatedness of figures like Stowe's Topsy or, in a doubled sense, Warner Brothers's Speedy, thus foregrounds the disturbing ease with which emotional qualities slide into corporeal qualities in the case of racialized subjects, reinforcing the notion of race itself as a truth located, quite naturally, in the always obvious, highly visible body.[3]

While my essay will continue to foreground animatedness in an effort to understand how affective categories not only acquire racial inflections but also attain the power to racialize, I will now proceed more theoretically to examine a series of political and aesthetic questions that have converged around animation as a rhetorical figure, a screen tradition, and, in its primary and most general sense, as a process of activating or giving life to inert matter.

In his preface to the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison relies on the concept of animation in replicating a standard feature of the slave narrative: the testament to its authenticity, which Garrison locates not only in the narrative's verisimilitude and its single author but also in its power to induce emotional responsiveness in the reader: "He who can peruse [this narrative] without a tearful eye, a heaving breast, [or] an afflicted spirit,—without *being* . . . *animated* with a determination to seek the immediate overthrow of that execrable system . . .—must have a flinty heart and be qualified to act the part of the trafficker 'in slaves and the souls of men.'"[4] Here the anticipated animation of Douglass's reader seems to hinge on signs of emotion betrayed by the "tearful eye" and "heaving breast," as if such emotion were mechanically induced by the mobilization of these body parts. Garrison's preface thus reflects the over-closeness between psychic and bodily experience suggested in the standard definition of *animation*, insofar as the animation of Douglass's reader seems to arise directly out of his emotively coded, if somewhat automatic, bodily gestures and movements. At the same time, however, animation also seems to designate the very process by which these involuntary, highly corporeal expressions of feeling come to exert a politicizing force, activating the reader's desire to overthrow an entire system. Facilitating this transition from the body's automatisms to political consciousness and agency, animation hinges on a

particularly immediate relationship to language, depicted as having a spontaneous and direct impact on both the body and mind of the reader.

Figured as this intensified attunement or hyperreceptiveness to the language of others, the animation of Douglass's reader that Garrison anticipates seems strikingly similar to the kind of animatedness Harriet Beecher Stowe assigns to racialized subjects in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852): "[T]he negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature, and as [the hymns are] sung, some laugh, cry, and clap hands, or shake hands rejoicingly with each other."[5] In this passage, animation turns the exaggeratedly expressive body into a spectacle for an ethnographic gaze, featuring an African American subject made to physically move in response to lyrical, poetic, or imagistic language. A similar excessive responsiveness to poetic discourse, but with different effects, is implied in Stowe's description of Uncle Tom himself:

> "Nothing could exceed . . . [the] earnestness, of his prayer, enriched with the language of Scripture, *which seemed so entirely to have wrought itself into his being, as to have become a part of himself, and to drop from his lips unconsciously*. . . . And so much did his prayer always work on the devotional feelings of his audiences, that there seemed often a danger it would be lost altogether in the abundance of the responses which broke out everywhere around him." (*UTC*, 79, my emphasis)

In this case, the animatedness ascribed to Tom, which seems to threaten to animate his audience in turn, takes the form not of bodily movement but of a kind of ventriloquism: language from an outside source that "drop[s] from his lips" without conscious volition. Hence the animation of the racialized body in this instance involves likening it to an instrument, porous and pliable, for the vocalization of others.

In this function, animation seems closely related also to apostrophe—lyric poetry's signature and, according to Jonathan Culler, most "embarrassing" rhetorical convention, in which absent, dead, or inanimate entities are made present, vital, and human-like in being addressed by a first-person speaker.[6] Barbara Johnson thus describes apostrophe as a form of ventriloquism, in which a speaker "throws voice . . . into the addressee, turning its silence into a mute responsiveness,"[7] recalling the scene of Tom's enthrallment (and ventrilo-

quization) by Scripture. This link between apostrophe, animation, and enthrallment can also be found in Garrison's preface:

> This Narrative contains many affecting incidents . . . but I think the most thrilling one of them all is the description Douglass gives of his feelings . . . on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay—viewing the receding vessels as they flew with their white wings before the breeze, *and apostrophizing them as animated by the living spirit of freedom*. Who can read that passage, and be insensible to its pathos and sublimity? ("P," 249; my emphasis)

Like the way in which Tom's prayer "work[s] on the devotional feelings" of his audience, here animation becomes a thrill that seems highly contagious—easily transferred through the animated body to its spectators. This transferability is reinforced by Garrison's use of the oblique conjunction "as," which makes it difficult to distinguish the subject performing the animation from the object being animated. One wonders if Garrison finds this scene "thrilling" because it provides the spectacle of Douglass animating the ships—investing these inanimate objects with the "living spirit of freedom"—or if the thrill comes from witnessing the animation of Douglass himself, either by the same "living spirit of freedom" or through his own expressive act of apostrophizing.

Regardless of where we locate the titillation Garrison describes, it is important to note that both Stowe and Garrison find it necessary to dramatize the animation of racialized bodies for political purposes: in Stowe's case, to demonstrate the intensity of the slave's devotional feeling in order to support a Christian indictment of slavery as sin; in Garrison's, to signify Douglass's power as a writer and mobilize his readers to the antislavery cause. In both cases, the connection between animation and affectivity is surprisingly fostered through acts resembling the practice of puppeteering, involving either the body's ventriloquism or a physical manipulation of its parts. Yet the *thinging* of the body in order to construct it, counterintuitively, as impassioned is deployed by both abolitionists as a strategy of shifting the status of this body from thing to human, as if the racialized, hence already objectified body's reobjectification, in being animated, were paradoxically necessary to put into the forefront its personhood or subjectivity.

Rey Chow argues that becoming animated in this objectifying sense—having one's body and voice controlled by an invisible other—is

synonymous with becoming automatized, "subjected to [a manipulation] whose origins are beyond one's individual grasp."[8] In a reading of Charlie Chaplin's hyperactive physical movements in *Modern Times* (1936), Chow suggests that as technologies of mass production, film and television uniquely disclose the fact that "[t]he 'human body' as such is already a *working body automatized*, in the sense that it becomes in the new age an automaton on which social injustice as well as processes of mechanization 'take on a life of their own,' so to speak" ("PA," 62). For Chow, this automatization of the body, as an effect of subjection to power, coincides with the moment the body becomes visible or made into the object of a gaze; being animated thus entails "becoming a spectacle whose 'aesthetic' power increases with one's increasing awkwardness and helplessness" ("PA," 61). While Chow describes this simultaneous visualization and technologicalization as a condition of the modern body in general, she also observes that certain bodies are technologized in more pronounced ways than others. Hence "the automatized other . . . takes the form either of the ridiculous, the lower class, or of woman" ("PA," 63). From a feminist perspective, this point enables Chow to argue that the main question facing third-world subjects constantly invoked, apostrophized, or ventriloquized by first-world theorists is the question of how to turn automatization into autonomy and independence: "The task that faces 'third world' feminists is thus not simply that of 'animating' the oppressed women of their cultures but of making the automatized and animated condition of their own voices the conscious point of departure in their interventions" ("PA," 66, 68).

Automatization, in this Taylorist sense, becomes a useful, if slightly anachronistic, synonym for the kind of animation already at work in the antebellum writings of Garrison and Stowe; in both situations, the human body is "subjected to [a manipulation] whose origins are beyond one's individual grasp" and becomes "a spectacle whose 'aesthetic' power increases with one's increasing awkwardness and helplessness." What makes the affect of animatedness distinctive, however, is the way in which it oddly synthesizes two kinds of automatism whose meanings run in opposite directions, encompassing the extremely codified, hyperrationalized routines epitomized by the factory worker's repetitive wrenching motion in *Modern Times* but also, as Rosaline Krauss notes, "the kind of *liberating release of spontaneity* that we associate with . . . the Surrealists' invocation of the word 'au-

tomatism' (as in psychic automatism)."[9] As this "peculiar blend" of the spontaneous with the formulaic, the unpremeditated with the predetermined, and the "liberating release" of psychic impulses with "the set of learned, more or less rote conventions (*automatisms*) contained within [a system or traditional medium],"[10] the concept of animatedness not only returns us to the connection between the emotive and the mechanistic but also commingles antithetical notions of physical agency. On one hand, animatedness points to restrictions placed on spontaneous movement and activity; in *Modern Times*, for example, it emerges from the exclusion of all bodily motion apart from the one assigned to the assembly-line worker. On the other hand, the affect can also be read as highlighting the elasticity of the body being animated, as evinced in Sergei Eisenstein's praise of "plasmaticness" in his analysis of Disney cartoons. Just as animatedness integrates the two contrasting meanings of automatism, then, the affect manages to fuse signs of the body's subjection to power with signs of its ostensive freedom—by encompassing not only bodily activity confined to fixed forms and rigid, specialized routines (Fordist or Taylorist animation) but also a dynamic principle of physical metamorphosis by which the body, according to Eisenstein, seems to "*triumph* over the fetters of form" (what we might call "animistic" animation).[11] It is clear that for the filmmaker, the excessive energy and metamorphic potential of the animated body make it a potentially subversive or powerful body, while for Chow, the very qualities that Eisenstein praises as liberatory—"plasmaticness," elasticity, and pliancy—are readable as signs of the body's utter subjection to power, confirming its vulnerability to external manipulation and control. Although in the last instance Chow's pessimistic reading of the animated-technologized body as Taylorized body seems more persuasive than Eisenstein's optimistic one, the two perspectives point to a crucial ambivalence embedded in the concept of animation that takes on special weight in the case of racialized subjects, for whom objectification, exaggerated corporeality or physical pliancy, and the body-made-spectacle remain doubly freighted issues.

The category of racial difference has thus come to complicate the meanings of animation on television, a visual medium Jane Feuer has described as increasingly governed by an ideology of liveness: that is, "the promise of presence and immediacy made available by video technology's capacity to record and transmit images simultaneously."[12]

Recalling the similarly direct and immediate impact of language on the racialized subjects in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, liveness's "promise of presence and immediacy" has thus been particularly crucial to what Sasha Torres calls "the definitionally televisual events of [the 1990s]," which "have involved, if not centered on, persons of color."[13] As Torres notes, historically significant broadcasting events such as the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, the trial of O. J. Simpson, the videotaped beating of Rodney King, and more recently, Court TV's coverage of the trial of the New York City police officers indicted for the murder of Amadou Diallo have made it impossible to ignore "the *centrality* of racial representation to television's representational practices," while also indicating the primacy of "liveness" in informing what race "*look[s] like* on television."[14] What bearing, then, does the liveliness associated with animation, in all its various meanings, have on the way race looks to viewers in a medium where liveness signifies live action and a simultaneity between event and transmission—principles fundamentally opposed to the stop-motion technology on which contemporary screen animation often depends? Thus, while it is the live broadcasting event that has made race central to television, as Torres argues in "King TV," it could be said that animation on television foregrounds the centrality of liveness to the representation of racial difference in a particularly intense way, even though at a certain level the genre runs counter to the medium-specific meanings of *liveness*, which as Feuer notes, is less an ontological reality than an ideological one: "[A]s television in fact becomes *less and less* a 'live' medium, in the sense of an equivalence between time of event and time of transmission, the medium in its practices insists *more and more* on the live, the immediate, the direct, the spontaneous, the real."[15] Although we have already seen how a similar ideology informs the relation between animation and racial identity in much older forms of cultural production (via the writings of Stowe and Garrison), the epistemological inflection linking these attributes to the racialized-feeling concepts above—what are vivaciousness, liveliness, and zeal if not affective correlates to "the immediate, the direct, the spontaneous, [and] real"?—makes television an ideal site for examining animation both as screen genre and as a technology for the representation of racial difference.

Questions related to animation and the politics of racial representation recently converged in debates surrounding Fox Television's di-

mensional animation comedy series, *The PJs* (1998–2000)—the first prime-time program in American television history to feature a completely nonwhite, non-middle-class, and non-live-action cast, as well as the first to depict its characters in foamation, a three-dimensional, stop-motion animation technique trademarked by Will Vinton Studios (once producer of the infamous California Raisin commercials, which featured anthropomorphized grapes singing and dancing to classic Motown hits).[16] Introduced to the network's lineup in the fall of 1998 and featuring multicultural but primarily African American characters living in an urban housing project, *The PJs* generated controversy several months prior to more widely publicized debates over the "whitewashing" of network television, described by Kweisi Mfume as "the most segregated industry in America" during his July 1999 keynote address to the 90th annual NAACP convention.[17] Coproduced by and starring Eddie Murphy as Thurgood Stubbs, the superintendent of the Hilton-Jacobs projects, the program was quickly accused of carrying an antiblack message by a number of grassroots organizations. These criticisms came from a variety of directions, including the black Muslim group Project Islamic Hope, as well the Coalition against Media Exploitation, headed by African American writer and activist Earl Ofari Hutchinson. In a CNN interview in February 1999, Hutchinson voiced his objection to the show: "It does not present an accurate or honest depiction of the African-American community. It does present racially demeaning and offensive stereotypes."[18] A similar criticism came from Spike Lee, who described the cartoon as "really hateful, I think, to black people."[19] The "I think" in Lee's statement reveals a crucial ambivalence, however, over the political and aesthetic aims of *The PJs*, and over the use of animation for the representation of racial minorities in general—an ambivalence I would like to explore by focusing on some of this technology's intended and unintended effects.

The shocking quality that Lee, Hutchinson, and others attribute to the *The PJs* points to how the program fundamentally disrupted the "look" of race on mainstream network television, since the traditional way in which racial minorities have had a presence in this arena (within the conspicuously few opportunities available) has been through live-action representations of upwardly mobile, nuclear families—not animated cartoons featuring the urban poor. In particular, Hutchinson's criticism of the show for failing to present "an accurate

and honest depiction of the African-American community" reflects the insistent demand for mimetic realism in the representation of African Americans on television, which is both reflected and resisted in the equally insistent demand for what Philip Brian Harper calls "simulacral" realism. Based on the premise that representations actively shape, define, and even occasionally usurp social realities, simulacral realism involves the conviction that "an improvement in [the] social status [of African Americans] can result from their mere depiction in mainstream television programming."[20] In contrast, mimetic realism insists that television faithfully mirror a set of social conditions viewed as constituting "a singular and unitary phenomenon known as '*the* black experience.'"[21] While it is this latter demand that Hutchinson sees *The PJs* as betraying, similar criticism was directed earlier at *The Cosby Show*—a black-produced program that could not be more opposed in form, content, or tone to *The PJs*. This contradiction reinforces Harper's observation that while the tension between mimetic and simulacral realism continues to structure critical discourse on black television, their opposing demands often run "smack up against [each other]."[22] Yet in its three-dimensional animation format, *The PJs* changed the terms of the existing debate in dramatic ways. The conflict between simulacral and mimetic realism, which had consistently framed debates about race and televisual representation, became a moot issue, since neither demand—that television faithfully mirror "the black experience" or, in contrast, aim at bettering the social status of actual African American subjects—could be properly applied to a show that so insistently foregrounded its own artifice. Given the program's exaggerated stylistics, and its emphasis on the material support of its characters (that is, the fact of their being dolls with hard plastic heads and foam latex bodies), *The PJs* pushed the issue of representation outside the mimetic-simulacral binary. Hence, if debates over the politics of representing racialized bodies on television are to continue, which they obviously must, the radical change the show inaugurated in the "look" of these bodies challenges us to approach the discussion in new ways. Introducing an unprecedented possibility for the representation of racial difference in the medium, the show emphasizes that new possibilities for representation demand new ways of theorizing it.

As the only prime-time comedy to feature residents of subsidized housing since Norman Lear's *Good Times* (1974–79) and the only

animated program featuring nonwhite, inner-city dwellers since *Fat Albert* in the early 1970s (the decade of "socially relevant" programming), *The PJs* also produced a shift in the content of network television.[23] As Armond White has noted, every joke on the show "implie[d] a correlated social circumstance,"[24] enabling the program in its first season to address topics such as access to food, health care, public education, and safe and livable housing. Since the show thus dealt with racism in a larger socioeconomic context, rather than as a problem of prejudice between individuals, its targets were frequently government institutions: the welfare system, hospitals, the police, and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The humor becomes most acerbic when Thurgood visits the local HUD office, which he does in nearly every episode. The sign greeting him displays a variety of sardonic messages, ranging from "HUD: Putting a Band-Aid over Poverty for 30 Years!" to "HUD: Keeping You in the Projects since 1965."

The PJs replaced the traditional sitcom's main social unit, the nuclear family, with the community formed by the project's inhabitants. In one episode, the tenants try to raise money for one elderly resident, Mrs. Avery, when it is discovered she has been secretly subsisting on dog food. Since Mrs. Avery is too proud to "take charity," Thurgood is only able to convince her to accept the food and health care supplies donated by tenants by disguising them as gift baskets from the state welfare system and Medicaid. The joke here is the illusion that these beleaguered institutions are still efficient—even benevolent—in their intended functions, and that the bitter task of perpetuating this illusion, rather than exposing it, becomes the only way of ensuring that services are actually performed.

In another episode, after suffering a near-fatal heart attack, Thurgood is informed that he requires medication he cannot afford. The only solution is to participate in an experimental drug program. The problem is that Thurgood's cholesterol level and blood pressure aren't high enough to officially qualify for the program, so the episode turns on his efforts to jack them up in order to receive the medication he needs to live. Once again, the show's humor finds its basis in the contradictions of an unjust system, targeting the institutional ineptness that translates into actual harm or violence to the bodies of the urban poor. In this manner, *The PJs* insists that racism involves more than the mobilization of stereotypes, that in fact it extends far be-

yond matters of visual representation. While this is a relatively simple point, it nonetheless invites us to push beyond the prevailing methods in media studies, where a focus on analyzing stereotypes dominates the conversation about race to the extent that racism often becomes inadvertently reduced to bad representation, and antiracist politics to a struggle over the content of specific images. Yet the struggles depicted on *The PJs* are rarely about imagery; indeed, in a culture where racism becomes impossible to separate from class politics, the struggles remain lived and felt primarily in relations of power not visible at all. In this sense, what the show ultimately offers is a Foucauldian, rather than a liberal humanist, critique of racism; as White notes: "When government workers appear or Thurgood and his wife visit social agencies, conversations take place in a void. Voices of authority are always faceless. . . . Thurgood's trek through a blizzard to retrieve his wife's journal left at a hospital emergency room is interrupted by cops who stay in their vehicle while announcing their shakedown through a bullhorn: 'Frisk yourself!' This humor puts *The PJs* in league with some of the most daring and derisive agit-pop such as Public Enemy's '911 is a Joke' and its colorful, comic music video" ("*TPJS*," 10).

This is not to say, however, that the issue of representing blackness on television is simply bypassed by *The PJs* in order to foreground nonvisual aspects of social inequity. For the show also contains the internal references to African American history and culture that Kristal Brent Zook finds integral to the antiracist identity politics of the first black-produced sitcoms in the early nineties, which unlike previous white-produced shows *about* African Americans, attempted to foreground struggles over the representation of blackness within the black community as a whole.[25] Unlike the paintings by Varnette Honeywood featured on the walls of the *Cosby* living room, however, or the framed photograph of Malcolm X prominently featured on the set of *Roc* (key examples cited in Zook's study), the references to black history and culture in *The PJs* are primarily references to black television culture—foregrounding the fraught legacy of African Americans on television not only in the form of tribute but also in playful, irreverent, and ambivalent ways. In naming the Hilton-Jacobs housing project after the actor who portrayed Freddie "Boom-Boom" Washington in *Welcome Back, Kotter*, for instance, the simple reference to the older situation comedy foregrounds the relationship between tokenism and

ghettoization, as well as the failures of liberal cultural progressivism (as reflected in the demands for issue-oriented programs like *Kotter* in the 1970s and early 1980s) to create public policy capable of producing serious changes in the infrastructure of U.S. cities ("*TPJS*," 10). Also invoking Sherman Helmsley's "apartment in the sky" in the theme song's description of the Hilton-Jacobs as a "low-rent high-rise" and using Janet DuBois, singer and composer of the memorable theme song for *The Jeffersons*, as the voice of Mrs. Avery, *The PJs* constantly "confronts the legacy of the 1970s black sitcom—rather than simply joining in" ("*TPJS*," 10). The show also offers a running commentary on the cultural legacy of black television in the eighties and early nineties. The most genteel character in *The PJs*, for example, is a parole officer named Walter, whose signature trait is an affable chuckle closely resembling the laugh of the expensive sweater-clad family doctor on *The Simpsons*, who in turn seems to be a gentle parody of Bill Cosby's Dr. Huxtable.

Yet as a situation comedy based entirely on caricature, *The PJs* cannot avoid addressing the problem of stereotypes. Questions concerning caricature and typecasting, moreover, necessarily come to the fore in genres informed by the mode of comedy, which has traditionally relied on the production of what Stanley Cavell calls individualities rather than individuals, or on the presentation of social types: opera's villains and boffos, Shakespeare's clowns and melancholics, Jane Austen's snobs and bores, and the television sitcom's nosy neighbors and meddling mothers-in-law. Although there remains an irreducible difference between types and stereotypes, or between social roles and "individualities that [project] particular *ways* of inhabiting a social role," this difference becomes especially uneasy when it involves social roles that have been drastically limited in ways that others have not.[26] Thus, while the overwhelming emphasis on stereotype analysis in antiracist media criticism often limits critical intervention to the analysis of the content of specific images or to acts of gauging the extent to which contemporary images conform to or deviate from previous ones, it remains important to acknowledge the reasons for this emphasis in the first place, which clearly underlie the specific criticisms of Hutchinson and Lee. The stakes of traditional stereotype analysis will continue to be high, not only because depictions of raced subjects in the mass media have been so severely limited but also because raced subjects continue to exert less control over

how already existing images are actually deployed—quite often with symbolically violent effects. Moreover, in conjunction with the continued haunting of black, live-action television comedy by blackface minstrelsy—a legacy that critics such as J. Fred MacDonald, Herman Gray, Robin Means Coleman, and Kristal Zook have extensively explored—the tradition of viciously racist cartoons in American screen culture ensures that the intersection of comedy with animation in the visual representation of racialized bodies becomes a particularly loaded issue.[27] Thus, while arguments have been made for cel animation's ideologically disruptive properties in its incipience as an early film genre,[28] in products ranging from MGM's "Bosko" series in the 1920s to numerous cartoon features in the following two decades (including Disney's "Alice Hunting in Africa," Warner Brothers's "Tokio Jokio," and Walter Lantz's "Jungle Jitters" and "Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat"), two-dimensional animation became one of the most culturally prominent technologies for the revitalization of already extant racial stereotypes, giving new "life" to caricatures that might otherwise have stood a greater chance of becoming defunct or inactive.[29]

Since the animated subjects in *The Pjs* are three-dimensional dolls made of spongy latex fitted over metal armatures, hand-drawn cel animation is not the technology responsible for (what many critics viewed as) the aesthetically disturbing "look" of the characters on *The PJs*, or of the disturbing way in which their bodies were made to move. Yet this two-dimensional ancestor, patented in the United States by Earl Hurd and John Bray in 1915, nevertheless ghosts the controversial sitcom through the pictorial separation process on which the older technology depends. For as I will discuss in more detail shortly, the stop-motion process used to animate characters on *The PJs* inadvertently introduced a fragmentation of the body that recalls cel animation's method of "separating portions of a drawing onto different layers to eliminate the necessity for re-drawing the entire composition for each movement phase" ("ICAT," 107). As Kristin Thompson notes, the "slash system" developed by Raoul Barré in the midteens provided an easily standardized, hence industrially amenable, method for this breakdown of figures into discrete parts, such that "a drawing of an entire character could be cut apart and traced onto different cels." Oddly anticipated, perhaps, by the activation of isolated body parts ("tearful eye," "heaving breast") in Garrison's account of the reader "ani-

mated" by Douglass's *Narrative*, the slash system's separation of the body, at each stage of its movement, into discrete portions and poses became particularly suited to the kind of animation specific to modern Fordist production—that is, to animation as automatization:

> . . . [U]sing the slash system, the background might be on paper at the lowest level, the characters' trunks on one sheet of clear celluloid, and the moving mouths, arms, and other parts on a top cel. For speech and gestures, only the top cel need be re-drawn, while the background and lower cel are simply re-photographed.
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> This technique not only saves labour time for a single artist, but it also allows specialisation of labour. That is, one person may do the background, while another does certain main poses of the character, and yet another fills in the phases between these major poses. In fact, the animation industry has followed this pattern, with key animators (doing the major poses), "in-betweeners," and "opaquers" (filling in the figures with opaque paint) in addition to those performing the specialised tasks of scripting and planning. The specialisation process and the establishment of the first production companies for animated films took place about 1915–1917—at the same time as the establishment of the Hollywood motion picture system in general (also characterised by greater and greater specialisation of tasks—the "factory" system). ("ICAT," 107–8).

If Fordist automatization constitutes a highly specialized type of animation, as Chow suggests, the celluloid slash system could be described as an animation technology that animated its workers in turn—a functional doubling that not only recalls the anticipated animation of Douglass's readers by the scene of his own animation or by his act of animating, by apostrophizing, the ships but also the capacity of Uncle Tom's excessive responsiveness to biblical language to animate or enthrall the spectators of his own animation—such that "there seemed often a danger it would be lost altogether in the abundance of the responses which broke out everywhere around him."

Thus, it is not just the material basis of two-dimensional cel animation or its explicitly racial-comic legacy that comes to haunt *The PJs*'s mode of production (which involves the same automatization of labor as its technological predecessor) but the antebellum meanings, both racial and emotional, that already haunt the former. Before launching a more detailed analysis of how the three-dimensional animation tech-

nology in *The PJs* operates, in a manner enabling the older racial, emotional, and technological connotations of animation to remain active within it, I'd like to recall a key scene from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in which similar questions converge.

Walking through midtown Manhattan, Ellison's narrator suddenly finds himself part of a larger audience watching a black doll puppeteered by a Harlem community leader he has previously looked up to and admired, Tod Clifton:

> I moved into the crowd and pressed to the front where at my feet I saw a square piece of cardboard upon which something was moving with furious action. It was some kind of toy and I glanced at the crowd's fascinated eyes and down again, seeing it clearly this time . . . a grinning doll of orange-and-black tissue paper with thin cardboard disks forming its head and feet and which some mysterious mechanism was causing to move up and down in a loose-jointed, shoulder-shaking, infuriatingly sensuous motion, a dance that was completely detached from the black, mask-like face. It's no jumping-jack, but *what*, I thought, seeing the doll throwing itself about with the fierce defiance of someone performing a degrading act in public, dancing as though it received a perverse pleasure from its motions. And beneath the chuckles of the crowd I could hear the swishing of its ruffled paper, while the same out-of-the-corner-of-the-mouth voice continued to spiel:
>
> *Shake it up! Shake it up!*
> *He's Sambo, the dancing doll, ladies and gentlemen.*
> *Shake him, stretch him by the neck and set him down,*
> *—He'll do the rest. Yes! . . .*
>
> I knew I should get back to the district but I was held by the inanimate, boneless bouncing of the grinning doll and struggled between the desire to join in the laughter and to leap upon it with both feet, when it suddenly collapsed and I saw the tip of the spieler's toe press upon the circular cardboard that formed the feet and a broad black hand come down, its fingers deftly lifting the doll's head and stretching it upward, twice its length, then releasing it to dance again. *And suddenly the voice didn't go with the hand*.[30]

I want to foreground several aspects of this literary account of the racial body made into comic spectacle, which will eventually prepare

us for a closer investigation of how visual format in *The PJs* affects the ideologically complex questions of animatedness as an affective quality, the agency of mechanized or technologized bodies, and the comic representation of racially marked subjects.

We can begin by noting that the narrator is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by the sight of the doll being animated. His effort to negotiate responses at odds with one another—a desire to join in the audience's laughter and a desire to destroy the object provoking it—suggest an ambivalence closely related to the contradictory qualities of the object itself: the doll is "grinning" while it dances, as if in empathetic attunement with the enthusiastic, lively response of its spectators, yet it is also described as "fierce" and "defiant"—words suggesting antipathy toward the audience at which it grins. These affective contradictions call attention to the disjunctive logic informing the total scene, from the way the doll's spasmodic body movements are described as "completely detached" from its immobile, mask-like face, to the image of the animator's voice suddenly "not going with" the animator's hand. In spite of the insistent processes of mechanization at work, then, nothing seems in sync in this scene—though it is precisely the mechanization that makes the disjunctiveness visible. In fact, it is the very moment when Tod Clifton's body is disclosed as the "mysterious mechanism" making the doll move (his toe against the doll's feet, his hand pulling the doll's neck) that this fragmentation and disruption of the synchronized movement takes place. The human agent anthropomorphizes the puppet, as we would entirely expect, but the puppet also mechanizes the human, breaking his organic unity into so many functional parts: pressing toe, stretching hand, commanding voice.[31] Like the slash system's separation of the drawn figure's moving body parts from its immobile ones (and the automatization of human labor this technology subsequently fostered), or the animated breast and eye that in turn induce the animation of Douglass's reader, Clifton's manual manipulation of the doll produces an animatedness that boomerangs back onto its human agent, separating his own body into isolated components and movements. Thus the nonliving entity animated, or as Chow would say, automatized, comes to automatize its animator.

The unexpected mechanization of the human animator by the inhuman object he animates, a situation we have already witnessed in the case of Yau's "foul lump" (a repulsive piece of matter invested with

"vigor" and "zest" to an extent that it becomes capable of overtaking and commanding the racialized speaker's voice) thus seems to represent the ultimate form of human subjection. Here the human agent is not only automatized or mechanized but ironically made so through the process by which he mechanizes an inhuman entity; his passive, corporeally fragmented condition is thus engendered by his own animating activity. Yet Ellison's scene of boomeranged animation might also be read as an allegory for how the "postmodern automaton," Chow's metaphor for the subjected subject in general, might acquire agency within his or her own automatized condition, enabling the mechanized human to politically comment on, if not exert some form of direct resistance to, the forces manipulating him or her. Here we might take a closer look at the sentence with which the passage concludes: "*And suddenly the voice didn't go with the hand.*" If the hand is clearly Clifton's hand and thus belongs to the animating agent's body but the voice no longer corresponds to this body, Ellison's sentence provocatively asks us to ask whose voice is coming out of Clifton's mouth. Regardless of whether the source can be identified, we can pinpoint one of the intended receivers. On one hand, the voice who says, "*Shake it up! Shake it up! He's Sambo, the dancing doll, ladies and gentlemen!*" is obviously directed at the collective audience enthusiastically witnessing the doll's animation—the "ladies and gentlemen" directly named and addressed. But on the other hand, the voice who in the same breath utters, "*Shake him, stretch him by the neck and set him down*" seems to direct itself at Clifton, issuing specific commands about how to move the doll, to which Clifton immediately responds. (We hear the imperative "*stretch him by the neck and set him down*," then see Clifton do precisely that.) In this sense, the voice emanating from the doll's ventriloquist, or animator, and directed primarily at those witnessing the spectacle of its animation is directed at the animator as well. But the fact that Clifton is being addressed or hailed by this voice, which is, moreover, a voice that does not correspond with his body, doubly emphasizes that it is a voice not his own. It is, thus, as if Clifton is ventriloquizing the doll in order to foreground his own ventriloquization, or animation, by an unidentified external agent.[32] It could even be said that Clifton animates the doll not only to comment polemically on his own animated condition (since what he does to the doll and what the doll does to him indicate something being done to both man and doll simultaneously) but also to contest

his own seemingly unequivocal status as the doll's true animator. Yet in putting forth the statement "Perhaps *I* am not the true animator in this scene of racial animation," Clifton paradoxically exercises a critical, albeit highly negative, form of agency within the context of his dramatized subjection.

The excessively "lively," racialized doll in *Invisible Man* thus brings us back to the three-dimensional animation technology at work in *The PJs*. This racial comedy in which all humans are represented as dolls made of metal and latex playfully inverts Henri Bergson's notion that the comic results from our perception of something rigid or mechanical "encrusted on the surface" of the supple or living; in *The PJs*, we have rigid structures "encrusted" with a layer of supple, skin-like material.[33] The animation of these three-dimensional figures takes place at two distinct levels: the body and speech. Like Ellison's representation of Clifton as animated by both "the hand" and "the voice," the *PJs* dolls are "endowed with the qualities of life" not only by being physically manipulated but also by being ventriloquized by the voices of human actors. So there are actually two animating agents or agencies here: the animator is the technician who moves the dolls' limbs into discrete poses to be photographed but the process remains incomplete without the actor's vocalization.

To create the illusion that the spongy dolls we see are unified and autonomous beings, *The PJs*'s stop-motion imaging technology requires that every movement by a character, including movements of his or her mouth (which are choreographed to correspond to the words spoken by the actor assigned to the character), be broken down into discrete positions, adjusted in small increments, and shot one frame at a time, with each shot previewed on a digital video assist before being recaptured on film. But because the movements of the mouth in speaking are much faster, more dynamic, and more complicated than the movements of arms or legs, the animators end up using a set of about 40 "replacement mouths" for each character, rather than moving a single mouth permanently fixed on the body into the various positions.[34] We can thus see how the separation principle of early-twentieth-century cel animation returns to haunt the late-twentieth-century, three-dimensional method; although the body parts are sculpted rather than hand-drawn on layers of celluloid, the concept of detaching mobile from immobile elements remains essentially the same.

Each *PJs* character is thus given his or her own set of independently molded plastic mouths, corresponding to the pronunciation of discrete consonants and vowels. The labor of constantly attaching and reattaching differently shaped mouths, however, raises the difficulty of ensuring that the forms are fitted in the exact location each time, since as one of the show's directors informed me, "Sometimes they move a little to the side of the face and we get what is known as 'slippery mouth' syndrome, which is quite painful to watch."[35] What results, then, is an unintended, excess animatedness on top of the intended, functional one. With every word spoken by the character, the mouth slides a bit from its initial position; the longer a character speaks, the more his mouth gives the impression, when viewed on our television screens, of threatening to fly off the body completely. The mouths of *The PJs* characters could thus be described as just a little *too* animated, particularly if we view the mouth as "subjected to [a manipulation] whose origins are beyond [its] individual grasp" at two distinct levels already ("PA," 61): through vocalization by an actor and by arrangement by the animator. And the characters are perhaps even "subjected to external manipulation" on a third front, given the fact that the mouth functions as a symbolically overdetermined feature in racist constructions of blackness, in the same way that eyes become overdetermined, synecdochal sites of racial specificity in representations of Asianness.

Like the corner-of-the-mouth voice emanating from Clifton, then, the unintended slippery-mouth effect in *The PJs* produces a disjunctiveness that in turn facilitates animation's uncanny redoubling: the mouths create surplus movement apart from those originally scripted for them, assuming a liveliness apart from the "life" given to them by the animators, which exceeds their design and control. In this sense, the very sign of the racialized body's automatization functions as the source of an unsuspected autonomy. It might be said that the excess liveliness produced by this particular body part suggests something like the racialized, animated subject's revenge, produced not by transcending the principles of mechanization from above but, as in the case of Chaplin's factory worker, by obeying them too well.[36]

In the consistency of their bodies, then, the characters in *The PJs* call attention to the uncomfortable proximity between social types and stereotypes in a material, yet highly metaphoric, fashion—by embodying the contradiction between the rigidity we typically associate

with social roles and the elasticity or "plasmaticness" hyperbolized by screen animation, which produces the visual effect of characters constantly threatening their own bodily limits. In this manner, *The PJs* reminds us that there can be ways of inhabiting a social role that actually distort its boundaries, changing the status of *role* from that which purely confines or constricts to the site in which new possibilities for human agency might be explored. Recalling the distinction between rigidity and elasticity central to Bergson's theory of laughter, animatedness in *The PJs* depends on something literally elastic "encrusted on the surface" of the mechanical. This elasticity is at once the sign of the body's automatization (since the pliancy of an object suggests its heightened vulnerability to external manipulation) but functions also as a source of an unaccounted-for autonomy. As the slippery-mouth effect demonstrates, the animation of the raced body seems capable of producing an excess that undermines the technology's traditional power to constitute that body *as* raced.

While the scene of Clifton's doll provided my first example of how the racialized body might produce this surplus animatedness, or a "lifelike movement" exceeding the control and intention of its would-be manipulators, I should note that the redoubling of animation in this scene is explicitly figured as violent. Emanating from Clifton's mouth and addressed to the mob around him, the invitation to "stretch" the doll's neck, with its explicit allusion to lynching, invokes a fantasy of inflicting harm or injury to animated objects in which the narrator himself becomes implicated, though his initial desire to "leap upon it with both feet" is replaced by the slightly less violent act of spitting on it instead:

> I looked at the doll and felt my throat constrict. There was a flash of whiteness and a splatter like heavy rain striking a newspaper and I saw the doll go over backwards, wilting into a dripping rage of frilled tissue, the hateful head upturned on its outstretched neck still grinning toward the sky. (*IM*, 423)

A fantasy of aggression against the doll invoked by its very own animator ("*stretch him by the neck*") thus leads to an act of real aggression that strips it of its human qualities and agency, turning the dancing figure into a pile of wet paper. More horrifically, the violence inflicted on the animated body culminates in violence toward the human who animates it, since the aftermath of Ellison's dancing-doll episode is

Clifton's murder by the police. This murder is described as if in slow motion: the narrator sees Clifton's body "suddenly crumpling" with "a huge wetness growing on his shirt," such that his death explicitly mirrors the doll "wilted" by the narrator's wet spit (*IM*, 426). The link between animation and violence cannot be dismissed here, and it is a link that reinforces the disturbing likeness of human animator and animated object: Clifton's "crumpled body" and the wilted body of the doll.

Here it becomes tempting to describe the act of animation as inevitably, inherently violent. If this is in fact the case, the idea of an animated object "animating its animator in turn" can only have negative and disturbing implications. Yet when the narrator later raises the possibility that his aggressive behavior towards the puppet may have been indirectly responsible for the murder of its puppeteer, Ellison's text suggests that the violence at stake here lies less in the doll's animation than in its deanimation. What results in both cases is the cessation of movement. Seeing Clifton's body crumple, the narrator describes himself as unable to "set [his] foot down" in the process of climbing a curb, just as crumpling the doll with his spit replaces his act of lifting his foot to crush it (*IM*, 426). The image of the narrator arrested in action, with his foot in the air each time, suggests that the deanimation of the doll (its fantasized and real disfiguration and reconversion into dead matter) leads not only to the death of its human operator but also to the deanimation of its human witness, freezing him in his attempt to destroy the object as if to foreground his complicity. Violence here takes the symbolic form of the body's arrested motion, as opposed to its mobilization; moreover, it is aggression towards the animated object that results directly in bodily harm and injury, and not, however symbolically disturbing it may have been, the object's animation itself. Once the narrator confronts the possibility that this aggression might have been misplaced, the deanimated doll, as an ambiguous symbol of both life and death, oppression and survival, becomes a burden he feels compelled to protect and safeguard, carried in his briefcase along with a chainlink given to him by former slave Brother Tarp.

Without losing sight of the seriousness of this scene from Ellison's novel, I want to conclude by interrogating the possibility of foreclosing comic animation altogether as a strategy for representing nonwhite characters, for which one *Village Voice* critic argues in his *PJs* review: "While I don't believe that any technique should be rejected out of

hand, I might make an exception for claymation . . . whose golliwog aspects come unpleasantly front and center when used to depict nonwhites, as here."[37] This argument for rejecting animation entirely in the depiction of racially marked characters hinges on a reference to the technique's propensity for the grotesque, a stylistics grounded in crudeness and distortion. Yet in the last *PJs* episode aired by Fox prior to the show's cancellation and subsequent move to currently "more black" Warner Brothers, the show's writers seemed to offer a direct response to this critical position, in a moment I think of as the episode's "lump" scene. In this episode, a "Christmas Special" broadcast on 17 December 1999, two of the Hilton-Jacobs residents, Thurgood's Chicano chess partner Sanchez and his Korean brother-in-law Jimmy, rummage in the basement to find makeshift supplies for the project's annual Christmas pageant. Faced with the lack of an actual baby Jesus doll for the nativity scene, Sanchez pulls a lumpy, crudely anthropomorphized object out of a box. The object resembles a Mr. Potato Head toy but on closer inspection seems to be an actual potato, or, rather, a claymation or foamation replica of an actual potato, with eyes, nose, and lips loosely arranged on its surface to resemble a face. Sanchez suggests using the potato as a replacement for the absent Jesus figurine. As Jimmy skeptically responds, "I don't know—this thing is pretty freaky. It might scare children!" we see Thurgood's head appear in the right background, symmetrically juxtaposed with the potato in the left foreground. The parallel between the show's star and the clay blob is reinforced by the manner in which the camera lingers on this shot.

Recalling the invisible man's repeated description of Clifton's puppet as "obscene" (*IM*, 428), Jimmy's description of the clay-like, crudely humanized object as "pretty freaky" seems deliberately aimed at the show's detractors, implicitly equating charges of the program's antiblack characterization to a fearful overreaction to crudely anthropomorphized objects in general, regardless of any social identity assigned to them. This comment is reinforced by a later moment in the same episode—one as crudely deconstructive as the lump seems crudely animated—which highlights the same principles of disjunction and detachability at work in the scene of animation from *Invisible Man*. In a moment of distress compelling Thurgood to pray to the Hilton-Jacobs's baby Jesus substitute (the potato), he anticlimatically discovers that he has to reattach and rearrange its facial features first, since all of these parts have slid off the lumpy object onto the

floor. Slippery-mouth syndrome, once again. The last Fox *PJs* episode thus offered its audience a little *mise en abyme* of its own mode of production, in which the crudeness and distortion attributed to its foamation characters become hyperbolized in a very poorly animated potato.

We have returned full circle, then, to Yau's "foul lump." And here I would argue that in spite of the racial connotations that continue to haunt *animation* in all its vicissitudes, from the affect of liveliness to the legacy of animated cartoons, *The PJs* and its slippery-mouth effects serve as useful reminders that crudeness and distortion, in their capacity to promulgate the "obscene" or the "pretty freaky" have been factors directly enabling antiracist critique in numerous cultural productions, ranging from the work of visual artists Kara Walker and Michael Ray Charles, both of whom controversially further exaggerate ugly racial exaggerations, to poet Chris Chen's *Uncle Chen's Oriental Slapstick* and, of course, "Genghis Chan: Private Eye."[38]

As a series of seven numbered poems each bearing the same title, Yau's format demands that each individual poem's relationship to the name "Genghis Chan" be reconsidered as the sequence unfolds, like a succession of identically captioned (but visually different) pictures or cartoon panels. The mechanical reproductiveness suggested by this repetitive, serial format reinforces the link between Yau's poems and the medium of film and television, as already implied by the title's explicit reference to the animated cartoon and live-action versions of Charlie Chan. At first, the name in the titles clearly seems to designate the poem's first-person speaker, an "I" whose overtly stylized, hard-boiled language suggests a subjectivity that is always already character or type—perhaps even a cartoonish type produced not just by a particular filmic or televisual genre but by a filmic or televisual medium: "I am just another particle cloud gliding on the screen / . . . . / I am the owner of one pockmarked tongue / I park it on the hedge between sure bets and bad business" (*RS*, 194). Like a projected mass of photons, the "I" described as "just another particle cloud gliding on the screen" inhabits a landscape marked by Yau's typically surreal imagery, which persistently disrupts and transforms the topos of 1930s and 1940s crime fiction: "I was floating through a cross section / with my dusty wine glass when she entered."

It was late
and we were getting jammed in deep.

I was on the other side, staring at
the snow covered moon pasted above the park.
A foul lump started making promises in my voice. (*RS*, 189)

The very first poem in the "Genghis Chan" serial thus ends by perpetuating a confusion between human subjects and inhuman objects: Is the last line foregrounding the lumpishness of the speaker or the speakerliness of lumps? In contrast to the romantic lyric tradition, in which animation conventionally takes the form of apostrophe, animation here depends on an inversion of the romantic rhetorical device: instead of a subject throwing voice into an inhuman entity in order to anthropomorphize it, or turn this object into another subject who can be addressed ("O Rose!"), we have a nonhuman object that becomes animated by usurping the human speaker's voice from a position inside the human's body. Yet the result of this ambiguous moment of animation results in another slippery-mouth effect. For in appropriating the "I"'s voice and agency, the lump immediately questions the connection between the proper name *Genghis Chan* and the poem's first-person speaker; perhaps it is not Genghis who is speaking in all the poems that follow but, instead, the foul entity residing in his throat? It is key that this theft of the "I"'s voice takes place in the first poem; as the series progresses, moreover, the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the speaker becomes increasingly pronounced. Hence the series culminates with a poem in which the "I" vanishes completely, replaced by the second-person "You" in a series of commands: "You will grasp someone's tongue with your teeth and pull / You will prefer the one that bleeds on the carpet / to the one that drools on your sleeve" (*RS*, 195). By the conclusion of the series, then, we can no longer be certain who is speaking in the poem or what is being referred to by its title. (Who is Genghis Chan? Is Genghis Chan a who or a what?) We can be sure, however, of the discontinuity between the human speaker and his own voice and body. Hence, if the proper name in the series title stands for neither person nor thing but for a specific relationship—the discontinuity that manifests between the speaker and his voice, between a body and its tongue, and between a poem and its title—*Genghis Chan* could be described as a term that designates animation's ability to undermine its traditional status as a technology producing unified racialized subjects. And since this relation of discontinuity intensifies as Yau's sequence progresses, what it seems to offer in its totality is less a portrait of someone named

Genghis Chan than a flicker-book-like demonstration of the technique of Genghis Channing.

Like the unintended surplus animation in *The PJs*, which resulted from a racialized body part becoming increasingly detached from its fixed position the more it was made to speak, "Genghis Chan: Private Eye" culminates in two disembodied sites of vocalization: a tongue parked on a hedge, another bleeding on the carpet or (less preferably) drooling on a sleeve. Thus while undeniably grotesque, Yau's reanimation of the always already animated, racialized body ultimately pits a kind of material elasticity against the conceptual rigidity of racial stereotypes, recalling the "sponge," a blob-like object similar to the tongue and particle cloud to which the speaker earlier likens himself. Given this combination of elasticity and self-discontinuity, "Genghis Channing" might be described as a practice of threatening one's own limits, or the roles in which one is captured and defined, not by transcending these limits from above but by inventing new ways of inhabiting them.[39]

Like the scenes from *Invisible Man* and *The PJs*, then, Yau's series ultimately suggests that racial stereotypes and clichés, cultural images that are perversely both dead and alive, can be critically interrogated not only by making them more dead (say, by attempting to stop their circulation) but also by reanimating them. Thus while animatedness and its affective cousins (liveliness, vigor, and zest) remain ugly categories of feeling reinforcing the historically tenacious construction of racialized subjects as excessively emotional, bodily subjects, they might also be thought of as categories of feeling that highlight animation's status as a nexus of contradictions and as a technology with the capacity to generate unanticipated social meanings and effects—as when the routine manipulation of racialized bodies on screen results in an unsuspected liveliness undermining animation's traditional role in constituting bodies *as* raced. Thus, as an affective spectacle that Garrison finds "thrilling," Stowe "impassioning," and Ellison's narrator "obscene," animation calls for new ways of understanding the technologizing of the racialized body as well as the uneasy differential between types and stereotypes—if only through a slippery-mouth method riskily situated, like Genghis Chan's parked tongue, in the uncertain territory between "sure bets and bad business."

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Notes

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1 John Yau, "Genghis Chan: Private Eye," in *Radiant Silhouette: New and Selected Work, 1974–1988* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), 189–95; further references to *Radiant Silhouette* will be cited parenthetically in the text as *RS*.

2 Robert Stonum, "Surviving Figures," in *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst: Univ. of Massachussetts Press, 1984), 199, 204.

3 For a cultural history of the "ubiquitous Latino mouse" and some of his more contemporary cousins, see William Anthony Nericcio, "Autopsy of a Rat: Odd, Sundry Parables of Freddy Lopez, Speedy Gonzales, and other Chicano/Latino Marionettes Prancing around Our First World Emporium," *camera obscura* 37 (January 1996): 189–237. (Note how Nericcio's title cannily deadens the liveliness of this animated racial character.)

4 William Lloyd Garrison, preface to Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Mentor, 1987), 248 (my emphasis). Further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as "P."

5 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life among the Lowly* (1852; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1981), 78; further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *UTC*.

6 Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophe," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), 135.

7 Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," in *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), 185.

8 Rey Chow, "Postmodern Automatons," in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), 61; further references will be cited parenthetically in the text as "PA."

9 Rosalind Krauss, "'The Rock': William Kentridge's Drawings for Projection," *October* 92 (spring 2000): 11.

10 Ibid.

11 Sergei Eisenstein, "II," *Eisenstein on Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1986), 35; cited in Krauss, "'The Rock,'" 16.

12 Sasha Torres is here paraphrasing Jane Feuer (Sasha Torres, "King TV,"

in *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States*, ed. Sasha Torres (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1998), 141; see Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—An Anthology*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1983), 12–21.

13 Torres, introduction to *Living Color*, 2–3.

14 Ibid., 1.

15 Feuer, "Concept of Live Television," 14, my emphasis; cited in Torres, "King TV," 141.

16 The 1970s animation comedy *Fat Albert*, which featured African Americans in the inner city, preceded *The PJs*, but it was not a prime-time evening program aimed at adult audiences. Cancelled by Fox at the start of the 1999–2000 season, *The PJs* moved in the fall of 2000 to the Warner Brothers network, which during its inception in the late 1990s repeated Fox's effort at the beginning of the decade to establish itself as a major network through niche programming. The Warner Brothers network (WB) currently seems to be following Fox's pattern of dropping much of its African American programming as the network gains an increasing foothold in the market. For a history of this marketing strategy, see Kristal Brent Zook, *Color by Fox: The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999). After a short-lived revival on WB, *The PJs* was cut from the fall 2001 season.

17 Kweisi Mfume, keynote address, 90th annual NAACP convention, July 1999; cited in Greg Braxton, "Is TV Diversity Drive Slowing? NAACP's New Drawn-Out Strategy Causes Concern among Some Supporters," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 1999, sec. F.

18 "Critics Accuse 'The PJs' of Having Anti-Black Message," *CNN Showbiz Today*, narr. Jim Moret, CNN, 16 February 1999 (Transcript #99021600V17); also quoted in Jim Moret, "Despite Strong Ratings, Foes Still Protest 'The PJs,'" CNN, 17 February 1999: *CNN Online*, Lexis-Nexis, 10 November 1999.

19 Spike Lee, quoted in Richard Huff, "Murphy Back in 'PJs' Fold: Ends Rift after Fox Apologizes for Its Handling of the Series," *New York Daily News*, 2 July 1999, 120.

20 Philip Brian Harper, "Extra-Special Effects: Televisual Representation and the Claims of 'the Black Experience,'" in *Living Color*, ed. Torres, 64. Harper makes similar arguments in "Around 1969: Televisual Representation and the Complication of the Black Subject," in *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture*, ed. Werner Sollers and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), 265–74.

21 Harper, "Around 1969," in *Black Columbiad*, 268.

22 Harper, "Extra-Special Effects," in *Living Color*, ed. Torres, 71.

23 On producers Norman Lear, Bud Yorkin, and issue-oriented, racial situation comedy in the 1970s, see Daryl Hamamoto, *Nervous Laughter: Tele-*

vision Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology (New York: Praeger, 1989). See also Jannette L. Dates, "Commercial Television," in *Split Image: African Americans in the Mass Media*, ed. Jannette L. Dates and William Barlow (Washington, D.C.: Howard Univ. Press, 1993), 290–95; and J. Fred MacDonald, *Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television since 1948* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1992), 181–94.

24 Armond White, "*The PJs*, conceived by Eddie Murphy," *New York Press*, 10–16 February 1999, 10; further references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text as "*TPJS*."

25 See Zook, *Color by Fox*.

26 Stanley Cavell, "Types: Cycles as Genres," in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), 33.

27 Recent critical reevaluations have usefully complicated the politics of blackface minstrelsy with analyses of gender and class, especially in light of postmodern theories of identity and performance (see Eric Lott's ground-breaking *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993]). But the comedic representation of racialized subjects remains a vexed issue, impossible to detach from the ways these representations have been historically deployed in conjunction with actual acts of violence (institutional, symbolic, and physical) against racialized bodies. In the wake of nineteenth-century minstrelsy and the revitalization of its traditions in early radio and television (CBS's *Amos 'n' Andy* being the key example), the problematic relation that develops between the representation of blackness and comedy resurfaces in ongoing cultural debates over the conspicuous lack of dramatic roles for black performers in mainstream entertainment today, as well as in recent critical studies of the black television sitcom. Zook thus identifies the "battle for drama" as a key element unifying black-produced television shows of the early nineties (*Color by Fox*, 80). The idea of a deliberate move away from comedy as an act of ideological resistance is taken further in Robin R. Means Coleman's indictment of virtually all post–*Cosby Show* African American programs involving clownish figures or physical humor as "Neo-Minstrelsy" (*African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor* [New York: Garland, 1998], 69). For Coleman, this category includes *Martin*, *Living Single*, and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, shows that Zook views as challenging the notion of authentic African American identity by depicting blackness as a site of cultural contestation and struggle, rather than a fixed or unitary subject position. In contrast, Coleman argues that these programs, including the numerous comedies now airing on UPN and WB (which copied Fox's now abandoned project of targeting black audiences in the initial attempt to establish a niche in the television market) are merely revamped versions of *Amos 'n' Andy*, following the 1950s sitcom in revitalizing minstrelsy stereotypes from the antebellum era, including Stepin Fetchit, Uncle Tom, Mammy, and Sapphire.

Much scholarship has been done on the relationship between nineteenth-century minstrelsy and black situation comedy. In addition to MacDonald's *Blacks and White TV* and Zook's *Color by Fox*, see Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness"* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1995); and Coleman, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy*. For an informative cultural history of *Amos 'n' Andy*, see Martin Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

28 See, for instance, Kristin Thompson's "Implications of the Cel Animation Technique," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (New York: St. Martin's, 1980), 106–20; further references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text as "ICAT."

29 For an abbreviated history of racial stereotypes in major studio animation, see Karl F. Cohen, "Racism and Resistance: Stereotypes in Animation," in *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997), 49–76.

30 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 421–22, my emphasis; further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically as *IM*.

31 My point here echoes and is indebted to an argument made by N. Katherine Hayles about our relationship to virtual creatures (see "Simulating Narratives: What Virtual Creatures Can Teach Us," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (autumn 1999): 15, 1–26.

32 In thinking about how Ellison's animation scene might illuminate issues raised by *The PJs* and its critical reception, it is interesting to note that when Eddie Murphy first conceived the idea for the show, his original intention was to use puppets rather than stop-motion cinematography to represent the characters (Sue Conklin, [Will Vinton Studios], e-mail to the author, 9 December 1999). The difference between characters animated in the form of marionettes pulled on strings, like Clifton's dancing doll, and characters animated by stop-motion photography seems to be a difference in their capacity to create an illusion of independence or autonomy. At a purely visual level, stop-motion characters seem less manipulated than puppets. As Conklin informed me, convincing Murphy to use stop motion in lieu of marionettes thus entailed persuading him that "it would be better than puppetry for making the characters one step closer to 'real.'" It may be of interest here to note that one of the roles that contributed to Murphy's popularity in the early eighties was his *Saturday Night Live* character "Grown-up Gumby"—a perverse live-action reproduction of television's most famous dimensional stop-motion character. In conjunction with this interest in puppets, Murphy's shift from playing "realistic," street-talking characters in his strictly live-action films from the 1980s (*Trading Places, Beverly Hills Cop*, *Beverly Hills Cop II* and *III*, *48 Hours*, *Another 48 Hours*) to emphatically cartoonish characters during

the late 1990s and in films that incorporated digital animation and numerous special effects to foreground the body's "plasmaticness" (*The Nutty Professor* [a remake of the Jerry Lewis original], *The Nutty Professor 2*, and, of course, *The PJs*) is a career turn worth thinking about in light of the issues this essay raises.

33 Henri Bergson's essay on laughter is notorious for including, as part of its analysis, the racist question "And why does one laugh at the Negro?" ("Laughter," in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher [New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956], 86).

34 Conklin, e-mail to the author, 9 December 1999.

35 Peter Boyd (Will Vinton Studios), e-mail to the author, 10 December 1999.

36 On this strategy of excessive submission, see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), 5.

37 Tom Carson, "Darndest Things," *Village Voice*, 2 February 1999, 137.

38 I am grateful to Eric Lott for introducing me to Charles's work. It is also worth noting that the cover of *Uncle Chen's Oriental Slapstick* (Incidental Press, 2001), which reproduces a NOI-ZEE BOX brand fireworks label, features cartoon "Chinese" figures.

39 As Cavell notes, "It can be *internal* to a character that he threaten his own limit" (*The World Viewed*, 159, my emphasis).