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Exploring the force of the moving image: A comparison between live-action pornography and Japanese adult animation

RESUMÉ

Denne artikel udforsker forskellene mellem live-action pornografi og japansk animationsporno. Målet er at vise, hvordan det levende billedes kraft virker i samspil med de obskure temaer og indhold i japansk animationsporno, samt hvordan dette er med til at skabe et særligt tilskuerforhold, der er gennemgående forskelligt fra traditionel filmpornografi. Artiklen forsøger samtidig at give et overblik over, hvordan animationsstudier med Thomas Lamarre og pornostudier med Linda Williams teoretisk kan bringes sammen i målet om at forklare animationsfilmens pornografiske potentiale. Hvorfor kan animation tilbyde en særlig pornooplevelse?

ABSTRACT

This article explores the differences between live-action pornography and Japanese adult animation. It aims to show how the forces of the moving image are employed in conjunction with the highly unusual content of adult animation, thereby constituting a viewing position that differs from that of live-action pornography. It also provides an overview of some of the important stances in both animation studies, drawing upon Thomas Lamarre, and porn studies, drawing upon Linda Williams, and how these fields can be understood in relation to one another when seeking to explain the pornographic potential of animation. Why does animation offer a particular pornographic experience?

EMNEORD

Pornografi, animation, Japan, mediets potentiale, tilskuerforhold

KEYWORDS

Pornography, animation, Japan, medium potentiality, viewing position

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Introduction

What is it we wish to see when we watch pornography? It is evident from the sheer diversity one finds in the bulk of pornographic productions now available on DVD or streamed over the Internet that pornographic preferences depend greatly on individual tastes. A general assumption is that pornography is closely associated with the direct, graphic display of other people's naked bodies (Williams, 1990, 2). But what about animated pornography? When the body is drawn instead of recorded, what is the result for the pornographic experience? And how are the filmic forces of Japanese adult animation instrumental in structuring this experience?

This article seeks to outline how animation harnesses the force of the moving image when dealing with the subject of pornography and how this is done differently than in live action. This article concentrates exclusively on Japanese adult animations mainly because films within this genre have gained great popularity over recent years (Ortega-Brena, 2009, 19). Consequently, the study is located between two sub-fields of film studies (porn studies and animation studies) and attempts to comment on both fields independently.

It is important to do justice to Mariana Ortega-Brena (2009), who has already discussed the viewing experience of adult anime.[1] However, Ortega-Brena downplays the importance of the technological base of the production of Japanese animation, and although some of the notions here might coincide with those of Ortega-Brena, this article will present a completely different approach by focusing on how adult anime utilises the forces of the moving image.[2]

Specifically, this article takes a technological perspective to compare the general assumptions presented by Linda Williams (1990) about live-action

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[1] Japanese adult animation goes by many names (e.g. hentai, ecchi, or adult anime) as it is not a defined genre. In this article, I choose to use the term 'adult anime'.

[2] The term 'force of the moving image' covers the potential offered by the film medium. This was originally presented by Thomas Lamarre, with the purpose of focusing on the technological base of production without succumbing to technological determinism. (Lamarre, 2009).

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pornography with Thomas Lamarre's (2009) theory of how Japanese animation employs the forces of the moving. I propose that adult anime offers a fundamentally different film experience than that provided by live-action pornography, and I locate this difference at the site of technological determination in accordance with Thomas Lamarre's conceptualisation of Japanese animation.

First, this article seeks to outline the points of departure within both porn studies and animation studies in order to illustrate how the technological base of production influence the creative potentials of each area respectively (animation in general and live-action pornography). Second, Lamarre and his concepts of anime aesthetics are introduced to provide an understanding of the affordances realised by the particular techniques for creating movement and image in anime. Third, a discussion of Lamarre's notions through the Deleuzian concept of the time-image is brought forth in order to attribute the animation techniques of anime to a more general force of the moving image. Fourth, the article considers some examples of conjunctions between the animation techniques and pornographic content found in adult anime. This is done by analysing selected scenes from the adult anime series *Cool Devices* (1995). For a conclusive discussion, the article arrives at Ortega-Brena and her concept of *the double voyeur*, which she regards as summing up the viewing position imposed by the adult anime genre. This article suggests a different viewing position offered by the genre, which can be fully explicated by comparing the technological base of live-action pornography and adult anime and how the force of the moving image is directed differently within to two categories of pornography.

Finally, the article includes a short presentation of a few other cultural phenomena related to adult anime that resonate well with the suggested viewing position.

What is the problem with animation?

The headline might be slightly suggestive, but it is important to note that animation as a medium-specific mode of production has generally been overlooked in film theory. One of the major reasons for this is that many renowned theoreticians who have pondered the general essence or phenomenology of cinema have either not considered animation as belonging

to true cinema or have located animation as nothing more than a specific style within cinema. The former tendency includes such classic authors as André Bazin (1958) and Siegfried Kracauer (1960) whereas the latter consists of many of the modern writers, such as Noel Carroll (1996), David Bordwell (2004), Kristin Thompson (1980), Torben Grodal (2009), and even Gilles Deleuze (1986) to name a few.[3] A good example is Noel Carroll's famous article 'Defining the Moving Image' (1996), which spends a great deal of time explaining the difference between cinema and binoculars but does not offer the slightest clue as to how animation might fit within his definition of the moving image. The point would indeed be debatable and even more so because Carroll seeks to define 'the moving image' and not the more historically determined 'cinema'.

In this article, I intend to place great emphasis on the technological base of animation, which is completely different from that of traditional cinema.

Trembling confessions: The point of departure in porn studies

Animation studies and porn studies may be sub-fields of film studies that have not yet become official academic disciplines, but there is still a considerable amount of literature concerning both subjects, which means that one must be precise in determining a certain point of departure. In this section, I will outline the specific theoretical framework that will be used in the subsequent analysis and discussion.

Pornography is intrinsically connected to the human body. This is rarely disputed and is therefore the starting point of Linda Williams' concept of *the frenzy of the visible*, which she introduced in her seminal work *Hard Core* (1990). Williams, in her studies, draws heavily on feminist, Marxist, and psychoanalytic frameworks as well as provides a technological and medium-specific approach, which can be used separately. The frenzy of the visible is

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[3] It is not that none of the names listed above mention animation, e.g. Torben Grodal (2009) explains why animation is especially appealing to children, Gilles Deleuze (1986) mentions that animation relies on a Cartesian rather than a Euclidean geometry, and Kristin Thompson (1980) has even delved into the question of why animation is such a petite genre within cinema. But what they all have in common is that they treat animation as a style or genre that adheres to the same rules and characteristics as the whole of mainstream cinema.

seen by Williams as a logical outcome of an ever-increasing development of technologies, which help to accurately document visible phenomena, culminating in the invention of cinema (Williams, 1990, 36). This leads the way to looking at pornography in relation to its historical context as well as the medium-specific forces that drive its production. With the frenzy of the visible as the base for pornographic production, Williams argues that the genre's rhetoric is to convince the spectator that he/she is watching an indexical, measurable moment of true pleasure (Williams, 1990, 268). Although it employs a wide variety of cultural elements, gender roles, and narratives, live-action pornography is rooted in a technology with the power to show real bodies, real movement, and real pleasure.

> "Hard core desires assurance that it is witnessing not the voluntary performance of feminine pleasure, but its involuntary confession. The woman's ability to fake the orgasm that the man can never fake (at least according to certain standards of evidence) seems to be at the root of all the genre's attempts to solicit what it can never be sure of: the out-of-control confession of pleasure, a hard core 'frenzy of the visible'" (Williams, 1990, 50).

Drawing on Edward Muybridge's photographic experiments with moving bodies (1886), Williams marks the link between the film cameras' ability to show true, scientifically accurate movement and live-action pornography, which uses this ability to display the uncontrollable bodily movements of orgasmic women. Of course, this promise of uncontrollable spasms is not necessarily upheld in a single film, but it is the attempt of the genre to solicit the confession of sexual pleasure from the female body in the same way as it does with the male body, which is why male ejaculation in pornography is called *the money shot* (the promise that you get your money's worth).

As Noel Carroll notes, one should be careful, when imposing a medium-specific perspective, not to reduce the spectacle of the medium to the mechanical simplicity of a Phillips screwdriver (Carroll, 1999, 324). In this article, I view the indexicality of movements and involuntary confessions of bodies not as necessarily resulting from the administration of the cinematic apparatus but instead as a force of the moving image used specifically and intentionally in live-action pornography. This avoids the claim of

technological determinism, which deemphasises the creative choices made by filmmakers of individual films.

Taking porn studies from behind: The point of departure in animation studies

In order to understand the role of adult anime within porn studies, it is productive to read Linda Williams from the perspective of animation studies.

Animation studies is a sub-field of film studies but is nevertheless a field with a number of major publications that have, over the years, created some defining borders around the subject of animation outside of mainstream film theory. Maureen Furniss (1998), Paul Wells (1998), and Alan Cholodenko (1991) are among the main contributors, and they have all been concerned with the question: What is animation? This question, however, is mostly posed as a means of better categorising the great variety of films that combine animation techniques with photorealistic cinema production, e.g. puppet animation, CGI, rotoscoping, motion capture, etc. In this article, I will not rely much on the results of these discussions, as it is widely accepted (Thompson (1980), Furniss (1998), Wells (1998), Lamarre (2009), Cholodenko (1991)) that the drawing of figures and scenery onto paper or cells with the intent of creating moving images can be placed in the category of animation and that it therefore relies on a production technique that is fundamentally different from that of traditional cinema. To illustrate the main point of this difference, I will invoke the famous quote from Norman McLaren: "Animation is not the art of drawings that move, but the art of movements that are drawn. What happens between each frame is more important than what exists on each frame" (Furniss, 1998, 3). This is where the point of departure of animation studies within porn studies becomes apparent. Although McLaren's quote is quite simple (and perhaps even oversimplistic), it raises an utterly important point as it overturns the understanding of movement that Linda Williams so strongly ties to the force of the moving image in live-action pornography. The important aspect of Muybridge's series of photos showing a horse trotting with all four legs above the ground is not the photo itself but that the movement was *recorded* and *not* created. Hence, a drawing depicting the same horse in the same position would not have served very well as evidence. So in Williams' understanding, the will to expose the uncontrollable movements of

the female body, which drives the production of live-action pornography, must ultimately lose some of its power when introduced into the production of animation as the viewer knows from the start that the promise of truly uncontrollable spasms, true sexual pleasure, can never be upheld.

Creating movement in Japanese animation

McLaren's emphasis on movements that are drawn elucidates an important point of departure in animation theory. However, to capture the full picture of the forces of animation, the concept must be expanded. Thomas Lamarre, with his book *The Anime Machine* (2009), has supplied a theoretical work that conceptualises how (especially postmodern) Japanese animation and what has become known as 'anime' channel the force of the moving image in a unique way. The theoretical focus lies on the technological base of production and the link between technology and the aesthetic properties of anime. Although Lamarre is careful not to succumb to technological determinism, his approach has been criticised by researchers such as animation scholar Ian Condry (2013). Condry suggests that Lamarre's focus could be overly technological and ignore some of the cultural perspectives surrounding the industry and the general mode of production of anime in Japan (Condry, 2013, 42). However, Lamarre's approach is fitting for this article since the purpose here is to explore how the technological differences between live-action and animation contribute to (rather than determine!) a specific pornographic experience offered by anime.

Anyone who has seen anime – especially the more lo-fi, cheap productions – will have noticed that it is not animated in the same way as the typical Disney feature animation. Stylistically, anime is often associated with images that are more static or with only part of the image in motion, much as in the old North American *The Flintstones* and *Top Cat* cartoons (1960;1961), where only the characters change, while the same background is used over and over. According to Lamarre, anime is indeed characterised by taking limited animation[4] to the extreme, which is also referred to as *hyperlimited animation*.[5]

[4] The type of animation that often involves fewer than 12 frames per second.

[5] Hyperlimited animation is specifically associated with Studio Gainax and director Anno Hideaki, who most famously created the anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995).

But this is not just a less expensive way of creating animation, although the low cost is indeed a motivating factor. Something is amiss, for words like *static*, *lo-fi*, *still image*, and *limited* seem unable to describe the evident dynamism and soaring popularity of anime productions. A huge part of Lamarre's theoretical project consists of a thorough analysis of how anime deploys the force of the moving image in a certain way, by means of both special techniques and artistic designs.

Where live-action cinema is usually created by recording 24 images per second through the monocular lens of a camera, animation is often made using an animation stand, a device that allows the animator to place a number of drawings on a flat surface and record a single frame with a fixed camera. Typically, the animator records between 6 (hyperlimited animation) and 18 frames (full animation) per second. What Lamarre emphasises are the affordances created by the *multiplanar image* of the animation stand, where the different elements or layers of the image are separated onto individual planes, which can then be moved independently.[6] The space between the planes of images is called *the animetic interval*. As Lamarre says of the animation stand: "It channels the force implicit in the succession of moving images into the gap between the planes of the image – through the animetic interval" (Lamarre, 2009, 303). Disney has traditionally sought to close the gap between the planes of the image, thereby creating a more photorealistic animation style, whereas anime, according to Lamarre, more often blows open the gap by moving the different planes or elements of the image more loosely, thus contributing to a *dehierarchised image*. For anyone less familiar with anime, the same technique is used most obviously in the intro of *The Simpsons* (1989 -), where the foreground and middle ground move in an eerily cartoonish and autonomous way.

In anime, movement is not always created by drawing the movements of the characters but much more often by moving the characters across planes or dragging planes past characters to produce the sense of relative motion. For

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[6] Concretely, this separation of planes corresponds to the different layers of transparent celluloid stacked on top of each other in traditional cel animation, but conceptually, the same thing happens in contemporary digital animation.

all Japanese animation, this technical determination has produced an obvious tendency toward characters flying, gliding, floating, or hovering in the air.

This article will specifically be concerned with the loosely constructed and dehierarchised image offered by the technical traditions of anime, which will be paired with the Deleuzian *time-image* and discussed in greater detail in the next section.

The time-image and bodily relations in adult anime

As mentioned above, the role of the body in films and especially in pornography has been extensively analysed and debated. Linda Williams makes the analogy between hard-core pornography and Hollywood musicals as they are both concerned with "moving bodies" (Williams, 1990).

One must tread carefully when analysing the role of the body in adult anime. As Joanna Bouldin (2004) has illustrated, using the film phenomenology of Vivian Sobschack (1992), the "somatic intelligibility" of the viewing experience can be aligned with the embodied film experience, which is why the animated body should not be disregarded as something without corporeal effect on the viewer. We can experience the sensation of warm lips when watching two animated characters kiss. On the other hand, we should not stress the unity of animation and live action created by the subjective film experience, thus running the risk of completely subsuming animation under the category of cinema.

As in live-action pornography, the focus in adult anime is on the sexual pleasure of the female body, which means that much of the content of adult anime consists of women trembling and moaning. But as I emphasised earlier, this trembling in animation does not have the same origin as in live action because the movement is created and not recorded. I therefore propose that the excitement involved in the viewing experience of adult anime is derived from a different channelling of the force of the moving image than the one used in live-action pornography, which relies on indexicality and recorded movement.

Within animation studies, Lamarre ascribes Japanese hyperlimited animation to the Deleuzian concept of *the time-image* (Lamarre, 2009, 185). As Deleuze associates the emergence of the time-image with the end of WWII and the

beginning of Italian Neorealism, so Lamarre sees full animation as classic, pertaining more to the movement image and limited animation as modern, more strongly tied to the time-image (Lamarre, 2009, 200). A way to better understand Lamarre here is to compare his assertion with Deleuze' analysis of Michelangelo Antonioni's films.[7] I draw here on the Deleuze scholar Richard Rushton:

> "One of the key issues Deleuze points towards is that we never get to know Antonioni's characters *from the inside*. Instead, we only get to see them in parallel with other objects of the landscape: Buildings, streets, the stock exchange, a nuclear power station (…) and so on. The humans here are composed *as* objects, as though they were merely other objects in a world full of objects" (Rushton, 2012, 66).

This way of seeing the time-image as an image of parallel objects is very similar to Lamarre's notion of the aforementioned dehierarchised image, where objects are spread out across the image. According to Lamarre, anime often employs what is called an *exploded view* (Lamarre, 2009, 120). The exploded view is what serves to dehierarchise the elements of the image and spread them across its surface, like an instructional drawing that shows how to put your newly purchased cupboard together. Although the image may create the impression of depth, it is a truly flattened image, where all of the moving forces are brought right to the surface of the screen.

Films that invoke the time-image have a less clear direction for the viewer, in contrast to the movement-image, where the film is always moving toward a unitary conclusion. The autonomy of the image caused by the exploded view and the dehierarchised image is very similar to Deleuze' notion of "a 'camera autonomy' where it stops following the movement of the characters or directing its own movement at them, to carry out constant reframings as functions of thought" (Deleuze, 1989, 24). The way the camera serves to break relations between screen elements in the time-image, as mentioned here by Deleuze, can be seen as analogous to Lamarre's adoption of the time-image

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[7] Michelangelo Antonioni was an Italian film director referred to by Bordwell and Thompson as one of the great auteurs of the years following Italian Neo-realism (Bordwell, Thompson, 2010, 392).

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for the hyperlimited animation of anime: "The time-image is the nonrelation at the heart of all cinematic relations and relationality, which opens them to thought" (Lamarre, 2009, 199).

So, within the technological perspective of this article, the openness created by the specific camera aesthetics of the time-image in live-action cinema can be introduced into animation as openness created by certain manipulations of the multiplanar image, which are evident in the exploded view and dehierarchised image. In this way, adult anime creates an image that is much more open to the engaged viewer and simultaneously encourages him/her to explore the world of the fiction on his/her own terms.

During the remainder of this article, I will explore how this distinction within animation studies can be introduced into the field of porn studies and thereby further illuminate the force of the moving image in adult anime.

Narrative complexity, fantastic elements, and Japanese culture

Perhaps more noticeable than anything else is the fact that the narrative in the average adult anime series often goes beyond the rigid and minimal narratives of live-action pornography. Torben Grodal calls these minimal narratives "spicy teasers", which often employ stereotypical gender roles like nurse/patient or the fabled pizza delivery guy (Grodal, 2009). In adult anime, however, the viewer encounters a great variety of fantastic and sometimes almost overly complex narrative settings and characters.

Episode 8 of the adult anime series *Cool Devices* (1995) is set in a world where young women from earth are teleported to a planet in a strange galaxy far away to be used for sexual experimentation. The protagonist Maya is bought on the market by a Darth Vader-like man/robot hybrid, who wants to make her a sex slave. She then discovers that she is in fact a legendary druid warrior destined to save the galaxy but only if she can resist the advances of the evil empire and its ambition to make her a sex slave.

Even though some live-action porn movies employ slightly sophisticated narratives, they rarely employ as many fantastic and otherworldly elements as do *Cool Devices* and many other adult anime series (e.g. *Bible Black* (2001); *Legend of the Overfiend* (1989); *Twin Dolls* (1994); *Ride of the Valkyrie* (2006)). One explanation is that the adult anime genre evolved more naturally from

regular anime and therefore has a tendency to adapt many of the typical characters and settings of regular anime productions. Live-action pornography, as Williams noted, evolved out of so-called stag films, which originated more from a desire to show the shapes and functions of that which is usually unseen than as an artistic mode of production (Williams, 1990, 59). It is important to note that both adult anime and regular anime have strong ties to Japanese culture in general. Ortega-Brena notes how the old erotic painting tradition called *Shunga* can be seen as a natural forerunner to adult anime. Furthermore, she illustrates how Shinto religion and other animistic beliefs can be found directly within the sexual discourse of many narratives in adult anime (Ortega-Brena, 2009, 20). There are important cultural aspects – especially concerning religion, gender roles, and censorship – that have been influential in shaping adult anime production, but this is outside the scope of the present article and will not be addressed further. The technological perspective brought forth here thus does not imply causality between the technological base of production and the actual content. The narrative and the *mise-en-scène* are not determined by how the force of the moving image is applied, but this article argues that the content in some cases becomes engendered and positively reinforced by the specific animation techniques mentioned above.

These complex narratives, with their fantastic elements, do not serve as just a frame around the subsequent pornography; they have consequences for the *mise-en-scène* of the explicit sex scenes. In Episode 8 of *Cool Devices*, Maya never has intercourse outright but is instead repeatedly tied up and penetrated by mechanical tubes, which serve as a surrogate penis. According to Williams, this "dehumanizing" of the male actor is not at all unusual in pornography, as the male actor functions as a surrogate for the male audience. One might say that this surrogate male actor is taken to the extreme in adult anime.

Tentacles and other surrogates

Many – including Torben Grodal, Slavoj Žižek, and Linda Williams – have noted the prominent role played by individual sex organs in pornography. Žižek mentions how hard-core pornography is able to break the unity of the body by focusing on the individual actions of body parts and thereby

constituting the autonomy of the organs. (Žižek, 2002, 152). Here, Žižek and Williams come together in their notion of "the speaking sex." Žižek claims that the autonomous organ is able to speak the inexorable truth about itself, a point with which Williams agrees, illustrating it with the 'money shot', which takes a special position by showing not the subjects' understanding of sexual pleasure but by speaking the unquestionable, absolute truth of the bodily action (Williams, 1990, 3). Again, the ability of the money shot to produce this definite proof of sexual pleasure is why it has taken on such an important role in live-action pornography. Williams treats the money shot as an important aspect of live-action pornography's goal of eliciting sexual pleasure, which is why this section will explore how adult anime deals with the role of male genitalia.

The money shot has nowhere near the same status in adult anime as it in mainstream pornography. This makes sense considering my earlier assertion of movement that is created and not recorded, with the result that animation fails to produce the proof of pleasure that empowers live-action pornography. I will now explore how other partial objects are engendered in adult anime in such a way that they can be seen as substitutes for the money shot.

Indeed, the use of tentacles seems to be one of the most curious and recurring elements in adult anime. We see images of women being grabbed, having their bodies turned upside down and twisted into extraordinary positions while massive waves of tentacles penetrate every orifice and encircle the breasts in the manner of a genuine boa constrictor. One of the classics of adult anime *Urotsukidöji: Legend of the Overfiend* (1989) employs a lot of this kind of tentacle sex, since the story includes numerous demon characters, who are explosively transformed into pulsating heaps of tentacles every time they get too excited.

There is a certain quality in the tentacle play that seems to resonate well with the flatness of the exploded view and dehierarchised image. This effect is most obvious in scenes in which the female body is spread across the screen and held in almost suspended animation while the tentacles explore every inch of her. The limited animation in these cases works very well to create images that are both dynamic and intriguing, by having characters dragged across the screen instead of having their movements drawn. This also corresponds with Lamarre's notion that the inactivity of characters found in

the time-image of limited animation does not afford stasis, but rather, a new kind of dynamism (Lamarre, 2009, 200).

In adult anime, the surrogate penis seems much more mobile and flexible than in live-action pornography. It can be attributed to any kind of tentacle-like object, be it a mechanical tube, an octopus, or even a snake. It can also be a more abstract version of an actual penis, as in Episode 1 of *Cool Devices*, where a man's genitals are represented as a shining rod of pure light. This mobility is taken to the extreme when the surrogate penis becomes attached to the woman, not simply as a kind of artificial paraphernalia but as a functioning penis. In a shocking twist at the end of Episode 8 of *Cool Devices*, the protagonist Maya is subjected to a series of grave electroshock treatments and out of her agony grows a penis. Maya can function as both man and woman, all depending on what the specific situation implies. From the perspective of traditional porn studies, this kind of doubling of the gender is rather remarkable for heterosexual porn. Yet this is not at all uncommon in the adult anime genre. Every time the animator needs the service of a male actor, he/she will just have a woman sprout out a penis (a particularly recurring element in e.g. *Bible Black* (2001) and *Legend of the Overfiend* (1989)).

The use of tentacles and attachable penises lies at the core of how adult anime implements the time-image in pornography. The scene in which Maya grows a penis shows the arduous procedure by exhibiting many different shots, e.g. close-up of eyes and mouth, illustrating Mayas affective responses to the treatment. The scene seems to resemble a perverse inversion of traditional intercourse, where instead of being penetrated by a penis, one grows out of her. It even concludes with the ejaculation of the penis, thus making the indiscernibility between male and female pleasure complete. Like the indiscernibility of positive/negative outcomes for the characters in Antonioni's films, we find in *Cool Devices* many scenes where it is not entirely clear whether Maya is experiencing agony or pleasure. As Deleuze notes, even the films of Antonioni that have tragic endings do not put the world as such in a negative light; rather, it is an objectified cinema that serves to reinstate our belief in the world (Deleuze, 1989, 204). The argument of this article is that the forces of the exploded view and dehierarchised image serve to lay bare the flat yet information-saturated world, where the truth of pleasure is found not in the measurable confession of body parts but lies

within the mystique of the vibrating pools of light in the eyes of the animated character while he/she is being dragged slowly across the screen.

Viewing position and pornographic experience

So what is it that the spectator of adult anime seeks?

My final arguments only partly agree with those of Ortega-Brena in determining the viewing position for adult animation. As she concludes:

> "This teetering indeterminacy between spaces, the desire and its source, ultimately constitutes an experience of erotic tension that, titillating and pleasurable as it could potentially be, also relentlessly announces our fantasizing onanism to our face" (Ortega-Brena, 2009, 29).

In sum, Ortega-Brena stresses that the animated image is more open to the viewer's imaginative participation as well as that the viewer takes on the role of a double voyeur, of watching the pornography through the eyes of the animator watching himself/herself drawing his/her own pictures. And therefore, according to Ortega-Brena, the watching of adult anime: "Requires a ludic sense of humor as well as an acute sense of irony" (Ortega-Brena, 2009, 29).

I propose that the viewing position and the pornographic experience are not so strongly determined by the double voyeur. This is not to say that there is no self-consciousness involved in watching adult anime, only that it imposes itself no more on the viewing experience than it does in live-action pornography, meaning that you need not possess an acute sense of humour and irony to have a full pornographic experience. As Žižek has noted, pornography, unlike, say, a medical documentary involving sex organs, openly returns the gaze to the viewer, thereby making him/her conscious of his/her voyeuristic position (Žižek, 1997, 227). According to Žižek, there is something fundamentally comical about pornography. The intimate sex act brought forth completely exposed necessitates an engaged viewer in order to avoid appearing comical (Ibid, 225). Live-action pornography might thus demand as much humour and irony as does adult anime.

Of course, it is possible for adult anime to incorporate situations that

explicitly return the gaze, for example by having a character suddenly address the viewer in the middle of a sex scene. However, the act of looking into the camera is done even more frequently in live-action pornography. A close up of the woman's eyes is a recurring shot in adult anime, but the eyes are rarely directed at the viewer, instead inviting him/her to actively transpose all of his/her own thoughts and fantasies onto the vibrating play of light on the screen.

The introduction of the time-image is important to make a distinct critique of Ortega-Brena. The time-image lends a more positive characteristic to adult anime, as it can be seen as creating an image that is truly open to thought, in contrast to Ortega-Brena's notion, where the openness of adult anime seems to become closed around itself by the reflectivity of the double voyeur position. In the dehierarchised image, in which the force of the moving image is brought to the surface by sliding and gliding the animated (mostly female) bodies across the screen or held floating in suspended animation, the viewing position is less that of a voyeur and more that of a participator. A participator in this sense means that the spectator is not following a story or observing a specific situation but is instead using the images to create his/her own world. And the dehierarchisation of elements in the exploded view is what supports this, as it helps to break down the immediate relationship between spectator and animator. As Lamarre has also noted, some anime productions create images that pertain to "personalizable" worlds, which encourage the spectator to, almost literally, pick apart the images and stich together their own fantasy (Lamarre, 2009, 147).

So how does the more participatory, personalisable, and less voyeuristic viewing position of adult anime compare to live-action pornography in terms of the specific sexual pleasure sought by the spectator? To answer this question, the notion of the time-image should be taken further within both animation studies and porn studies. Ortega-Brena's assertion that adult anime "announces our own fantasizing onanism to our face" seems located within implicit parameters of the movement-image. This happens because she does not consider the animation-specific forces that serve to create a more autonomous dehierarchised image rather than one structured by a closed, goal-oriented viewing position. The time-image created by adult anime must be reintroduced in porn studies and compared to Williams, which means that

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the concept of the indexicality of the image native to live-action pornography must simultaneously be read back into the animated time-image. The Deleuzian time-image relies as much on indexicality and photographic realism as does live-action pornography, and the effect of the time-image must thus be reevaluated within the animation perspective. One of Deleuze's most famous remarks about the time-image is that it, in its openness, has the potential to "restore our belief in the world" (Deleuze, 1989, 182). Most simply explained, the restoration of belief in the world arises out of the openness of the time-image, in which the spectator is freer to believe in the world presented, in contrast to the movement-image that tells the person what to believe.

The proposal of this article is that adult anime restores our *belief in the image* instead of our belief in the world and that that is what lies at the core of the pornographic experience offered by the genre.

To return to Williams and live-action pornography: Here the pornographic experience is closely tied to the indexical referent, which is the actor/actress' sexual pleasure. As shown in the earlier discussion, animation is at a natural impasse when it comes to reproducing the sensation of indexicality often exploited in live-action cinema. On a more positive note, the technological base of animation frees the animated pornographic image from reliance on the indexical referent found in live-action, a freedom of which adult anime takes full advantage. The aforementioned concept of a 'mobile penis' illustrates this point as it serves as an example of how the usual indexical sign of the penis can be used more freely, detached from its male possessor. The dehierarchised image and exploded view conceived by Lamarre suggest an image employed by adult anime that does not seek to emulate live-action cinema vis-à-vis movement but instead presents something that should be viewed and understood independently. The medium potential harnessed by the technological base of animation as well as by the specific techniques often employed in adult anime can be used to argue that adult anime offers a new, different kind of pornographic experience. When it is said that adult anime has the potential to restore our belief in the image, what is meant is that it makes the image of the woman the actual object of desire instead of simply a representation of the object of desire. This suggestion should be seen in sharp contrast to Ortega-Brena, who construes the image in adult anime as more of

an ironic musing over the situation that it represents. As both the world and the movements within it are created rather than recorded and as the movements pertain particularly to inactivity and suspension of motion within a generally flat, dehierarchised frame, so the adult anime image creates its own world. This world should be understood only on its own terms and therefore demands that the viewer make the presented world his/her own. It is an exhibition of 2D images that were never meant to signify more than themselves and can thus become a virtual plaything for the viewer.

Conclusion and further perspectives

In exploring the difference between typical live-action and Japanese animated pornography, this article has focused on the medium-specific and technological conditions for this very difference. As mentioned above, these should not be seen as mechanisms that determine the production of adult anime but rather as forces of the moving image that have been instrumental in structuring the reception and viewing position of adult anime alongside cultural, narrative, and economic influences.

The perspective offered by this article, which considers the technological bases of production of both live-action pornography and adult anime, can, however, be used to assert a more complete pornographic experience than does Ortega-Brena, whose final conclusion somewhat dismisses adult anime as only capable of providing a scattered experience. Considering the growing popularity of adult anime as well as a number of recent cases of extreme affection toward drawn images of women, it might be possible that the sensation delivered has potential to create much more than just an ironically charged and fragmented pornographic experience.

As a means of offering further perspectives for research, I will here mention a few spectacles that can be directly related to the findings of this article.

Activities like adult anime dress-up games[8] are being churned out by the dozen, and even more peculiar phenomena have evolved out of this trend, such as the city of Atami just outside of Tokyo.[9] Here, men can book a hotel

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[8] http://www.i-dressup.com/girls/Hatsune_Miku_in_Vocaloid.php

[9] http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703632304575451414209658940

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vacation with their favourite virtual anime character, who will be with them the entire stay and simulate actions that are typical of real couples. On the 22nd of October 2008, a man named Taichi Takashita set up an online petition for the right to marry animated characters. What is particularly interesting about Takashita is how he stressed the right to marry 2D characters and not a doll, figurine, or the like (Condry, 2013, 186). This suggests an utter fascination with images, which further points toward a very significant pornographic experience caused by images that are nothing more than images.

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