

4 The biopolitics of companion species

Wartime animation and multi-ethnic nationalism

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In Japanese wartime animation, Japan's enemies and colonized peoples frequently appear in animal form.¹ In animated versions of the manga *Norakuro* (Stray Black) produced in the 1930s, for instance, there is a dog regiment that stands in for Japanese soldiers, and the dogs do battle with tigers, monkeys, and pigs who apparently represent peoples, races, or nations within the Japanese empire. In animated films based on the folklore character Momotarô (Peach Boy) produced between 1931 and 1945, animals common to Japan (monkeys, dogs, pheasants) serve as Japanese soldiers, while peoples of Japan's conquered territories take the form of animals indigenous to those regions.

At first glance, such an association of peoples with animal species seems to present nothing more than a naturalization of ethnos, race, or nation. After all, insofar as a dog does not choose to be a dog, depictions of the Japanese regiment as a dog regiment would seem to naturalize Japaneseness, to make it appear as a natural classification, a given, an ontological condition or empirical fact. As such, the transformation of peoples into animal species in wartime animation seems designed to avoid a confrontation with the *negativity* and *mediation* inherent in nationalism that Naoki Sakai has repeatedly shown to be one of the central concerns of Kyoto School Philosophy of roughly the same period, particularly in his discussion of the essays of Tanabe Hajime gathered in a volume entitled *Shu no ronri* or "The Logic of Species" (Sakai 2000). Animal species in wartime animation might appear to imply an immediate, unmediated, positivistic belonging to an ethnos, race, or nation.

There is nonetheless a sort of negativity at work in the dynamics of animal species in wartime animations. There is mediation of ethnos or nation. But such negativity is not apparent if we read these animations exclusively at the level of representation, if we assume that dogs unambiguously represent the Japanese, for instance, and completely ignore the specificity of animation. This is where Sakai's work on Tanabe Hajime and "The Logic of Species" proves crucial, not because it addresses the specificity of animation per se, but because it forces us to move beyond a simplistic analysis of representation and to take a closer look at mediation, which in turn leads to a consideration of media (animation).

Philosophy and animation differ profoundly in their treatment of species, and I will gradually draw a contrast between them at the level of their political implications. Where Sakai carefully excavates a politics of national subjectivity and sovereignty from Kyoto School Philosophy, I find in wartime animation something closer to Michel Foucault's discussion of security and biopolitics. Which is to say, in animation, mediation is not so much a matter of the negation of the subject (that produces and promises to stabilize the national subject), but of a "spacing" or material interval that tends to act at the level of the circulation of images and the distribution of populations.

The logic of species

One of the hallmarks of Naoki Sakai's work is a sustained critique of the postwar myth of Japan as a mono-ethnic society, a myth that finds popular expression in *Nihonjinron* or discourses on Japaneseness, discourses that stress the uniqueness of being Japanese. Unlike most critics of *Nihonjinron*, who are content to signal the excesses and exclusionary tendencies of Japanese cultural nationalism as mono-ethnic nationalism, Sakai deliberately avoids and directly challenges the received critiques. His work shows how the received critiques remain content to take issue with mono-ethnic nationalism, that is, particularism, while accepting universalism, typically in the form of Western or American multi-ethnic nationalism. In other words, the received critiques rely on an opposition between particularism and universalism, in a variety of forms. In one of his key essays, for instance, a study of Kyoto School philosopher Tanabe Hajime, Sakai writes, "I refuse to address the problem of the Kyoto School Philosophy and nationalism within the framework of either the West vs the East or the United States vs Japan, multi-ethnic universalism vs mono-ethnic particularism, Christianity vs Asiatic religions, while at the same time I do not hesitate to deal with issues coming out of the fact that many intellectuals and political agents in the West or the East, Europe and North America or East Asia, could not and cannot think of their positionality without reference to such crude binaries" (2000: 466).

In other words, Sakai does not see different kinds of nationalism (say, multi-ethnic versus mono-ethnic) but detects a sort of dialectical tension within nationalism, an unrelenting co-figuration of the particular and the universal, which makes nationalism exceedingly productive and compelling, and impossible to contest simply by attacking particularism. To address nationalism in the register of universalism, Sakai turns primarily to Kyoto School Philosophy of interwar and wartime Japan. At that time philosophers directly engaged questions about multi-ethnic nationalism, precisely because Japanese imperial nationalism had forced some manner of a confrontation with questions about ethnos, races, folks, or peoples. These philosophers could not treat mono-ethnic society as a given. As Sakai points out, the difficulty that such philosophers experienced in their attempts to provide empirical definitions for such terms as *minshu* or *minzoku* (people, folk, ethnos, race, nation)

betrays the instability inherent in particularistic or mono-ethnic nationalism. Ultimately, Sakai shows, certain Kyoto School philosophers came to recognize that particularism can only ground and sustain itself through some relation to universalism. To use a turn of phrase that Sakai develops at length in his work on translation (Sakai 1997), Kyoto School Philosophy of prewar Japan demonstrates how mono-ethnic nationalisms (particularisms) become *co-figured* within multi-ethnic nationalism through the work of the universal. The question then is not *whether* one will engage with multi-ethnic nationalism but *how* one will engage with it. It is matter of negotiation (thrownness, or a schema), not of rejection or acceptance (rational choice).

The interest of Tanabe for Sakai lies in Tanabe's turn to the terms of formal logic – *ko* or “individual,” *shu* or “species,” and *rui* or “genus” – in order to expose the instability and ambivalence inherent in concepts of ethnicity and nationality. Sakai argues that Tanabe's use of such terms does not follow from the formal logic of Aristotle or the taxonomies of Linnaeus. In contrast with Aristotle and Linnaeus, for Tanabe, individuals do not unambiguously belong to a species, nor do species fit into a genus in a positive or natural way. Rather, Sakai argues, Tanabe's use of species and genus recalls Hegel's dialectic of the particular and universal. The individual (subject) only belongs fully (that is, self-consciously) to a species insofar as the individual *negates* the species and thus gains freedom from it. It is the genus that mediates the individual's self-aware negation of the species. Tanabe's logic of species, as Sakai deftly unravels it, takes a Hegelian turn wherein the individual (subject) only belongs to the species (particular: ethnos, race, or nation) by self-consciously negating it through the mediation of the genus (universal: State, empire, or God). It is in this sense that Sakai sees Tanabe's logic of species offering a metaphysical foundation for Japanese imperial nationalism and for the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Now, because the individual cannot belong to a species unless the individual is *aware* of belonging, the logical is the ethical in Tanabe (480). It demands a mode of praxis. You must to some degree consciously resist your species to belong to it. But what actual practices might afford an ethical awareness of belonging to a species through its negation? The prime example in Sakai's account of Tanabe comes from Tanabe's lecture “Shi Sei” or “Death and Life,” delivered in 1943 as the first in a series of lectures organized to deal with anxiety about death on the part of volunteer student soldiers or draftees about to leave for the front (469). Here Tanabe calls on the readiness to die for the State as an ethical practice of negation of the species mediated by the genus or universal. Interestingly enough, Tanabe says that by risking his life, a man acquires the right to rebel against the State. This proposition may seem to contradict Tanabe's claim that the genus mediates the individual's negation of the species. Isn't the State the universal? How can you negate the universal?

In fact, you cannot negate the genus or the universal. You can only do its work. In Tanabe's “Death and Life,” the species is still the nation or ethnos, but the genus is now both the State and God. To sustain the universality of

the State, Tanabe exhorts his audience to devote themselves to the continued perfection of the universality inherent in the existing State, and he calls on God as that universal principle.

Readers of Robert Heinlein will probably note that Tanabe's proposal recalls the basic conceit of *Starship Troopers* (1959): to become a citizen, you must enlist, which means you must be prepared to die. It is this readiness to die for the State that gives you the right to vote, that is, to question and thus to take responsibility for and improve the State. What is more, in Heinlein's novel, as in Tanabe's logic of species, ethnicity is at once acknowledged and negated: the novel includes a cast of multi-ethnic names, but you would be hard pressed to find actual ethnic practices. Readiness for death ethically trumps all other modes of practice. The State trumps other forms of belonging and identification by mediating them.

In Heinlein's novel, the military actively discourages enlistment, and you can drop out at any time without penalty (except that you will not gain the rights of a citizen). This is unlike Tanabe's historical situation, in which recruitment was a pressing concern for the Japanese State, leading to conscription not only of younger and younger men but also of ethnic nationals residing with the Japanese empire (both men as soldiers and women as military sexual slaves or “comfort women”). Nonetheless, if I draw out the analogy between Tanabe Hajime's philosophy and Robert Heinlein's novel, two points can be made. First, in keeping with Sakai's critical project, such an analogy discourages us from positing an opposition between Japan and the West on the basis of Japanese mono-ethnic nationalism (particularism) versus American multi-ethnic nationalism (universalism).

Second, I have slipped a science fiction writer into the discussion because it is above all in the world of science fiction that the Japanese conceptualization of multi-ethnic social formations persisted in the postwar era, even as the American Occupation and subsequent domination of parts of East Asia made the Japanese nation appear as a species of mono-ethnic nationalism to be negated and “sublated” within the genus of the Pax Americana. We might note, for instance, that *Starship Troopers* would have a profound impact on Japanese science fiction, and the cover illustration of the Japanese translation would provide the major inspiration for anime mecha designs. But the persistence of the imaginary of multi-ethnic empire in Japanese science fiction is not merely a matter of coincidental influences between American and Japanese science fictions.

As the above excursus through Tanabe's logic of species makes clear, the analogy with science fiction runs deeper: once we adopt a formal logic of species to address questions of ethnicity and nationality that cannot be resolved via positivistic inquiry and strict definitions, we open the door to the evaluation and integration not only of other humans (species as ethnos, race, people) but also of non-human species (non-human animals, non-animal terrestrials, and extraterrestrial or alien species). The evaluation and potential integration of other species is, needless to say, one of the domains of certain

fictions that today we generally group under the rubric of science fiction. Science fictions that explore relations between humans and non-humans also entail a sort of “formal logic of species” whose implications can be effectively opened to discussion by reference to Tanabe’s Hegelian twist on the formal logic of species.

The same is true of Japanese wartime animations in which animal species do battle and form alliances: there is in such animations a formal logic of species in which the translation of peoples into species allows for evaluation and integration of them. The very process of depicting nationality (say, Korean) in terms of animal species (tiger) already implies some degree of negative mediation of ethnicity or nationality by means of a “formalization” of a nation as a species. There are precedents for the use of animals in wartime animations. Conventions of national animal heraldry had become widespread in newspapers and comics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the Russian bear, the American eagle, the British bulldog, and a range of other animals that were designed to convey national characteristics. The political cartoons of *Tokyo Puck* or *Tôkyô Pakku* provide numerous instances. Or we might take the tradition of fables and folktales as a point of departure. Nonetheless, in keeping with Sakai’s analysis of Tanabe, we need to ask how the universal mediates, and what kind of universalism is at stake. In the case of *Tokyo Puck*, for instance, should we address internationalism, cosmopolitanism, the State, or national Empire? But then, precisely because the boundaries between internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and imperialism are not clear and distinct, we need to ask what kind of material configuration (or more precisely, spacing or interval) grounds or sustains a historically specific “co-figuration” of the particular and universal.

Let me begin with an account, however brief, of the historical context for Japanese wartime animations. Such contextualization is not intended as an explanation of these animations. Instead, I wish to move from historical contextualization to *historicity*, that is, to what is historically new about animal species in animation, which allows them to open beyond their historical context and extend into other historical formations. At the level of historicity, we can then address mediation and negativity of animation’s animals with greater historical specificity.

Yellow peril and companion species

In *War without Mercy*, John Dower contrasts images of the Japanese enemy in American wartime propaganda with images of Americans and Westerners in Japanese wartime propaganda. He finds that Americans tended to dehumanize their Japanese enemies, and one strategy involved bestializing them by representing them as animals: “A characteristic feature of this level of anti-Japanese sentiment was the resort to nonhuman or subhuman representation, in which the Japanese were perceived as animals, reptiles, or insects (monkeys, baboons, gorillas, dogs, mice and rats, vipers and rattlesnakes, cockroaches,

vermin, or more indirectly, ‘the Japanese herd’ and the like)” (Dower 1986: 81). And yet, “without question ... the most common caricature of the Japanese by Westerners, writers and cartoonists alike, was the monkey or ape” (84). Such depictions reinforced a sense that the Japanese were not humans but animals to be hunted down and exterminated.

In contrast, even though the Japanese war media also tended to dehumanize the enemy, its strategy was not to bestialize the American enemy. Dower stresses how Japanese tended to depict the American enemy as failed humans: as demons, ogres, or fiends. Crucial to his assessment is the representation of English and American enemies in Seo Mitsuyo’s 1945 animated film *Momotarô: Umi no shinpei* (Momotarô’s Divine Soldiers of the Sea), the last in a series of wartime animated adaptations of the Momotarô folktale intended to reflect national military values (Seo 1945). In one of the climatic scenes in this film, Japan’s English-speaking enemies appear in human form but with horns on their head, reflecting their degraded and demonic stature. Facing them is Momotarô, whose spiritual purity and youthful vigor intimidates and overpowers them (Figure 4.1).

Dower concludes, “the depiction of the enemy as demons, devils, or ogres permitted the rise of an exterminationist rhetoric in Japan comparable to the metaphors of the hunt or of exterminating vermin in the West” (255). Nonetheless, in the context of this particular film, he argues that, “Momotarô and

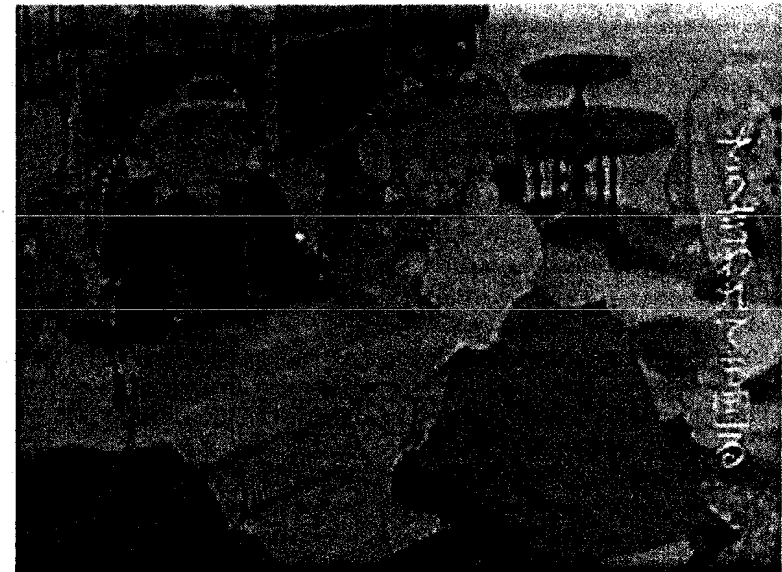


Figure 4.1 The English commander, sporting a horn on his head, nervously addresses Momotarô (flanked by his companion animals) in English to the effect that “...you’re placing us in a difficult situation,” which is translated into Japanese in the accompanying title.

the Caucasians thus confronted each other as figures who partook of supranational as well as human qualities; and in this regard they were actually closer to each other than was apparent at first glance" (255). In these Japanese depictions of American and English enemies, Dower sees "symbolic ruptures" that "helped prepare the ground for discarding the antipodal stereotypes of pure Self and incorrigibly evil Other once Japan had acknowledged its defeat" (255).

It is telling that Dower ignores the other conspicuous characters in this scene: Momotarô's animal helpers, who play a larger role in the film than the Caucasians. Dower's attention falls almost exclusively on how the Japanese see Caucasians. He largely ignores the animals in the film, not only Momotarô's Japanese animal helpers (rabbits, bears, monkeys, pheasants) but also the film's depiction of non-Japanese nations and peoples included in Japan's empire. While Dower is aware of the Japanese empire, he tends to assume that a distinction between humans and animals always amounts to bestialization and thus to categorical dehumanization. He assumes that there is nothing at stake in these animal depictions but an unrelenting degradation and oppression of non-Japanese ethnicities and nationalities. In other words, Dower refuses to acknowledge exactly what Sakai highlights: the work of the universal in nationalism, and specifically in the instance of Japanese multi-ethnic nationalism. Dower reduces the Japanese empire to mono-ethnic nationalism, which then requires American multi-ethnic nationalism to bring out the humanism that lies encrypted in the "symbolic ruptures" appearing in Japanese representations of Caucasians – as if the failed or lacking expression of universalism in the Japanese empire left it primed to "embrace defeat," that is, to embrace American universalism.

The animals in the Momotarô film tell a different story. To the traditional animals of the folktale (dog, monkey, pheasant), the film adds rabbits and bears, and rather than one animal of each species, there are platoons and squadrons of them. Figure 4.1 includes a monkey seated on Momotarô's left, a bear standing at attention behind the monkey, a rabbit seated on his left (only the ear is visible in the image), and if you look closely, the head of a pheasant to the right. In addition, leading up to the confrontation with the Caucasian enemy, Momotarô's animal platoons and squadrons construct an airbase on an island, with the eager assistance of animals apparently indigenous to the island. (There is a generic quality to the elephants, leopards, apes, and other animals that raises doubts about the degree to which these animals are based on actual indigenous animals or on other animations.) The scenes of animals working together are among the longer and happier scenes in the film, and in keeping with the film's address to children or general audiences, the animals are above all cute, receptive, and winsome. They fairly cry out for nurture, charming us with their gentle open faces, energetic movements, and willingness. Of course, we should not conclude that such a strategy of using cute little animal helpers is somehow innocent of power relations, especially in light of their childlike qualities. But we do need to

acknowledge two major omissions in Dower's account of Japan's wartime media that come of his omission of these animals: Japanese multi-ethnic nationalism and the materiality of media. I will address questions of media and historical materiality in the next section. Let me here continue with the discussion of the consequences of ignoring Japan's multi-ethnic nationalism.

The omission of Japan's multi-ethnic nationalism allows Dower to embrace the American multi-ethnic order and Japan's integration into it. The implications of his gesture can be better understood by looking from a different angle, that of the prehistory of science fiction. In effect, *War without Mercy* depends on an opposition between two streams or lineages of fictionalized encounters with non-human others that today constitute a tension within many science fictions – eradication of the alien other in contrast to integration.

When Dower wishes to underscore the ideological effects of American or Japanese wartime representations of the enemy, he speaks of how they tend to encourage a complete extermination of the non-animal other. This scenario recalls yellow peril fiction, in which non-white nationalities and ethnicities (frequently a generalized Oriental) threaten to invade and conquer Caucasian lands. Because these non-white or yellow peoples were dehumanized and de-differentiated in what Peter Button calls the "para-human" (Button 2003), they entered directly into early science fictions in the form of alien swarms attacking Earth (Tatsumi 2006: 63–70). It is precisely this sort of scenario that Dower detects at work in both American and Japanese wartime media: "the depiction of the enemy as demons, devils, or ogres permitted the rise of an exterminationist rhetoric in Japan comparable to the metaphors of the hunt or of exterminating vermin in the West" (255). Dower tends to find clearer expression of this impulse to exterminate others on the American side, however, in his examples and conclusions: "No side had a monopoly on attributing 'beastliness' to the other, although the Westerners possessed a more intricate web of metaphors with which to convey this" (11).

In contrast to the evils of "exterminationist rhetoric," which entails evaluation without integration, Dower holds out the possibility for a friendlier assimilatory encounter with the foreign or ethnic other. Oddly enough, Dower even attributes assimilation in the form of a "cutification" of conquered peoples to the American order, highlighting the postwar American transformation of the ugly simian Japanese into a cute little chimp: "to the victors, the simian became a pet, the child a pupil, the madman a patient" (13). Such a cutification and juvenilization of ethnic others is not exclusively American, as Japan's wartime animation attests. This imaginary of integration of others grows out of a different lineage of fictionalized encounters with non-human others, that of the animal helper of folktales, which gradually transforms into the companion animals or companion species that became prevalent in children's literature, comics, films, and animation from the 1920s, and becoming something of a cultural dominant in family entertainment today. The Momotarô films and much of Japanese wartime animation belong to this lineage.

Expressions of multi-ethnic nationalism derive in part from Japan's conscious evocation of, and resistance to, American racism. The Japanese war was couched as one of racial liberation, emancipating "Asians" or "people of color" from "white demons" or Western imperialists. As Dower points out, the Japanese media consistently expressed indignation over how Westerners looked upon colored people in general as simply "races who should serve them like domestic animals" (248). In addition to concern about the instability of mono-ethnic nationalism and its threat to the stability of the Japanese empire, which Sakai highlights in his account of Tanabe, there was a general recognition of the danger of mono-ethnic nationalism as a mode of racism. Such concerns entered into Japanese diplomacy as well. For instance, the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 demanded not only territorial control over former German colonies in East Asia and the South Pacific but also made a proposal for racial equality, which mandated equal and just treatment for all alien nationals of states without distinction on the basis of race or nationality. The rejection of both demands confirmed the impression among many Japanese that Western modernity was predicated on racism, that is, mono-ethnic (white) nationalism that merely pretended to endorse multi-ethnicity. Thus the Japanese bid to "overcome modernity," that is, to overcome Western modernity, also included resistance to both racial prejudice and mono-ethnic nationalism (see Calichman 2008). This is why Japan's Fifteen-Year Asia-Pacific War could be couched as a war of racial liberation, of freeing peoples and nations of Asia from Western domination, and offering the vision of a new sphere of non-racial, that is, non-hierarchical "co-prosperity."

Dower ignores these concerns in Japanese wartime media and seems intent on reading them in terms of an impulse toward mono-ethnic nationalism, as if Japanese multi-ethnic nationalism, which expressed such modes as Pan-Asianism and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, were discredited due the defeat of Japan and thus not worthy of critical attention. But, in the context of wartime animation at least, we cannot in good conscience reduce the transformation of peoples into cute little animals to an expression of mono-ethnic nationalism. There is in wartime animations a sort of formal logic of species that evaluates peoples in order to integrate them into a multi-ethnic order (or more precisely, a multi-species order). Put another way, the translation of peoples into cute little animals entails a mediation of mono-ethnicity that at once negates and "elevates" it to produce a sense of multi-species cooperation and, if you will, co-prosperity – as with the productivity of cooperation among animals in *Momotarô: Umi no shinpei*. Maybe Dower omits such concerns because, once we acknowledge them, we begin to look differently at the apparent friendliness and co-prosperity of postwar American expressions of multi-ethnic nationalism and multi-species universalism.

In any event, following Sakai, we would have to reject an opposition between yellow peril and companion species. Yellow peril scenarios (mono-ethnic nationalism) readily serve as the negative condition for the production

of companion species (multi-ethnic empire). This does not mean that we must abandon companion species (if that were in fact possible). But we do need to take a closer look at their operations.

The life of animal characters

The vitality of animation is most palpable in its animal characters. Even though we are aware of forms of animation that deliberately avoid cute little non-humans, animation commonly brings to mind images of cute little animals frolicking, dancing, leaping, and cavorting, as well as being stretched, squashed, and otherwise deformed, only to bounce back. Historically, it was largely in the form of children's films (or family or general audience films) that animation reached wider audiences, and typically such films centered on, or called attention to, cute little animals. We have only to think of Felix the Cat, Bugs Bunny, Oswald the Rabbit, Cubby Bear, Mickey Mouse, or Tom and Jerry; or in Japan, Norakuro the Stray Black, Songoku the monkey, Dankichi's monkey in the *Bôken Dankichi* animations, Maabo's animal friends, or the diverse animal helpers in *Momotarô* animations.

Such animal characters evoke a sort of "kinetophilia," a delight in movement and a fascination with plasticity and elasticity, which Sergei Eisenstein (1988) called "plasmaticness," and which we might also call plasmaticity. The deformation and reformation of characters – stretching, squashing, flattening, and inflating – provides a major source of pleasure in animation. Years later, Disney animators Ollie Johnson and Frank Thomas (1981) outlined the various techniques that emerged in the 1930s, which gradually became associated with Disney, among them the famous "squash and stretch" that today plays a central role in Pixar's vision of computer animation.² Ôtsuka Eiji notes that the elasticity associated with animated characters imparts a sense of their invulnerability and even immortality: they appear resilient and resistant to injury and death (2008). Theirs is a fascinatingly deathless vitality.

But the characters do not actually have to be violently stretched, squashed, or otherwise deformed to convey this sense of plasticity and thus vitality. Animated animals seem to channel an almost supernatural force of movement, evident in the dynamism of their actions, especially when leaping and frolicking but even in mundane activities like walking. There are a number of technical reasons for this plasmaticity, and a number of reasons why it tends to settle on animal characters. Let me speak first to the technical reasons.

Animated characters show a fluidity of line and contour that imparts a sense of heightened energy and vitality. This stems in part from new styles of drawing characters that became prevalent in the 1920s, which is as apparent in comics as in cartoons. The contours of characters became more rounded, and their composition based on round or spherical elements. Such a style appeared youthful and well suited to the younger readers and viewers who were a newly targeted audience for comics and cartoons. It originated largely in the United States and became associated primarily with Walt Disney. With the

cinema emerging as distinctive art with a global reach and nearly synchronous reception and production, however, Japanese comics and cartoons, or manga and *manga-eiga* (manga films), did not lag in implementing these features.

Many of the animations or manga films in Japan were adapted from popular manga for boys, as in the instances of *Norakuro* and *Bôken Dankichi*, originally serialized in *Shônen kurabu*. But animation introduces something new to the manga, something already implicit in comics but which emerges through the interrelation of comics and cartoons, manga and animation: this something is what Miyamoto Hirohito, in his discussion of prewar manga, calls the tendency toward a sense of the life and autonomous existence of the character (2003: 47–48). As for the relation of manga to animation, while we tend to think of media mix or media convergence as a phenomenon of the 1990s, such cross-over and convergence effects had already begun in earnest in the 1930s, at the level of establishing what contemporary manga critic Itô Gô calls the “sense of existence” (*sonzaikan*) and “sense of life” (*seimeikan*) of the character (2005: 94–95) in his discussion of transmedial worlds centered on manga characters.³ Animation contributes directly to the sense of the life, vitality, and autonomous existence of characters due to a specific technical array that channels the force of the moving image into character animation. With the continued crossover between manga, animation, and cinema, these effects become integral to manga expression as well.

In animation production, with the introduction of layers of celluloid and the animation stand, which gradually became standard practice in the 1930s, the camera was fixed (on a rostrum), and so, to impart a sense of motion, animators had the choice of moving the sheets, or animating the characters, or both. In the 1930s and 1940s, the emphasis fell on character animation, to the point that character animation appeared to be *the* art of animation, taking precedence over camera movement and editing (animation is largely pre-edited). While the art of painting backgrounds received attention, this was a matter of art, not of animation per se.⁴

It was not until the 1950s, when animators explicitly developed procedures of limited animation, deemphasizing character animation and playing with iconic expression, that moving the celluloid sheets became an appealing option for imparting a sense of movement. Tezuka Osamu played an integral role in this transformation with the television animation for *Tetsuwan Atomu* in the early 1960s, for which his team used techniques for dramatically limiting character animation and shifting the experience of movement into other registers of the moving image. Nonetheless, such techniques are still frequently disparaged today, and the bias toward character animation as *the* art of animation remains.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the animation stand, with its fixed camera and celluloid layers, encouraged an emphasis on character animation. Thus the force of the moving image, which comes of the mechanical succession of images, became channeled into characters, whose plasticity embodies that force, at once folding it into their bodies and releasing it. Needless to say, this is not a matter of representation. Plasticity does not represent the force of the

mechanical succession of images. It affords an actual experience of it. The animated character summons and channels a technical force. As a consequence, a technical force is now experienced as plasmaticity, as vitality, as life itself.

Such an experience is not, as so many commentators would have it, an illusion of life. It is a real experience of a force wherein the technical and the vital appear inseparable. We might call this techno-animism or techno-vitalism, provided we do not take the “ism” to imply that this is an idealist construction or illusion. It is a new experience of life. But why does this experience gravitate toward, or settle on, the animation of animal characters, especially cute little animals?

Animal characters presented certain advantages, both for perceptual and socioeconomic reasons. It is a commonplace of animation that the human eye is less finicky about accuracy of movement with animal characters than with human characters. Humans apparently subject human figures to greater scrutiny and demand a higher degree of verisimilitude. Surely, such expectations are as much learned as innate, but in any event, what matters is that conventions in cinema and animation gradually introduced a rough separation into the moving image, whereby animation tended toward animal energies, and cinema toward human verisimilitude. In addition, as Jonathan Burt (2002) discusses at length, images of animals in cinema have historically evoked a great deal of concern about violence to animals, to the point where we accept truly gruesome violence to humans on film (understanding it as staged) while balking at the least violence to animals (because we tend not to perceive it as staged).⁵ In contrast, although animation, like cinema, has its conventions, codes, and limits for violence, it allows for greater violence to and more violent deformation of animal characters, surely because we perceive them as deathless and invulnerable embodiments of a techno-vital force.

In addition to these perceptual considerations that affected the development of conventions for animals in animation, two other factors had a major impact on animation animals: the emergence of folklore studies and children's culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, in Japan as in other parts of the world, the emergence of mass culture brought with it a new sense of distinct markets and audiences. This era saw, for instance, the mass production of cultural materials for women (women's journals and other female-directed commodities), as well as the mass production of a children's culture, with new journals and books intended for children, which would increasingly include manga. This process was not merely a matter of discovering and developing new markets or niche audiences, but of actively isolating and shaping them, economically, legally and politically. As early as the Film Laws of 1917, for instance, the Japanese government displayed a concern for segregating audiences by gender (mandating separate seating for men and women). Furthermore, particularly in the course of the 1920s, certain films raised questions in the popular imagination about the impact of cinema on juvenile delinquency, which contributed to new regulations and new entertainments to produce what was deemed child-appropriate material. Consequently, from the mid-1910s through the

1920s, as cinema emerged as a form of entertainment distinctive from other entertainments, such developments led to the delineation of children as a distinct population, audience, and market, to be cultivated as such. Not surprisingly, this newly delineated children's culture emphasized animal characters, in illustrated books, manga, animation, and in magazines stressing the importance of nature skills as the basis for a scientific appreciation of things.

While there are strong associations between children and animals in many cultures (children show a liking for animals, and children are often seen as akin to animals), the invention of folklore or ethnography played an important role in mediating the relation between Japanese children and animal characters by drawing animal helpers out of traditional tales, which could be repackaged in a more cosmopolitan form in children's entertainments. It is surely not a coincidence that Yanagita Kunio, the "father" of Japanese ethnography, published a major book on Momotarô (*Momotarô no tanjô*, 1931) at the same time that the first Momotarô cartoons were being produced, for instance, *Nippon ichi Momotarô* (Momotarô of Japan supreme, 1928) and *Sora no Momotarô* (Momotarô of the skies, 1931). Yanagita not only devoted himself to collecting folktales as an effort to protect the strangeness and diversity of rural Japan, which he saw vanishing in the light of a rationalist modernity (Ivy 1995), but he also contributed to destabilizing the idea of a mono-ethnic Japan by calling attention to the strange characters and cultures inhabiting the lore gathered in remote areas, which he sometimes interpreted as lingering signs of an ancient and authentic population driven into obscurity with the emergence of another dominant population. In other words, his folklore studies undermined the notion of an ancient and immutable mono-ethnicity, for it unearthed different populations in Japan.

The emergence of folklore in combination with the development of children's culture thus led to the establishment of a nexus conjoining children, folktales, and animals in popular entertainments. It is not surprising then that when critics as different as Sergei Einstein and Ôtsuka Eiji consider the plasmaticity and vitality of animation characters, they turn simultaneously to the realm of folklore and children. All these factors – the technical tendencies of animation; perceptions about violence and verisimilitude in film; the establishment of children as a population, audience, and market through government regulation and cultural industries; and the invention of folklore – contributed to making the cute little animated animal not only integral to children's culture but also the nodal point (or attractor) producing connections across distinct social domains or activities (law, modes of production, art, and knowledge production). The vitality of these new entities is not a mere illusion of life. It marks the point of entry of life into the political and the social where it will at once produce new connections across domains and ground them. This is a lot of work for a little animal, and so we have steadily produced legions of them over the past hundred odd years.

In sum, to understand how the life of animated animals works, we need to consider two levels or registers: that of plasmaticity or techno-vitality, and

that of representation. But, as Sakai's account of Tanabe shows, we must not read representation in terms of a mere re-presentation in which the animal character is an immediate or unmediated stand-in for something else (say, a dog soldier standing for a Japanese soldier). Instead we need to attend to representation as mediation, and to the work of negativity. To give a more concrete sense of what is at stake, by way of conclusion, I will turn to the example of Norakuro. I will show how the register of plasmaticity implies a kind of biopolitics (governance of populations), while that of representation implies a politics of sovereignty (formation of subjectivity).

The biopolitics of species

Created by Tagawa Suiho, Norakuro the Stray Black Dog first appeared in print in *Shônen kurabu* in 1931, the year in which the rigged Manchurian Incident gave the Japanese government its excuse to begin a full-scale invasion of, and war against, China. Norakuro begins his adventures as an accident-prone soldier in a dog regiment under the command of Buru the Bulldog. The character enjoyed such popularity that animation adaptations soon followed, with some episodes adapted repeatedly. There are, for instance, two extant versions of Norakuro's first adventure in the army entitled *Norakuro nitôhei* (Norakuro, Private Second Class). Murata Yasuji directed a version in 1933 (1993a), and Seo Mitsuyo directed another in 1935 (2004a).

In Murata's version, Norakuro stands out from the other dogs in the dog regiment on the basis of his color (the other dogs are white), and he constantly stumbles and bumbles through his duties. In one scene, as the dog soldiers smartly salute their commander, Norakuro throws both hands in the air in a moment of irrepressible enthusiasm. Or, in another scene, as the other dog soldiers march crisply, Norakuro plods glumly and without conviction (Figure 4.2).

Norakuro's unruly and lazy behavior is striking in comparison with the general insistence in national policy films on regimentation and synchronization of soldierly activities, which reached new aesthetic heights in films like *Hawai Mare oki kaisen* (War at sea from Hawaii to Malaysia, 1945). In Seo's 1935 production of Norakuro as a private second class, Norakuro lazily sleeps on after the other soldiers are already at their calisthenics. Fortunately, Norakuro's bed comes to life, and when the bed is unable to awaken him, it runs him out to join the squad of soldiers.

Despite his lack of discipline and coordination, the Stray Black shows unusual spirit on the battlefield – he runs headlong to face the enemy when other dogs of regiment hesitate. He also has dumb luck in spades, and frequently produces a victory through some sort of ruse. As a result of his spirit, ingenuity, and good fortune, Norakuro leads the dog regiment to victory after victory against its enemies. With each victory, Norakuro rises in rank, and consequently there are a series of animated shorts based on the manga episodes that track Norakuro's climb through the military ranks. The episodes begin with "private second-class" (*Norakuro nitôhei*), and Stray Black

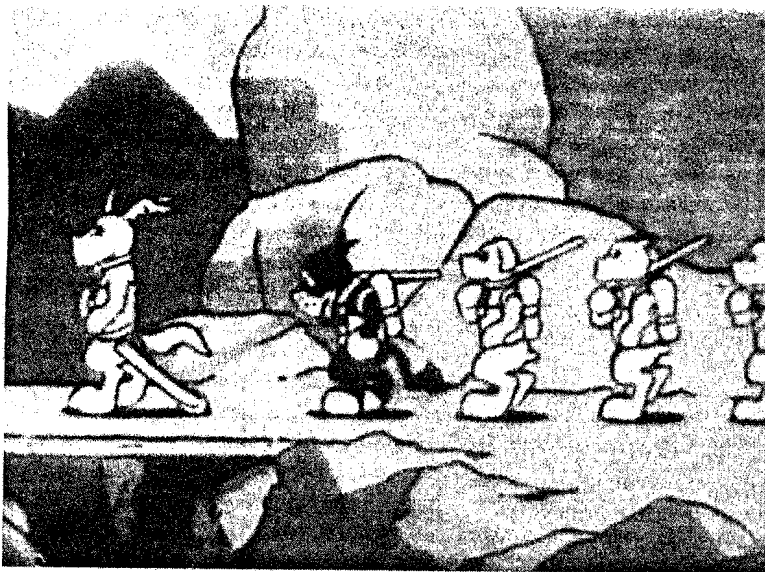


Figure 4.2 In Murata's 1933 version of Norakuro's adventures as a private second class, the stray dog frequently finds it difficult to stay in formation with the other dog soldiers.

gradually rises from "private first-class" (*Norakuro ittōhei*, 1935) (Seo 2004b) to "corporal" (*Norakuro gochō*, 1934) (Murata 1993b) and "minor company officer" (*Norakuro shōjō*, director and date unknown). Because Norakuro made his appearance in 1931 at the start of Japan's war against China, his rise through the ranks corresponds with Japan's movement deeper and deeper into its "war of liberation."

Now, Norakuro and the dogs are clearly Japanese. In *Norakuro gochō* (Corporal Norakuro, 1934), for instance, Japanese flags stand at the gate to the dogs' military encampment. But what do the animal enemies stand for? In Seo Mitsuyo's 1935 version of *Norakuro nitōhei*, for instance, the dog regiment encounters a ferocious tiger. Because national animal heraldry retained some importance in the 1930s, and because Korea commonly designated itself as a tiger, it is tempting to construe Norakuro's battle against the tiger as a representation of Japan versus Korea: dog versus tiger is Japan versus Korea. Such reading certainly proves interesting. In Seo's film, Norakuro accidentally paints himself with tiger stripes and confronts the adult tiger as if he were a cub of the same species. Norakuro's little tiger disguise allows him to immobilize the larger tiger (among other things his proximity allows him to toss laughing gas down the tiger's throat), and in the end, the Japanese dog regiment cages and merrily drags off the tiger (Figure 4.3).

Read allegorically, the Japanese dog in Seo's *Norakuro Nitōhei* who acts as a friendly little benefactor of the same species in order to cage the tiger and

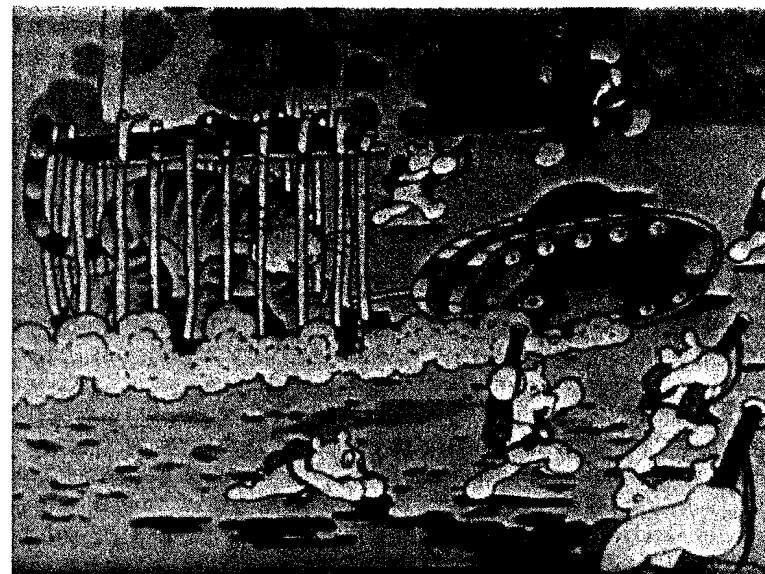


Figure 4.3 In the 1935 animated installment of Norakuro's adventures as private second class, the stray dog succeeds in capturing the enemy tiger, and the dog regiment merrily leads off the caged tiger with Norakuro dancing on the tank.

drag it home is evocative of the dupery and force involved in Japan's mass importation of Korean labor into Japanese factories during the war, and also recalls the "recruitment" of "comfort women" (Korean women were especially numerous among the women drafted by the Japanese army into military sexual slavery, by force or by ruse).

Similarly, other animals in the Norakuro series can also be read as allegorical representations of Japan's colonized peoples and enemies. The pigs, for instance, are usually read as Chinese, and there is cause to do so.⁶ But there are many possible readings for the gorillas or apes in *Norakuro ittōhei* (who are frightened into submission by a jack-in-the-box tiger head) or monkeys in *Norakuro gochō* (who are apparently proving difficult to assimilate into the dog army).⁷

But there is a problem with reading such animations in terms of a one-to-one correspondence between animal and nation, that is, in terms of direct and unmediated representation. We then completely ignore the process of mediation at work in the animations. Even if we wish to insist that the dogs are Japanese and the tiger Korean, we have to acknowledge that, in the transformation of a nation into a species, there is a process of abstraction and thus of negation. There is a negation of mono-ethnic nationalism, reminiscent of Tanabe's logic of species. It is this negation of mono-ethnic nationalism that imparts an aura of merriness and playfulness to these animations. We are

not just seeing a battle between nations. We are also seeing cute little animals at play. Even though the tiger looks glum, he retains his plasmaticity and vitality. He exists and acts on the same field of techno-vitality, which in the register of representation is that of multi-ethnic nationalism. Put another way, with reference to Sakai's account of Tanabe, there is a universal at work under these particularisms (animal species as peoples, ethnos, or nations). This is not about a mono-ethnic Japan conquering a mono-ethnic Korea. It is about a multi-ethnic Japanese evaluating and integrating peoples, ethnicities, or nationalities.

Yet, although it is appropriate to speak, as Sakai and Tanabe do, of the Japanese State or empire embodying and mediating, that is, carrying out the work of the universal at the level of representation, animation adds something to the dynamics of representation. It introduces life itself, in the mediation of plasmaticity or techno-vitality. This is another kind of negativity, a very specific co-figuration of the particular and universal, as it were.

In accordance with the conventions of animation animals, these are bipedal animals, with paw-like hands, often with the trappings of human attire, and acting rather human. Norakuro the Stray Black Dog is like so many other animated animals in this respect, like Oswald the Rabbit, Felix the Cat, Cubby Bear, and Momotarô's companion animals. Initially we might conclude that the human functions as the universal here, mediating – that is, negating and elevating – animal species. Yet we cannot say whether these characters are humanized animals or animalized humans. We cannot determine if the human mediates the animal or the animal mediates the human. Sergei Eisenstein is insightful here. He notes of animated figures, “here we have a being represented in drawing, a being of definite form, a being which has attained a definite appearance, and which behaves like the primal protoplasm, not yet possessing a stable form, but capable of assuming any form and which skipping along the rungs of the evolutionary ladder, attaches itself to any and all forms of animal existence” (1988: 21). In other words, it is ultimately the animal or animality that does the work of the universal. The human and humanity are at the level of the particular, of the species.

When animality (or more broadly, vitality) becomes the site of negativity spurring mediation, the political implications are very different from Tanabe's logic of species. While an analysis of representation as mediation can allow us to detect this “animal negativity” at work, this is no longer a politics of representation, of sovereignty and subjectivity. Once the human becomes a species or a particular, politics becomes governance articulated at the level of populations, in the form of security.

Sakai indicates something analogous at the end of his essay on Tanabe when he associates it with pastoral power (2000: 515). But his remarks are fleeting, and given his overall emphasis on sovereignty and subjectivity, it is not clear how Sakai sees Tanabe's discussion leading from a politics directed toward the imaginary at the level of subject formation to a politics directed at populations rather than individuals. Here we need to differentiate sovereignty,

discipline, and security, as Foucault does in the first lecture in *Security, Population, Territory* (2007). This politics of animality and vitality is not directed at the imaginary (sovereignty, ideology, or subjectivity), nor is it a discipline directed at the bodies of individuals entailing segregations and divisions among them. It is a biopolitics related to the governance of populations, predicated on security. Once we acknowledge this politics of animality in animation, we see how the translation of peoples into cute little animals (companion species) in Japanese wartime animation extends into contemporary animation and science fiction, in which love and war between species is predicated upon a negation of the human via the “negativity” of animality and vitality, which transforms the politics of national sovereignty into a concern for security and governance of populations that is articulated in the form of interplanetary warfare and annihilation of life forms, species, and worlds. And the very thing that promises to save us – our fascination with cute little animals and alien others – is inextricably meshed with regimes of security and total war.

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Notes

- 1 This chapter constitutes a bridge between a recently published essay (Lamarre 2009b) and forthcoming essays on animals in Japanese manga and animation, forthcoming in *Mechademia* 5 and 6. My thanks to Rich Calichman for providing this opportunity to spell out the theoretical basis for this project through a dialogue with Naoki Sakai's work.
- 2 For Pixar's indebtedness to such techniques, see Leslie Iwerks's documentary *The Pixar Story* (2007).
- 3 Itô's project entails a distinction between *kyarakutaa* and *kyara* as a new paradigm for the analysis of manga expression. The term *kyarakutaa*, which derives from the Japanese pronunciation for the English word character, can be used to refer to characters in manga and anime, yet the abbreviated pronunciation *kyara* or "chara" has come into common use in talking about character more broadly, including character figurines and model kits (garage kits) for anime, manga and game characters. For Itô, *kyarakutaa* is the limited term, while *kyara* implies something that is not only larger but also ontologically prior to *kyarakutaa*.
- 4 See Chapter 2 of Thomas Lamarre (2009a) for a fuller account of the animation stand, and chapters six and fifteen for an account of full and limited animation.
- 5 See Lamarre 2009b: 80–83 for further discussion of these two points.
- 6 Akiyama Masami (1998) makes this point in a presentation and commentary on the manga of Norakuro's dog regiment versus the pigs.
- 7 Note that, in Japanese, dogs and monkeys are considered natural enemies, and instead of "like cat and dog," in Japanese one says "like dog and monkey."

5 Translating the image

Helen Petrovsky

I met Naoki Sakai in 2002 at Cornell, at a seminar on visual culture. He was then member of a group of scholars discussing the object of a new discipline as well as the possibility of introducing it in the academic curriculum. A year and a half later I had the privilege of attending another ongoing seminar at the same University sponsored by the Society for the Humanities, its topic this time being translation. Again Professor Sakai was closely involved in its work. I have learned much from those extensive and animated discussions and, to my delight, have discovered things that, I dare say, point to a certain commonality, to what we seem to share. This is all the more exciting as we come from different cultural and academic backgrounds and as Professor Sakai's experience, both professional and personal, is absolutely unique. What distinguishes him, however, is an inherent loyalty to the Other – be it another language, discourse or a different form of experience. Naoki Sakai is always willing to translate – and is engaged in this complicated activity. It is from him that we learn what translation implies – not as a technical or semiotic procedure, but as the very condition for retaining the trace of the Other. Professor Sakai's seminal theory of translation is helpful in understanding non-linguistic phenomena, including the image. In the notes that follow I will try to combine the two themes that have initially brought us together, namely, visuality and translation, while sketching out a way of reading present-day visual data. I would like to offer these thoughts to Naoki Sakai.

1.

In trying to approach the problematic of images today one should take into account the impact of a changed reality. The transformations themselves can be defined in very broad terms: politically they are often alluded to as "globalization," while theoretically they are accompanied with the denial of any access to reality whatever – a seemingly rival idea. In both cases, however, what is at issue is indeed a changed world as well as the changed conditions of its perception and representation. The humanities respond to the pressure coming from the outside world by introducing new disciplines, such as visual studies or media theory which is increasingly popular these days.

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