



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Speciesism, Part I: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation

To scores of millions of participants, John Dower reminds us, World War II was a race war.¹ Among the many patterns of racial prejudice explored in his book *War without Mercy*, Dower discusses how the American media depicted the Japanese 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).”² And yet, “without question . . . the most common caricature of the Japanese by Westerners, writers and cartoonists alike, was the monkey or ape.”³

In the American animalization or bestialization of the Japanese enemy, Dower detects a general strategy of dehumanization. Behind this strategy is the idea that to depict someone as an animal is to strip away their very humanness, their humanity. In effect, both human animals and nonhuman animals are degraded through these dehumanizing, bestializing depictions. The racial imaginary, however, is not limited to the application of negative animal qualities to humans (bestialization). Friendly or positive animal images may imply strategies of racialization, too. For instance, when Dower

considers the American postwar transformation of the image of the Japanese from a horrifying ape or gorilla into a friendly pet chimp, he remarks, “that vicious racial stereotypes were transformed, however, does not mean that they were dispelled.”⁴ In other words, although he does not speak to it as such, Dower points to the persistence of this racial consciousness and racial typology whenever human animals are depicted as nonhuman animals.⁵ This is what I call “speciesism.”

Speciesism is a displacement of race and racism (relations between humans as imagined in racial terms) onto relations between humans and animals.

**JAPANESE WAR MEDIA, IN
CONTRAST TO THE AMERICAN,
DID NOT TEND TO BESTIALIZE
THE AMERICAN ENEMY.**

The term speciesism was coined and is often used to indicate discrimination against nonhuman animals.⁶ On the one hand, speciesism is a matter of blatant discrimination against animals, which comes of attributing “bestial,” that is, negative characteristics to nonhuman animals and extending these

negative attributes to humans. On the other hand, speciesism entails the displacement of problems associated with race relations onto species relations, and vice versa.⁷ Speciesism thus comprises violence to nonhuman animals *and* to those designated as racial others. In this essay, it is the latter inflection of speciesism that concerns me primarily, the translation of racial differences into animal differences, in the context of Japanese animation. Moreover, the prevalence of speciesism in prewar and postwar Japanese animation implies important continuity between the prewar and postwar racial imaginary. My intent is not to declare a simple continuity between prewar and postwar Japanese thinking about race. Not only are there different inflections of speciesism in wartime animation, but also postwar animation responds to wartime speciesism in a variety of ways: unwitting replication, celebration, fascination, ambivalence, disavowal. There are unthinking responses and critical responses.

Japanese wartime speciesism presents a contrast with American wartime speciesism. Dower reminds us that Japanese war media, in contrast to the American, did not tend to bestialize the American enemy. Dower is quick to remind us that this does not mean that Japanese propaganda was not dehumanizing: “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.”⁸ 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 *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* (Momotarō's divine army).⁹ In this film, Japan's English-speaking enemies appear in human form but with horns on their head, reflecting their degraded and demonic stature, and suggesting that Japan's spiritual youthful purity and vigor, embodied in Momotarō, will dispel them (Figure 1).

In such not-entirely-dehumanizing depictions, 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.”¹⁰ In effect, Dower detects a potential humanization or humanism encrypted within Japanese depictions of the American enemy. Oddly, however, in light of his remarks about how postwar American transformation of the vile simian into the cute pet chimp still constituted racism, Dower never considers the relation between humanization of the enemy (humanism) and racialization (racism).¹¹ Yet in his examples humanizing strategies and racializing procedures are intertwined.



FIGURE 1. The English commander, sporting a horn on his head, nervously addresses Momotarō (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.

What is more, Dower passes over Japanese depictions of the empire's colonized peoples and non-Western enemies, which gives the impression that Japanese war media did not engage in speciesism. In animated films, however, Japan's wartime speciesism is impossible to ignore. In *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei*, for instance, as in the other prewar *Momotarō* animated films, colonial peoples appear as animals, as indigenous animals. They appear as cute and friendly animals that fairly cry out for nurture. What is more, in *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* native critters happily lend their strengths and abilities to the construction of a Japanese airstrip and military enclave. The cuteness of local animals meshes nicely with their status as a readily available and willing source of labor. This is a kind of speciesism unlike the American bestialization of the enemy. It hints at a different imaginary at work in the translation of racial problems into human–animal relations.

This difference comes partly of Japan's conscious evocation of, and resistance to, American racism. As is well known (but infrequently addressed in discussions of Japanese cultural production), 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 on colored people in general as simply "races who should serve them like domestic animals."¹² Yet Japanese wartime media do not eschew speciesism. Although Japanese animated films do not bestialize the enemy or the colonized in order to dehumanize them, the depiction of colonized peoples as cute, friendly, and accommodating native critters is hardly innocent. The Japanese imaginary is one of "companion species" rather than one of wild animals to be hunted and exterminated or one of domestic animals to be exploited. The imaginary of companion species is related to a specific geopolitical imaginary.¹³

Significantly, as Dower's remarks about America's postwar transformation of the ugly simian into the cute pet ("to the victors, the simian became a pet, the child a pupil, the madman a patient")¹⁴ suggest, Japanese wartime speciesism not only shows signs of overlap and intersection with the geopolitical imaginary of American speciesism but also seems to anticipate American postwar speciesism in which the defeated quasi-colonial other is transformed into a companion species: the ape or gorilla becomes a pet chimp. To make a long argument exceedingly short, it is my opinion that Japanese wartime speciesism anticipates or intersects with American postwar speciesism, because of an overlap in their geopolitical concerns.¹⁵ Both wartime Japan and postwar America tried to imagine multinational or multiethnic empire,

which entails an effort to imagine the productive coexistence of different communities that are frequently typed as races, racial communities, racial ethnicities, or national races. Within the framework of multiethnic empire, speciesism—translating race relations into species relations—not only promises a way of working through racism but also entertains hopes of moving beyond racism altogether. It is here, in Japanese wartime animation, that the problem that Dower seems intent on avoiding—that of the relation between racism and humanism in the context of multiethnic empire—becomes impossible to overlook.

FOR HISTORICAL AND MATERIAL REASONS, ANIMATION HAS COME TO PROVIDE A PRIME SITE FOR SPECIESISM.

The central hypothesis of this essay is that, for historical and material reasons, animation has come to provide a prime site for speciesism. Although in this paper I pay less attention to the dynamics of manga than those of animation, I think that the commonalities between certain lineages of manga and animation will become obvious in the overall discussion of speciesism. In part one of this essay, I will present some general reflections on animation's love affair with animals in order to set the stage for a discussion of speciesism in Japanese animation. Subsequently, as a first step toward delineating some of the range of speciesism in Japanese animation, I will briefly consider how speciesism overlaps with, yet differs from, racism. Particularly important in part one are the animated films based on the manga character Norakuro, or "Stray Black," a series of films in which the Japanese dog regiment does battle with a range of animal enemies. In part two, I will continue the discussion of wartime animation looking at the depictions of colonial peoples in the *Momotarō* films and will conclude with an analysis of the legacy of wartime speciesism in the works of Tezuka Osamu.¹⁶

ANIMATION'S LOVE OF ANIMALS

Animation loves animals. In fact, animals are such a staple of animated films that it is hard to think about animation without thinking of scenes of nonhuman animals frolicking, dancing, leaping, and of course, being bent, crushed, and stretched. There is a sort of "kinetophilia" associated with animated animals, a sheer delight in movement, as well as a fascination with plasticity and elasticity, which Eisenstein called "plasmaticness" and I will call plasmaticity.¹⁷ The deformation and reformation of characters—stretching, bending, flattening, inflating, shattering—becomes a source of pleasure in itself and,

as Eisenstein notes, implies an ability of an animated form to attach itself to any life form.

As Ōtsuka Eiji notes in his essay in this volume, the elasticity associated with animated characters imparts a sense of their invulnerability and even

**THE PLASMATICITY OF
CHARACTERS IN ANIMATION
SEEMS TO ENCOURAGE ALL
MANNER OF CRUEL AND
VIOLENT DEFORMATIONS
OF THE BODY FORM.**

immortality: they appear resilient and resistant to injury and death. As such, plasmaticity implies another register of deathlessness—the transformative ability of animated characters to adopt the qualities and shapes of a range of life forms (other species) and of developmental moments (phases and stages). In this respect, the sensibility of animation vis-à-vis animals differs profoundly from that of cinema.

In his chapter on the history of cinema and cruelty to animals in *Animals in Film*, Jonathan Burt notes how cinematic images of animals have historically received a great deal of attention from animal advocates, to the point where film viewers have become more sanguine about violence to humans in cinema than they are about cruelty to animals. He concludes that the “split within the animal image—the artificial image that can never quite be read as artificial—is one that ruptures all readings of it.”¹⁸ Yet, even though the split in the cinematic animal image ultimately ruptures readings of it, Burt reminds us that such ruptures happen along specific lines: an underlying sense of the reality of the cinematic image has contributed to a set of conventions and expectations for the humane treatment of animals depicted in film.

Animation, in contrast, implies a different sense of the reality of the image, and the “animetic” treatment of the animal image need not eschew violence and cruelty. In fact, the plasmaticity of characters in animation seems to encourage all manner of cruel and violent deformations of the body form—as if taking slapstick gags to their limit, as is common in Looney Tunes, Ub Iwerks’s Mickey Mouse, and vintage *Tom and Jerry* (lampooned so well in “Itchy and Scratchy” in *The Simpsons*). As Ōtsuka Eiji notes, American silent comedy had a powerful influence on animation, and Japanese animation also has its lineages of slapstick humor and violence in animation, which enable equally parodic excess in more recent edgy fare such as *Excel Saga* (1999–2000, *Ekuseru Saaga*), *Tamala 2010* (2004), or *Panda Z* (2004, *Pandaa zetto: The Robonimation*). Yet it is not necessary to take the capacity for bodily deformation to its limit in violence for the plasmaticity of animation to exert its hold on us. Even when bodily movement and transformation is handled lyrically with an insistence on grace and suppleness, animation imparts a different

sense of the powers of the body, which is commonly linked to animal or animalized bodies.

I don't wish to imply that cinema and animation cannot or do not overlap significantly. As is evident in recent films such as *Charlotte's Web* (2006), which use digital technologies and animatronics to construct talking animals with suitably expressive faces, animation and cinema can overlap a good deal. Nor do I want to imply that animation sanctions cruelty to animals or that animation does not have its conventions for dealing with violence. Rather, as both Sergei Eisenstein and Ōtsuka Eiji note, the inherent elasticity of the animetic animal image imparts a sense of its invulnerability to violence done to it. The animetic image seems to erase all traces of violence and even of death. Animation doesn't fret over the fragility and mortality of animals but celebrates their apparent invulnerability and immortality (lyrically and violently) and frequently extends these qualities to human animals.

Both cinema and animation today are caught up in a paradoxical situation, however. For instance, it should give us pause that, in an era of increasing urbanization and "mediatization" on a global scale, human animals have less and less contact with nonhuman animals, and pets tend to be the animals that most urbanized folk know best. As a result, media forms such as animation and cinema become a prime source, and maybe *the* prime source, of knowledge about a range of nonhuman animals. Akira Lippit expresses the paradox succinctly in his discussion of animals in film and philosophy, remarking that, in an age of massive extinction, in which the majority of nonhuman animals seem on the verge of disappearing from our world entirely, our media abound in images of animals. It is as if those vanishing animals return to us in spectral form, proliferating across media platforms, as cartoon characters, electronic pets, animatronic and SFX creatures in films, on stickers, in ads, on book covers, in a vain attempt to mark their presence at the moment of their global disappearance.¹⁹ The image that comes to mind is that of the reddish alien phantoms in the first *Final Fantasy* movie, *The Spirits Within* (2001): the entire zoosphere of a distant planet, exterminated in a global war, is hurtled to Earth in the form of a great chain of ghostly life that haunts the human world with the possibility of planetary death. Much of our zoosphere is currently in danger of such a spectral existence, condemned to survive only on film and in other media, and it is hard not to see the proliferation of animated animals across media (and their transnational movement) in terms of a global panic formation: our attempt to capture animals and their nonhuman animality before they disappear actually is part of a process of erasing their lives and life worlds while frantically retaining them in spectral form.

Still, even though both cinema and animation seem equally caught up in this zoological panic formation that loves animals to death, cinema and animation have different ways of expressing their love for nonhuman animals. Not only are animals more prevalent in animation, but also animation seems bent on expressing animal invulnerability, where cinema tends to linger on animal fragility. (These are, of course, tendencies, not mutually exclusive oppositional categories.) Simply put, for historical, formal and material reasons, animation tends toward vitalism, animism, and animal powers.

One explanation for the prevalence of animals in animation has it that humans (or human animals, if you will) are much fussier about images of humans than about images of nonhumans, especially with respect to movement. Apparently, human viewers demand a higher degree of verisimilitude in the depiction and movement of human characters. Because humans are much more attentive to details when it comes to depictions of their own species than other species, the human viewer will accept a greater degree of deformation and simplification with nonhuman figures. Simply stated, animality and plasmaticity are mutually enabling. Consequently, if you're an animator who wants to experiment with, or push the limits of, the plasticity inherent in drawing figures for cel animation, using nonhuman animals allows you to sustain a sense of verisimilitude in action while allowing a great deal of leeway for deformations and transformations of the figure. Thus the use of nonhuman animals allows for heightened fluidity as well as intensified violence and abruptness of movement, whence animation's penchant for lyrically graceful motions in tandem with over-the-top slapstick, pratfalls, gags. This also explains why, from the earliest days of animated film, so many of the nonhuman animals in animation appear poised between human and animal—we see bipedal cats, monkeys, pigs, dogs, bears, and mice, with paws like hands, often in human attire, acting downright human—Norakuro the Stray Black dog, Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse, Songokû the Monkey,²⁰ Cubby Bear, and so on. Are they animals or humans? Are these humanized animals or animalized humans?

Where cinema viewing tends to draw a line between humans and animals, treating the cinematic images of nonhuman animals as less artificial than those of humans, animation viewing does not draw a strict line between nonhuman animals and human animals. It would seem that cinema humanizes animals, while animation tends to animalize humans. This may derive from the ability of human viewers to detect the artificiality of human actors on film, and thus violence against humans concerns them less than that against animals—they sense that the humans are not real. In animation, however, it

ANIMATION SEEMS BENT
ON EXPRESSING ANIMAL
INVULNERABILITY, WHERE
CINEMA TENDS TO LINGER
ON ANIMAL FRAGILITY.

is less a matter of reality and artificiality than a matter of verisimilitude and plasmaticity. Whatever the reasons, what is important in this context is that animation delights in constructing zones where human and animal become indiscernible, where the animal opens into the human, and the human into the animal. It surely goes without saying that animation's love of animals is more for the delight of humans than for the benefit of nonhuman animals. But then maybe animation presents interesting possibilities for imagining the human-animal interface, to which we have never paid much critical attention.

As animation opens the human love affair with animals, that love takes a variety of forms: animals appear as loyal comrades in arms, as worthy foes, as advisors, as second selves, as therapists, as potential mates, as sexual objects. As with any love affair, unexpected obstacles and detours may appear, resulting in jealousies, quarrels, even battles, but also reunions and complex sympathies. There is no guarantee that things will turn out well, nor can we say definitively what it would mean for things to turn out well between humans and animals in the realm of animation. Uncertainty about the outcome arises in part because, even though animation appears ideally suited to reminding humans that they too are animals, affection can lead to ambivalence. After all, it is the nature of affection—insofar as it entails affect or affective responses—to take things out of circulation, to form self-sustaining circuits and feedback loops, precisely because affect does not allow for neat distinctions between subjects and objects. This is not necessarily a comfortable situation.²¹

Among the varied implications of animation's blurring of distinctions between human and animal—first and foremost evident in the prevalence of humanized animals or animalized humans, I am most interested here in how animation thus becomes an ideal site for translating race relations into species relations. The translation of races into species makes for a situation that is not so straightforward to critique as racial stereotyping. In this respect, racism in animation and manga demands some remarks, however brief.

It is relatively common to lament racial stereotypes of humans in early animation. This is the case with the depictions of Africans in Disney's *Trader Mickey* (1932). *Trader Mickey* stages a wild African village dance, drawing on "Black dandy" stereotypes in Sheldon Brooks's song "The Darktown Strutters' Ball" (1917), in which African Americans dress up like big shots but speak and behave like uneducated louts.²² Yet David Gerstein, who presents this example on his Web site, also reminds us that such cartoons sometimes open

critical perspectives on the white fascination with black culture. In the cartoon *Showing Off* (1931), for instance, the portrayal of a white boy mimicking black culture also affords a way to see the boy's imitation as crude and ridiculous. And Gernstein concludes, "While still some distance from a real acceptance of Black contributions or acknowledgement of white racism, *Showing Off* is at least an interesting start."

Such fascination with racial others is equally evident in Japanese animation from the 1930s. In a Japanese animated short from the early 1930s (actual date unknown) based on a manga by Shimada Keizō, entitled *Bōken Dankichi—Hyōryū no kan* (The adventurous Dankichi: Adrift),²³ the young hero Dankichi and his little mouse friend are cast ashore on a far-off island where they strike a lion with an arrow. As they flee the lion, they encounter "natives" who look stereotypically African but, given the context, probably represent New Guineans or one of the peoples loosely designated at that time in Japan as "South Seas natives." Caught between lion and natives, Dankichi and his companion mouse leap into a tree and then onto the back of an elephant. Riding the elephant, they literally trample the natives who thereupon joyously crown Dankichi king of the island (Figure 2).

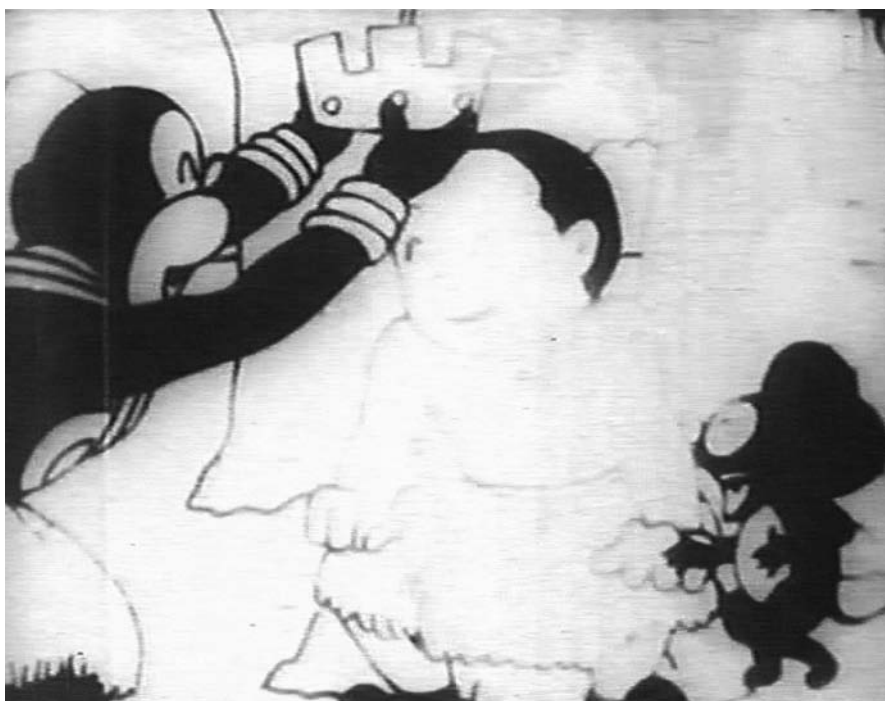


FIGURE 2. The native king, once conquered, happily places his crown on Dankichi's head.

This chapter of *Bōken Dankichi* is easy to critique, not only for its unenlightened, stereotyped depiction of Japan's colonized peoples but also for its use of a stock scenario of imperial desire in which the conquered or colonized people is ultimately asked to express its love for the conqueror or colonizer. The native king does not merely crown Dankichi as the new ruler of the island; he does so with delight and affection. The use of racial stereotypes and the expression of imperial desire is so obvious in this short animated romp that it almost defies criticism. This is fun colonialism, in which the interactions between colonizer and colonized appear in the guise of hyperactive yet harmless child's play. In order to frame colonialism as a playful adventure, however, *Bōken Dankichi* must also level the playing field, so to speak. If natives and their conqueror are to "play war," they must have some common ground. In *Bōken Dankichi*, this common ground appears briefly in a shot in which Dankichi and the native king literally bump noses (Figure 3).

This moment is notable for a couple of reasons. First, it is early example of the use of close-up in animation. In manga of the early 1930s, artists did not tend to use cinematic techniques such as close-up. For the most part, figures appeared in each manga frame from head to toe, and the same techniques

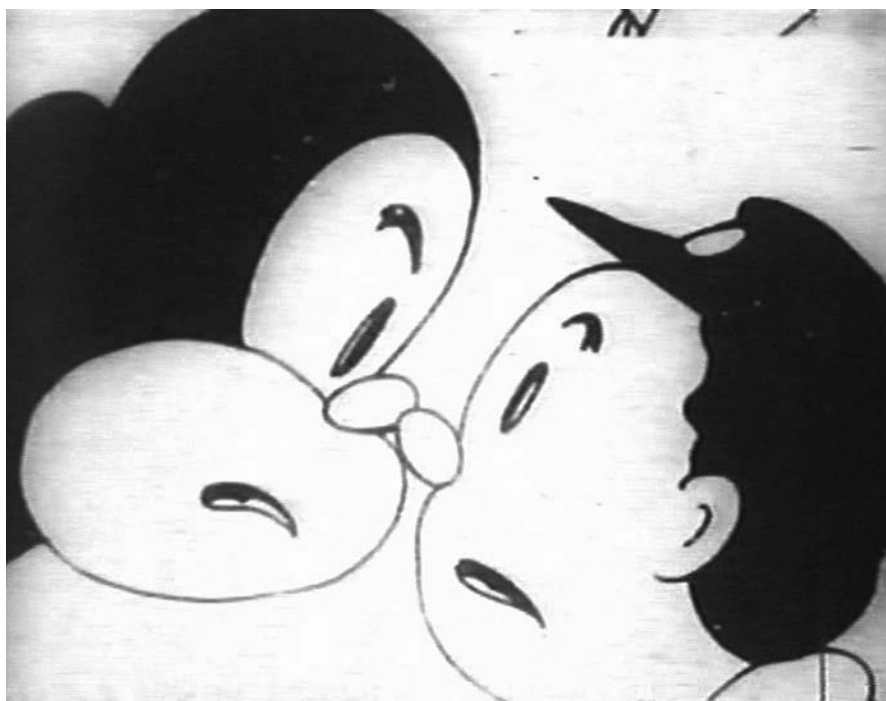


FIGURE 3. Dankichi and the "island native" bump noses.

extended to animated adaptations of manga. In this moment in *Bōken Dankichi*, however, the emphasis is on the faces in the manner of cinematic close-up. Second, the simplification of the two faces enhances and reinforces the sense of commonality between Dankichi and the native king: composed of various geometric figures, they appear in almost perfect symmetry, with the same eyes, nose, mouth, facial curvatures, and head, and even the same proportions and distribution of black and white. They are almost mirror images of one another.

In sum, this moment of erasure of racial difference depends on visual strategies that bring us very close to the image (close-up) and to the fundamentals of figuration (simplified geometrical composition), as a result of which we do not perceive difference between the native king and Dankichi.

WITH SPECIESISM, WE CAN NEVER BE ENTIRELY SURE WHAT A CERTAIN ANIMAL STANDS FOR—A RACE, A NATION, AN ETHNICITY, ALL OF THESE, OR NONE OF THESE.

Rather we feel their fundamental commonality, which comes of sort of primordial simplicity and elasticity of the animated figure, a plasmaticity that implicates the transformative ability of animated characters to adopt the qualities and shapes of other entities and of other developmental moments (so-called primitive or childish stages).

In *Dankichi* the story concerns humans.

Speciesism will introduce another twist to this plasmaticity, however. As speciesism translates racial difference into species difference, we lose fixed points of reference that commonly allow us to identify racism and racial stereotypes. In many respects, the scene of the native king and Dankichi bumping noses anticipates the operations of animation's speciesism. The native king in *Bōken Dankichi* is already so simplified and generalized that we cannot say with certainty what he represents in ethnic or racial terms, even though this is a racialized depiction. With speciesism, we can never be entirely sure what a certain animal stands for—a race, a nation, an ethnicity, all of these, or none of these. We know that it makes a difference yet we don't know what kind of difference it makes. We have a sense that racial distinctions are being made, and yet they are not racial distinctions exactly.

In sum, even in depictions of racial difference in animation, we see a tendency to make racial difference elastic, plastic, plasmatic. Speciesism extends this plasmaticity at the level of form to the level of referent. Animation's affection for animals entails an investment in a plasmaticity in which deformation and transformation take precedence over, and appears more fundamental than, representation and figuration. At the same time, iconicity

takes precedence over, and appears more fundamental than, referentiality. The important question becomes whether speciesism can truly move beyond racism by “plasmaticizing” it, or whether it merely holds racial difference under erasure in order to repeat it more effectively—continually displacing and renewing racism by simultaneously marking and erasing it.

NORAKURO

In its potential to depict the enemy as an animal species, wartime animation differs from Japanese wartime cinema or “national policy films” insofar as these latter tended to avoid depictions of Japan’s enemies, particularly those involved in the war in China and those on other fronts and throughout the colonies. Because such scholars as Satō Tadao, Kyoko Hirano, and John Dower have stressed this tendency of Japanese war cinema to avoid depictions of the enemy, I feel that I can present it schematically here.²⁴ The emphasis in national policy films falls instead on the difficulties and sacrifices of the soldiers who carry on regardless of privations and who continue to embody youth and sincerity. We don’t see who the enemy is, we don’t know what the context for the war is, and even battles remain rather abstract, mostly a matter of an experience of the difficulties of war. War thus appears as an existential test site for purity, integrity, and sacrifice on the part of Japanese soldiers. To some extent, the erasure of the enemy makes sense in ideological terms. Because the Japanese war was presented in terms of liberation, it would surely not have been wise to crank out images of Japanese soldiers killing Chinese soldiers or murdering civilian populations (even though the murder of civilians gradually becomes the rule in modern warfare).

Again, Japan’s wartime animation differs from its wartime cinema. Animation (and manga) seemed to enjoy a certain freedom in the presentation of war battles with the enemy. This is not to say that manga and animation offered direct representations of the enemy as a rule. Rather, because animation and manga so readily translate “races” (in the slippery sense of the term that comprises peoples, ethnic communities, and nations) into animals, something very different happens in Japan’s wartime animation. Cartoons of Norakuro or “Stray Black” provide prime examples.

A cartoon character created by Tagawa Suihō and often described as a canine counterpart to Felix the Cat, Norakuro first appeared in print in *Shōnen 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 Stray Black dog enjoyed such popularity that the manga were soon adapted in animation, with some episodes adapted repeatedly. There are, for instance, two extant versions of Norakuro's first adventure in the army entitled *Norakuro nitōhei* (Norakuro, Private Second Class). Murata Yasuji directed a version in 1933,²⁵ and Seo Mitsuyo directed another in 1935.²⁶

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 Figure 4, for instance, from Murata's version, as the line of dog soldiers smartly salute their commander, Norakuro throws both hands in the air in a moment of irrepressible enthusiasm.

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 Maree oki kaisen* (1945, War at sea from Hawaii to Malaysia). 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 the 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 nitōhei*), and Stray Black gradually rises

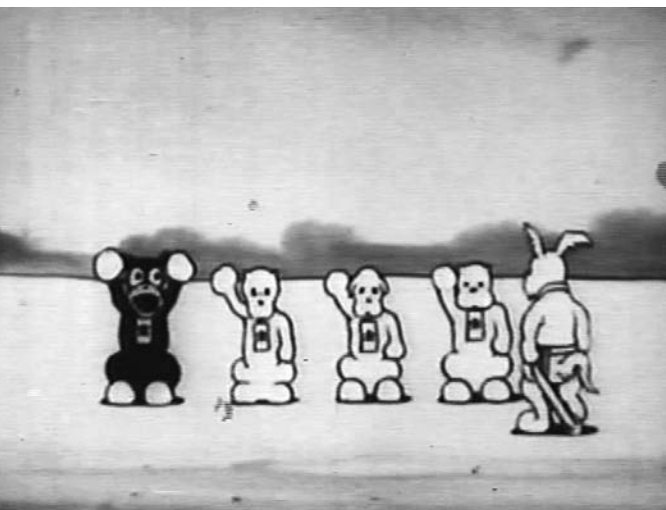


FIGURE 4. In the 1933 version of his adventures as a private second class, Norakuro the Stray Black dog finds it difficult to stay in formation with the other dog soldiers.

from “private first class” (*Norakuro ittōhei*)²⁷ to “corporal” (*Norakuro gochō*)²⁸ and “minor company officer” (*Norakuro shōjō*).²⁹ 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 “Asian” war. Needless to say, Norakuro’s good fortunes stand in stark contrast with Japan’s wartime fortunes.

Now, Norakuro and the dogs are clearly Japanese. In *Norakuro gochō* (1934, Corporal Norakuro), 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. Does the tiger stand for a specific foe? 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 in terms of national allegory: dog versus tiger is Japan versus Korea. Such a 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 (Figure 5).



FIGURE 5. In the 1935 version of Norakuro’s adventures as private second class, Norakuro fortuitously develops stripes and approaches the enemy tiger disguised as a tiger cub.

IS SPECIESISM FATED TO
DISPLACE RACISM (TO
ERASE, REINSCRIBE, AND
RENEW IT), OR CAN IT
PRODUCE SOMETHING
ENTIRELY NEW, SOMETHING
BEYOND RACIAL THOUGHT?

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. 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 drag it home is evocative of the dupery and force involved in Japan's mass exportation 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, by force or by ruse, into military sexual slavery).³⁰

Similarly, other animals in the Norakuro series can 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.³¹ 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).³² In other words, it is difficult and probably impossible to sustain an allegorical reading based on a one-to-one correspondence between an animal species and a people or nation. Something strange happens with speciesism in general. Something strange happens when races, nationalities, or ethnicities are translated into nonhuman animal species.

As remarked above, speciesism entails a plastic or elastic relation to racism. Even though we know very well that racial differences are at work, we cannot say for certain which peoples or which racial relations are in play. This is a general property of speciesism: we may say that the pigs in the Norakuro series are Chinese and the dogs Japanese; we may wonder about Bernard Weber's analogies between ant societies and Indian or Japanese social structures in his novel *Les fourmis* (1991, *Ants*);³³ the "domestic beast-people" or "human cattle" called "Yapoo" in Numa Shōzō's novels are Japanese who have been biologically engineered to fulfill a variety of domestic functions, but with the transformation of Japanese in Yapoo, we might well ask whether "Japanese" is not now a species rather than a people or nation;³⁴ we may feel that the humanoid alien in Wolfgang Peterson's film *Enemy Mine* (1985) is somehow Japanese, especially if we note its similarity to John Boorman's *Hell in the Pacific* (1968); and we may read the concern for human-alien relations in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* series as a displacement of contemporary American racism against

African Americans³⁵—and yet, in all these instances, the exact racial reference has been rendered fluid, at once evoking a familiar mode of discrimination and conjuring up a different world of experience. This is a relatively common trope in science fiction, as these examples suggest. Some mode of racial discrimination is displaced onto a relation between different species, and frequently between humans and humanoid aliens. Speciesism allows for the exploration and maybe resolution of racial discrimination, with outcomes ranging from pious moral treacle to perverse scenarios of mutual bondage or shared guilt.

Speciesism introduces uncertainty about the boundary between races and species. With humanoid aliens, we are already on slippery grounds. We cannot always be sure whether humanoid aliens constitute another species or another race or people: in *Star Trek*, for instance, Klingons or Vulcans may appear to constitute another species, but then, because humans marry and bear offspring with Klingons and Vulcans, these aliens turn out to be more like races (in the course of the series we may alternately think of Klingons as Russians, as African Americans, or as some other people, nation, or race). The appellation “humanoid” glosses over the difficulty in ascertaining what the relations between humans and humanoids really are—different races or different species? The idea of humanoid aliens constructs a zone of indiscernibility between race and species. With relations that are between human animals and nonhuman animals, we may assume an even greater gap or a greater degree of referential plasmaticity; humans and animals don’t usually marry and bear children together. Of course, because speciesism is a translation of race and racism, we can’t rule out the possibility either. And the prior question arises again. Is speciesism fated to displace racism (to erase, reinscribe, and renew it), or can it produce something entirely new, something beyond racial thought?

Such a question can only be entertained in specific contexts, with specific materials. In effect, speciesism in Japanese wartime animation constituted a powerful attempt to move beyond (Western) racism, a concerted effort to imagine the multinational or multiethnic world proposed in pan-Asianist thinking. In the *Norakuro* animated films, the translation of the military conflicts of national empire into interspecies warfare produces a paradoxical situation in which racism is at once challenged and embraced. On the one hand, the *Norakuro* series introduces an insuperable divide between friend and enemy. War is no longer a matter of humans fighting humans but of one species (dogs) fighting other species (tigers, monkeys, apes, pigs). But does the *Norakuro* series thus take racism to a new extreme wherein the enemy is no longer of the same species? What peace can be hoped for between dogs and tigers? While enemies are not imagined as racial others, neither are they entirely human.

On the other hand, the Norakuro films depict friend and foe as humanoid animals, or precisely, as animalized humans. Animals on both sides appear cute, playful, childlike, elastic, and plastic. Instead of humanism then, this sort of animation develops an “animalism” mingled with animism, vitalism, and what might be called “childism.” There is a turn to “earlier” phases of development in terms of ontogeny and phylogeny, to a primordial youthful vitality, a wellspring of life, of animality—plasmaticity.

The beauty of such animated plasmaticity in ideological terms is that it decisively separates different communities (evoking fundamental biological differences between species—dogs, pigs, apes, and so forth) while linking the same communities to one another at a level different from that of traditional humanism. While animals in the Norakuro series may fight, their conflict is not that of social Darwinism (survival of the fittest), whose racial implications Japanese imperial ideologies strove to resist (namely the implication that whites are the fittest race because their imperial strength is greater).

If the Norakuro series successfully avoids the racism implicit in the American bestialization of the Japanese foe, its manner of speciesism does not entirely break with racism and racialization, despite its challenge to the racial imaginary. Its animated animals thus come to embody the paradoxical stance underlying the Japanese war of racial liberation: races are simultaneously delineated and “liberated” (allowed free reign to swarm), simultaneously projected and overcome. Animation’s love affair with animals paves the way for rendering pan-Asianism in the form of pan-speciesism—a sphere of coprosperity that takes the form of the cooperation of animal species (in such ecosystems as jungle, savannah, woodlands, and coral reef) who cooperate despite, and paradoxically because of, their innate irreconcilable differences.

It should give us pause that the state of war itself is necessary for the work of cooperation and coprosperity, while the vital plasmaticity of animation promises to underwrite the transformation of races into species primarily through modalities of cuteness and play. This cooperation and coprosperity is predicated on, and only sustainable through, the perpetuation of war among ever-younger generations.

The Japanese wartime version of speciesism—the wartime attempt to get out of racism through animal cooperation—will haunt the racial imaginary of postwar Japan, and it is Tezuka Osamu’s works in particular that strive to take up and transform wartime speciesism into an ethics of nurture of the nonhuman in a cosmopolitan era.³⁶ Understanding the prewar–postwar transformation of speciesism, however, demands some account of the legacy of folklore in animation, as with the modern invention of the Momotarō tradition that

happened between folklore studies and animation. Thus we might begin to take seriously the idea that “cute is what remains of Japanese empire” and demand that speciesism in our films and fictions live up to its promise to imagine other worlds of difference rather than assuage our racial anxieties.

.....

Notes

1. John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 4.

2. *Ibid.*, 81.

3. *Ibid.*, 84.

4. *Ibid.*, 13.

5. While the preference in animal studies is to refer consistently to humans as human animals (and to animals as nonhuman animals) in order to stress that humans are indeed animals, I sometimes use the shorthand terms *humans* and *animals* but with the understanding (and hope) that my intermittent use of human animals and nonhuman animals (in conjunction with my general argument) provides ample indication that I do not separate humans and animals.

6. Richard Ryder coined the term in the early 1970s to refer to prejudices toward nonhuman animals, and animal advocates have picked up the term with this general connotation. While Ryder and subsequent writers see speciesism as akin to racism and sexism, I shift and expand the definition of speciesism in order to indicate that speciesism is often intimately connected with racism.

7. Some would argue that *Homo sapiens* is unusual as a species because, having killed off all other species of the genus, human is de facto a genus and a species. In any event, it is beyond the scope of this article to explore the many questions that arise in classification of species (which frequently breaks down). What is important here is the history of racial thought in which the problem of racial difference was imagined in terms of species difference, and one of the central questions of the late nineteenth century became, Can different races interbreed? The answer is of course yes, but many racial thinkers insisted that such hybridity would weaken the species, while others suggested that hybridity would improve the human stock. Such questions, which are discussed more fully in Part Two of this essay, are outlined nicely in Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995). Interestingly enough, upon the transmission of Gobineau’s ideas about race and the “yellow peril” into Japan, thinkers such as Mori Ōgai not only challenged such thinking but also showed it to be scientifically spurious.

8. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 11.

9. Seo Mitsuyo, dir., *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* (Momotarō’s divine army) (Shōchiku hōmu bideo, n.d.).

10. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 255.

11. Étienne Balibar, in the chapter “Racism and Nationalism,” in *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, by Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), speaks to the problematic that runs throughout this essay. To summarize his

account very simply, humanism, like racism, is a supplement to nationalism, but humanism promises a supernationalism that will overcome the racial supplementation of nationalism. Balibar argues persuasively that humanism and racism are closely related, and in fact, humanism frequently operates as a form of whiteness. Needless to say, Pan-Asianism implies a logic analogous to humanism.

12. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 248.

13. In an earlier version of the work that became *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Others* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003), an essay entitled “Cyborgs to Companion Species: Reconfiguring Kinship in Technoscience” (in *Chasing Technoscience: Matrix for Materiality*, ed. Don Ihde and Evan Selinger [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003]), Donna Haraway begins with the provocative thesis that “I have come to see cyborgs as junior siblings in the much bigger, queer family of companion species.” Yet, even though she refers to sites of potential overlap between companion species and imperialism (for instance, settlers’ dogs in Israel’s conquered territories displacing local wild types), she glosses over questions of power implied in companion-species formations. In this respect, while I borrow her term and owe a great deal to her discussion, I tend to insist on the power dynamics implicit in specific formations of companion species and not simply within the technoscientific formulation of companion animals.

14. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 13.

15. Naoki Sakai, in his discussion of Kyoto School philosopher Tanabe Hajime, provides a concise and persuasive account of this problem. See “Subject and Substratum: On Japanese Imperial Nationalism,” *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (2000): 462–530.

16. Part two will be published in *Mechademia* 4.

17. Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda, trans. Alan Upchurch (London: Methuen, 1988). Eisenstein favors the term plasmaticness because ‘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’ (21).

18. Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 163.

19. Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

20. Not surprisingly, the adventures of Songokū the Monkey from *The Journey to the West* figure among the earliest extant animated films.

21. In this volume Sharalyn Orbaugh discusses some of the ways affect challenges conventional boundaries of the subject. I would add in this context that the prolongation of affect results in something like a body, a sensorimotor schema that is temporally sustainable. Here arises a politics of “bare life” or “naked life.”

22. See David Gernstein’s “Cartoon Pop Music Page” for Africans in Disney’s *Trader Mickey*: <http://www.cartoonresearch.com/gerstein/cartoonmusic> (accessed February 22, 2007).

23. *Bōken Dankichi—Hyōryū no kan* (The adventurous Dankichi: Adrift), original manga by Shima Keizō, in *Shōwa manga eiga daikōshin*, 5 VHS tapes (Victor Entertainment, 1993), vol. 1, title 2.

24. See, for instance, Tadao Sato’s chapter, “Japanese War Films,” trans. Gregory

Burnett, in *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982); Kyoko Hirano's chapter, "From War to Occupation," in *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1992), and John Dower's chapter, "Japanese Cinema Goes to War," in *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: New Press, 1993). Two fairly recent edited collections have considerably complicated some of the prior insistence on the absence of representation of Japan's others in Japan's national policy cinema, opening the history of Japan's imperial film production and distribution: see especially Iwamoto Kenji's introduction to his edited volume, *Nihon eiga to nashonarizumu 1931–1945* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2004); and An Ni's essay, "Daitōa eiga e no kaidan: 'Tairiku eiga' shiron," in another volume edited by Iwamoto Kenji, *Eiga to "Daitōa kyōeiken"* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2004).

25. Murata Yasuji, manga and direction, *Norakuro nitōhei*, in *Shōwa manga eiga daikōshin*, vol. 1, title 1.

26. Seo Mitsuyo, dir., *Norakuro nitōhei*, in *Nihon aato animeeshon eiga senshū*, 12 DVDs (Kinokuniya Company, 2004), vol. 3, title 3.

27. Seo Mitsuyo, dir., *Norakuro ittōhei*, in *Nihon aato animeeshon eiga senshū*, vol. 3, title 4.

28. Murata Yasuji, *Norakuro gochō*, in *Shōwa manga eiga daikōshin*, vol. 2, title 1.

29. Murata Yasuji, *Norakuro shōjō—nichiyōbi no kaijiken*, in *Shōwa manga eiga daikōshin*, vol. 2, title 2.

30. For an introduction of the "comfort women" and the debates on history surrounding their testimony, see *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, ed. Keith Howard (London: Cassell, 1995) and Hyunah Yang, "Revisiting the Issue of Korean 'Military Comfort Women': The Question of Truth and Positionality," in *The Comfort Women: Colonialism, War, and Sex*, ed. Elaine H. Kim (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 51–72.

31. Akiyama Masami makes this point in a presentation and commentary on the manga of Norakuro's dog regiment versus the pigs in *Maboroshi no sensō manga no sekai* (Tokyo: Natsume shobō, 1998), 31–46.

32. 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."

33. Bernard Weber, *Les fourmis* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1991). There would be two additional books in the trilogy, *Jour des fourmis* (1992) and *La révolution des fourmis* (1995).

34. In the final revised version of Numa Shōzō's *Kachikujin Yapuu* comprises five volumes (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1999). There are also two important manga versions: Ishinomori Shōtarō's (1970) and Egawa Tatsuya's (2004). Takayuki Tatsumi, in *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), gives a nice introduction to the Yapoo as *kachikujin* or "domestic animal-people," which he renders as "human cattle" (54–59).

35. There are three books in the Xenogenesis trilogy: *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), reprinted together in the omnibus edition *Xenogenesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

36. I will take up this question in part two to be published later; see, too, Yomota Inuhiko's essay on Tezuka in this volume.