INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS LAMARRE

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On March 8, 2024, Thomas Lamarre, from the University of Chicago, met with Lucas Ferraço Nassif and Susana Viegas at Colégio Almada Negreiros (FCSH-UNL) for an interview held on the eve of his seminar as part of the FILM AND DEATH activities. During their conversation, they addressed some of the themes and ideas that would later shape Lamarre's talk, offering an early glimpse into the discussions to come. The interview was carried out with the support of the ERC Consolidator Grant 101088956.

Lucas Ferraço Nassif (LFN): How did anime and Félix Guattari become important to you?

Thomas Lamarre (TL): Anime and Guattari came together for me as if quite naturally but maybe not for the reasons one might expect. In the 1990s, particularly towards the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, anime was a disruptive object. It didn't fit in any field, it wasn't really taken seriously, or if it was taken seriously, people wanted to make it into an expression of Japanese cultural values. The reigning idea was that anime was primarily about Japan, and it could thus contribute to the sorts of knowledge about Japan produced in area studies. But area studies weren't all that interested in anime. Nor did anime fit into film studies, at least not in the way that people wished to organize them at the time. And it didn't really fit into the emerging field of new media, which focused above all on the digital. Digital studies were then structured around a rather simple narrative about a break between analog media and digital media, and oddly enough, cinema was one of the dominant objects of study not because cinema presented the best or only object for understanding new media, but because programs in film studies were gaining purchase in universities at the time, and inquiry into digital cinema made cinema appear newly relevant. For these reasons, many objects dropped out of digital studies and media studies — not only anime but also television. Neither anime nor television mapped into the historical

paradigm articulating a movement from analog to digital, or from old media to new media. Anime didn't really fit with conceptualizations of post-cinema either, which offered one way of challenging the paradigm of new media. In sum, anime defied both the paradigm of a historical rupture between the analog and the digital and the insistence on cinema as a key point of reference for media studies. It was this conceptual unwieldiness or unsuitability that made anime interesting. Anime made it possible to pose questions that weren't being posed in a direct way within cinema studies, new media studies, and digital studies.

At the same time, Gilles Deleuze's books on cinema were important for me. What surprised me, however, was the tendency at that time to treat Deleuze as the important thinker and to write Félix Guattari out of the picture, even though their collaboration clearly informs Deleuze's thinking in his solo works, even the cinema books, his Foucault book, and his book on Leibniz. Deleuze was treated as the rigorous philosopher and Guattari was seen as a kind of maverick intellectual or sensationalist. Maybe there is some truth to this bias, but as I was writing *The Anime Machine* and using concepts like "machine," I found many of them to be equally plausibly Guattarian. Even though I don't want to assign an origin or owner to such concepts, something shifts when one treats concepts like machines as Guattarian. For me, this meant taking Lacanian and Marxist thinking seriously instead of assuming, as was the wisdom at the time, that Deleuze had simply rejected or had moved beyond psychoanalysis and Marxism. This opened the possibility of thinking Deleuze's film philosophy differently. What if Deleuze and Guattari had written the *Cinema* books together? Maybe it would be like *The Anime Machine.* For similar reasons, *Anti-Oedipus* was a source of inspiration for *The Anime Ecology*.

LFN: Do you think Félix Guattari was considered too disruptive?

TL: In terms of how people were mapping things intellectually at the time, yes. I don't think he's inherently more disruptive than Deleuze. It's just the way in which this sort of work gets mapped. There's a moment when suddenly people are taking Deleuze seriously as a philosopher of cinema, but it was often at the expense of his work with Guattari, even though Deleuze was writing those books at the same time that he was writing with Guattari. Even if the crossover is detectable in Deleuze's work.

Nonetheless, Guattari is not disruptive in an absolute sense any more than anime is. Anime is not disruptive in all situations. But in a certain kind of setting, both anime and Guattari raised questions that people didn't seem eager to take on. The question — or the task for those of us studying anime today — is to find ways to prolong or renew that kind of radical thought. We can't presume that some combination of objects and concepts is automatically radical or disruptive. We should ask what it means to be disruptive in the first place, and why it's desirable or not.

LFN: Why do you think that happens?

TL: In part, it is due to the way in which a field of inquiry, film studies for instance, legitimates itself as a discipline within the university, often taking on a monumental feel as it polices its boundaries. I am not denouncing disciplines here. Disciplines are part of the way in which thought happens. In the wake of psychoanalytic theory, film studies struggled to produce a history, and there was a moment in which everyone had to agree: this is the history of cinema; these are the canonical films. As departments of film studies emerged, film studies required a history that could be used to structure and organize instruction in the classroom. I am not saying this to denounce it in a simplistic manner. Anime was strange in such a context because it fell outside this disciplinary gesture. The questions anime poses about cinema are probably not really wanted within film studies — the same may be true of digital studies and video game studies. And even though it could be placed within Japan studies and could be treated as being about Japan, Japan studies didn't want anime either. Whatever anime was saying about Japan, it didn't seem to be the things that people wanted within area studies, and to some extent that may still be true. Anime remains something of a strange object in terms of current divisions of intellectual labor. Nonetheless, for precisely these reasons, it could also be productive to put anime in dialogue with film studies, with area studies, with digital studies, with game studies.

Susana Viegas (SV): Since you mentioned "life" after Deleuze's work on cinema, both Cinema 1 *and* Cinema 2*, there's a task that Gilles Deleuze set for all of us who follow his thinking: What happens next? Is there a possible* "Cinema 3"*? As you know, many Deleuzians are trying to figure this out. Is it a neuro-image? What would the third volume of* Cinema *look like? You've mentioned what* The Anime

Machine *could be, and I think it's bold and important to approach Deleuze this way. My point, however, is about the legacy Deleuze gave us, particularly the crisis of the time-image. You end* The Anime Machine *with the crisis, and I love this idea but at the same time, it's puzzling. Why has no one else noticed this? We've always assumed that the time-image would be the "final" stage of moving images, and we take that for granted. I think your inquiry here is really interesting, especially when you suggest that the time-image has become a* cliché*. It's everywhere now, mistaken for thinking images – which is exactly what Deleuze warns about! How do we distinguish between a true time-image, the crisis of the time-image, and the time-image as* cliché*?*

TL: I was interested in precisely that question. One of the things that's fascinating about Deleuze's account of cinema is that he was one of the last people to write about cinema who watched everything on the movie screen. The two volumes were published in 1983 and 1985, and although one could watch films on video at that time, apparently he didn't adopt that approach. For those of us writing only a few years later, pretty much everything was available on video, or DVD, or streaming. While film scholars rightly continue to insist on screening films when studying them, our viewing habits have nonetheless been transformed. The media ecology has changed. As such, today, whether one is talking about cinema or anime, Deleuze's approach to the time-image would surely have to be reconsidered if the aim is to prolong his manner of thinking. Because the media ecology of anime owes more to television than to cinema, one has to rethink Deleuze's project if one takes it seriously.

The challenge of Deleuze's approach lies in his interest in how cinema thinks; he says that screen is a brain, and he invites us to think transformations in cinema in terms of natural history. Each film is like an organism, with its particular sensory-motor schema, which entails a manner of moving into world, experimenting on it, transforming it. Each film is individuating, evolving as it were, with new species emerging. Cinema is individuating and speciating. But Deleuze's taxonomy avoids or displaces the logic of species and genera. Deleuze focuses on variation and variants, and on selection. Selection generates populations or collectives. What Deleuze calls "forms" are more like phyla than genres or genera. The echoes of two thinkers, Gilbert Simondon and Raymond Ruyer, are evident in his ontogenetic approach to cinema, which draws on embryogenesis and evolutionary theory. Individual

and collective emerge together. Variation and selection occur together. This is why the cinematic field is individuating and speciating at the same time.

The relation between the movement-image and time-image can be thought in such terms. The time-image does not come after the movement-image in a sequential manner. Nor does it constitute a break or rupture with the movement-image. The time-image follows the movement-image in the manner that reptiles follow fish, or mammals follow reptiles, or in the manner that vertebrates follow invertebrates in evolutionary terms. But this is not a sequential, progressive, developmental history. The "later" organisms do not present an advance over the "prior" organisms. What comes later is already in the prior, potentially. Organisms differentiate as new problems arise in the environment, or new opportunities or strategies are discovered. Thus, the time-image does not replace, overcome, or break with the movement-image. Their relation can also be likened to that of the orchid and wasp, which Deleuze and Guattari famously describe in terms of involution. Their relation can thus be called ecological, because time-image and movement-image go on individuating together.

Deleuze also described their relationship as a fold of a fold. The movement-image is a "first" fold, and time-image is a fold of that fold. When Deleuze likens cinema to the brain or nervous system, he is evoking the process of embryogenesis: the tissue that will eventually become the brain and nervous system in vertebrates is first folded from inside of the egg outward — some will remain on the surface as skin. It then invaginates, folding inward and forming what will be the spinal cord and brain. This is what happens in the natural history of cinema. The movement-image generates a body or fold with the neural tissue pushed outward to the surface — or we might think of the neural net of a jellyfish. That system is folded again with the time-image. The time-image may be likened to encephalization in the course of embryogenesis. Although this may be described in sequential terms (the movement-image is first, and the time-image comes after), the process is not sequential. It is more like superpositioning or phase-shifting.

To ask what happens after the time-image, then, is to ask how the whole of cinema (its ecology) might continue to complexify and diversify while continuing its integration — to individuate, to phase-

shift. To explore this question, we need to take a step that Deleuze did not take in the *Cinema* book, but which Guattari and Deleuze took elsewhere. This is tricky, because cinema no longer seems to provide the whole in question. Some commentators see an invitation to posit a divide, to speak of new media, that is, a radically different media ecology. They claim that films are no longer dominant, no longer the best point of departure. Others speak of post-cinema, focusing on the legacy of cinema and a corpus of films. Both gestures are needed, and something like anime can be considered in either way — not least because it has both a cinematic and a televisual lineage. Yet to prolong the Guattarian or Deleuzian approach, one must consider how cinema becomes inchoate and is plunged back into preindividual potential. Just as Simondon describes the animal as an inchoate plant, we might begin by describing anime or television as inchoate cinema. This is not a value judgment. I am not saying television is inherently incoherent. It requires a new ecology to gain coherence or take on intensity.

This is the gesture of *The Anime Ecology,* which is a plunge into the preindividual potential of moving images, of both cinema and television. They are born at roughly the same time, but television developed as if in the wake of cinema. Television then is neither a radical break with cinema nor an elaboration of it. It might be described as a folding of the fold — or better, as a phase-shift. Where the time-image of cinema reached for a new kind of thinking entangled with the projection of moving images onto screens, television anime arises where the time-image becomes inchoate due to flash and flow, and a thinking entangled with electrons streaming from infrastructures is in the offing, but it was already there. What should we call this image — neuro-image or electro-image, or maybe noos-image or eco-image? In any case, the history of alternating current and the life of electricity would be as important as binary code to this mind-media ecology, and probably more so.

SV: Do you mean television as a medium, or screen media in general?

TL: That is the crucial question: What is television? Some people think it's a device or platform. Some people think it's a screen culture. Some people think it's a content. I think that Stanley Cavell poses the question well in his essay “The Fact of Television.” He doesn’t ask what’s wrong with television. On the contrary, he says, television does what it does really well. Instead of calling it a flawed

art or an inferior cinema, we need to figure out what it's doing as media. Interesting enough, Cavell publishes his essay around the same time that Deleuze publishes his film books, in the mid-1980s, and despite the genuine differences between these two thinkers, Cavell's three concepts — monitoring and switching and serializing — struck me as a way to prolong the sort of questioning pursued by Deleuze in the cinema books and by Deleuze and Guattari in the two volumes on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* — but with respect to television as media. This is resonant with what was happening in Japan in the 1980s. The 80s in Japan were the decade of new media, and television was at the center of debates about and conceptualizations of new media. Anime was integral to this 1980s formation of "television new media" or "expanded television media." Japan, then, offers a radically different perspective on new media — as does anime. It wasn't reduced to analog versus digital. It wasn't reduced to the computational. Nor was cinema as key point of reference as in the US context. It was about interconnected transformations across media. This is how anime, or more precisely its media ecology, eventually became integral to the phenomenon of streaming — not only as a content but also the anime fan sites that provided the format for streaming platforms.

To return to your question about "what is television?", the phenomenon of new media in 1980s Japan was pushing people to think in terms of media ecology. This is why, in the context of anime, I approached television as ecology — it involves devices or platforms, kinds of content, infrastructures, forms such as serialization, etc. But these are not preexisting pieces that are assembled. The "television ecology" does not preexist its assembling. This is why it goes on individuating and speciating, and yet we continue call it television, even if in an interrogative manner. Is streaming still television? It belongs to the television ecology, which is at once differentiating and integrating in the era of streaming and YouTube and TikTok.

SV: The focus remains on the thinking potential of images. I ask this because the time-image was supposed to be an exception — an exception in the sense that classical moving images and the movement-image would be the mainstream. The time-image doesn't appear at the end of an era; rather, it coexists with the movement-image, but it would be a very "minor" way of doing cinema. Do you think that even within this regime, we could find some minor explorations of this "minor" or "atomic"

perspective, one that encompasses all the new technological possibilities you explore through anime? It's not just about the technology we use to produce something, but how that technology expresses and shows how our lives have been changed.

TL: I really like your emphasis on "minor cinema." This way of looking at the relationship between the movement-image and the time-image introduces another level of complexity: the time-image in cinema is akin to what Deleuze and Guattari call minor literature. Again, the time-image doesn't replace the movement-image; they are cohabitants, as you say, but the time-image arises as the movement-image becomes in some sense inchoate. It becomes impossible to coordinate and subordinate the components of the moving image in the same way, for their energetic states are shifting — for all kinds of reasons, technological, historical, social, political reasons. Again, Simondon's characterization of the animal as an inchoate plant comes to mind. The time-image happens when the movement-image loses coherence, coherence in the sense of it in physics — the phase difference between waves is no longer constant. The emergence of the time-image doesn't signal a history of progress, or a narrative of developmental advance, but a kind of stuttering or stammering of the moving image, which involuntarily shudders as it individuates and speciates. It is a kind of nervous convulsion or spiritual incoherence. It may be for this reason that, when people try to talk about what comes "after" the time-image, they often evoke neurons, nerves, nervous systems, which follows Deleuze's usage of terms like brain and spiritual automaton. Patricia Pisters speaks of the neuro-image, for instance. This strikes me useful, to point toward something like the neuro-image or nerve-image.

LFN: You say nerve image?

TL: Something like the neuro-image or nerve-image might be a good point of departure for thinking transformations of the time-image insofar as the goal is not so much to ask "what is a minor cinema?" as "what is minor moving image media?" Something like "information-image" also comes to mind in the context of anime and digital media. I believe some writers have evoked information-image when considering what follows the time-image. In any case Susana's question about minor cinema is really important when thinking about what comes "after" — and I continue mentally to put the term

after in quotation marks, because of course this after is not after in a simple sequential way. A couple of things might be taken into consideration to approach what comes after the time-image.

First, the techniques associated the time-image or minor cinema might be characterized as modernist, at least tentatively. Such techniques were, in many ways, disruptive of the increasingly commercialized and industrially streamlined forms associated with the movement-image. Today, however, the same modernist techniques are arguably widespread, and maybe not disruptive in the same way, if at all. Indeed, anime series often play with avant-garde, modernist film techniques, as do commercial media more generally. Second, it surely doesn't make sense to lump all of the animation produced in Japan under the rubric of anime, and to characterize all of it as inherently disruptive.

Which returns us to our point of departure, the reasons why anime was something of a disruptive object for media studies and film studies in late 1990s and early 2000s. Although anime can be considered generally disruptive in that context, when one turns to the history of Japanese animation, there are distinctions and developments analogous to what Deleuze dubs the movement-image and time-image. The animated films or manga films of Miyazaki Hayao, for instance, follow in a lineage of animation not unlike that of the movement-image in cinema. The animated television series of Anno Hideaki present a nervous convulsion of that movement-image. Consequently, two things need to be considered at once. On the one hand, it is possible, at least in certain contexts, to see anime as "externally" disruptive — of cinematic conventions and cinematic understandings of the moving image, for instance. On the other hand, anime has its own "internal" conventions and disruptions.

One is thus dealing with questions about disruptiveness or convulsiveness in two registers: first, across media formations, which may be characterized in different ways: cinema and animation, film and television, movie project and broadcast; and second, within a media formation. Yet this "internal difference" tends to repeat "external" differences that arise between media (such as cinema and television) but are not reducible to them. Because convulsiveness can be situated as both internal and external to this "natural history" of anime, we are more precisely dealing with something transversal — something at once transindividual and preindividual to the ongoing individuation of anime.

I should add that, if we follow Deleuze and Guattari, this transversal disruptiveness is not oppositional. It is not a question of opposing, denouncing, or even transgressing the movement-image, for instance. Nor does transversal disruptiveness guarantee a politically progressive position. It marks a shift in what we think counts politically. In a sense, transversal disruptiveness is perfect ordinary, plebian.

LFN: And anime is mainstream mostly.

TL: Exactly. Anime is at once accessible, plebian, and highly conceptual. That's part of its allure. But then so were many of the films that Deleuze discusses under the rubric of the time-image. This invites us to put pressure on the notion of the mainstream. There are different ways of using this term, but people often evoke it in the manner associated with cultural studies in the U.K. Mainstream is placed in opposition with the marginal, deviant, or transgressive, and there is a tendency to transform this contrast into an oppositional stance. This is not how Deleuze and Guattari proceed, and I don't think this sort of opposition is useful in the context of anime. In fact, it just won't work. I take Deleuze's evocation of "the people are missing" in his cinema books as an invitation to think the logic of the popular, the aesthetics of the popular. The logic of the popular is different from the idea of the masses or mass society. Thinkers as diverse as Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, and Rancière are equally adamant in questioning the very idea of the masses, both in the legacy we associate with the Frankfurt School in the U.S. (Marcuse) and that of Guy Debord in France. The critique of fascism in Deleuze, Foucault, Guattari, and Rancière proceeds in different manner than denunciation of the stupidity of the masses — as if intellects were not equally manipulable and stupid. They do not conflate the popular with the mass or the masses. The popular not a matter of large numbers, or of being popular in that sense. To evoke Rancière, it is a matter of aesthetic equality (practices of reading) instead of market equivalency (number of likes). Deleuze does not, of course, see equality in the way that Rancière does. Yet when he evokes the missing people in the context of the time-image, he likewise invites an inquiry into the popular.

In the context of anime, for all that anime is commonly referred to as Japanese animation and conflated with Japanese culture, we might say that, in anime, the people are missing, and the national masses are missing. This does not mean that anime is thus odorless global culture. Guattari's works are of interest here, for he did not place the molecular and insurgencies in opposition to the molar and mass formations. He felt that right-wing movements, totalitarian, authoritarian, fascist movements, were increasing situated tactically at the level of the molecular, and as such, were not (or no longer) comprehensible in entirely molar terms. He was offering the left a toolkit for engaging politically on the terrain of the molecular, but without guarantees. This is also true of Deleuze's account of control societies. In any case, Guattari and Deleuze did not claim that molar formations had been replaced, were no longer relevant. They point to the complex political terrain that emerges around the popular, and it should be part of the mission of anime studies (if there is such a thing) to rise to this challenge.

LFN: You came up with this term that is the nerve image. If we discuss this specific anime that is Neon Genesis Evangelion *and elaborate on the organization that does everything in the story, it's called* NERV*; they are working both with and against this other organization, called* SEELE*, the soul. Do you think Anno Hideaki, the creator of the anime, could be talking about this nerve image? Do you think he could be at the same time producing and commenting on the possibility of this nerve image?*

TL: Your comments about *Evangelion* bring together, in a compelling way, the two questions guiding the conversation so far: What comes "after" the time-image? What is the logic of the popular? In terms of the image, Anno's 1995 series was renowned for its experimental use of animation techniques — such as the famous dissolution and modification of the character design of Shinji in the final episode. As for its logic, Anno's somewhat sadistic engagement with otaku culture was equally subject to commentary. Anno, a notorious otaku, spoke disparagingly about male otaku, and the *Evangelion* series was read as a sort of otaku trap — Anno was said to have lured them in with all their beloved tropes and devices, only to pull out the rug from under them in the last episode, stranding them, mocking them, foreclosing their desire. Hence the outcry around the series, which spurred a demand for an alternative ending in the form of a film sequel. And as you know, Anno would eventually form his own studio and "rebuild" *Evangelion* in four films.

To return to your question with this in mind, I think Anno hits upon the logic of the popular, which would not necessarily be something that everyone likes — Miyazaki's films might again be evoked as a foil, because at the time of *Evangelion*, everyone liked Miyazaki's films. The *Evangelion* series was wildly popular, but not in the same manner, and its popularity was not about "national masses" in the received sense of it. It is an open question whether it is still true of Anno today that his films and animations exemplify the logic of the popular. With the box office success of the third *Evangelion* movie in 2012 and then *Shin Gojira* in 2016, which garnered critical accolades and film awards, Anno was clearly positioned as one of the most important Japanese filmmakers ever. But many commentators also spoke of the demise of otaku culture due to the mainstream status of *Shin Gojira*. We might ask about what is happening to the logic of popular in this specific instance, and this question can also be approached via the nerve-image or noos-image or whatever rubric we feel is suited to grasping this sort of minor or molecular movement of anime in a more general way.

LFN: There's a part in The Anime Machine *where you write about Anno and mention that, for a test or an interview, he draws a* mobile suit*. Do you think this nerve-image has something to do with the* mobile suit*?*

TL: I lingered on the mobile suit and mecha in *The Anime Machine* to highlight the importance of exploded projection in anime. Exploded projection offers a different structuration of the image than geometric perspective. My example was an assembly diagram for a motor wheel. In geometric perspective, distant components are smaller than those closer to the viewer. In exploded projection, components remain in scalar proportion. A screw is the same size whether it is close or distant from the observer or assembler. You don't want to mistake one size screw or another size screw when assembling a wheel, when disassembling and reassembling. Exploded projection is visual of course, but it also involves a hands-on engagement with the elements of the image. The assembly diagram is visual and tactile, that is, haptic, or synesthetic if you will. It permits multiple kinds of engagement. Sometimes there is an order of elements for assembly, but you can generally traverse the assembly along different trajectories. Its structure is process, is processual.

Now, the mobile suit or mecha of anime series is typically presented in exploded projection, not in geometric perspective. There is a straightforward reason for this: the image offers an assembly diagram for the viewer or user. Watching the mecha transform on the screen, the viewer sees how the mecha is unfolded and refolded. This can be done with the actual toy at home. Some of the famous or classic mecha, like the one in *Getta Robo*, offer not only transformation of one robot but also combination and recombination of three robots. The viewer, then, is a user or player of the image.

This provides a nice analogy for the anime image, for the multiplanar image. Its multiplanar quality makes for an image that is not structured or "rationalized" in accordance with geometric perspective. But it is rationalized in accordance with exploded projection. Exploded projection allows for multiple trajectories through the image, through the anime series, which might be considered different stories or storylines. The *Evangelion* series plays with this effect, and different characters offer different ways of traversing the series, different ways of taking it apart and putting it together. Anno eventually calls this process rebuild, and when he rebuilds his television series as a movie series, he does his rebuild by following character, using them to take the series part and put it together again.

As an aside, exploded projection was the central concept or problematic in *The Anime Machine*. It's something that still preoccupies me, partly because exploded projection now seems so prevalent in special effects cinema and digital filmmaking that I am surprised that people don't linger on it. I was heartened to find Azuma Hiroki formulate something similar to exploded projection in his book on gamic realism, the sequel to the book called *Database Animals* in English. He shows how games allow players to traverse the game by following, that is, constructing worldlines. But exploded projection has not received much attention.

But to return to the other part of your question, when you gloss the mobile suit in *Evangelion* series as a mother or matrix, you add a crucial twist to the discussion of mecha. If one tracks the storyline or worldline of Shinji across the exploded projection, the series feels Oedipal due to Shinji's combination of aggression and submission in relation to his father, a powerful authoritarian figure, and Shinji is trying to master the maternal body, with disturbing results, through the mecha interface.

Deleuze and Guattari's take might be useful here: they characterize modern power in terms of the production of multitudes of tiny despots. Where Lacan humorously calls them "hommelettes," Deleuze and Guattari don't seem to embrace the idea that men have the phallus, and women are the phallus, or at least they considerably complicate this scenario, expanding on the socioeconomic and political register instead of isolating the psychological register, while thinking in terms of modes of production — and what produces production. They seem to draw inspiration from Foucault — the production that happens in the factory cannot take place without the production of docile bodies, without disciplinary power. Tiny despots are compatible with the docile bodies and self-governing subjects of Foucault's disciplinary power. This resonates with *Evangelion* where it is similarly a disciplinary scenario of now being at school, now being in the military. In this respect, Anno seems to be staging disciplinary power and the production of docile bodies. But docile bodies are not shorn of power; power is exercised through docility and self-governance, through complicated acts of compliance, obedience, acquiescence — and all the somatic effects arising at the interface of the pilot with the mecha. Stilling one's rebellious nature is as powerful as acting rebelliously.

When it comes to "stopping on rebellious action," what interests me about the mecha or mobile suits in *Evangelion* is their emphasis on the stomach. This is part of larger shift in the mecha genre, from pilots sitting in the head to pilots sitting in the gut, and a shift from a cognitive mode to a psychic mode. Piloting involves psychic synchronization, but the psychic link is also a biological hereditary link. The gut is the site of another kind of thinking, and it is the site of birth and death and rebirth.

LFN: The seppuku *of the samurai.*

TL: If something were born of spilling your guts… in an act of "in/voluntary" death. In the context of mecha and the giant mobile suit, Elizabeth Wilson's work comes to mind. She writes of the stomach as a second brain, for the gut has the highest density of neurons after the brain. The stomach is full of neurological activity, and maybe this is why we evoke the stomach so often in affective terms, saying that we can't stomach someone, or in Japanese, becoming angry is an arising of the belly, *hara*

ga tatsu. There are many other phrases with guts and *hara*. To spill one's guts is to confess, as if despite oneself.

I can't help thinking that the psychic or affective turn within the mecha genre, in which one pilots via the stomach, evokes this variation on thought, gut thought. The mobile suits in *Evangelion* might be read at once as a paradigmatic instance of exploded projection and as an instance of gut thought. And the series highlights violent and ordinary acts of eating – such as the horrifying scene in which the suited Shinji devours his enemy and well-stocked refrigerator. Anno, instead of isolating the transcendent ego of Cartesianism or the rational calculating brain, stages a thinking that happens through devouring, filling the guts, and spilling the guts. Guts have their reasons.

LFN: Breathing as well, when they're inside of the EVA.

TL: There is a womblike quality about this interface, which brings us back to your comments about the mecha or mobile suit as a mother or maternal body. The *Eva* series deliberately burdens viewers with these tropes that afford possible codes for understanding the action. Recall that the young women who arrive at the most intense interface with mobile suits are those daughters whose mothers have died. How are we to understand this lineage? How seriously are we to take it? Anno also introduces so many symbols and so much symbolism, as if to invite multiple frames of reference for deciphering what is happening and what is at stake. My impression is that he is consciously playing with fans, offering multiple trajectories that do not pan out in terms of explanatory force. He builds toward a crisis of meaning, a collapse of signification and action. It is as if he is toying with his viewers, refusing to offer them what they want, refusing to offer a way to make sense of the series, refusing an ending that would retroactively allow viewers to decipher it and, in effect, justify the characters' actions.

LFN: I'm not going to give you the pyrotechnics of the last episode.

TL: Exactly. Instead of definitive victory or defeat, or a heightening of the battle between heroes defending the earth and the alien invaders, the final episode offers an unraveling of the image and an unraveling of Shinji. The overall movement is from function to dysfunction, and it seems as if it was

only ever dysfunction that was functioning. This gesture forces a reconsideration of operativity — of the image in general, of characters specifically. The multiplanar mecha suit at the center of this movement is pivotal because it unfolds into another kind of thinking (gut thought) and another kind of operativity of the image (exploded projection). This is one way of talking about what comes after the time-image, but again I would stress that this is not a simple sequential afterward; it is not a break, a rupture. This "new" image was in some sense always there, in Miyazaki for instance. The image plunges into an inchoate state and individuates anew.

LFN: Instead of staying in the head, you go to the gut, to the movement of the bowels. I thought about the samurai, the process of the seppuku, *which is to disembowel, and it means death, but it also means reincarnation.*

TL: …yes, although it isn't exactly your spirit that is reincarnated, any more than the unconscious is yours. The you goes on individuating. I is an other.

SV: Since you're discussing that exercise, one thing we missed during our Reading Group on The Anime Machine *is the question of death. You talk about moving images and organisms, and the equation related to death often seems to focus on the death of the mind, rather than the body. You can be in a coma or brain death and still be considered a living being. It's only when the brain fully shuts down, from a medical perspective, a person is officially declared dead. How would you approach the question of death within your own theory of moving images? Do you think this element could make a significant difference, or not?*

TL: Interestingly enough, in Japan, brain death is not officially death from a medical perspective. If other organs are alive, the person is still considered alive. This is another way to broach the questions I previously raised with reference to the gut. But whether we talk about brain death or gut death or some other organ death, your question gets to the point. What is the relation between parts and whole? Where and when is death? At some point we may say that it's really and truly over, this person has died. But such a declaration is a way of avoiding the difficulty of death, of life. I too find myself

sidestepping this difficulty already, in advance, with ideas about animation and life. Maybe I can pursue your question in a sidelong manner without answering it, without responding as if I had the answer.

Historically, discussions of animation tend to highlight animism and vitalism. It is as if everything were coming to life, and in effect, banishing death — animation as a simple vitalism. Or as if animation were discovering that everything is in fact alive — animation as a simple animism. There are commentators who have focused on the uncanny, on moments where a character is coming to life, usually a character like a robot or automation or doll, but there is uncertainty about the status of that life, for it appears to be hovering between life and death, between organic and inorganic, etc. This is interesting, but a problem arises, because such accounts seem to assume that everybody knows what is alive and what is dead, everyone knows what life is and what death is, and everyone knows that matter, for instance, is inorganic and not alive — a doll is not alive, a person is. Such accounts don't really disturb our understanding of life or death. The moment of uncertainty may be compelling, fascinating, but it doesn't push us to think differently about death, life.

There is also a pronounced tendency in animation studies to focus on the movement of characters and construe their movement as a sign of life. From this point of view, as Ōtsuka Eiji has pointed out, animated characters appear deathless. He asks if it is even possible to convey death in animation. Certain kinds of animation play up the deathless quality of characters, enacting violence on them only to show them bouncing back, lifelike. Something strange is happening here: liveliness seems to demand a demonstration of deathlessness.

Still, if we wish to delve into the question of life, death, without assuming in advance that we know what these are, we might begin with nonlocalized movement. This is my bias of course: I realized early on that animation studies are so obsessively focused on the movement of characters that they don't actually think about movement; they don't think with it, through it, or thanks to it, let alone think about it. Only when we turn to non-localized movement, can we begin ontologizing movement as such. Not only is movement not merely localized in characters; it is not localized in the image. We are then dealing with unbounded system, and the emergence or appearing of boundaries has to be explained; boundaries

can't be assumed, posited in advance. Nor can temporal sequences be assumed, such as first life, then death. This is akin to what Derrida called originary violence, where the originary is not first in a sequential manner and maybe not even in an ontological manner in the traditional philosophical sense. When Deleuze turns to Peirce's semiotics in the cinema books, something analogous is at stake. Peirce's "firstness" does not necessarily come first. Death does not come at the end.

I realize that I am swerving here, not providing a firm answer, but then this is because I don't want to idealize life or death, to assign them definitive values.

SV: Moving images can give us a decentered, non-anthropocentric sense of death. For example, when we talk about the death of non-biological beings, technological or mechanical beings, we're using "death" in a semantic way, meaning deactivating, shutdown, and so on. Yet, at the same time, we should recognize that we, as biological human beings, don't own the definition of death. In our Project FILM AND DEATH, that's precisely the point: to bring this expanded sense, this extra meaning, of what death can be for a film. It's not only about chemical degradation or physical decay; a film, after all, is a kind of artificial intelligence — an artificial way of thinking. If a film has a way of dying, it would be an "artificial dying", and that, from a philosophical perspective, is fascinating to explore.

TL: I like this line of thought and yet I would also want to ask if we need to differentiate between artificial dying and natural dying on the basis of a distinction between the death of inorganic materials and the death of organic life forms. Of course, I don't want to sweep away the distinction between death and life, or between nonlife and life for that matter. But this distinction has to be complicated. On the one hand, you have thresholds in the decay of life forms where in fact you can never locate death precisely. If a human body decomposes and new life forms spring out of it, where is the death? Wasn't there just more life? As you are saying, it would depend on whether you adopt the human point of view or the point of view of the things that sprout from a dead body. Conversely, life is seen as a threshold when we ask: What point an embryo alive? At what point is anything alive? Is the seed alive? On the other hand, if I understand you correctly, you are saying that this threshold is not merely physical. This is not about physical substance in some brute sense, for the threshold of what is called subjectivity is

unequally in question. We might be forced to think again about matter and materiality, about individuation, if we do not insist on foundational distinction between natural and artificial.

SV: This is not an easy vision to explain.

TL: It is difficult terrain because questions associated with religion and the absolute reappear as soon as we think relationally. Raymond Ruyer is an interesting thinker in this respect. He ventures onto this terrain but contests both vitalism and panpsychism, or at least, certain ways of deploying them. Life, he says, cannot simply be a force pushing from behind. Panpsychism he finds interesting, and yet he feels that it mistakenly models the psyche on secondary consciousness. He develops a thinking of primarily consciousness. At the same time, he rejects theories of emergence that hold that there is a moment where there is no life, and then life emerges. Likewise for consciousness: there is not a moment where there is not consciousness, and then consciousness emerges. Life and consciousness are there, before and after, so to speak. What happens at the threshold is not simply about absence of life or death and then its presence.

SV: It creates an epistemological problem: What exactly are we dealing with? As you put it, if we say that everything that is alive is also dying, then there is no clear line of division. And yet, conceptually, there is a division. The question is that our brains are too slow — too slow to follow these movements. We think with concepts, with divisions, with opposition: life is not death, but everything alive is also dying. When our brain tries to express this in language, it slows everything down. It becomes dull, heavy, even uninteresting. When you truly get it, you get it immediately.

TL: This is indeed an epistemological problem, for there is a threshold where it feels difficult to say much more than "there both is and is not a distinction." For I wouldn't want to say that there are not any distinctions. Your example is a perfect one: we don't know when an idea comes over us. Along with the apparent slowness of language when it comes to talking about what is happening to us, language in another sense moves faster than the speed of light. It is ahead of "us," happening before us. Language is clairvoyant. It is primed to respond before we have any "secondary" consciousness of the response. This is what Ruyer means by primary consciousness. And there's the often-cited comment by

William James: you're not running from the bear because you're afraid, you're feeling afraid because you're running from the bear. Of course, James doesn't want to impose a strict temporal order on acting and feeling. He is inverting a commonsense logic to open up our analytics of perception and consciousness. Things are happening before and around secondary consciousness, with and through it, to use a now somewhat rote turn of phrase. To speak of primary consciousness is to speak of something originary, always happening, individuating.

LFN: Thinking with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari when they are debating "the people to come". Can anime make us learn how to die other deaths, different deaths, images that are not the Cartesian images into depth*? I'm trying to think with multinaturalism and perspectivism: What kind of bodies and worlds may appear? When did you notice that anime could be posing these problems?*

TL: Here, too, I want to hedge — while I don't want to reject the search for other bodies, other worlds, other deaths, I want to resist the idea of an overcoming, of a simple rupture or break. And so even though I began by talking about anime as a disruptive object, I don't think of that disruptiveness as a break with this body, this world, this death. To return to the thread we were pursuing from Deleuze's cinema books about the relation between the movement-image and the time-image as well as "the people are missing," Deleuze evokes belief in this world. In other words, when we speak of a new image, it is not outside this world or beyond it. It is a different way of inhabiting this world. A good deal is written today about what it means to live in the ruins — instead of denouncing this world or disavowing its disasters, the idea of belief in this world is a call to engage with what is happening instead of imagining that denunciation will bring you to the other side of whatever this mess is. This doesn't mean that one must accept and embrace this world as the best of all possible worlds. In effect, it is to put oneself at risk. This sort of scenario — belief in this world — is remarkably common in anime. For similar reasons, I find I am not so interested in making judgments about what is new. Thoreau's advice feels apt: don't ask what's new, ask what's never old. And so, even though there are so many excellent new anime series, for instance, and anime is a source of constant novelty, that may not be what is interesting or disruptive about it at the current juncture. Deleuze speaks to this issue in terms of repetition. In the cinema books, he writes that modern cinema repeats modern literature, just

as modern literature repeats modern philosophy, to which we might add, or at least think about the possibility that, anime media repeats modern media, the whole of cinema, television, video. But repetition is not of the same. It is difference. It is the individuation of a field.

In this respect, exploded projection is surely not a radical break with Cartesian perspective. Exploded projection resituates Cartesian perspective, dwells in it, differentiates it, releases something from it. Cartesian perspective turns out differently: instead of a fixed viewing position that implies a transcendent position of mastery, it turns out to be populated. This brings us to another common theme in anime, solitude. Anno stages it beautifully in *Nadia* and in *Evangelion.* Solitude is different from loneliness in that the individual turns out not to be alone at all; the individual is populated. One might even say that the missing people are there. This is what happens to Shinji at the end of *Evangelion*, and to humans at the end of *Nadia*. Some commentators picked up on this possibility in another registers, characterizing otaku as a family of one instead of one of family. In contrast perhaps with loneliness, the kind of psychic individuation occurring in solitude entails risk, a confrontation with death, to return to our other thread.

Take the instance of a colonial organism like corals, sponges, and others: the organism is a colony or collective, and the moment of the individual occurs when a piece is detached and sent out to form a colony elsewhere. This individual bit risks death in a way that the colony does not, and at the same time that it is an individual, its isolation or "solitude" is populated with the colony. This kind of solitude also has very old, even mythological overtones. Someone wanders into the wilderness but instead of finding themselves alone, as they experience privation and confront death, they discover myriad beings in and around them.

LFN: Operating with the word colony, *and thinking about Félix Guattari*'s *concern with structuralist psychoanalysis: How do we preserve the molecular?*

TL: The challenge of these psychoanalytic formulations comes first and foremost of the shift they propose with respect to from models of domination and sovereign power. With repression (which is absolutely necessary) and slips (which are also moments of repression), we are far from the model in

which there is domination and escape from domination. Indeed, when Guattari proposes the molecular, he doesn't hesitate to draw on Foucault who insisted on a contrast between domination, exploitation, and subjectification or subjectivization. When Foucault argued that subjectification was increasingly prevalent in modern societies, he was well aware that this turn to subjectification placed him on the same terrain as psychoanalysis. Similarly, but with different consequences, Guattari and Deleuze made clear that schizoanalysis wasn't a replacement for or an overcoming of psychoanalysis. Schizoanalysis entailed a tactical enlargement of the psychoanalytic domain. In different ways, then, these three thinkers were proposing an immanent critique of psychoanalysis to renew it. It is for this reason that Guattari does not hesitate to associate his notion of the molecular with Foucault's micropolitics.

My aim here is not to equate the molecular and the micropolitical. I simply wish to make clear what sort of questions arise about power in the context of anime when we turn to Guattari. These were the questions very much on my mind when working on *The Anime Ecology*. To cut to the chase, I would argue, and in fact have argued at length, that the terrain of subjectification and the micropolitical today can be understood by reference to "media addiction." Far more than something like schizophrenia or paranoia, it is addiction that offers insight into the micropolitics of media at present. Discourses about media addiction abound today, and they swarm around anime. Addiction is of course impossible to define in purely physiological way or in a purely cultural or social way. The subjectification entailed in media addiction is a matter of physiological, discursive, technological, infrastructural, psychological, social, and other determinations. The Pokemon Incident was a watershed moment in my opinion not only because it exposed all these determinations, but also, and even more importantly, because it revealed the emergence of micropolitical field of subjectification, a sort of phase-shift in the field of expanded television media that revealed media addiction as a formation of subjectivity at once systemic (generalizable) and historically specific. If one wanted to reframe media addiction in psychoanalytic terms, it involves a molecular movement of media that is at once (self)repressive and (self)transgressive, in a context in which each member of the family is a family of one.

SV: Can you tell us about your current work? We're curious about what excites you in TV shows and films, and what inspires your work these days.

TL: When I began writing *The Anime Machine*, I envisioned a book that would deal with the production, distribution, consumption, and circulation of anime. As I started writing, the book grew longer and longer, and eventually I cut it in two, deferring a fuller discussion of distribution and consumption for another volume. Thus, *The Anime Machine* focused on the production and creation of anime, while *The Anime Ecology* focused on the distribution and circulation of anime. This means I have still to write a volume on the consumption of anime, and I have been at work on a book on fan cultures and media capital, tentatively called *The Anime Life*. At the same time, as *The Anime Ecology* was becoming too long, I had to focus more on television in Japan and thus had to cut the other half of the book, the half dealing with global media, infrastructures, and sovereignty. I have published some essays on this topic and hope to follow through on the project in a more rigorous fashion. The working title of this book is *The Anime World*.

In these other two projects on anime, as in the two published books, I draw inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari's ontologization of production, which they derive from Marx's *Grundrisse*. This manner of reading Marx — in terms of the ontologization of production — owes a great deal to the so-called Italian School of Marxism associated with Autonomia Operaia and the generalization of the factory, the social factory. Arguably it is something that Guattari brought to his collaborations with Deleuze. I don't want to lump all the different Italian thinkers and approaches together. There are very different ways of ontologizing production with divergent consequences. Nonetheless, in this context, where we began with Guattari and anime, I wanted to underscore how important Guattari's ontologization of production is for the way I am thinking about capitalism with respect to anime. In their first book on capitalism, *Anti-Oedipus*, Guattari and Deleuze lay out their approach quite nicely, saying that to understand production one has to move away from a narrow definition of production and address the "production of production," which is to say, "what produces production?" and "what does production produce." By the same token, once one ontologizes production in this manner as Marx does in *Grundrisse* or as Negri does with the idea of the social factory — "there is no outside-production," so to speak, one also needs to address the production of distribution, the production of consumption, the production of circulation. Distribution, consumption, circulation are all productive, systemically. It

is worth noting that, in fan studies, it became a big deal to say that consumption is productive, consumption is production. In fact, Marx had not only signaled this fact but had also formulated a social critique of capitalism building on a systemic thinking of production. This form of critique of capitalism is central to the kind of questions I wish to ask of "glocal anime" (production of distribution) and "anime fan-worlds" (production of consumption).