

OTHER | 20 Minute Paper Presentation

(SAS2019-11002) - PANTA RHEI (EVERYTHING FLOWS) – ANIMATION AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERACLITUS.

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Abstract

It is characteristic of animation studies to hold open central questions about the very nature of animation. Is animation a place or a process? An art-form, a medium or an industry? Animation scholars variously approach characterization of animation through:

- taxonomy - differentiation by genre, technology, method, origin
- by its interdisciplinary hybridising relationships - connections to the visual arts, cinema, interactive technology, or
- through its “pervasive” cultural impact (Buchan, 2013)

The theme of the 2019 SAS conference challenges us to consider the trans-disciplinary nature of animation as a means of reflecting on, and challenging, the world we live in. This paper considers the metaphysics of the ‘place’ of animation through the concept of ‘Panta rhei’ - ‘everything flows’; the phrase attributed to the pre-socratic philosopher Heraclitus that encapsulates his metaphysics of fluid-material monism. In the ‘place’ of animation, it is this flowing that presents one defining characteristic of the medium, a flowing that was described as “plasmaticness” by Eisenstein (1986) and explored as cultural quick-change ‘morphing’ by Sobchack, Klein and others (2000). This paper extends this theoretical branch of animation studies through the metaphysics of Heraclitus and the more recent traditions of process philosophy and event based ontology.

Existence as process in animation is evident at different levels of animation production and in a variety of animated entities – numerous examples are explored that demonstrate the premise of universal flow as an ontology that can relate disparate aspects of animation.

Heraclitus tells us that we cannot step into the same river twice, both because it is never the same river, and also because we who step are subject to the constant of change. So too with animators, animation and animation studies, because our practices and our technology flow much like animated images.

Palavras-chave : Metamorphosis, Plasmatic, Philosophy, Animation