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**Animating perception:
British cartoons from music hall to cinema, 1880 - 1928**

by

Malcolm Cook

Thesis submitted to

BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)
(VISUAL ARTS AND MEDIA)

October 2012

Declaration of original work

The work presented in this thesis is my own and has not been submitted for any other degree. All sources of information have been acknowledged.

Signature.....

Date.....

Acknowledgments

Beyond the sources recorded in the footnotes and bibliography of this thesis, many people have provided assistance and input, and I would like to credit and thank them publicly here.

Ian Christie has provided invaluable advice and ideas, allowing me to shape my own field, while gently steering me away from trouble. His boundless knowledge and enthusiasm are an inspiration.

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Daphne Jones was generous and hospitable in sharing her father's archive relating to his career as a lightning cartoonist. I am grateful for the permission to use some of that material here.

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It is impossible to describe the extent of the love mine and my wife's parents give and the how far it underpins everything I have done. My thanks to them and our families, both close and extended, for the unwavering support they provide.

Over the past six years, in parallel to this thesis, Clara and Oliver Cook have grown from nothing into much more than I could have imagined. I hope when one day they come to read this they will understand that anything is possible if you put your mind to it, as well as realising that all those episodes of Paddington, Mr Benn, and Peppa Pig, along with all those Pixar films, weren't *just* for them.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the history of animated cartoons in Britain between 1880 and 1928, identifying a body of work that has been largely ignored by film and animation historians, covering the production, distribution, and exhibition of these films.

Throughout this history, graphic arts - especially print cartooning and illustration - and the music-hall lightning cartoon act are found to have played a formative role in British animated cartoons. The artists who made the first British animated cartoons were almost exclusively drawn from one of those two fields and thus this work may be considered to form a parallel history of 'artists' film'. They brought with them to film a range of concerns from those prior forms that would shape British animated cartoons. Examining that context provides an understanding of the ways British animated cartoons developed in technologic, economic, and aesthetic terms. This work includes the first in-depth history of the music-hall lightning cartoon act, which finds that it anticipates cinematic animation, featuring qualities such as transformation, the movement of line drawings, and the desire to bring drawings to life.

Building on this history, a new critical framework for examining these films aesthetically is provided, emphasising the role of the spectator and their perceptual processes. This framework draws upon the work of E.H. Gombrich and Sergei Eisenstein, and extends it to include recent findings from neuroscientific fields. The result is an original aesthetic reading of this body of work, which finds the films to have a deep engagement with the basic perceptual processes involved in viewing moving line drawings.

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Introduction

British animated cartoons: A neglected field of study

British animated cartoons have received little attention within the disciplinary fields that might have been expected to study them: British film history and animation studies. They are simply absent from most British film histories,¹ or given extremely brief asides.² These histories may well reflect the judgement of Rachael Low, whose multi-volume *The History of the British Film* is considered the founding document of British film history. Low, writing immediately after the Second World War, dismissed cartoons from the earlier World War, judging that ‘the appearance of movement so far achieved [by 1918] was still so rudimentary as to offer little aesthetic satisfaction or even the hope of a better future’, before moving swiftly on to other areas of study.³ Her assessments of the films that followed in the 1920s were equally dismissive; she described Dudley Buxton’s work as ‘very elementary’ and noted that these films, as a whole, were ‘not taken seriously as an art’.⁴

The field of animation studies might be expected to be more receptive, given its axiomatic belief in the value of studying animation. Yet landmark studies and histories either make no reference to British animation of the silent period⁵, or cover the whole period in a short paragraph or two.⁶ The key exceptions to this are Donald Crafton’s *Before Mickey* and a series of articles by Paul Ward on First World War animated cartoons. Crafton gives considerable space to the discussion of British films in his study of pre-Disney silent era animated cartoons, but this extends only up to the start of the war, after which he implies British films fell behind their American counterparts, noting with surprise that straight lightning cartoons were ‘still’ being released ‘as late as

¹ Christine Gledhill, *Reframing British Cinema, 1918-1928: Between Restraint and Passion* (London: British Film Institute, 2003).

² Amy Sargeant, *British Cinema: A Critical History* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

³ Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film. 1914-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), 174.

⁴ Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film. 1918-1929* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), 285.

⁵ Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁶ Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Cartoons : One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (London: Libbey, 1994).

1914'.⁷ Paul Ward calls this assessment into question yet ultimately agrees that this work would have appeared 'incredibly dated'.⁸

This marginal position within specialised histories has perpetuated the economic and aesthetic situation at the time of the films' release, when American producers' ascendant control of the marketplace established the aesthetic criteria by which animated cartoons were to be judged, as will be shown in more detail in chapter three. Film and animation historians have continued this bias, either ignoring British cartoons completely, or criticizing their failure to fit essentialist definitions of what constitutes (good) animation. For both Low and Bendazzi, questions of technique and technology were central to their dismissal of British animated cartoons of this period. Bendazzi implied that British cartoonists were slow in 'learning new techniques'.⁹ Low devoted half of her two-page discussion of a decade of animated cartoons to describing the latest production line techniques used in the United States, and condemning British animated cartoons for their failure to adopt these.¹⁰

These assessments of silent era British animated cartoons also reflect the other dominant narrative of animation: the pervasiveness of Walt Disney and the organisation he established.

Two approaches to animation history

The pervasiveness of Disney in animation history may be seen in many ways, two of which are particularly important to this study. The techniques of character animation devised at the Disney Studio after 1928 have remained fundamental to animated feature films until today and effectively define animation within mainstream discussion.¹¹ Equally, from an historiographic perspective, all animation history is in danger of being teleologically determined by that which followed it, as acknowledged in the title of Crafton's *Before Mickey*.¹² Rather than consider these two strands separately, a productive analogy may be drawn

⁷ Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 364.

⁸ Paul Ward, "British Animated Cartoons and Topical Propaganda 1914-18," in *Crossing the Pond: Anglo-American Film Relations before 1930*, ed. Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (Trowbridge, Wilts: Flicks Books, 2002), 64.

⁹ Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*, 42.

¹⁰ Low, *The History of the British Film. 1918-1929*, 283-85.

¹¹ John Lasseter and the Pixar studio have been pivotal in the translation of those techniques to the new digital realm: John Lasseter, "Tricks to Animating Characters with a Computer [Original Presentation Given in 1994]," *Computer Graphics* 35, no. 2 (2001).

¹² Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*.

between them. The key-frame technique of character animation may be found to have strong parallels with the teleological history of animation which situates all films in relation to Disney. By looking at the alternatives to key-frame techniques we may locate an alternate historiographic model for animated cartoons that predate Disney's work.

The dominant technique of character animation for most of the 20th century was 'pose to pose' or key-frame animation, instituted at the Disney Studio in the 1930s.¹³ Disney's economic and aesthetic dominance of hand drawn animation meant this technique was widely adopted in the industry. In 'pose to pose' animation the lead animator identified and drew the key frames of a character's action to be animated: the start/end points and the intermediate points that defined the path the action took. These frames would be passed to an assistant to produce the intervening drawings and 'clean up' the rough pencil drawings.¹⁴ These line drawings were then passed to the 'ink and paint' department to be transferred from paper to transparent celluloid and painted.¹⁵

This process may be seen as analogous to the approach most popular historians have taken to the history of animation, often taking their lead from Walt Disney's own account, in an episode of the television series *Disneyland* entitled 'The Story of the Animated Drawing', first transmitted in 1955.¹⁶ In these teleological 'key-frame histories' a line is drawn between the start positions (prehistoric depiction of movement in cave paintings, 19th century optical toys) and the end position (the aesthetic and economic success of Walt Disney Productions from the 1930s onwards). Key intermediate moments are chosen that fit on this trajectory; stray lines which lead nowhere are cleaned up and eliminated. Histories which have adopted such a model exclude most British animated cartoons because they did not obviously lead to the rise of the theatrical short featuring anthropomorphised animals and the creation of the feature-length animated cartoon. Even where early British animated cartoons received attention, it was selective, highlighting those points which coincided with the overarching

¹³ Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (New York: Disney Editions, 1984), 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹⁶ Leonard Maltin's history of American animated cartoons features a production still of Walt Disney with a zoetrope from that show, clearly indicating its influence. Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: Plume, 1980), 3.

movement being described. For instance, the choice of George Studdy's 'Bonzo' as representative of all pre-sound British animated cartoons in Jerry Beck's edited volume was possible because it was in keeping with the wider narrative of character animation that the book tracked, in opposition to an international experimental tradition.¹⁷

However, there was an alternative to the 'pose to pose' technique for character animation, one which was commonly in use in the era prior to synchronised sound: 'straight-ahead' animation.¹⁸ Here the path the action would take was not predetermined, rather each drawing was made in turn, as it would be shot and projected. This produced a 'fresh, slightly zany look' a spontaneity and unpredictability which gave little indication of where the action would end up; mistakes and missteps were likely to appear; a direction might be tackled then discarded; drawings were furiously produced, the impression of movement being more important than its analysis.¹⁹

As an historiographic model, 'straight-ahead' animation provides an alternative to the teleological 'key-frame histories' described above. A 'straight-ahead history' is determined by what precedes it rather than what follows and can be closer to the lived experience of the development of British animated cartoons. A 'straight-ahead history' may find many of the same 'key frames', but these no longer point self-evidently to a final position. Hesitant lines are no longer eliminated because they distract from the main movement, but are celebrated for the vitality they bring to the overall movement. When examined in detail, British animated cartoons show many signs of these paths not taken. Early films of Tom Merry (1895/6) and Walter Booth (1906/7) fell within generic parameters for filmed music hall or trick films, and are better understood in relation to the entertainment forms these artists trained in, rather than being seen as 'primitive' models for what would follow. Equally the topical and propaganda films of the First World War indicate a very different potential future for animated cartoons, one that has only been occasionally acknowledged in the general trend to see animated cartoons as childish, or at least childlike.²⁰

¹⁷ Jerry Beck, ed. *Animation Art : From Pencil to Pixel, the History of Cartoon, Anime & Cgi* (London: Flame Tree 2004), 24-25.

¹⁸ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁰ Among the exceptions to this rule are David Huxley, "Kidding the Kaiser -- British Propaganda Animation, 1914-1919," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, no. 3 (2006); Annabelle Honess Roe,

This thesis contends that British animated cartoons should not be erased from history as loose ends, but rather they require and repay examination in their own terms. The criteria and methodologies provided by British film history and animation studies have found these films wanting, replicating the critical position established by dominant American control of the market at the time of the films' release. Furthermore, their position in film and animation history has been based on a teleological model, determined by where mainstream animation would later go. This thesis proposes an alternate critical framework which examines the films from the perspective in which they were made and in the context of what preceded them.

Terminology and boundaries of field

The constitution of the field of study and the terminology 'British animated cartoon' require explication.

*'All British'*²¹

Britain is not the only country to have had its early animation marginalised by an American-dominated history.²² Japanese *anime* were for a long period considered inferior because of perceived technical deficiencies, encapsulated in the description of them as utilising 'limited animation'. Only recently has this position been re-evaluated in light of anime's relationship with traditional Japanese graphic art, specifically manga, and the use of an alternative term 'selective animation'.²³ This example indicates the importance of approaching works within their specific national context, which is why this thesis is restricted to British films. British animated cartoons will be shown to have arisen out of a specific British cultural tradition, or range of traditions, of cartooning. Of course, music hall and the lightning cartoon, print cartooning and book illustration were not unique to Britain, with equivalent entertainments occurring in other countries. But in Britain they were nevertheless seen as being distinctively

"Animating Documentary" (PhD, University of Southern California, 2009); Paul Ward, "Distribution and Trade Press Strategies for British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War Era," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25, no. 2 (2005); Paul Ward, "British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War: Issues of Topicality," *Animation Journal* 11(2003); Ward, "British Animated Cartoons and Topical Propaganda 1914-18."

²¹ This phrase comes from an advertisement for four films released by Neptune. *The Bioscope* (hereafter, *Bios*) 24 December 1914, 1308.

²² Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34* (London: British Film Institute, 1985).

²³ Sheuo Hui Gan, "The Newly Developed Form of Ganime and Its Relation to Selective Animation for Adults in Japan," *Animation Studies* 3(2008).

British, and this played an important role in the way animated cartoons were produced and received here, especially during the First World War, when matters of nationality were prominent. Animated cartoons from other countries will be considered, as there was considerable interaction between national film industries, albeit in shifting patterns, through the period in question. However, this interaction is only considered in relation to its impact on domestic film production and reception, most notably in chapter three which discusses the impact of American films on British exhibition and production.

Animated Cartoons

The terms ‘animation’ and ‘animated’ commonly serve as standalone descriptions of a particular mode of filmmaking in the present day. They are used in the title of scholarly journals (*Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* published by Sage from 2006), academic societies (the *Society for Animation Studies* founded by Harvey Deneroff in 1987), and within the film industry. The producers of the *Shrek* (2001 onwards) and *Kung Fu Panda* (2008 onwards) series are publicly listed on the NASDAQ exchange as DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc. (DWA). Two divisions of The Walt Disney Company have animation in their name: Pixar Animation Studios and Walt Disney Animation Studios. Since 2001 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) has presented an Academy Award (‘Oscar’) for Best Animated Feature, distinct from its award for Best Picture. Despite this apparent consistency the terms are opaque when examined in detail and remain controversial. In 2008 the online discussion group of the Society for Animation Studies was subject to an unusual flurry of messages debating the definition of, or even the possibility or desirability of defining, ‘animation’ with academic and practitioner members disagreeing over what the central concept in the society’s name even meant. Equally, within Hollywood recent developments in digital creation and manipulation have led to AMPAS having to revise its definition of an ‘Animated Feature’ to exclude motion or performance capture techniques used in blockbusters such as *Avatar* (2009) and *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* (2011).²⁴ James Cameron, director of *Avatar*, has affirmed the Academy position, saying ‘I’m not

²⁴ "Rules Approved for 83rd Academy Awards [Press Release]," Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, <http://www.oscars.org/press/pressreleases/2010/20100708.html>.

interested in being an animator', while Spielberg, director of *Tintin* argues 'I like to think of it as digital makeup, not augmented animation'.²⁵ Yet these films list numerous crew members as animators, and Spielberg and *Tintin*'s distributor Paramount Pictures entered their film in the Animated Feature category for the Academy Awards.²⁶ A number of academic writers have proposed theories which identify animation as the defining paradigm for these new digital media, with some even seeing cinema as being subsumed as a subcategory of animation, reversing the view that animation is a genre of cinema.²⁷

The conflicts over these contested terms are raised here not to resolve them, or to express an opinion on how they should be defined. Donald Crafton's 2011 paper addressing this topic provides a helpful discussion of these theories, the etymology of the terms, and their use historically.²⁸ He concludes by highlighting the dangers of creating a teleological history which projects concepts backwards and ignores historical distinctiveness. Crafton argues for 'more clarity and historical precision about the semantics of the various forms and meanings of *animation*'.²⁹ This need is especially true of the films and period identified in the title of this thesis. In the research carried out for this study in trade and popular press from the end of the 19th century and start of the 20th century, it is clear the terms 'animation' or 'animated' were never used unequivocally in the ways described above. On the contrary, in 1896 all moving images were described as 'animated photographs' or 'animated pictures'.³⁰ This more general use continued into the teens, where the titles of films such as *Animated Putty* or *Animated Toys* does not reflect a categorisation of a particular technique or genre, rather a more widespread use of the term to describe something brought to life through movement.³¹ In contrast the term 'cartoon' was consistently used to describe a particular type of drawn material, optionally with

²⁵ Rachel Abramowitz, "'Avatar's' Animated Acting," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18 2010.

²⁶ Rebecca Keegan, "'Tintin': Steven Spielberg Animates an Oscar Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20 2011; "18 Animated Features Submitted for 2011 Oscar® Race [Press Release]," Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, <http://www.oscars.org/press/pressreleases/2011/20111104a.html>.

²⁷ Variations on this argument has been proposed in, amongst others, Alan Cholodenko, *The Illusion of Life*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Sydney: Power Publications, 1991); André Gaudreault and Philippe Gauthier, "Special Issue: Could Kinematography Be Animation and Animation Kinematography?," *Animation* 6, no. 2 (2011); Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Donald Crafton provides a helpful overview of these theories in Donald Crafton, "The Veiled Genealogies of Animation and Cinema," *Animation* 6, no. 2 (2011).

²⁸ Crafton, "The Veiled Genealogies of Animation and Cinema."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105-07.

³⁰ *The Era* (hereafter, *Era*), 25 April 1896, 17; *Era*, 18 April 1896, 24.

³¹ *Bios*, 26 January 1911, 31; *Bios*, 14 March 1912, xxii.

‘animated’ suffixed to emphasise the movement of those drawings distinct from their print equivalents in newspapers and magazines. Throughout the period in question, then, it is the dominant term ‘cartoon’, and not animated or animation, which described a distinct body of work, and following this historical definition serves a number of purposes. Firstly, it bypasses the complex present-day discussions about the definition of animation, briefly described above. Secondly, it emphasises the study of drawn work, excluding stop-motion filmmaking which is not differentiated by the term animation, for instance in Denis Gifford’s *British Animated Films* which lists both types of films.³² While many issues discussed in the thesis may equally apply to stop-motion films, such as the discussion of industry practices and economics, the central argument rests upon the specificity of the perception of hand-drawn images. In this respect the photographic images used in stop-motion films are clearly distinct from the animated cartoons discussed here.

1880 - 1928

History is not merely chronology, and consequently the dates chosen for the title of this thesis are not intended as hard delimiters, but merely to guide the reader as to the temporal scope of the work. They serve as placeholders for two developments which epitomise either the convergence of cultural strands at the start of the period or the dissipation of those same strands at the end.

1880 saw the codification of the lightning cartoon, as will be described in chapter one. While similar types of acts had been performed before this date, the term Edgar Austin coined in 1880 became the one used widely to describe the generic performance within the music-hall industry in Britain. As proposed in that chapter, the lightning cartoon is not simply an historical context for the development of animated cartoons, rather both may be considered as part of a cultural tradition, with the lightning cartoon anticipating and striving towards many of the qualities of animated cartoons. Placing the year of 1880 in the title is an acknowledgement that this history does not begin with the invention of the cinematic apparatus nor with the projection of moving images.

³² Denis Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography* (Jefferson, N.C ; London: McFarland, 1987).

Similarly, 1928 was the year of the first British animated cartoon with synchronised sound, Joe Noble's 'Orace the 'Armonious 'Ound in "The Jazz Slinger". As Douglas Gomery, Crafton, and others have demonstrated, synchronised sound did not arrive all at once or fully formed; its emergence may be seen in the years leading up to 1928, not least in the British singalong film craze from 1926 which is examined in this thesis.³³ The end date of 1928 does not, therefore, indicate a particular date on which everything changed, rather the point when a decisive shift away from the patterns examined and identified in this thesis are readily apparent. The arrival of the talkies shifted the relationship between the spectator and animated cartoons, representing a fundamental change to the perceptual engagement that is central to this thesis' argument, and it therefore marks a necessary end point for the chronology of this thesis.

Argument

While moving images, especially what would later be described as 'animation', are central to this thesis, it does not begin with the events and innovations of 1895/6 commonly given as the 'birth of cinema'. Rather it begins with practices institutionalised earlier in the 19th century, namely the music-hall lightning cartoon act, and print illustration and cartooning. I argue that these are not simply contextual histories for the development of animated cartoons, but rather exist in the same continuum. These 19th century forms exhibit many qualities which would later be considered specific to the medium of film or of 'animation' as a mode of filmmaking. Equally the animated cartoons of the first decades of the 20th century extend and elaborate the aesthetic practices of the earlier period. This is hardly surprising, given their makers had almost exclusively been trained and worked within those fields before arriving at film. As this thesis will show, these 19th century entertainments provided the personnel, institutional structures, and aesthetic model for the incorporation of graphic material into moving images, not only at their inception but through into the 1920s.

Institutional influence of prior forms: Alternative 'artists' film'

The canonical history of the involvement of visual artists in cinema is notable for its late starting point, relative to the aforementioned 'birth of cinema'. A.L. Rees'

³³ Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); D. Gomery, *The Coming of Sound: A History* (London: Routledge, 2005).

A History of Experimental Film and Video encapsulates this as he recounts what he acknowledges as ‘the canonical avant-garde’.³⁴ Experiments in the 1910s by Leopold Survage, the Futurists Ginna and Corra, and others are seen as indicative of a growing interest in film within artistic circles, yet this remained largely theoretical as the actual films were either never completed or have not survived to be verified. It was only in the late 1910s and early 1920s that artists such as Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, both associated with the Dada movement, were able to fully realise their artistic vision on film. These were closely followed by the landmark films of the mid-1920s: René Clair’s *Entr’acte* (1924); Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy’s *Ballet mécanique* (1924); and Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s *Un Chien andalou* (1928), among others. By this account artists would appear to have been rather slow to recognise the implications of moving images, or their potential to expand artistic practices. Yet, as the title of Rees’ book intimates, this is only *a*, not *the*, history of artists’ involvement in cinema. Ian Christie asks ‘whether this, already canonic, historiography is reliable. Are we using the right or the relevant concepts to survey the field? What do we mean in any case by *artists* and *cinema*?’³⁵ Christie surveys a number of artists’ activities in the period 1910-1914 that fall outside the canonic history. Most notable for the present discussion is the work of two British artists. Duncan Grant’s *Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound* (1914) was an abstract scroll painting intended to be wound across an opening in a lit box, accompanied by music by Bach, which Christie argues anticipates a type of filmmaking that could not be achieved in 1914. Secondly, he discusses the work of Sir Hubert von Herkomer. Herkomer was an established artist, both as society portrait painter and a social realist. He was made a Royal Academician in 1890 and was knighted in 1907. Herkomer’s decision to turn to filmmaking in 1913 may, therefore, be seen as a significant event in the history of artists’ involvement in film, predating most of the canonical first steps. Yet Herkomer is usually ignored because of the type of painter he was. Christie concludes from these two examples that

³⁴ A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video : From Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), iii.

³⁵ Ian Christie, "Before the Avant-Gardes: Artists and Cinema, 1910–1914," in *La Decima Musa/the Tenth Muse: Il Cinema E Le Alter Arti/ Cinema and Other Arts*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima and Laura Vichi (Udine: Forum, 2001), 367.

a phase of *proto-cinema* was aesthetically significant in creating . . . “the desire for cinema.” Beyond this, there is still a vast terrain of responses to cinema from the established arts to be explored, which need not be confined to the canonic avant-gardes.³⁶

This thesis represents an investigation of one specific area of this ‘vast terrain’. Firstly, the 19th century entertainments examined in the first chapter, especially the lightning cartoon music-hall act, may be seen as representing a desire for animation as the artists imagined a form that might allow them to move beyond the confines of the music hall. Secondly, the history of animated cartoons in Britain is the story of established artists coming to film and seeing in it the potential to enhance their work. That these were commercial artists working in a print environment, rather than Academicians working in fine arts or avant-garde artists breaking boundaries, does not mean their response to moving images is not worthy of study. On the contrary, their backgrounds in mechanically-reproduced popular media allowed them to integrate with the emerging economic, technologic, and aesthetic particularities of cinema more effectively than other artists.

Aesthetic influence of prior forms: The interrogation of, and appeal to, base perception

This thesis is not only concerned with the way institutional structures of cartooning, in all its forms, played a formative role in the development of animated cartoons. It also shows how the aesthetic concerns of these artists were explored and expanded through the new technology of moving images. As with the institutional involvement of artists in moving images, British animated cartoons may be found to have aesthetic concerns normally associated with modernism. Close attention to perception and the role of the observer in constructing what is seen is a paradigmatic component of definitions of modernism.³⁷ This is apparent in the modernist avant-garde films mentioned above, which clearly engaged with perception, especially the visual, and its relationship with the cinematic apparatus.³⁸ As will be argued in this thesis, British animated cartoons have an equally strong engagement with, and offer an

³⁶ Ibid., 375.

³⁷ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer : On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1990).

³⁸ This is discussed in relation to Richter and Eggeling's work in Malcolm Cook, "Visual Music in Film, 1921-1924: Richter, Eggeling, Ruttman," in *Music and Modernism, C. 1849-1950.* , ed. Charlotte de Mille (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

interrogation of, the spectator's perceptual faculties. This argument does not aim to co-opt British animated cartoons into a canonical modernism, but rather to constitute them as a distinct although parallel history, which may also serve to problematise any notion of a singular modernism. The concern with perception in these animated cartoons is manifest in two broad, overlapping areas.

Firstly, the lightning cartoon act is found to address directly the perceptual process a spectator undergoes when viewing a line drawing. This act extends and explores the 'narrative of perception' which normally occurs in milliseconds allowing a reflection on concerns that are central to print cartooning and caricature, even if they are not so overtly acknowledged. This thesis traces the movement of the lightning cartoon from its initial appearance in straight records of the music-hall act through to being combined with trick film techniques which created on-screen movement without apparent human agency. The lightning cartoon, along with the 'narrative of perception', remained an important part of British animated cartoons throughout the First World War period. While the iconography of the lightning cartoon largely disappeared from the screen in the period leading up to the arrival of synchronised sound, the importance of perceptual play is found to remain a vital component of British animated cartoons, indicating their continued inheritance from the contextual forms examined here.

Secondly, cartooning and illustration, and consequently animated cartoons, are found to have a particular attraction at a base perceptual level. This attraction derives in part from the ambiguity of line drawings, whose absence of surface detail differentiates them from the physical world or photographic images. In addition, this appeal of cartooning seems to derive from techniques such as transformation, and the ability to present two distinct meanings simultaneously in a single image, techniques that may be considered to recreate or engage base perceptual functions. This thesis examines such appeal, as well as theorists who have identified it as a characteristic aspect of cartooning and animation. It scrutinizes the formulation of 'base' perception to clarify the various ways this has been understood and examines the extant films from this period to understand more fully the aesthetic implications of their appeal.

Methodology and theoretical framework

As already implied, this thesis adopts a historical methodology, reassessing the existing histories which address, or fail to address, this body of work. Its principal mode is the discovery, selection, ordering, and interpretation of empirical data from primary sources. The dominant primary sources available are trade and popular newspapers, with very little other material known to have survived. The loss of primary material extends to the films themselves, many of which have perished because of the chemical decomposition of the base materials.³⁹ This situation has been exacerbated by the economic circumstances of the period, also examined in this thesis, which would have resulted in relatively few copies being created and these falling out of circulation soon after release. Nevertheless, extant films are a vital source of primary information since they provide the clearest record of the aesthetic model and influences used by the filmmakers; they are, therefore, used heavily in the second half of this thesis.

Despite the concentration on empirical data, a theoretical framework is inevitably part of the selection, ordering, and interpretation of those facts, particularly in understanding moving image material. Animation studies and British film history have a number of dominant approaches which, while useful in some cases, are problematic for this study. Authorial or 'auteur' approaches have, of course, played a central role in the development of film studies and are particularly common in the study of animation due to the artisanal nature of many animation production practices. Equally, the foregrounding of technique and technology in many animated films has meant these areas have been used to structure and understand animation history.

Individual artists are an important part of this history, and chapter two presents considerable biographical detail about these filmmakers, information which is not widely available in standard reference works. However, this

³⁹ This loss of material is one reason for excluding the creation of a filmography from the scope of this thesis. Despite a number of demonstrable mistakes, oversights, and unattributed sources, Denis Gifford's *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography* remains a vital source. Gifford's work is complemented by the filmography provided by Paul Ward of First World War cartoons, the catalogues of archives holding selected films, and the listings of films in John Barnes work, amongst other sources. These could only be improved upon by a fully revised edition of Gifford's filmography, preferably in a database format that could be continually updated to reflect new findings, a task which remains for future research. This thesis is therefore restricted to noting specific cases where those sources conflict or new information has been found which clarifies or contradicts them. Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*; Ward, "British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War: Issues of Topicality."; John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, ed. Richard Maltby, Rev. and enl. ed., 5 vols., vol. 1 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

attention to individuals should not be interpreted as advocating a purely authorial approach. The importance of spectatorial perception to these films, outlined throughout the thesis, indicates that the production of meaning within these animated cartoons does not reside purely with the production of a film or its author but must consider the role of the spectator equally. Filmmakers' backgrounds are presented to establish the institutional context within which these films were produced, rather than to imply the films' sole source of meaning resides with an 'author'.

Technology and technique equally have an important place here, and changes in production practice can be seen to have significant impact on the issues discussed. For example the shift to cel animation produced a major change in the visual aesthetic of these films and their role in interrogating visual perception. Yet an approach primarily concerned with technology and technique, or changes in these over time, would merely replicate that of other historians, discussed earlier, which has perpetuated the dominance of American production in the period in question, with its innovation of industrial mass production techniques. Rather than subscribe to a teleological approach which views changes in technique and technology as inherently advancing or improving animated cartoons, changes are instead investigated to understand the interrelated social, economic, or aesthetic cause and effect they are embedded within.

This thesis establishes a new theoretical approach to British animated cartoons based on their deep engagement with the perceptual faculties of the spectator. It draws on the theories of E.H. Gombrich and Sergei Eisenstein whose writings place the spectators' perception at the heart of cartoons and animation respectively. Yet it also aims to extend these readings in two directions. Firstly, it examines the work of Alexander Luria to better understand the empirical basis of Eisenstein's aesthetic theories of animation. Secondly, it projects those theories into the present day, where neuroscientific research is focussing considerable attention on human perception, especially those areas used to understand line drawings.⁴⁰ This approach engages directly with the perceptual concerns seen in

⁴⁰ The term 'neuroscience' cannot be considered as a discrete discipline, but rather the scientific research utilised here derives from a number of areas including Neuropsychology, Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive Neuropsychology, Behavioural Neurology, Cognitive Psychology, and Experimental Psychology. Just as this thesis reflects the growing interdisciplinary nature of research in the humanities, so scientific research is experiencing shifting disciplinary boundaries with the advent of new techniques, methodologies, and objects of study. The use of 'neuroscience' is thus not intended

the films under study, but may also be suggestive of a process more broadly applicable to animation studies, one which acknowledges both the intermediality of these films as well as the spectators' role in constructing their meaning, through an interdisciplinary framework.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1. Music hall and print cartooning: The desire for animation

The personnel involved in the production of animated cartoons in Britain up to the 1920s were consistently drawn from music hall and print cartooning, including illustration. Chapter one examines these industries in the 19th century, leading up to the arrival of moving images. They are found to be not simply contextual background, but a distinct British cultural tradition that would continue into moving images. This chapter identifies two overarching ways in which these fields prefigured or established the terms on which animated cartoons developed. Firstly, from an institutional perspective, they provided a model by which the animated cartoon industry would operate. Both were concerned with economically motivated and highly organised popular entertainment; in the case of print cartooning it was also a mechanically reproduced one requiring the artist to carefully consider the role of technology. Both were concerned with the role the art form played within the overall programme of presentation.

The second influence these forms would have was at an aesthetic level. In presenting the first detailed history of the lightning cartoon act, this performance is found to anticipate qualities often seen as characteristic of animation, including transformation, the movement of line drawings, and the desire to bring drawings to life. Both the lightning cartoon act and print cartooning are shown to foreground and play upon the processes involved in viewing line drawings, establishing the central topic of this thesis: spectatorial perception and its role in animated cartoons. Chapter one establishes the terms on which British animated cartoons will be examined in the rest of the thesis, at both an institutional and aesthetic level, with particular attention to perceptual processes.

to establish a single disciplinary source, but more simply to refer to a diverse range of research which considers the functioning of the human brain. For further detail see discussion of Cubelli and Della Salla in chapter 6. Roberto Cubelli and Sergio Della Salla, "The Multiple Meanings of "Neuro" in Neuropsychology," *Cortex* 46, no. 5 (2010).

Chapter 2. From music hall to cinemas: Animated cartoons emerge

Chapter two examines the historical development of animated cartoons in Britain from the earliest appearances of graphic material in the form of lightning cartoons in 1895/6 to the regular character series of the 1920s. This history is defined by the transfer of established commercial graphic artists into the new industry of moving images. By outlining the biographies of animated cartoon filmmakers the consistent role prior forms played in the institutionalisation of the emerging animated cartoon genre is made apparent for the first time. In moving from the fields examined in chapter one into moving images, these personnel may be considered to constitute an alternate or parallel history of ‘artists’ film’, with institutional and aesthetic concerns that are distinct from the conventional meaning of that term. These shared concerns include the importance of active spectatorship; animated cartoons’ role in a broader programme of attractions; and the continued importance of artists’ sensitivity to working within a mechanically reproduced art form.⁴¹

Chapter 3. British animated cartoons and the international film industry

Chapter three examines the economic market within which animated cartoons in Britain were operating throughout the period of study. The increasingly dominant position that American films held in the British market from the 1910s onwards is well known from previous scholarly work. This chapter contributes new research to this area with particular reference to British animated cartoons and the impact that imports had on them, providing a detailed history of wartime and post-war animated cartoon production, distribution, and exhibition. The discussion of international relationships raises questions of nationality and the degree to which British animated cartoons expressed culturally specific topics and style, or conversely adopted practises used by the commercially successful American imports.

⁴¹ These topics inevitably evoke landmark essays by, respectively, Walter Benjamin and Tom Gunning. Gunning’s essay is addressed in chapter six, where the ‘narrative of perception’ is found to hold an intermediary position between the dichotomy of narrative and spectacle or attraction. The implications of reproduction are addressed here in a more limited, practical sense than addressed in Benjamin’s essay, relating to the professional demands placed on artists, rather than the philosophical relationship between the viewer and the work of art. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books, 2008 [1936]); Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space - Frame - Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI, 1990).

This chapter demonstrates how the economic success of American animated cartoons established the aesthetic criteria by which British animated cartoons were judged by trade-press critics and the audience. American cartoons were celebrated for their concentration on perceived medium specific qualities, a result of their industrialised technological approach to production. In contrast, the intermedial qualities of British cartoons were denigrated at that time, a position that has been replicated by historians addressing these films long after the period in question. The shifting relationship between British and American cartoons is argued as the decisive external factor affecting the development of animated cartoons in this country between the war and post-war periods.

Chapter 4. Theories of aesthetic perception: Gombrich, Eisenstein, and Luria

Chapter four establishes a new theoretical approach to address British animated cartoons from an aesthetic perspective. In order to avoid replicating the criteria established by American imports and continued by later historians, as described in chapter three, it returns to the prior forms which played a pivotal role in the formation of British animated cartoons. The work of E. H. Gombrich and Sergei Eisenstein is found to be of particular importance and utility due to two shared aspects. Firstly, both writers work dealt specifically with print cartooning and illustration rather than more general visual art. Eisenstein's work also makes a direct link between these forms of print work and later animated cartoons, acknowledging the shared aesthetic principles that are the basis of this thesis. Secondly, both writers pay particular attention to the role perception plays in cartoon and caricature drawings, with Eisenstein and Gombrich arguing this form has a particular appeal to, or affinity with, the basic mechanisms of visual perception. The chapter concludes with a discussion of A. R. Luria's scientific research, which directly influenced Eisenstein, and which helps elucidate in more detail the characteristics of the argument that these art forms appeal to a childlike, atavistic, or primitive perception.

Chapter 5. Animating perception: An aesthetic approach to British animated cartoons

Chapter five utilises the theoretical approach developed in chapter four to provide a detailed aesthetic analysis of animated cartoons in Britain up to the arrival of synchronised sound. The institutional links tracked in the first three

chapters are readily apparent in the continuities from prior forms. The lightning cartoon was the basis for bringing print cartooning into moving image presentations and providing the necessary kinetic quality for this new entertainment. Consequently the perceptual play of the music-hall act was a fundamental part of many early animated cartoons.

The broader social, economic, and technological contexts outlined in previous chapters are found to play an important role in animated cartoon film aesthetics over the period in question. Topical and political material were clearly dominant during the First World War when there was a large market for such material, and the films of this period address topical ideological concepts. The aesthetic mode of these wartime films continues, nevertheless, in the tradition described here and contributed to the expression of national identity. Economic and technological developments in the post-war period saw a shift towards a simplified visual style and an address to basic visual perception.

By considering these rarely-screened films I argue for recognition of this body of work as a distinctive cultural tradition, related to, but not subsumed within, prior forms. The contextual history of the films does not point to a mere repetition of pre-cinematic forms, but rather a set of aesthetic modes and concerns which are explored and expanded using the new technological possibilities of cinema. While acknowledging that historical changes are apparent, the prevailing concern of British animated cartoons throughout this period is on an intense attention to the basic perceptual faculties engaged when viewing animated line drawings.

Chapter 6. The contributions of neuroscience: A case study

The final chapter of this thesis presents a case study of a single film from early within the period, utilising an original methodological approach based on the application of present-day neuroscientific research. The chapter places such an approach within the historical and theoretical contexts examined in previous chapters and acknowledges the difficulties of using scientific research, particularly when addressing much older films. By restricting this chapter to a case study of one film, the utility of this method is evaluated and I suggest how a new methodology using this type of research might be more broadly applied.

This chapter demonstrates how recent research can elucidate and add further nuance to the analysis of the perceptual project of British animated cartoons put forward in the previous chapter. In this analysis Walter Booth's *Comedy Cartoons* (1907) is found to demonstrate a profound commitment to perceptual enquiry. The film exhibits strong similarities with the experimental stimuli used in recent research to understand basic visual perception, indicating its affinity with that project. In using the perceptual play derived from Booth's background as a music-hall lightning cartoonist, the film shows a concentrated awareness of, and experimentation with, the basic perceptual decision-making process, with recent research providing the terminology and understanding to better grasp the phenomenological experience of watching this film. Finally, the choice of faces as the primary object of study is revealed not simply as arbitrary but reflects the special place faces have within the brain. The importance of facial identification, and the specialisation of areas of the brain for it, has been empirically investigated and proven since the film's production. The undoubted appeal of Booth's film as entertainment can now be understood to rest on his exploitation of a basic 'hard-wired' human facility for facial recognition, whose physiological basis is beginning to be understood.

Chapter 1. Music hall and print cartooning: The desire for animation

The range of 19th century entertainment practices which played a role in the formation of what came to be known as cinema are diverse. Even if only the category of British animated cartoons is being considered there are a significant number of precursors: print cartooning and illustration, music hall, magic lantern slides, optical toys, flip books, chronophotography, and magic. An examination of the films and filmmakers of early British animated cartoons reveals two particularly strong influences. The music-hall lightning cartoon provided key personnel, with Tom Merry's films being among the earliest appearances of graphic art in moving images in 1895/6 and Walter Booth's contributions to the development of animation in the first decade of the 20th century originating in his past experience as a performer of the act. The lightning cartoon also provided the aesthetic model for British animated cartoons of the 1910s and 1920s, with wartime films using the act with little adaptation, and the 1920s films revealing the continued importance of its attention to perceptual processes, a mode that will be termed 'the narrative of perception' in this chapter. While some filmmakers came directly from the music hall, most were recruited from print cartooning or illustration. The major figures of both wartime and 1920s animated cartoons had invariably been trained as cartoonists and had established careers before their move into film. Lancelot Speed, G.E. Studdy, Dudley Buxton, and Douglas Tempest all had considerable experience working for magazines, newspapers and book publishers before contributing to cinematic history. This list excludes many other famous names whose involvement in film is no less noteworthy, but whose moving image output was more limited in scope or was just a side-line to their print work, including figures such as Louis Wain, Bruce Bairnsfather, Harry Furniss, and Louis Raemaekers.

These figures, and their involvements in filmmaking, are examined in detail in the following chapters, but before addressing moving images directly, this chapter looks at the practices of these two dominant influences: music hall and print cartooning. These discussions are not intended to provide a comprehensive history of these forms. Rather, they highlight those aspects of these entertainment practices which would come to bear upon animated cartoons, encompassing production, exhibition, and distribution practices; technological, economic, and aesthetic concerns.

Music hall and the lightning cartoon

The lightning cartoon: The earliest British animated cartoons

In his filmography of British animated films, Denis Gifford lists an 1895 film of lightning cartoonist Tom Merry as the earliest example of the animated cartoon.⁴² As primarily a filmed record of a music-hall act the attribution of this as a proto-animated film would initially seem unwarranted, and certainly Gifford downplays its importance. He suggests that this was simply a starting point and that once the technical limitations of this approach became apparent, animation moved on.⁴³ A close examination of the music-hall act, however, reveals that the lightning cartoon anticipates cinematic animation, featuring qualities such as transformation, the movement of line drawings, and the desire to bring drawings to life. This act is known to have been performed by a number of key figures in the early history of animation, including J. Stuart Blackton and Winsor McCay in the United States, Georges Méliès in France, and Walter Booth in Britain.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the lightning sketch remained an important aspect of British animated cartoons in both the First World War period and the 1920s. It was common, if not routine, for the animated cartoons of these later periods to begin with a form of lightning sketch before they entered a fuller animated mode.

Given this, it is apparent that the lightning sketch was more than simply a starting point for the introduction of drawn material into moving images, but played a pivotal role in the development of animated cartoons and what would later be called animation. Donald Crafton acknowledges this centrality and interprets it as one aspect of animation's 'self-figuration, the tendency of the filmmaker to interject himself into his film'.⁴⁵ Crafton sees the controlling influence of the animator, whether visibly on screen as in the lightning sketch or implied by other means, as a defining aspect of early animation prior to Disney's dominance of this form. While Crafton's argument would seem to be of its time, foregrounding as it does the role of an author in the meaning of these films, this thesis does not argue against Crafton's reading, but rather adds to it by suggesting that there is another aspect that should be considered: the role of the

⁴² Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

⁴⁴ Charles Musser, "American Vitagraph: 1897-1901," *Cinema Journal* 22, no. 3 (1983): 5; John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York; [London]: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 131-39; Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 50.

⁴⁵ Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 11.

viewer and their perception. Before examining the lighting cartoon act directly, it is important to understand the circumstances in which it arose.

Music Hall

The origins of British music hall, distinct but related to American vaudeville, can be traced to the 1830s and 1840s, with pub back room sing-alongs transforming into ‘singing saloons’ and ‘song and supper’ rooms with professional singers providing entertainment for those consuming food or drinks.⁴⁶ In his novel *The History of Pendennis*, set in the 1830s, William Makepeace Thackeray describes such a ‘house of entertainment’, where a varied social group gathers ‘smoking and drinking, and vociferously applauding the songs’.⁴⁷ Dickens equally describes the ‘alternation of music and chat and smoke’ in the music halls where ‘they do not pay for the music, but regard it as a kind of bonus – a something given in by the capital landlord’.⁴⁸ It was the 1843 Theatres Act, however, which formalized in law the characteristics of the music hall. The 1843 act allowed any theatre to apply for a license to perform ‘Stage-plays’ which were very broadly defined as ‘every Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, Opera, Burletta, Interlude, Melodrama, Pantomime, or other Entertainment of the Stage, or any part thereof’ but such a venue would be excluded from selling alcohol or food.⁴⁹ These venues had to decide whether to forgo selling refreshments, from which much of their revenue would have come, or face restrictions upon the type of performances they could present. Thus the music halls were defined in opposition to legitimate theatres, presenting short musical performances in front of an audience consuming beer and food. The number and popularity of music halls of this type grew throughout the latter half of the 19th century, moving from small individually operated music halls to larger music halls belonging to syndicated chains.⁵⁰ By the start of the 20th century music hall had transformed into the more theatrical experience of ‘variety’, presented in lavish venues such as Oswald

⁴⁶ Peter Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," in *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), ix.

⁴⁷ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis: His Fortunes and Misfortunes, His Friends and His Greatest Enemy* II vols., vol. I (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1849), 303-04.

⁴⁸ Charles Dickens, "Music in Poor Neighbourhoods," *Household Words* 12, no. 285 (1855): 140.

⁴⁹ *6&7 Victoriae Cap Lxvii an Act for Regulating Theatres* (22 August 1843); Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91.

⁵⁰ Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," x-xi.

Stoll's Coliseum, opened in 1904.⁵¹ For some commentators this period marks the pinnacle of music hall's rise, culminating in the 1912 Royal Command Performance at the Palace Theatre, yet by this stage a number of competing entertainments were emerging, not least of which was cinema. Within a few years music hall was in decline, a nostalgic memory.

It is important to recognise at this point the different viewpoints of histories of music hall and the difficulty of summarising them. Popular histories tend to be nostalgic reminiscences which describe a teleological growth from the early pub back rooms to the establishment recognition of the Royal Command Performance.⁵² Yet such an approach is blind to a key element of this performance based art form, the audience, and in particular the shift from working class to middle class audiences that coincided with this history. In the 1970s the concerns of academia with both class politics and their relationship with mass culture were played out in the histories of music hall of that time. For some commentators music hall represented the authentic voice of the Victorian working class, if a conservative and patriotic one.⁵³ For others music hall has been seen as an early form of mass culture, controlled by economic principles, subject to the same rationalisation and division of labour as factories, and therefore promulgates the capitalist ideal.⁵⁴ More recent work has drawn on Gramsci's notion of hegemony and argues for music hall as a negotiation of these two extremes, driven by economic demands but with space for authentic expression, either aesthetically or structurally.⁵⁵ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to present a detailed chronological history of music hall in Britain or to fully engage with these complex issues, it is, nevertheless, important to be mindful of them. The central proposition that perception plays a central role in early British animated cartoons is not simply an aesthetic evaluation but intimately tied to a notion of a perceiving viewer. This viewer cannot be considered simply a generic or universal one, but must be situated within a

⁵¹ *The Times* 26 December 1904, 4. See also Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *British Music Hall: A Story in Pictures* (London: Studio Vista, 1965), 29.

⁵² For example see *ibid.*.

⁵³ Gareth Stedman Jones, "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 7, no. 4 (1974): 460-508.

⁵⁴ Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," xv.

⁵⁵ Peter Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture," *Past & Present*, no. 144 (1994): 138-70; Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict*

cultural and social context, a concern which will be examined further in discussions of Sergei Eisenstein's writing on animation.

The lightning cartoon: A music-hall genre

Making a performance out of the act of drawing, or the emphasis of an artist's skill through the speed and accuracy with which they could produce that drawing, have undoubtedly been in existence since humans learnt to draw. During the period in question writers were happy to retrospectively label French painter Charles Le Brun 'A Seventeenth-century "Lightning Artist"' and it may even be suggested that prehistoric cave painting included a performance element, as Günter Berghaus writes 'prehistoric works of art were not unchanging texts but components of cultural performances'.⁵⁶ It was only in the 1870s and early 1880s that a variety of practices coalesced into the widely recognised 'lightning cartoon' music-hall act. The term 'lightning cartoon' would appear to have been originated in 1880 by the popular performer Edgar Austin who repeatedly claimed he was the inventor of this description, asserting in 1881 he was 'the First that ever used the Title of "The Lightning Cartoonist"', and asking 'W. T—y please refrain pirating the above'.⁵⁷ Austin's thinly veiled threat was referring to 'Professor' Walter Thornbury, another popular music-hall act, an advert for whom appeared immediately below Austin's in this edition of the music-hall trade paper *The Era*, billing Thornbury as 'lightning caricaturist'.⁵⁸ This controversy is indicative of the fact that, while the term lightning cartoonist may have originated with Austin, cartooning acts had been performing throughout the late 1870s. Austin himself was appearing as an 'express cartoonist' in 1877 and simply 'cartoonist' in 1879.⁵⁹ Tom Merry, later to appear performing his act in some of the earliest British films, billed himself as 'electric caricaturist' in the 1870s and was appearing as early as 1875.⁶⁰ Several other acts, including Kalulu, C. Raynor, and Monsieur Theo, appeared in the 1870s, billed variously as 'lightning caricaturist' or 'lightning artist'.⁶¹ From the 1880s

⁵⁶*The Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 December 1897, 8; Günter Berghaus, *New Perspectives on Prehistoric Art* (Westport, Conn. ; London: Praeger, 2004), 8.

⁵⁷*Era*, 18 July 1880, 16; *Era*, 8 January 1881, 20.

⁵⁸*Era*, 8 January 1881, 20.

⁵⁹*Era*, 4 February 1877, 10; *Era*, 13 April 1879, 11.

⁶⁰*Era*, 7 July 1878, 20; *Era*, 27 June 1875, 7.

⁶¹*The Derby Mercury*, 9 June 1875, 4; *The Derby Mercury*, 11 June 1879, 4; *Era*, 9 February 1879, 8-9; *The Derby Mercury*, 9 June 1875, 4; *Era*, 9 February 1879, 8-9.

onwards a wide range of terms were used to describe these acts: ‘rapid sketcher’, ‘presto portraits’, ‘rapid portraiture’, ‘electric cartoonist’, ‘lightning draughtsman’.⁶² The term ‘lightning sketch’ has commonly been used to describe these acts in more recent writing on animation, such as Donald Crafton’s *Before Mickey*.⁶³ While this term was used in a British context (such as by the artist Fleury) it would appear to be American in origin.⁶⁴ In a survey of turn of the century American newspapers available from the Library of Congress, the term ‘lightning cartoon’ appears only twenty five times, whereas ‘lightning sketch’ appears two hundred and seventy two times.⁶⁵ In contrast, in Britain by far the most commonly used term was that of ‘lightning cartoonist’. The main British music-hall trade newspaper *The Era* has only seventeen references to ‘lightning sketch’ from its inception in 1838 to the end of 1900. In contrast, it has three hundred and eighty nine references to ‘lightning cartoonist’ in the same period.⁶⁶ The growth of this performance from individual act to a recognised genre reflects the move in music hall from small scale semi-professional operations to a structured and syndicated industry; through the 1880s and 1890s there were approaching one hundred unique performers within this music-hall genre in Britain.

While some of these performers’ careers may have been short lived, others, such as the aforementioned Edgar Austin, Professor Thornbury, and Tom Merry, had long periods of popularity. Merry performed regularly between 1875 and 1882. In 1879 he performed twice nightly, one performance at the Royal Aquarium (his twelfth week there), the other at the Oxford (his eight week there).⁶⁷ In another advertisement he listed 196 performances at the Royal Aquarium, 231 performances at the Oxford and 54 performances at the Crystal Palace since his return from an international tour of the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America.⁶⁸ Edgar Austin had a similarly long and prolific career, stretching from 1877 to his death in 1893 again including an international tour, to

⁶² *Era*, 5 October 1895, 16; *Era*, 8 December 1883, 20; *Era*, 1 August 1880, 16; *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 24 December 1898, 4; *Era*, 27 April 1895, 20.

⁶³ Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*.

⁶⁴ *Era*, 13 March 1886, 12.

⁶⁵ "Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers," Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

⁶⁶ "19th Century British Newspapers," British Library, <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

⁶⁷ *Era*, 9 November 1879, 20.

⁶⁸ *Era*, 9 November 1879, 20; *Era*, 17 August 1879, 16.

Australia in this case.⁶⁹ The popularity of the lightning cartoon act continued into the period following the appearance of film, with lightning cartoonists appearing alongside moving image entertainments in music-hall venues: Professor Thornbury appeared alongside the ‘Lumiere Triographe’ in Belfast in 1897.⁷⁰ Walter Booth, later to create one of the earliest fully animated cartoons in Britain, performed in intervals between David Devant’s cinematograph, also in 1897.⁷¹ The popularity of this act in music halls would continue up to the appearance of regular animated cartoons in the First World War. Ernest Mills, whose work also appeared on film during the war, was performing on stage through the first and second decades of the 20th century.⁷²

The narrative of perception

At its most basic the lightning cartoon act presented a performance of the cartoonist producing a drawing. (Figure 1) shows the performer Little Erskine in front of his drawing board during an 1891 European tour, taken in Vienna. While this image was clearly taken in a photographer’s studio, it gives a good indication of how the act would have appeared on stage.⁷³ The artist would stand in front of a chalk board, sheet of paper, or even a canvas and rapidly produce a drawing.⁷⁴ These were most commonly of public figures in the political or entertainment realm, but often also included other subjects such as landscapes.⁷⁵ Given such a range of techniques and subjects, the unifying feature of the act was the ‘lightning’ speed with which the images were made. Ernest Mills, for example, is recorded as having made ‘ten pictures in colour in twelve minutes’.⁷⁶ Crafton’s reading of the form as author-centric is clearly a major aspect of the pleasures of this entertainment, the active demonstration of the skill of the cartoonist to

⁶⁹ *Era*, 4 February 1877, 10; *Era*, 4 March 1893, 17; *Era*, 8 August 8 1885, 23.

⁷⁰ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 1 November 1897, 4.

⁷¹ *Era*, 25 December 1897, 21.

⁷² *The Times*, 2 June 1908, 9; *The Times*, 14 July 1913, 8.

⁷³ This image is taken from the personal collection of Erskine’s daughter, Daphne Jones. Erskine’s father - Daphne’s grandfather - accompanied Erskine throughout his stage career and appeared on stage with him providing verbal commentary. He maintained a collection of memorabilia, including press clippings and photographs, including this one. See also *Era*, 8 August 1891, 23; Daphne Jones, *Bullets and Bandsmen: The Story of a Bandsman on the Western Front* (Salisbury: Owl Press, 1992).

⁷⁴ *Era*, 28 June 1884, 21; *Chums*, 9 May 1894, 587; *Era*, 22 September 1883, 20.

⁷⁵ For example Tom Merry is described drawing ‘Sir John Lubbock, Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Mr Gladstone’ in *Daily News*, 5 August 1879, 5; Professor Thornbury is described drawing ‘John Bright, Bismarck, Captain Webb (swimming)... and Mr Henry Irving’ in *Era*, 24 October 1880, 4; *Era*, 5 January 1895, 29.

⁷⁶ *Playgoer and Society Illustrated*, December 1910, 107



Figure 1: Little Erskine (1891)

produce the drawing with such speed. Certainly reviewers of the time consistently remarked on how ‘clever’ the performers of this act were.⁷⁷ Yet as well as enacting the event of the production of a cartoon, the lightning cartoon also enacted the reading or decoding of a cartoon. While the act of producing the drawing was accelerated to ‘lightning’ speed, the act of perception was decelerated. Whether or not the viewer had been made aware, through a title, of what was being drawn, as each line appeared the viewer must interpret it and understand its relation to those already drawn, sometimes reassessing their interpretation as conflicting elements appeared.

Being a performance, little direct evidence of this act remains, but a famous cartoon which appeared in a British periodical in 1900 demonstrates how a particularly sophisticated lightning cartoon might work (Figure 2).⁷⁸ At first the artist appears to be drawing a landscape with the sun on the horizon and a house in the foreground, but as the cartoonist adds more lines what appeared to be a house and the sun are revealed to be, respectively, a bicycle and the head of the cyclist. This process provides an insight into the way the mind resolves the ambiguity present in a simple line drawing. There is simply not enough information to be sure what is seen, yet the mind makes a best endeavour assumption. Particularly revealing is the way perspective is resolved. When the drawing is seen as a house with a sunset, the viewer applies a linear perspective to the elements, with the house lines receding into the picture and the sun lying far behind. Yet once more information is given the scene is revealed as a cyclist on his bike and the same lines are resolved onto a single plane, with only the horizon on another plane. Not all lightning cartoon acts would contain such an elaborate play on the viewers’ perception; nevertheless, there is evidence that the slow motion enactment of perception was a central part of the pleasures of the lightning cartoon act.

⁷⁷ Limmere Cullen’s cartoon’s are ‘cleverly depicted’ in *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 29 June 1900, 13; Little Stanley is a ‘clever boy artist’ in *Era*, 4 July 1896, 27; Alfred Reeves is a ‘clever lightning cartoonist’ in *Era*, 14 June 1890, 17.

⁷⁸ *Chums*, 17 October 1900, 131. Donald Crafton reprints an almost identical version of this cartoon drawn by Edwin G. Lutz, titled ‘The lightning sketcher’ which appeared in *Life*, 15 April 1897. Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 49. Given the earlier date of the Lutz cartoon it must be presumed the British version is plagiarised.

As a Lightning Sketch Artist.

He Gave Everyone a Surprise.

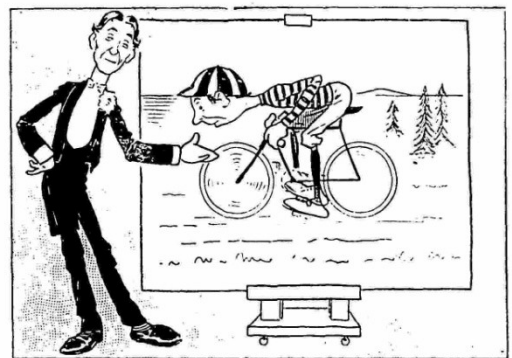
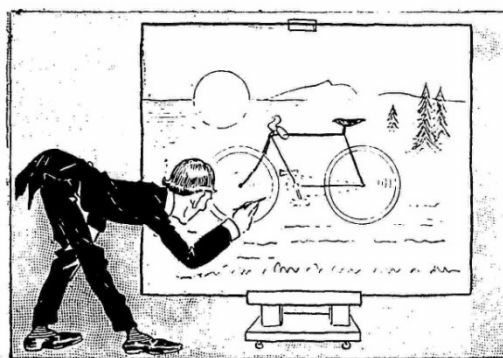
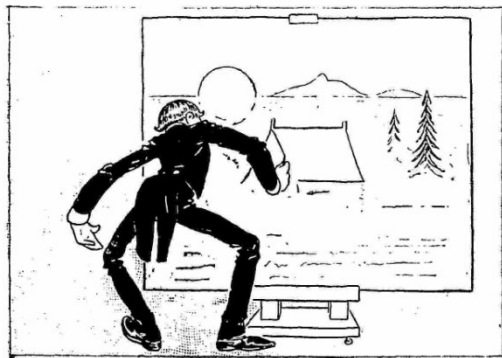
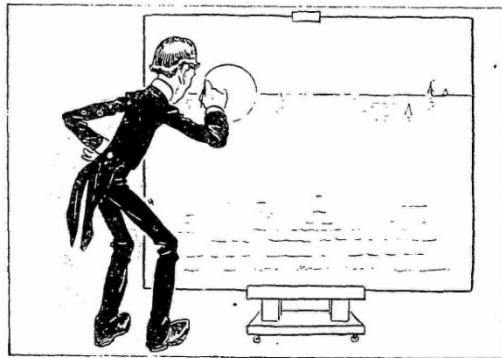
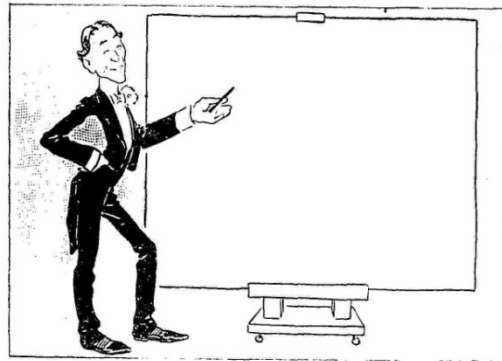


Figure 2: *As a Lightning Sketch Artist...* (1900)

There is very little detailed contemporaneous commentary on the lightning cartoonists. With ten or twenty individual acts performing each night at

each music hall, reviews tended to be limited to a generic description of the act ('lightning cartoonist') and a word or two on the success of the act. As indicated above, reviews repeatedly described the act in one word: 'clever'. This term implies more to the act than simply skill, suggestive as it is of the response to an ingenious optical illusion or magic trick, of not only a sense of skill but also a sense of revelation.

Another aspect of these performances which is suggestive of a play on the act of perception is the practice of writing the name of the person depicted as a caption, either before or following the drawing being produced, a practice that was presumably carried out verbally by other performers. This could again be interpreted as simply relating to the skill of the artist, those who were less proficient needing to make clear their subject to 'avoid the least possibility of mistake', but it also suggests the narrative that would unfold along with the drawing.⁷⁹ If the name of the subject were revealed before the drawing commenced, the defining characteristics of the subject would be self-evident very quickly, revealing to the spectator how few strokes were required to imply the essence (or at least the stereotyped caricature essence) of the person: a single stroke suggestive of the large nose, the bald pate, the wide moustache. Conversely if the name were not revealed beforehand, the drawing would produce a narrative of speculation and correction, as in the *Chums* cartoon described above. Here the spectator would attempt to resolve the ambiguity in the line drawings to identify the subject depicted, reassessing as more detail was added, until the identity was made apparent in the final 'reveal' of the caption or the announcement of the name. This use of captions is clearly visible in the photograph of Little Erskine reproduced above (Figure 1).

A further technique used by lightning cartoonists which indicates the importance and foregrounding of perception is the use of inverted drawings. This method is documented as being used by a number of the most famous and popular artists, suggesting it would have been widely disseminated and copied by other artists as well. Edgar Austin, making another claim to originality, advertised that he 'introduced a novelty by drawing portraits upside down'.⁸⁰ Professor Thornbury, in a New York performance at Tony Pastor's vaudeville

⁷⁹ *The Times*, 24 October 1892, 6.

⁸⁰ *Era*, 15 September 1883, 19.

theatre, is also documented as producing ‘a portrait upside down’.⁸¹ Little Erskine also ‘drew Mr Gladstone upside down’.⁸² As with the previous aspects discussed, drawing caricatures upside down could simply be seen as another demonstration of skill, the inverted image making the act more difficult and therefore more impressive, yet it has another effect. Facial recognition has come to be recognised by neuroscientists as a distinctive function which provides evidence for the specialisation of areas of the brain for specific tasks.⁸³ Of particular interest to the current discussion is the fact that facial inversion radically affects our ability to recognise and identify a person. With most objects the time it takes to identify the object remains constant whether viewed in its most usual configuration or upside down. In contrast faces are recognised very quickly when seen in their normal alignment, but are far more slowly recognised when inverted. While detailed psychological or neurological studies were, of course, unavailable to late 19th century music-hall performers, the use of facial inversion in these lightning cartoonists’ acts suggests an awareness of the underlying perceptual principle. Its use in these performances would further add to, and thus emphasise, the deceleration of the perceptual process already described. This observation highlights the utility of applying neuroscientific research to this field of entertainment, an approach that will be further addressed in the last chapter of this thesis.

An additional aspect to the concern of the lightning cartoon act with perception is the notion of the primitive or childlike, of a sense that drawing is derived from or appeals to a base or non-rational perceptual facility. It is notable that of the many performers working as lightning cartoonists in the late 19th century, a significant number were child performers, young enough to require court issued licences to perform.⁸⁴ Master Erskine Williams (‘scarcely Eight Years of age’), Little Stanley (‘but eight years old’), and Valda (‘boy cartoonist’ performing at age twelve) were amongst the most popular performers.⁸⁵ They were subject to newspaper profiles and interviews; performed for royal or

⁸¹ *Era*, 4 November 1893, 8.

⁸² Press clipping from *The Town Crier* (Birmingham), 16 February 1895, in the collection of Daphne Jones.

⁸³ N. Kanwisher, F. Tong, and K. Nakayama, "The Effect of Face Inversion on the Human Fusiform Face Area," *Cognition* 68, no. 1 (1998).

⁸⁴ *Era*, 1 February 1890, 7.

⁸⁵ *Era*, 3 August 1889, 19; *The Belfast News-Letter*, 22 April 1899, 6; *Era*, 20 April 1895, 23; *Chums*, 9 May 1894, 587.

political patrons; and conducted international tours.⁸⁶ While the idea of a child performing may simply be viewed as another aspect of music hall's insatiable appetite for novelty, the discourse surrounding these child performers suggests that there was a belief in a more substantial affinity between lightning cartooning and a child's perspective. Interviews and profiles of these child stars emphasised their untutored approach; 'I've never had a lesson in my life' claimed Salvator Valda, despite his father having been a 'fellow-student of Sir John Millais at Sass's Art School'.⁸⁷ Equally, the innate nature of their skills was highlighted in the early age they are claimed to have exhibited their skills; for Erskine Williams 'ever since he could stand upright the pencil has been his chief toy', equally for Salvator Valda 'it was about the age of two when I began'.⁸⁸

This discourse of naive or unconscious drawing, while most readily apparent in the discussion of these child performers, can also be seen in other lightning cartoonists as well. The most obvious example is a number of exotically named lightning cartoonists, including Azig Babalo ('Oriental marvel' and 'lightning cartoonist'), Kalulu, Ko-Ko ('the Japanese cartoonist'), Marishio, and Mefoto.⁸⁹ As with the child performers these performers, whether genuinely from overseas or not, drew upon a cultural notion of an exotic 'other' whose abilities derive from a primitive mindset unhindered by conventional rationality. Similarly a number of lightning cartoonists paired their skills with magic or spiritualism wherein the cartooning is seen to derive from a hidden 'other' force rather than rational choice, for instance American Jenny Lind 'Lady Spiritualistic Lightning Cartoonist'.⁹⁰ When considered in this context, the constant praise of all lightning cartoonists for their speed may be seen not simply as another example of the role skill and authorship play in their performances, but also indicating an unconscious or involuntary aspect to it, much as the surrealists would later use automatic writing. For instance when one reviewer writes that

⁸⁶*Chums*, 9 May 1894, 587; *The Belfast News-Letter*, 22 April 1899, 6; Erskine Williams had the 'honour of appearing before H.R.H. Princess Louise...her Royal Highness specially requested to be introduced to the little artist' in *Era*, 14 July 1894, 15; Little Stanley 'had the good fortune to attract the attention of the Prince of Wales' in *The Belfast News-Letter*, 22 April 1899, 6; Gladstone sends 'compliments to the little artist' Erskine Williams in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 May 1890, 3; Erskine Williams performed in Berlin, Vienna and Paris in *Era*, 8 August 1891, 23.

⁸⁷ *Chums*, 9 May 1894, 587.

⁸⁸ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 May 1890, 3; *Chums*, 9 May 1894, 587.

⁸⁹ *Era*, 21 December 1895, 18; *Era*, 13 June 1896, 19; *The Derby Mercury*, 9 June 1875, 4; *Era*, 3 October 1891, 8; *Era*, 5 September 1891, 15; *Era*, 8 September 1900, 19.

⁹⁰ *Era*, 13 December 1890, 25.

Edgar Austin ‘gives himself no time for elaboration or fine lines’ it is suggestive of the notions raised by child or exotic performers.⁹¹ These comments provide a glimpse of a broader cultural concern with drawing and caricature, an idea that they appeal to or reflect a primitive or childlike perception and are consequently best when produced by an untutored or unconscious mind. This cultural concern is readily apparent in other aspects of 18th and 19th century culture, such as the mechanical automata of childlike figures produced by Pierre Jaquet-Droz or Henri Maillardet who uncannily draw complex images on paper, a concern that would be explored in greater depth by Sergei Eisenstein in relation to animation, to be discussed further in later chapters. The lightning cartoonists can thus be seen as establishing a concern with perception which would be carried through into the animated cartoons of the early 20th century.

Anticipating animation

The lightning cartoon act also anticipated animation in more immediate ways, suggesting that these artists working prior to the appearance of film were already imagining a form that might allow them to move beyond the confines of the music hall. As indicated in the introduction, the definition of ‘animation’ is a nebulous one, never more so than when discussing the early period of cinema where this term was used non-specifically to describe all moving images. Nevertheless, the combination of drawings with motion is clearly central to any usable definition of ‘animation’. All drawings, to a greater or lesser extent, may evoke the movement which produced them, with the spectator’s eye recreating that movement in passing along its lines. As filmmaker Len Lye (whose work will be addressed in later chapters) describes it ‘the history of any definite form is the movement of which the form is the result’; a line is a history of the movement which made it.⁹² The lightning cartoonist emphasised this movement by the performance of drawing. Thus the lightning cartoonist, decades before the 20th century’s action painters or kinetic sculptors, introduced time and movement into a primarily spatial art form by virtue of their performance. This is in no way to suggest that the lightning cartoonists were self-consciously proto-modernists; clearly their choice of subjects and style of cartooning placed them firmly within

⁹¹ *Era*, 4 April 1885, 10.

⁹² Len Lye and Laura Ridings, "Film-Making [1935]," in *Len Lye* ed. Jean-Michel Bouhours and Roger Horrocks (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2000), 224.

a British Victorian aesthetic context typified by the restrained humour of *Punch*, rather than an avant-garde sensibility emerging in Paris and elsewhere in this period. Still we must acknowledge that the lightning cartoon act introduced a movement of the drawn line that would be fully realised through the technology of moving images in the early 20th century, an indication that they were striving towards a notion of ‘animation’, however ill-defined.

A further indication of this desire to animate drawings is the practice of giving the drawings voices through ventriloquism. A number of lightning cartoonists also listed ventriloquism as part of their acts, including Dr. Walford Bodie, Walter Booth, Byron Cooper, Miss Lydia Dreams, Fred Ormonde, and Professor Thornbury.⁹³ While for some performers this may have simply been a demonstration of their versatility, it is apparent that for others the two skills were combined into a single act. Walter Booth is described as drawing ‘amusing ventriloquial sketches’ and Professor Thornbury advertises his ‘New Ventriloquial Sketching Entertainment’ as well as regularly emphasising his skill as ‘lightning cartoonist, ventriloquist and mimic’.⁹⁴ Final confirmation that the two elements were combined in a single act is provided by the following description from a review in *The Era*

Professor Thornbury’s pictures take the entertainment out of the groove of song and dance. He first chromographs a lake and a winter scene; he then draws some automaton heads on his canvas and proceeds to voice them⁹⁵

This scene from 1892 clearly anticipates cinematic animation, the desire to animate or bring to life the drawings made, by giving them a voice, and perhaps even giving them rudimentary movement, as implied by the description of the ‘automaton heads’.

The final quality of the lightning cartoon act which anticipates the animated cartoons of the early 20th century is that of transformation. Transformation is often seen as one of the defining characteristics of animation, the malleability and control afforded to the animator courtesy of its frame by frame construction allowing unlimited manipulation of the visual field. While the lightning cartoon act does not afford the performer the same degree of control

⁹³ *Era*, 5 August 1899, 19; *Era*, 3 September 1898, 23; *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 17 February 1900, 3; *Era*, 5 October 1895, 16; *Northern Echo*, 28 October 1896, 3; *Era*, 29 December 1883, 21.

⁹⁴ *Era*, 3 September 1898, 22; *Era*, 29 December 1883, 21; *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 4 February 1898, 13.

⁹⁵ *Era*, 22 October 1892, 16.

over the visual image as animated cartoons, there is, nevertheless, evidence that performers did strive towards the same qualities that would be realised in animated cartoons. A number of acts are documented as using transformation as part of their lightning cartoon routine: Miss Lydia Dreams' act is described in which 'a portrait of Bismarck is quickly changed into a likeness of Lord Salisbury'; Walter Westwood is described making 'people thunderstruck when they see the Marvellous Lightning Change from one face to another'; and Edward Mortimer advertised his act involving 'changing one face into another'.⁹⁶ As with other aspects of the lightning cartoon act, such as drawing images upside down, it is likely that these novelties would have been appropriated by other performers and become a familiar part of the act.

As the description of Lydia Dreams' act above suggests, a major aspect of the use of transformation would have been to give a political commentary on the figures depicted, to highlight the differences or similarities in their political views. For instance, one reviewer describes how Walter Westwood's act proves 'how easy it is "on paper" to convert Gladstone into Dizzy'.⁹⁷ Yet these transformations would also play an important role in the narrative of perception that would unfold as part of the lightning cartoon performance. Transformation would disrupt the perceptual assumptions spectators make, highlighting how a drawing which might on first appearance unambiguously depict one thing can be transformed into something or someone completely different with a few strokes, shifting emphasis and changing the meaning of pre-existing elements. Transformation in the lightning cartoon may also be seen as an extension of a quality of music hall in general: the evocation of two distinct, even incompatible, meanings in a single moment. These can be seen in a range of qualities that might be grouped under the umbrella term 'simultaneous meaning'. These qualities would be carried over into the early animated cartoons and bear a close relationship with the characteristic that Sergei Eisenstein identified as defining animation, which he termed the 'plasmatic', to be discussed in a later chapter.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Era*, 5 October 1895, 16; *Era*, 18 February 1888, 22; *Era*, 25 May 1895, 26.

⁹⁷ *Era*, 28 February 1891, 16.

⁹⁸ Sergei Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1986).

Simultaneous meaning and performance

The most obvious and widespread of the music-hall practices which evoke simultaneous meaning is the use of puns and double entendre. The ubiquity of puns in music-hall culture is readily apparent in the coverage of lightning cartoonists in the pages of *The Era*, for instance one reviewer saying of Professor Thornbury ‘he can draw thunders of applause’ playing on double meanings of both lightning and drawing.⁹⁹ These puns were repeated numerous times: Lillian Lancaster’s lightning act being followed by ‘thunder - in the shape of applause’; while ‘the most acceptable matter that Mr [Tom] Merry draws is without doubt his salary’.¹⁰⁰ The double entendre, a risqué subcategory of puns, was equally prevalent in the music hall. Marie Lloyd’s career was famously based upon the suggestive comment which ultimately resulted in her being excluded from the first Royal Variety Performance, apparently on the grounds of being too vulgar.¹⁰¹

Regular debate appeared in the pages of *The Era* regarding ‘Music Hall Morals’, for instance one commentator suggested ‘the mission of some of our “star *comiques*” appears to be to render popular sayings unpopular, so that one can scarcely use them in their most innocent sense without being suspected of meaning more than is said’.¹⁰² Such criticisms resulted in a petition organised in 1879 by the ‘Music Hall Proprietors’ Protection Association’ in an attempt to self-regulate and defend the industry from legislation that would place stricter controls upon the content of performances.¹⁰³ This petition prompted one commentator to suggest ‘I frankly say that the songs sung at both the Halls and Theatres in London are as broad as any I have ever heard in either of the hemispheres...invariably it is the “double entendre” that is considered “broad”’.¹⁰⁴ This aspect of performance is all too easily lost in the most common traces of music hall which remain, namely the lyrics of the songs which were sung or the advertising descriptions of the acts which appeared in the trade newspaper *The Era*. If there was, as a commentator at the time suggested, ‘an unwritten language of vulgarity and obscenity known to music-hall audiences, in

⁹⁹ *Era*, 18 July 1891, 14.

¹⁰⁰ *The Sporting Times* 10 April 1880, 5; *Era*, 14 October 1877, 4.

¹⁰¹ Frances Gray, "Lloyd, Marie (1870–1922)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹⁰² *Era*, 25 November 1877, 4.

¹⁰³ *Era*, 23 March 1879, 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Era*, 30 March 30 1879, 4.

which vile things can be said that appear perfectly inoffensive in King's English' then these traces cannot fully express what was communicated in a music-hall performance.¹⁰⁵ For Peter Bailey this ephemeral quality of music-hall acts is central to its understanding, a quality he describes as 'knowingness'.¹⁰⁶ Of particular interest to the discussion of lightning cartoonists and their later influence on animated cartoons is the way the knowingness of puns and double entendres is not only a method of smuggling scandalous content into an increasingly economically controlled form, but also the way it allows two meanings to be simultaneously evoked.

F. Freeman's assessment of music-hall 'vulgarity' stated above suggests that performers said one thing but meant another, that the language used was primarily just a slang whose meaning was commonly agreed but unknown to the uninitiated. Yet, as the term double entendre suggests, it may be argued that puns and double entendre precisely rely upon the slippage in their meaning, in signifying two or more meanings simultaneously. In this sense a pun is a comic equivalent to poetic metaphor, a word image which links two situations or ideas that they might be compared or contrasted.

This notion of simultaneous meaning is also paralleled in the nature of music-hall performance, in the tension between the actor and the enacted. The tension between fictional character and performer is of course present in all performance based arts, but whereas the legitimate theatre of the 19th century attempted to elide this, in music hall the two aspects were open to play. A particularly pertinent example of this is in the use of direct audience address. Here the music-hall performer would break from the fictionalised world of a sketch or character based song and directly addresses the audience with adlib commentary or physical business such as a wink, breaking the 'fourth wall' of legitimate theatre and emphasising the simultaneous meaning present in a performance of a fictionalised scene. A related effect is produced by many of the costume choices music-hall performers took. Whereas in legitimate theatre costumes were used to reinforce the plausibility of the character, in music hall they commonly play on the gap between performer and character, most notably

¹⁰⁵ *Weekly Despatch* 4 February 1883 quoted in Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture," 158.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

in the female impersonators. In these roles much of the comedic value derives from the gap between the clearly male actor performing a female role in female clothes.

On first glance the lightning cartoon act would not appear to be strongly involved in this aspect of music hall's simultaneous meaning, with performers billed by their own name and emphasising their act as honest and without trickery: Edgar Austin advertised 'my sketches are done off hand, without the aid of any tracing'.¹⁰⁷ Yet there is significant evidence that many lightning cartoonists would have played upon the simultaneous meaning of performer and performed character in some way. Many took stage names, including Edgar Austin (real name William Edgar Piercey) and Tom Merry (real name William Mecham) and there is no evidence that Professor Thornbury's title was anything but self-attributed.¹⁰⁸ We may add to this the exotic performers identified earlier, including Azig Babalo and Ko Ko, whose acts undoubtedly contained a performance of 'otherness'. Thus we can see that even the apparently simple lightning cartoon act contains a range of performance elements.

The most startling example of this is the previously mentioned Miss Lydia Dreams. Miss Lydia Dreams was the stage name of Walter Lambert.¹⁰⁹ Her act was described in *The Era* thus

"the lady" is no other than a young gentleman very cleverly made up to represent one of the fair sex; and the element of surprise comes in when the artist, who works a ventriloquial performance, gives utterance to some unmistakably manly tones supposed to proceed from one of the [lightning cartooned] figures¹¹⁰

Thus Miss Lydia Dreams/Walter Lambert's act involves a range of simultaneous meanings. While the phrase 'female impersonator' is often used, it is misleading, as this act is not simply an attempt to trick the audience but a play on the binary male/female, as the use of 'manly tones' in the act indicates, it signifies both at once, just as a pun or metaphor evokes two simultaneous meanings. Lydia Dreams/Lambert extended this simultaneity further by performing roles within a sketch, *Upside Down*, 'a condensed version of the vaudeville farce *Confusion*...Mr [sic] Lydia Dreams as an excruciatingly comic waiter'¹¹¹ playing

¹⁰⁷ *Era*, 24 December 1881, 21.

¹⁰⁸ *The Illustrated Police News etc.*, 11 March 1893, 4; *Era*, 7 December 1895, 17.

¹⁰⁹ *Northern Echo*, 5 January 1893, 1.

¹¹⁰ *Era*, 24 November 1894, 16.

¹¹¹ *Era*, 18 June 1898, 16.

further with the performer/character dichotomy already present in the performance by having a female impersonator play a man in a sketch. The use of transformation added another dimension to this simultaneity, playing as it did upon an image which can be understood to depict two distinct referents.¹¹² These preliminary qualities of simultaneous meaning identified in the lightning cartoon act (in transformation, in the 'knowingness'¹¹³ of puns and double entendres, and in various aspects of performance) will be explored later as they become central to understanding later animated cartoons.

Thus far discussion of music hall has been largely restricted to a number of qualities specific to the lightning cartoon act which would prove to be central to animated cartoons in early British cinema. There are also several characteristics prevalent in music hall generally, which nonetheless are amply demonstrated by the lightning cartoon act and would prove important to animated cartoons, as well as being shared concerns with cartooning and illustration. These characteristics are topicality; the classification of high and low or popular art; and an attention to the immediate context in which work appeared.

Topicality

With regular live performances, one act often appearing several times in a single evening, and a degree of improvisation and audience involvement, topicality was an inevitable part of some music-hall performances. Lightning cartoonists, like most music-hall acts, would have presented their live act several times each evening: Tom Merry performed twice nightly at the Royal Aquarium and the Oxford Music Hall; Hal Verdo (a popular 'Antipodean colour sketcher and lightning cartoonist') performed thrice nightly in 1886; Professor Thornbury appeared twice nightly in the 1880s.¹¹⁴ For most lightning cartoonists topical figures were a major subject of their cartoons. Contemporary sources document abundantly the list of political figures, such as Disraeli and Gladstone, who were routinely depicted by the lightning cartoonists.¹¹⁵ Little Erskine made particular

¹¹² References to this aspect in Miss Lydia Dreams act run from 1895 to 1899: *Era*, 5 October 1895, 16; *Era*, 4 March 1899, 20.

¹¹³ Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture."

¹¹⁴ *Era*, 9 November 1879, 20; *Era*, 9 January 1886, 2; 'Seebright Lounge ... 7:10, Royal Albert... 9:10, Belmont's Palace... 10:45' in *Era*, 18 September 1886, 23; 'Royal Victoria Coffee House... 9:30, Middlesex Music Hall... 10:25' in *Era*, 15 January 1881, 20.

¹¹⁵ For instance, Edgar Austin is reported drawing 'Generals Gordon and Stewart, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr Bradlaugh, Mr Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield' in *Era*, 4 April 1885, 10; Erskine Williams depicts 'the Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield, Sir Augustus Harris' in *Era*, 5 January 1895, 29.

effort to get photographs of local figures, such as the Mayor of Portsmouth, in advance of a visit to allow him to draw a figure of local significance as part of his act.¹¹⁶ Less clear from these sources is the amount of political commentary these acts gave on the subjects they depicted. As indicated earlier, historians of music hall have provided different readings of the extent of political commentary in performances. Certainly the descriptions of lightning cartoonists would seem to correspond with the sense that, while addressing vaguely topical issues, acts avoided overt commentary or partisanship. While reviews regularly listed figures depicted they do not show any indication that the drawings were anything more than gentle physical caricatures. That Disraeli was still a common subject for lightning cartoonists, such as Erskine Williams and Walter Westwood, in the 1890s, many years after his death in 1881, indicates that these cartoonists addressed a generalised topicality rather than commenting on immediate political specificities.¹¹⁷

Yet historians, such as Peter Bailey, have argued that music hall did contain space for commentary. His notion of 'knowingness' has already been described in relation to the use of puns and double entendres, whose simultaneous meanings offered an opportunity for covert commentary.¹¹⁸ Bailey also discusses the importance of audience participation and its role in generating a commentary, something which was amply demonstrated by the lightning cartoonists' acts.¹¹⁹ Edgar Austin's act is described, wherein

"Lord Salisbury" was received in chilling silence, while no sooner was the "Grand Old Man" displayed than a most cordial round of applause went up. This latest reading of the political barometer is but a straw, but sufficiently indicates whence the wind blows¹²⁰

Tom Merry's act also provoked strong audience reactions

the partisans of Mr Gladstone cheered when Mr Tom Merry sketched his portrait, and his opponents of the Jingo tribe howled. They changed their howlings to applause when the late Earl Beaconsfield's visage was drawn; some applauded Bradlaugh's countenance, and some raved over Salisbury and that rash young man Lord Randolph Churchill¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Diary of Little Erskine in collection of his daughter, Daphne Jones.

¹¹⁷ *Era*, 5 January 1895, 29; *Era*, 28 February 1891, 16; Jonathan Parry, "Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804–1881)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹¹⁸ Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture."

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹²⁰ *The Pall Mall Gazette* 23 April 1889, 6.

¹²¹ *Era*, 12 November 1881, 4.

In such a charged atmosphere of audience participation, the lightning cartoon, especially an act such as Walter Westwood's transformation of a portrait of Disraeli into Gladstone, can be seen as more politically active than may appear initially.¹²²

High and low art

A further quality of music hall, evident in the careers of many lightning cartoonists, is its treatment as popular or 'low' art. The 1843 Theatres Act institutionalised the distinction between legitimate theatre and other forms of live entertainment, creating a caste system of theatrical performances. While the 1912 Royal Command Performance was heralded by popular histories as representing the long overdue recognition of the importance of this art form by the establishment, this reflected a convergence of music hall and legitimate theatre far more than a genuine shift in middle and upper class tastes. 1912 saw the loosening of the restrictions on music hall presenting longer dramatic scenes, allowing up to half hour sketches with dialogue and many music-hall proprietors aspired to high art forms, with opera and ballet commonly given a place on the music-hall stage, while many music halls would push the boundaries of the licensing laws to present theatrical sketches.¹²³ That music hall was considered an inferior form is apparent in the low esteem lightning cartoonists were held outside of the halls. Despite their popularity and long careers both Edgar Austin and Tom Merry struggled to make more than a living wage. For Edgar Austin this was identified as contributing to his death, the following exchange taking place at the Coroner's inquest following his death caused by tuberculosis

Juryman – I suppose he ought not to have gone out at night.

Witness – No.

The Coroner – He could not help it, as it was his living¹²⁴

Austin's choice of career literally became the death of him. Tom Merry equally struggled to subsist as a lightning cartoonist despite his many appearances. By 1881 he was supplementing his income by drawing promotional posters for other music-hall acts which by the mid-1880s was his primary business.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Merry was declared bankrupt and jailed in Wandsworth prison in

¹²² *Era*, 23 November 1889, 12.

¹²³ Mander and Mitchenson, *British Music Hall: A Story in Pictures*, 30; Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* 54.

¹²⁴ *Era*, 4 March 1893, 17.

¹²⁵ *Era*, 24 September 1881, 20; *Era*, 18 July 1885, 22.

1895, just a few months after his lightning cartoon act had appeared in one of the first British films.¹²⁶

Reflecting the general trend of music hall, a number of variations on the lightning cartoon act can be seen to attempt to move toward a high cultural approach. That the high/low culture split was an issue is indicated by an act performed by 'The Levinos' under the title 'Art v Music'. In this act Dolph Levinos performed a lightning cartoon while his wife sang, an act which would seem to have directly addressed the classification of 'the Rival Arts'.¹²⁷ Other performers, including D'Inglo, Fleury, Herr Von Prittwitz-Palm, and Harvard, used oil paints on canvas, a medium which would connote the academic traditions of painting, rather than the less respectable caricatures produced using chalk or pencil.¹²⁸ Fleury, a French performer, is praised by one reviewer, who compares his work favourably with that of Whistler.¹²⁹ The appeal to high art implicit in this approach would have been undermined, however, by it almost certainly being a trick. While Fleury claimed he 'paints a splendid picture 6ft by 4ft in five minutes' there are a number of exposés of this type of act which indicate that in fact it actually involved the removal of a temporary whitewash from a pre-prepared painting, giving the impression of producing the painting.¹³⁰

Flow

The final aspect of music hall that would prove significant for cinema, and animated cartoons in particular, is the 'flow' of performances, to use Raymond Williams' term.¹³¹ Williams' term, from his study of television, highlights the significance not only of individual units, in the case of television this being programmes, but also of the overall context in which they appeared, that is the 'flow' of programmes that make up the schedule. Being unable to present long plays under the restrictions of the 1843 Theatres Act, music hall was subject to a similar structure, presenting a series of short acts, including lightning cartoonists. While thus far these acts have been discussed in isolation, they would have

¹²⁶ *Era*, 7 December 1895, 17; *Liverpool Mercury etc* 20 November 1895, 6; *Era*, 28 March 1896, 18.

¹²⁷ *Era*, 28 June 1884, 21.

¹²⁸ *Era*, 17 October 1891, 26; *Era*, 22 September 1883, 20; *Era*, 27 September 1890, 27; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 2 November 1884, 6.

¹²⁹ *Era*, 7 February 1885, 9.

¹³⁰ *Era*, 22 September 1883, 20; *Northern Echo* 14 April 1893, 2; *Daily News* 10 October 1893, 5.

¹³¹ Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, ed. Ederyn Williams (London: Routledge, 1990 [1975]), 79-111.

appeared within a flow of other acts, which may have played a significant role in the way these acts were received and understood. Within early music hall the flow of acts would have been very organic, orchestrated by the 'chairman' who would announce acts and be host for the whole evening, while the audience arrived and departed as they wished.¹³² By the later period, as previously described, performers might appear in several music halls in a single night, requiring strict schedules set in advance, strict performance times which regulated audience arrival and departure and theatrical seating layouts; in short an industrial organisation of mass culture.¹³³ Yet in both cases the context within which an act appeared could be vital to the understanding of its content.

As suggested earlier, these three more general qualities of music hall are shared by the other area which heavily influenced animated cartoons and it is to that this chapter now turns.

Print cartooning and illustration

As will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, the related arts of print cartooning and illustration are particularly significant antecedents to the use of drawn material in early 20th century animated cartoons. The history of these forms of graphic art in Britain can be traced at least as far back as William Hogarth's (1697–1764) topical series and prints. By the early 19th century the art and business of producing topical caricature prints played an important social, political, and economic role in London and by extension the whole of Britain. Artists such as James Gillray (1756–1815) and George Cruikshank (1792–1878) were well known and their work was reproduced, sold, rented, and exhibited in a manner that has strong parallels with the film business that would evolve in the early 20th century. The Victorian period saw significant changes to this model, with journals and newspapers such as *Punch* (established 1841) and *The Illustrated London News* (established 1842) relying heavily upon illustration and caricature for both their content and popularity. Parallel to this tradition of cartooning and caricature is one of book illustration. Often executed by the same artists who worked on topical prints and journals, book illustrations were a central part of the publishing industry in the Victorian period, featuring in both

¹³² Mander and Mitchenson, *British Music Hall: A Story in Pictures*, 10.

¹³³ Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," x-xi.

fiction and non-fiction, children's and adults' books. Artists' names were prominently featured alongside the authors' in advertising and front matter. Illustrations often became intimately associated with their texts, perhaps most famously in the case of Tenniel's illustrations for Lewis Carroll's work. The political and cultural importance of caricature, cartooning, and illustration would remain throughout the 19th century and into the period when moving images appeared.

As the above short history already implies, drawn material falls into many different areas, none of which are fully distinct: drawing, caricature, cartooning, illustration, painting. Each term has its own etymology and historically specific meanings. 'Illustration' is a rather general term describing the function of the drawing rather than its subject matter or style. 'Caricature' is usually reserved for images directed at an individual, as in Max Beerbohm's definition of the term

the most perfect caricature is that which, on a small surface, with the simplest means, most accurately exaggerates to the highest point, the peculiarities of a human being, at his most characteristic moment, in the most beautiful manner¹³⁴

Yet it can often be used with a much broader meaning to refer to any drawing which seeks to satirise a person, their ideas or whole political systems. Until the mid-19th century the term 'cartoon' was reserved for the preparatory drawings an artist made for a painting, with most historians locating the origin of its use for comic drawings in *Punch*'s use of the term in describing its satirical drawings of the 1843 competition to decorate the Houses of Parliament.¹³⁵ That 'caricature', with its greater implication of satirical attack, was substituted with 'cartoon', with its greater implication of gentle humour, is in itself telling of one shift in the history of this type of work in the Victorian period. While the 19th century began with the venomous drawings of Gillray and Cruikshank, by the 1860s the images in *Punch* were more gently satirical.

This chapter will not present a detailed chronological history of caricature and cartooning, of which a number of examples already exist; nor will it trace the complete etymology of each of the terms used. Rather it will examine the culture

¹³⁴ Max Beerbohm 'The spirit of Caricature' (1901) quoted in *English Caricature : 1620 to the Present : Caricaturists and Satirists, Their Art, Their Purpose and Influence*, (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984).

¹³⁵ John Geipel, *The Cartoon : A Short History of Graphic Comedy and Satire* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), 13-14; Simon Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1978), 55; Tim Batchelor, Cedar Lewisohn, and Martin Myrone, *Rude Britannia : British Comic Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 27.

of commercial graphic art in Britain in the 19th century with particular attention to artists and approaches which would directly affect the use of drawn material in moving images. The areas of attention include the perceptual basis of viewing line drawings; topicality; the relationship with the technology of reproduction; and aesthetic strategies of cartooning, caricature, and illustration. The work of a range of cartoonists and illustrators will be discussed, but particular focus will be paid to artists who had established careers in these fields and then moved into filmmaking in the first decades of the 20th century, including Lancelot Speed, Harry Furniss, Dudley Buxton and Louis Wain.

Although addressed separately here, there were considerable links between music hall, discussed in the first half of this chapter, and print cartooning which it is worthwhile briefly highlighting. A central principle of this thesis is that artistic and media practices arise within, and are a product of, a wider context of other such practices. The primary focus of this thesis is on the animated cartoon and its special relationships with music hall, and print cartooning. It should, nevertheless, be observed that these practices are themselves subject to similar intermedial interactions.

Interactions between cartooning and music hall

The references from Thackeray and Dickens in the discussion of music hall is one demonstration that music hall and cartooning were equal parts of a wider cultural exchange, with both of these important Victorian novelists' work equally referring to and interacting with print cartooning. These novelists' work was associated with the illustrations which accompanied them, with John Ruskin's analysis of illustrations of Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* discussed later in this chapter. Thackeray had a keen interest in cartooning, having hoped to adopt an artistic career in earlier life.¹³⁶ He continued to produce drawings, including illustrating some editions of his own *Vanity Fair*, as well as writing about caricature, such as his celebrated piece on his former teacher George Cruikshank for the *Westminster Review* in 1840.¹³⁷ Thackeray had even hoped to illustrate Dickens work before he became a novelist himself, but failed to impress Dickens

¹³⁶ Peter L. Shillingsburg, "Thackeray, William Makepeace (1811–1863)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹³⁷ William Makepeace Thackeray, "George Cruikshank," *Westminster Review* 34(1840).

when they met.¹³⁸ Clearly the Victorian period saw considerable interaction between the arts, with cartooning and illustration, literature and music hall all contributing and involving a complex social network, often facilitated by London clubs such as the Garrick. This cultural milieu would provide a fertile basis for animated cartoon films in the early 20th century: future cartoon film maker Harry Furniss helped revive Dickens from critical disdain with his many illustrations for a library edition of the author's work in 1910.¹³⁹ Furniss also provided illustrations for Thackeray's own work in *The Centenary Thackeray*. Furniss was equally an active member of a number of London clubs, as were other future animators such as G.E. Studdy.¹⁴⁰

Music hall and cartoons can also be seen to have a shared history in more direct ways as well. A number of music-hall acts drew inspiration for their act directly from caricatures and cartoons. Dagmar Kift describes one act presented by Thomas Sharples in Bolton in the late 1840s: 'a theatrical adaptation of George Cruikshank's "Eight Illustrations of the Effects of the Gin Bottle"' a series of engravings that Dickens himself had purchased a copy of.¹⁴¹ This influence continued throughout music hall's reign, with the Royal Command Performance of 1912 featuring the Palace Girls in a popular ballet "'A Fantasy in Black and White"' after [Punch cartoonist] Phil May'.¹⁴² The title of this performance suggests a desire to directly animate May's drawings on stage and thus we find two forms, music hall and cartooning, aspiring to the condition of a third form, animated cartoons, that in cinema was in its very infancy in 1912.

In addition to these influences of illustration on music hall, there was a reciprocal stimulus in illustration and cartooning from music hall. Drawings were an important part of the visualisation of music hall in a number of ways. The journal *Punch*, already highlighted as an important outlet for cartooning in the

¹³⁸ Jane R. Cohen, *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 235-36.

¹³⁹ Gareth Cordery, "Harry Furniss and the 'Boom in Boz' (Part One): The Dickens Revival and 'a Sketch of Boz'," *Dickens Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2004); Gareth Cordery, "Harry Furniss and the 'Boom in Boz' (Part Two)," *Dickens Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2004); Gareth Cordery, "A Special Relationship: Stiggins in England and America (Part One)," *Dickens Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2005); Gareth Cordery, "A Special Relationship: Stiggins in England and America (Part Two)," *Dickens Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (2005).

¹⁴⁰ *The North American Review* April 1912, 570-72; *Daily News* 22 March 1886, 5; *The Times* 11 April 1921, 7.

¹⁴¹ Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* 53. Cohen, *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators*, 32.

¹⁴² Palace Theatre, "Programme of Royal Music Hall Performance by Command of His Majesty the King," (1912).

Victorian period, also published music-hall songs and sketches, with accompanying caricatures that would be suggestive of how they should be performed.¹⁴³ F. Anstey's *Mr. Punch's Model Music-Hall Songs & Dramas* collected these and gives an indication how illustration may have played as important a role as the words or music in shaping how music-hall songs were perceived and therefore performed. Section VI *The Chivalrous* presents a song on the topic of female suffrage, with a chorus of

Why shouldn't the darlings have votes ? de-ar things !
 On politics each of 'em dotes, de-ar things !
 (Pathetically.) Oh it does seem so hard
 They should all be debarred,
 'Cause they happen to wear petticoats, de-ar things !¹⁴⁴

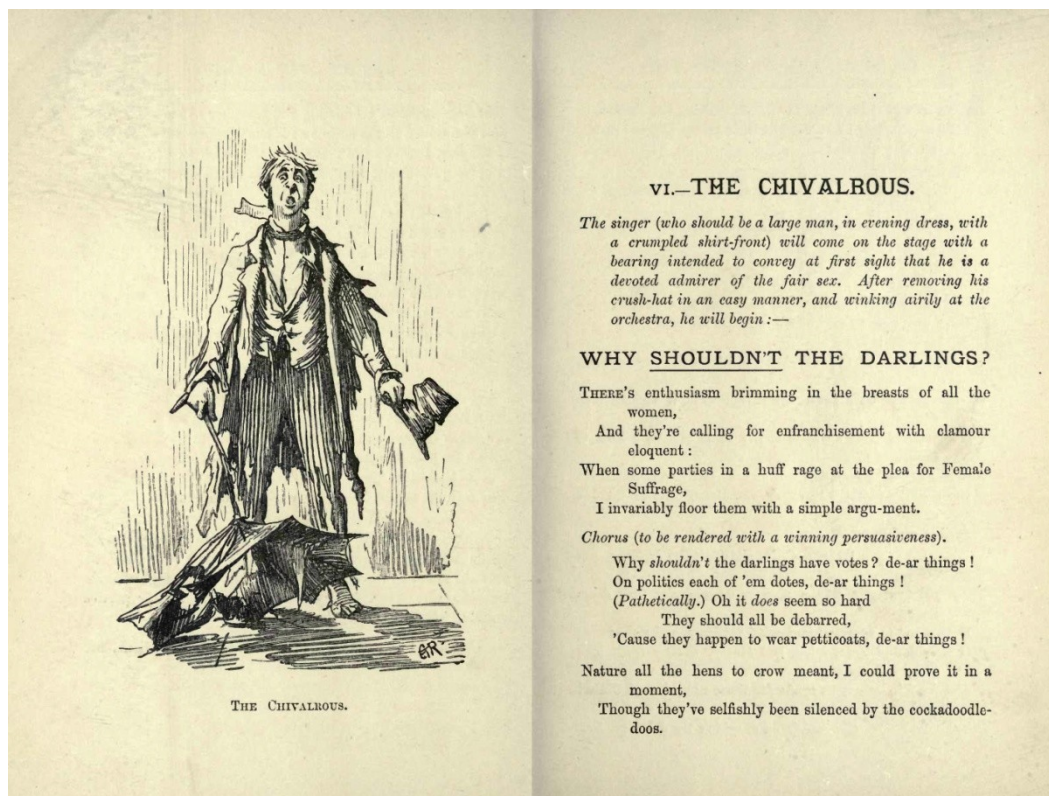


Figure 3: *Mr. Punch's Model Music-Hall Songs & Dramas* (1892)

In word the song, while perhaps patronising, would seem to support female suffrage. Yet the accompanying drawing shows a man bedraggled, in a state implying his position on suffrage has been thrust upon him through violence rather than from rational thought (Figure 3).¹⁴⁵ The drawing serves as an

¹⁴³ Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* 46.

¹⁴⁴ F. Anstey, *Mr. Punch's Model Music-Hall Songs & Dramas* (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co, 1892), 37.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 36. This drawing is initialled 'ETR' indicating it is the work of Edward Tennyson-Reed a prolific *Punch* cartoonist. E. V. Knox and Jane Newton, "Reed, Edward Tennyson (1860–1933)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

addition to the written stage directions, providing an illustration of how the song should be performed, and is an example of the use of simultaneous meaning in music hall discussed earlier. The other caricatures accompanying the songs in Anstey's book all provide a similar insight into the way these songs would have been performed on the music-hall stage.

Music hall also stimulated cartooning and illustration directly by commissioning advertising material. John Garrett discusses the importance of music publishing to the music-hall business in the 1850s, especially the 'full-page colour picture covers [that] became commonplace, especially when publishers realised that a music cover would fit almost exactly into the pane of a window shop' an image of these proto-record covers that recalls the display of cartoons in print seller's windows depicted in Gillray's *Very Slippery-Weather*, discussed later.¹⁴⁶ Thus cartooning and caricature can be seen to have a number of interactions with music hall: as a direct source for acts, as an illustration or instructional addition to the printed words and music of songs, as an advertisement or selling point of sheet music.

Topicality

A defining characteristic of caricatures and cartoons is that of topicality. It is this that makes them distinct from comic strips as well as illustration, painting and other forms of drawing. William Hogarth's work in the 18th century established the print as a vehicle for moral and political comment, exemplified by his works *Beer Lane* and *Gin Lane* (both 1751) and the series *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), *A Rake's Progress* (1734/5) and *Marriage a-la-mode* (1745). These works addressed topical social and political issues and used engraved reproductions to reach a far wider audience than would be achieved by original paintings.¹⁴⁷ By the end of the 18th century the production of prints was established as an important business, with many print sellers located around London: John Hatchard at 190 Piccadilly; Samuel William Fores at 50 Piccadilly; Thomas Tegg at 111 Cheapside; Hannah Humphrey at 27 St James's Street; Rudolph Ackermann at 96 Strand.¹⁴⁸ These printers and print sellers sold a variety of types

¹⁴⁶ John M. Garratt, *Sixty Years of British Music Hall* (London: Chappell & Company/André Deutsch, 1976), 12.

¹⁴⁷ Batchelor, Lewisohn, and Myrone, *Rude Britannia : British Comic Art*, 40.

¹⁴⁸ Mark Pottle, "Hatchard, John (1768–1849)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); Simon Turner, "Fores, Samuel William (Bap. 1761, D. 1838)," in *Oxford Dictionary of*

of prints, but a key genre was the topical caricature, as exemplified in the work of Gillray, Cruikshank, Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827) and others. Like Hogarth these artists addressed topical themes in their drawings, whether weighty political topics surrounding military operations or satirising fanciful social conventions and fashion.¹⁴⁹ By the 1860s the production of topical prints had been displaced by regular weekly magazines such as *Punch* and *The Illustrated London News*. As the title of *The Illustrated London News* (hereafter: *ILN*) indicates, drawings were central to both the content and popularity of these publications, whose mass circulation subsequently broadened the audience for topical drawings. While *ILN* primarily focused on illustrating newsworthy events in a naturalistic manner, *Punch* used drawing for humorous ends depicting political or social topical issues. Both these publications continued in popularity into the period of moving images that is the primary focus of this thesis, and were joined by many similar publications including titles such as *The Bystander* and *The Strand*, which provided an outlet and training ground for the artists who would go on to make animated cartoons.

Topicality was an important aspect of the use of drawings throughout this history, but it posed a number of challenges for the artists and businesspeople involved. From a production point of view the technology of printing was a significant obstacle to producing topical prints. In the 18th century the production of prints involved at least three steps, very often each performed by a different individual. Firstly, the artist would draw the image, then an engraver or woodcutter would transfer this before the image could be printed and potentially hand coloured. As the curators of an exhibition of these prints at the Victoria and Albert museum put it, this ‘mode of execution generally prevented a rapid response to events’.¹⁵⁰ The launch of *ILN* and *Punch* in the 1840s in part reflected the improved process of wood engraving and its acceptance by those

National Biography (Oxford: OUP, 2004); James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, "Tegg, Thomas (1776–1846)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); Timothy Clayton, "Humphrey, William (B. 1742?, D. In or before 1814)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); John Ford, "Ackermann, Rudolph (1764–1834)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹⁴⁹ Batchelor, Lewisohn, and Myrone, *Rude Britannia : British Comic Art*, 48.

¹⁵⁰ *English Caricature : 1620 to the Present : Caricaturists and Satirists, Their Art, Their Purpose and Influence*, 13.

publications' readers.¹⁵¹ The lead time to print remained an issue in these magazines; *The Illustrated London News* artist William Simpson describes 'the feeling that if an event could not be given till the Saturday week after its occurrence it had become "ancient history" which in these days of fast living would be all but forgotten'.¹⁵² Thus effort was put into improving the technology of printing to allow recent events to be reported on a weekly schedule.



Figure 4: *John Bull taking a Luncheon* (1798)

Topicality was a vital selling point of both Regency prints and later illustrated magazines and newspapers – in both cases the date of production was displayed prominently on the finished print or paper. The economic importance of topical caricatures and political cartoons remained in the early 20th century and the First World War: 'the cartoonist could be a vital weapon in the circulation battle'.¹⁵³ Yet topicality equally posed a threat to the economic viability of caricature and cartooning. While topical prints brought customers back to the 18th and early-19th century print sellers, such work was in danger of dating more quickly than the other subjects they would have sold, such as

¹⁵¹ Brian Maidment, "Representing the Victorians – Illustration and the Iln," Gale Cengage Learning, http://find.galegroup.com/iln/researchTools.do?dblist=&inPS=true&searchTerm=sas_01&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=birkb#.

¹⁵² William Simpson, *The Autobiography of William Simpson, R.I. (Crimean Simpson)*, ed. George Eyre-Todd (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903).

¹⁵³ *English Caricature : 1620 to the Present : Caricaturists and Satirists, Their Art, Their Purpose and Influence*, 23.

landscapes and portraits. Such considerations can be seen at work in many of the caricatures of the period. *John Bull taking a Luncheon* (Figure 4) by James Gillray undoubtedly makes specific topical reference to the recent successes of Nelson in Egypt, the background showing Nelson's hat hanging over a poster which reads 'Buonaparte in Egypt'. This is a clear reference to Nelson thwarting Napoleon Bonaparte's ambitions in the region with the British success in the Battle of the Nile. Yet its main subject is less specifically topical, showing an obese John Bull, a common symbol of 'Englishness and British imperialism', gorging himself on the offerings of the British Navy.¹⁵⁴ Thus Gillray, while making reference to very recent specific events, creates a print which would remain topical for a number of years, regardless of future events.

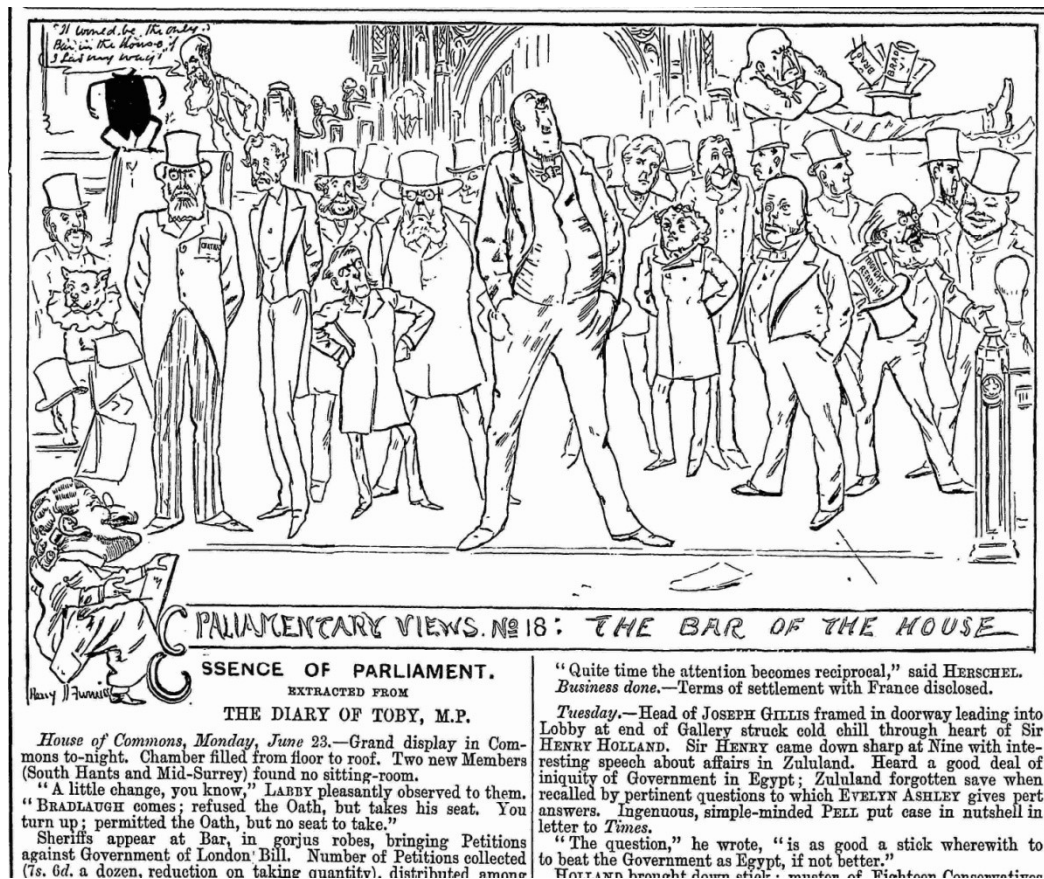


Figure 5: *Parliamentary Views No. 18* (1884)

With an inherent obsolescence in their publishing schedule, the weekly illustrated magazines were less subject to the dangers of being too specific in their topicality. There is, nevertheless, a clear sense in work by artists who would move into filmmaking that they were conscious of this issue and had adapted

¹⁵⁴ Miles Taylor, "Bull, John (Supp. Fl. 1712-)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

their work to present a sense of topicality but were not defined or limited by it. Harry Furniss had a long and varied career in cartooning and illustration before he moved into filmmaking, but perhaps his most important position was as the Parliamentary cartoonist for *Punch*. Furniss' work in this capacity shows a clear awareness of the balance between addressing topical matters and achieving a more enduring legacy. In an 1884 cartoon nominally illustrating the opposition to The London Government Bill, Furniss provides little information on the details of that failed bill or even the political machinations surrounding it, but gives a vivid portrayal of the various characters responsible for its downfall (Figure 5). At the time of drawing Furniss could not be sure of the outcome of that bill: it accompanied text describing discussions on 23 June and the issue of *Punch* was dated Saturday 5 July, several days before the second reading of the bill on Tuesday 8 July determined its fate.¹⁵⁵ This example is typical of the approach Furniss, and other cartoonists, took. The text which his caricatures accompanied was dense with references to the immediate machinations of Parliament, making it difficult for a reader removed in time from it to understand without reference to newspapers or histories of the period. In contrast Furniss' drawing focuses on the personalities and temperaments of the politicians being discussed, rather than the specific laws and other parliamentary business they were engaged in.

The reproduction and distribution of drawings

As is already apparent from the discussion of topicality, the relationship with the technology of reproduction was a central part of the industry of cartooning and illustration. The production of caricature prints, and the Victorian illustrated magazines and books that followed them, was an industrial process which involved a number of steps, each usually executed by a different artist or technician, with the aim of reproducing an original drawing many times to reach as wide an audience as possible. As suggested earlier, and depending on the exact printing technique to be used, a caricature or cartoon would go through three stages. Firstly, the artist would draw the caricature, either on paper or directly onto the printing medium (wood block or metal plate); it would then be translated onto the printing surface by an engraver; and finally, the image would

¹⁵⁵ *Punch* 5 July 1884, 10; *The Times* 9 July 1884, 12.

be printed onto paper.¹⁵⁶ The stages may have been reduced where a purely chemical process was used (such as lithography) or where the artist was also a skilled engraver (as James Gillray was). Nevertheless, each of these stages involved qualitative decisions about how to present the material and therefore shaped the understanding of the image. William Simpson's autobiography provides an example of the changes that occurred in such a translation, presenting two versions of his image 'Attack of a Tiger on the Elephant of the Prince of Wales' which 'affords a good example of the way in which such work was treated'.¹⁵⁷ First (Figure 6) is a reproduction of the original drawing, using newer photographic techniques possible at the time of the book being published. Second is a wood engraving of the same picture as appeared in *ILN* in April 1876 (Figure 7).¹⁵⁸ While many aspects of the original drawing were retained, such as the composition, qualities such as texture were radically altered by the translation. In addition presented here is a scan of the original *ILN* page indicating the extent to which the image in the book was itself altered by the reproduction and representation (Figure 8).¹⁵⁹ It is this translation of, and potential for corruption of, the artist's intent that John Ruskin found objectionable in engraving, decrying the 'decision in its steady linear labour which interprets, or corrects, the swift pencilling of the artist'.¹⁶⁰ Even Rudolphe Töpffer, a celebrant of cartooning, praised autography (by which he meant a lithographic process) because 'no intermediary step of engraving is required'.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Maidment, "Representing the Victorians – Illustration and the Illn."

¹⁵⁷ Simpson, *The Autobiography of William Simpson, R.I. (Crimean Simpson)*, xiv, 271.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 270-71. *The Illustrated London News* 1 April 1876, 333-34.

¹⁵⁹ *The Illustrated London News* 1 April 1876, 333-334. Of course all three of these images are subject to a further level of reproduction here and are subject to the scanning and printing processes this thesis has been subject to.

¹⁶⁰ John Ruskin, *Ariadne Florentina, Six Lectures on Wood and Metal Engraving with Appendix* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910), 12.

¹⁶¹ Rodolphe Töpffer and Ellen Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, trans. Ellen Wiese (Lincoln,: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 5-6.



Figure 6: Attack of a Tiger...(1876) Photographic reproduction of original drawing

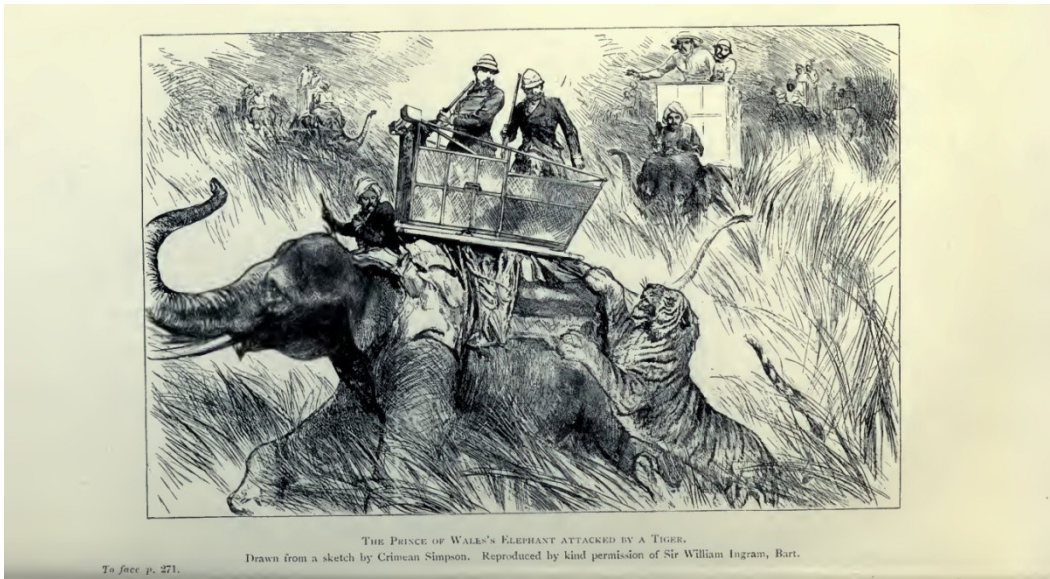


Figure 7: Attack of a Tiger...(1876) Wood engraving



Figure 8: *Attack of a Tiger...*(1876) Modern scan of original newspaper

It is clear that the most successful caricaturists were aware of the restrictions of the methods of reproduction used and drew accordingly, as Simon Houfe argues they ‘learned to draw for the engraver, to adapt to his skill and recognise his limitations’.¹⁶² Walter Crane acknowledged this need, when he described his ‘sense of necessary relationship between design, material and method of production - of art and craft in fact’.¹⁶³ Artists who would later move into film would have been thoroughly schooled in this requirement, an approach which would benefit them when dealing with the technology of moving image reproduction. Lancelot Speed’s illustrations for H. Rider Haggard’s *Eric Brighteyes*, published in 1891, featured ‘17 Full-page Illustrations and 34 Woodcuts in the Text’ the different reproduction techniques required depending upon whether the images appeared on separate pages or in line with the text.¹⁶⁴ In another instance, two photogravures provided by Speed for a monograph on the New Forest are praised for ‘giving the effect of good drawings in India ink’ indicating Speed was sensitive to producing his drawings with the method of

¹⁶² Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914*, 35.

¹⁶³ Walter Crane, *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), 148.

¹⁶⁴ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 May 1891, 3.

reproduction in mind.¹⁶⁵ Harry Furniss was equally known for his sensitivity to reproduction. An 1883 review praises a book ‘admirably illustrated’ by him, linking its success to him finding ‘a most efficient engraver in Mr J.D. Cooper’.¹⁶⁶ Furniss trained as an engraver as a young artist with the intention of engraving his own work, and while he did not continue this practice after he moved to London, this knowledge would have allowed him to adapt his drawings in order to be best reproduced, an awareness of the role reproduction plays that would have continued into his film work.¹⁶⁷

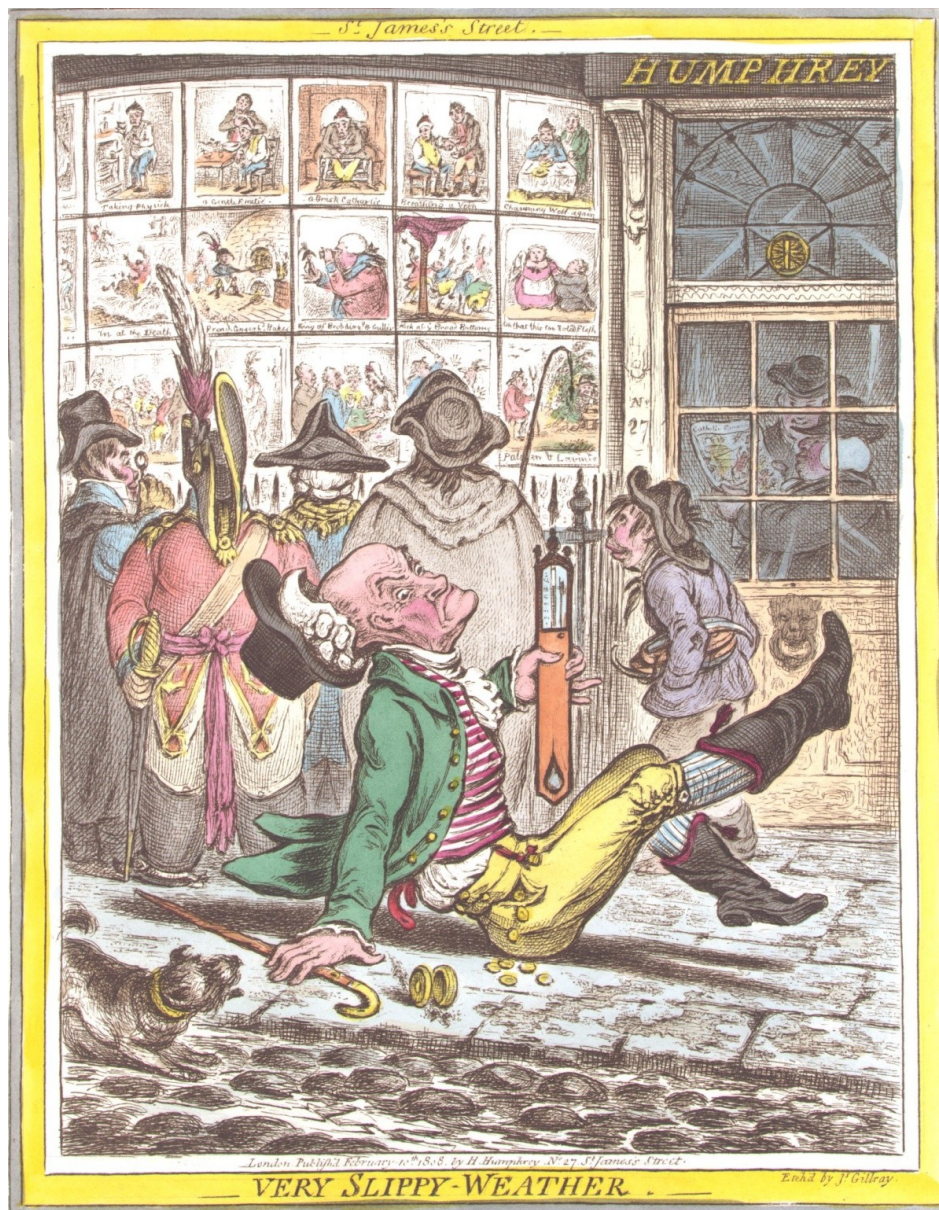


Figure 9: *Very Slippy-Weather* (1808)

¹⁶⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 September 1894, 3.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Magazines For October’ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 3 October 1883, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Harry Furniss, *The Confessions of a Caricaturist*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1902), 18.

Artists working within the print industries in the 19th century were not only sensitive to the methods of reproduction used to disseminate their work, but also the distribution methods as these could strongly affect the meaning of their work. Caricatures in the late 18th century and early 19th century, such as the work previously discussed by James Gillray and George Cruikshank, were sold individually to wealthy patrons, but they were also made more widely available through two other distribution practices: being displayed in the print seller's windows and rented out in albums. The former, display in shop windows, is a situation depicted in Gillray's *Very Slippery-Weather* (Figure 9). This image makes apparent a number of aspects related to the display and distribution of these caricatures. Firstly, this display is public, a situation which would give rise to discussion and is suggestive of a more communal consumption mode than might be indicated by the sale of prints for private consumption. Secondly, the majority of the viewers of the shop window are, as implied by their dress, the upper class men who would purchase these prints, including the gentleman seen viewing a print inside the shop. Nevertheless, the public display makes these prints accessible to a wider audience, as suggested by the presence of an archetypal young street urchin, apparently also amused by the caricatures. Finally, multiple prints are displayed alongside one another – among Gillray's famous images shown are *Tiddy-Doll* (January 23, 1806), *The King of Brobdingnag*, and *Gulliver* (June 26, 1803), and – a *Kick at the Broad-Bottoms!* (March 23, 1807). The cumulative or montage effect this method of display produced would undoubtedly have shaped the understanding of them, for instance presenting the most recent topical caricatures alongside those from months, if not years, before. This is an effect which would also have been produced by compiled albums of caricatures which were rented out.

These distribution and exhibition practices would remain important to cartoonists throughout the 19th century and into the appearance of animated cartoons, albeit in an ever evolving form. For the Victorian publications, such as *Punch* and *ILN*, communal consumption was weakened as they were sold for a more private mode of consumption, but they would have remained an important stimulus for conversation in that period. The other two qualities described above, the broadening of the audience for cartoons and the increasing importance of placing cartoons in sequential order, are often seen as defining characteristics of

these magazines of the Victorian era. *Punch*, *ILN*, and the other illustrated magazines of the 19th century are commonly described as having instigated a ‘major extension of the reading public beyond the wealthy and the genteel’ with their illustrations playing a significant role in expanding that audience, even to include ‘barely literate readers’.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, by packaging a large number of cartoons or illustrations in a single volume these magazines formalised the practice of creating albums of caricatures, placing increased emphasis not simply on each cartoon in its own right but as a collection of images which could interact and comment upon one another. Ultimately these British magazines, along with their American counterparts, would provide the breeding ground for the development of comic strips, where the precise sequential ordering of images and text become the primary communication method rather than individual drawings.¹⁶⁹ The early stages of such developments may be seen in the work of future filmmakers in their contributions for magazines. In 1898 Louis Wain contributed a cartoon panel which fills the space at the end of a story in *Windsor Magazine*, which shows five owls in a line in various positions of jumping (Figure 10). While this may be considered a single moment in time, with each owl clearly distinct, the image equally creates a sense of animation as the viewer’s eye travels across the five birds, the eye moving up and down in a way that evokes the movement the birds are making. While remaining distinct from both comic strips and animated cartoons, this image by Wain exhibits qualities that would become important to both forms.¹⁷⁰



Figure 10: Owls by Louis Wain (1898)

¹⁶⁸ Maidment, "Representing the Victorians – Illustration and the Illn."

¹⁶⁹ Robert C. Harvey, "How Comics Came to Be," in *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. J. Heer and K. Worcester (University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 25-45.

¹⁷⁰ *Windsor Magazine* September 1898, 373.

It is apparent from the preceding description that the distribution and exhibition of cartoons involved a series of complex and evolving practices in which cartoon images were not presented in isolation but depended upon their context and interaction with surrounding images for their meaning. This aspect of the industry is not raised here to fully delineate the range of practices over the whole of the 19th century, rather to indicate that those artists who moved into filmmaking from this industry would have been very aware of considering their work not simply in isolation but as a component of a wider entertainment form. This awareness would serve them well when considering the complete film programme in which their work would appear. It is also apparent from this discussion that these concerns lead from one related to reproduction, distribution, and exhibition to having a significant influence upon the aesthetics of drawings themselves.

Cartoon aesthetics

As the previous section indicates, the wider context in which cartoons, caricatures and illustration appeared was central to their meaning. Furthermore, there is no definitive line between what may be considered industrial context (matters such as the technology of reproduction, alongside distribution and exhibition practices) and aesthetic concerns (including the tailoring of images for engraving techniques, or the compilation and ordering of images into albums or magazines to produce enhanced meaning from their sequential order). This is particularly the case with book illustration, notably absent from the prior discussion. For book illustrators the relationship of their images with the text they accompany was axiomatic. Some magazine cartoons were drawn to sit within specific contexts, such as Harry Furniss' 'Parliamentary Views' which always accompanied the 'Essence of Parliament' column, to the extent that Furniss would regularly incorporate the 'E' from the column's title into his drawing (Figure 5).¹⁷¹ For book illustration this was an essential aspect of the work and as such must be considered an aesthetic concern and not simply a practical one. The criteria for judging successful illustrations was based on their

¹⁷¹ *Punch* 12 July 1884, 23.

relationship with the text, for instance future film maker Lancelot Speed's work being singled out in one review for being 'a great help to the text'.¹⁷²

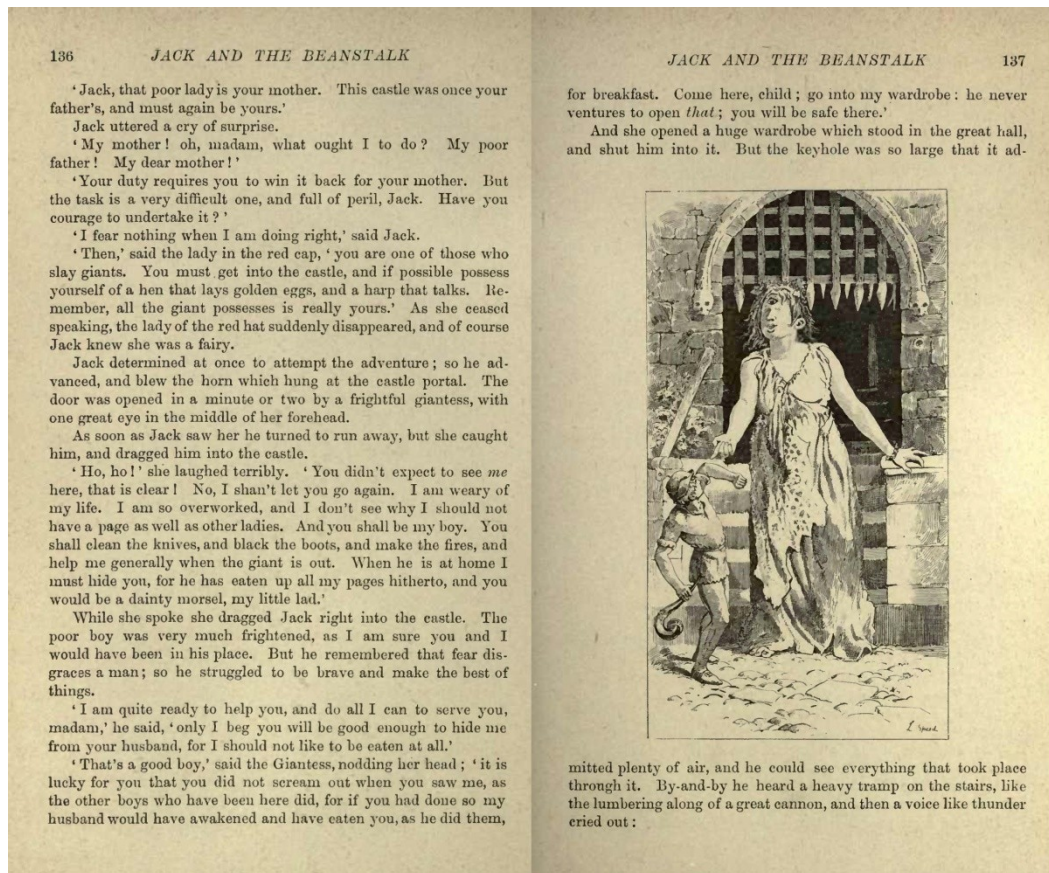


Figure 11: Lancelot Speed *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1890)

Lancelot Speed's illustrations for Andrew Lang's *The Red Fairy Book* are exemplary in the way they not only illustrated but interacted with the text they were surrounded by. *The Red Fairy Book* was part of Lang's series of coloured collections of fairy tales, which were hugely successful in the 1890s and helped popularise many of the classic fairy tales still in circulation today. Speed's illustrations for 'Jack and the Beanstalk' demonstrate the close attention to the context in which they appear. The first drawing in the story (Figure 11) appears after Jack has climbed the beanstalk and encounters 'a frightful giantess, with one great eye in the middle of her forehead'.¹⁷³ The decision to choose this as the moment to introduce illustration reflects Jack's move into a fantasy realm at the top of the beanstalk, away from the mundane reality of his suffering mother and their cottage. Speed's illustration helps the reader picture the events of the story at the moment they have passed outside of the sphere of experience. The

¹⁷² *The Saturday Review* 5 December 1896, 596.

¹⁷³ Andrew Lang, ed. *The Red Fairy Book* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890), 136.

illustration is placed on the right hand page, directly opposite the description on the left allowing the reader to take in both the textual and pictorial description of the giantess at once.

Speed's composition further enhances the textual description with its portrait aspect, leaving wide gutters on either side, thus emphasising the height of the giantess in contrast to Jack. This effect is further enhanced by strong vertical lines within the image. The giantess' menacing demeanour is strengthened by placing a portcullis behind her head and skulls on either side. Most importantly for the current discussion is the way Speed's composition is designed to guide the reader's eye across the page. The image has a strong diagonal construction, starting from top right leading to bottom left. A number of elements contribute to this diagonal: the giantess' eye looking down; her arm pointing at Jack; the folds of the giantess' dress; Jack's shoulders and arms reeling back from the giantess; the hunting horn Jack is holding. This viewing direction is reinforced by what would otherwise be an arbitrary and unnecessary background detail, a piece of wood (or perhaps a handrail) following the same sight line. This trajectory coincides with the natural movement of the reader's eye across the page, from the end of the line of text before the image at top right, to the start of the next line of text below the image at bottom left. A similar composition can be seen in Speed's other drawings for 'Jack and the Beanstalk' as well as other stories in this volume. In another book in Lang's series, *The Blue Poetry Book* from 1891, Speed's illustrations for Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' utilise a number of page layouts, including another double page spread with the sailors looking upon 'the death-fires danced at night' across the page from them and a vertical composition with the sailors pulling on a rope looking upward towards the stanza which describes their actions.¹⁷⁴ Speed produced illustrations for approaching one hundred books, possibly more, before he turned to making animated cartoons, so a comprehensive study of this work is impossible in this thesis. What is clear from the examples presented here is that he showed a particular sensitivity to understanding the role his illustrations would play in the books they were an integral part of, both at a linguistic and graphic level.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Lang, ed. *The Blue Poetry Book*, Fifth ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 220-21, 29.

The relationship book illustrations have with their surrounding (con)texts is clearly central to their meaning and artists working in that field would have had particular sensitivity to it. This discussion draws attention to the importance of text to the other graphic arts under discussion here. The early 19th century caricatures of Gillray, Cruikshank, and their peers regularly incorporated text into their drawings in the form of captions, as seen in Gillray's *John Bull taking a Luncheon* discussed earlier (Figure 4). In the print many items are labelled: a pint pot inscribed 'true British stout', a piece of paper hanging from Nelson's pocket labelled 'list of French ships, taken burnt & destroyed'. While these labels may have served a minor purpose of identifying what was being portrayed, for a contemporaneous viewer the main role of these was to contribute to the satire of the drawing, often through puns such as 'frigasee'. This expression plays on the words frigate (referring to the ships Nelson's navy was capturing) and fricassee (referring to a typically French dish) as well as the sea, the venue for these victories. As discussed in relation to music hall, puns and double entendres present simultaneous meanings; their comedic effect is predicated upon the viewer simultaneously understanding the two or more signifieds and the play between them, both the gap and the links between their meanings.

This practice was still common in the Victorian illustrated magazines, with Harry Furniss regularly incorporating labels and other text elements into his cartoons for *Punch*.¹⁷⁵ The incorporation of text became less common through the 19th and early 20th century, with text becoming segregated from the image as a caption set aside from the drawing itself. Nevertheless, text and linguistic meaning remained an important component of these cartoons' humour, as is clear from examples by two future filmmakers. These cartoons drawn by Dudley Buxton in 1907 (Figure 12), and Douglas Tempest during the First World War (Figure 13), indicate the continuous importance of text as an integral part of a cartoon even if it was segregated from the visual image. In these cartoons it is the relationship between the image and text which produces meaning: either element taken out of context would not produce the same meaning, recalling the double meaning seen as central to music-hall forms.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *Punch* 21 February 1885, 95.

¹⁷⁶ For further discussion see Harvey, "How Comics Came to Be."



Figure 12: Dudley Buxton (1907) "Excuse me, but have you a little drop of oil on you?"

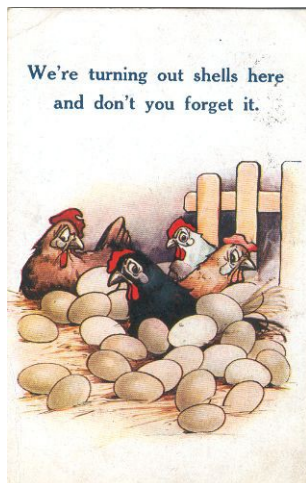


Figure 13: Douglas Tempest (World War 1 period)

Along with the flattening of perspective, also seen commonly in cartoons and caricatures, the incorporation of text into art images is generally considered an indicator of 20th century modernist aesthetics, at least within the Western academic tradition. Textual elements disrupt figurative qualities resulting in an emphasis on the drawing as a drawing, rather than as a representation of a real or imagined event.¹⁷⁷ This observation is not raised to argue that cartoons and caricatures represent an early or proto-modernism, but rather to identify that those qualities that would be hailed as original or unique in the modern art movements were already present in the popular arts of caricature and cartooning, and that cartoonists such as Furniss, Buxton, and Tempest would draw on this tradition in their film work, especially during the First World War. As suggested in the introduction, this tradition of cartooning and caricature may be considered a parallel to the more familiar narrative of the interaction of modern art with film. Both featured established artists familiar with non-figurative techniques (such as the flattening of space, and the incorporation of text into the image) adopting film and producing moving images quite different from the increasingly institutionalised narrative mode in cinema of the 1910s and 1920s. Where the likes of Duchamp, Léger, and Dalí have become part of a canonical cinematic avant-garde, the artists discussed here have largely been ignored. While this in part reflects the bias of more recent historians, it also reflects and perpetuates the secondary status cartooning, illustration, and caricature held in the period under discussion.

¹⁷⁷ M. Antliff and P.D. Leighton, *Cubism and Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 162-63.

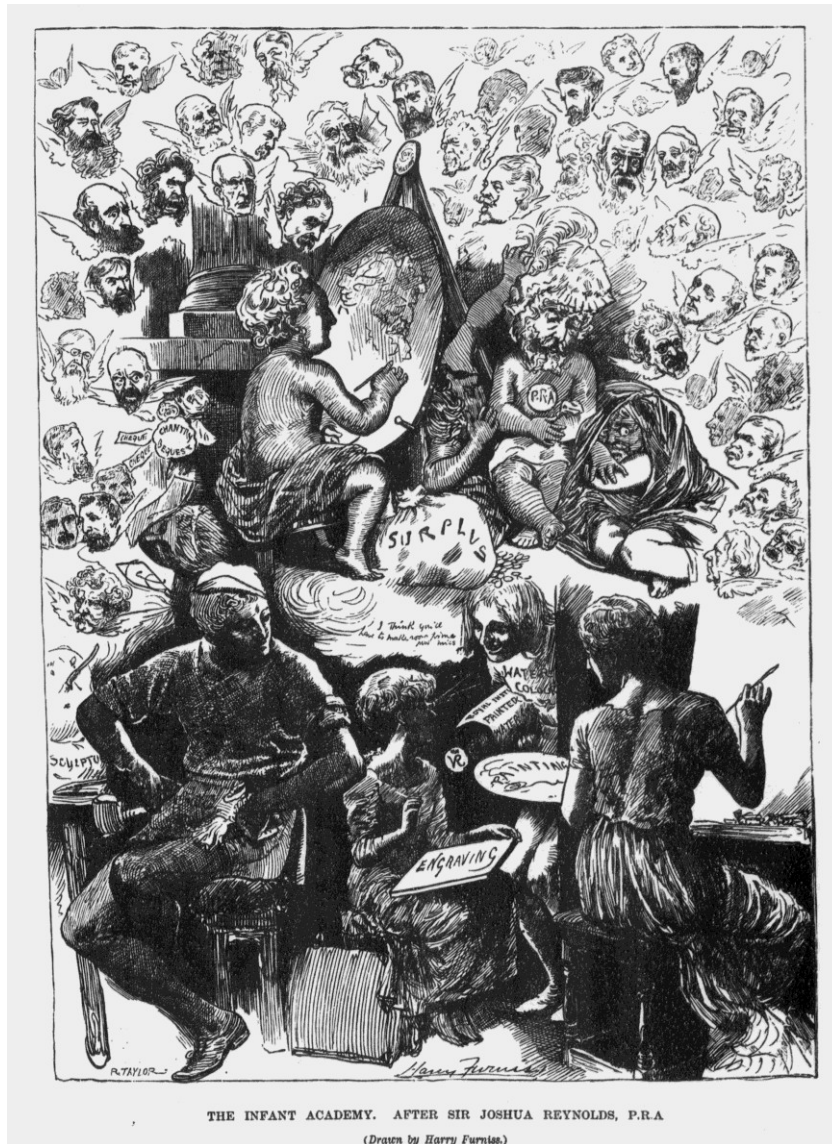


Figure 14: Harry Furniss *The Infant Academy* (1885)

'Cheap popular art': The denigration of commercial graphic art

Prior to the work of Gillray and Cruikshank, caricatures were published anonymously due to fear of retribution from famous figures satirised, indicating how far this form could be considered both powerfully subversive and disreputable.¹⁷⁸ Equally, while the significance of Hogarth's work for later cartooning and caricature has been highlighted, in his own period it was his paintings, both historical and portraits, which defined him as an important artist. Gillray and Cruikshank's work may have made them well known and successful within their field, but their work would have been considered a popular entertainment and not comparable to history, landscape, or portrait painting, and

¹⁷⁸ *English Caricature: 1620 to the Present: Caricaturists and Satirists, Their Art, Their Purpose and Influence*, 13.

they were not Royal Academy members. For the Victorian cartoonists their profession made their ‘social position a rather ambiguous one and social standing was everything in Victorian England’, and some, such as John Leech (1817–1864), turned to oil painting in the hope of a more respectable career.¹⁷⁹ Others, such as Leech’s *Punch* colleague Harry Furniss, apparently rejected such aspirations. Furniss satirised the Royal Academicians in an 1885 full page contribution to *Magazine of Art* which not only caricatured the members but amply demonstrates the position Furniss felt reproduced graphic arts were held in (Figure 14). Here figures representing painting, watercolour, and sculpture look down upon the lowly and rather malnourished figure of engraving, relegated to the lowest realms of this Pantheon.¹⁸⁰ In 1887 Furniss went further, producing a whole exhibition of ninety parodies of the work of the Academicians which were displayed on Bond Street, close to the Royal Academy.¹⁸¹ Furniss’s engagement with the Royal Academy may well have reflected a degree of jealousy or disappointment, but it clearly communicates the status Furniss’ chosen art was held in.

The critic John Ruskin encapsulated the art establishment’s disparaging view of popular illustration in his 1872 lectures, saying of the illustrations for Dickens’ *Barnaby Rudge*

the cheap popular art cannot draw for you beauty, sense, or honesty...every species of distorted folly and vice, the idiot, the blackguard, the coxcomb, the paltry fool, the degraded woman, are pictured for your honourable pleasure in every page, with clumsy caricature, struggling to render its dullness tolerable by insisting on defect, if perchance a penny or two more may be coined out of the Cockney reader’s itch for loathsomeness¹⁸²

Ruskin’s attacks, not just in this example but throughout *Ariadne Florentina* and the rest of his lectures and writings, clearly contain many different strands: the class snobbery in his description of ‘the Cockney reader’s itch for loathsomeness’; the demand that art provide ‘beauty, sense, or honesty’ to the exclusion of the grotesque or ugly; the disdain for anything ‘cheap’ or ‘popular’; the expectation of technical proficiency in his scorn of the ‘clumsy’.

¹⁷⁹ Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914*, 62-63.

¹⁸⁰ *Magazine of Art* January 1885, 273.

¹⁸¹ *Daily News* 5 April 1887, 2.

¹⁸² Ruskin, *Ariadne Florentina, Six Lectures on Wood and Metal Engraving with Appendix* 264.

There were undoubtedly others who found virtues in these same qualities. Charles Baudelaire, in his 1863 essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, discusses the work of Constantin Guys, an artist who worked for a time in London as an illustrator for *The Illustrated London News*. Baudelaire praises Guys for his ‘artlessness’ which adds ‘an unexpected seasoning to his rich gifts’, a contrast to Ruskin’s disdain for inferior technique.¹⁸³ Baudelaire equally praises the expansion of subjects beyond the traditional disciplines, referring to Guys as a ‘man of the world...he wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of our globe’.¹⁸⁴ In contrast, ‘the artist lives very little, if at all, in the world of morals and politics...limited to the narrowest of circles’.¹⁸⁵ The topicality found in popular illustration, addressed earlier in this chapter, would be anathema to Ruskin, damaging the timelessness found in what he considers the best art. Yet for Baudelaire, it is Guys’ capturing of fleeting street life which is most praiseworthy, his impressionistic technique enhancing the choice of subject. While Constantin Guys did work for a time in London for *The Illustrated London News* his impact here was limited.¹⁸⁶ Baudelaire’s comments can be considered an important early point in the establishment of the avant-garde in France but in Britain the viewpoint Ruskin voices remained dominant: that popular illustration in magazines and books was second-class to the academic practice of painting. The role this second-class status played both in cartoonists’ adoption of film and the reception that work received will be examined in later chapters.

Nationality

The differing receptions and evaluations of commercial graphic arts in France and Britain, epitomised by Baudelaire and Ruskin’s writings, highlight another important aspect of the institutional practices that played a role in the formation of animated cartoons. The arts of caricature and cartooning have often been considered British, or perhaps more specifically English, specialities. The French-Swiss cartoonist Rudolphe Töpffer in his influential ‘Essay on Physiognomy’ (1845) wrote

¹⁸³ C. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, trans. J. Mayne (Phaidon, 1965), 6.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914*, 81.

the English come off better in such subjects than the French...they are highhanded and disrespectful toward their forms...they attain a gay, vigorous buffoonery, a comical verve to which the French pencil can rarely rise¹⁸⁷

and praises Hogarth's work, among others. Even in his own time, Töpffer's claim for English supremacy was looking outmoded, with William Makepeace Thackeray, in 1840, hailing French lithographers as 'men of genius' compared to the 'finikin performances of laboured mediocrity' found in England.¹⁸⁸ It would clearly be a simplification to argue that these commercial graphic arts are a distinctively English strength; it is equally beyond the scope of this thesis to lay out in full detail the history of these arts and their complex relationship, not only with a French/English national division, but also the internal distinctions such as that between 'England' and 'Britain'. Nevertheless, the notion of a particularly British form of comic drawing is prevalent. Such a view remains apparent in more recent writing, for instance cartoon historian John Geipel writes

both history and geography have been especially favourable to the British cartoonist...it was not until transplanted to Britain in the eighteenth century that the disparate roots of comic figure drawing and graphic slander coalesced into a distinctive and self-enriching minor genre¹⁸⁹

The perception of a specifically British or English character in cartooning and caricature, whether factually sound or not, was significant in the appearance of animated cartoons in early 20th century cinema.

Rudolphe Töpffer and the science of perception

A central argument of this thesis is that animated cartoons were, from their very beginnings and throughout the silent period, intimately involved with exploiting the perceptual processes of the human brain. As shown earlier in this chapter, this concern was an important part of the lightning cartoon and in the work of artists who would later bring that performance into moving images for the first steps towards animated cartoons. Perceptual concerns may also be considered important to print cartooning and illustration. Of course, in a general sense, all line drawing exhibits an understanding of the way the human mind perceives this form as it is 'a means of representation fixed wholly by convention, for it does

¹⁸⁷ Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, 9.

¹⁸⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Caricatures and Lithography in Paris*, vol. II, *The Paris Sketch Book* (London: John Macrone, 1840), 9.

¹⁸⁹ John Geipel, 1972, pp. 10-11.

not exist in the world of nature'.¹⁹⁰ Line drawings must produce, to some extent, the same effect in the spectator as the world of nature in order for them to recognise what is being depicted, despite the drawing having no indexical link with that world. For the vast majority of cartoons and illustrations this is an entirely involuntary process, based upon convention and the artist's uncritical observation of their own perception. An important exception to that is the work of Rudolphe Töpffer who not only engages with the phenomenology of line drawing but also the contemporaneous scientific theories of the mind in the mid-19th century.

Töpffer would be an important point of reference for the discussion of cartooning even without the perceptual concerns of this thesis, as he is generally credited with innovating the comic strip, or 'picture-story' as he called it.¹⁹¹ He openly acknowledged the importance of British artists in this innovation, particularly Hogarth, but also British novelists such as Richardson.¹⁹² There is also evidence that Töpffer was a direct influence on British cartoonists, with Thackeray encountering his work in Germany through his association with Goethe, who was an admirer of Töpffer's work.¹⁹³ Thackeray is thought to have subsequently introduced George Cruikshank to Töpffer's work. Töpffer was thus an important influence on the social network of cartoonists and other Victorian artists described earlier. It is his direct acknowledgement of perception, however, and particularly the scientific examination of it, which will prove particularly important throughout this thesis, especially as it creates a bridge between the discussion of pre-cinematic forms in this chapter and the application of present-day scientific research in the final chapter.

In his 'Essay on Physiognomy' (1865) Töpffer made the link between cartooning and sciences, arguing that the face expresses two types of signs that describe the underlying character

Permanent signs depict dispositional traits...those we mean by the general term *intelligence*.

¹⁹⁰ Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, 6.

¹⁹¹ Scott McCloud and Bob Lappan, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 17; Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, 3.

¹⁹² Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, 3.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, x; Batchelor, Lewisohn, and Myrone, *Rude Britannia : British Comic Art*, 43.

Non-permanent signs depict all the soul's evanescent or accidental emotions and anxieties...all that we include in the general term *feelings*¹⁹⁴

The use of outward appearances to represent inner moral, emotional or intellectual status is an important link with a wider social movement in the 19th century: the enlightenment belief in the ability of observation to produce knowledge. The implications of this are, of course, enormous. In terms of cartooning and caricature there are particularly strong associations with the sciences of phrenology and physiognomy. These sciences believed that the outward appearance of a person could be used to understand and judge their inner character. Physiognomy, which argues that the shape of a person's face was particularly important, had its key advocate in Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), whose writings were translated into English and widely distributed. Phrenology, derived from the work of Franz Joseph Gall in Germany and Austria in the 1790s, studied the brain and skull as indicative of underlying characteristics, although as discussed in chapter six the popularisation of this work as 'bumpology' would not have been recognised by Gall himself.

Töpffer's work contributed to the popular decline of phrenology, as it is lampooned in the character of Doctor Craniose 'a gossipy charlatan, a peddler of systematized twaddle, a parasite professor' in Töpffer's comic strip *The True Story of Monsieur Crépin* (1837).¹⁹⁵ In his 'Essay on Physiognomy' Töpffer went further, arguing phrenology 'has never yielded one immediate, dependable result; it has no useful, profitable, or even workable application'.¹⁹⁶ For Töpffer phrenology's concept of locating character in the physical organ of the brain went too far; for him 'nothing is localized physically. The soul's independent unity is not in question'.¹⁹⁷ While Töpffer was more complementary about physiognomy, he shows signs of distrusting its scientific absolutism in his insistence that his 'permanent' signs are 'changeable and always unreliable'. While 'permanent' for any individual, between different people the same trait can result in different 'permanent' signs. Conversely he sees aspects of physiognomy as 'hardly more than technical devices as easy to grasp as they are

¹⁹⁴ Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, 17.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

to justify'.¹⁹⁸ For Töpffer this aspect of physiognomy is simply a statement of the ability of any human to read another's expression. Despite scepticism regarding the specific scientific approaches of phrenology and physiognomy, Töpffer's engagement with them indicates a shared concern between these scientific pursuits and the art of cartooning and caricature. This concern was not limited to Töpffer, as the English cartoonist George Cruikshank produced a book which equally satirised the then popular phrenology in 1826, a book which was republished a number of times, including 1830 and 1873.¹⁹⁹

In her introduction to the two pieces of Töpffer's work under discussion, Ellen Wiese draws a parallel between Töpffer's views and those of Sergei Eisenstein, whose writings on drawing and animation will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.²⁰⁰ While primarily presented to indicate Töpffer and Eisenstein's shared belief in the limits of scientific, absolute physiognomy, Wiese's comparison serves to draw attention to several aspects of Töpffer's work which contribute to the broader cultural understanding of cartooning which are investigated in this thesis. First is Töpffer and Eisenstein's shared interest in the role of the observer in constructing what is observed, rather than the observed having inherent meaning. Töpffer writes 'one can acquire the fundamentals of practical physiognomy without ever studying the face, head, or human contours' suggesting a 'recluse' could acquire an understanding simply through observation of his own drawings.²⁰¹ The power to interpret a facial expression lies as much in the observation as in the facial expression itself. As shall be seen throughout this thesis the observer's capacity to construct meaning from line drawings is central to the lightning cartoon, print cartooning, and subsequently the animated cartoons that arose from these forms. The second important aspect of Töpffer's writing which is brought into relief by the comparison with Eisenstein is the an affinity of cartooning and caricature with the primitive or childlike. Töpffer makes a number of statements to this effect, suggesting

in a painting where the handling is complex and sophisticated, a child will have difficulty making out the shape of a man . . . but he will never fail to

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹⁹ George Cruikshank, *Phrenological Illustrations or an Artist's View of Craniological System of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim* (London: George Cruikshank, 1826).

²⁰⁰ Töpffer and Wiese, *Enter the Comics: Rodolphe Töpffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crépin*, xxi.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 10-11.

recognize it at once if it has been lifted out of its context by means of a simple outline

and that ‘the picture-story appeals mainly to children and the lower classes’.²⁰²

As well as being an important example of the art of cartooning in the 19th century, Rudolphe Töpffer’s work discussed here foreshadows several of the recurring topics of this thesis, indicating their importance to cartooning and caricature long before the innovation of animated cartoons. Prefiguring Eisenstein, Töpffer emphasises the role of the perceiver in the construction of line drawings, especially of faces. Furthermore, he subscribes to the commonly observed affinity between cartooning and the primitive or childlike. Töpffer’s work also displays an engagement with the scientific study of human perception and the brain. While the disciplines of phrenology and physiognomy have come into disrepute, they remain an important heritage for present-day neuroscientific studies. These studies will be utilised in the final chapter of this thesis, indicating the continued relevance of Töpffer’s use of scientific research to better understand cartooning.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified the key qualities of the two interrelated fields of music hall and graphic arts which would provide the personnel, aesthetic model, and institutional practices for the development of animated cartoons from 1895. These two fields had considerable shared context. Perception is vital to understanding both forms, with the lightning cartoon’s narrative of perception fundamental to the pleasures of this entertainment. While less explicitly engaged in cartooning, Rudolphe Töpffer and George Cruikshank’s work on physiognomy indicates that perceptual processes were of concern to print cartooning. The discussion of their involvement prefigures later discussions in this thesis, both of Eisenstein’s assessment of animation and the use of scientific explanations of perception. The concern with perception also encompasses an association of both lightning and print cartooning with a notion of the primitive or childlike.

The relationship between the work and its context has been highlighted as another important shared concern, seen in book illustration’s attention to the text

²⁰² Ibid., 7,3.

it accompanied; the interaction of lightning cartoons with the acts that surrounded it; and the consideration paid to cartoons within a compiled album or magazine. An important part of both forms' reception was their identification as popular or low art, despite both forms prefiguring qualities often seen as characteristic of modernism, such as the introduction of movement into spatial art or the incorporation of text and the flattening of perspective. Both forms had a shared attention to topicality as both a selling point and economic challenge.

These shared characteristics would define the parameters within which animated cartoons emerged following the appearance of moving images. Beyond their immediate influence they also demonstrate a general principle. Both were part of a wider cultural sphere of popular entertainment and each influenced and prompted work in the other. Further than this, they may be considered different aspects of a single practice of graphic art, of different approaches to the use of the drawn line of which animated cartoons were simply an extension.

Not all aspects of the discussion in this chapter are common to both forms and each holds a particular quality which would prove important to animated cartoons but which was necessarily limited to only one practice. The performance basis of music hall and the lightning cartoon prefigures animated cartoons in terms of movement, characterisation, and the creation of simultaneous meanings. Conversely the mediated, mechanical reproduction of print work meant engaging with technology was a necessary skill for cartoonists in this field. Only with the appearance of moving images would these two areas be brought into alignment as filmmakers addressed the implications of mechanically reproduced performance, a nearly oxymoronic phrase which captures one of the tensions at play in the animated cartoons which are examined in the following chapters.

Chapter 2. From music hall to cinemas: Animated cartoons emerge

This chapter examines the institutional changes which saw artists from the fields examined in chapter one adopt film as an alternate outlet for their work. This discussion covers a long period, from the first appearance of drawn images on film in 1895, right up to the emergence of synchronised sound in the late 1920s. This time span may be considered in three distinct periods: an early period up to the beginning of the First World War; the war period itself; and the post-war period into the 1920s.

The early period remains the most difficult to research, not only because of the scarcity of source material, but also because the notion of animation, or even animated cartoons, was only emerging both as a technique and as a film genre. The films under study, which are of scarce number, were generally considered a subset of the broader trick film genre. This was itself only part of moving image output in this period, competing with films whose greater emphasis on indexicality made very different claims to what the essential qualities of film were. Furthermore this period is marked by a multiplicity of production, distribution, and exhibition practices that make simple generalisations difficult. This period, however, did see two important figures move from the music-hall lightning cartoon act into making moving images: Tom Merry and Walter Booth.

If the early period is marked by hesitancy, scarcity, and diversity, the First World War period is marked by purpose, consistency, and abundance as the exigencies of conflict saw a significant number of print cartoonists and illustrators embrace film as a new medium for their topical work, adopting and adapting the lightning cartoon as the basic mode for animating cartoons. This interaction of prior forms and moving image saw the concerns addressed in chapter one play an important role in the development of animated cartoons.

The immediate post-war period saw a rapid decline in the production of animated cartoons in Britain, as the demand for topicality which had prompted their exploitation ended with the war, alongside changes in the international film market which are examined in more detail chapter three. It was only in the early 1920s that the third period fully took shape, as British cartoonists again saw the possibilities of moving images. These cartoons have often been superficially

dismissed as copying their American counterparts, concentrating as they do on non-topical character based series, but they are more correctly seen in the context of the traditions, examined in chapter one, from which almost all cartoon animators were drawn.

Despite these distinct periods, the dominant character of animated cartoons prior to synchronised sound is one of continuity. This chapter begins with an overview of the basic historical events and key films in the establishment of animated cartoons as an integral part of the cinema programme by the 1910s and 1920s, focussed on the biographies and careers of the filmmakers. This attention to personnel is in no way intended to suggest a simple authorial reading of these films. On the contrary, the consistency in all these artists' biographies which emerges from such an approach indicates that the institutional practices of print cartooning and music hall were dominant in the formation of animated cartoons. The second part of this chapter addresses in more detail some of the key areas of concern arising from this context, including the address to an active audience; the continuation of programming practices from music hall; and a close attention to the technology of reproduction. It examines how these were dealt with in the three periods, consequently highlighting the continuity of 19th century practices in 20th century filmmaking while also noting the progressions and changes that did occur over this period.

Biographical history of British animated cartoons

Victorian animated cartoons: Tom Merry and the lightning cartoon on film

During the inception of moving images in Britain, the term 'animated' held none of the special (if still, as discussed elsewhere, indistinct) meaning it signifies today. Nevertheless, the first films using drawn material can be considered important first steps towards the animated cartoons of the First World War and the 1920s. This distinction belongs to Tom Merry, a music-hall lightning cartoonist previously discussed in chapter one. In mid-to-late 1895 Merry was filmed performing his music-hall act by Birt Acres and R. W. (Robert William) Paul. Two short films were produced, one of Merry sketching Bismarck, the

other of him sketching Kaiser Wilhelm II.²⁰³ A further two films of Merry were produced by Birt Acres in 1896, following his split from Paul.²⁰⁴

The motivation behind Merry's appearances in the films of these pioneers of cinema in Britain is not immediately clear. A number of other well-known music-hall acts were also filmed in these early years, including the Sisters Hengler, G. H. Chirgwin and David Devant.²⁰⁵ This suggests an economic rationale behind the filming of Merry, an attempt to participate in the established star system in place in the music-hall circuit. Merry's name was prominent in an advertisement for a Birt Acres presentation of 1897, suggesting he was a star attraction.²⁰⁶ Further weight is given to this explanation by a series of letters exchanged publicly between Acres and Paul in the pages of the *British Journal of Photography*, in a dispute over the relative contribution each man made to the manufacturing of their moving image camera and subsequent production of films. Acres, in a letter dated March 7, 1896, made specific reference to the Merry films, writing 'the photographs also of the Boxing Kangaroo, Tom Merry, lightning cartoonist, dancing girls, &c., as well as the magnificent wave picture at Dover, are also mine'.²⁰⁷ Acres not only singled out the lightning cartoon films from all the films produced by himself and Paul in collaboration, but named Merry specifically, implying an importance to his presence in the film.

By 1895 Merry was not, however, a star performer. The height of his popularity as a stage performer was in the late 1870s, when he was appearing nightly at both the Oxford and Royal Aquarium.²⁰⁸ By 1881 he was supplementing his income by drawing promotional posters for other music-hall acts which by the mid-1880s was his primary business.²⁰⁹ Merry's career seemed to be dogged by controversy. In 1878 he failed to appear, without explanation, for a scheduled performance at Crowder's music hall, resulting in *The Era* writing of his behaviour 'if oft repeated, is hardly likely to bring him either good repute or fortune'.²¹⁰ Merry was involved in several legal disputes throughout the 1880s. In 1885 Merry was a party in a legal case relating to the removal of

²⁰³ Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 133.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 248-51.

²⁰⁶ Advertisement reproduced in *ibid.*, 82.

²⁰⁷ *British Journal of Photography* 13 March 1896, 173-4. Reprinted in *ibid.*, 35.

²⁰⁸ *Era*, 9 November 1879, 20.

²⁰⁹ *Era*, 24 September 1881, 20; *Era*, 18 July 1885, 22.

²¹⁰ *Era*, 3 February 1878, 4.

images from lithograph stones; in 1886 he was accused of copyright infringement for copying a photograph of Queen Victoria for an image in the *St Stephen's Review*; and in 1890 Merry was involved in two disputes regarding non-payment, both of which were thrown out on the grounds that Merry could provide no evidence that services had been performed.²¹¹ Merry's work for the *St Stephen's Review* may have brought him some renewed fame. Merry regularly contributed full page cartoons to this 'well known Weekly Conservative Paper' which was established in 1883, but it folded in 1892, having been renamed *Big Ben* a year earlier.²¹² In 1890 Merry was a partner in establishing a newspaper, the *Music Hall Review*, which was not a success. By 1895 the resulting debt caused Merry to be incarcerated in Wandsworth prison, following which he filed for bankruptcy.²¹³ While it has not been possible to accurately date when in 1895 the two Paul/Acres films of Merry were produced, Merry's bankruptcy must have occurred at most a few months after the films were produced.²¹⁴ In part Merry's appearance in the Paul/Acres films may then reflect not an appeal to a pre-established audience, but rather a matter of availability and that he would be willing to perform for minimal payment, if not for free.²¹⁵

Most importantly, however, Merry's career shows he was embedded within the 19th century entertainment institutions of music hall and print cartooning and this provides the key explanation for his appearance in these early films. In contrast to Merry, Robert Paul was a scientific instrument maker and Birt Acres a photographer by trade. Paul first presented his invention at Finsbury Technical College and the Royal Institution, his natural home as a scientist. Paul only pursued other uses of his apparatus through the interest of Sir Augustus Harris, the general manager of Olympia who suggested exploiting it for entertainment.²¹⁶ Acres was entrenched within the photographic community, presenting his Kinetic Lantern at the Royal Photographic Society and engaging in public dispute with Paul in the pages of photographic journals including *Amateur Photographer* and *British Journal of Photography*.²¹⁷ Both backgrounds

²¹¹ *Era*, 18 July 1885, 22; *North Wales Chronicle*, 25 December 1886, 7; *Era*, 20 December 1890, 16.

²¹² *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 July 1885, 16; *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 31 March 1883, 5.

²¹³ *Era*, 7 December 1895, 17.

²¹⁴ Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 233.

²¹⁵ John Barnes suggests many music hall artistes were willing to perform for the camera without payment. *Ibid.*, 130.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-35, 65.

would contribute to their technical and aesthetic successes in film, for instance in *Rough Sea at Dover*. Yet Merry brought great experience in presenting entertainment to an audience and translating that entertainment in a mechanically reproduced form. For him music halls like Leicester Square's Alhambra were familiar venues. Merry's association with Paul and Acres was short lived, amounting to only four films, yet the fact that Paul would later turn to another music-hall lightning cartoonist, Walter Booth, to assist him in making his films in the early 1900s indicates that these skills Merry brought were an important complement to Paul's technical and business skills and Acres's photographic ability. Walter Booth's contribution to this history will be examined later in this chapter.

Merry's film work was not in itself a significant contribution to the development of animated cartoon films. With only a few short films which were presented much as other music-hall acts were, and with little interpolation from the filmic medium, they did not utilise any of the techniques associated today with animation such as frame-by-frame construction. Merry's films were not unique as other lightning cartoons also appeared on film in Britain in the late 19th century. Little Stanley, one of the child performers discussed in chapter one, performed in at least one film, in 1898.²¹⁸ Despite this Merry's films rank among the earliest appearances of drawn images, and certainly images being drawn, presented on moving film and are an important landmark for this study. This thesis is not concerned with establishing unique firsts, not only because historical evidence of earlier activity might arise and undermine the attribution but also because a number of known precedents of projected animated drawings may be considered to predate them already, including Émile Reynaud's *Théâtre Optique* and Muybridge's zoopraxiscope as well as myriad moving magic lantern slides.²¹⁹ Unlike these, Merry's films are important because of their adherence, from the earliest days of the film industry, to a number of the patterns which would characterise later British animated cartoons. These include the adoption of music-hall acts and practices, including the lightning cartoon; the willingness of commercial graphic artists to extend their work into the new medium long before

²¹⁸ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 3.

²¹⁹ Crafton, "The Veiled Genealogies of Animation and Cinema."; L. Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, trans. Richard Crangle (University of Exeter Press, 2000).

established academic or avant-garde artists would do so²²⁰; and the adoption of the perceptual concerns of the lightning cartoon, an aspect to be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Walter Booth: animating the lightning cartoon

As described in chapter one, Walter Booth had been a popular and important lightning cartoonist prior to his involvement in animated pictures. His career had in fact started in another form of graphic art, as an apprentice painter following his father's career as china painter at the Royal Worcester factory.²²¹ After leaving the family line of business, Booth appeared in between cinematograph performances, including those presented by William Slade, ultimately joining the company of David Devant.²²² Devant was a magician who had been an early adopter of Paul's Theatrograph. Devant purchased one of Paul's projectors and presented films at the Egyptian Hall, operated by Maskelyne & Cook, from March 1896 as well as appearing in a number of Paul's films.²²³ It is presumably through this connection that Booth joined Robert Paul's film company after advertising for work in 1899, despite continuing to appear on stage in Maskelyne & Cooke presentations to the end of that year.²²⁴ As well as appearing on stage performing lightning cartoons between film performances by Paul, Booth was responsible, with Paul, for a series of trick films which utilised in-camera manipulation to produce magical effects, including *The Cheese Mites, or Liliputians in a London Restaurant* (1901) and *The '?' Motorist* (1906).²²⁵ In 1906 Booth moved to Charles Urban's film company where he combined these trick techniques with the lightning cartoon to produce a number of films, including *The Hand of the Artist* (1906), *Comedy Cartoons* (1907), *The Lightning Postcard Artist* (1908) and *Animated Cotton* (1909). These saw a progression from the straight lightning cartoon to the drawn images taking on

²²⁰ While outside of the main scope of this thesis, Frederic Villiers move from graphic art to moving image represents an intriguing parallel: Stephen Bottomore, "Filming, Faking and Propaganda: The Origins of the War Film, 1897-1902" (PhD, Utrecht University, 2007).

²²¹ Denis Gifford, "Walter Robert Booth," <http://www.victorian-cinema.net/blackton.htm>. The curator at the Worcester Porcelain Museum indicates that Booth was apprenticed as a decorator of china from 1884-1895, from the age of 14.

²²² The Cheltenham Looker-On 10 July, 1897, 1; Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser, 3 June 1897, 3.

²²³ Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 134.

²²⁴ *Era*, 15 April 1899, 26; *Northern Echo*, 21 November 1899, 2.

²²⁵ *The Essex County Standard West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties Advertiser*, 10 November 1900,

independent agency, and the gradual elimination of the outward symbols of the lightning cartoon, such as the artist, their hand, the drawing board or easel.

Booth's career had close parallels with the British born, but American based, James Stuart Blackton. Both artists began their careers performing lightning cartoons on music hall or vaudeville stage in the late 19th century before their involvement in moving images. Both produced a range of films in the early 20th century which were not restricted to the use of drawn images but used the technology of film to explore a range of subjects. Both then returned to their prior careers, producing films which extended the lightning cartoon using techniques learnt from trick films, effecting what may retrospectively be described as animation, although that term would not have been recognised by either artist. On the basis of his film *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906) Blackton has been commonly credited as 'the Father of Animation'.²²⁶ In contrast Booth has been largely forgotten, receiving no mention in standard histories. In large part this reflects the fact that key films, including *The Hand of the Artist* and *Comedy Cartoons* were thought to have been lost, a contributing factor acknowledged in Donald Crafton's discussion of them.²²⁷

Both films had, in actual fact, survived, having been donated to the National Library of Australia in 1968 by the family of an itinerant exhibitor who had shown them in the early 1900s. The films were only identified, catalogued and publically screened in 2008 and 2009 when the restored versions from the Australian National Film and Sound Archive were shown at the Italian silent film festival *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* in Pordenone.²²⁸ While Blackton's film may have predated Booth's by a short period, comparing these artists indicates that Blackton and Booth's films were not the product of inspired and unprompted genius, but rather the product of a specific context. These earliest animated cartoons were the result not of the divination of an essential quality of film but rather the amalgamation of their training within the institutional framework of 19th century stage entertainment, particularly the lightning cartoon, with the technology of moving images and the trick film genre.

²²⁶ Beck, ed. *Animation Art : From Pencil to Pixel, the History of Cartoon, Anime & Cgi*, 13-14.

²²⁷ Donald Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1990), 134.

²²⁸ Leslie Anne Lewis, "The Corrick Collection : A Case Study in Asia-Pacific Itinerant Film Exhibition (1901-1914)," *NFSA Journal* 2, no. 2 (2007).

Booth's use of ventriloquism in his stage act to provide voices for the figures he had lightning cartooned has already been highlighted as indicating a desire to give life to these images.²²⁹ His 1907 film *Comedy Cartoons* amply demonstrates the way in which he adapted the straight lightning cartoon act combining it with trick film techniques to emphasise the animated qualities of the music-hall act. (A complete descriptive and visual breakdown of *Comedy Cartoons* may be found in Appendix A.).

The film begins with a plan américain shot of Booth standing in front of a chalk board on which he performs a lightning cartoon before moving the chalk board closer to the camera until it fills the screen, where it is then animated through the use of manipulated cut-outs. Movement is achieved in exactly the manner it would have been in the music-hall act, through Booth's performance and through the use of cut-outs. A second sequence again sees Booth drawing a lightning cartoon, but framed closely so only his arm and hand are seen. By introducing the trick film techniques of substitution splices and crossfades Booth is able to transform faces and objects between line drawings and live action footage, consequently animating them. The final sequence of the film starts with a lightning cartoon but produced using stop motion so that the lines appear with their own agency, the outward symbols of the lightning cartoon have been marginalised then eliminated. The artist, his hand and chalk are all absent, removed through stop-motion drawing of the image. Furthermore, the chalkboard is tightly framed so by the end of the film it now appears simply as a black background. Thus the development in techniques over four minutes of *Comedy Cartoons* may be considered analogous to the developments in animated cartoons over the whole period under consideration, moving from straight lightning cartoon to drawings moving without apparent human intervention through filmic manipulation. *Comedy Cartoons* can also be seen to extend the aesthetic mode of the narrative of perception derived from the music-hall lightning cartoon act, an observation that will be explored in detail in later chapters.

The pre-war period: Emerging patterns

While Walter Booth's films offered a glimpse of the ways the lightning cartoon might be developed in animated cartoons, this did not immediately stimulate a

²²⁹ *Era*, 3 September 1898, 23.

growth in this kind of filmmaking. Booth did produce a number of films which show the influence of the lightning cartoon, not only using drawing (*A Little Lady Cartoonist*)²³⁰ but also other stop-motion materials such as clay (*Modelling Extraordinary*)²³¹ and Chinese puzzles (*The Tangram*).²³² Despite these occasional works, Booth would not contribute further to British animated cartoons beyond the start of the war.²³³

In Britain significant activity in the related field of stop-motion animation occurred, most notably with Arthur Melbourne-Cooper producing a series of films that utilised stop camera techniques they held in common with Booth's films; however, their use of real objects rather than drawings places them out of the scope of this study.²³⁴ If applied to drawings these techniques would produce fully animated cartoons, yet few British films prior to 1914 fit this description. Internationally several prominent cartoonists began working in moving images, with Winsor McCay in the United States and Emile Cohl in France both producing films now considered landmarks of animation history.²³⁵ In a period in which the institutional framework of the industry of film was rapidly being established, these films adhered to earlier modes of production, with individual creators toiling over single films.²³⁶ In 1913 these were joined by regularly produced adaptations of newspaper comic strips, including *The Newlyweds* and *Mutt and Jeff*, their producers assisted by the industrial timesaving techniques of John Bray and Earl Hurd.²³⁷ It was only in 1912-13 that British cartoonists again showed significant interest in moving images. In 1912, Harry Furniss, one of Britain's most well-known and established cartoonists and illustrators travelled

²³⁰ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 27.

²³¹ *Bios*, 26 November 1914, iii.

²³² *Bios*, 2 April 1914, vii.

²³³ Denis Gifford offers a tantalising description of Booth pursuing advertising films in the 1910s with 'unique colour effects in light and movement' which he called 'Flashing Film Ads' Gifford, "Walter Robert Booth." Booth is also known to have become involved with Theodore Brown's 'stereoscopic' Kinoplastikon presentations at London's Scala theatre in the 1910s: S. Herbert, *Theodore Brown's Magic Pictures: The Art and Inventions of a Multi-Media Pioneer* (Projection Box, 1997), 87. See also *The Times* 28 April 1913, 10.

²³⁴ For a comprehensive study of Melbourne-Cooper's work see: Tjitte De Vries and Ati Mul, *'They Thought It Was a Marvel': Arthur Melbourne-Cooper (1874-1961) Pioneer of Puppet Animation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

²³⁵ Canemaker, *Winsor Mccay : His Life and Art*; Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*.

²³⁶ For one case study of the formation of the film industry, see: Simon Brown, "Cecil Court and the Emergence of the British Film Industry," *Film Studies* Spring 2007, no. 10 (2007).

²³⁷ Crafton, *Before Mickey : The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 137-67; Denis Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929* (Jefferson, N.C. ; London: McFarland, 1990).

to New York to work on scenarios for Edison's film company.²³⁸ Furniss's contribution to British films will be considered in the next section.



Figure 15: Max J. Martin *An impression of our artist on being filmed* (1913)

In 1913-14 Max J. Martin produced a series of cartoons for Pathé Frères. These films are unremarkable in themselves and certainly in comparison to the films by Booth, Cohl, and McCay. Yet they are notable because they are an early example of the pattern which would dominate animated cartoons for the following fifteen years. Firstly, Martin was a print cartoonist rather than coming from a music-hall background as Merry and Booth had done. Print cartooning would prove to be a dominant source of personnel for animated cartoons, with only a few cartoonists coming to film from music hall, E.H. Mills being the notable exception. Nevertheless, Martin adopted the lightning cartoon in this series as a way of translating his print work into the movement required of moving image, an approach that would be consistently used throughout the First World War and the 1920s. Martin's films mark early attempts to incorporate two aspects of print cartooning that would dominate wartime animated cartoon production and which will be explored later in both this chapter and the following one: topicality, and the attempt to establish continuous series with a consistent identity. Martin's films also mark an example of a cartoonist documenting the early development of cinema in his print work, as he published

²³⁸ John Jensen, "Furniss, Henry [Pseud. Lika Joko] (1854–1925)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

at least one cartoon in 1913 in the *Pathé Cinema Journal* showing the mechanics of making his films (Figure 15).²³⁹ Judging from this cartoon, which shows Martin being dominated and interrogated by lights, camera, and a vocal director, the experience was not a happy one and may explain the absence of any further contribution to the art of moving images after the Pathé series. Nevertheless, this cartoon highlights a more general interaction between cartooning and moving images, outside the production of animated cartoons, a relationship which is explored in the next section.

Film and the graphic arts: An established relationship

As will be shown in this section, the graphic arts played an important role in the film industry in general terms, even before considering animated cartoons themselves. They provided character, plots and a comedic model; equally illustration was central to the advertising of films, and would influence the introduction of filmed advertising, with these areas providing an entry point to the film industry for a number of cartoonists.

As with any social or cultural paradigm shift, the arrival of moving images as a mass entertainment was addressed in print by many topical cartoonists from the earliest days, as is amply demonstrated in Stephen Bottomore's collection of cartoons addressing this topic.²⁴⁰ The importance of newspaper cartoons to early cinema has been equally well established. Donald Crafton details their role in providing plots for some of the earliest films produced in France, and identifies that this may have provided Emile Cohl's entry into the film business, Cohl having seen a film which plagiarised one of his cartoons.²⁴¹ Equally Josh Lambert has explored the interrelation between comic strips and early cinema in an American context.²⁴² Such a relationship is readily apparent in British cinema during the First World War. Bruce Bairnsfather was one of the most celebrated cartoonists of the War, and as will be seen was involved in a number of lightning cartoon films, but his cartoons were also used as the source for a live action film. Produced in 1918 by Welsh, Pearson & Co,

²³⁹ Stephen Bottomore, *I Want to See This Annie Mattygraph : A Cartoon History of the Coming of the Movies* (Pordenone: Le Giornate del cinema muto, 1995), 77.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*, 92-97.

²⁴² Josh Lambert, "'Wait for the Next Pictures': Intertextuality and Cliffhanger Continuity in Early Cinema and Comic Strips," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 2 (2009).

The Better 'Ole or The Romance of Old Bill was an adaptation of a play, written by Bairnsfather and Arthur Eliot, itself based on Bairnsfather's famous cartoon. This cartoon and others made Bairnsfather a household name and increased enormously the circulation of *The Bystander* where Bairnsfather's cartoons were published; the commercial appeal in producing a film adaption of these cartoons is readily apparent.²⁴³ Bairnsfather's cartoons would remain a significant source for films into the 1920s and beyond, the cartoons' film adaptation rights being subject to a law suit in 1925, a live action silent film starring Syd Chaplin being released in 1926 and several sound films being produced.²⁴⁴

A similar symbiotic relationship between film and cartooning can be seen in *The Adventures of Eve* (1918). This series of films produced by J.L.V. Leigh for Gaumont, based upon the 'famous caricatures appearing in "The Tatler"' is another example of cinema drawing on established graphic sources for live action.²⁴⁵ Eve's appeal lay not only in the material as a source of plot lines, but also provided a strong graphic identity for the films' advertising (Figure 16). The press adverts featured a striking image of Eve wearing high fashion, an image that in its stark, high contrast design and sans serif typeface presages the 'moderne' or 'deco' styles of the 1920s, a markedly different style to that used in the majority of press adverts of the period.

²⁴³ Mark Bryant, "Bairnsfather, (Charles) Bruce (1887–1959)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

²⁴⁴ *Kinematograph Weekly* (hereafter, *KW*), 23 October 1924, 77; *KW*, 11 November 1926; *ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Bios*, 18 July 1918, 14.

MISS EILEEN
MOLYNEUX
AS
"EVE"
IN



A SERIES OF 12
UNIQUE COMEDIES
GAUMONT
PRODUCTION
Directed by
J. L. V. LEIGH.

THE
ADVENTURES
OF EVE
FROM THE FAMOUS CARICATURES
APPEARING IN
"THE TATLER"

Figure 16: *The Adventures of Eve* (1918)

Even where specific cartoons were not used as a source, cartoons provided inspiration for many live action films, as in the *Kinekature Comedies* (1918) starring Lupino Lane, produced by Hagen & Double, their name indicating a connection with caricature.²⁴⁶ A press advert describes how these

²⁴⁶ *Bios*, 13 December 1917, 106.

films included ‘a series of extremely novel and amusing distorting effects by which the comical appearance of caricature produced by the popular “laughing mirrors” is shown on the screen’, a clear attempt to harness the popularity of cartooning and caricature in live action film.²⁴⁷ A similar attempt is equally apparent in the advertising for the *Kine-Quips* series of films (1914) which described themselves as ‘The Kinematograph “Punch”’, drawing a direct comparison between their live action comedies and the cartoons in *Punch* magazine.²⁴⁸

The importance of illustration to the film industry is readily observable in the pages of trade journals such as *The Bioscope*. While photographic reproduction techniques had been developed by this time, a large number of the illustrations for film advertising remained hand drawn. Many advertisements used cartoon illustration even when dealing with live action films and even Mr Punch, the figurehead of *Punch* magazine, appeared regularly in advertisements.²⁴⁹ Harry Furniss, a celebrated illustrator whose contribution to cinema will be discussed later, decried the low standard of film poster artwork. Even film productions ‘of the highest standard of merit’ are degraded by ‘diabolical posters...redrawn from the “still picture”...subsequently redrawn by an inferior lithographic artist’.²⁵⁰

The relationship between film and illustration was felt not only in the advertising of films, but also in filmed advertising. In 1914 the Kineto film production company began an offshoot, Kino-Ads Ltd., whose aim was ‘to adapt advertising illustrations and commercial announcements for the cinema theatre’.²⁵¹ The manager of Kino-Ads, E. Herbert Morris, acknowledges that ‘in advertising illustrations have now taken a dominant place’ and argues that pictures are far more effective at introducing ideas, noting ‘moving pictures convey thought with an added rapidity’.²⁵² Illustration served as an important

²⁴⁷ *Bios*, 18 July 1918, xiv.

²⁴⁸ *Bios*, 21 May 1914, 808.

²⁴⁹ Examples include drawings for the *Kinetosities* column, an editorialised advertising feature which appeared regularly in *The Bioscope* in 1918, for example *Bios*, 8 August 1918, viii; *Bios*, 10 January 1918, 30. Mr. Punch also appears in ‘King George’s Fund’ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 21 March 1918, 52.

²⁵⁰ Harry Furniss, *Our Lady Cinema. How and Why I Went into the Photo-Play World and What I Found There* (J. W. Arrowsmith: Bristol, 1914), 145-47.

²⁵¹ *Bios*, 14 December 1916, 1103. This article refers to Kino-Ads Ltd being formed ‘during the last two years’.

²⁵² *Bios*, 14 December 14, 1103.

reference point for filmed advertising, even where animation techniques were not utilised.



Figure 17: Victor Hicks Trans-atlantic press advertisement (1917)

It is clear from these examples that even before the advent of regular animated cartoons, film and illustration had significant links, and there was a degree of convergence between them. The case of Victor Hicks best illustrates this convergence, and indicates how it was not simply an economic and industrial alignment, but also an aesthetic one. Victor Hicks produced a number of animated cartoons late in the war, but his introduction to film was as an illustrator producing advertising material. An advertisement for Transatlantic Film typifies the qualities of cartooning that artists like Hicks would bring to, and adapt for, animated film cartoons (Figure 17).²⁵³ On initial inspection the page is

²⁵³ *Bios*, 26 April 1917, 301.

dominated by an abstract graphic border; however, a small sign urges the reader to ‘follow the line of laughter’. As the reader’s eye follows the line it becomes apparent that it is not simply a graphic border, but is transformed along the page. At the top of the page the line represents the ground on which two cartoon characters and a house stand, it is then transformed on the left hand side of the page into a silhouette of a laughing face, before being transformed into the letters LSD, before finally retuning to being simply a graphic border. Here we see an example of Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘plasmatic’, to be discussed later, and the role perception plays in transformation: the movement of the eye over the line animates and transforms it multiple times, resulting in a dynamic narrative of perception.

The outbreak of war: The adoption of film by cartoonists

It can be seen that the British film industry in 1914 had considerable cause to expand production of animated cartoons. On the one hand it had strong links with illustration and cartooning, both as a source of material for live action films and for advertising purposes. On the other hand international production of animated cartoons saw considerable growth in the number of regular cartoon series being produced in the first years of the war, particularly in the United States, as yet uninvolved in the war.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the war introduced specific demands and constraints that would heavily influence both the growth in production of animated cartoons and the form they would take. The war increased demand for topical subjects yet conversely constrained film producers’ ability to gather this material amid the restrictions and dangers of wartime filming. Animated cartoons, the techniques now proven both by British films and the increasing flow of American product, provided an ideal solution, just as their counterparts in newspapers and music halls provided a similar service to their hosts.

A shift in the pattern of animated cartoons before and after the declaration of war in the summer of 1914 is readily apparent when examining the cinema trade journals of the time. These journals, such as *The Bioscope*, listed all the films released and placed them within a predefined set of categories: ‘B, Biblical;

²⁵⁴ For details of series that started in 1914-1916 see Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*. The United States officially entered the War on April 6th 1917. *The Times*, 7 April 1917, 7.

C, Comedy; Com, Comic; D, Drama; E, Educational'.²⁵⁵ At the start of the war animated cartoon films were not afforded their own category, being categorised as 'Tr, Trick' or 'Top, Topical', but by the latter part of 1914 *The Bioscope* had introduced a new category of 'Car – Cartoon'.²⁵⁶ This new categorisation reflected the sudden growth in production in Britain, with at least thirty topical cartoon productions being released between the declaration of war on 4 August and the end of the year, compared with less than five animated cartoons in the first half of the year.²⁵⁷ In 1913 Max Martin's series for Pathé had been the only British animated cartoons released that year. Such a dramatic increase in production was achieved largely through one means: the introduction of personnel and techniques from other fields, a point acknowledged as early as 1915 by *The Bioscope* which wrote

a number of clever cartoonists...have turned their attention to the possibilities of films in connection with their efforts, it affords us a keen satisfaction, and considerable enjoyment, to witness the results of their artistry upon the screen²⁵⁸

Figures such as Harry Furniss and Lancelot Speed, among others, were well known for their drawn work, either illustrating books or contributing to magazines such as *Punch*. While a few films presented newspaper cartoons directly, making no allowances for the moving images that gave film its distinguishing feature, most appropriated the lightning cartoon act from music hall as a way to combine the draughtsman skills of these artists with a more dynamic presentation demanded by an audience for moving pictures.

This first generation of British animators had long pre-existing careers in graphic arts, illustration, and cartooning before coming to film as a new way of expressing their ideas. Lancelot Speed was born in 1860, attending Cambridge University as a medical student before finding drawing to be his calling and attending Slade School in the 1880s.²⁵⁹ On completion of his studies Speed began working as a cartoonist and book illustrator, quickly gaining recognition, his cartoons appearing regularly in *The Illustrated London News* and *Punch*. In

²⁵⁵ *Bios*, 26 March 1914, xliii.

²⁵⁶ For instance Sidney Aldridge's *War Cartoons* are listed as 'topical' in *Bios*, 24 September 1914, xxviii; *Bios*, 19 November 1914, xxiv.

²⁵⁷ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 27-34.

²⁵⁸ *Bios*, 15 April 1915, 253.

²⁵⁹ *The Times*, 4 January 1932, 17. Birth registered in Jul-Aug-Sep in Richmond, Surrey, 1860. "England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes," (London, England: General Register Office, 1837-1915).; *Bios*, 5 November 1914, 497-499.

1914 Speed estimated that he had published well over 3000 illustrations and cartoons, an indication of the breadth of his output.²⁶⁰ Speed was drawn into film when he became artistic adviser to the Neptune Film Company, designing their logo and providing other artistic advice before producing his own films following the outbreak of war.²⁶¹ Speed's films were clearly received and understood in the context of this long career, an early review describing his work as 'living line drawings' and an interview with him in a film trade journal emphasising his career as illustrator.²⁶² In 1916 Speed was designer on the Barker live action film *She* based on the novel by H. Rider Haggard, with Speed's role being explicitly publicised.²⁶³ Speed's involvement was undoubtedly motivated by his having illustrated Haggard's books, an experience which provided him both with the skills required to visualise a literary work, as well as the star name to bolster the credibility of this cinematic adaptation.²⁶⁴ Speed's involvement in *She* and is another indication that his film career was understood in relation to his previous career as an illustrator of books

Harry Furniss was born in 1854 and became involved in cartooning at school in Dublin.²⁶⁵ As a young man he quickly achieved commercial success, moving to London at age 19 and producing drawings for *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* and *The Illustrated London News*, both also featuring contributions from Lancelot Speed. Furniss started contributing to *Punch* in 1880, becoming its chief Parliamentary caricaturist.²⁶⁶ Furniss had equal success illustrating books, covering a wide range of styles and topics. Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, chose him to illustrate *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) having had an unhappy relationship with Sir John Tenniel, the celebrated illustrator of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871).²⁶⁷ Furniss was regularly ranked alongside famous peers, including John Tenniel and George Du Maurier, as well

²⁶⁰ *Bios*, 5 November 1914, 497-499.

²⁶¹ Geoff Brown and Paul Wells, "Lancelot Speed," in *Directors in British and Irish Cinema: A Reference Companion*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI Publishing, 2006), 562-63.

²⁶² *Bios*, 8 October 1914, 151; *Bios*, 5 November 1914, 497-499.

²⁶³ Low, *The History of the British Film. 1914-1918*, 55.

²⁶⁴ H. Rider Haggard, *Eric Brighteyes* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891).

²⁶⁵ *The Times*, 16 January 1925, 14. Birthdate confirmed in 1881 England Census. Public Record Office, "Census Returns of England and Wales," (Public Record Office 1881), Class: RG11; Piece: 183; Folio: 62; Page: 48; Line: ; GSU roll: 1341040.; *The Times*, 16 January 1925, 14.

²⁶⁶ Furniss, *The Confessions of a Caricaturist*, 217.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-03.

as antecedents, including Hogarth and Gilray and he was famous enough to warrant a two volume autobiography, published in 1901.²⁶⁸ In 1912 Furniss travelled to New York and worked on scenarios for live action films at the Edison studio.²⁶⁹ He established his own studio on his return to Britain, initially producing live action films. At least one of these, *Uncle Harry Draws Peggy* produced in 1913, featured Furniss on screen performing a lightning cartoon within the context of the narrative, demonstrating that Furniss was aware of the commercial appeal of combining his famed cartooning skills with moving images. Furniss went on to produce a number of cartoon films dealing with wartime topics, although remaining closely indebted to the lightning cartoonist act rather than presenting full animation.

Alongside Speed and Furniss a number of other cartoonists and illustrators became involved with cartoon film production in 1914, within a few months of the war commencing. Sidney Aldridge was ‘a famous contributor to *Punch*’, although less famous than Furniss or Speed.²⁷⁰ Alick P. F. Ritchie was known for his poster designs as well as his caricatures of famous figures.²⁷¹ Frank Holland contributed cartoons to a number of comic periodicals, including *Big Budget*.²⁷² Douglas Tempest was a ‘staff postcard artist’ at Bamforth, the Yorkshire production company, and his films were clearly made and received in this context.²⁷³ The title of his 1914 film *Merry War Jottings* defines the film by its graphic qualities; equally a review of the film draws attention to its ‘pen-and-ink’ technique.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 17 October 1887, 7; *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated* 30 April 1887, 275; *The Belfast News-Letter*, 17 October 1887, 7; Harry Furniss, *The Confessions of a Caricaturist Volume 1 and 2* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901).

²⁶⁹ Jensen, "Furniss, Henry [Pseud. Lika Joko] (1854–1925)."

²⁷⁰ *Bios*, 17 September 1914, 1091.

²⁷¹ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 June 1898, 8. A number of Ritchie’s caricatures are held in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

²⁷² Representative of Holland’s work for this periodical is ‘A Terrible Time! Or, The Story of Arugustus de Vere, The Bricklayer’s Labourer’ *The Big Budget*, 13 October 1900, 275.

²⁷³ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 28. Denis Gifford refers to *Dudley* Tempest as the artist responsible for these films. A number of other writers equally refer to this artist as *Dudley*, including Paul Ward (Ward, "Distribution and Trade Press Strategies for British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War Era," 192.) and David Huxley (Huxley, "Kidding the Kaiser -- British Propaganda Animation, 1914–1919," 308.). Yet the well known postcard artist working for Bamforth in Yorkshire was *Douglas* Tempest (see The Magic Lantern Society, "The Illustrated Bamforth Slide Catalogue," ed. Robert MacDonald and Richard Crangle (2009). Also John Windsor ‘Obituary: Arnold Taylor’ *The Independent* 6 February 2001). In the absence of the original films, which are apparently lost, it seems Denis Gifford has mistaken Tempest’s forename (perhaps confusing his name with Dudley Buxton) and this error has been reproduced by Ward and Huxley when using Gifford as a reference.

²⁷⁴ *Bios*, 10 December 1914, xi.

The popularity of film cartoons by illustrators early in the war led to their becoming an established part of the cinema programme. By 1917 *The Bioscope* commented that 'no programme can be considered complete which cannot find occasional space for one of these highly ingenious forms of artistic entertainment'.²⁷⁵ This success in turn led the most prominent cartoonists of the period to become involved in film productions, whether topical artists such as Bruce Bairnsfather and Louis Raemaekers, or non-topical artists like Louis Wain.

Bruce Bairnsfather, born in 1887, was from a younger generation than artists, such as Furniss and Speed, who were already well known when war broke out.²⁷⁶ Bairnsfather only rose to prominence during the war, his topical cartoons unusual in their dealing with the plight of the ordinary soldier rather than the political machinations of leaders. Bairnsfather's position as the cartoonist of the common soldier was enhanced by his own service in the army, with his service being emphasised in a 'Pathé Gazette' film cartoon by describing him as 'Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather'.²⁷⁷ As described earlier, his popularity was such that his work was adapted into both plays and live action films, but he was also in demand to provide cartoon films for the cinema programme. Demands for the Bairnsfather cartoons 'are exceedingly gratifying' and his films were 'in greater demand even than Chaplin Comedies'.²⁷⁸ Film Booking Offices produced at least eight 1000ft Bairnsfather films in a series for in 1917, but there also exists at least one short cartoon drawn for the 'Pathé Gazette'.²⁷⁹ Based on the descriptions in trade journals and the extant British Pathé film, it would appear the Bairnsfather cartoons remained entirely within the lightning cartoonist mode in these cartoons.²⁸⁰

Louis Raemaekers, like Bairnsfather, rose to prominence during the First World War. Born in 1869 in the Netherlands, he developed a caustic style of cartooning which eschewed light humour, instead making incisive political commentary through his drawings.²⁸¹ That Raemaekers was effective in his commentary was demonstrated by his being tried in Dutch Courts on the charge

²⁷⁵ *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

²⁷⁶ Bryant, "Bairnsfather, (Charles) Bruce (1887–1959)."

²⁷⁷ Bairnsfather served both in the period 1904-1907 and during the First World War. *Ibid*.

²⁷⁸ *Bios*, 31 May 1917, 819.; *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1305.

²⁷⁹ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1305. Denis Gifford suggests there were twelve films in the *Bairnsfather Cartoons* series

²⁸⁰ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1318.

²⁸¹ *The Times*, 27 July 1956, 13.

of ‘endangering the Neutrality of Holland’, a charge brought following diplomatic pressure from Germany on the Dutch authorities.²⁸² Raemaekers subsequently moved to London, in 1916, where his cartoons continued to receive wide attention.²⁸³ In 1916 he published a collection of cartoons, each accompanied by an essay by well-known figures, including G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, and an ‘appreciation’ by Prime Minister H. H. Asquith.²⁸⁴ With the success of the Bairnsfather cartoons Film Booking Offices felt that ‘cartoon pictures are the rage of the times’, which ‘prompted this enterprising firm to secure a series of cartoons by the world famous artist Louis Raemaekers’, resulting in a series of twelve 1000ft cartoon films.²⁸⁵

Both the Bairnsfather and Raemaekers films were sold as being authored by the famous cartoonists. The extant ‘Pathé Gazette’ film includes the picture being signed by Bairnsfather, despite his face never being shown to camera; equally Raemaekers was known as a skilled lighting cartoonist, although only performing in private rather than in music halls.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the films were actually the work of Jack Dodsworth who was responsible for ‘redrawing for the screen’ the work of both men, from whom he had ‘unqualified approval’.²⁸⁷ Based on the descriptions in trade journals and the extant British Pathé film, it would appear these cartoons remained entirely within the lightning cartoonist.²⁸⁸

Another topical cartoonist whose work was adapted for the screen was W.K. Haselden, whose *Daily Mirror* cartoons were adapted in 1915 as *The Adventures of Big and Little Willie*, the title characters being caricatures of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Crown Prince.²⁸⁹ Strangely, these were produced as marionette films rather than drawn cartoons, and as the films no longer exist it is not clear whether these were stop-motion animated or simply puppet films. Nevertheless, this film again demonstrates the importance of cartooning and illustration as a source for film.

It was not only topical cartoonists whose work was translated from newspaper pages to the film screen, but also a number of famous non-topical

²⁸² *Bios*, 19 July 1917, 258.

²⁸³ *The Times*, 27 July 1956, 13.

²⁸⁴ Louis Raemaekers, *Raemaekers' Cartoons*, ed. Francis Stopford (London: Land & Water, 1916).

²⁸⁵ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1209. ; *Bios*, 19 July 1917, 258. ; *Bios*, 19 July 1917, 298.

²⁸⁶ *The Times*, 31 January 1916, 10.

²⁸⁷ *Bios*, 24 October 1918, 108.

²⁸⁸ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1318.

²⁸⁹ *Bios*, 6 May 1915, xv.

cartoonists. Louis Wain was a singular artist who specialised in drawing cats that were ‘known the world over’.²⁹⁰ Wain’s association with cats was such that he was invited by *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* to review the film *The Acrobat of Death* from a feline perspective, purely on the grounds it prominently featured an acting cat.²⁹¹ In 1917 Wain produced at least two cartoon films for Gaumont featuring his trademark cats, although at only 350ft these were considerably shorter than the majority of animated cartoons at this time, which were typically at least 500ft, and ranged up to the 1000ft of the Bairnsfather and Raemaekers cartoons.²⁹² With such a meagre output Wain’s films do not in themselves constitute a significant contribution to British animated films. They do, however, mark one of the earliest instances of anthropomorphised animals in British animated cartoons, an approach that would dominate in the 1920s. Wain, working in the tradition of illustrators such as Grandville (the pseudonym of Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard) and Honoré Daumier, drew images of cats which had a superficial visual verisimilitude with real animals, but which ascribed to them a human agency, a duality between animal and human that is central to the discussion of later films.²⁹³

In addition to the significant number of personnel who came to film from cartooning and illustration, a number of key figures also came from music hall. The most prominent of these was Ernest H. Mills, who had appeared on stage as a lightning cartoonist and ‘art humorist’ throughout the first two decades of the 20th century.²⁹⁴ Mills had appeared at famous London venues such as the Palace Theatre, Cambridge Circus and St George’s Hall, Oxford Circus and alongside famous music-hall names like Maskelyne, Devant, and Vesta Tilley.²⁹⁵ In 1916 Mills became associated with ‘Kine Comedy Kartoons’ under the production of Frank Zeitlin.²⁹⁶ His first films *The Battle of Jutland*, *Supremacy*, and *What London Saw*, all produced in 1916, would appear to have aroused little interest. A distribution deal with Broadwest, however, resulted in considerable attention for

²⁹⁰ *Bios*, 16 August 1917.

²⁹¹ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 10 October 1918, 145.

²⁹² *Bios*, 16 August 1917.

²⁹³ "Grandville," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, ed. Ian Chilvers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); "Daumier, Honoré", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, ed. Ian Chilvers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁹⁴ *The Times*, 25 August 1913, 6.

²⁹⁵ *The Times*, 2 June 1908, 9; *The Times*, 15 September 1911, 1; *The Times*, 15 September 1911, 1; *The Times*, 8 February 1910, 8.

²⁹⁶ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 2 May 1918, 57.

Mill's next film *The Romance of David Lloyd George*, released at the start of 1917. This film was an animated portrait 'founded on sittings given to the artist by the Prime Minister'.²⁹⁷ Broadwest gave this film an unprecedented marketing campaign, with multiple full page adverts taken out in the trade press, in a period in which short cartoons received little direct advertising.²⁹⁸ Whether it was this advertising or the subject matter and the manner in which it was achieved, the film was a considerable success, Broadwest receiving 'a record number of bookings'.²⁹⁹ Mills continued to produce a series of films for 'Kine Komedy Kartoons', his next film *The Entente Cordiale* receiving a similarly strong marketing push, but none of them achieved the same success as *The Romance of David Lloyd George* and his involvement in film would appear to have ended after the war.³⁰⁰

A number of other music-hall artists were also responsible for producing animated films during the war. Ernest Mills' colleague at 'Kine Komedy Kartoons', Dudley Buxton, was known as an 'eminent lightning cartoonist'; he was also known prior to the war as a print cartoonist, for instance contributing to the *Printer's Pie* compilation in several years, a publication which also featured the work of G. E. Studdy among other future animators.³⁰¹ Buxton went on to produce a significant number of topical cartoons during the war, contributing titles in the 'John Bull's Animated Sketchbook' series for the Cartoon Film Company and the 'War Cartoons Series' for Tressograph as well as his work for 'Kine Komedy Kartoons'. Louis Nikola was primarily known as a music-hall illusionist (he appeared alongside Ernest Mills on at least one occasion) but was also responsible for producing *Magic Squares* for British and Colonial which depicted 'squares of paper assuming various animate forms and enacting a

²⁹⁷ *Bios*, 4 January 1917, 60-61.

²⁹⁸ In addition to the double page spread listed above (*Bios*, 4 January 1917, 60-61) this edition featured another full page advert on an unnumbered page. Full page advertisements appeared on 11 January 1917, 122-123 and 25 January 1917, 390 with smaller banner advertisements on 18 January 1917, 242 and 295. The film continued to be mentioned in future adverts for other 'Kine Komedy Kartoons' throughout 1917.

²⁹⁹ *Bios*, 11 January 1917, 105.

³⁰⁰ Full page advertisements appeared in *The Bioscope* on 8 March 1917, 1033; 15 March 1917 and 22 March 1917 and was featured prominently in general adverts for 'Kine Komedy Kartoons' on 1 March 1917, 927 and 10 May 1917, 548. The last film Denis Gifford credits to Mills is *Zig-Zags at the Zoo No. 3* in 1919. Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 59.

³⁰¹ Advertisement November 1914 quoted in *ibid.*, 32. *The Times*, 4 May 1912, 10. See also *The Times*, 9 May 1910, 18.

comedy', a description which suggests the film utilised a narrative of perception similar to that found in the music-hall lightning cartoon.³⁰²

Post-war and the 1920s: The continued importance of cartoonists to film

The volume of animated cartoons being produced and released in Britain dropped precipitously in the years following the war. While the years 1914-1918 saw more than twenty standalone films and several continuous series released each year, the years 1920-1924 saw less than 10 British films released annually.³⁰³ It was only after 1924 that domestic production reached and surpassed wartime output, with the arrival of regular series and newsreel characters such as 'Bonzo' and 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' resulting in a large number of releases. The reasons behind these shifts in production are varied and will be examined later in the next chapter. In some respects the change in social context was a rupture, a moment of absolute change for animated cartoons. Given the centrality of topical wartime subject matter to animated cartoons during the First World War, the end of that conflict inevitably resulted in immediate change for both the industrial context in which they were produced and the aesthetic model they utilised. Nevertheless, the animated cartoons of the 1920s can be seen to retain much continuity with the work already examined, representing a progression of the trends already described rather than a reversal of them.

The most notable continuity between the wartime animated cartoons and the period that followed is the importance of print cartoons and their creators. A significant number of the wartime artists discussed in the previous section continued to produce films. Former book illustrator and cartoonist Lancelot Speed's first post-war film 'Britain's Honour', in 1919, closely resembled his wartime work, its name echoing his previous wartime film 'Britain's Effort' (1918). A trade review described how this 'latest creation is one that cannot fail to arouse fresh admiration' clearly linking the film with his other work.³⁰⁴ Its socially conscious topic aimed at highlighting 'the crying need for reform in all matters' by depicting not only 'the heroes who have fought, worked and died'

³⁰² *The Times*, 15 September 1911, 1; *Bios*, 3 September 1914, i.

³⁰³ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 61-69.

³⁰⁴ *Bios*, 29 May 1919, 79.

but also ‘the victims of child labour, bad housing, disease, and other evils’.³⁰⁵ While this film is not known to have survived, it is clear from this description that it continued in the tradition of topical and political cartooning that Speed had followed through the war.

Speed’s next series of films remained indebted to his newspaper and magazine heritage, even while they rejected abstract, categorical, topical and political subject matter. ‘The Wonderful Adventures of Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ (hereafter: ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’) was a series of 26 cartoons produced by Speed for Astra, the first episode released February 15, 1921.³⁰⁶ This series was based on A. B. Payne’s popular *Daily Mirror* comic strip, first published in 1919.³⁰⁷ The comic strip was sufficiently popular and widely known by 1921 that its characters’ names were used as popular slang for the group of three medals awarded to all who served during the First World War: the 1914 (or 1914-15) Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.³⁰⁸ During the war Speed had received full credit as author of his films with his full name on the titles, star billing on advertisements and acknowledgement as author in reviews.³⁰⁹ For ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’, Speed had to share the film credits with the print cartoon’s creators: the cartoons were ‘Produced under the supervision of Lancelot Speed’ with ‘Story by Uncle Dick, Drawings by A.B. Payne’. Reviews simply disregard Speed’s involvement by failing to mention his name.³¹⁰ If viewers still remained unaware of the source of ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ they are further prompted by the opening shot of episode one, in which the title characters are introduced reading the *Daily Mirror*. It is readily apparent that print cartooning was far from losing its influence as cinema and animated cartoons developed their own language, even while the focus shifted from one off political and topical cartoons to regular comic strip series, developments that will be further discussed in the next chapter.

³⁰⁵ *Bios*, 29 May 1919, 79.

³⁰⁶ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 January 1921, 72.

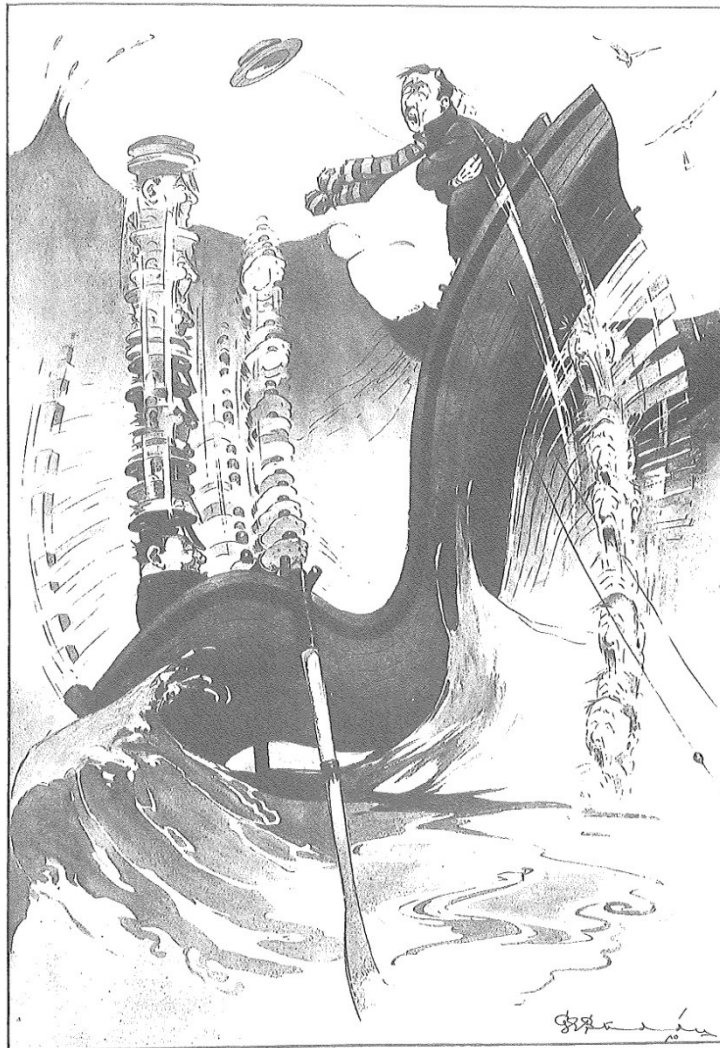
³⁰⁷ Mary Cadogan, "Introduction," in *The Nostalgia Collection: Pip Squeak and Wilfred* (London: Hawk Books, 1990).

³⁰⁸ "Imperial War Museum Website", <http://www.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.2495>

³⁰⁹ *Bios*, 8 October 1914. xx; *Bios*, 29 October 1914, 474.

³¹⁰ *KW*, 27 January 1921, 72. Despite emphasising the amount of work required to produce the series *The Times* equally fails to give credit to Speed *The Times*, 17 January 1921, 14.

Precisely How It Feels



BIOSCOPIC STUDY OF A GENTLEMAN FISHING FOR MACKEREL OFF DOVER
ON EASTER MONDAY

BY G. E. STUDDY

Figure 18: G.E. Studdy (1910)

By 1918, like Lancelot Speed, George Ernest Studdy had already established himself as both a well-known print cartoonist and produced a number of wartime animated cartoons, albeit sticking closely to the lightning cartoon act rather than full animation. Studdy was born in 1878 and attended Dulwich college; he maintained a connection with the college throughout his life, regularly attending alumni Alleyn Club meetings.³¹¹ Studdy's involvement in professional art began when he attended The Heatherley School of Fine Art, following which he established himself as a cartoonist and illustrator for a variety of magazines, notably *The Sketch* for whom he began to contribute a weekly full

³¹¹ Birth Registered Jul-Aug-Sep 1878 in Stoke Damerel, Devon. "England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes."; *The Times*, 22 December 1933, 13.

page cartoon before the war.³¹² A pre-war print cartoon by Studdy for *The Bystander* already exhibited interest in the cinema and its animating effects as both a subject matter and aesthetic model (Figure 18).³¹³ Following his wartime animated cartoons Studdy worked primarily as a print cartoonist, his work appearing in a number of publications and compendiums, including *Sporting and Dramatic News*, *Nash's Magazine*, *Printer's Pie*, *The Magpie*, and *The Sketch* as well as illustrating a number of books, including his own *Uncle's Animal Book*.³¹⁴ Although Studdy had often included canine characters in his contributions to *The Sketch*, it was in November 1922 that these archetypal characters coalesced into the named figure of Bonzo.³¹⁵ Bonzo would prove to be very popular, quickly appearing on merchandising and postcards.³¹⁶ Bonzo would first be animated not on film, but in one of the earliest neon signs in Piccadilly Circus, which showed him smoking, in an advertisement for Pinnacle [sic] Cigarettes.³¹⁷ Studdy began producing animated cartoons based on the character for New Era Films from 1924, with the world premiere on Tuesday, October 14, 1924.³¹⁸ By this stage Studdy could be described as 'the world famous artist' and an 'introduction to this screamingly funny little chap and his creator Mr. G. E. Studdy would be superfluous as their names are world famous'.³¹⁹ Twenty six 'Bonzo' animated cartoons were made, running till the start of 1926, while Bonzo would continue as a print character till 1952, shortly after Studdy's death in 1948.³²⁰ While the 'Bonzo' films stand on their own as cinematic texts, they clearly retain strong links with the world of illustration, both through their creator's biography and the source material they drew upon. Furthermore, Studdy was actively involved in a social network related to cartooning throughout the 1920s when he produced these films. He was an active member of the 'London Sketch Club', his drawings being exhibited in a group

³¹² Paul Babb and Gay Owen, *Bonzo: The Life and Work of George Studdy* (Ilminster, Somerset: Richard Dennis, 1988), 9-12.

³¹³ *The Bystander* 23 March 1910, reprinted in Bottomore, *I Want to See This Annie Matygraph : A Cartoon History of the Coming of the Movies*, 173.

³¹⁴ *The Times*, 5 December 1923, 18; *The Times*, 16 November 1923, 4; *The Times*, 25 July 1922, 12; *The Times*, 28 November 1923, 17; *The Times*, 3 December 1917, 15; *The Times*, 14 December 1923, 9.

³¹⁵ Mary Cadogan, "Introduction," in *The Nostalgia Collection: A Dog Called Bonzo* (London: Hawk Books, 1990), 4.

³¹⁶ Babb and Owen, *Bonzo: The Life and Work of George Studdy* 35.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

³¹⁸ *KW*, 6 October 1924, 25.

³¹⁹ *KW*, 6 October 1924, 25-26.

³²⁰ Cadogan, "Introduction," 5.

show from that club.³²¹ Other prominent members of the club included Phil May, John Hassall, and Heath Robinson.³²² He was equally supportive of Louis Wain, the cartoonist famed for his cat drawings who, by 1925, was suffering from mental illness and living in poverty.³²³ Among others who supported Wain were Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, sister-in-law of G. K. Chesterton who had previously contributed essays to Louis Raemaeker's book of cartoons. Such links indicate the vibrant network of cartoonists and other artists and writers within which Studdy moved, continuing the tradition exemplified by William Makepeace Thackeray in chapter one.

Victor Hicks had already been involved with the film industry during the war with the advertisement drawings discussed in the previous section. Denis Gifford suggests he was involved in at least one 'Kine Komedy Kartoon' before the armistice, an apparently non-topical 'cartoon burlesque of a typical Music Hall program'.³²⁴ It was only after the war, however, that he received notable attention for producing a series of animated cartoons, including the 'A Genii and a Genius' series for which he was given a full page illustrated profile in *Picture Plays*.³²⁵

Tom Webster was another print cartoonist who moved into animated cartoons in the 1920s. Webster had been involved in film at the end of the war, when he was a local newspaper cartoonist. In 1918, for the regional Birmingham Film Producing Co., he produced a series of cartoons, beginning with *Charlie at the Front*, that featured a likeness of Charlie Chaplin, although there is no indication these were authorised by the famous film star.³²⁶ Webster had no further involvement in film until 1922, instead building his career as a cartoonist specialising in sporting subjects, contributing to the national *Daily Mail* as well as magazines such as *Answers*, *The London Magazine*, and the *Weekly Despatch*. By 1920 he was famous enough to be regularly referred to in sporting columns in *The Times*, to have his cartoons 'prominently displayed' in the *New York Times*

³²¹ *The Times*, 11 April 1921, 7.

³²² *The Times*, 12 November 1921, 8.

³²³ *The Times*, 12 August 1925, 9.

³²⁴ *Bios*, 26 April 1917, 301; Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 175.

³²⁵ It is not clear whether the Spick and Span characters Hicks discusses in *Picture Plays* were a separate series of animated cartoons or appeared in the 'A Genii and a Genius' series. *Picture Plays*, 20 December 1919, 8.

³²⁶ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 7 March 1918, 76.

and to have his own annual published.³²⁷ In 1922 Webster was involved in producing a cartoon based on his racehorse character ‘Tishy’, which was included in a Royal variety performance on 12 December 1922 at the London Hippodrome, which included both live stage acts and cinematograph films.³²⁸ Denis Gifford credits Joe Noble and W.D Ford as animators on this film, suggesting the now famous Webster’s involvement was more limited than his early films.³²⁹ Despite its Royal premiere, the ‘Tishy’ film does not appear to have been successful with no further films known to have been produced.

In 1925/1926 Webster, again with the assistance of Joe Noble, produced another animated cartoon adaptation of Webster’s characters, this time a horse and trainer pair called ‘Alfred and Steve’. This series was heavily advertised, with multiple full-page advertisements in trade papers.³³⁰ Webster’s fame as a print cartoonist provided the central theme of this advertising, with the *Daily Mail*’s banner prominently displayed beneath Webster’s signature with him being described as ‘the Famous Cartoonist’.³³¹ One advertisement emphasised Webster’s ‘two million readers daily’ and that if one were to ‘ask the man in the street the name of the funniest cartoonist...nine times out of ten he will reply “Why, Tom Webster, of course”’, while another crowned him ‘Prince of Cartoonists’.³³² Despite this push the films were not successful, and it is not clear if the planned eight single reel films were ever completed.³³³ The likely cause of this failure was the impact of reviews, which felt the cartoons did not adequately embrace the potential of their new medium in comparison to the large number of competitors in the market by 1926. While advertising claimed “‘Alfred’ and ‘Steve’ are funnier by far than a Webster cartoon – with the added advantage of being animated’, reviews criticised them, saying one film ‘lacks some of the life of its best American prototypes’ while ‘there are too many sub-titles’ in another.”³³⁴ Webster’s background as a print cartoonist may have served well as a

³²⁷ *KW*, 1 January 1926, viii; *The Times*, 15 April 1919, 6; *The Times*, 14 July 1922, 11; *The Times*, 12 June 1920, 9; *The Times*, 19 July 1919, 6; *The Times*, 23 September 1919, 4; *The Times*, 18 December 1919, 7; *The Times*, 13 September 1920, 10; *The Times*, 27 July 1921, 7.

³²⁸ *The Times*, 23 November 1922, 10; *The Times*, 13 December 1922, 10.

³²⁹ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 65.

³³⁰ Full page advertisements appeared in *KW* on 31 December 1925, 4; 1 January 1926, viii; 14 January 1926, 35; 11 February 1926, 23; 4 March 1926, 6.

³³¹ *KW*, 1 January 1926, viii.

³³² *KW*, 11 February 1926, 23; *KW*, 4 March 1926, 6.

³³³ *KW*, 4 March 1926, 6.

³³⁴ *KW*, 4 March 1926, 6; *KW*, 1 April 1926, 32; *KW*, 21 January 1926, 68.

marketing advantage, but for critics the films did not move far enough away from their heritage, where ‘individual drawings make the appeal’ rather than the animation.³³⁵ The aesthetic criteria which were applied to animated cartoons of this period will be examined further in the following chapter on economics as these played a significant role in shaping British animated cartoons, their reception and subsequent valuation in histories of the British cinema.

As seen in the previous chapter, Anson Dyer had already had considerable involvement in the film industry, contributing to both the ‘Kine Komedie Karton’ and ‘John Bull’s Animated Sketchbook’ series. It was only after the war, however, that his work moved away from the ‘house style’ of these series, which were also animated by others, and he gained greater attention for this more distinctive work. Dyer was born in 1876 and after graduating from Brighton Art School had earned an ‘enviable reputation as a black and white artist’ for publishers and advertising, as well as designing stained glass windows for churches.³³⁶ After the war, Dyer’s work followed the pattern seen with the other artists under discussion, moving away from the topical and political towards light-hearted adaptations of pre-existing characters, including a number of Shakespeare plays, as well as anticipating a number of Disney adaptations with fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs* (both 1922) and Joel Chandler Harris’ *Uncle Remus* stories in 1919. Such sources would clearly cause the audience to recall the print illustrations that would have accompanied the original texts and thus emphasise again the close links between the animated cartoon and print cartooning, specifically in this case, book illustration.³³⁷

The dominant pattern of print artists moving into film to make animated cartoons is clearly established by the preceding biographies of the major contributors to the form. The most illuminating exception to this pattern is the

³³⁵ *KW*, 21 January 1926, 68.

³³⁶ Birth Registered Jul-Aug-Sep in Steyning, Sussex in 1876. "England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes."; *Pictures and Picturegoer*, 2 August 1919, 143; *Pictures and Picturegoer*, 25 October 1919, 496.

³³⁷ Examples of illustrated versions of these texts published in Britain include Joel Chandler Harris, F. Church, and J. Moses, "Uncle Remus and His Legends of the Old Plantation " (London: David Bogue, 1881); Joel Chandler Harris and A. T. Elwe, *Uncle Remus, or Mr. Fox, Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Terrapin* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1883); Andrew Lang, H. J. Ford, and G. P. Jacob Hood, *Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1912). This final item was derived from Lang’s earlier ‘The Blue Fairy Book’, whose sister publication ‘The Red Fairy Book’ was illustrated by Lancelot Speed in the latter half of the 19th century: Lang, ed. *The Red Fairy Book*.

career of Sid Griffiths who was responsible for the 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' series from 1925. Griffiths was born in 1899, and as such moving images would not have been an innovation for him, merely part of normal life, unlike the other artists described here who had established careers in print in the mid-to-late 19th century.³³⁸ Before becoming a filmmaker in 1925, Griffiths worked as a cinema projectionist in Cardiff, an experience which would have further normalised moving images - and specifically animated cartoons - for him, as well as providing an introduction to the technology of cinema.³³⁹ While little else is known about Griffiths' early life, these facts alone indicate a shift that was occurring at the end of the period studied here. In the 1920s a new generation of artists were coming to film as their primary medium.³⁴⁰ They had been born after the innovations of 1895/6 and reached working age after cinemas were a naturalised part of modern life. This does not mean these artists outright rejected the traditions that are shown here to be central to British animated cartoons; on the contrary, their films exhibit many aspects of the tradition that indicate strong continuities. Nevertheless, having had no direct training or contact with that print tradition may have been a contributory factor in the changes that occur at the end of the 1920s, to be explored in this and later chapters.

Film and the graphic arts: Shared concerns

It can be seen that the First World War period saw the forming of considerable links between the film industry and illustration and cartooning, which continued strongly post-war and into the 1920s. Film drew on these fields for subject matter for live action films, and in the use of illustration for advertising material and trade journals. Most importantly, almost all of the animated cartoons were produced by established figures from illustration or cartooning, with a minority drawn from music hall. These artists were known for their still images, but in moving into film appropriated the lightning cartoon act from music hall as a first step to creating the movement necessary for moving images. It is clear that these

³³⁸ Birth Registered Jul-Aug-Sep in Cardiff in 1899. "England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes." Griffiths death records confirm this date. His death was registered Oct-Nov-Dec 1967 in Newton Abbot, Devon. "England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes," (London, England: General Register Office, 1916-2005).

³³⁹ Dave Berry, "Jerry the Tyke - Felix's Canine Cousin," in *Crossing the Pond: Anglo-American Film Relations before 1930*, ed. Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (Trowbridge: Flicks, 2002), 66.

³⁴⁰ Len Lye (born in 1901) may be considered another notable member of this generation. Roger Horrocks, "Len Lye – Origins of His Art," in *Len Lye*, ed. Jean-Michel Bouhours and Roger Horrocks (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2000), 179.

animators' backgrounds played an important role in the films they produced, both in terms of their general working practices and aesthetically in the films themselves. Chapter one examined a number of key aspects to illustration, cartooning and music hall, and these qualities are readily apparent in these artists' films and the way they approached their work.

Music hall origins and influences

The aesthetic impact of music hall, and especially the lightning cartoon act, on British animated cartoons will be examined in depth later, yet there were a number of practical influences music hall played on the animated cartoons under discussion. The role music-hall performers played in the earliest developments of animated cartoons has already been addressed because the relationship was so close. Lightning cartoon performers from music hall such as Tom Merry, Walter Booth and Little Stanley were responsible for the production of the earliest appearances of drawn images on film and developing the act using trick film techniques. Equally music halls were important venues for the presentation of these films, with Merry's films first appearing publically at the Alhambra in Leicester Square in 1896 and music halls remaining important exhibition venues until the development of dedicated cinemas. With the move towards cinema presentation and the adoption of film by print cartoonists, rather than music-hall performers, the influence of music hall might be thought to have ended. There remained, however, a number of ways music hall played a determining role in the way animated cartoons were exhibited and received during the war period and the 1920s.

Music halls continued to be an important venue for some exhibitors during the First World War. Ernest H. Mills' famed *The Romance of David Lloyd George* was shown not only at dedicated cinemas, but 'also at Music Halls and Theatres', and a later advert indicates that the film had been booked at the Coliseum, the Alhambra, and the Palladium, among other venues known for their mixture of music-hall or variety acts and films.³⁴¹ As discussed earlier, Mills was a rare example of a music-hall cartoonist working in animated cartoons, so presenting his films in these venues, where he would have previously appeared as a live act, would have harnessed his star appeal in them. Equally Lancelot

³⁴¹ *Bios*, 11 January 1917, 105; *Bios*, 25 January 1917, 396.

Speed's *Bully Boy* cartoons were found to 'very frequently ... form a "turn" at some of the best music-halls'.³⁴²

Clearly significant links remained between music hall and film, more than 20 years after the films of Tom Merry were first shown at the Alhambra. A *Bioscope* editorial decried this position, expressing the concern of its exhibitor readership that demanded that music halls showing films should be subject to the same legislation as dedicated cinemas, and that cinemas were commercially disadvantaged by the legal position in 1917.³⁴³ While the economic principle may have been a factor, this disagreement also reflected a class distinction, hinted at in the claim that 'we do not believe any [film] exhibitor would desire to possess an excise licence for refreshments'.³⁴⁴ As discussed earlier, the music hall had commonly been considered a working class entertainment, whereas cinemas in 1917 considered themselves middle class, although in each case there is considerable evidence that the audience demographics were far more complex, and both historically and geographically specific, than such generalised statements convey. One aspect of this debate is particularly pertinent for the discussion of animated cartoons: audience reaction and participation. As described in chapter one, lightning cartoonists would have provoked a vocal reaction in their music-hall audience when drawing popular, or unpopular, political figures as part of their act. Such a vocal reaction, with its association with the alcohol served at music halls, was anathema to cinemas trying to appeal to middle class aspirations.

A case in 1910 rehearsed these issues, with a Captain H. B. Jay bringing a suit against Bedford Palace of Varieties after he was ejected for exceeding 'the limits of fair and occasionable criticism of the performance' in vocalising during a performance.³⁴⁵ *The Bioscope* makes a clear class distinction in this case, suggesting venues in Hoxton or Bermondsey would tolerate 'much coarser and more noisy' interruptions than their West-end counterparts. Such a position would seem to suggest that by 1917, when dedicated cinemas were common, audiences sat silently through the film programme, erasing one more link with

³⁴² Pictures and the Picturegoer, 6 February 1915, 408.

³⁴³ *Bios*, 9 August 1917, 568.

³⁴⁴ An opinion piece in the following week's *Bioscope* disputes any significant economic impact, suggesting music hall's bad quality projection has the effect of making 'people go to the cinema to see the pictures decently'. *Bios*, 16 August 1917, 768; *Bios*, 9 August 1917, 568.

³⁴⁵ *Bios*, 7 July 1910, 3.

music halls Yet, as Nicholas Hiley has shown, British cinema audiences continued to be vocal into the 1910s, although ‘from 1909 onwards the working class cinema audience was subjected to a concerted effort at controlling its behaviour’, including dampening vocal responses.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, audiences continued to be vocal throughout this period, especially in animated cartoons, but in a manner controlled by the exhibitor and his musical director.

In 1917 Anson Dyer’s film *The Kaiser’s Record* featured a series of famous music-hall songs, including ‘We don’t want to fight, but by Jingo if we do’ and ‘All dressed up and nowhere to go’, that would be very familiar to the audience and would likely result in a singalong.³⁴⁷ This result was to be encouraged according to *The Bioscope* reviewer who states that cinemas ‘with a musical director who can play up to the artist are sure of a hearty welcome’.³⁴⁸ Audience participation remained a component of cinema going during the First World War, another indicator of the continued influence of music hall, and one which would have played a particular role for animated cartoons, themselves heavily influenced by music hall. Furthermore, this participation enhanced the active spectatorship engendered by the lightning cartoon’s narrative of perception and therefore contributes to a central argument of this thesis, that these animated cartoons were deeply concerned with the spectators’ active perceptual processes. This audience participation, and the influence of music hall in general, would remain important to animated cartoons after the war and into the 1920s.

Singalong films in the 1920s: music hall’s continued influence

Music hall remained a vital factor in the shaping of some animated cartoons into the 1920s. The most notable instance of this continued influence is the vogue for ‘sing-along’ cartoons in the mid-1920s, films which utilised an animated ‘bouncing ball’ or similar device to indicate the lyrics of a song with the intent of promoting a communal singalong in the audience. The first singalong films to be released in Britain were Reciprocity’s *Milestone Melodies* from January 1926, with Mercury’s *Famous Melody* series also released in that month.³⁴⁹ While these

³⁴⁶ Nicholas Hiley, “The British Cinema Auditorium,” in *Film and the First World War*, ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 165.

³⁴⁷ *Bios*, 12 July 1917, 198.

³⁴⁸ *Bios*, 12 July 1917, 180.

³⁴⁹ *KW*, 5 November 1925, 43.

films reached cinemas first, Pathé had been promoting the American produced *Song Car-tune* series since August 1925 for release in March 1926.³⁵⁰ They were clearly successful as Pathé instigated a British produced series called *Pathésongs* in 1926 and by their own account achieved the ‘huge success of cinema singing’.³⁵¹ This prompted them to release a third series later in the same year, titled *Super-Songs*.³⁵² Alongside these, British cinemas were flooded with new releases in 1926 and 1927. These included British produced series such as Ideal’s *Singsong* series,³⁵³ Pioneer’s *Famous Song Scenes*,³⁵⁴ Pioneer/Luscombe’s *Community Song* series,³⁵⁵ Parkinson’s *Syncopated Melodies*,³⁵⁶ as well as Film Box Office’s American produced *Song Parodies*.³⁵⁷ The secondary status of short films at this time meant the trade press did not list or review every release in each series, though it is clear they were all intended to have a regular and frequent release schedule. Ideal’s *Singsong* series was ‘to be released fortnightly’ with at least 12 films being released.³⁵⁸ Pioneer/Luscombe’s *Community Song* series was planned for 26 episodes.³⁵⁹ Parkinson’s *Syncopated Melodies* included at least 12 releases.³⁶⁰ Given that these films would also have been eminently repeatable it can be assumed they were a mainstay of the cinema programme in 1926 and 1927. From 1928, however, references to the films became scarce in trade papers. To an extent this may reflect that the films had simply become an unremarkable part of the cinema programme, but it also coincides with two important changes: first, the emergence of synchronised sound cinema in this period and second, the slow decline in popularity of the community singing movement.³⁶¹

There were a number of precedents and contexts for these films. Illustrated songs, which utilised magic lantern slides with the lyrics printed on them, were popular were both in American vaudeville and nickelodeons,³⁶² and

³⁵⁰ *KW*, 27 August 1925, lxix.

³⁵¹ *KW*, 2 September 1926, 15.

³⁵² *KW*, 18 November 1926, 74.

³⁵³ *KW*, 1 July 1926, 2.

³⁵⁴ *KW*, 21 October 1926, 63.

³⁵⁵ *KW*, 3 March 1927, 54.

³⁵⁶ *KW*, 10 March 1927, 59.

³⁵⁷ *KW*, 7 October 1926, 63. *Film Daily*, 5 December 1926, 13.

³⁵⁸ *KW*, 19 August 1926, 8.

³⁵⁹ *KW*, 3 March 1927, 54.

³⁶⁰ *KW*, 10 March 1927, 59.

³⁶¹ *The Times*, 25 April 1927, 6.

³⁶² Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), 183.

in Britain.³⁶³ Another important precursor was the *Koko Song Car-tune* series produced from 1924 by the Fleischer brothers, Dave and Max Fleischer.³⁶⁴ The final important predecessor was the parallel rise and decline of the community singing movement, inaugurated by Gibson Young's founding of the Community Singers Association (CSA) in April 1925,³⁶⁵ which reached its peak with community singing at the 1927 Football Association Cup Final with the King in attendance.³⁶⁶ The singalong films of the 1920s were clearly embedded within a number of contexts and engage a range of issues beyond the scope of this thesis.³⁶⁷ For the present discussion, there are three main areas of interest: the films as an outlet for animated cartoons; the continued influence of music hall; and the association of cartooning with an active spectator. Most obviously these films, produced in the volumes described earlier, constitute a major part of the total amount of animated cartoons on British cinema screens in the 1920s. Not all these series used animated cartoons. Ideal's *Singsongs* and Luscombe's *Community Song* series were fully animated, but Reciprocity's *Milestone Melodies* and Mercury's *Famous Melody* series used photographic footage and with so few of these films surviving, other series cannot be clearly identified as using one technique or the other.

Secondly, these films indicate the degree to which, even in the mid-1920s, animated cartoons remained indebted to music hall. As the titles of these series suggest, the films were fully intended to provoke a communal vocal reaction of the kind that was commonly associated with music hall. One review writes of the *Pathésongs* series: 'the popular song . . . and clever sketches and good timing ensure that any audience will be both interested and quickly moved to song'.³⁶⁸ The cartoons accompanying the Ideal advertisements feature large groups, many holding song sheets in front of them, with their mouths wide open

³⁶³ *A Detailed Catalogue of Photographic Lantern Slides, Life Models & Co.*, (Holmfirth, England: Bamforth & Co., 1910). Society, "The Illustrated Bamforth Slide Catalogue."

³⁶⁴ Daniel Goldmark, "Before *Willie*: Reconsidering Music and the Animated Cartoon of the 1920s," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 233.

³⁶⁵ Gibson Young, "Recreative Singing: Community Singing in Industry," *The Sackbut*, May 1925, 300-01.

³⁶⁶ Dave Russell, "Abiding Memories: The Community Singing Movement and English Social Life in the 1920s," *Popular Music* 27, no. 01 (2008): 117-33.

³⁶⁷ For a more detailed discussion see Malcolm Cook, "Animating the Audience: Singalong Films in Britain in the 1920s," in *The Sounds of the Silents in Britain: Voice, Music and Sound in Early Cinema Exhibition*, ed. Annette Davison and Julie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁶⁸ *KW*, 20 May 1926, 68.

in song, again emphasising the communal and interactive nature of the experience (Figure 19).³⁶⁹



Figure 19: *Singsong* advertisement (1926)

The continued influence of music hall is also apparent in the song repertoire chosen. Ideal's *Singsong* series drew on music-hall hits, and often

³⁶⁹ Full page advertisements featuring these cartoons appear in *KW* on 24 June 1926, 2; 1 July 1926, 2; 15 July 1926, 2; 19 August 1926, 8; 16 September 1926, 26.

those that date from the earliest days of film and before. Ideal chose to emphasise the songs' origins by listing the names of the music-hall performers associated with the songs alongside the song names in their advertising.³⁷⁰ Vesta Tilley's 'The Midnight Son', used in a September 1926 edition, had been debuted by Tilley, one of the most popular music-hall stars, in 1897.³⁷¹ Tilley had also helped popularise another Ideal *Singsong* - 'Burlington Bertie' - a song she first sang in 1900.³⁷² Harry Lauder's 'Stop Y'r Ticklin Jock' featured in another Ideal *Singsong*, a song Lauder had been performing since at least 1904, and was strongly associated with his Scottish persona.³⁷³ Lauder had been performing in music halls since 1895 and was knighted in 1919 in recognition of his work during the First World War.³⁷⁴ By 1926 he would be considered a national treasure and one of the most recognisable music-hall and variety performers.

The final quality of the singalong films of particular importance to this study is the emphasis they placed on the active spectator. Advertising for the *Singsong* series emphasised the interactive nature of these films as their primary purpose as 'they comprise familiar British songs and melodies that people love to sing together' and that they contain 'songs they all sing – heartily'.³⁷⁵ While primarily musical in nature, the visual element of the singalong films was important to their appeal. Ideal's advertising highlighted the 'drawings by Norman Cobb' and the use of cartoon images in the advertising indicates the equal status given to the visual. As discussed throughout this thesis, cartooning had a long association with active vocal spectatorship from the lightning cartoon. This was clearly still a factor in the 1920s, with Ideal advertising that their *Singsong* films contain 'the pictures the people yell at'.³⁷⁶ The association with lightning cartooning also carried into the films themselves, with the bouncing ball replaced by an animated conductor's hand holding a baton which points to each word in turn in the *Community Song* series, for example. While ostensibly musical in reference, the image evokes the iconography of the lightning cartoon, the artist's hand holding a pen or pencil. Animation was important to the

³⁷⁰ *KW*, 16 September 1926, 26.

³⁷¹ *KW*, 23 September 1926, 70; *Era*, 6 November 6 1897, 19.

³⁷² *KW*, 16 September 1926, 26; *Era*, 22 September 1900, 19.

³⁷³ *KW*, 16 September 1926, 26; *Judy: The London Serio-Comic Journal*, 16 November 1904, 1172.

³⁷⁴ *Era*, 17 August 1895, 16; Dave Russell, "Lauder, Sir Henry [Harry] (1870–1950)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁷⁵ *KW*, 24 June 1926, 2; *KW*, 16 September 1926, 26.

³⁷⁶ *KW*, 1 July 1926, 2.

singalong films discussed here because it encouraged and was associated with active vocal participation.

The Lightning cartoon in 1920s cinema

Another series of cartoon films which drew heavily upon music hall was produced in the 1920s, and of particular relevance to the current discussion used the lightning cartoon act with little adjustment for the cinema screen. The 'Pathé Pictorial' newsreel featured a cartoon competition for ten weeks in 1921.³⁷⁷ Each week the newspaper cartoonist 'Poy' (the pen name of well known newspaper cartoonist Percy Fearon³⁷⁸) drew a lightning cartoon depicting the title of a song or play, and the audience were invited to guess what that title was, and send a postcard to Pathé's offices once they had guessed all ten titles in order to win a £100 prize.³⁷⁹ These films drew upon music hall in a number of ways. Many of the titles depicted were popular music-hall songs from the heyday of the halls before cinema. The opening film in the series depicts the song 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo' originally performed by Charles Coborn in 1892.³⁸⁰ Coborn's work was also depicted in the final film of the series, the song 'Two Lovely Black Eyes' first performed by him in 1886.³⁸¹

The lightning cartoons performed are also a direct link with the music-hall performance discussed in a previous chapter. In several of the films Poy is seen approaching a desk before he begins to draw, just as a music-hall performer would approach the easel on stage, before the film cuts to the format used in all ten films, namely an overhead shot of the blank page on which we see the artists hand drawing. No animation is used, the only technological manipulation applied being the use of jump cuts and slow filming speed to enhance the 'lightning' quality of the drawings. The narrative of perception is readily apparent in these films and is enhanced further by the competitive element introduced by the contest. It seems probable that, in a cinema audience put in mind of the music hall by the mode of address of these films, this guessing game would have been a highly vocal and competitive activity, an interactive experience, one that again has cartooning at its centre.

³⁷⁷ The final film gives an exact deadline for entering the competition as 15 June 1921.

³⁷⁸ "Percy Fearon [Poy]," British Cartoon Archive, <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/artists/percyfearon/biography>.

³⁷⁹ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 58.

³⁸⁰ *Era*, 13 February 1892, 32.

³⁸¹ *Era*, 31 July 1886, 8.

The cartoon competition is the most significant use of the traditional music-hall lightning cartoon act in 1920s British cinema, the competitive element introduced by the 'guess the title' game making explicit the narrative of perception that is implicit in all performances of this act. There were, however, appearances of this act performed for newsreels throughout the decade, although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how common straight lightning cartoons were. A large number of the films from this period have been lost, and because these were only segments in longer newsreels, paper documentation, such as reviews, would not always comprehensively list the contents of the package. Nevertheless, there exist enough extant examples to suggest that this form would remain familiar to cinema audiences, particularly in its use for topical and political commentary. The general election of 1923 saw non-animated lightning cartoons featured in the 'Gaumont Graphic' newsreel. In December 1923 'The Political Race' featured, showing an unknown artist drawing the three candidates (Baldwin, Lloyd George, and MacDonald) each being assisted to climb towards the 'prize' by a figure representing their core constituencies, followed by a large question mark. Increasingly these lightning cartoons were embedded within a documentary format of a screen portrait of the artist in question, examples including a portrait of Louis Wain in Pathé's 'Eve's Film Review' in the early 1920s, and portraits of French cartoonist Jean Louis Forain (1923) and Dutch cartoonist Van Dock (1929) in 'Gaumont Graphic'. That the lightning cartoon had increasingly to be bracketed by the framing device of a screen portrait of the artist is indicative that the form was becoming less dominant. Nevertheless, its appearance in these films was merely the most visible and obvious of the links film cartooning maintained with the music-hall act even into the 1920s; the less obvious aesthetic links will be examined in chapter five.

Music hall and the formalisation of the variety format

The appearance of the music-hall lightning cartoon act in these newsreels and magazine films draws attention to their relationship with music hall, in particular the formalisation of the variety format. As discussed in chapter one, the music-hall programme would have consisted of a series of discrete complementary acts. The earliest film presentations were often included in music halls as one of these acts, and film programmes continued to mimic the segmented programme format

long after dedicated cinemas appeared and links with music hall were weakened. In the 1910s this programme was generally created by individual exhibitors and would have varied from cinema to cinema. The majority of exhibitors constructed their own programme by selecting films from a range of sources, leaving the exact relationship between animated cartoons and the surrounding programme subject to regional or even personal difference and making analysis of the precise relationship difficult. However, some distributors did produce pre-packaged programmes featuring cartoons. Trans-Atlantic Film emphasised the volume of material they could offer each week ‘20151ft...this is what the Trans-Atlantic offers you each week’, from which an exhibitor could choose a programme, including ‘Topical War Cartoons’ by American cartoonist Hy Mayer.³⁸² Such a service could only be provided by a large company with the resources to continually source large volumes of film, and it is telling that Trans-Atlantic, as their name suggests, primarily distributed American product, highlighting the importance of international markets and the economic model of the film industry for the fate of British cartoons, a subject addressed in the following chapter.

While the exact structure of programmes they would appear in was generally unknown to the cartoonist, they were sensitive to their context in order to complement or contrast with the films that would surround them, just as their cartooning predecessors in print or music hall would have. The majority of the animated cartoons produced during the First World War were topical, so even while providing valuable light relief from the surrounding programme, they would also be commenting upon them, whether in newsreels and actualities, or in dramatic wartime stories. One reviewer highlights the importance of

the animated cartoon as a humorous commentary on events of topical interest, and in this respect nothing has been done better than the political skits by such well-known and talented black and white artists as Dudley Buxton, Anson Dyer, and Ernest Mills...[their films] form ideal subjects as a contrast to any feature whether grave or gay³⁸³

Animated cartoons played an important role in creating a balanced programme for exhibitors. Anson Dyer’s *Foch – The Man* (1918) was suggested to be ‘just the sort of thing required as a follow-up to heavy drama, and should prove

³⁸² *Bios*, 1 October 1914, xviii-xix.

³⁸³ *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

invaluable to exhibitors'³⁸⁴; likewise the Bairnsfather cartoons 'will furnish a good relief to the average programme of picture drama'³⁸⁵; while Dudley Buxton's *John Bull's Animated Sketchbook* (1915) provided the 'necessary comedy element of film production'.³⁸⁶ The importance of this sensitivity to the surrounding programme remained in place for separately released cartoon films of the 1920s. All *Kinematograph Weekly* reviews of this period categorised their comments under various headings, including 'Story', 'Points of Appeal', 'Production', 'Acting', and 'Suitability', the latter guiding exhibitors on how to programme the film. For short films, such as animated cartoons, the majority of these headings were discarded, but it is telling that the 'suitability' comments were not. For instance, Dudley Buxton's *A Fishy Business* (1920), part of the 'Memoirs of Miffy' series, attracted the praise 'should please any audience'. The relationship a short cartoon would have with the rest of its programme was central to its appeal to both audience and exhibitor.³⁸⁷

This relationship between cartoon and surrounding programme was increasingly formalised by producers and distributors in the 1920s. Ideal packaged their comedy films together under the banner 'Laughter Festival', including both live action films, magazine reels and animated cartoons. The central attraction of these was Tom Webster's 'Alfred and Steve' animated cartoons, the characters providing the visual identity for the whole package in trade advertising.³⁸⁸ In 1921 Anson Dyer was working for Hepworth Picture Plays and his work was packaged with that company's feature length films. An advertisement for *The Narrow Valley* (Dir: C. M. Hepworth, 1921) makes specific reference to the film being 'preceded by the first of a new series of burlesques by Anson Dyer' with Dyer's name given particular emphasis through large type, larger even than Hepworth's own name.³⁸⁹ While not specified in the advertisement the films in question are likely the 'Bobby the Scout' series Dyer initiated in 1921, of which three cartoons are known to have been made.³⁹⁰ No doubt the 'light fare' of these cartoons provided a contrast to *The Narrow Valley*,

³⁸⁴ The *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 24 October 1918, 64.

³⁸⁵ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1818.

³⁸⁶ *Bios*, 15 April 1915, 255.

³⁸⁷ *KW*, 25 November 1920, 89.

³⁸⁸ *KW*, 14 January 1926, 35.

³⁸⁹ *KW*, 2 June 1921.

³⁹⁰ *KW*, 16 June 1921, 45; *KW*, 10 November 1921, 66. *Bios*, 13 October 1921, 52.

described as a ‘strong story of English country life, set amid the grandeur of the Sussex Downs and the glory of the Surrey hills and valleys’.³⁹¹ Nevertheless, the ‘Bobby the Scout’ series was suitably high-brow for the audience of such a literary film: one episode is instigated by Bobby playing on his ‘harp’, while others in the series featured references to ‘Jupiter and Juno’, ‘gods of ancient Greece and Rome’, a ‘centaur’, and a ‘horrible serpent’.³⁹² Seen in the context of the packaging of his animated cartoons with Hepworth’s features, Dyer’s burlesques on Shakespeare produced in 1920 can be seen, in their use of literary references, as intended specifically to complement the lofty aims of Hepworth whose ‘most positive contribution to the British film was a measure of dignity and respectability and a feeling that cinema was more than a vulgar money-making novelty’.³⁹³

The newsreel and magazine format further formalised the relationship between animated cartoons and their immediate context. Newsreels and magazine films had been distributed throughout the 1910s, and on occasion had included lightning or animated cartoons. Equally animated cartoons fulfilling the same role as they did with newspapers was acknowledged during the war, one writer stating ‘the comic serial has been a feature of illustrated papers for many years...this has led to the consideration of the animated cartoon as a humorous commentary on events of topical interest’.³⁹⁴ In the 1920s, however, animated cartoons became increasingly associated with newsreels and magazine films, with fewer independent cartoons released outside of this format. This increased affinity has a number of causal explanations. Dudley Buxton and Joe Noble’s ‘Pongo the Pup’ series was released only as an ‘inset into the Pathé Gazette’.³⁹⁵ Its length of only 250ft out of a magazine that would have occupied a whole reel is revealing of one motivation for the integration of animated cartoons into this format.³⁹⁶ Coupling animated cartoons with ‘interest and travel’ actuality footage reduced the demand for large volumes of animated footage with its time consuming and costly production process, while allowing a consistent and

³⁹¹ *KW*, 16 June 1921, 45; *KW*, 2 June 1921.

³⁹² *KW*, 10 November 1921, 66; *KW*, 16 June 1921, 45; *Bios*, 13 October 1921, 52; *Bios*, 13 October 1921, 52; *Bios*, 13 October 1921, 52.

³⁹³ Low, *The History of the British Film. 1918-1929*.

³⁹⁴ *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

³⁹⁵ *KW*, 9 October 1924, 56.

³⁹⁶ *KW*, 9 October 1924, 56; *KW*, 16 October 1924, 49.

regular release schedule which could capitalise on the popularity and demand for animated cartoons. The underpinning economic rationale for this approach to programming cartoons is discussed in further detail in the following chapter.³⁹⁷

Including animated cartoons in newsreel and magazine films not only benefited the animators, their inclusion became increasingly important in providing a consistent tone and visual identity for films which otherwise contained an ever changing variety of material. ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ could appear one week alongside ‘the illumination of Niagara Falls...“Ironfist” depicts a man with a strong resemblance to an erstwhile film “producer” demolishing stones and bricks...“Psychology and Snow”...the Herefordshire Wye is shown in Pathécolour’, while another week Jerry appears alongside ‘a five-year-old lifesaver...“The Unbreakable Clock”...[and] the drastic training of an American football team’.³⁹⁸ With such an eclectic mix of material, the only consistent element between each weekly episode was the hand drawn titles which introduced each segment, and the presence of a regular cartoon character such as the British ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ and ‘Pongo the Pup’ series or American imports such as ‘Felix the Cat’. That animated cartoons were an important part of the magazine and newsreel films is demonstrated by ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ being identified in Pathé’s advertising as one of the highlights of the ‘Pathé Pictorial’ magazine.³⁹⁹ Equally reviews, limited to only one or two sentences of space to review the full contents of the reel, commonly picked out the animated cartoons as notable, for instance one review remarking ‘the “star” item in this feature is the third of a new series of British cartoons entitled “Jerry the Troublesome Tyke”’.⁴⁰⁰

Technique and the technology of reproduction

It has been shown in chapter one that a significant aspect of the role of print cartoonist was in understanding the techniques and technology of reproduction and adapting their work to best fit. While the technology of moving image reproduction bears little relation to that of printing, the techniques cartoonists learnt to use to adapt to a reproduced medium may explain their success in

³⁹⁷ *KW*, 16 October 1924, 49.

³⁹⁸ *KW*, 20 August 1925, 57; *KW*, 3 September 1925, 70.

³⁹⁹ *KW*, 27 August 1925, lxvi-lxvii.

⁴⁰⁰ *KW*, 20 August 1925, 57. Other examples include *KW*, 23 July 1925, 59; *KW*, 30 July 1925, 67.

bringing their art work to moving images long before other artists would achieve the equivalent results.⁴⁰¹ The requirement to understand the implications of technology were clearly evident from the very earliest lightning cartoon films Tom Merry made in collaboration with Robert Paul and Birt Acres.

The first two films of Merry performing were initially produced for display in Edison's Kinetoscope, not for projection. The Kinetoscope displayed films at 40 frames per second, so the first two Merry films would have been shot at this rate. The earliest of Paul's projected performances used the same Kinetoscope films, but these were projected at slower frame rates, the mismatch in production and projection speeds resulting in a slow motion effect. As John Barnes argues, this undoubtedly added to the appeal of some subjects.⁴⁰² The film most often commented upon and praised in reviews of this period, *Rough Sea at Dover* would be given an ethereal, picturesque quality that would enhance the natural subject matter. In contrast the Merry films would be adversely affected, the 'lightning' speed damaged by doubling the screen time.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, human performers' movements would be identified as unnatural more readily than phenomena such as waves, and the change in projection speed would have contributed to the flicker which caused one reviewer to remark 'it would not be safe for a man addicted to drink to look at that for more than a minute'.⁴⁰⁴ This undoubtedly contributed to Merry's films being removed from Paul's presentations soon after these first shows, and indicates the importance of filmmakers working with the technology of reproduction in mind.

As described throughout this chapter, the huge growth of animated cartoons produced during the war and immediate post-war period saw a significant number of artists move from print cartooning and illustration into film. The previous chapter described how Lancelot Speed and Harry Furniss had both been praised for their particular sensitivity to the challenges of reproduction in the book illustrations. Awareness not only of aesthetic requirements but also

⁴⁰¹ In a contrasting example Hans Richter and Viking Eggling struggled with the technology of moving images in the 1910s and 1920s, impacting their ability to translate their scroll paintings into films. See Cook, "Visual Music in Film, 1921-1924: Richter, Eggeling, Ruttman," 211.

⁴⁰² Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 217.

⁴⁰³ The film of Merry sketching Bismarck is considered simply 'successful' by *Era* reviewer, but the review does specifically comment on a film of two men boxing 'whose sparring seemed to us a little slow', as a result of a mismatch between the shooting speed intended for the Kinetoscope and projection speed. *Era*, 28 March 1896, 18.

⁴⁰⁴ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 March 1896, 2.

technological issues surrounding reproduction would have served Speed well and may well explain his spending two years ‘experimenting exhaustively’ with animation before the production of his first commercially released cartoon, the first of the *Bully Boy* series.⁴⁰⁵ Certainly it is apparent from the films themselves that Speed paid more attention than other filmmakers to how the finished result would appear in reproduction, one review praising his ability to ‘appreciate to the full the unique possibilities offered by the use of the moving picture camera in conjunction with work of this sort’.⁴⁰⁶

A 1919 self-penned article for *Picture Plays*, a British fan magazine, by Victor Hicks whose cartooning and film career were described earlier provides further evidence of the importance placed on the techniques of reproduction by a cartoonist’s training. Hicks is described as ‘The well-known artist’, immediately highlighting his credentials as an established graphic artist.⁴⁰⁷ Hicks goes on to emphasise his attempt to ‘introduce background and tones into each picture and was most fastidious on the artistic side – a fact that is usually overlooked on this class of work’, a desire to maintain qualities found in his print work on film.⁴⁰⁸ Of course putting these qualities into the individual drawings is only part of making an animated film:

one may have what you fondly imagine to be wonderfully good ideas as a subject for a cartoon and work them out with a wealth of detail, only to discover that your conception has been so unkindly treated by the camera as to be the merest “shadow” of what was intended. For this reason it is essential that the film cartoonist has a very complete knowledge of the technique of the film camera and cinematography generally.⁴⁰⁹

Hicks highlights the importance of artists understanding the techniques of reproduction and working with them to produce the most effective result, a sensitivity found in other cartoonists, such as Speed and Furniss, discussed in the previous chapter. Hicks career is another example of the continued importance of print cartooning and its personnel to animated cartoons.

For all of the artists working in animated cartoons during the war, engaging with the technology of animation would have presented a significant challenge, just as engaging with the technology of reproduction and printing had

⁴⁰⁵ *Bios*, 5 November 1914, 497-499.

⁴⁰⁶ *Bios*, 29 October 1914, 474.

⁴⁰⁷ *Picture Plays*, 20 December 1919, 8.

⁴⁰⁸ *Picture Plays*, 20 December 1919, 8.

⁴⁰⁹ *Picture Plays*, 20 December 1919, 8.

for their cartoons or illustrations. While there were a number of ‘how to’ manuals for filmmaking in existence by this time, the closest these got to the rapidly developing techniques of animation was in explaining the trick film techniques used ten years earlier in films such as Blackton’s *The Haunted Hotel* (1907).⁴¹⁰ While the production line techniques being developed in the United States were undoubtedly becoming known on this side of the Atlantic, comprehensive descriptions, such as E.G. Lutz’s practical manual, would not be available until 1920.⁴¹¹ There was no institutionalised separation of techniques, as there would be later, between stop-motion and cel animation. While some films did adhere to a particular technique, the majority used a hybrid mix of drawn material, cut outs and three dimensional objects animated by stop motion and other techniques such as silhouettes.

The techniques used in these films were dominated by two opposing forces. Producing animated cartoons was time consuming, and therefore expensive, in comparison to making live action films of a similar length. Interviews and reviews repeatedly emphasise the costly process involved in producing the effects seen on screen. Lancelot Speed suggested that it could take as long as twenty minutes to produce a single ‘move’ and that it would take a fortnight for him to produce each *Bully Boy* cartoon, which would even then amount to only 375ft of film.⁴¹² Jack Dodsworth emphasised the ‘painstaking care and judgement required in timing and exposing’ the Bairnsfather and Raemaekers cartoons, which were relatively simple from a technological perspective, being accelerated lightning cartoons rather than full animation.⁴¹³

Underlying this technological concern was an economic one. The novelty and accomplishment of the techniques used in animated cartoons was a primary criteria in film reviews and therefore ultimately its commercial success. Reviews consistently praise those films with the highest production values: Lancelot Speed’s *Bully Boy* cartoons are celebrated for ‘taking this new form of comic

⁴¹⁰ Examples include Colin N. Bennett and Collaborators, *The Handbook of Kinematography: The History, Theory and Practice of Motion Photography and Projection* (London: The Kinematograph Weekly, 1911).; Frederick Talbot, *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked* (London: William Heinemann, 1912).; Frederick Talbot, *Practical Cinematography and Its Applications* (London: W. Heinemann, 1913).

⁴¹¹ Edwin George Lutz, *Animated Cartoons. How They Are Made, Their Origin and Development* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1920).

⁴¹² *Bios*, 5 November 1914, 499; *Bios*, 15 October 1914, 268.

⁴¹³ *Bios*, 24 October 1918, 108.

pictorial art several steps further forward'.⁴¹⁴ In contrast films which fell behind a perceived quality threshold were criticised, regardless of their content: F. Baragwanath's *The Kaiser's Nightmare* is criticised for being "still drawings" as opposed to "animated cartoons" since...they gain nothing from their cinematographic presentation and might have been produced with equal effect as lantern slides'; Sidney Aldridge's *Adventures of Willy Woodbine and Lightning Larry* is 'marred by indifferent quality'; several cartoons are attacked for being drawn too small for the viewer to see clearly, including a Bairnsfather cartoon and a cartoon from Kineto.⁴¹⁵ The producers of animated films were clearly sensitive to these issues, making claims in advertising of new improvements: Davison's marketing *The Topical Sketch* as having 'no more rainstorm backgrounds!' and Kineto's *The Adventures of Slim and Pim* series exhibiting 'perfect mechanical production'.⁴¹⁶

Improving the quality of animated cartoons was clearly an economic necessity for producers, yet the nature of the technology meant this would increase production time and therefore the cost of the film. This situation was exacerbated by the practice of the time of charging for film by length. Given the time consuming nature of animated film technology, these films would regularly be more costly per foot to produce, yet would be charged at the same rate. An advertisement for *The Topical Sketch* states its price at '3½d. per ft. nett', the same price charged for live action films *Charlie Smiler Takes Up Ju-Jitsu* and *A Present from Uncle*.⁴¹⁷ Technological and aesthetic concerns can thus be seen not simply existing in isolation but to be intimately bound with the economics of the industry at this time. The following chapter consequently takes a more detailed look at the economic conditions affecting the production of animated cartoons

Conclusion

This chapter has forcefully demonstrated the consistent patterns which are fundamental to the whole of this study. From the earliest projections of moving images in Britain in 1896 through to the character series of the 1920s, the

⁴¹⁴ *Bios*, 29 October 1914, 474.

⁴¹⁵ *Bios*, 1 October 1914, 79; *Bios*, 21 January 1915; 'It would be an advantage to picture-goers if the artist for the screen would draw his life figures bigger and bolder...faces...are barely seen' *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1305-6. The Kineto film is 'well drawn but over-small' *Bios*, 16 August 1917, 788.

⁴¹⁶ *Bios*, 20 May 1915, 754; *Bios*, 25 July 1918, x.

⁴¹⁷ *Bios*, 3 June 1915, iv.

creation of British animated cartoons was performed by personnel who had trained in, and had established careers in, the fields examined in chapter one: music-hall lightning cartooning, and print cartooning and illustration. In part this undoubtedly reflected both an established relationship between the emerging film industry and those prior forms, as well as the artists' suitability for moving into this new medium, such as their familiarity with adapting their work to a mechanically reproduced art form and working within a programme of entertainment. In other respects their background shaped the development of animated cartoons, importing a close engagement with an active spectator from the music hall in general, and the lightning cartoon in particular.

The final, and most significant, role these artists' backgrounds played in British animated cartoon history remains to be addressed in chapter five: the aesthetic influence. Before this can be correctly understood, however, the wider economic context of these films must be considered, as well as the establishment of a new theoretical framework with which to analyse the films in question. These tasks are addressed in chapters three and four.

Chapter 3. British animated cartoons and the international film industry

While the economics of the animated cartoon industry are not the primary focus of this study, their pervasive influence on the choices made by British animated cartoon producers demands that the topic be examined in more detail. In particular the growing influence of American imports led to an emphasis of qualities drawn from the fields of illustration and cartooning in an attempt to differentiate British films from their American counterparts. The failure of these strategies following the end of the war led to the collapse of the animated cartoon industry in Britain and the subsequent adoption of American standards in technology, economic model, and subject matter, marking the decisive difference seen between the First World War and 1920s British animated cartoons.

International films and the British marketplace

Early international relationships

As Kristin Thompson has shown, the influence of American films in the British film market (as well as the rest of the world) became dominant during the First World War and they therefore do not play a large role in the present history until 1917, to be examined in detail in the next section.⁴¹⁸ There remain some international relationships in the earliest period which are important to this study. While American films were not yet in the majority, European films were being released in Britain from the earliest period. Most notably Philipp Wolff was distributing lightning cartoon films in Britain in 1897 under the title 'Robert Houdin', films thought to be early work by Georges Méliès.⁴¹⁹ This reference to one of the major figures of early French cinema indicates that the film industry was already international in scope at this stage. This would prove decisive in the development of animated cartoons in the post-war period, as discussed later, but even in this early period there are some intriguing international connections.

Thus far the discussion of this period of nascent animation has been limited to the British context. This reflects one of the primary arguments of this thesis, that the specific context in which British animation arose played an important role in its formation. Cartooning, illustration, and the music-hall

⁴¹⁸ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34*.

⁴¹⁹ Stephen Herbert, ed. *Victorian Film Catalogues: A Facsimile Collection* (London: The Projection Box, 1996), 40, 48.

lightning cartoon act, while not individually unique to Britain, together provided a specific environment distinct from developments elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge and examine the relationships British animated cartoons may have had with early films from overseas. Even in the 19th century there are a number of connections which tantalisingly suggest the networks of communication and knowledge exchange that may have arisen in the earliest period of cinema.

One such link is that between British lightning cartoonist Professor Thornbury and James Stuart Blackton. Professor Thornbury's proto-animated lightning cartoon act has already been described, with his incorporation of ventriloquism and movement in the use of 'automaton heads'.⁴²⁰ James Stuart Blackton is often accorded an important role in the development of animation. Blackton was British, born in Sheffield on 5 January 1875, but he was peripheral to British animation, having moved to the United States with his parents as a child.⁴²¹ While there is no specific evidence of the two meeting, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that they were in the same New York vaudeville milieu, and therefore that Thornbury's act may well have influenced Blackton's early career. Professor Thornbury travelled to New York in 1893 to perform his lightning cartoon act including performances at Tony Pastor's well known vaudeville theatre on 14th Street.⁴²² Blackton at this time was performing his own lightning sketch routine in lesser venues in New York.⁴²³ Furthermore, Pastor's vaudeville theatre would play an important role in the success of Blackton and Albert Smith's Vitagraph company, as the location where they would show their films for nine years, from 1899 to 1908.⁴²⁴ Thornbury was a major music-hall star in Britain and it may be assumed that Blackton would have been aware of his appearances at the landmark vaudeville theatre, if not actually attending.

A similarly indeterminate encounter occurred between Walter Booth and Emile Cohl in the late 1890s. Booth would later play an important role in the development of British animated cartoons and early film in general. At this time

⁴²⁰ *Era*, 22 October 1892, 16.

⁴²¹ Denis Gifford, "James Stuart Blackton," <http://www.victorian-cinema.net/blackton.htm>; Beck, ed. *Animation Art : From Pencil to Pixel, the History of Cartoon, Anime & Cgi*, 12-13.

⁴²² Thornbury's entry into New York is recorded in the Ellis Island records. Departing from Liverpool, he arrived, aged 40 on 26 July 1893 on the ship *Teutonic*. "Port of New York Passenger Records ", <http://www.ellisland.org>; *Era*, 4 November 1893, 8.

⁴²³ Musser, "American Vitagraph: 1897-1901," 5.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

Booth was performing as a lightning cartoonist, part of David Devant's magic show appearing regularly at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London as well as touring the country.⁴²⁵ Devant's presentation was one of the earliest venues for the presentation of 'animated photographs'. Cohl in this period was a well-known cartoonist in France contributing to political newspapers and magazines, but from 1908 would be responsible for the production of some of the earliest fully animated cartoons.⁴²⁶ In 1896 Cohl spent some time in London, and Donald Crafton identifies a reference to 'l'Egyptien' as a possible reference to Cohl visiting the Egyptian Hall for one of Devant's performances, potentially his first exposure to moving pictures.⁴²⁷

These interactions between the founders of animated cartoons indicate that the increasingly effective transportation and communication between Britain, the United States, and France meant graphic artists and future animated cartoon makers did exist in the same artistic milieu and that these artists were not, and could not, be oblivious to developments in other countries.

1917: The growth of American imports

Kristin Thompson's detailed history of the growth to dominance of American companies in the world film market provides a valuable context for understanding the changes in the British film industry over the period of this study.⁴²⁸ Thompson outlines that between 1909 and 1916 London was the primary centre for worldwide distribution of American films outside the United States, gaining the benefit of British shipping and business expertise.⁴²⁹ American producers were able to amortise costs in their home market, which was not yet saturated, so paid little attention to worldwide markets or maximising income from them, focussing their effort on local matters. While this situation was profitable for British distributors, it meant the British market was already a difficult one for British producers who needed home profits to amortise their production costs; by 1909-1912 the British market was already consuming 60% American films, with French and Italian films taking a significant proportion of

⁴²⁵ *Era*, 15 January 1898, 20.

⁴²⁶ Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴²⁸ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34*.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

the rest.⁴³⁰ The outbreak of war had a significant effect upon this situation, with American companies increasingly operating directly in individual countries or regions, both to get around wartime restrictions and to maximise profits from them, having become dependent upon the income with increasingly elaborate and costly production methods.⁴³¹ While wartime transport and border restrictions would initially see a drop in American exports, by 1917 these changes strengthened the American industry making it even harder for British producers to compete, a situation which would become more entrenched in the post-war period.⁴³² Thompson does not, however, discuss particular types of film and describes in only limited terms the impact these economic conditions had on the production of films, both tasks she identifies for future research.⁴³³ By examining the specific economic conditions affecting animated cartoon production and distribution in Britain this chapter can shed light on the choices their makers made, as well as the reception they received.

As might be expected from Thompson's findings, American animated cartoons were being regularly released in Britain from the start of the First World War in 1914. These animated cartoons included both topical films, such as those drawn by Hy Mayer, and non-topical such as the *Colonel Heeza Liar* series produced by John R. Bray.⁴³⁴ American productions were already appearing in Britain quickly after their American debut: *Colonel Heeza Liar, Farmer* was released in the United States on 18 May 1914 and appeared in Britain five months later on 22 October; Hy Mayer's cartoons, whose topical content would have made a timely release more desirable, were released internationally even more swiftly, *Topical War Cartoons* being released in September in the United States, the same month they were advertised in Britain for release on 2 November, less than two months since their debut.⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear from the volume of British animated cartoons produced and released between 1914 and 1916, and the relative scarcity of references to American animated cartoons in trade press, that British producers were able to maintain some control

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 103.

⁴³² Ibid., 63-71.

⁴³³ Ibid., xi.

⁴³⁴ *Bios*, 10 September 1914, 967; *Bios*, 15 October 1914, xi.

⁴³⁵ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 19,16.; *Bios*, 15 October 1914, xi; *Bios*, 10 September 1914, 967.

of the market in these years.⁴³⁶ Thompson's suggestion that American exports suffered early in the war is upheld by the case of animated cartoons, although there are also conditions specific to this genre which contributed. While animated cartoons had been sporadically produced in the United States since 1900, most notably those by Winsor McCay and Stuart Blackton, these were low in number due to the labour intensive production process.⁴³⁷ Large scale production awaited the labour-saving patent of John Bray, which was filed on 9 January 1914 and patented on 11 August 1914.⁴³⁸ Thus regularly produced animated cartoons were in their infancy in 1914 and patterns of production and distribution had yet to develop, impaired not only by wartime restrictions, but also technical knowledge and the legal wrangling that accompanied patents.⁴³⁹

By 1917 patterns had fully developed and American productions dominated the British animated cartoon market. The 'Mutt and Jeff' series, based on a newspaper cartoon strip by Harry 'Bud' Fisher, had been in production since 1913, one of the earliest regular animated cartoon series; however, their impact on Britain started in 1917.⁴⁴⁰ From the start of 1917 Pathé, the British distributor for 'Mutt and Jeff', gave the series a considerable marketing push, with full page advertisements for the series in trade magazines and novelty promotional items such as

some wonderfully clever models of the comic pair for standing on tables or desks, and any exhibitor who cares to write in, will have one forwarded to him free, gratis and for nothing⁴⁴¹

Pathé were probably aided by having a backlog of four years intermittent production, allowing a regular release schedule with the production costs long since accounted for. The 'Mutt and Jeff' series became dominant in Britain in the latter half of 1917, coinciding with the release of new material from the United States under the supervision of Raoul Barré, utilising the talents of future Disney

⁴³⁶ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 26-45.

⁴³⁷ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 1-3.

⁴³⁸ John Randolph Bray, "1,107,193 Process of and Articles for Producing Moving Pictures," ed. United States Patent Office (United States 1914).

⁴³⁹ Crafton, *Before Mickey : The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 137-67.

⁴⁴⁰ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 6. The 'Mutt and Jeff' comic strip had been previously adapted for moving pictures as a series of live action films produced by Nestor from 1911, providing another example of the interrelation between film and cartooning in an American context. See Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915*, History of the American Cinema 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 183.

⁴⁴¹ *Bios*, 18 January 1917; *Bios*, 18 January 1917, 216.

star animators, including Burt Gillett, Ben Sharpsteen and Bill Tytla.⁴⁴² Releases from this production unit appeared in Britain almost simultaneously with their American debut. *Submarine Chasers* and *The Cheese Tamers* were released in Britain on 19 September around two months since their release in July 1917 in the United States.⁴⁴³

The ‘Mutt and Jeff’ series was not the only American animated cartoon to make an impact in the British market. An increasing number of series were being launched in the United States and released here, including Essanay’s series drawn by ‘famous cartoonist’ Clare Briggs, and Pat Powers ‘Powers Cartoons’ in full production from 1916 but which again made a significant impact in Britain from 1917.⁴⁴⁴ Powers would later play a central role as the distributor for the first Mickey Mouse cartoons and by providing the sound technology which gave Mickey a voice in *Steamboat Willie* (1928).⁴⁴⁵ ‘Powers Cartoons’ mixed one off cartoons with character series, such as those featuring ‘Mr. Fuller Pep’. The one off cartoons included further items drawn by Hy Mayer, as well as future ‘Felix the Cat’ producers Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer.⁴⁴⁶ As with ‘Mutt and Jeff’, the ‘Powers Cartoons’, were released with a frequency and regularity that ensured them a regular booking from exhibitors looking to bring continuity to their programmes. This was a major selling point for Trans-Atlantic, one advertisement featuring a graphical depiction of a waterfall of releases with the tagline ‘let the steady stream of Trans-Atlantic open-market subjects make your success continuous’(Figure 20).⁴⁴⁷ It was quantity, not quality, which gave these films real dominance.

⁴⁴² Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 7.

⁴⁴³ *Bios*, 27 September 1917, 52; *ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴⁴ *Bios*, 18 January 1917; *ibid.*, 23.; *Bios*, 21 June 1917, 1168.

⁴⁴⁵ Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version : The Life, Times, Art, and Commerce of Walt Disney*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 125.

⁴⁴⁶ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 24-26.; *Them Were the Happy Days* produced by Sullivan and Directed by Messmer was released in the United States 26 May 1917 (*ibid.*, 26.) and in Britain 15 October 1917 (*Bios*, 16 August 1917, 814). More details on Sullivan and Messmer can be found in John Canemaker, *Felix : The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, 1st Da Capo Press ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

⁴⁴⁷ *Bios*, 20 September 1917, 15.

October 20, 1917 THE BIOSCOPE 15

Let the Steady Stream

REX LAEMMLE NESTOR L-KO VICTOR SCREEN MAGAZINE POWERS

of Trans-Atlantic

OPEN-MARKET

subjects make your success continuous

DRAMAS

"The Double-Topped Trunk." Imp. 940 ft. approx. Released November 8th.
Featuring ALLEN HOLDBAR.

"Her City Beau." Victor. 940 ft. approx. Released November 8th.
Featuring M. K. WILSON and EDITH ROBERTS.

"The Girl in the Limousine." Imp. 917 ft. approx. Released November 15th.
Featuring MOLLY MALONE and LEE HILL.

COMEDIES

"Some Nurse." Joker. 956 ft. approx. Released November 12th.
Featuring GALE HENRY.

"Monkey Love." Powers Cartoon Comedy. 536 ft. approx. Released November 12th.

"The Little Fat Rascal." L-Ko. 2,021 ft. approx. Released November 12th.
Featuring MERTA STERLING and PHIL DUNHAM.

"Daredevil Dan." Victor. 938 ft. approx. Released November 15th.
Featuring RUTH STONEHOUSE.

"The War Bridegroom." Nestor. 997 ft. approx. Released November 15th.
Featuring LEE MORAN, EDDIE LYONS, and EDITH ROBERTS.

And the "SCREENMAG"

The Trans-Atlantic Screen Magazine.
Vol. 1. No. 25. T-A. Interest. 483 ft. approx. Released Nov. 15th.

NOTICE.—The Trans-Atlantic Film Co., Ltd., desire to make it quite clear to everybody that the names and characters in all their films are imaginary, and that no reference or allusion is intended to apply to any living person or persons.




Figure 20: Trans-atlantic press advertisement (1917)

By the end of 1917 Trans-Atlantic had established a weekly release schedule for the 'Powers Cartoons', as Table 1 highlights in the listing of releases in Autumn 1917.

FILM TITLE	BRITISH RELEASE DATE	ORIGINAL AMERICAN RELEASE DATE
<i>When Noah's Ark Embarked</i>	24 September ⁴⁴⁸	19 May ⁴⁴⁹
<i>His Day of Rest (Mr Fuller Pep series)</i>	1 October ⁴⁵⁰	11 March ⁴⁵¹
<i>His Wife goes for a Rest (Mr Fuller Pep series)</i>	8 October ⁴⁵²	4 February ⁴⁵³
<i>The Pesky Pup</i>	22 October ⁴⁵⁴	6 June ⁴⁵⁵
<i>Young Nick Carter – Detective</i>	29 October ⁴⁵⁶	9 June ⁴⁵⁷
<i>Duke Doolittle's Jungle Fizz</i>	5 November ⁴⁵⁸	18 June ⁴⁵⁹
<i>Monkey Love</i>	12 November ⁴⁶⁰	3 July ⁴⁶¹
<i>Box Car Bill Falls in Luck</i>	19 November ⁴⁶²	10 July ⁴⁶³
<i>The Barnyard Hamlet</i>	26 November ⁴⁶⁴	24 July ⁴⁶⁵

Table 1: Trans-atlantic cartoon releases, Autumn 1917

Given this heavy release schedule, alongside regular releases in the ‘Mutt and Jeff’ and ‘Colonel Heeza Liar’ series, it is unsurprising that American animated cartoons quickly became dominant in the British market. Cartoons clearly followed the general economic trend of American dominance of British screens: in 1918 it was estimated that ‘ninety per cent’ of releases were of American origin.⁴⁶⁶

Post-war: American dominance

The pattern established from 1917, of American animated cartoons increasingly dominating British screens, accelerated following the armistice. With their largely non-topical subject matter American cartoons featuring characters familiar from wartime films continued to get regular releases. Bud Fisher’s ‘Mutt

⁴⁴⁸ *Bios*, 16 August 1917, 857.

⁴⁴⁹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26.

⁴⁵⁰ *Bios*, 23 August 1917, 868.

⁴⁵¹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 25.

⁴⁵² *Bios*, 6 September 1917, 47.

⁴⁵³ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 25.

⁴⁵⁴ *Bios*, 20 September 1917, 51.

⁴⁵⁵ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26.

⁴⁵⁶ *Bios*, 6 September 1917, 15.

⁴⁵⁷ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26.

⁴⁵⁸ *Bios*, 13 September 1917, 35.

⁴⁵⁹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26.

⁴⁶⁰ *Bios*, 20 September 1917, 15.

⁴⁶¹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26.

⁴⁶² *Bios*, 18 October 1917, 54.

⁴⁶³ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 26-27.

⁴⁶⁴ *Bios*, 4 October 1917, 19.

⁴⁶⁵ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 27.

⁴⁶⁶ For instance *The Janitors* was released 5 November, *A Chemical Calamity* was released 12 November (both reviewed in *Bios*, 1 November 1917, 60.) and *The Theatrical Business* was released 19 November (*Bios*, 15 November 1917, 54.); *Bios*, 22 February 1917, 816; *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* 10 October 1918, 137.

and Jeff’ were the most consistently released American series in the immediate period following the war between 1919 and 1921, with their films appearing on British screens little more than two months after their American debut. Table 2 documents a sample period, May 1919, indicating the review date of the film and its original American release date.⁴⁶⁷

FILM TITLE	BRITISH REVIEW DATE	ORIGINAL AMERICAN RELEASE DATE
‘William Hohenzollern Sausage Maker’	May 1 ⁴⁶⁸	March 16 ⁴⁶⁹
‘Fireman, Save My Child’	May 8 ⁴⁷⁰	March 2 ⁴⁷¹
‘A Cow’s Husband’	May 15 ⁴⁷²	March 30 ⁴⁷³
‘Wild Waves and Angry Women’	May 22 ⁴⁷⁴	March 9 ⁴⁷⁵
‘Mutt the Mutt Trainer’	May 29 ⁴⁷⁶	April 6 ⁴⁷⁷

Table 2: ‘Mutt and Jeff’ releases May 1919

No British producer could match this voluminous output, which continued throughout 1920 and 1921 and it may be assumed that the majority of the episodes produced would have been released in Britain. Budd Fisher was celebrated as ‘brilliant’ by British trade press and on his visit to New York the Prince of Wales was shown several of their films ‘of which the Prince declared that he had heard many times’, an event worthy of headline news: ‘The Prince Sees Mutt and Jeff’.⁴⁷⁸ ‘Mutt and Jeff’ were the most successful American animated cartoons of the immediate post-war period, but they were joined on British screens by other series, including the cartoons featured in the ‘Trans-Atlantic Screen Magazine’ and ‘The Pussyfoot Twins’.⁴⁷⁹ Known in the United States as ‘The Katzenjammer Kids’, this series’ name changed presumably both to anglicise them and to make topical reference to prohibitionist William E.

⁴⁶⁷ British release dates were not always specified in trade press reviews at this time so the review date has been used as a more reliable indicator of regular release schedule.

⁴⁶⁸ *Bios*, 1 May 1919, 70.

⁴⁶⁹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 9.

⁴⁷⁰ *Bios*, 8 May 1919, 68.

⁴⁷¹ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 9.

⁴⁷² *Bios*, 15 May 1919, 68.

⁴⁷³ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 9.

⁴⁷⁴ *Bios*, 22 May 1919, 67.

⁴⁷⁵ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 9.

⁴⁷⁶ *Bios*, 29 May 1919, 75.

⁴⁷⁷ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 9.

⁴⁷⁸ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 2 May 1918, 50; *Bios*, 11 December 1919, 14; *Bios*, 11 December 1919, 14.

⁴⁷⁹ *Bios*, 17 April 1919, 79; *Bios*, 13 November 1919, 27; *Bios*, 6 September 1919, 51. This advertisement indicates three *Pussyfoot Twins* cartoons to be released fortnightly between November and December 1919, then moving to a weekly release schedule with four releases in January.

Johnson, known as ‘Mr. Pussyfoot’ whose arrival in Britain was international news in 1919.⁴⁸⁰ The pace of production of ‘Mutt and Jeff’ slowed in 1922, with only 33 episodes being produced, and while cartoons featuring the pair were produced until 1926 by this time newer characters had replaced them in popularity.⁴⁸¹

The mid-1920s saw massive growth in the production of animated cartoons in the United States and many of these series were released in Britain, superseding ‘Mutt and Jeff’ as the dominant animated cartoon imports. Paul Terry’s ‘Aesop’s Film Fables’, produced by Amedee J. Van Beuren, were released regularly in Britain throughout the 1920s often with a weekly release schedule and were popular enough to warrant a two page article in fan magazine *Pictures and Picturegoer*.⁴⁸² Likewise Max and Dave Fleischer’s ‘Out of the Inkwell’ series was released fortnightly with British releases following quickly after the American debut and again received significant press attention: one review described Koko the Clown, the lead character of this series, as ‘too familiar a figure to require comment’.⁴⁸³ Their ‘Koko Song Cartune’ series also joined Pathé’s schedule from March 1926.⁴⁸⁴ Alongside these long running major series a number of other animated cartoon series from the United States were released in this period. These included the young Walt Disney’s ‘Alice’ series⁴⁸⁵; films by the holders of the patents for using cel animation and other labour

⁴⁸⁰ Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 67-69. Matching titles which confirm the two series are one and the same include *Vanity and Vengeance*, *Crabs are Crabs* and *A Picnic for Two*. (*Bios*, 6 September 1919, 51); *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 November 1919, SM4. See also *The Times*, 13 October 1919, 9.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13-14; *ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸² Releases documented in *KW* on 14 December 1922, 46; 2 November 1922, 24; 30 October 1924, 74; 19 March 1925, 12; 18 June 1925, 46; 9 July 1925, 87; 6 August 1925, 42; 1 January 1926, 24; 11 November 1926, 12-13; 2 December 1926, 8. One 1925 advertisement promotes 26 subjects to be released one a week (*KW*, 12 March 1925, 8); *KW*, 1 January 1925, 21; *Pictures and Picturegoer*, October 1922, 52-53.

⁴⁸³ This schedule was definitely in place between October 5 1925 and March 29, 1926. See *KW*, 27 August 1925, lxix. Releases documented in *KW*, 21 May 1925, 22-23; *KW*, 28 May 1925, 60; *Bios*, 3 September 1925, 41; *KW*, 10 September 1925, 72; *KW*, 12 November 1925, 71; *KW*, 26 November 1925, 61; *KW*, 10 December 1925, 42; *KW*, 24 December 1925, 24; *KW*, 21 January 1926, 68; Denis Gifford does not list some of the above titles, so it is not possible to cross-reference release dates in a table; however, *Koko Steps Out* (*KW*, 24 December 1925, 24) was released in the United States on November 21, 1925 (Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 87.) *Koko on the Run* (*KW*, 26 November 1925, 61) was released in the United States on September 26, 1925 (*ibid.*, 87.) indicating that the pattern established in other series of releasing films in Britain less than two months after their American debut was applicable; *Pictures and Picturegoer*, April 1924, 40; *KW*, 21 January 1926, 68.

⁴⁸⁴ *KW*, 27 August 1925, lxix.

⁴⁸⁵ This series was released fortnightly, see: *KW*, 30 October 1924, 67; *KW*, 23 October 1924, 65; *KW*, 26 March 1925, 60.

saving devices John Bray⁴⁸⁶ and Earl Hurd⁴⁸⁷; a screen adaptation of George Herriman's comic strip 'Krazy Kat'⁴⁸⁸; American 'sing-along' films which competed with British films of the same genre in 1926-7, with FBO's 'Song Parody' series having 26 episodes being released fortnightly⁴⁸⁹; the 'Togo and Dinky' series from the future creator of Woody Woodpecker, Walter Lantz⁴⁹⁰; Gregory La Cava's 'Judge Rummy'⁴⁹¹; and 'Colonel Heeza Liar' appeared in Pathé magazine films.⁴⁹²

Case study: Felix the Cat

The impact of American animated cartoons in Britain, both economically and aesthetically, is best illustrated by examining in more detail the most popular and successful character series released in the silent period, Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer's 'Felix the Cat'.⁴⁹³ Messmer and Sullivan had contributed to a number of animated cartoon series prior to creating 'Felix' including a number of Charlie Chaplin cartoons in 1918-19 and items for Pat Powers' 'Power's Cartoons' series many of which would have been released in Britain, both during and after the war.⁴⁹⁴ The character of Felix first appeared in 1919 as a segment in the *Paramount Screen Magazine*, but quickly gained popularity and Sullivan, as producer, was contracted in 1920 to produce a regular standalone series.⁴⁹⁵ Although it is not known exactly how many 'Felix the Cat' episodes were produced in the United States in his early career, it is clear that the films started to appear regularly on British screens in this period and by 1922 were a weekly feature as part of Pathé's 'Eve's Film Review' screen magazine, one review commenting 'the usual cartoon [Felix] completes the issue'.⁴⁹⁶ In a period in

⁴⁸⁶ *KW*, 23 October 1924, 72.

⁴⁸⁷ *KW*, 16 November 1922, 52.

⁴⁸⁸ *KW*, 1 February 1926, 69.

⁴⁸⁹ *KW*, 9 December 1926, 13; *KW*, 18 November 1926, 74; *KW*, 2 December 1926, 57.

⁴⁹⁰ This series was known as 'Dinky Doodle' in the United States (Gifford, *American Animated Films: The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 148.) British releases are documented in *KW*, 8 January 1925, 65; *KW*, 29 January 1925, 63.

⁴⁹¹ *KW*, 1 October 1925, 85.

⁴⁹² *KW*, 26 March 1925, 19.

⁴⁹³ Full details of Sullivan and Messmer's career can be found in Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*.

⁴⁹⁴ Gifford, *American Animated Films: The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 90-91, 23-27. ; *Them Were the Happy Days* produced by Sullivan and directed by Messmer was released in Britain October 15, 1917 (*Bios*, 16 August 1917, 814). Full details of Sullivan and Messmer's career can be found in Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*.

⁴⁹⁵ Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, 56. See also Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 305-07.

⁴⁹⁶ Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, 169-70.; Officially titled 'Eve - and Everybody's - Film Review' (*KW*, 27 August 1925, lxxvii.) this magazine film was commonly

which British animated cartoons were scarcely being produced, Felix rose to huge popularity with British audiences: Felix's first appearance in a print comic strip was in London's *The Sketch*; he was made mascot of the British Polo Team by the Prince of Wales; he was a favourite of Queen Mary and King George; and he became a topic for cultural commentators including George Bernard Shaw and David Low.⁴⁹⁷ In 1923 a song 'Felix Kept on Walking' was published in Britain.⁴⁹⁸ Written by Ed. E. Bryant and Hubert W. David the song was a popular hit, encouraging them to follow it in 1924 with 'Here He Is Again! (Being More Adventures of Felix)'.⁴⁹⁹ Harry Tilsley also wrote a 'Felix' song 'Fido Followed Felix' published in Britain in 1924.⁵⁰⁰ By 1924, when Sullivan and his wife visited Britain, they were greeted with an overwhelming reception due to the popularity of Felix, which surpassed even that in the United States.⁵⁰¹

The popularity of Felix in Britain was enhanced by his appearing on a weekly schedule in Pathé's 'Eve's Film Review' screen magazine, yet Sullivan and Messmer were only producing one or two full episodes per month in New York.⁵⁰² In order to achieve their schedule Pathé were taking the full reel episodes and cutting them into multiple chapters shown over a number of weeks. Sullivan was unhappy with this approach, which he described as a 'mutilation' of the films, which led to him ending his contract with American distributor Margaret J. Winkler in 1925, who had also made the international sales of the Felix films up to this point.⁵⁰³ Importantly for this discussion, Sullivan turned not to another American distributor but to a British one, Ideal, who agreed to pay \$5000 per film for the British rights to 'Felix the Cat' on a fortnightly schedule.⁵⁰⁴ Ideal's confidence in the ability of short animated cartoons to

shortened to 'Eve's Film Review' in reviews and on the title cards of each segment. *KW*, 23 November 1922, 52. The weekly appearances are confirmed by *KW* reviews on 16 November 1922, 52; 30 November 1922, 52; 7 December 1922, 59; 14 December 1922, 48.

⁴⁹⁷ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 61-69.; Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, 78,4-5.

⁴⁹⁸ Ed. E. Bryant and Hubert W. David, *Felix Kept on Walking* (London: Worton David Ltd, 1923). Images of the sheet music can be found at David Gerstein, "David Gerstein's Felix the Cat Page " <http://felix.goldenagecartoons.com/>

⁴⁹⁹ Ed. E. Bryant and Hubert W. David, *Here He Is Again! (Being More Adventures of Felix)* (London: Worton David Ltd, 1924). Images of the sheet music can be found at Gerstein, "David Gerstein's Felix the Cat Page ".

⁵⁰⁰ Harry Tilsley, *Fido Followed Felix* (London: Cecil Lennox & Co, 1924). Images of the sheet music can be found at Gerstein, "David Gerstein's Felix the Cat Page ".

⁵⁰¹ Canemaker, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, 84-89.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 170-71.

⁵⁰³ *The Cinema*, 24 September 1925 quoted in *ibid.*, 89-90.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 92-94.

generate returns to warrant such a high payment indicates not only Felix's popularity but the ability of this type of film to draw in customers and produce an economic return for exhibitors and distributors, a fact that undoubtedly contributed to the increased production of British animated cartoons between 1924 and 1926.

This confidence was equally demonstrated in the aggressive marketing Ideal undertook to protect their investment, which brought them into direct conflict with Pathé whose backlog of older 'Felix the Cat' films meant they had up to a year's worth of material still to exploit. The conflict between Pathé and Ideal over the 'Felix the Cat' franchise was highly visible throughout 1925. In March 1925 *Kinematograph Weekly* reported on the dispute between the two companies following Sullivan signing with Ideal, and throughout the year the companies engaged in a back and forth battle of words executed through full-page advertisements in the trade press.⁵⁰⁵ Ideal could not start releasing new material until October 1925, after Sullivan and Messmer had completed their contractual obligations to Margaret J. Winkler and Pathé, but this did not prevent them publishing adverts which maligned Pathé's ongoing releases for being incomplete and that Pathé no longer had the rights to new 'Felix the Cat'.⁵⁰⁶ Even where Ideal did not make explicit reference to the competition, the advertisements featured cartoons of Felix in jail or 'bottled up', trapped until October when Ideal's 'Felix Complete' would free him from the constraints of Pathé's treatment of him (Figure 21 and Figure 22).⁵⁰⁷ Pathé responded to these advertisements with their own full page messages, reassuring exhibitors that booking 'Eve's Film Review' would ensure they had Felix animated cartoons in their programme well into 1926, but with a dwindling supply and in the face of Ideal's overwhelming advertising Pathé had to admit defeat; by the end of 1925 Ideal had published over twenty five full page press advertisements for the Felix

⁵⁰⁵ *KW*, March 5, 1925, p. 56.

⁵⁰⁶ *KW*, 15 October 1925; Ideal advertisements featuring these messages were published in *KW* on 11 June 1925, 19; 25 June 1925, 9; 2 July 1925, 17; 16 July 1925, 4; 30 July 1925, 29; 13 August 1925, 26-27; 20 August 1925, xxvi; 27 August 1925, iv; 3 September 1925, 18-19; 10 September 1925, 39; 17 September 1925, 2; 8 October 1925, 2; 15 October 1925, 34; 22 October 1925, 7; 29 October 1925, 2; 11 November 1925, 22; 12 November 1925, 30; 19 November 1925, 6-7; 26 November 1925, 26; 3 December 1925, 2. Advertisements also appeared in *Bios*, 16 July 1925; 3 September 1925, 24.

⁵⁰⁷ *Bios*, 16 July 1925; *Bios*, 3 September 1925, 24.

series, an unprecedented level of exposure, and they continued to publish full page press advertisements in the following year.⁵⁰⁸

24

Bioscope

SEPTEMBER 3, 1925

Bottled up till October

And then—

- ☐ Felix as a Feature!
- ☐ Felix Complete
- ☐ Felix Saucier, more impudent, more laughable than ever
- ☐ Felix in 26 complete reels
- ☐ Felix with an amusing Sullivan Poster for each release
- ☐ Felix Limerick Competition for attractive Money Prices

FELIX

RELEASE IN OCTOBER

IDEAL FILMS LTD., 76-78, Wardour Street, W.1

Figure 21: 'Felix the Cat' (1925)

5

Bioscope

July 16, 1925

I'm coming out in September!

FELIX

RELEASE IN SEPTEMBER

An announcement of Ideal's comprehensive arrangements for the release of

FELIX COMPLETE

in September will be made in the next issue.

NOW BOOKING.

IDEAL FILMS LTD., 76/78, Wardour Street, W.1

Figure 22: 'Felix the Cat' (1925)

This battle between Pathé and Ideal did not damage Felix's popularity, and in many ways aided it, as for a period both Pathé and Ideal were releasing his films, resulting in a level of exposure no British animated cartoon could achieve.⁵⁰⁹ Felix would be further aided by the General Strike of 1926. The strike caused considerable disruption to ordinary activities even where workers themselves did not join the strike, for instance the *Kinematograph Weekly* found it 'impracticable' to produce a normal edition, instead publishing a short, un-illustrated newsletter.⁵¹⁰ Similarly British cartoon series would have had their weekly production schedules interrupted and delayed by the strike. In contrast Felix's American production was unaffected by the strike and with *Kinematograph Weekly* reporting that 'practically every hall in the country is running' this series continued uninterrupted.⁵¹¹ This fact was gleefully publicised by Ideal who published an advertisement (Figure 23) in the aftermath stating 'all through the strike Felix kept on walking; now he's going better than ever',

⁵⁰⁸ Pathé response advertisements of this kind were published in *KW* on 26 March 1925, 17; 4 June 1925, 25; 25 June 1925, 14.

⁵⁰⁹ *KW*, 15 October 1925.

⁵¹⁰ *KW*, 11 May 1925.

⁵¹¹ *KW*, 11 May 1925.

accompanied by an image of Felix in lockstep with City workers forced to walk to work past signs stating 'No Trains Today' and 'No Papers'.⁵¹² Beyond the economic implications of this advertisement for British animated cartoons, it is also suggestive of the audience animated cartoons attracted, with Felix holding his cane walking past St Paul's Cathedral toward the City, sympathetic with the agents of capitalism rather than the proletariat.



Figure 23: 'Felix the Cat' (1926)

⁵¹² KW, 27 May 1926, 12.

The case study of 'Felix the Cat', as well as the other American series discussed above, demonstrates the overwhelming volume of imported releases which began during the First World War and continued unabated to the end of the period discussed in this thesis. British companies, such as Ideal, were complicit in allowing American films to dominate economically and that, while British animated cartoon producers may have been struggling, those sections of the industry in exhibition and distribution were thriving.

British cartoonists respond

Alongside the competition with imported American animated cartoons, British cartoonists were also increasingly competing with another challenge to their screen time: the rise of the feature length film. The earliest films examined in this thesis, those from between 1895 and 1907, were of a comparable length to all other types of films being produced. In the first decade of the century the Charles Urban Trading Company could advertise Walter Booth's 'The Sorcerer's Scissors' on equal terms with a live action drama 'Only a Dog; But More than Human' and an actuality 'Training the British Bluejacket' because its length of 220ft was comparable to its 366ft and 735ft associates.⁵¹³ During the 1910s the economic implications of the labour intensive animation process limited the length and competitiveness of animated cartoons, while live action films length increased without the same implications for increasing production costs. Following the war, short films were increasingly stigmatised, a *Kinematograph Weekly* editorial in 1922 admitting 'for a long time it has been the habit to regard all one- and two-reel pictures as "fill-ups" and very few exhibitors have thought this worthy of much attention in the matter of choice of subject', even while proclaiming this supplementary material as 'very important...and that the public was ready and waiting for more variety in programs'.⁵¹⁴ One indication of the relegation of short films was *Kinematograph Weekly's* decision in 1925 to separate their reviews of short films from the main review section and place them within a small dedicated section titled 'This Week's Short Stuff'. At the start of 1925 G.E. Studdy's 'Bonzo' films received equal treatment to much longer films with the one reel cartoons being reviewed alongside 5000ft features, but by the

⁵¹³ The *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 5 March 1908, 292.

⁵¹⁴ *KW*, 7 December 1922, 56.

middle of the year they received only a three sentence review in the separate short film section, alongside other animated cartoons and newsreels and magazines.⁵¹⁵ By the latter half of the year the reviews consisted of little more than descriptions of the contents of the films and a short recommendation ‘a thoroughly enjoyable feature’ or ‘a really good edition’.⁵¹⁶

Even as the feature length film became dominant, the supporting programme remained an important part of the cinema going experience. There is evidence that despite their short length animated cartoons were an important attraction to draw an audience in. As early as 1914 R. Prieur & Co.’s ‘Cine War Cartoons’ were promised to ‘fill your theatre’.⁵¹⁷ *The Bioscope* in 1917 remarked ‘no programme can be considered complete which cannot find occasional space for one of these highly ingenious forms of artistic entertainment’.⁵¹⁸ There is equally some evidence that British films, on occasion, could compete with American product in both their home market and in international markets. One review of Lancelot Speed’s *Sea Dreams*, the fourth in the *Bully Boy* series, praises it by saying ‘there is no better cartoonistic work on the screen anywhere in the world’; equally Bruce Bairnsfather’s cartoons were ‘now being shown in pretty nearly all the civilised world’.⁵¹⁹ Yet British cartoons struggled to establish themselves, a fact bemoaned by a 1918 editorial which, under the banner ‘Great Britain’s Opportunity’ asked ‘why do we see so few of our own cartoonists’ pictures filmed? Is it yet another admission that the foreign article is best?’ and urged more British animated cartoons and ‘films that are distinctly and essentially British’.⁵²⁰ During the war such an emphasis on distinctive qualities such as ‘Britishness’ and topicality were effective in selling British animated cartoons. These qualities were directly derived from the entertainment forms examined in chapter one and brought to film through the personnel who moved into film from them, as seen in chapter two. Following the war, however, these qualities were at best a neutral addition and at worst hampered their domestic shelf life and international sales. Consequently animated cartoon production in Britain was reduced to near-zero in the early 1920s and only recovered

⁵¹⁵ *KW*, 5 February 1925, 67; *KW*, 30 July 1925, 67.

⁵¹⁶ *KW*, 17 September 1925, 92; *KW*, 8 October 1925, 60.

⁵¹⁷ *Bios*, 10 September 1914, 930.

⁵¹⁸ *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

⁵¹⁹ *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 9 January 1915, 348; *Bios*, 24 October 1918, 108.

⁵²⁰ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 10 October 1918, 137.

significantly when British producers mimicked the practices of the successful American companies, such as establishing regular series which exhibitors could rely upon on a weekly basis.



Figure 24: Neptune advertisement (1914)

'All British': Nationality and the animated cartoon

The strong association of cartooning as a distinctly British artistic mode has been described in an earlier chapter and it is therefore no surprise that during the First World War an emphasis on the origin of cartoon films and their 'Britishness' as a unique selling point is readily apparent, from the earliest animated cartoons of the war. Neptune films, advertising a quartet of films in 1914 emphasised this quality to the exclusion of all others. Their advertisement simply lists the titles of the films, including Lancelot Speed's *Bully Boy* series, each with an arrow pointing to the central phrase 'All British' in large bold letting at the centre of the advert, with none of the normal information (length, cost, synopsis) that accompanied the majority of film adverts at this time (Figure 24).⁵²¹ Broadwest,

⁵²¹ *Bios*, 24 December 1914, 1308.

advertising E. H. Mills' *The Entente Cordiale*, following the highly successful *The Romance of David Lloyd George*, adopted a new logo, showing the company initials 'BW' over a Union Jack, with the motto 'Follow the Flag', a clear effort to associate their films with a specifically British content, and to encourage exhibitors and viewers to choose their films for this patriotic reason. Reviews explicitly identify animated cartoons as British and associate this with their success: *Dicky Dee's Cartoons (No.2)*, drawn by Anson Dyer, 'being of British origin...should be particularly useful' while the 'Kine Komedie Kartoons' are 'of such sound patriotism that there can never be any doubt as to their hearty reception by the audience'.⁵²²

Such an approach by cartoonists and their distributors was not without its problems, however. Firstly, where American animated cartoons featured topical subject matter these could equally be sold as patriotic. Trans-Atlantic promoted the American Hy Mayer's *Topical War Cartoons* under an image of Britannia and a Union Jack and suggested exhibitors 'show your patriotism by getting up a special military night and donating a part or all of the proceeds to...any of the worthy charitable societies alleviating the distress caused by the war'.⁵²³ Secondly, the notion of a coherent and unified view of 'Britishness' belies the complex relationship between the state and its constituent parts. On the one hand the British Empire remained at this time central to any understanding of Britain's place in the world, a point acknowledged by some cartoons, such as *The Voice of the Empire*. This

descriptive cartoon shows Kitchener's appeal for volunteers, and how Britain responds by giving him a first instalment of 500,000. Cartoons show how London, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales responded, also how the colonies – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, India etc., answer the call⁵²⁴

This cartoon ends with 'an original cartoon – "The Rousing of the British Lion"', an attempt to take this disparate group of places and bind them together as a single entity.⁵²⁵ *The Voice of the Empire* not only demonstrates the tensions between Britain and 'the colonies', but also between England, Ireland Scotland and Wales, even going so far as to name London on an equal footing with these countries. While the ideological ramifications of this go far beyond any

⁵²² *Bios*, 7 October 1915, i; *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

⁵²³ *Bios*, 8 October 1914, xxv.

⁵²⁴ *Bios*, 8 October 1914, 178.

⁵²⁵ *Bios*, 8 October 1914, 178.

discussion of animated cartoons, these issues are regularly reflected in them, particularly during the First World War when both nationality and topicality were central to the content of many, if not most, cartoons.

Acknowledging cultural difference in animated cartoons was of course difficult in a time of war, when national unity would be highly valued; however, some filmmakers were able to directly address such issues. Lancelot Speed's film *Tommy Atkins* takes up the difficult topic of immigration. It presents a story of a British soldier, the metonymic Tommy Atkins, whose employer, Levinski, is a Russian immigrant to Britain. They refuse to support him and when he returns from war he 'kicks Levinski and his Russian partner out of the office and the police tell them to enlist or deport themselves'.⁵²⁶ Unfortunately, as with many other animated cartoons of this period, Speed's film has not survived, so it is not clear whether this narrative descended to a jingoistic tirade against immigrants. The above description holds out the possibility of redemption in the form of Levinski enlisting, suggesting the film was more concerned with the 'white feather' movement and that immigrants were welcome as long as they contribute to their adoptive country through service.⁵²⁷ It is certainly clear that in this period animated cartoons were directly addressing the complex issues surrounding nationhood.

A further example of the complexity of selling animated cartoons as distinctly British is the case of Frank Leah. While none of his films are known to have survived and little is known about him, the description of Leah as an 'Anglo-Indian artist' immediately highlights the issues raised above.⁵²⁸ On the one hand Leah's cartoons dealt with 'native Indian life' and were initially 'exhibited at the leading variety theatres in Calcutta and elsewhere in India'.⁵²⁹ Yet he worked in the British tradition of the lightning cartoonist, producing 'topical pen sketches' which were 'of worldwide interest'.⁵³⁰ Furthermore, Leah's cartoons appeared under the title 'Ensign Cartoons' a name which evokes

⁵²⁶ *Bios*, 14 March 1918, 35.

⁵²⁷ This movement aimed to shame non-enlisted men to joining the war effort by publicly giving them one of the white feathers that gave the movement its name. See *The Times*, 19 January 1915, 4; Nicoletta F. Gullace, "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (1997).

⁵²⁸ *Bios*, 22 October 1914, 347.

⁵²⁹ *Bios*, 22 October 1914, 347.

⁵³⁰ *Bios*, 22 October 1914, 347.

a common national interest encapsulated in the symbol of a flag.⁵³¹ Revealingly, *The Bioscope* suggested his films would ‘meet with considerable success in *England*’, their slippage between Britain and England again unintentionally emphasising the tension between region, country, and empire.⁵³² Such a slippage is common in writing about British animated cartoons at this time, Lancelot Speed being described as producing the ‘original English animated drawings’.⁵³³

In terms of production and distribution the majority of animated cartoons during the war could make this slippage with little difficulty. London was the focus of the film industry and by default represented both England and Britain. There is evidence that films were released in London initially and only later released to the provinces, a situation particularly favourable to London exhibitors when topicality gave films a distinct shelf life. Ernest H. Mills’ *The Entente Cordiale* was released in London on 26 March 1917, with ‘different release dates for provinces’.⁵³⁴ Equally *The Romance of David Lloyd George* was released in London on 22 January 1917, but only available in the Midlands from 12 February, by which time the next film in the ‘Kine Comedy Kartoons’ series, Dudley Buxton’s *The Devil’s Little Joke*, was ready for its London release.⁵³⁵

There were, however, some exceptions to the London-centric film industry. Douglas Tempest’s *War Cartoons* were produced for Bamforth, a Yorkshire based company best known for producing picture postcards and magic lantern slides.⁵³⁶ Based in the small provincial town of Holmfirth, Bamforth was located well away from cosmopolitan London. Their postcards, particularly those drawn by Tempest, heavily featured life on the home front, and even where referring to front line events did so through domestic settings. For instance one postcard shows a man digging potatoes in a garden with the caption ‘I see you’re in the “trenches” at last!’, while another shows two children running away from a giant tortoise with the caption ‘look out, Sis, it must be one o’ dem tanks!’.⁵³⁷ While none of Tempest’s animated cartoons are known to have survived, it might

⁵³¹ *Bios*, 22 October 1914, 347.

⁵³² *Bios*, 22 October 1914, 347. My italics.

⁵³³ *Bios*, 8 February 1917, ii.

⁵³⁴ *Bios*, 8 March 1917, 1033.

⁵³⁵ *Bios*, 4 January 1917, 60-61; *Bios*, 11 January 1917, 192; *Bios*, 11 January 1917, 122-123.

⁵³⁶ *Bios*, 29 October 1914, xxv.

⁵³⁷ A Selection of Bamforth/Tempest postcards can be found at "Newton-Le-Willows and Earlestown War Memorial : Postcards," <http://nlwmemorial.tripod.com/nlwmemorial/pages/pagessections/postcards/tempestindex.htm>

be assumed that with section titles such as *His Master's Voice* and *Footing the Bill* they followed a similar approach.⁵³⁸ This focus on domestic matters can be seen as a reflection of Bamforth's distance from the centre of power, a disdain for the distant political machinations and a focus on the personal effects of the war. This in contrast to the London based artists such as Lancelot Speed and Anson Dyer whose films frequently feature German and British leaders and dealt with abstract ideologies far more than the practical realities of war.

Another film which addresses the issues of regional difference within Britain is *The Adventures of "Wee Rob Roy" No 1* thought to be from 1916. This non-topical film features the titular character in a series of barely related escapades, their defining feature being the focus on distinctly 'Scottish' activities including hunting and golfing, ultimately ending up being fired from cannon and landing on a thistle.⁵³⁹ While these symbols of 'Scottishness' (thistles, golf, bagpipes) may be considered stereotypes there is no indication that the film was an attempt to ridicule or caricature Scotland or its inhabitants, rather that it is an earnest attempt to create a distinctly Scottish animated cartoon series. Nationality and regional difference remained an important way for animated cartoons to differentiate themselves economically, even while addressing such topics exposed their ideological construction.

Following the end of the First World War the economic benefit of distinctly British cartoons was far less pronounced and would equally have limited international sales. The singalong films discussed in the previous chapter heavily emphasised their national origins. Pathé chose the patriotic 'Land of Hope and Glory' as the first song for their 'Super-Song' series accompanied by 'typical British scenes of a patriotic and artistic kind' while Ideal emphasised that the 'Singsong' series 'are British throughout' and 'British through and through'.⁵⁴⁰ These films may be considered an anomaly and their nationalistic fervour attributed to the wider concerns of the community singing movement.⁵⁴¹ For most animated cartoons their British production was reduced to a marketing point rather than being fundamental to the content of the films. Advertising and

⁵³⁸ *Bios*, 29 October 1914, xxv; *Bios*, 12 November 1914, xxv.

⁵³⁹ The character's name refers to the Scottish folk hero whose biography by Scott brought him to widespread notice Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co, 1818).

⁵⁴⁰ *KW*, 18 November 1926, 74; *KW*, 24 June 1926, 2; *KW*, 1 July 1926, 2.

⁵⁴¹ Russell, "Abiding Memories: The Community Singing Movement and English Social Life in the 1920s."

trade reviews continued to hail ‘Pongo the Pup’ as ‘All British’⁵⁴²; remark of ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ that ‘it is of special interest to note that this is an entirely British production’⁵⁴³, a point also made in Pathé’s advertising⁵⁴⁴; and highlight Bonzo’s British origin⁵⁴⁵. By the middle of the decade the cartoons themselves showed little that was nationally or regionally distinctive and eschewed any narrative elements that would distinguish them from the American imports. The recent rediscovery of the ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ films by British Pathé and the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales has brought attention to Jerry’s regional importance in the form of Welsh creator Sid Griffiths.⁵⁴⁶ Yet highlighting the importance of these films for Welsh filmmaking from a production perspective merely serves to further emphasise how little regional, or even national, specificities are brought to bear upon the films themselves. Jerry travels internationally in several cartoons and Hollywood and Paris are clearly identified by stereotypical images, but Jerry’s home could exist anywhere and the films contain none of the national references typical of wartime cartoons, let alone the regional iconography seen in *The Adventures of “Wee Rob Roy” No 1*.

That the decision to reject specific regional references was a deliberate one is illustrated by the films Jerry appeared alongside in the ‘Pathé Pictorial’ magazine films. ‘Pathé Pictorial’ regularly featured regional British stories and travelogues, for instance in February 1926 Jerry appeared alongside a story on ‘the coxswain of the North Deal lifeboat completing 50 years of service’ and later that year alongside a Welsh subject ‘Llandudno in British Pathécolour’.⁵⁴⁷ Jerry’s lack of regional colour was in strong contrast to the immediate context in which he was appearing. Given the lack of regional references in ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ it is unsurprising that the *Kinematograph Weekly* mistakenly described the films as ‘the work of the *English* artists, Messers. Bilby and Griffiths’.⁵⁴⁸ Equally it is unsurprising that American imports were occasionally

⁵⁴² *KW*, 9 October 1924, 56.

⁵⁴³ *KW*, 23 July 1925, 59.

⁵⁴⁴ *KW*, 20 August 1925, lxvi-lxvii.

⁵⁴⁵ *KW*, 23 October 1924, 94.

⁵⁴⁶ Griffiths is hailed, perhaps with tongue in cheek, as ‘the founding father of Welsh animation that has borne such animation classics as *Superted and Sam Tân*’ “It’s a Dogs Life - but Not for Jerry [Press Release],” The National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, http://screenandsound.llgc.org.uk/news_026.htm.

⁵⁴⁷ *KW*, 25 February 1926, 64; *KW*, 23 September 1926, 70.

⁵⁴⁸ *KW*, 21 January 1926, 68. My Italics.

mistaken for British films, Paul Terry's 'Aesop's Fable' *The Farmer and the Ostrich* being explicitly credited as of British origin despite being released in the United States earlier the same year.⁵⁴⁹ This should not be considered simply an editorial mistake, but rather indicative of the fact that British and American character series were by this time interchangeable.

While facing stiff competition from American imports in their home market, British animated cartoons looked to emulate them not only in content and technique, but also in exploiting the films in foreign markets. Victor Hicks discusses the importance of tailoring films for an international audience, stating 'your cartoon, to be successful, has to appeal to the American or French audience equally to the British cinegoer' and describes how a section of his 'Spick and Span' series had to be redrawn 'because the joke on which it was based would have been meaningless to the film patron on Paris'.⁵⁵⁰ G.E. Studdy clearly intended that Bonzo travel beyond his homeland, the advertising that launched the series stating the cartoons' quality would be accepted 'as the world's pattern', that Studdy and Bonzo are 'world famous' and add 'considerably to the gaiety of the world'.⁵⁵¹ The two page advertisement uses the word 'world' no less than six times in two pages, including stating that the films are 'controlled throughout the world' by New Era Films. Tom Webster's ambition equally extended beyond Britain, with advertisements for 'Alfred and Steve' stating 'if his still cartoons amuse the world, imagine them when animated'.⁵⁵² Whether this marketing ambition resulted in significant foreign sales is unclear, but it is apparent that it had considerable effect on the films themselves. As Victor Hicks suggests animated cartoons after the war increasingly rejected material which identified the films in a time or place, rejecting both British (or regional) specificities and topical subjects.

Topicality: Economic opportunity and risk

The continuation of strategies established in cartooning and illustration and adapted by personnel moving from those fields into film during the First World War was equally in place in the related area of topicality. An earlier chapter

⁵⁴⁹ *KW*, 14 December 1922, 46; Gifford, *American Animated Films : The Silent Era, 1897-1929*, 118.

⁵⁵⁰ *Picture Plays*, 20 December 1919, 8.

⁵⁵¹ *KW*, 9 October 1924, 26.

⁵⁵² *KW*, 9 October 1924, 26; *KW*, 31 December 1925, 4.

described the importance of topicality, both in the prints produced by Gillray and Cruickshank, and in the later Victorian illustrated newspapers and magazines. Topicality remained a vital attraction for animated cartoons throughout the war. A number of cartoons were explicitly named topical, including *The Topical Sketch* series by Say (1915), as well as the American Hy Mayer's *Topical War Cartoons*.⁵⁵³ Advertising regularly emphasised animated cartoons as 'the latest and best', 'best and most up-to-date' or 'topically invented'.⁵⁵⁴ Kineto's *Tank Cartoons* were advertised as utilising the titular mechanical devices while their invention was 'still fresh in the minds of the people'.⁵⁵⁵ A number of animated cartoons utilised seasonal interest to provide a topical marketing advantage, including *A Child's Dream of Peace* released for the Christmas market in 1918, and the Douglas Tempest produced *Christmas War Sketches* for Bamforth in 1914.⁵⁵⁶ Finally, reviews gave high praise for cartoons' topicality: *The Topical Sketch* being 'emphasised in value by ...allusions to everyday topics', while Anson Dyer is praised for showing 'a keen knowledge of the trend of popular opinion' and E. H. Mills' *The Romance of David Lloyd George* is 'a real winner, bang up to date'.⁵⁵⁷

As with their antecedents, such a demand for topicality placed considerable economic and technological pressures on animated cartoons of this period. Reproduction techniques and distribution channels were such that by 1914 the Yorkshire Cine Company, distributors of the Bamforth films, could promise to 'deliver any of their subjects within two days of receipt of order', a promise that was vital to deliver time sensitive films such as Douglas Tempest's *Christmas War Sketches*, which were required punctually for exhibitors to take advantage of their seasonal content.⁵⁵⁸ A Christmas film was unlikely to be a great success in mid-January. Yet while reproduction was far quicker than it had been for the cartoonists of the 19th century, this did not account for the increased time it took to produce the original of a hand drawn animated film. As highlighted earlier, these films could take many weeks to produce, extending

⁵⁵³ *Bios*, 20 May 1915, 754; *Bios*, 10 September 1914, 967.

⁵⁵⁴ *Bios*, 3 June 1915, iv; *Bios*, 20 May 1915, 754; *Bios*, 15 October 1914, 268.

⁵⁵⁵ *Bios*, 6 December 1917, 30.

⁵⁵⁶ *Bios*, 17 October 1918, 37; *Bios*, 12 November 1914, xxv.

⁵⁵⁷ *Bios*, 3 June 1915, i; *Bios*, 12 July 1917, 198; *Bios*, 18 January 1917, 286.

⁵⁵⁸ *Bios*, 19 November 1914, 689.

their time to market and limiting their ability to depict topical events. This is reflected in the long lead time many films had.

‘The Topical Sketch’ series (1915) would initially seem to challenge this, with regular releases less than a fortnight apart. For instance the fourth cartoon in the series was released on 29 July under the slogan ‘the latest and best cartoons’, just 10 days after the 19 July release of the third instalment.⁵⁵⁹ Yet these advertisements were appearing a month and half before the films were released, along with reviews of the finished films also appearing far in advance of the release date: the fourth edition being available to be reviewed in the 17 June edition of *The Bioscope*.⁵⁶⁰ A similar schedule can be discerned for the *Dicky Dee Cartoons* from B&C, where supposedly ‘topical cartoons’ were reviewed in the 2 September edition of *The Bioscope* more than a month before the film’s 18 October release date.⁵⁶¹ Clearly such extended schedules would severely limit the ability of these films to represent and react to genuinely topical events, even in comparison to their antecedents in print cartoons or music-hall lighting cartoonists.

Yet even with such an extended production schedule, the animators were clearly unable to maintain supply, and the film lengths subsequently suffered. The first instalment of ‘The Topical Sketch’ was 316ft., already shorter than the average animated cartoon of the period, which was typically 500ft. ⁵⁶² The second in the series dropped to 299ft. and the fourth edition was only 210ft.⁵⁶³ This gradual decline was noted in reviews, with the fourth edition being described as ‘brief’.⁵⁶⁴ As with the production schedule, a pattern emerges and a similar fate befell other series. The ‘Dicky Dee Cartoons’ series from B&C started out with its first film at a regular 541ft., but by its third edition had

⁵⁵⁹ *Bios*, 10 June 1915, vi; *Bios*, 3 June 1915, iv.

⁵⁶⁰ *Bios*, 17 June 1915, iii.

⁵⁶¹ *Bios*, 2 September 1915, i. There seems to have been some confusion by the editors of *The Bioscope* over the precise title of this series. In this case they call them *Dicky-Dee’s Cartoons* but elsewhere they use *Dicky Dee Cartoons* (for instance *Bios*, 25 November 1915, i.) as B&C did in their advertising material (for instance *Bios*, 2 September 1915, iv.). Denis Gifford has consequently compounded their mistake, listing all episodes as *Dicky Dee’s Cartoons* (Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 39-40.) For the purposes of this thesis the correct title as seen in the extant films (*Dicky Dee Cartoons*) has been used except when directly quoting printed sources. *Bios*, 2 September 1915.

⁵⁶² *Bios*, 20 May 1915, 754.

⁵⁶³ *Bios*, 3 June 1915, i; *Bios*, 10 June 1915, vi.

⁵⁶⁴ *Bios*, 17 June 1915, iii.

dropped to the sparse 352ft., yet still only achieved a release date of 6 January, still too late for exhibitors to capitalise on the ‘Christmassy’ topical theme.⁵⁶⁵

The majority of animated cartoons adopted the technique, described earlier in its use by the early 19th century cartoonists, of producing cartoons with nominally topical subject matter but which did not directly refer to events or details that would be quickly superseded. An advertisement for Broadwest’s ‘Kine Komedie Kartoon’ series, including *The Romance of David Lloyd George*, *The Devil’s Little Joke*, and *The Entente Cordiale* describes the films as ‘topical “topping” and taking’, despite the fact that the oldest of the three was four months old. That these films could continue to attract an audience indicates that, while they presented a veneer of topicality suitable for marketing, their content was more general than that term suggests. Equally a number of essentially non-topical character based series continued to add elements of topicality to their films allowing them to compete with the cartoons which genuinely addressed current affairs. The first film in the ‘Slim and Pim’ series, created by Leslie Dawson for Kineto, is titled *Allotments* and revolves around the two main characters and their rivalry trying to grow vegetables on an allotment, where ‘we see their frenzied attempts to outdo each other, complicated by a wonderful fertiliser and a very bad dream’.⁵⁶⁶ Kineto claim in advertising for the film that this constitutes ‘a topical story’, yet it is clear from the synopsis that the topicality is limited to a reference to the increased need during wartime for citizens to grow their own food and to a generalised notion of human conflict.⁵⁶⁷ Clearly this film would not be immediately out of date even if the war ended, giving it a longer shelf life and therefore more opportunity to recoup its production costs and make a profit.

In contrast E. H. Mills film *Russia the Resolute*, produced in 1917 was marked as out of date even before it was released due to the tumultuous events in that country in 1917, *The Bioscope* review finding it necessary to start their review by pointing out ‘this clever cartoon was produced before the deplorable debacle in the Russian armies’.⁵⁶⁸ Attempting to reflect rapidly changing events inevitably ran the risk of giving animated cartoons a short shelf life, and may

⁵⁶⁵ *Bios*, 2 September 1915, iv; *Bios*, 25 November 1915, i; *Bios*, 25 November 1915, i.

⁵⁶⁶ *Bios*, 8 August 1918, viii.

⁵⁶⁷ *Bios*, 8 August 1918, viii.

⁵⁶⁸ *Bios*, 2 August 1917, 505.

well explain the muted response Mills' film received, a marked indifference in comparison to his *The Romance of David Lloyd George* earlier in that year. Mills' dedication to presenting genuinely topical material is emphasised further by Dudley Buxton's *The Plot that Failed* released a week later and reviewed just below Mills' film in *The Bioscope*. While Buxton's film features topical elements, including more 'allotment gardeners' and 'a bomb dropped from a Zepp' its focus on a 'furious rivalry' rather than the topical elements gave it a longevity that Mills' film could not achieve.⁵⁶⁹

A small minority of British animated cartoons were produced during the war with no attempt at topicality. The Kineto 'Humours of...' series satirised familiar elements of everyday British life, including football, libraries and advertising, while Louis Wain's feline films allowed little space for wartime topics.⁵⁷⁰ For the majority, however, topicality was an important selling point. This is particularly the case when the strong competition coming from American animated cartoons is considered. As the light-hearted titles of the films in Table 1 might suggest, American animated cartoons were overwhelmingly non-topical for most of the war period, reflecting that nation's detached association with the war. Towards the end of the war, following the American entry, there was a notable increase in topical subject matter in American animated cartoons.⁵⁷¹ In *Joining the Tanks* Mutt and Jeff move from their typical domestic setting to 'the very seat of war...on German soil...putting the wily Hun himself through frightfulness'.⁵⁷² The American use of topicality as a selling point came too late to challenge British dominance in this area, however, and in some cases subjected their films to the same problems faced by British topical subjects: obsolescence. Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* is, in the present day, celebrated as an early instance of animated documentary and for depicting the topical event described in its title. Yet this film was only released in British cinemas in May 1919, following the end of the war, when its impact would be considerably weakened.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ *Bios*, 2 August 1917, 505.

⁵⁷⁰ *Bios*, 13 September 1917, 47; *Bios*, 16 August 1917, 788; *Bios*, 18 October 1917, 54; *Bios*, 16 August 1917.

⁵⁷¹ The United States officially entered the War on 6 April 1917. *The Times*, 7 April 1917, 7.

⁵⁷² *Bios*, 28 November 1918, 28.

⁵⁷³ *Bios*, 27 March 1919, 74.

Thus far the economic motivation for addressing concerns of nationality have been foregrounded. ‘Britishness’, however loosely defined, was a marketing tool to attract an audience and produce a profit for commercially produced films, with regional variation playing a role in the distribution of films. Not all animated cartoons during the war were produced as commercial concerns, however. Throughout the First World War there was a growing awareness of the importance of propaganda in winning wars, with Germany estimated to be spending ‘sixteen millions per year’ by 1918, in contrast to the British Government’s two million, and editorials calling for far more money to be spent on propaganda, particularly in a cinematic form.⁵⁷⁴ Of particular interest for this study, a number of Government financed cartoons were produced by E.P. Kinsella with Horace Morgan, and Lancelot Speed. These were provided ‘Free, gratis and for nothing’ by the War Savings Committee. They were distributed by Pathé and explicitly labelled as ‘propaganda’, with advertisements stating that they were made available ‘by the Government...as a means of carrying on their work of Propaganda’.⁵⁷⁵ Paul Ward has discussed in detail the relationship of First World War cartoons with propaganda and argues that this label should not be reserved only for those films directly financed by Government agencies.⁵⁷⁶ Ward is undoubtedly correct that propaganda is not the sole reserve of Government sponsored films. As discussed already, a number of films address topics of national interest with no official involvement, and a number of films had Government approval without being directly produced or financed by them. Notably E.H. Mills’ *The Romance of David Lloyd George* was ‘founded on sittings given to the artist by the Prime Minister’, a clear endorsement of the film by the Prime Minister and the Government.⁵⁷⁷ Given the lengths taken to suppress Maurice Elvey’s 1918 film *The Life Story of David Lloyd George* the following year it must be assumed the release of Mills’ film constituted full Government approval.⁵⁷⁸ A review of Mills’ films describes him as ‘in the front

⁵⁷⁴ *Bios*, 8 August 1918, 4.

⁵⁷⁵ *Bios*, 14 February 1918, 22; These Government sponsored films were listed in a separate section of ‘free propaganda films’ in *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 7 March 1918, 94; *Bios*, 14 February 1918, 22.

⁵⁷⁶ Ward, "Distribution and Trade Press Strategies for British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War Era."

⁵⁷⁷ *Bios*, 4 January 1917, 60-61.

⁵⁷⁸ David Berry and Simon Horrocks, *David Lloyd George : The Movie Mystery* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

rank of cartoonists' a military metaphor indicating his role in the battle for hearts and minds.⁵⁷⁹

It is, nevertheless, important to acknowledge the distinction between commercial films whose propagandistic content primarily represented a marketing tool in a time of heightened sensitivity to issues of nationality, in contrast to subsidised films intended first and foremost to shape, reinforce or change public opinion. Furthermore, within the light of the current study, these concerns should be seen within the context of the British tradition of illustration and cartooning, stretching back to the political cartoons of Gillray, Cruickshank and their peers, discussed in an earlier chapter. Cartooning and illustration were seen as inherently British and a concern with nationhood and nationality had long been central to this aesthetic form. That the cartoonists who came to film during the war overwhelmingly chose to continue this tradition is not a surprise and need not be labelled explicitly as propaganda; it was simply *business* as usual.

In the immediate post-war period cartoonists did not initially reject the topical mode used throughout the war. As described earlier, Lancelot Speed's 1919 film *Britain's Honour* applied the topical propaganda techniques of his war cartoons to the domestic arena, tackling 'child labour, bad housing, disease and other evils'.⁵⁸⁰ Without a wartime consensus to silence critics, however, any solutions the film might propose would have been more contentious. Perhaps more significantly, this local subject matter would severely restrict the sale of such films abroad. Topical and regional subjects would continue to play a role in animated cartoons but this was increasingly a marketing tool rather than a fundamental reason for the cartoons' existence. Hepworth promoted seasonal Christmas cartoons under the title 'Christmas Specials' yet the films released under this banner were Anson Dyer's *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs*, films whose appeal would remain after the Christmas season.⁵⁸¹ Similarly Dyer's 'Bobby the Scout' series (1922), while referring to the British scouting movement would have relevance throughout the British Empire.⁵⁸² Dyer was equally praised for introducing a 'topical touch' to his *Romeo and Juliet* in

⁵⁷⁹ *Bios*, 6 December 1917, 47.

⁵⁸⁰ *Bios*, 29 May 1919, 79.

⁵⁸¹ *KW*, 7 December 1922, 56.

⁵⁸² *KW*, 16 June 1921, 45; Allen Warren, "Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal, 1900-40," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

the figure of ‘Mr Pussyfoot’, but this reference can be considered in the same light as the use of Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford as the lead characters, namely a generalised period reference that was not fundamental to the film’s long term appeal, rather than a truly topical commentary.⁵⁸³

As described in the introductory chapter, British animated cartoon makers have been seen by a number of commentators and historians as slow in ‘learning new techniques’.⁵⁸⁴ The adoption of the techniques developed in the United States by Bray and Hurd, or more general production line techniques, may have offered British filmmakers the opportunity to retain topicality while delivering regular releases with consistent length. This did not occur and topicality was largely eliminated from British animated cartoons following the war. Yet there is no evidence that this was simply a technical failing of the British cartoonists. Based on the primary information available (the films themselves and descriptions in trade journals of the time) it would appear their reluctance to use mass production techniques stemmed from a desire to retain other aspects of their cartooning heritage. Firstly, examined below, is the retention of the cartoonist as a distinctive and creative voice expressed through the work. Secondly, to be examined in later chapters, is the desire to retain the aesthetic approach of cartooning, especially the close attention to perceptual process and the narrative of perception derived from the lightning cartoon.

Series films: The cartoonist as star protagonist

Alongside topicality, and the emphasis on the ‘Britishness’ of cartooning, there remains one further notable approach which British animated cartoons took, drawing on the heritage and traditions of cartooning in this country to compete with American cartoons, namely the attempt to establish series which retained the cartoonist as both star and author. While some animated cartoons were apparently produced as one off productions, including *Peace and War Pencillings* by Harry Furniss and *The Voice of the Empire* (both 1914), the majority of animated cartoons produced from 1914 onwards were associated with a larger series in one form or another.⁵⁸⁵ Donald Crafton has delineated a

⁵⁸³ *Bios*, 23 October 1919, xiv.

⁵⁸⁴ Bendazzi, *Cartoons : One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*, 42; Low, *The History of the British Film. 1914-1918*, 174.

⁵⁸⁵ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 27.; *Bios*, 8 October 1914, 178.

categorisation of early animated cartoons, based primarily on the degree of continuity and repetition in the films, progressing through ‘Nonseries films without protagonists’, ‘Nonseries films with protagonists’, ‘Series films without protagonists’, ‘Series films with protagonists’ ending with ‘Continuity series with protagonists’.⁵⁸⁶ In examining British animated cartoons from the First World War, it is apparent that films across the spectrum of these broad categories were being produced.

At one end of this continuum lay films like *The Voice of the Empire* which sits easily into Crafton’s ‘Nonseries films without protagonists’, while a significant number of the animated cartoons fall into ‘Series films without protagonists’, with the ‘Kine Komedie Kartoons’, ‘John Bull’s Animated Sketchbook’ and ‘Bully Boy’ series all following this pattern. *Peace and War Pencillings by Harry Furniss* would seem initially to be a ‘nonseries films without protagonists’, but in a period when the lightning cartoon remained the dominant model, the cartoonist played a central role in providing their cartoons with a distinct identity, in the same way recurring protagonists do in Crafton’s categories. In this film, Furniss plays a central role as raconteur leading the audience through a series of cartoons he draws. Given Furniss’s celebrity, described earlier, we might equally describe it as one instance in a series with Furniss as protagonist, it just happens to be the only *film* in the series, the other entries being his work in other arenas, such as his famed lecture tours.⁵⁸⁷

A similarly complex relationship between animated cartoon series and their cartoonists can be seen throughout the First World War. ‘Kine Komedie Kartoons’ was the most loosely grouped series, consisting of a number of unrelated cartoons, each with their own title, drawn by different cartoonists. A 1917 two page advertisement hails ‘Cartoons! Cartoons!’ and highlights the first two releases, E.H. Mills’ *The Romance of David Lloyd George* and Dudley Buxton’s *The Devil’s Little Joke*.⁵⁸⁸ Neither film is known to have survived, yet from descriptions alone it is apparent they have a very different tone and

⁵⁸⁶ Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 259-99.

⁵⁸⁷ For instance in 1888 Furniss embarked on a lecture tour ‘in which he will act as both bright and genial speaker and humorous delineator’ on the topic of the Royal Academy (*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 11 February 1888, 84.) For more details of Furniss’s lecturing career see ‘Chapter XI: Platform Confessions’ in Harry Furniss, *The Confessions of a Caricaturist*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1902), 154-89.

⁵⁸⁸ *Bios*, 11 January 1917, 122-123.

aesthetic. E.H. Mills' film 'portrays incidents in the life of the Premier with the utmost fidelity', an early attempt at animated documentary, predating Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania*.⁵⁸⁹ In contrast an advertisement for Buxton's *The Devil's Little Joke* shows a highly caricatured image of the Kaiser in bed in his pyjamas, in what we can assume is an image from the actual film. Distinct from Mills' film, *The Devil's Little Joke* is much closer to the satirical tone of the majority of First World War cartoons, which draw on the long history of political caricature described previously. Nevertheless, both films were heavily marketed as a regular series under the 'Kine Komedie Kartoons' banner in an attempt to bind them together as a consistent package that exhibitors could schedule on a regular basis, with one advertisement highlighting that they were 'to be released one a fortnight'.⁵⁹⁰

The earlier 'John Bull's Animated Sketchbook' series had a more defined identity using consistent title cards and a simple numbering system rather than individual titles. Nevertheless, 'John Bull's Animated Sketchbook' was drawn by more than one cartoonist, just as the 'Kine Komedie Kartoons' were. The series featured the work of both Anson Dyer and Dudley Buxton. Each cartoonist continued to bring a degree of individuality to the films they animated, denying the series a consistent tone. Despite this the series was more successful than most, running to at least 17 instalments throughout 1916.⁵⁹¹

Neptune Film's *Bully Boy* series was the most uniform series, utilising both repeatable title cards and a single author, Lancelot Speed. Yet while using a single animator provided consistency, it subjected the series to the same constraints discussed in relation to topicality, namely extending the production time to a degree that films were not produced on the regularity required by exhibitors, thus damaging it economically. While the initial *Bully Boy* cartoons 'proved such a successful feature in the Neptune Film Company's productions' that they intended to release films from this series on a very regular basis, the production schedule was quickly extended and by instalments five and six there was a two and a half month gap between release dates.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ *Bios*, January 4, 1917 quoted in Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 46.

⁵⁹⁰ *Bios*, 29 November 1917, 102.

⁵⁹¹ *Bios*, 20 July 1916, v. Denis Gifford suggests the series ran until December 1916 for 22 instalments, but gives no reference for his source. Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 45.

⁵⁹² *Bios*, 24 December 1914, 1305. This news item is not entirely clear on the precise release schedule intended, stating simply 'three subjects will be released every week', but it is implied that this was to

Crafton's taxonomy of early animation remains a useful way to delineate the films, but in relation to British animation in the First World War it fails to distinguish the range of approaches used by producers to establish series. British producers were challenged by the twin economic challenges of producing regular series which could attract exhibitors, which required a division of labour, while retaining the consistent tone and style which would define the series, something which in the previous forms of print cartooning and the lightning cartoon act had been provided by the product being the work of a single cartoonist.

In the post-war period the dominant role of American imports was decisive in changing the dynamic of animated cartoon series in Britain. The most successful American series, including 'Felix the Cat' and 'Mutt and Jeff', were 'continuity series films with protagonists'.⁵⁹³ Some producers continued to release loosely related films under a banner title in an attempt to secure regular distribution, as they had done during the war.⁵⁹⁴ These loosely grouped series were not successful in establishing long term production and following the near absence of animated cartoon production in the early 1920s, British producers clung closely to the American model for the series that were launched. This is clearly seen in several home-grown series whose names echoed Felix's: 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke', 'Bonzo', and 'Pongo the Pup'. The influence of Felix is equally seen in other ways. Having lost the rights to 'Felix the Cat' to Ideal in March 1925, Pathé launched the series 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' in July 1925, with one review explicitly stating 'this is Pathé's latest cartoon to take the place of "Felix"'.⁵⁹⁵ Dudley Buxton's 'Pongo the Pup' series was launched in October 1924 as part of the 'Pathé Pictorial' magazine, a parallel position to the one held by Felix in 'Eve's Film Review'. It is readily apparent from the extant films that Felix played an influence on the character design of Pongo and one review states explicitly the intention that this "All-British" cartoon series will soon rival the popularity of the famous Felix'.⁵⁹⁶ 'Pongo the Pup's similarity to

include live action films, not simply Lancelot Speed's animated cartoons. Instalment number five was released on February 1, 1915 (*Bios*, 7 January 1915, 54). Instalment number six was released April 17, 1915 (*Bios*, 1 April 1915.)

⁵⁹³ Crafton, *Before Mickey : The Animated Film, 1898-1928*.

⁵⁹⁴ For instance 'Kine Komedie Kartoons' labelled a number of films by Dudley Buxton under the banner *Bucky's Burlesques* despite them having little apparent connection other than Buxton's authorship. *KW*, 22 July 1920, 75. See also Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 61.

⁵⁹⁵ *KW*, 23 July 1925, 59.

⁵⁹⁶ *KW*, 9 October 1924, 56.

other characters would even result in a High Court case. In late 1924, when both series were launching, G. E. Studdy, creator of ‘Bonzo’ brought an injunction against Pathé arguing that ‘Pongo the Pup’ bore too close a relation to Studdy’s own creation which had been announced, but not released, first.⁵⁹⁷ The case was dismissed on the grounds that ‘Pongo the Pup’ was not directly copying ‘Bonzo’, but rather operating in a generic field established by ‘Felix the Cat’. This was acknowledged by one news report which described Studdy’s creation as also ‘on the lines of that of “Felix the Cat”’, and a review of the series’ first entry stated it was ‘a cartoon subject which will rival “Felix”’.⁵⁹⁸ Alongside Pongo, Bonzo (both 1924) and Jerry (1925), Dudley Buxton launched ‘Memoirs of Miffy’⁵⁹⁹ in 1920; Lancelot Speed produced the ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ adaptation in 1921⁶⁰⁰ the same year Anson Dyer’s ‘Bobby the Scout’ was released⁶⁰¹; Gaumont launched ‘Dismal Desmond’ as part of their ‘Gaumont Mirror’ magazine film in 1926⁶⁰²; Tom Webster attempted several series, including ‘Alfred and Steve’ in 1926.⁶⁰³ Joe Noble had been involved as an assistant on a number of series, including Tom Webster’s films, the ‘Pongo the Pup’ series with Dudley Buxton and the uncorroborated 1921 series ‘Crock and Dizzy’⁶⁰⁴ but at the end of the period under examination he produced the ‘The Adventures of Sammy and Sausage’ in 1928⁶⁰⁵ before going on to produce the first British sound cartoons with ‘Orace the ‘Armonious ‘Ound’.⁶⁰⁶

These anthropomorphised characters are indicative of one of the main strategies of animated cartoons in the 1920s: the shift towards series. In the attempt to compete with American imports, of which Felix was only the most visible and popular, British animated cartoons turned away from the strategies employed during the war to differentiate themselves from American releases. Whereas during the war cartoons had been loosely grouped and structured around the star cartoonist, now they were regular series where the onscreen character was the star.

⁵⁹⁷ *KW*, 16 October 1924, 58.

⁵⁹⁸ *KW*, 16 October 1924, 58; *KW*, 23 October 1924, 67.

⁵⁹⁹ *KW*, 25 November 1920, 89.

⁶⁰⁰ *KW*, 27 January 1921, 72.

⁶⁰¹ *KW*, 16 June 1921, 45.

⁶⁰² *KW*, 4 November 1926, 10.

⁶⁰³ *KW*, 1 January 1926, viii.

⁶⁰⁴ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 64.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

Aesthetic Criteria

In addition to their economic dominance, described above, American animated cartoons also became the model for the aesthetic judgement of these types of films, making their competition even greater for British cartoon producers. This became keenly apparent towards the end of the war, a typical example being the American *Mr Fuller Pep Tries Mesmerism*, which was praised as containing ‘the funniest cartoon work ever seen’.⁶⁰⁷ One review of the ‘Mutt and Jeff’ series describes how ‘the bright originality of these clever and amusing cartoons never seems to diminish’, while *Box Car Bill Falls in Luck* is praised for having ‘the same imagination and humour and the same remarkable animation’ as the ‘Mr Fuller Pep’ series.⁶⁰⁸ This latter praise is particularly telling coming on the same page as a damning review of a British animated cartoon, *Humours of Advertising*, where ‘the drawing is rather elementary and ... does not lend itself effectively to the humour’.⁶⁰⁹ This dominance of the market led to the belief that ‘cartoons were conceived in America’, despite the earlier precedents of Merry and Booth and the traditions of both music hall and cartooning in Britain.⁶¹⁰

In the 1920s new series were always understood in relation to their foreign competition, such as Dudley Buxton’s ‘Memoirs of Miffy’ series being considered a ‘British counterpart of “Mutt and Jeff”’.⁶¹¹ The advertising for the launch of G.E. Studdy’s ‘Bonzo’ series acknowledges the dominance of American product, stating ‘to date it has not been found possible to produce animated cartoons in this country on a technical level with those emanating from the United States’ while arguing ‘Bonzo’ finally reached or even surpassed that level.⁶¹² The comparison with American films would often find British animated cartoons failing to meet the aesthetic criteria established by the imported films, for instance Tom Webster’s ‘Steve and Alfred’ series ‘lacks some of the life of its best American prototypes’ while *The Language of Cricket* has drawings ‘of mediocre quality [that] do not suggest a long experience with the medium of the screen’.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁷ *Bios*, 21 June 1917, 1177.

⁶⁰⁸ *Bios*, 28 November 1918, 28; *Bios*, 18 October 1917, 54.

⁶⁰⁹ *Bios*, 18 October 1917, 54.

⁶¹⁰ *Bios*, 24 October 1918, 108.

⁶¹¹ *KW*, 25 November 1920, 89.

⁶¹² *KW*, 9 October 1924, 26.

⁶¹³ *KW*, 1 April 1926, 32; *KW*, 26 August 1926, 47.

The comparison was not always in favour of the imported films and the detriment of British films. American films were not invulnerable, a ‘Krazy Kat’ animated cartoon being made up of ‘one or two stale’ ideas, while one reviewer stated of ‘Bonzo’ ‘British cartoon films need fear no rivals so long as they approach this remarkably high standard’.⁶¹⁴ Yet it is apparent that even where praise was awarded it was with the large volume of American films as a background, establishing the criteria for what constituted ‘good’ animated cartoons. The highest praise one *Kinematograph Weekly* reviewer could award ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ for ‘the funniest footage seen lately’ is to state ‘this British cartoon creation can now rank in quality with its Max Fleischer godfather’ though it fails to make clear what constitutes that ‘quality’.⁶¹⁵ For adhering to the criteria of the American animated cartoons, British cartoons were praised. In contrast it is notable that the poor reviews identified above were for animated cartoons which retained a greater association with print cartooning. Tom Webster’s films were heavily advertised and structured around his position as star cartoonist at the *Daily Mail* newspaper and it would seem probable that it was these print cartoons that served as ‘prototype’ for the screen adaptation and not the American films reviews compared them to, resulting in the poor reception described earlier.⁶¹⁶ Similarly the description of *The Language of Cricket* as ‘sketchily handled’ implies a graphic approach at odds with the dominance of movement in American animated cartoons.⁶¹⁷

The most revealing example of the role these aesthetic criteria played in shaping British animated cartoons is Lancelot Speed’s ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ series. Made in 1921 this series foregrounds the print tradition it resides within. The titles of this series heavily promote both Speed, and A.B. Payne who created the newspaper strip the series is based on. Furthermore, the opening sequence of *Trouble in the Nursery*, the first episode of the series, introduces the characters by showing them reading the ‘Daily Mirror’ the newspaper which published the A.B. Payne comic strip, reminding the spectator not only of the source of the characters and story, but equally their aesthetic model. This series used a cut-out animation technique which stayed faithful to the look of the source material,

⁶¹⁴ *KW*, 22 April 1926, 61; *KW*, 23 October 1924, 94.

⁶¹⁵ *KW*, 9 September 1926, 54.

⁶¹⁶ *KW*, 1 April 1926, 32.

⁶¹⁷ *KW*, 26 August 1926, 47.

especially in the use of greyscale colouring and the representation of textures. Equally this series' dependence upon intertitles maintained, to some degree, the relationship between text and image found in the source cartoons where each comic strip frame not only contained speech bubbles, but also a narratorial subtitle, giving equal weight to text and image. The series was consequently criticised for these characteristics, with the *Kinematograph Weekly* writing 'There seems to be about as much footage devoted to sub-titles as to pictures in the first episode of "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred". From the artistic and technical point of view it would be an advantage to cut all of them out. They merely detract from the value of the scenes'.⁶¹⁸ 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' is thus criticised for the very qualities which had brought Lancelot Speed such success as a book illustrator, where he established a close relationship between text and image at both a graphic and narrative level, and introduced new levels of expressive detail to a mechanically reproduced mass medium. As will be explored in chapter five 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' holds considerable interest, but this was not recognised at the time of its release. The criteria for judging animated cartoons had been established by American imports dominated by image, and privileged material of that kind over animated cartoons which drew on earlier forms and placed no hierarchy on text and image. While 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' continued to be produced for up to a year, the series did not warrant further comments in trade papers and is almost entirely ignored in all future histories.⁶¹⁹

Conclusion

Economic concerns can be seen to be determinant in many aspects of the animated cartoon business. During the First World War American producers utilised time saving industrial mass production techniques and technologies to produce a regular stream of releases which saturated the market, aided by the more general changes in distribution that have been described by Kristin Thompson.⁶²⁰ During the First World War this growth of American imports led

⁶¹⁸ *KW*, 27 January 1921, 72.

⁶¹⁹ Rachael Low does list the series but makes no direct commentary on it. Denis Gifford reprints the largely negative *KW* review and does not track the individual episodes, in contrast to the *Jerry, Pongo* and *Bonzo* series. Low, *The History of the British Film. 1918-1929*, 284; Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 63.

⁶²⁰ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34*.

animated cartoon producers to emphasise qualities from prior forms to differentiate their films. Personnel from both print cartooning and music hall were familiar with the role topicality could play in cartoons and utilised this experience in negotiating the economic risks and opportunities of topical subject matter. Both music hall and print cartooning engaged with notions of nationality, and in a period of global war animated cartoons continued to reflect this concern. Finally, the centrality of the cartoonist in providing cartoons' identity was challenged by the time consuming and costly animation process. In the post-war period the appeal of topical and national subjects waned while they equally damaged the longevity and international saleability of the films in question. Consequently British animated cartoon production reached a low in the early 1920s, only recovering when British producers adopted the economic strategies of the American series.

Providing a detailed case study in the decisive shift in distribution that would see American film companies dominate the international film market to the present day, this history would initially seem to confirm the conventional history of British animated cartoons that was outlined in the Introduction of this thesis. The emphasis during the war on qualities from prior forms such as nationality and topicality, as well as the use of the lightning cartoon as a mode to express these, may be interpreted as indicating that British animated cartoons were antiquated, unable to see beyond prior aesthetic forms to develop a new mode of cinematic expression. Equally the similarity in subject matter between 1920s British series and American imports, particularly in the use of anthropomorphised animals, may be interpreted as indicating British animated cartoons were derivative, at best no different from the huge volumes of animated cartoons now in production in the United States, at worst a pale imitation. These interpretations replicate the aesthetic criteria that were applied by trade journals in the period in question. Yet these criteria were themselves products of American films' dominance, the sheer volume of releases establishing the definition of what animated cartoons were. This thesis contends that British animated cartoons need to be understood on their own terms, and that there are alternate approaches which would more accurately reflect the contexts in which these animated cartoons arose. A by-product of this history, however, was that the critical tools to achieve this were never developed, particularly from an

aesthetic perspective. Therefore, before re-examining the films in aesthetic terms, the following chapter looks to redress this imbalance and identify sources of an alternate aesthetic approach grounded in the intermedial context from which these animated cartoons arose.

Chapter 4. Theories of aesthetic perception: Gombrich, Eisenstein, and Luria

This chapter addresses the need for an alternate aesthetic framework with which to examine British animated cartoons in the period before the adoption of synchronous sound. Rather than replicate the aesthetic criteria established by dominant American imports after 1917, described in the previous chapter, it returns to the prior forms from which these animated cartoons derived their personnel and aesthetic model. As described in chapter one, close attention and engagement with the viewer's perception may be considered a vital aspect of cartooning, illustration, and the lightning cartoon. The theorists' work examined in this chapter explores this relationship between perception and these graphic arts.

Perceptual concerns have, of course, been widely considered as characteristic of late-19th and early-20th century artistic practices under the broad category of modernism, suggesting an aesthetic model which could be utilised to reassess British animated cartoons. Yet such an approach would face two very clear difficulties. Firstly, while the films under study have been suggested as a form of 'artist's film' elsewhere in this thesis, they sit uneasily alongside the canonical works of avant-garde modernism. British animated cartoons are to be considered as part of a cultural tradition stretching back at least to the early to mid-19th century, a tradition pre-dating most practical definitions of modernism. While this and the following chapter will suggest these films exhibit a number of qualities commonly associated with modernism, this serves to indicate the difficulty in characterising a unique definition of modernism, rather than co-opting these films into it. Furthermore, such an approach would risk returning to the criteria it seeks to escape. Just as American animated cartoons established a criteria of medium specificity predicated upon their industrial and technological advances, so many modernist approaches to perception return to essentialist definitions which emphasise a medium's sense specificity or perceived formal particularities.

Rather than following this route to theorising the role of perception in British animated cartoons, this chapter looks to two theorists of the drawn image whose work directly engages with the perceptual basis of those images. Of

particular importance is that both theorists, Sergei Eisenstein and Ernst Gombrich, address this perceptual basis within the context of the cultural tradition of illustration and caricature from which British animated cartoons arose.

E. H. Gombrich: The psychology of pictorial representation

Art historian Ernst Gombrich is a key theorist with respect to the perceptual principles of caricature and drawing, a topic addressed throughout his writing, but especially in both his 1940 monograph *Caricature* (co-authored with Ernst Kris) and his later 1960 work *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*.⁶²¹ While written more recently, this chapter will first address *Art and Illusion*, which examines a general field of pictorial art, before considering Gombrich's more specific theorisation of the art of caricature and cartooning.

Art and Illusion

In his book *Art and Illusion* Gombrich examines in detail the distinct principles of perception central to 'pictorial representation' including caricature. Gombrich's stated aim is to address art history not as a simple teleological history of progression from primitive art to perfected representational illusion, but rather that 'changes in style...were the result of different modes of seeing the world'.⁶²² In this sense, Gombrich's work encompasses the application of psychological principles to art history, as the subtitle of his book suggests: *A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. While the eclectic and non-chronological choice of examples in *Art and Illusion* deny the clarity of a cultural history of style, Gombrich successfully elucidates psychological principles as found throughout art history. His work is thus most useful in considering the application of art to psychology, rather than the application of psychology to art. Of particular importance here is the degree to which this highlights the role of perception in the creation and consumption of pictorial art. Gombrich's range of examples from historically, geographically, and disciplinary diverse sources serves to indicate that while modernism may be strongly associated with an

⁶²¹ E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 6th ed. (London: Phaidon, 2002); E. H. Gombrich and Ernst Kris, *Caricature : With Sixteen Colour Plates and Nineteen Illustrations in Black and White* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940).

⁶²² Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 10.

increased awareness of the spectators' role in constructing aesthetic experience it does not have an exclusive claim to these concerns.

A major perceptual principle Gombrich highlights is the capacity of the mind to complete suggestions, to leap from the incomplete or ambiguous to a definite perception. He gives the example of his wartime duties listening to and interpreting radio transmissions. Here barely audible transmissions were subjected to analysis, with the mind's ability to interpret and finish incomplete inputs being vital to their understanding.⁶²³ Gombrich links this capacity with magicians and conjurers who

set up a train of expectations, a semblance of familiar situations, which makes our imagination run ahead and complete it obligingly without knowing where we have been tricked... anyone who can handle a needle convincingly can make us see a thread which is not there.⁶²⁴

Gombrich links magic with art in terms of their dependence upon the capacity of the perceiving mind to complete their representation. Early animated cartoons clearly extend this interrelation further, with Walter Booth's background as a magician as well as lightning cartoonist playing an important role in his films, as it did for other early animators internationally, most notably Georges Méliès.

For Gombrich this capacity of the mind to complete is not limited to overt illusions but is central to all artistic representation. Gombrich argues that there exists an 'inherent ambiguity of all images' and the mind plays a vital role in completing and interpreting the 'indeterminate'.⁶²⁵ Gombrich describes several examples in which the mind's role in interpreting what is seen is actively demonstrated. He describes approaching a village from a distance: 'in certain circumstances we may easily take a rock for a building and a building for a rock, and we may hold on to this wrong interpretation till it suddenly gives way to a different reading'.⁶²⁶ In a second example Gombrich describes the familiar activity of examining a painting closely then stepping back and 'watching our imagination come into play, transforming the medley of colour into a finished image'.⁶²⁷ In both cases the role the mind plays in constructing the image, normally concealed, is brought to the forefront. Importantly for our discussion, these situations closely resemble the perceptual experience of the lightning

⁶²³ Ibid., 170-71.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 211, 188.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 167.

cartoon act, in which the act of perception, the resolution of indeterminacy, is enacted.

Gombrich argues that this resolution of indeterminacy is not simply an option but a requirement, a fundamental principle of perception. He gives several examples of London Transport advertising material where the ‘bull’s-eye’ logo has a dual role, as the logo, and as an object in a scene or a letter in written text.⁶²⁸ While it is possible to switch between the two aspects, ‘we are not aware of the ambiguity as such...we cannot hold conflicting interpretations’.⁶²⁹ This principle is readily apparent in the ‘Rabbit or Duck?’ image Gombrich uses to introduce his book, made famous in its use by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*.⁶³⁰ In this image the viewer can see both a duck and a rabbit, but cannot hold both in place both at once. This experience is also a familiar one in Victorian optical illusions, in which images depict, for example, both a haggard old lady and a young girl, or a lady with long hair and a gentleman with a beard.⁶³¹ Some examples of these images require the card to be inverted to ‘switch’ between the two highlighting a particular cognitive function, namely the specialisation of facial recognition and the impact inversion has on it, a topic addressed further in chapter six.⁶³² Other examples of these illusions only require the viewer to mentally switch between the two by focusing on particular aspects of the image. While such overt illusions are not present in all art works, Gombrich sees as fundamental to all art the perceptual principle of completion that they demonstrate. These illusions may also be considered a visual parallel to the simultaneous meanings that were a major component of music-hall presentations discussed in chapter one, indicating a lineage between literary and visual simultaneity that forms a significant aspect of Eisenstein’s theories on animation, discussed later in this chapter.

Throughout *Art and Illusion* Gombrich identifies a number of other conditions or principles of perception which govern the reception of visual art, such the need for a “screen” an empty or ill-defined area onto which he [the

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 198.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 4-5; L. Wittgenstein et al., *Philosophical Investigations* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 204e.

⁶³¹ Laurent Mannoni, Werner Nekes, and Maria Warner, *Eyes, Lies and Illusions: The Art of Deception* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2004).

⁶³² Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 198.

viewer] can project the expected image'.⁶³³ Likewise the notion of 'familiarity': a requirement for some prior knowledge to allow the completion of the image.⁶³⁴ In addition Gombrich emphasises 'the capacity of our minds to register relationships rather than individual elements'.⁶³⁵ This phrase draws attention to Gombrich's debt to Gestalt psychology with its basic tenet that

there are wholes, the behaviour of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole⁶³⁶

In using non-scientific terms such as 'familiarity', 'screen', and 'relationships' Gombrich attempts to retain the Gestalt notion of the 'whole' as well as avoid any type of dehumanising scientific reductionism. Gombrich does not directly address scientific explanations, an antipathy that for John Onians is rooted in his experience of growing up as a Jew in Austria in the 1920s and 1930s where the dangers of biological essentialism or determinism would have been all too apparent.⁶³⁷ Perhaps because of this, *Art and Illusion* is ambivalent about the division between innate and learned perception. Throughout his discussion of these principles Gombrich raises, but does not resolve, the relative weight between basic perception and the role of higher cognitive functions such as language and memory.

This is apparent in his discussion of relationships. Some aspects of this topic in *Art and Illusion* address basic physiological response to stimuli, such as the observation that an image drawn in black on a white background is perceived identically to one drawn in white on a black background, thus indicating that it is the relationship between the two which defines the image rather than the individual elements.⁶³⁸ As regards colour perception, he observes 'we respond to light intervals...rather than to the measurable quantity of light reflected from any given object', that is to say that the perception of a colour depends upon those surrounding it.⁶³⁹ In contrast to these low level perceptual relationships, Gombrich also identifies the importance of the broader context, remarking for

⁶³³ Ibid., 174.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁶³⁶ Max Wertheimer, "Gestalt Theory (1925)," in *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed. Willis D. Ellis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1938), 2.

⁶³⁷ J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 161.

⁶³⁸ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 35-37.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 46.

example “we do well to remember that relationships matter in art not only within any given painting, but also between paintings as they are hung or as they are seen”.⁶⁴⁰ Gombrich’s notion of ‘relationships’ thus encompasses both immediate perceptual context (elements within the artwork) and a wider environmental context (labels or names, artworks seen in the same environment).⁶⁴¹ We may add a further aspect to this list, linked with the ‘familiarity’ requirement identified earlier, namely the context a viewer (or indeed an artist) brings to the artwork, the application of prior knowledge, experience of the world, and cultural conditioning.⁶⁴²

This ambiguity regarding the balance between innate and learned is also apparent in his discussion of schemata. Gombrich uses the terms ‘schema’ or ‘mental set’ to group his observations regarding the application of prior knowledge to the understanding of art.⁶⁴³ The terms ‘schema’ and its plural ‘schemata’ are derived from the psychology of Gombrich’s period, as well as revealing again his debt to Gestalt psychology, but like his discussion of other psychological principles, Gombrich avoids directly addressing the scientific findings of his time.⁶⁴⁴ For Gombrich the notion of a pre-established expectation is central to the understanding both of how artists create images of the world and how a viewer understands those images. A schema is a mental representation of a thing which identifies its salient features, an abstracted notion independent of the specific physical members of that type. A schema is produced by, and located in, the perceiving viewer’s mind, rather than existing independently of it. Gombrich describes a series of illustrations of two Cathedrals of Notre Dame, in Paris and Chartres. These illustrations, intended for documentary purposes, at first glance appear faithful to their subject, yet close attention reveals significant differences, such as the shape and number windows depicted.⁶⁴⁵ While the illustrations could be simply dismissed as erroneous, Gombrich argues they indicate the role schemata play in both the production and reception of images. Both illustrations have captured the salient features of the mental schemata we hold and it is this

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴² Ibid., 175.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁴⁴ A useful overview of schema theory can be found in Richard Anderson and David Pearson, "A Schema-Theoretic View of Basic Processes in Reading Comprehension," in *Handbook of Reading Research*, ed. P.D. Pearson (New York: Longman, 1984).

⁶⁴⁵ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 61-64.

which makes them evoke in the viewer the same image as that the artist experienced when viewing the subject. While the role of schemata is, for Gombrich, clearly learned rather than innate, the topic is ambiguous regarding the level of control and consciousness the spectator has over them. It is not clear the degree to which this learned response reflects high level intellectual cognition or a learned low level physiological response.

Gombrich's reluctance to fully articulate a position on these issues is understandable even without recourse to his biography. Firstly, they address fundamental epistemological and ontological questions which have no easy answers, with scientific engagement with them in its infancy in 1960 when Gombrich published his book. Furthermore *Art and Illusion* addresses a historically and geographically diverse set of references from throughout art history in an attempt to produce a universal theory of art. It is only in Chapter X of *Art and Illusion* that Gombrich addresses a more limited and historically specific form of pictorial art. That this chapter covers caricature is in itself indicative that Gombrich sees this form having an especially strong affinity with the interrogation of the perceptual principles of pictorial art. This chapter, along with earlier work *Caricature* from which it draws heavily, makes an unqualified assessment of the relationship between this particular art form and the perceptual process of its spectator.

Gombrich on Caricature

Caricature (1940) is primarily a brief chronological history of the eponymous form and identifies a number of the qualities discussed in chapter one. Gombrich delineates the early history of this form in Britain in the works of Hogarth, Gillray, and Rowlandson, followed by the shift in the Victorian newspapers and magazines, away from the 'pictorial expression' of those artists, to the illustration of verbal jokes.⁶⁴⁶ Gombrich emphasises the second class status caricature and cartooning have held in comparison to other pictorial arts stating 'comic art is, and always has been, ranked as inferior'.⁶⁴⁷ The importance within caricature of the notion of the inner self being represented through 'outward appearance' is also addressed, a tendency already identified here as having a

⁶⁴⁶ Gombrich and Kris, *Caricature : With Sixteen Colour Plates and Nineteen Illustrations in Black and White*, 22.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

close relationship with scientific understandings of perception, as typified by the relationship between Rudolphe Töpffer's drawings and the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology.⁶⁴⁸ Moreover, Gombrich identifies in caricature a perceptual basis which can also be argued to be central to the understanding of animated cartoons, with their shared cultural tradition and aesthetic strategies.

In both *Caricature* and *Art and Illusion* Gombrich pays close attention to the distinction between the production and the reception of this form of pictorial art. As regards the production of caricatures, the first observation Gombrich makes pertinent to this discussion concerns Charles Philipon's famous series of images of Louis Philippe entitled 'Les Poires', showing the King's face being transformed into a pear which appeared in *La Charivari* in 1834. Gombrich highlights the double meaning present in the image, 'Philipon arrives at a picture which is both a king and a *poire*' highlighting the notion of simultaneous meaning explicated earlier, a simultaneous meaning which is further exploited through the evocation of a linguistic pun, namely a play on the French *poire* meaning both pear and fathead.⁶⁴⁹ Yet this goes beyond simply being another example of the simultaneous meaning which is central to both music hall and caricature. This caricature is presented as a series of four drawings showing the transformation of Louis Philippe, which Gombrich suggests presents the 'unfolding, as in a slow-motion picture, the process which goes on in the caricaturist's mind'.⁶⁵⁰ Such a situation clearly bears close resemblance to the lightning cartoon. In Philipon's drawing, as in a lightning cartoon performance, the perceptual underpinnings of the caricature are revealed. Whereas the lightning cartoon primarily presents the simultaneous meaning of line and image, the coming into being of an image from the lines which construct it, Philipon's drawing presents the construction of a simultaneous meaning of two dispirit images brought into conjunction, a pear and the King. For Gombrich this cartoon illustrates the basic perceptual process occurring in the caricaturist's mind, and in doing so also recreates that process in the viewer's mind.

The second aspect of the production of caricature that Gombrich highlights is an emphasis on the notion that this art form is most effective when

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

unhindered by professional training, that ‘the drawings of late eighteenth century amateurs were often even funnier when produced by untalented but witty persons...the professional artist soon learnt to adopt this effect, to renounce “design” and to be deliberately crude’.⁶⁵¹ As with Baudelaire’s celebration of Constantin Guy’s work, Gombrich argues that caricature is a reflection of a mind unhindered by the rationality and discipline of academic style.

Throughout *Art and Illusion* Gombrich consistently emphasises the role prior art plays in training the artist, that conventions of pictorial representation are central to the development of style and that the observation of an external reality is far less important than it has previously been considered in art history. This is an argument made especially forcefully in his chapter ‘Formula and Experience’ which deals with instructional guides for artists.⁶⁵² The major exceptions he makes to this argument are caricaturists such as Rudolphe Töpffer and Daumier. These artists’ work ‘relies not on pre-existent forms, on the schemata of academic art checked and clarified in front of the model, but on configurations arising under the artist’s hand as if by accident’.⁶⁵³ These artists’ work arises from their ability to analyse, or at least react and adjust to, their own perception of the image that arises before them. Caricature and cartooning are thus given a special basis which depends upon the naivety of the artist and their ability to interrogate the perceptual process of viewing a line drawing. In this we may make another connection between caricature and the lightning cartoon.

As identified earlier, there were a significant number of child performers working in music hall as lightning cartoonists in the late 19th century, and the discourse surrounding these acts held very closely to the argument Gombrich makes in 1940, namely that the inexperience and lack of academic drafting skills, far from hindering the artists, provided them with an insight denied academic artists. This notion of the insightful childlike or ‘primitive’, mind should not be accepted uncritically, but it is clear that this discourse is central to any understanding of drawing, whether lightning cartooning or caricature, and will prove to be central to animation theory as discussed later in relation to Sergei Eisenstein’s work on Disney.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 18-19.

⁶⁵² Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 126-52.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 298.

Gombrich's emphasis on a naive, childlike, or primitive aspect to caricature is not limited to its production, but also encompasses its reception and perception. Gombrich likens caricature to beliefs in 'black magic' or voodoo in which an action performed on an image or effigy might in some way affect the person depicted, an appeal to the 'more primitive strata in the human mentality'.⁶⁵⁴ Caricature's appeal to a non-rational aspect of the viewers' minds goes beyond a mere resemblance to primitive beliefs, however, with Gombrich arguing that caricature evokes in its viewers a childlike state of mind, that

with the caricaturist we may relapse into a stratum of the mind where words and pictures, rules and values lose their well-established meaning, where the king may be changed into a pear and a face into a simple ball. And thus we are led back on a lightning excursion to the sphere of childhood, where our freedom was unhampered. In the eternal child in all of us lie the true roots of caricature⁶⁵⁵

In part Gombrich is simply indicating that caricature may deal with issues that social restraint would normally preclude being raised. Published in 1940, Gombrich's remarks are undoubtedly marked by the background of the Second World War and reflect a desire for a balance between the propagandistic need for a united nation and the democratic need for debate and dissent. It is notable, however, that Gombrich does not pay significant attention to the political and social messages of these propagandistic cartoons. Rather, Gombrich's comments go beyond this political argument, to the level of perception, suggesting that 'in all of us' exists a basic perceptual faculty which is subsequently controlled by a 'strict path of logic', to which caricature appeals.⁶⁵⁶ *Art and Illusion* as a whole is ambiguous about the relative balance between higher cognitive functions and basic perception in the psychology of pictorial art. Its discussion of caricature, along with Gombrich's earlier work in *Caricature*, make a clear argument that this particular form of graphic art is deeply engaged with low level basic perceptual functions. The exact nature of this appeal is less clearly expressed. Gombrich likens it at once to 'black magic', an 'eternal child', and a basic 'stratum of the mind' suggesting a range of sources, ranging from evolutionary to development to physiological. Gombrich's argument here bears comparison with Sergei Eisenstein's theories on animation, with both authors arguing caricature or

⁶⁵⁴ Gombrich and Kris, *Caricature : With Sixteen Colour Plates and Nineteen Illustrations in Black and White*, 9.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

animated cartoons appeal to a primitive or childlike aspect of the viewers' mind. The following section addresses Eisenstein's writing on this topic along with its sources, a discussion of which allow a more detailed examination of these different notions of primitive perception.

Eisenstein on Disney

While never completed as a single coherent document, Sergei Eisenstein's writings of the 1940s around the topic of Walt Disney's animation remain an important theorisation of the workings of hand drawn animation.⁶⁵⁷ While it is in the nature of the incomplete work and its discursive tone that it raises many issues and strands of thought, for this discussion the primary argument Eisenstein makes is the identification of the notion of the 'plasmatic' and its relationship with the role 'primitive' perception plays in the understanding of animation.

The importance of perception manifests itself in a number of ways. Eisenstein consistently foregrounds dialectic between the rational/logical and the sensuous. Naum Kleiman writes that for Eisenstein resolving this tension was his "*Grundproblem*"-the problem that was not only "fundamental", but "basic", "underlying", "foundational".⁶⁵⁸ For Eisenstein, Disney's films, appeal to the sensuous, basic perceptual level of the viewer, in opposition to the rational/logical. For example he reads the 1937 cartoon *Lonesome Ghosts* as providing a

unique morality-play on the theme that, only having joined in the fantastical, alogical and sensuous order is it possible to achieve a mastery and supremacy in the realm of freedom from the shackles of logic⁶⁵⁹

Further than this, though, the animation of Disney appeals to the sensuous not simply through the narrativisation of the victory of the sensuous over the logical but through the embodiment of that victory, particularly in cartoons from the 'Silly Symphonies' in which narrative is diminished in favour of the play of ideas. In these films objects, animals or people reject rationalising categorisation through their very form. Transformation or metamorphosis are terms often used to describe animation and might be used to describe these figures, yet Eisenstein coins a new term, the 'plasmatic'.⁶⁶⁰ This term describes the capacity of the

⁶⁵⁷ The writings were edited into a single volume by Jey Leyda in 1986: Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*.

⁶⁵⁸ N. I. Kleiman, "Introduction," in *Eisenstein on Disney* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1986).

⁶⁵⁹ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 22.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

images in Disney's films not simply to 'dynamically assume any form' but also a 'rejection of once-and-forever allotted form'.⁶⁶¹ For Eisenstein this quality seen in animation is not simply the shape shifting of one form into another. In *Merbabies* (1938) animals do not simply transform, they embody two or more categories at once. Here the spectator experiences an octopus which walks and behaves like an elephant (Figure 25); sea horses with equine behaviour (Figure 26); and a tiger fish that displays big cat aggression (Figure 27).⁶⁶² For Eisenstein these forms, which cut across any attempt at taxonomy, appeal to the viewer at a pre-logical, primitive-sensuous level.⁶⁶³

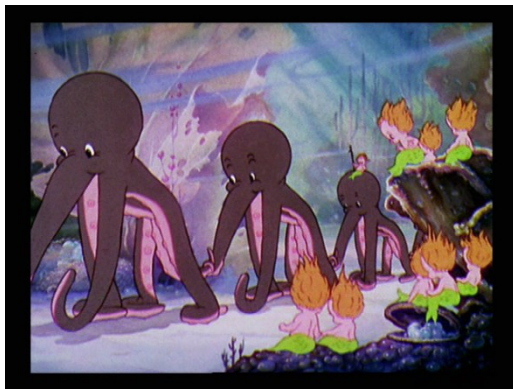


Figure 25: *Merbabies* (1938)



Figure 26: *Merbabies* (1938)



Figure 27: *Merbabies* (1938)

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 21.

Eisenstein's celebration of the transformative qualities of Disney animation is not unproblematic. Firstly, he emphasises in the 1940s a quality that was increasingly eliminated from the Disney cartoons throughout the 1930s. In many ways his comments are more applicable to animation of the 1920s, such as Disney's American predecessor Otto Messmer's Felix the Cat, as well as the British characters of the 1920s to be discussed here. Certainly Disney's early work, that animated by Ub Iwerks featuring Oswald the Rabbit and Mickey Mouse as well as the early 'Silly Symphonies', continued to show a debt to the dominant style of the silent period, featuring transformable characters sporting elastic 'rubber hose' limbs.⁶⁶⁴ Yet by the time of Eisenstein's writing this had been largely eliminated in favour of a greater physical verisimilitude, such as the use of 'squash and stretch' to maintain consistent volume.⁶⁶⁵ By the production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (in production from 1934 and released in 1937) live action reference footage was used to create more 'realistic' characters.⁶⁶⁶

A second difficulty with Eisenstein's arguments regarding the 'plasmatic' is his arguments heavily draw on the 1938 cartoon *Merbabies* that, although released under the Silly Symphonies banner by Disney, was directed by George Stallings at the Harmon-Ising Studio in an agreement Disney made to help finish *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.⁶⁶⁷ Thus the authorial claims made not simply for the Disney Studio but for Walt Disney himself – 'The work of this master is the greatest contribution of the American people to art' – are destabilised by the historical facts.⁶⁶⁸

These issues do not undermine Eisenstein's overriding argument. Firstly any aesthetic reading of *Merbabies* is independent of its origin and authorship. Furthermore, while *Merbabies* is neither typical of the work of the Disney studio by the late 1930s nor is the most obvious exemplar of the 'plasmatic', this can be explained by this film being more recently released and therefore presumably more recently seen by Eisenstein. Eisenstein undoubtedly formed his ideas while watching earlier Disney cartoons as he makes several references to *The Skeleton*

⁶⁶⁴ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*, 45. p. 45.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁶⁶⁷ Michael Barrier, "Interviews: Hugh Harman,"

http://www.michaelbarrier.com/Interviews/Harman/interview_hugh_harman.htm.

⁶⁶⁸ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 1.

Dance (the first of the Silly Symphonies series, released in 1929) and other earlier films, and it is only the more recent films proximity which results in their use as examples. It is also possible to see Eisenstein's interest in the topic as early as 1923, the same year the young Walt Disney moved to Hollywood, five years before the creation of Mickey Mouse.⁶⁶⁹ In a sequence of his first film *Dnevnik Glumova/Glumov's Diary* Eisenstein depicts a jester who transforms into that thing most desired by the other character on screen – a baby for a young lady; a cannon for a soldier; a Swastika for a young fop; a donkey for a clown. The jester's ability to transform is enabled by the technology of cinema, in this case the substitution splice, and would seem to embody the same 'plasmaticness' Eisenstein celebrates in Disney. Lastly, and most importantly, the examples from *Merbabies* demonstrate that the 'plasmatic' is not synonymous with transformation, as will be discussed further below.

It is also necessary to recognise that Eisenstein's argument is not limited to Disney per se but rather holds Disney as an exemplar of a broader historical tradition of 'plasmaticness'. He finds the same quality in a range of historical illustrations and drawings – those of European examples such as Lewis Carroll, Walter Trier, and Wilhelm Busch as well as Asian examples by Toyohiro, Bokusen, and Katsushika Hokusai.⁶⁷⁰ Eisenstein's theories on animation thus link it with a tradition of caricature and illustration, the same tradition which provoked Gombrich's writing addressed earlier, and the same tradition which provided much of the personnel and aesthetic concerns for early British animation as established in earlier chapters of this thesis.

While the majority of his examples are drawings, Eisenstein's use of the 'plasmatic' sees this quality as present in a range of mediums. In particular he sees poetry as the historical antecedent to drawing and animation as regards the use of metamorphosis/metaphor. Drawing on the writing of Taine, Eisenstein sees metaphor as a linguistic equivalent or precursor; metaphor is 'poetry's principle of transformation' which in Disney becomes 'literal metamorphosis'; Disney's animation is 'metaphor in form and objects'.⁶⁷¹ The 'plasmatic' may

⁶⁶⁹ Bob Thomas, *Building a Company: Roy O. Disney and the Creation of an Entertainment Empire* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), 44.

⁶⁷⁰ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 11-22.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 40, 48.

thus be seen as a theory of the simultaneous meaning addressed earlier in this thesis.

Eisenstein extends this idea of simultaneous meaning into the relationships between line and image, and between image and movement. Eisenstein states ‘any representation exists in two ways: as a set of lines, and as the image that arises from them’.⁶⁷² The dialectical pair highlights the central role of the viewer’s mind in transforming the former (‘set of lines’) into the latter (‘the image’). As in the lightning cartoon, the mind is unable to hold these two aspects in place at the same moment and must instead resolve the ambiguity. Furthermore, there is an equivalent tension between still image and movement, where the ‘action of glancing itself...is “animistically” ascribed to the object of observation’.⁶⁷³ For Eisenstein the movement of the eye over the lines of a drawing are ‘motori-subjectively sensed’, the act of observation evokes not simply a visual sensation but a motor response, the image is animated psychologically even before it is technologically placed in motion.⁶⁷⁴ Thus, as with the line/image pair, the mind (and particularly for Eisenstein the ‘pre-logical’ mind) is central to the construction of animation, as it transforms a line into an image, and an image into movement.⁶⁷⁵

Eisenstein’s valorisation of the ‘plasmatic’ could be seen as apolitical aestheticism or a conservative reinforcement of the status quo. Initially in his writing he would seem to concur with this, suggesting that ‘Disney...bestows precisely this upon his viewer, precisely obliviousness, an instant of complete and total release from everything connected with the suffering caused by the social conditions of the social order of the largest capitalist government’.⁶⁷⁶ This quote indicates that escapism is part of Disney’s appeal, but Eisenstein argues that this is not simply ‘obliviousness as a tool for disarming the struggle’ but something more or different.⁶⁷⁷ This could appear as a simple apologia for an aesthetic attraction to a politically unsound product, yet it is important to recognise that Eisenstein’s valorisation of the ‘plasmatic’ is not in isolation, an appeal to the rational/logical, but rather is bound up with the notion of sensuous,

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

the ‘pre-logical’ or ‘primitive’.⁶⁷⁸ It is in the interrelation between the ‘plasmatic’ and the primitive that Disney’s films transcend a simple reactionary escapism.

The importance of the primitive to our understanding of Disney’s appeal is clearly indicated when Eisenstein writes ‘Walt Disney’s work is the most omni-appealing I’ve ever met...this work has most or all the traits of pre-logical attractiveness’.⁶⁷⁹ Eisenstein’s conception of the ‘pre-logical’ or primitive encompasses a range of divisions explored by later psychologists.⁶⁸⁰ The first of these is the distinction between the rational/logical and the sensuous. These categories are partly aesthetic: there is a parallelism (though not an absolute equivalence) between a content/form split and the rational/sensuous division. Yet it is also a psychological division, the sensuous being the immediate sensations we experience from the world through our eyes/ears/nose/mouth/sense of touch, the rational/logical being the way those sensations are ordered and understood. While form/content can be considered to exist independently in the world, the rational/logical and the sensuous are dependent upon a perceiving mind. There are a number of qualities to this observation. Firstly, it posits a mind, if not in conflict then at least divided. Secondly, while the rational/logical are learned and culturally specific, the sensuous is innate and universal. As shall be seen these observations closely match later scientific studies which categorise the mind into ‘top-down’ or ‘nativistic perception’ and ‘bottom-up’ or ‘directed perception’.⁶⁸¹

The second aspect to Eisenstein’s notion of the pre-logical is an evolutionary one. He writes ‘at the centre of Disney..stands man. But man brought back, as it were, to those pre-stages that were traced out by ... Darwin’.⁶⁸² While writing prior to the discovery of DNA, Eisenstein, nevertheless, embraces a conception that the human mind has inherently evolved and that a modern mind differs fundamentally from that of our prehistoric forebears, yet we retain the capacity to think in these prehistoric terms, as Disney’s work evokes this primitive mode. This notion of an evolutionary psychology remains an important one to psychologists’ work today, as will be broached in chapter six. The previously discussed notion of the ‘plasmatic’ is a

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 41,59.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁸¹ Robert L. Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 2003), 2.

⁶⁸² Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 10.

further indication of Eisenstein's interest in the evolution of the brain, the term evoking both the Primordial soup from which all life on earth developed and embryonic stem cells.⁶⁸³ Both of these forms embody the 'plasmatic', the capacity to transform into other forms, the pluripotency Eisenstein celebrates in Disney.

The reference to stem cells raises the third aspect to Eisenstein's discussion of the pre-logical or primitive, the developmental one. In this aspect he sees the childlike as a primitive psychology, untainted by the rationalising influence of experience or teaching, and suggests this provides an exact parallel with both the prior evolutionary stages discussed above and alternate 'primitive' cultures.⁶⁸⁴ He writes

a child not only physically, but also psychically and psychologically, passes through stages which correspond to earlier stages of human development. And the psychology of a child at specific stages of development corresponds to the peculiarities of the psychology of peoples who are at the 'childhood stage' of social and societal development⁶⁸⁵

This raises the final aspect to Eisenstein's all-encompassing notion of the pre-logical to which, he argues, Disney's animation appeals: the social/cultural or anthropological. Eisenstein draws on a notion of 'primitive' cultures, often the indigenous peoples of countries whose very different cultures may seem backward from the perspective of a western tradition. For Eisenstein such people provide direct access to a prior evolutionary stage, an opportunity to study the pre-logical mind which he sees as latent in all humans. For instance he discusses 'the Indian tribes of Northern Brazil' who 'maintain that, while human beings, they are none the less at the same time also a special kind of red parrot common in Brazil...It is not here a matter of identity of names or relationship; they mean a complete simultaneous identity of both'.⁶⁸⁶ While the hierarchical value judgement implicit in Eisenstein's labelling of these cultures as primitive is today considered unacceptable, there remains a valuable aspect to Eisenstein's comments, that is the recognition of social, cultural, and historic difference in perception. Eisenstein was aware of recent work which was starting to acknowledge and investigate the cultural influence upon perception. He directly refers to the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl whose work influenced that of

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., 50.

Aleksandr Luria, who, although not directly referred to in his Disney texts was a contemporary and colleague of Eisenstein and whose work will be discussed later.⁶⁸⁷

There is one further aspect to Eisenstein's commentary on Disney, and that is the related notions of animism and totemism. Animism shares an etymological root with the term animation, but Eisenstein's analysis goes beyond this linguistic relationship. For Eisenstein animism is the meeting point of the two aspects of animation discussed separately above; the 'plasmatic' and the pre-logical or primitive. The term animism refers to 'the attribution of a soul to natural objects and phenomena; G E Stahl's theory (1720) that the soul is the vital principle and source of the phenomena of animal life'.⁶⁸⁸ Eisenstein uses the term totemism to refer to the belief in a relationship between humankind and this animating soul. Eisenstein identifies three levels to the totemistic belief in animism that have evolved as humankind has moved from the primitive to the rational. The first stage is the absolute unity of man and animal, the second stage the unity of man and animal though totemistic belief and the third stage is the comparison of man and animal, the metaphoric stage. As Eisenstein describes the stages 'I and nature *are one and the same*, later *on-identical*, still later-*alike*'.⁶⁸⁹ Here the primitive, pre-logical mind perceives the 'plasmatic', the transformation of man into animal or even the elimination of difference between them. For Eisenstein Disney's animation regresses through these stages, starting at the metaphoric level but ending in the reunification of man and animal: 'Mickey [Mouse] *plastically* truly embodies the "ideals of the Bororo"-he is *both* human, *and* a mouse!'.⁶⁹⁰ Animism may thus be seen as a special instance of simultaneous meaning or the 'plasmatic' in which a primitive mind removes the distinction between human and animal. Animation, for Eisenstein, can return the viewer to such a state.

For Eisenstein the key quality of animation is what he calls the 'plasmatic', a quality not only of transformation or metamorphoses, terms which imply movement between two distinct categories or forms, but also the 'rejection

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 48; A. R. Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 7.

⁶⁸⁸ *The Chambers Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 1993), 60.

⁶⁸⁹ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 53.[Italics in original]

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 96.[Italics in original]

of once-and-forever allotted form'.⁶⁹¹ He sees this quality not as a unique quality of animation, but deriving from older aesthetic forms, especially illustration and caricature. Just as Gombrich found these earlier forms to be deeply engaged with low level basic perceptual functions, so Eisenstein sees the intermedial quality of the 'plasmatic' as having a special appeal at a primitive or basic perceptual level. While he does not produce a taxonomy of these perceptual responses a close reading finds four distinct meanings to it: the sensuous (opposed to rational/logical); evolutionary; developmental; and social/cultural. Eisenstein's theorisation of animation's 'plasmatic' appeal to these primitive psychologies is encapsulated in the notion of animism, in which the reintegration of man and animal is embodied in anthropomorphised characters such as Mickey Mouse in which the distinctions between the two categories are dissolved. Eisenstein's theories thus suggest a relationship between basic perception, which is addressed in the narrative of perception seen in the lightning cartoon act, and the anthropomorphised characters typical of British animated cartoons on the 1920s. Before addressing these topics, it is worthwhile examining one of the major influences on Eisenstein's theories, a source which helps clarify a number of the implications which Eisenstein does not fully extrapolate.

A. R. Luria and the cultural basis of cognition

Eisenstein and Aleksandr Luria were well known to one another, both belonging to a study circle investigating 'pre-logical thought and "inner speech"'.⁶⁹²

Michael Cole in his epilogue to Luria's autobiography describes how Luria

met regularly with Sergei Eisenstein to discuss ways in which the abstract ideas that formed the core of historical materialism could be embodied in visual images projected upon the movie screen.⁶⁹³

Cole indicates that Luria's fellow psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who died in 1934, also attended, dating these meetings prior to both that date and Eisenstein's writings on Disney.

Aleksandr Luria is popularly known for his later work, particularly the book *The Mind of Mnemonist*.⁶⁹⁴ Within scientific circles his work continues to

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁹² Katerina Clark, "Eisenstein's Two Projects for a Film About Moscow," *Modern Language Review*, no. 101 (2006).

⁶⁹³ Michael Cole, Karl Levitin, and A. R. Luria, *The Autobiography of Alexander Luria : A Dialogue with the Making of Mind* (Mahwah, N.J. ; London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), 207.

⁶⁹⁴ A. R. Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book About a Vast Memory*, trans. Lynn Solotaroff (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968).

influence present-day neuroscience, as will be identified in chapter six. It is his research conducted in 1931-32, however, that is of relevance to this discussion. Luria was influenced by the publication in 1930 of an edition of work by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl which was 'the first to treat logical processes as products of historical development'.⁶⁹⁵ Luria conducted a series of psychological experiments, carried out under natural conditions, in Uzbekistan. This area was undergoing major changes following the 1917 revolution, shifting from illiterate village communities to educated modern economic and social groupings. A study of the distinct groups, from illiterate women living in isolated villages to educated women students training to be teachers, allowed the impact of literacy and the new socialist economy on fundamental thought processes to be identified and measured.

Luria's findings led him to propose two modes of thinking which he describes as the 'graphic-functional' and the 'abstract, categorical'.⁶⁹⁶ The 'graphic-functional', typical of the illiterate villagers, is characterised by a practical approach to problems, led by their immediate experiences. When asked to name and categorise skeins of coloured wool, subjects from this group predominantly named colours on the basis of real world referents ('calf's-dung'; 'pistachio'; 'spoiled cotton') and found it difficult to group colours by primary colour.⁶⁹⁷ When presented with a series of geometric figures (a line drawing of a circle; an incomplete line drawing of a circle; a filled circle) the subjects from this group did not use the categorical name (circles) but rather object-orientated names ('watches') and again failed to group them or grouped them on the basis of the real world referents they had used to name them rather than their shared geometrical features.⁶⁹⁸

Conversely 'abstract, categorical' thinking is characterised by the ability to think beyond the immediate practical circumstances. Subjects in this group, such as female students training to be teachers, were able to name skeins of wool by their abstract colour names ('blue, red, yellow') and categorise them by

⁶⁹⁵ Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, 7; Michael Cole, "Introduction," in *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, ed. A. R. Luria, et al. (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1976).

⁶⁹⁶ Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, 162-63.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-30.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31-39.

primary colour or other categories, such as saturation.⁶⁹⁹ Equally subjects in this group were able to use the geometrical names for figures (circles, triangles, squares) and abstract common features from differently drawn shapes to group them according to shared qualities.⁷⁰⁰

These patterns, defining the distinction between the ‘graphic-functional’ and the ‘abstract, categorical’ were repeated throughout Luria’s experiments into other areas of cognition: ‘generalization and abstraction’, ‘deduction and inference’, ‘reasoning and problem-solving’, ‘imagination’ and ‘self-analysis and self-awareness’.⁷⁰¹ As the illiterate villagers were schooled and became involved in a broader social economy they went beyond ‘immediate impressions and...practical activity’ to the consideration of broader concerns and motives.⁷⁰² These include ‘future planning’; ‘the interests of the collective’; ‘the possibility of drawing inferences not only on the basis of one’s own practical experience, but on the basis of discursive, verbal and logical processes as well’; and a ‘higher level of social awareness’.⁷⁰³

For Luria these results indicated that ‘under the impact of a social and cultural revolution...major shifts occur in human mental activity. These are not limited simply to an expanding of man’s horizons, but involve the creation of new motives for action and radically affect the structure of cognitive processes’.⁷⁰⁴ Michael Cole, in his introduction to Luria’s book, argues against such a radical interpretation of the data. In particular he stops short of seeing a ‘creation’ of cognitive processes, instead understanding the change as an ‘application of previously available modes to the particular problems and contexts of discourse represented by the experimental setting’.⁷⁰⁵ In both authors interpretation of the data, the literate modern mind has the capacity for both modes of understanding. It is in this that we find the empirical basis for Eisenstein’s theories. Eisenstein’s association with Luria, indicated earlier, undoubtedly extended to a discussion of the cultural basis of cognition; Michael Cole describes how, in conjunction with Luria and Vygotsky, Eisenstein

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 24-30.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 31-39.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 162-63.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 162.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 161-63.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 161.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 161; Cole, "Introduction," xv.

‘constructed questionnaires for audiences composed variously of students, workers, and peasants, to determine if they had understood his images as he intended’ indicating an expectation that such groups might respond differently to Eisenstein’s films, an awareness of the different modes of perception potentially brought to bear upon a film.⁷⁰⁶

Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘pre-logical’ or ‘primitive’ is impressionistic, while Luria’s concept of the ‘graphic-functional’ is rigorously scientific, yet they bear close comparison. In particular one of Luria’s experiments into ‘generalization and abstraction’ demonstrates Eisenstein’s theory of the ‘plasmatic’ appeal to the pre-logical mind.⁷⁰⁷ Luria describes the experiment thus

we presented three subjects (1-3) with drawings of an ax, a saw, and a hammer and asked, “Would you say these things are tools?” All three subjects answered yes.

“What about a log?”

1: “It also belongs with these. We make all sorts of things out of logs - handles, doors, and the handles of tools.”

2: “We say a log is a tool because it works with tools to make things. The pieces of logs go into making tools.”

“But” we remarked, “one man said a log isn’t a tool since it can’t saw or chop.”

3: “Some crazy fellow must have told you that! After all, you need a log for tools, together with iron it can cut.”

“But I can’t call wood a tool?”

3: “Yes, you can - you can make handles out of it.”

“But can you really say wood is a tool?”

2: “It is ! Poles are made out of it, handles. We call all the things we have need of ‘tools.’”

“Name all the tools you can.”

3: “An ax, a mosque [light carriage on springs], and also the tree we tether a horse to if there’s no pole around. Look, if we didn’t have this board here, we wouldn’t be able to keep the water in this irrigation ditch. So that’s also a tool, and so is the wood that goes to make a blackboard.”

“Name all the tools used to produce things.”

1: “We have a saying: take a look in the fields and you’ll see tools.”

3: “Hatchet, ax, saw, yoke, harness, and the thong used in a saddle.”

“Can you really call wood a tool?”

1: “Yes, of course! If we have no wood to use with an ax, we can’t plow and we can’t build a carriage.”⁷⁰⁸

The categorisation of objects by the illiterate peasants is driven not by an abstract definition but by practical circumstances. For these peasants wood or a log are, to use Eisenstein’s term, ‘plasmatic’. Without the influence of a rationalising

⁷⁰⁶ Michael Cole, "Epilogue," in *The Making of Mind: The Autobiography of A.R. Luria*, ed. Michael Cole and Sheila Cole (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁷⁰⁷ Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, 48-99.

⁷⁰⁸ Cole, Levitin, and Luria, *The Autobiography of Alexander Luria : A Dialogue with the Making of Mind*, 72-73.

categorisation, a log can be *both* an object to be acted upon and a tool, dependent only upon the immediate practical circumstances. As will be argued later, such a situation is common in the animated cartoons of the 1920s.

Conclusion

The balance between higher intellectual cognition and lower reflexive physiological response and their role in the perception of graphic art and animation may be seen to underpin the theories of Gombrich, Eisenstein, and Luria addressed in this chapter. Inherent in each discussion is the degree to which these responses are innate or learned. There is a natural tendency to see higher functions (such as language and memory) as learned while basic functions (such as colour and shape perception) are viewed as innate. Luria's work counteracts this, as it indicates that basic functions can be socially or culturally constructed.

Both Gombrich and Eisenstein address these issues in relation to the tradition of caricature and popular graphic arts. Both argue that this tradition is predicated upon an appeal to a basic or primitive mind. Although they do not fully theorise this primitive mind, their discussions encompass a range of meanings, from developmental to evolutionary and from physiognomic to cultural. Luria's scientific investigation helps bring empirical rigour to these concepts in the form of the description and investigation of the 'graphic-functional' and the 'abstract, categorical' as two modes of cognition.

These theories thus provide a basis for approaching British animated cartoons within the cultural context from which they arose. The narrative of perception described as fundamental to the lightning cartoon clearly fits easily within Gombrich and Eisenstein's theories of perceptual attractiveness. Yet as seen in chapters two and three this presentation mode was utilised to present 'abstract, categorical' ideas during the first major growth of animated cartoon films, presenting topical and propagandistic ideas during the First World War. It was only following the war that British animated cartoons turned to address more 'graphic-functional' narratives, but this also coincided with the decline in the use of the iconography of the lightning cartoons. The following chapter will thus examine British animated cartoons in relation to Gombrich and Eisenstein's suggestion of caricature's, and by extension animated cartoons', primitive appeal

while interrogating the negotiation between the ‘abstract, categorical’ and the ‘graphic-functional’.

Chapter 5. Animating perception: An aesthetic approach to British animated cartoons

This chapter will present a reconsideration of early British animated cartoons from an aesthetic perspective, within a framework of the theories of aesthetic perception examined in the previous chapter. Covering a long period, from the first appearances of music-hall lightning cartoonists on film in the 1890s through to Len Lye's only non-synchronised film at the end of the 1920s, the chronology follows the tripartite division seen in earlier chapters. The earliest period, prior to the First World War, saw tentative steps to integrate drawn material into moving images, largely by means of adopting the lightning cartoon and applying trick film techniques to enhance them using medium specific techniques. During the First World War the influence of the prior forms examined in chapter one are still readily apparent, but the considerable economic success and demand for this type of topical filmmaking precipitated by the war allowed for the emergence of a characteristic form of filmmaking which utilised the technological potential of cinema while retaining the aesthetic modes and concerns of their antecedents. Examined in isolation, British animated cartoons of the 1920s have little visible connection with the traditions they arose from, yet when viewed in context their play upon, and interrogation of, perception may be seen as a fundamental continuation of the concerns of the lightning cartoon and print cartooning.

This chronology should not, however, be seen as establishing a simplistic teleological progression away from the cultural traditions of the lightning cartoon and print cartooning, or towards alignment with an industrialised and homogenised model of animated cartoons reproducing dominant American imports. British animated cartoons were neither slavish copies of their American counterparts nor retrograde repetition of pre-cinematic forms. Rather, they represent a distinctive cultural tradition more interested in using the medium of moving images as a new way to extend and explore old concerns than in establishing essential qualities of 'cinema' or 'animation'. Furthermore, any sense of simple progression is undermined by the cyclical nature of this history and the influence of external cultural, social, and economic concerns. In particular topicality recurs sporadically throughout this period, subject not simply

to aesthetic choice but by wider influences. The earliest films examined, of Tom Merry performing for Robert Paul and Birt Acre's camera, feature topical caricatures indicating the strong link these films retain with the music-hall lightning cartoon act. Walter Booth's films in the next decade eschew any topical or culturally specific subject matter, but the outbreak of the First World War saw topicality return as a vital component of British animated cartoons from 1914 until the end of the war. The absence of topicality in the films of the 1920s undoubtedly reflects the wider economic situation examined in chapter three rather than purely aesthetic choice and should not be considered a final position as topicality would cyclically recur in British animated cartoons in the period beyond the parameters of this thesis.

Throughout this history, early British animated cartoons can be seen to consistently, but not repetitively, engage with the basic perceptual process of looking at line drawings, extending the careful attention to this found in 19th century antecedents. As seen in chapter two these artists did not come to film to reject prior forms but rather as an extension of those forms. Consequently, there remain many visible signs of the tradition they sit within: the narrative of perception from the lightning cartoon; punning and the incorporation of text and language; the use of detailed textural drawings. Yet, from the first films of Tom Merry performing in 1895 through to Len Lye's *Tusalava* in 1928, there are many ways in which these filmmakers, unwittingly at first, then intentionally, introduced new methods of interrogating perception. By exploiting the dualities of performance and the ambiguity of the drawn line - of line and icon, of image and movement - British animated cartoons reveal a deep understanding of, and appeal to, basic visual perception as well as engaging with a broader cultural interest in the 'primitive'.

Case Study: Lancelot Speed's Bully Boy No.1

One of the earliest animated cartoons to be released at the very start of the First World War, Lancelot Speed's *Bully Boy No.1* (1914), contains a microcosm of the developments which occurred in animated cartoons more generally in the period under discussion, which saw the slow transformation of the aesthetics of the lightning cartoon act into a divergent form of its own.⁷⁰⁹ The film was sold as

⁷⁰⁹ *Bully Boy No.1* was released on 12 October 1914. (*Bios*, 8 October 1914, xx.)

part of ‘a series of Lightning Sketches’ and begins with a straight record of such a performance, the only allowance for the filmed media being a number of brief jump-cuts to enhance the ‘lightning’ quality, although it is not clear whether this was enacted in-camera or in post-production editing.⁷¹⁰



Figure 28: *Bully Boy* (1914) - Kaiser's hairline



Figure 29: *Bully Boy* (1914) - Transformation



Figure 30: *Bully Boy* (1914) - Kaiser's Helmet

The first section gives the modern spectator the most accurate record of the experience of watching a music-hall lightning cartoonist likely to be possible at this remove. The narrative of perception is readily apparent in this sequence. As Speed begins drawing on a blank sheet of paper, the spectator has little indication of what the lines are intended to convey, and they must speculate and revise their assumptions, firstly to identify that it is a face being drawn, and then to identify the exact figure being depicted. Even once the face has been identified as Kaiser Wilhelm II, Speed continues to play on the spectators' perceptions. Lines drawn on the Kaiser's forehead are assumed to be his hairline, and Speed moves on to drawing other parts of the image (Figure 28). Yet when he returns to finish the head Speed draws a helmet and the elements assumed to the Kaiser's hairline are transformed into a decorative element of the helmet (Figure 29 and Figure 30). This transformation is highly revealing of the perceptual assumptions that are constantly made in viewing and interpreting line drawings, which are inherently ambiguous. The element assumed to be the hairline is not directly changed, but by changing the dominant context (from the face below it, to the helmet above it) Speed alters the spectators' perception of the graphic marks. Immediately several of the perceptual principles Ernst Gombrich identified are not only demonstrated but actively played upon by Speed's lightning cartoon. The blank space around the hairline/decoration provides a 'screen' for the spectator to project their imagination; the dependence of the hairline/decoration on contextual information to resolve its meaning plays upon the role

⁷¹⁰ *Bios*, 8 October 1914, xx.

‘relationships’ play in determining visual meaning; and above all the change in meaning of this element is structured upon the ambiguity or indeterminacy of the line drawing which requires the spectator to complete and interpret it.⁷¹¹

This sequence not only demonstrates the centrality of the narrative of perception to this form of cartooning and the underlying principles that have been elucidated by Gombrich, but also the other qualities that have been identified previously and will be further examined throughout this chapter. It contains a rudimentary form of transformation in the form of the hairline/decoration. More precisely this transformation exhibits simultaneous meaning, or in Eisenstein’s terms the ‘plasmatic’: it connotes two separate meanings simultaneously.⁷¹² As argued in a previous chapter, Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘plasmatic’ was concerned with the expression of primitive perception, a pre-literate mode of thinking derived from Luria’s identification of a ‘graphic-functional’ perception.⁷¹³ In the case of *Bully Boy No. 1*, however, the use of transformation and the ‘plasmatic’ serves not to highlight the ‘graphic-functional’, but conversely is used to express an idea that embodies Luria’s other category, the ‘abstract, categorical’.

The first sequence of *Bully Boy No. 1* can thus be seen to demonstrate the key aesthetic strategies identified in the lightning cartoon act and print cartooning, particularly the narrative of perception; the use of transformation through simultaneous meaning; and the depiction of ‘abstract, categorical’ concepts. This is unsurprising as the sequence remains completely bound to the lightning cartoon act and its mode of presentation, taking little or no account of the new filmic medium.

The second sequence takes an initial step away from the direct presentation of a lightning cartoon towards utilising fully animated footage. It begins not with a blank page, but with an already outlined image of Rheims’s cathedral, which Speed completes. Following this Speed draws an artillery cannon in a lightning cartoon manner. The sequence then shifts to an animated sequence of the cannon destroying the cathedral, maintaining a connection between the movement Speed’s active drawing introduces in the first half of the

⁷¹¹ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 174,75,46,211,188.

⁷¹² Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*.

⁷¹³ Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*.

sequence (a movement wholly possible in a music-hall act) with the movement seen in the latter half (a movement wholly dependent upon the technological medium). Despite this shift, the second sequence remains closely linked to music-hall and print-cartoon aesthetics, most notably in the use of punning. The cathedral is titled 'The world's greatest Gothic work', while the artillery cannon is labelled 'The work of the world's greatest Goth' a transformation of the words, just as German fire had transformed the cathedral early in the war.⁷¹⁴ Equally Speed pays considerable attention to giving his drawings a detailed textural aspect, revealing his background in print illustration. Speed adopted the lightning cartoon as a suitable mechanism to introduce dynamic movement into his drawings, but does not fully adopt the simple line drawings that would have been typical in music-hall acts where they could be executed with the rapidity required of the act. Speed is aided by the technology of film and is consequently able to reproduce the textural greyscale aesthetics of his print work while retaining the lightning speed required of this performance act. Film technology allows him to elide the time taken to create the detailed facade of Rheims's cathedral or Kaiser Wilhelm's uniform.

The next sequence presents fully animated footage with transformations enacted not through lightning cartoon additions but through changes in the image over time, with no apparent human agency involved. This approach allows Speed the opportunity to present a sequence of transformations expressing a complex set of 'abstract, categorical' ideas. The sequence first shows a German officer wearing a typical spiked pickelhaube helmet, the spike of which transforms into a demon; subsequently the German is transformed into a sausage (a common derogatory metonymic substitution of the time) which is consequently consumed by a British bulldog. While there is an inevitable suspense regarding what will happen next, the sequence no longer relies upon the narrative of perception to create transformation as this is now produced through the technology of film. Nonetheless, the transformations make connections or simultaneous meanings between two distinct things, for instance linking the German with the sausage, a connection that would not have necessarily been apparent without the transformation. Clearly in this instance transformation again operates at the

⁷¹⁴ *The Times*, 21 September 1914, 9.

service of complex ‘abstract, categorical’ intellectual notions, namely a dichotomy between the Germans, especially their diet and temperament, with the British and their temperament.

Lancelot Speed’s first film, *Bully Boy No. 1* can thus be seen as a microcosm of the changes that occurred in animated cartoons during the period 1895 to 1928. Many films appropriated the lightning cartoon act from music hall, with little or no adaptation or allowance made for the medium of film, typified by the opening sequence of Speed’s film. Some filmmakers introduced rudimentary movement through a number of techniques, but remained closely tied to the music-hall and print cartoons, as seen in the second sequence of this film, where Speed uses the technology of film to animate the destruction of Rheims’s cathedral without apparent human agency, yet retains the inclusion of text in the image and the use of puns. As seen in the final sequence of Speed’s film, some filmmakers took further moves away from earlier forms and eliminated many of the visible traits of lightning cartooning, such as the appearance of the artist or his hand, even while retaining underlying aesthetic strategies such as transformation and the narrative of perception. This should not be seen as a simplistic teleology of technological and aesthetic development. Most importantly Speed’s film indicates the importance of these aesthetic techniques in expressing ‘abstract, categorical’ concepts during the First World War; this is a marked difference from both animated cartoons of the 1920s and the earliest films under discussion here, which more easily fit Gombrich and Eisenstein’s argument of the appeal to the pre-logical, or ‘graphic-functional’, mind.

War and pre-war: Animated cartoons debt to prior forms

The lightning cartoon: the narrative of perception

As identified in earlier chapters, the first cartoon films in Britain (amongst the earliest films of any subject) were records of Tom Merry’s lightning cartoon music-hall act made in 1895 and 1896. Of the four films of Merry performing that were produced, only a small fragment of one film, Merry drawing Kaiser Wilhelm II, is known to remain. Even without examining the films themselves, they can be seen to anticipate the fully animated films that followed. Firstly, the titles (*Tom Merry, Lightning Cartoonist, sketching Bismarck/Kaiser Wilhelm II*

and *Tom Merry (Lightning Artist) Sketching Lord Salisbury/Mr Gladstone*) reveal their topical and political content.⁷¹⁵ This choice of subject binds them not only to media forms which preceded them, namely music hall and newspaper and magazine cartooning, but also to the films of the First World War period when British animation first found a unique voice reflecting the topical and political issues of the war.

The fragment of film that does remain is revealing when considered in light of Merry's background as a lightning cartoonist in music halls. The fragment confirms that the films were straight filmed records of Merry's music-hall act. There is no indication of manipulation of time; Merry is seen bowing to the camera as he would have done in a stage performance; his drawing rests on an easel at mid distance, viewed just as a spectator in theatre stalls might have seen his act, rather than in close-up. Given the period in which the film was made these qualities are to be expected. Two less anticipated details can also be discerned from the short fragment. Firstly, Merry's drawing is labelled with its subject 'KAISER WILHELM II' but it is apparent that this is not written on the same sheet of paper as the drawing, but is attached separately, strongly indicating that it was only added at the end of the lightning cartoon, as part of the reveal. The reveal, as discussed in an earlier chapter, would have been a key part of the narrative of perception the lightning cartoon act presented. An audience member would likely have been unaware at the start of this film who, or what, Merry was to draw. In the process of his drawing they would have speculated upon the figure depicted, until the caption was added in the reveal. The extant extract is suggestive that this was not the only element to the reveal: on the left side of the screen, on the other side of the drawing from Merry stands a man seemingly dressed as the Kaiser. If we assume he was not there throughout the film, but rather appears at the moment of the reveal, when the caption was added to the drawing, then he represents the first instance in British animated cartoons, if not all animation, of the artist's drawing coming to life. This of course echoes the mythological story of Pygmalion, a story that can be seen as highly significantly for film animation, not only because of its use as a source for early 20th century

⁷¹⁵ Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 233,37.

films by, among others, Walter Booth, but also as an allegory of the process of animation itself.

Merry's films established a pattern for the involvement of cartoonists in moving images from their appearance in kinetoscopes in 1895. The adoption of the lightning cartoon as a method of introducing movement to graphic art, and thereby animating them, was a consistent model for much of the period. Other music-hall lightning cartoonists, such as Little Stanley, were filmed for inclusion in early film programmes at the turn of the century. Walter Booth, whose background performing lightning cartoons has already been described, presented lightning cartoons combined with trick film techniques to produce effects that would not be possible on the music-hall stage, in the first decade of the 20th century. Produced in 1909, *Animated Cotton* demonstrates clearly the continued importance of the lessons Booth had learned on stage as a lightning cartoonist. Framed by live action sequences, the appeal and title of the film derives from three sequences where a piece of white cotton magically forms an image on a black background. While the techniques of this film, produced by playing in reverse the removal of a carefully constructed image outlined in string, are more akin to the trick film than drawn animation, its aesthetic content is pure lightning cartoon. The slow revealing of the image demonstrates Booth's awareness and mastery of the narrative of perception that is at the heart of the lightning cartoon. Particularly important is the order of the three images displayed. After the first image (a bicycle) a second image begins to appear, but confounding the expectations established by the first iconographic image, the second never forms a recognisable object, remaining an abstract arabesque. By the final image, which resolves into a fashionable lady, the narrative of perception is heightened, held in tension between the search for the recognisable as in the first image, and the possibility of this being unrealised, as in the second image. *Animated Cotton* is thus typical of Booth's adaptation of the lightning cartoon in combining it with trick film techniques. Booth's other films will be examined in further detail in the following chapter, in which his continued debt to the narrative of perception is investigated through a theoretical framework of present-day neuroscientific studies.

In the immediate pre-war period Max J. Martin, already known as a print cartoonist, produced his series of films, again utilising the lightning cartoon to

introduce a dynamic element to his work. The adoption of the lightning cartoon would mean the narrative of perception was a primary pleasure of the films' presentation, something that is readily apparent in the continued use of this form in First World War animated cartoons.

First World War: The emergence of animated cartoons

As suggested previously, the majority of animated cartoons from 1914 continued to use the lightning cartoon act with little adjustment for the new medium. Contemporary reports suggest that the perceptual play described in relation to music hall, here termed as the narrative of perception, was equally translated wholesale into these early films. The majority of trade reviews are extremely brief, primarily acting as a consumer guide for exhibitors rather than an attempt to analyse and describe the films aesthetic approach, nonetheless there are some indications of this mode of spectatorship. Many reviews describe the effects of these films as 'ingenious',⁷¹⁶ equally there are countless references to animated cartoons 'cleverness',⁷¹⁷ terms that, while open to interpretation, are suggestive of the narrative of perception. Several reviews describe in more detail the operation and pleasures of these early animated cartoons and reveal the similarity with the narrative of perception seen in the music-hall lightning cartoon act. The *Bairnsfather Cartoons* are described as follows in a *Bioscope* article from 1917

the cartoons interested the viewers intensely, and the feeling of seeing bits of France and trench life materialise out of nothing, grow as it were into being out of the air, had much to do with the interest excited⁷¹⁸

A review of the 'Kine Komedie Kartoons' series describes a similar sensation, wherein the

facility of draughtsmanship is greatly enhanced by the method in which it appears as if by magic on the screen, the most important feature being left to the last and forming the subject of speculation for just so long as not to miss in effect, which is always heightened by the addition of a sub-title⁷¹⁹

These descriptions adhere to the effects elicited by the music-hall lightning cartoonists from the 1880s onwards, the sensation of images appearing 'out of

⁷¹⁶ *Bully Boy No.1* is 'ingenious' (*Bios*, 8 October 1914, 151.); *Bully Boy No.2* exhibits 'ingenuity' (*Bios*, 29 October 1914, 474.); *War Skits*, by Sidney Aldridge are 'ingenious' (*Bios*, 12 November 1914, ix.); *John Bull's Animated Sketch Book No. 1* shows 'considerable ingenuity' (*Bios*, 15 April 1915, 253.); The *Bairnsfather Cartoons* are 'ingenious' (*Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1818.).

⁷¹⁷ 'Mr. Lancelot Speed is an exceedingly clever draughtsman' (*Bios*, 29 October 1914, 474.) while *Dicky Dee's Cartoons No.2* are 'clever cartoons...cleverly executed' (*Bios*, 7 October 1915, i.)

⁷¹⁸ *Bios*, 28 June 1917, 1818.

⁷¹⁹ *Bios*, 15 November 1917, 51.

nothing', the speculation on what is appearing, down to the use of titles to confirm or confound the spectators' perceptions.

A significant number of straight lightning cartoons appeared in the 'Pathé Gazette' newsreel, of which a number remain in existence, including cartoons by the famed Bruce Bairnsfather. Their presence in these magazine films is telling: just as the newsreels adopted the format of magazines and newspapers and brought them to the cinema screen with little adjustment, so the cartoons that would have appeared in the print counterpart play a role in the film versions, with little adjustment for the cinematic medium. Extant examples include *Climbing the Greasy Pole*, *The Whip Hand*, and *A Tumble-Down Nest* by Frank Holland, all thought to be from 1914; *Old Bill's Message* by Bruce Bairnsfather; and the anonymous *Troops*.⁷²⁰ *A Tumble-Down Nest* by Frank Holland is typical of these films. Its running length is around 1 minute and 57 seconds, far shorter than standalone cartoon films of the period, but still longer than some of the 'Pathé Gazette' items which were all two minutes or less, with particularly short entries less than a minute, such as Bairnsfather's *Old Bill's Message* which runs for only 18 seconds.⁷²¹ *A Tumble-Down Nest* is again typical of these short magazine cartoons in remaining closely aligned with their print and music-hall forebears. Like single panel print cartoons, it uses a single scene or setup, with text used both within the image graphically and as an explanatory title distinct from the image. There is no attempt to develop a narrative in the manner of a multipanel comic strip; it does not depict a series of events over time. Nevertheless, the lightning cartoon method it uses means it remains very much concerned with changes over time in a number of ways.

The film demonstrates very clearly the operation of the narrative of perception, the way the lightning cartoon extends the act of perception from the near instantaneous to several minutes. Whether or not the film's enigmatic title, *A Tumble-Down Nest*, was revealed in a title card before the cartoon, little information is provided to the audience to understand what is to be drawn before the cartoon starts. The film begins with a blank sheet of white paper, over which

⁷²⁰ "British Pathé Website ", <http://www.britishpathe.com>.

⁷²¹ These timings are of course based on materials available today which use standard transfer frame rates. It should be borne in mind both that material may be missing from these films and that shooting and projection rates were not standardised in this period. See Kevin Brownlow, "Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?," *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 3 (1980).

the artist's hand appears and starts to draw a series of oblique lines. While these are generally evocative of the war, with their angled and jagged edges, they provide little specific information about what is being depicted. Furthermore, they are placed at the side and top of the image, leaving the centre and foreground unresolved, traditionally the focus of a normal composition. This lack of specificity leads the spectator to become more aware of the assumptions and reassessments they are constantly making in an attempt to resolve the ambiguity of the image and provide it with a fixed meaning. It is only after a minute has passed, more than halfway through the film, that the general image is understood as a bombed out building, although, of course, the precise moment of realisation would vary from spectator to spectator. Even at this stage, key aspects of the image are missing and are only added at the very end of the film, namely a caricature of Kaiser Wilhelm, who occupies the centre foreground,; a sign reading 'The Hohenzollern "Arms"'; and a caption above the image reading 'his little grey home in the west'. These additions largely resolve the image, but it should be noted that its full meaning remains culturally and historically specific, the pun on 'Hohenzollern' requiring external knowledge which may have been common during the war but would be less so in other times and places.

This lightning cartoon, as with all of its counterparts, engages with time as a perceptual phenomenon, slowing the spectators' understanding of the image by slowly revealing its elements. It may also be considered to depict time in another way: the cause and effect that results in the 'Tumble-Down Nest' of the title. As suggested before, the initial lines drawn by Frank Holland would have placed the spectator living through the events of 1914 in mind of the war. Such a context could lead to the interpretation of the following lines as a large artillery gun. As the drawing progresses this interpretation is rejected as it becomes clear that these lines instead show a collapsed public house sign. This situation evokes E. H. Gombrich's description of approaching a village, discussed in an earlier chapter: 'in certain circumstances we may easily take a rock for a building and a building for a rock, and we may hold on to this wrong interpretation till it suddenly gives way to a different reading'.⁷²² The interpretation of the lines as a cannon might be dismissed as simply erroneous in the light of the final image,

⁷²² Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 187.

yet Holland's film would seem to actively encourage such misinterpretation, thus enabling the artist to evoke the cause (artillery) and the effect (a tumble down building) within a single setup. While the film may not depict time in a manner typical of either cartoons or cinema, that is by means of multiple scenes, it does depict time through the narrative of perception and the ambiguity that entails.

Peace and War Pencillings by Harry Furniss (1914) is typical of the earliest filmed cartoons, using no fully animated sequences, instead replicating on screen one of Furniss's famous lectures, described earlier, excluding, of course, his voice. The film shows Furniss greeting the audience in what would appear to be his studio, and then showing a series of cartoons, largely completed, which he embellishes by way of a lightning cartoon. While such a straight record of a music-hall act might be considered outside of the interest of the current study, it is notable for two aspects. Firstly, the narrative of perception is readily apparent as Furniss draws on the images. Secondly, arising from this narrative of perception, is the use of transformation of the images to make a commentary upon topical events. In one sequence an apparently finished drawing of a Scottish highlander is shown, his rifle over his shoulder with a dead game bird hanging from its end, a seemingly typical Scottish pastoral scene. Furniss then begins to embellish the drawing, first raising a query on the part of the viewer, for whom the image appeared complete, generating a narrative of perception. This finds Furniss using the ambiguity of the image of the game bird to transform it, with a few strokes, into a German helmet and head, changing the meaning of the image completely. This transformation is most tellingly completed by a series of sketchily drawn lines. In themselves these lines would be barely figurative, but within the context of the drawing they imply a line of soldiers, each presumably carrying their own 'trophy'. While a modern sensibility may lead to a squeamish response to images of both hunting and wartime death, there is little indication in this cartoon that it is intended as a critique or exposé. Rather the transformation serves to suggest a link between the two activities and implies a similar sense of satisfaction at a successful hunt, both resting upon a sense of national pride. Without using the cinematic apparatus to produce animated effects, Furniss demonstrates how the lightning cartoonists produced meaning by using the ambiguity inherent in line drawings to enact a transformation.

Punning, simultaneous meaning, and the 'plasmatic'

It can be seen from the films examined above that the narrative of perception remained a central feature of animated cartoons throughout the First World War. Given that the earliest films were largely filmed records of lightning cartoon performances it is to be expected that they would also import the aesthetic and perceptual modes from the earlier form. Yet it is apparent that even as the apparatus of the music-hall performance was stripped away, as the visible artist and the easel or drawing board were replaced by a technologically propelled animation, later films retained the aesthetic and perceptual framework of the lightning cartoon act. The narrative of perception examined above was only the starting point, however, and the transformation it allowed, along with simultaneous meaning it produces, can be seen to expand in importance.

The simplest example of transformation and simultaneous meaning is the use of puns. As described in earlier discussion, punning was a dominant form of humour within the music halls and for lightning cartoonists especially. By simultaneously evoking two or more distinct meanings, puns are a literary precursor to Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic', as Eisenstein himself identified. Reviews provide evidence of the use of puns in the animated cartoons in question. A review of Douglas Tempest's *Christmas War Sketches* identifies one sequence as titled 'Footing the Bill', a play between the common phrase used to describe paying for something and the British physically trampling Kaiser Wilhelm, the 'Bill' of the title.⁷²³ Anson Dyer's *Old King Coal* is described as having 'clever punning subtitles'.⁷²⁴ The title of Dudley Buxton's *The Plot that Failed* refers to 'plot' both in its meaning of a conspiracy and as a section of land. This pun is typical in that it links two unrelated meanings to create a single humorous idea. The former meaning of plot evokes the grand scale of events during wartime, especially a war precipitated by an assassination, linking it with a mundane domestic detail, the allotment plots that feature heavily in this cartoon; the film's punning title is also indicative of its attempt to create a topical film but in a domestic register.⁷²⁵

Extant films provide further evidence of the centrality of the pun to these cartoons. The use of puns in Lancelot Speed's *Bully Boy No.1* has already been

⁷²³ *Bios*, 12 November 1914, xxv.

⁷²⁴ *Bios*, 6 December 1917, 47.

⁷²⁵ *Bios*, 2 August 1917, 505.

described, and their use evidently continued throughout the series, with *Bully Boy No. 3* (1914) also making extensive use of them. Speed shows a sleeping Kaiser haunted by ‘horrid Drheims’ another reference to the damage to Reims’ famous cathedral; other puns include the phrase ‘huniforms’, a play between ‘Hun’ and ‘uniforms’, and ‘drams of potion’ becoming ‘ruin of Potsdam’. This final example moves away from a purely linguistic pun and moves toward physical transformation of the text as graphic marks. A similar combination of punning and the graphic transformation of words is seen in “*A Pencil*” and *Alick P F Ritchie* in which a thwarted ‘Zeppelin’ airship has its name rearranged to ‘Zeppeout’. Punning and wordplay as a form of humour are by no means restricted to British or English language cartoons; Charles Philippon’s images of Louis Philippe entitled ‘Les Poires’ discussed in relation to Gombrich’s analysis of them is an important French language example. Nevertheless, any specific example would only be meaningful to speakers of that language and this form of humour would restrict the international commercial appeal of these films. Whether for aesthetic or economic reasons, some wartime cartoons present a further step away from the dependence on the specificity of the English language, or at least the signifiers of that language. Lancelot Speed’s *Bully Boy No. 3* provides the best example of this, with a drawing of Kaiser Wilhelm II shown ‘blowing his own trumpet’. This visual pun eliminates the abstract and arbitrary signifiers of language in favour of graphic and iconic signifiers. Nevertheless, the joke only makes sense (and is only funny) when it evokes the language underlying it.

While puns can in part be seen as a link with the precursors to the animated cartoon, their importance, demonstrated here, goes beyond a reflexive repeating of past forms. As animators became more technologically adept transformation became the more common form of humour. This should not be seen as a rejection of the aesthetic approach of the pun, only its literary and linguistic basis. Transformation represents a dynamic, visual progression on the pun, not a rejection of it. A pun relies upon the inherent arbitrariness of language, the relationship between signifier and signified, while transformation and Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘plasmatic’ rely upon the inherent ambiguity between the drawn line and its referent. The graphic manipulation of words described above can be seen as an intermediate stage between these two aspects of the

same aesthetic impulse, grounded in the linguistic meaning of the words, the signified, while also graphically manipulating the signifier. A further gradation in this move from linguistic puns to visual transformation may be seen in a number of films where puns are rendered in a purely iconic, rather than textual, manner as visual transformation increasingly replaced linguistic wordplay over the course of the war.

The most effective result of transformation is the linking of two ideas, as seen in the previous examples, but alongside it we must also consider the effect Eisenstein would later call the ‘plasmatic’: the simultaneous evocation of two ideas. While transformation links the two ideas visually in space, they remain separated by time, whereas in the fulfilment of the ‘plasmatic’ the two ideas are evoked simultaneously in both space and time, as in a pun but visually, without the recourse to linguistic meaning. This effect is rarer in the cartoons of the First World War, but there are examples of artists expressing ideas in this manner. A description of Lancelot Speed’s *Tank Pranks* (1917) describes how two soldiers see a tank ‘which one believes to be a rhinoceros and the other a motor lorry. Each is right to a certain extent, for the tank imagined by the artist is an amazing combination of both, with a suggestion of the chameleon and a suspicion of the lobster’.⁷²⁶ A particular aspect of this simultaneous meaning is anthropomorphism, the assigning of human characteristics to animals. While this was not a dominant mode during First World War cartoons, as will be seen, it became central to post-war cartoons. In *The Allies’ Chorus* the Kaiser is shown as ‘a discontented dachshund’ an amalgam of human and animal in which both are simultaneously evoked.⁷²⁷

It is extant films themselves, however, which again best illustrate the centrality of transformation to the animated cartoons of the First World War. Examples of transformation produced non-technologically, in a form directly inherited from the lightning cartoon act, have been described already. The transformation of the Kaiser’s hairline into his helmet in Lancelot Speed’s *Bully Boy No. 1* and Harry Furniss’ cartoon of a Scottish Highlander both accomplished their associations in a way that could have been achieved in a music hall, with the cartoonists’ hand and pencil readily apparent. Yet

⁷²⁶ *Bios*, 8 February 1917, 557.

⁷²⁷ *Bios*, 8 April 1915, ix.

throughout the war animated cartoons started to utilise the technological possibilities of film, to produce transformation which appears without human agency, but still dependent on the ambiguity of line and the narrative of perception that has been described as central to the lightning cartoon.

Anson Dyer's *Dicky Dee Cartoons No. 3* (1915) is typical of the initial progression away from the pure lightning cartoon. The film starts with a conventional lightning cartoon with the artist's hand visible, but after a short while the figures begin to move and are changed without the artist's involvement being made visible. One sequence begins with a lightning cartoon of the Great Sphinx of Giza and the caption 'imperturbable'; the sphinx is then transformed by a cap appearing on his head and small alterations to his face to become Lord Kitchener. While the transformation retains a rational justification, given Kitchener's long involvement with Egypt, its main power is in its ability to associate Kitchener with the many qualities the sphinx embodies, including permanence, leadership, and composure.⁷²⁸ Such a transformation is dependent upon the ambiguity of the line drawings: with just a few lines the sphinx becomes Lord Kitchener, the drawing retaining sufficient of the original features that the two separate images are simultaneously evoked, thus associating the qualities of one with the other.

Dudley Buxton's *John Bull's Animated Sketch Book No.4* contains a similarly complex use of transformation to make associations that would be difficult to make in other forms. The sequence in question starts with a lightning cartoon, which delivers the familiar narrative of perception. In the absence of a title, the viewer must follow the drawing carefully to assess and reassess what is being drawn. At first there is no indication, then it becomes apparent that it is a human face being drawn but the identity of that face remains unclear, until it is finally apparent that it is Alfred von Tirpitz, the German Grand Admiral. Following this revelation, and the apparent completion of the portrait with an Iron Cross in the background, the drawing is transformed with von Tirpitz' face becoming a skull, retaining many of von Tirpitz' distinguishing features, and the Iron Cross becoming crossbones. Such a transformation makes bold and complex associations. Firstly, transforming von Tirpitz' face into a skull connects him

⁷²⁸ For a contemporaneous account of Kitchener's military and diplomatic service in the region, see *The Times*, 7 June 1916, 14.

with death; secondly, the skull and crossbones evokes the 'Jolly Roger' flag, suggesting von Tirpitz and the German Navy were more akin to lawless pirates than professional Naval personnel. Such associations would have a strong resonance for a British audience of the time: this episode of 'John Bull's Animated Sketch Book' was released on 21 June 1915 a little more than a month after the sinking of the *Lusitania*,⁷²⁹ an act condemned as 'wholesale murder' and outside of the rules of engagement, but which von Tirpitz wholly advocated.⁷³⁰ In fact the cartoon of von Tirpitz is preceded by one of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, predating Winsor McCay's more famous depiction of that event by several years. In Dudley Buxton's film the sinking of the civilian ship is described as 'The Crowning act of Piracy', readying the spectator for the associations achieved through transformation in the von Tirpitz sequence.

Transformation can be seen to be central to animated cartoons during the First World War, with most extant films using it in some form, whether sticking closely to the approach of music-hall lightning cartoonists or utilising a technologically enabled form. In either case the transformation arises from the spectators' perception, from the inherent ambiguity of the drawn line and the ability to rapidly change the viewers' understanding of an image with a few changes or even simply a change in the context of the lines.

The close attention to the aesthetic effects of these cartoons, by both the artists themselves and this study, might on first inspection appear obtuse. These films were released during one of the most horrific and all-encompassing wars in recent history, and such circumstances might seem to demand a concentrated attention to their content, to the exclusion of all else. As is clear from the previous example of Dudley Buxton's Von Tirpitz transformation, these cartoons were concerned not simply with aesthetic play, but rather the use of these effects to raise ideas and make associations that would be difficult to make in other forms. Beyond this though, it must be recognised that their aesthetic tradition was in itself considered an expression of national, and therefore patriotic, identity.

⁷²⁹ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985 : A Filmography*, 39. 'The *Lusitania* Sunk' *The Times*, 8 May 1915, 9.

⁷³⁰ 'The Sinking of the *Lusitania* [Editorial]' *The Times*, 8 May 1915, 9. For one account of von Tirpitz's advocacy of unrestricted U-boat war see Dirk Steffen, "The Holtzendorff Memorandum of 22 December 1916 and Germany's Declaration of Unrestricted U-Boat Warfare," *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 1 (2004).

Understanding aesthetic approach as an important component of the nationalist message finds a parallel in propaganda posters, another form of mass communication which also first rose to prominence during the First World War.⁷³¹ As Steve Baker recounts, the principal imperative of ‘individual poster designs, was the idea that the national self was distinct from (and superior to) the enemy other’.⁷³² Baker goes on to describe how this was understood by British artists and commentators not in purely iconographic terms but stylistically, that ‘during the war many writers . . . insisted on the indivisibility of aesthetic and patriotic considerations’.⁷³³ The mode of expression was consistently emphasised over the political content, with German aesthetics being interpreted as expressing German force and brutality, while British posters’ restrained style was seen as expressing a national sincerity and conviction.

A similar discourse surrounded animated cartoons. For instance a report on Lancelot Speed’s *Bully Boy No. 1* states ‘although keen and stinging, the humour of the pictures never degenerates into mere vulgarity’. G.E. Studdy’s war films are praised in similar terms for avoiding ‘vulgar abuse’ while ‘the chief merit of the cartoons is their delicate satire and the agreeable facility of the draughtsmanship’, a phrase which links the ideological temperament of the cartoons with their aesthetic expression.⁷³⁴

Drawing attention to this parallel between wartime animated cartoons and propaganda posters serves two important purposes here. Firstly, it indicates that aesthetic considerations need not necessarily be distinct or secondary to the expression of national identity. Understanding the aesthetic tradition these cartoons arose from allows us to understand the contribution it made to their ideological project during the war. Secondly, it makes clear that despite their very different subject matter, these films are not isolated exceptions within the history of early British animated cartoons, but rather they are an integral continuation of it. It should be remembered that a number of the key figures in this history, including Lancelot Speed, Dudley Buxton, and George Studdy, were able to comfortably move from topical and political wartime films to

⁷³¹ Pearl James, *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 1-6.

⁷³² Steve Baker, "Describing Images of the National Self: Popular Accounts of the Construction of Pictorial Identity in the First World War Poster," *Oxford Art Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 24.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷³⁴ *Bios*, 8 October 1914, 151; *Bios*, 28 January 1915, 375.

anthropomorphised animals in the 1920s and were highly successful in both periods. The aesthetic approach of these filmmakers did not alter radically over these two periods. Rather, where the wartime films are distinct is in their underlying aims. Eisenstein's notion of transformation and the 'plasmatic' celebrates them for their ability to unlock the primitive or non-rational, that which Luria describes as the 'graphic-functional'. Yet, the animated cartoons of the First World War utilise them to reveal the opposite side of Luria's binary, namely the 'abstract, categorical'.

The revelation of the 'abstract, categorical'

As suggested in chapter one, a key aspect of caricature is the revelation of what is hidden, achieved through the exaggeration of the visible. This has been seen in examples already discussed, as caricature remained an important part of animated cartoons. Increasingly their interest was not, however, in the exaggeration of the visible world, but in the ability of this form of graphic art to reveal the non-visible, non-tangible components of the war. These include the ideological underpinnings of the war as well as quantitative material that cannot be directly expressed.

It is clear from trade journal discussion of the wartime animated cartoons that this form offered a unique opportunity for artists to express ideas which were not easily articulated by other means. In some cases these were physical things which could not be captured on film due to their unplanned nature, such as the sinking of the *Lusitania*, or that due to their size, length, and complexity could not be straightforwardly filmed, such as battles. Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* is often credited as the first animated documentary but there are a number of British films which predate his famous film and equally aim to present events that could not be filmed. The fate of the *Lusitania* was depicted by Dudley Buxton soon after it occurred, in a 1915 edition of *John Bull's Animated Sketchbook*. Buxton also produced *The Raid on Zeebrugge* (1918) which presented a 'reconstruction' of the titular events and whose advertising emphasises the documentary nature of the film by means of an illustrating map, rather than the caricatures more familiar in advertisements for other Buxton films.⁷³⁵ The *Kineto War Map* series produced by F. Percy Smith depicts by

⁷³⁵ *Bios*, 1 August 1918, 70; *Bios*, 25 July 1918, 62.

means of animation an aerial view of battles that had taken place in the war, a perspective that could only be achieved from a retrospective position.⁷³⁶ This series was praised for this reason, even while the reviewer hoped further less tangible information might be depicted by similar means, such as ‘statistical charts’ in the form of ‘animated diagrams’.⁷³⁷

The Kineto War Maps also indicate a desire to express on film not simply physical things which were difficult to capture, but also things which have no direct physical manifestation to be captured on film, such as national boundaries and individuals’ affiliations with them. While the indexical quality of film enabled it to represent the physical world with ease, it required far more imagination and skill to depict ideological constructs, the ‘abstract, categorical’. Drawing, whether in print cartooning or the music-hall lightning cartoon, had long been used to depict these matters and it is therefore unsurprising that the first generation of artists to come to film from these forms would continue to use the new medium to express these complex ideas. Trade reviews indicate that this approach was central to many of the animated cartoons discussed here. Louis Raemaekers’ films abound with symbolic images, such as ‘The Crucifixion of Belgium’ and ‘The German Tango’, but one reviewer describes the most effective image, that of ‘the skeleton figure of Death dancing with a crowned female, “From East to West and West to East, I dance with thee”’.⁷³⁸ It is difficult to imagine the complex ideas encapsulated in this image being expressed with such ease in another manner.

The films already analysed clearly indicate the commitment animated cartoonists exhibited to expressing ‘abstract, categorical’ ideas during the war. Frank Holland’s use of the narrative of perception expressed the cause and effect of military conflict, while Dudley Buxton and Anson Dyer’s use of transformation associated wartime leaders with ineffable qualities such as composure or death. Lancelot Speed’s *Britain’s Effort* (1918) marks the apotheosis of this approach. The extended length film, 1000ft or more than sixteen minutes, depicts the history of the wartime effort of the title, providing graphical illustration of the intangible ‘abstract, categorical’ aspects of the war.

⁷³⁶ *Bios*, 22 October 1914, ii.

⁷³⁷ *Bios*, 3 December 1914, iii-iv.

⁷³⁸ *Bios*, 19 July 1917, 258.

The opening sequence immediately establishes this approach, depicting the complacency of Britain in 1914 in the form of John Bull sleeping on the beach in front of the cliffs at Dover, before he is roused by Britannia. The use of the John Bull and Britannia characters highlights the inheritance, emphasised throughout this chapter, of the long history of print cartooning Speed and his peers brought to bear on their film work. As seen in chapter one these allegorical figures had a long history of use in print cartooning to depict abstract notions of national identity. *Britain's Effort* continues with a number of graphical representations which visualise the mathematical details of war: the growth in troop and armament numbers, the financial cost of the war. While the representations may be considered misleading from a mathematical perspective, they indicate Speed's desire to utilise animated cartoons to express intangible 'abstract, categorical' ideas, ideological constructs that despite being non-visible play a central role in shaping people's lives, especially during wartime. As it had in the previous century for print and music-hall cartoonists, the ambiguity and expressive capacity of line drawings proved ideal for this articulation. Yet, as will be seen in the next section, Speed's film was among the last of its kind, released a few months before the armistice and a major shift, not only in a general political and social sense, but also culturally and economically impacting the production of animated cartoons.

On initial inspection British animated cartoons of the First World War would seem to be one of the hesitant lines or paths not taken of animation history discussed in the introduction of this thesis, and this may explain their absence from most histories of the wider form. With their strong focus on topicality and the construction of national identity, they are quite distinct from the animated cartoons which preceded or followed them. Conversely, from an aesthetic perspective these films utilise the same techniques as their predecessors and, to some extent, what would follow: the lightning cartoon and its narrative of perception, and transformation utilising the ambiguity of line drawings. As the parallel example of propaganda posters indicates, stylistic concerns need not be considered distinct from the construction of national identity and may actually be a critical component of it. Paul Ward suggests as much when he indicates that the lightning cartoon was adopted by First World War cartoonists precisely for its cultural specificity and it was 'crucial that their animated films would be

associated with a “Britishness” that would intensify their stature as propaganda’.⁷³⁹ The aesthetic approach of First World War animated cartoons is not at odds with their topical content and construction of identity, it is integral to it. Furthermore, when considered in this light, First World War animated cartoons are not an aberrant departure from what preceded and followed them. Rather they exist within the lineage of British animated cartoons, derived from prior traditions, predicated upon the use of the techniques outlined here to reveal the hidden. Where the wartime cartoons are distinctive is in the way they apply these techniques: not to explore and revel in the ‘graphic-functional’, as earlier and later films did, but to reveal the ‘abstract, categorical’.

British animated cartoons of the 1920s: Beyond the lightning cartoon

The end of the First World War, combined with the parallel economic shifts in the international film industry, resulted in a radical adjustment in the production of animated cartoons in Britain. As discussed in chapter three, production dropped to near zero in the immediate post-war period, and when production resumed, topicality had been eradicated, replaced by continuous series which almost invariably featured anthropomorphised animals. Superficially this might be misunderstood as a capitulation to, or slavish copying of, American imports. Yet the use of anthropomorphised animals may also be seen in the British print cartoon tradition, as discussed in relation to Louis Wain previously. Other visible signs of the continued influence of a music-hall and print-cartoon heritage are also apparent in the animated cartoons of the 1920s. Some cartoons continued to display the iconography of lightning cartoons, such as the ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ series which regularly feature Sid Griffiths drawing a lightning cartoon either as the opening of the film, as in *A Wireless Whirl* and *He Gets “Fired”*; or during his interaction with a fully animated Jerry, in order to provide an object for Jerry. For instance in *Football* Sid lightning cartoons a football for Jerry to play with, while in *His Birthday* Sid sketches a gramophone for Jerry to listen to.

The aesthetic influence of illustration and print making are apparent in Lancelot Speed’s ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’, which featured greyscale cut-out animation rather than cel animation, allowing Speed to continue to use the range of expressive textures seen in his print work discussed in chapter one. He also

⁷³⁹ Ward, "British Animated Propaganda Cartoons of the First World War: Issues of Topicality."

uses considerable amounts of text to communicate the narrative, a parallel to the use of subtitles in the newspaper source for this series.

Punning and word play, central to both music hall and print cartooning, remained a source of humour. In the opening sequence of the first 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' a play is immediately made on Squeak's name: 'oils the thing to cure a squeak', introducing a tone that continues through the series. Episode thirteen sees Wilfred getting electrocuted and declaring it 'shocking'; the group entering the 'Gulf of Lyons' which they can hear 'roaring'; and Wilfred performing a Russian/Rushing ballet. G.E. Studdy's 'Bonzo' makes similar regular use of puns. *Topical Bonzette*, an episode written by Adrian Brunel, plays on place names giving them a canine twist such as 'Deaugville' and 'Houndsditch', while in *Tally Ho* Bonzo complains of being 'hounded by this low dog' as he is chased. The punning titles of 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' episodes such as "*Weather*" or *Not, A Sticky Business, He Gets "Fired"* and *A Flash Affair* are indicative of that series' equal dedication to the pun. Dudley Buxton's *Memoirs of Miffy* is filled with puns, including a depiction of an 'Ultra-rabid camera' and an actress named 'Ima Hottun'.

These outward signs of the continuation of the music-hall and print-cartoon tradition should not be taken as signs of a retrograde aesthetic approach by the animated cartoonists of the 1920s. Rather they are surface reminders of the larger project of interrogating the perceptual underpinnings of these graphic forms. The appearance of sightlines in many of these cartoons may be considered exemplary in this regard. Sightlines are the drawing of a dotted or continuous line from the main character's eyes to the object of their gaze. Along with exclamation marks, musical/audible notation and movement lines, sightlines may be considered another visible link between animated cartoon films of this period and their antecedents, as such marks were common place in newspaper cartooning. Yet they are not simply an outmoded technique but rather indicate the constant attention cartoonists had to pay to perception. Within drawing or painting, especially a two dimensional black and white line drawing, it is difficult for the perceiving viewer to fully resolve where or at what a protagonist is looking. This poses a challenge to animated cartoons attempting to establish a narrative or create thinking characters whose internal thoughts and motivation

can be implied visually by where their eyes are looking.⁷⁴⁰ Sightlines are not simply a throwback to the visual style of print cartooning, but more fundamentally are a solution to the ambiguity of line drawings. As will be seen later in this chapter, British animated cartoonists would not only acknowledge this ambiguity in their use of these graphic marks, but also play upon it to produce some of their most remarkable gags.

The dualities of performance and the appeal to the pre-logical mind

The complexities of performance and the multiple layers it entails are generally important to the animated cartoons of the 1920s. Most overtly there are a number of explicit depictions of theatrical settings, placing the lead characters in a performance scenario. A theatre or music hall is depicted directly in the 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' episode *The Deputy* and Jerry's appearance in this episode is revealing of an influence felt throughout 1920s cartoons of the duality, or plurality, of performance. The whole of *The Deputy* takes place on a stage, depicted by footlights and framing curtains, viewed from the fixed perspective of an audience member in the stalls. Jerry appears on stage and informs the audience that scheduled pianist 'Ottstuffski' will not be able to perform and that Jerry will deputise, then proceeds to magically pull on a dress coat. The direct address to the audience (both the extra-diegetic fictional theatre audience and the extra-filmic cinematic spectators) and the act of pulling on a costume emphasise that this is a performance, with the ensuing multiple levels seen in music-hall performances, such as Miss Lydia Dreams examined in an earlier chapter. This duality is continued as Jerry proceeds to try and sit on the piano stool, resulting in a series of slapstick pratfalls, interspersed with Jerry turning to the audience and winking or mugging, breaking the fourth wall and evoking the 'knowingness' typical of music-hall performances.⁷⁴¹

A similar use of theatrical space appears in *His Birthday*, which begins with the frame filled with a pair of theatrical curtains. Jerry appears in the gap

⁷⁴⁰ The use of eyes for this purpose has become a central tenet of the Disney tradition of character animation: 'To convey the idea that the thoughts of a character are driving its actions, a simple trick is in the anticipation; always lead with the eyes or the head. If the character has eyes, the eyes should move first...the eyes of a character are the windows to its thoughts; the character's thoughts are conveyed through the actions of its eyes' Lasseter, "Tricks to Animating Characters with a Computer [Original Presentation Given in 1994]," 45-47; Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*, 51-53.

⁷⁴¹ Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture."

between the curtains to tell the audience ‘Hold on a minute – I’M next’ just as a stage performer might occupy the audience while a scene change takes place. After Jerry goes back behind the curtains they rise as they would in a theatre to reveal the cartoon’s title card. Again this exchange emphasises Jerry’s knowingness, his ability to step beyond the fourth wall and address the audience directly, before stepping back into the theatrical space for the ‘next’ performance.

Although foregrounded by the theatrical space in which these particular animated cartoons take place, the simultaneous meaning evoked by such a performance is present throughout the *Jerry* series. In *Jerry’s Treasure Island Travel* Jerry, stranded on a whale’s back, turns to the audience and waves. *Ten Little Jerry Boys* starts with him climbing out of an ink bottle and waving to the audience again. Such moments of knowingness, of acknowledging the multiple levels in the performance being presented, are equally present in the other popular British series of the 1920s. Bonzo’s first film sees him winking at the audience, a direct address outside of the ongoing narrative that he repeats in other films, such as *Bonzo in Gay Paree* where he enters a bar in Paris, demands service, turns to the audience to wink, then returns to place his order with the barmaid. Bowing was also one of Bonzo’s archetypal poses, to the extent that it was used in advertising (Figure 31) and some of his films end with him bowing to the audience, such as episode 10 “*Bonzolino*” or *Bonzo Broadcasted*.⁷⁴² Jerry, Bonzo and Pongo regularly break from the narrative world of their cartoons to wink, mug or bow for the audience, breaking the fourth wall and emphasising the dual nature of their performance, at odds with classical realist conventions but fully in keeping with the knowingness and simultaneous meaning of music-hall performances.

⁷⁴² *KW*, 9 October 1924, 25.



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Figure 31: 'Bonzo' (1924)

These examples may be considered a form of metalepsis, the transgression of diegetic worlds, which is prevalent throughout the animated cartoons of the 1920s, and has been argued by Erwin Feyersinger as a typical aesthetic device in many forms of animation.⁷⁴³ This thesis aims, however, to identify the distinctive qualities of British animated cartoons rather than co-opt

⁷⁴³ Erwin Feyersinger, "Diegetic Short Circuits: Metalepsis in Animation," *Animation* 5, no. 3 (2010).

them into a broader trend within animation. The duality of performance may equally be considered ‘plasmatic’ in Eisenstein’s terms. As described earlier Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘plasmatic’ refers not simply to the transformation of one thing into another, but rather the abandonment of the rational distinctions between them, the simultaneous evocation of two meanings. It is possible to see the performance aspects already described in the animated cartoons of the 1920s as ‘plasmatic’ on these terms. Not only are the cartoons simultaneously both lines on a page and figurative characters, but also the performative aspects inherited from music hall allow a constant play between performer and role. Nevertheless, these qualities do not distinguish animated cartoons from other graphic or performance based arts, where such duality is inherent in their production, even if the degree to which it is foregrounded may vary. A second fundamental aspect to Eisenstein’s ‘plasmaticness’ is that it appeals to or recreates a base perceptual experience, whether at a cultural, evolutionary, developmental, or psychological level. The rejection of topical and political subject matter led the cartoons of the 1920s to adopt, almost without exception, anthropomorphised animals as protagonists whose confirmation as human or animal, adult or child is constantly deferred in favour of a play between them, enacting the ‘plasmatic’ as they appeal to the ‘pre-logical’ mind where such distinctions have yet to be stratified.

Lancelot Speed and A.B. Payne’s ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ series (1921) may visually be more akin to the films of the 1910s with its cut-out animation and detailed greyscale textures, but its anthropomorphised characters signal the shift that would be fully realised in the simple line drawings used to draw Jerry, Bonzo and the other cel animated characters of the mid-1920s. The three lead characters are animals that would not normally be best friends: Pip is a dog, Wilfred is a rabbit, and Squeak a penguin. Both as a group and as individuals their position is never fixed between animal and human, adult and child. In the opening shots of the first episode, the group sit at a table, eating breakfast cereal; Pip sits cross-legged while reading - a thoroughly human posture - and they interact as if human adults. The friends regularly interact with human characters with no reference made to them being animals; in *Pip and Wilfred Detectives* Wilfred is refused entry to the British Museum by the human guard, not because he is a rabbit, as the audience might expect, but because it is shut, of which the

guard politely informs 'sir'. Similarly in episode six *Over the Edge of the World* Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred are stopped by a human policeman while driving a car, only to be asked for their driving license; this episode also sees Wilfred riding a non-anthropomorphised horse as if he were a human. Yet Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred regularly and swiftly revert from this anthropomorphised human-like state to animalistic behaviour. In the third episode *Pip and Wilfred Detectives* Pip initially exhibits human behaviour, holding an umbrella and suitcase and standing on his hind legs. Pip interacts with a rich human swapping his belongings for a dog as if Pip, a dog himself, could be the owner. Yet once the exchange has been made, Pip reverts to canine behaviour, playing games with the dog, and as if to emphasise their status as creatures they look for Squeak in the most likely place to find a penguin: the zoo. Pip proceeds to drop to all four legs and states 'I smell fish', using his canine sense of smell to locate Squeak. In episode four, *Wilfred's Wonderful Adventures*, Wilfred becomes the prey for a hunter and reverts to rabbit behaviour, digging underground leading him to a rabbit warren; he calls this the 'old, old home', again reminding the spectator of his being an animal. Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred are not simply in flux between human and animal, rather they fulfil Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic': they are both human and animal simultaneously. In episode five *Catching the Seaside Train* Squeak and Wilfred decide to go for a swim and pull on their swimming costumes, perfectly in keeping with the human behaviour they have been exhibiting since the start of the cartoon: planning a holiday, packing their suitcase, catching a train. Yet in pulling on their swimming costumes they draw attention to the fact that up till now they have not been wearing any clothes, unremarkable for a cat, dog, and penguin, but unusual for the humans the spectator had been taking the characters to be. This joke, like the other incidents described, is less of a shift in the friends' characters, rather a moment in which the spectator is made particularly aware of the constant duality in their being, their status as both human and animal.

A similar ambiguity exists between their status as adults and as children. As seen in the previous examples Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred often behave as independent adults, yet they equally exhibit many childlike tendencies. The character designs emphasise childish qualities: large eyes; disproportionate head, hands, and feet. Episode two, *Popski's Early Life*, opens with the three characters

in bed, surrounded by toys accompanied by a title 'Bedtime and Storytime' emphasising a childlike scene, despite the absence of parents. At other times the group form a family unit, with Pip and Squeak as parents and Wilfred as the unruly child. In *Wilfred's Wonderful Adventures* Wilfred runs away, leaving a note written in with childish scrawl and spelling 'Good bi I'm off to cee the world'. In a later cartoon *Nearing Home* Pip and Squeak welcome a returning Wilfred with a hug, his smaller size casting him in the role of child in this family scene. Although apparently parentless, in *Wilfred's Nightmare* the group are revealed to have an 'owner', namely 'Uncle Dick'. That 'owner' is suggestive of their animal nature while the familial term 'Uncle' is suggestive of human relations again reflects the 'plasmatic' simultaneity at work in these characters. In their childish state they can still be both creatures - who are owned - and humans with families. This simultaneity is further nuanced by 'Uncle Dick' being the pseudonym used by writer B.J. Lamb on the credits for the series. Thus the threesome's ownership by 'Uncle Dick' not only plays upon the human/animal duality, but also on their status as fictional characters and lines on a page.

The characters that followed 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' were equally involved in these simultaneous meanings, a constant play between animal and human, adult and child. Like 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred', Bonzo's adventures are often initiated by him behaving in a human manner: in *Playing The "Dickens" In An Old Curiosity Shop* Bonzo sees a job advertisement 'Boy Wanted' and not only thinks of himself but is given the job by the human store owner. Yet at other times Bonzo displays typically canine behaviour: *Circus Bonzo* opens with him chasing a cat on all fours, while *Cheekie the Vamp* starts with Bonzo in a kennel with a bone and bowl, and details Bonzo's attempt to woo a female dog away from a canine rival. While Bonzo's human antics are often adult, he equally behaves in a childlike manner. In "*Bonzolino*" or *Bonzo Broadcasted* he bursts into infantile tears when Cheekie spurns his amorous advances, and when he leaves the room he has to stand on tip toes to reach the door handle, a typically childlike pose. Ultimately, however, Bonzo is not simply animal or human, child or adult, but all of these simultaneously and it is those incidents where these categories are at constant play that are most typical. Episode nine *Out on the tiles after a Cat Burglar* sees Bonzo, a dog who behaves throughout the cartoon like a

human, chasing a cat burglar, a human who behaves and looks like a cat. Yet, of course, the appeal of the chase for Bonzo in part derives from the archetypal *animal* relationship between dogs and cats, while the cat burglar retains a very human fear of dogs. In *Bonzo in Gay Paree* he approaches a bar in Paris, makes advances to the barmaid and while embracing her sneaks a drink from behind the bar, all of which very adult behaviour is countered by Bonzo's diminutive size which requires him to balance on a bar stool and makes him look more like a child in the arms of the barmaid.

'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' displays a similarly 'plasmatic' combination of adult and child, human and animal. Jerry's regular stance is standing on two hind legs, as if he were human, yet in several cartoons he settles in front of a fireplace, not as a human would in the armchair, but on all fours and even scratches himself with his hind leg, as he does in *Both Biters Bit*. In *C.O.D.* Jerry walks up to the table and sits down to read the newspaper, yet the table and chairs are much larger than him, giving him a childlike dimension as he has to clamber onto the chair. The childlike quality continues as he proceeds to order some food from a newspaper advert, but when the delivery boy demands the 'cash on delivery' that gives the cartoon its name, Jerry realises he doesn't have any money and reverts to barking like a dog to scare the delivery boy and get the food. In "*Weather*" or *Not* Jerry stows away on a ship and his behaviour is that of a dog, running around on all four legs looking for food, and is subsequently chased by the cook. Yet when he is caught by the Captain his punishment is that of a human stowaway, mopping the deck while standing on his hind legs. In *Never Say Die* Jerry gets tired of being manipulated by the onscreen animator, and states 'I've had enough of this dog's life! I'm going to commit suicide!!' and walks off the animator's page into a fictional world where a series of suicide attempts end in failure, Jerry ultimately being taken in by a human as his pet, ending the film happily chewing on a bone, albeit sat upright at the dining table to do so. This sequence sees Jerry in all of his modes: the childish outburst against the parental control of the animator, the human adult impulse to commit suicide, the canine appetite for bones, with none given privilege.

Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic' is amply demonstrated by the animated cartoons of the 1920s. The characters exhibit the simultaneity that distinguishes the 'plasmatic' from simple transformation. They are animal and

human, adult and child. Furthermore, that simultaneity plays upon the atavistic psychological states that Eisenstein argues the ‘plasmatic’ appeals to. These characters embody the inherent animalistic and childish psychologies that are subdued by the rational. The fluidity with which they move between human and animal, adult and child reveal that these qualities are always latent, never fully subsumed by the rational.

The narrative of perception beyond the lightning cartoon:

As has been shown, thematically ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ embodied a distinct shift in focus from the animated cartoons of the First World War, moving away from topical and political subject matter which appealed to the ‘abstract, categorical’ mind, while embracing the simultaneous meaning of anthropomorphism with its appeal to the ‘graphic-functional’ mind. Yet these cartoons remained stylistically tied to the methods of First World War animated cartoons and their antecedents in illustration, both forms that Lancelot Speed was heavily associated with. In particular the use of cut-out animation and textured images, while hardly photorealistic, left less ambiguity in the spectators’ interpretation of the line drawings being presented. The anthropomorphic characters who followed ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ onto cinema screens, including Bonzo and Jerry, used cel animation whose techniques favoured a high contrast palate of black lines on a white background, rejecting the greyscale detail of First World War cartoons. This entailed a greater degree of ambiguity in the drawings, an increased reliance on the cognition of the spectators to resolve the meaning of an image and a consequent play upon that cognition, an extension of the narrative of perception described in the lightning cartoon act and its appropriation in earlier animated cartoons.

Jerry sacks a Saxophone provides a prototypical example of this extension of the lightning cartoon and the narrative of perception. The film opens with the artist’s hand drawing a black circle on a white background and a small line inside it. The hand then withdraws, and the line is then animated. At first its movement is entirely abstract; it tracks the circumference of the circle with no apparent reason or agency. After a few turns the line’s movement begins to take on a worm-like quality, before resting at the bottom of the circle with a regular pulsing movement. The circle then performs an iris-in revealing that the line is in

fact a section of Jerry's back, asleep by the fire, its movement caused by his regular breathing. This opening sequence is highly revealing of the way the initial qualities of the lightning cartoon were adopted and adapted in these 1920s animated cartoons. The sequence opens with the artist's hand and a straight invocation of the narrative of perception as seen in music hall and earlier animated cartoons. An audience expecting a 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' episode would immediately be attempting to discern what was being drawn: perhaps a part of Jerry, or an object from which he would spring? Rather than satisfy this curiosity the film extends and delays the perceptual experience over a forty second period, a significant proportion of the episode's three and a half minute running time. This experience is predicated upon the ambiguity of the lines and their movement. There is simply insufficient information to attribute a single meaning to the black lines, yet there is an overwhelming urge to categorise it, to identify it. This is seen clearly when the movement of the line becomes less mechanical, it is immediately understood as having a biological agency, as being worm-like. The capacity of the human mind to perceive life in the simplest movement of the simplest of black lines on a white screen becomes the punch line to this sequence, as the final rhythmic movement of the line is revealed to be created by Jerry's breathing, just as the movement of the line breathes life into Jerry. Having experienced this narrative of perception the spectator is, at one level at least, aware of the cognitive process by which ambiguous lines on a page are resolved into animate creatures.

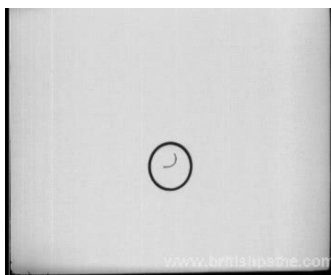


Figure 32: *Jerry sacks a saxophone* (1926) - abstract lines

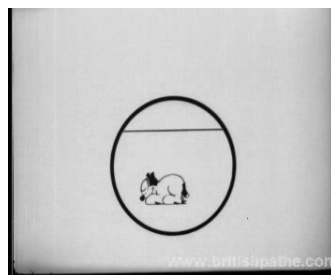


Figure 33: *Jerry sacks a saxophone* (1926) - iris-in

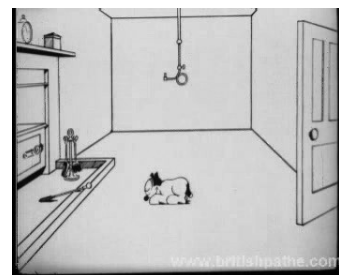


Figure 34: *Jerry sacks a saxophone* (1926) - linear perspective established

There is a second key quality to this opening sequence of *Jerry sacks a Saxophone* which is pertinent to the perceptual framework which guides this study, namely its handling of depth. The initial lightning cartoon establishes a basic photorealistic depth to the image, with a slight shadow beneath the artist's

hand providing additional depth cues to the indexical image of a hand drawing on a sheet of paper. Once the hand is removed, however, the image becomes two dimensional, with movement only on the x and y axes. With no depth cues or linear perspective to guide the interpretation of the lines, they are understood as existing only on two planes. In isolation they might be mistaken for non-figurative abstract animation of the kind concerning modernist artists in the same period, such as Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling (Figure 32). Yet following the iris-in the rhythmic line is perceived entirely differently. Although its position on screen and movement have not altered, by adjusting the context in which it appears the line is now situated in the mid-ground, the figurative, linear perspective of the walls of the room disappearing to a vanishing point giving it a distinct position within the z axis (Figure 33 and Figure 34). Despite the opening sequence making it clear that these are simply lines on a page with no dimensionality it is impossible to perceive them as such once placed in this context. Gombrich's emphasis on the ambiguity of drawings, the role of context or 'relationships' and the use of blank space as a screen again provide a clear framework for understanding the way these cartoons play upon the perceptual principles underlying the understanding of sparse line drawings produced by the cel animation technique. Such attention to, and play upon, the perceptual particularities of the sparse black on white images of cel animation of this period is characteristic of British animated cartoons of the 1920s, as will be examined in the next section.

Cel animation and the ambiguity of line drawings

As described previously, the adoption of cel animation techniques in the dominant series of the 1920s resulted in a distinct shift, away from the greyscale cut-outs with detailed backgrounds of wartime films and 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred', to high contrast black line drawings surrounded by large fields of white space. This arrangement placed increased emphasis on the spectators' perception to resolve the image, the white space being understood in relation to very limited contextual information, such as a horizon line or receding lines indicating linear perspective. *Jerry Sacks a Saxophone* has already provided one instance of a play on this white space, the shift from the two dimensional opening sequence to the linear perspective of the latter half of the film resulting in a complete shift in the

spectators' understanding of the white space that dominates the screen throughout, even though that white space has remained the same throughout the cartoon. Both 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' and 'Bonzo' feature a particular gag which depends entirely upon the spectator having resolved the ambiguous white space of the screen on the basis of its context, only to have that resolution confounded by Jerry or Bonzo's interaction with it. *The Topical Bonzette* sees Bonzo at a swimming pool, indicated by a diving board, a rectangular enclosure indicating the bounds of the pool beneath the board. Bonzo climbs onto the diving board, dives off and, surprisingly, bounces off the surface of the water. Bonzo, ever persistent, goes back to the board and takes a second dive, this time 'entering' the water with a few lines indicating the water he displaces splashing up. In *Treasure Hunting* Jerry experiences a very similar gag. After a series of adventures Jerry lands on the ocean bed, an expanse of white screen given context by a border of rocks and seaweed. Jerry takes several steps on the ocean bed, only to plunge into a pool of water on his next step, he then swims further across the screen before 'climbing' out back onto the ocean floor, only to turn around and walk back across the space he had just swum across. The same gag is repeated in the 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' episode *All Cod!*, where Jerry is fishing by a pond, the surface of the pond being simply a white space delineated by a curved line. The fish Jerry is hunting jumps out of the water to taunt him, prompting Jerry to walk out into the pond to chase him. Rather than immediately falling into the water, Jerry walks on the surface for several steps before diving into the water and disappearing beneath the surface. This repeated gag plays heavily upon the ambiguity of the white space of the screen. In each case the spectator has been led to believe that the white space represents an expanse of water, not by anything directly within that space, only by the contextual lines which surround it. By disrupting the spectators' expectations of how the cartoon character will interact with that space, these cartoons draw attention to their status as constructions of the spectators' perception, as a resolution of ambiguity rather than an immutable representation of concrete reality. In all three cases the rational understanding of the space is not simply reversed, it is dismissed as the characters first break our expectation then reaffirm it. Such jokes' influence extends far beyond the few minutes screen time in which the actual gag takes place, introducing a degree of uncertainty to all the consequent images, or rather

reintroducing the ambiguity inherent in them and drawing the spectators' attention to it.

An extension of these 'white space' gags is seen where characters presence is clearly detected by the spectator, yet is only implied or half represented, the spectator filling in the gaps perceptually. In *The Scout's Good Turn* Bonzo attempts to help a fat man lose weight by towing him behind a car. As he loses weight the man shrinks, then appears as a skeleton, then disappears, yet is still perceptible to the audience by virtue of his shoes continuing to be dragged along. Despite there only being white space, the spectator resolves the empty space and perceives the man there still. The 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' episode *There's Many a Slip...* begins with another lightning cartoon, enacting the familiar narrative of perception. However, the image is not completed, rather Jerry is shown with his legs moving, suspended on the page. Despite the absence of a drawn bicycle, it is readily perceived by the context of Jerry's position and, importantly, the movement of his legs. Thus in this instance it is not only line drawings which call upon the spectators' ability to resolve them, but particularly the movement of those lines. Any single, still image from this sequence would not evoke the presence of a bicycle as effectively as the moving, animated image. The movement of the line is equally central to the first half of *He Gets "Fired"*, which revolves entirely around the spectators' ability to resolve white space in this manner. The artist draws Jerry's legs, again a lightning cartoon, which proceed to run away, preventing the artist from completing his upper body. Despite the small number of lines and absence of any face, the spectator has no difficulty in 'seeing' Jerry and laughing at the detailed personality Griffiths is able to express with such limited resources.

There are a number of other gag types which equally draw on this ambiguity for their effectiveness. One such type of gag is the use of an object understood by the spectator in one context being appropriated as an entirely different item. While in one sense the object is transformed, the transformation is entirely a perceptual one – the configuration of lines on the screen remain, but by changing the objects use and context those same lines are understood in very different ways. In an episode titled *Tanked* Bonzo joins up with the Army and at

the end of his adventure drives off in a tank.⁷⁴⁴ On the side of the tank are two small guns, what would appear initially to be an incidental detail, but then Bonzo reaches down and pulls one of the gun barrels, revealing it to be a beer bottle, and takes a swig in celebration. This gag would seem to embody Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic' in that Bonzo's appropriation of the item does not transform it physically, but rather imbues the same lines with an alternate referent, creating a simultaneous meaning for them. Similar gags are made in other 'Bonzo' episodes, where objects are appropriated or recontextualised, often to allow Bonzo to escape a hazardous situation. In *Polar Bonzo* Bonzo takes a pair of trousers and is able to use them as skis, the pin stripes echoing the wood grain that would have been seen on skis of this period. Bonzo consequently reuses the trousers again, this time as wings to fly home. In *Tally-Ho! Bonzo* the canine hero uses a tin can for a hat, a fox as a stole and a mushroom as an umbrella to disguise himself as a 1920s 'flapper'. In this case the objects are stretched to fit their new purpose, but they retain the distinctive features of their origin, while equally being read as the items which help Bonzo evade detection. Such jokes depend upon the sparse black and white line drawings which leave the spectator to resolve the many details which are left out of the iconic depictions of objects. A mushroom and an umbrella share very few qualities in the natural world, but in the ambiguous world of Bonzo it is only the shared qualities that are retained and depicted: the curved canopy and straight stem. Thus they can be treated as interchangeable.

'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' equally uses these type of gags to play upon the ambiguity of line drawings and their ability to be transformed, not physically, but in the spectators' perception through their recontextualisation. In *Treasure Hunting* Jerry is underwater and as he breathes out, air bubbles rise from his mouth, which he proceeds to grab hold of and start juggling with, defying the expectation of their physical behaviour that they would naturally rise, including when Jerry misjudges his juggling and one hits him on the head, subject not to floating but to gravity. Yet it is at this moment that the spheres' behaviour returns to that of bubbles and they float up and off the screen. Again this gag emphasises that, within Jerry's world, there is no distinction between an

⁷⁴⁴ This title comes from a 9.5mm release of the Bonzo films from the 1930s.

air bubble and a juggling ball, they are both depicted by a simple black circle. In *Jerry is too canny for the Cannibal* Jerry's ears are taken off by a spear thrown at him, so he replaces them with some leaves off a tree which have the same shape. If we return to Luria's investigations, we see the animated cartoon worlds of Jerry, Bonzo, and others correspond to his description of a 'graphic-functional' psychology. Objects are not categorised and compartmentalised, rather they are classified by their use value at a particular moment in time. Aided by the ambiguous line drawings, objects can be transformed, not physically but perceptually, into whatever function they need to serve at that moment in time.

In both 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' and 'Bonzo' there are a number of scenarios which, while in some respects may be seen as simply further examples of the recontextualisation described above, also extend these gags into the use of words and signs that ultimately results in the breakdown of the layers constructed by these animated worlds. In *One Exciting Nightmare* Jerry has a dream in which he is chasing a cheese. He sees a road sign with an arrow on it, which he is able to remove and throws the arrow at the cheese, stopping it in its tracks. Jerry then uses the arrow to divide the cheese into two circles, then fashions a bicycle out of the two circles of cheese and the arrow. Again this sequence depends upon the ambiguity and simplicity of the icons presented. Using a cheese as the wheels for a bicycle is impossible if it is considered in a rational, or 'abstract, categorical', manner as cheese has a number of qualities unsuitable for its use as transportation. Yet in Jerry's 'graphic-functional' world cheese is simply a circular black line and therefore identical to bicycle wheels.

The use of the arrow extends this joke beyond those described before. When first encountered the arrow on the road sign is assumed to two dimensional, to be painted on the sign. Even though everything on screen is simply black lines on a white background, the narrative leads the spectator to retain distinctions between a number of levels within the world depicted. Even though Jerry is ultimately, of course, two dimensional, text and signs are interpreted as *more* two dimensional, existing at a more abstract level than Jerry. When Jerry acts upon the sign it collapses this distinction, returning the spectator to a naive perspective, that of the 'graphic-functional' where there are no rules which govern behaviour or compartmentalise objects: everything is functionally equivalent, everything is black ink on a white background. In this instance the

gag appears within a dream sequence that may be considered to bracket or mitigate the flattening of levels, but very similar gags appear without this framing device in both ‘Bonzo’ and other ‘Jerry the Troublesome Tyke’ episodes. In *Zoology* Bonzo sees the sign for a Zoo, turns to wink at the audience then removes the letters from the wall and combines them to become a bicycle, similarly in “*Bonzolino*” or *Bonzo Broadcasted* Bonzo appropriates the words off a sign saying ‘Radio Station’ and uses them as a rope to clamber up a radio mast. In *Aladdin Bonzo* Bonzo is able to remove one of his spots and bounces it on the floor like a ball, appropriating his decoration, normally understood like text as being less dimensional than the rest of the narrative world.

The textual and decorative elements appropriated by Bonzo and Jerry in these examples are still within the diegesis of the narrative world, even while their use indicates a fluidity between objects that ultimately acknowledges that everything is first and foremost black lines on a white background. There is a further class of gag in these series that extends this fluidity to non-diegetic objects as well. As described previously, the continued influence of print illustration and cartooning on these animated cartoons resulted in the inclusion of many of the expressive marks used in those prior forms: exclamation marks, musical and audible notation, movement lines, and sight lines. These symbols are understood initially as non-diegetic, even if they aim to represent elements that are diegetic. For instance while musical notes might indicate diegetic music emanating within the narrative world, the crotchets and quavers seen on screen are still non-diegetic, the onscreen characters do not see them. Yet this distinction is commonly undermined by gags in which the lead character interacts physically with these symbols which were understood to exist outside the narrative’s physical world.

In *All Cod!* Jerry decides to go fishing to satisfy his hunger. When he reaches the lake he pulls a branch from a tree and attaches a piece of string to it, but of course also needs a hook and bait. A question mark forms above his head, a graphical representation of Jerry’s state of mind as he puzzles how to resolve this. Jerry then looks up, sees the question mark and grabs it, tying it to the string as a hook, before grabbing the full stop which starts to wriggle like a worm and attaching it to the hook. This joke breaks the distinction between the diegetic narrative world and the non-diegetic expressive marks, acknowledging that they

both exist at the same perceptual level, as black ink on the white background. In *Polar Bonzo* the canine hero attends a cinema show. The orchestra, seen in the diegesis, produces a series of non-diegetic musical notes used to express what cannot directly be represent in a silent film. Yet as Bonzo watches the film he is able to grab hold of one of the floating notes, which then transports him onto the cinema screen. Again this gag cuts across the distinctions between diegetic and non-diegetic world, adding further to it through the self-reflexive use of cinema: there is no distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic world, or between Bonzo's 'real' world and the fictional world seen on screen. As suggested before these examples may be considered typical of animation in general, embodying the narrative device of metalepsis.⁷⁴⁵ For the purposes of this study, however, they are important in more specific terms, playing as they do upon the ambiguity of line drawings for the perceiver and thus emphasising basic perceptual processes. They exist at the level of the 'graphic-functional', making them distinct from other forms of metalepsis which might play upon complex narrative levels which would require an 'abstract, categorical' analysis.

Altered states and alternative perception

The previous example of Bonzo's adventure in the cinema comes, as have some of the earlier examples given, from a sequence in which Bonzo is revealed to have been dreaming. Such a framing device could be considered to mitigate the events that take place, to place them in quotation marks and thus contain the transgressions that take place while reinforcing the 'real' narrative world. Yet such gags are not always contained within such a framing device, and where they are they serve to emphasise the connection observed in Eisenstein's writing, that between the rejection of conventional physical and rational rules and the primitive, childlike or dreamlike. The depiction of altered or naive states is common in the animated cartoons of the 1920s. In *Honesty is the Best Policy* Jerry is chased by a policeman, who trips and becomes concussed. Rather than depicting this with print cartoon conventions of stars or birds around his head, the film enters a short but startling abstract animated sequence of shooting stars on a black background, a shift from the regular white background that when viewed in a theatrical context would produce a stroboscopic effect and invoke a

⁷⁴⁵ Feyersinger, "Diegetic Short Circuits: Metalepsis in Animation."

physiological reaction in the audience. Drunkenness is equally often a factor in these types of sequence. In *He Breaks Out!* Jerry becomes drunk and we are given a shot from Jerry's point of view. Sid Griffiths is seen in live action footage, but the focus and framing is constantly shifting, before the film again invokes a stroboscopic effect by rapidly switching between positive and negative images that would be particularly disquieting in a darkened cinema. In *Bonzo in Gay Paree* Bonzo rapidly drinks several bottles of alcohol and when another customer approaches the bar Bonzo's drunken perception is expressionistically depicted, the image becoming distorted, the customer looming over Bonzo through an optical distortion. In each of these examples the rejection of realist conventions coincides with altered states of mind, that as the mind is stripped of its rational controls the world begins to appear, or be perceived, differently.

This notion, that people can perceive the world differently, and that the difference often is expressed in a rejection of conventions, whether physical or aesthetic clearly finds a parallel in Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic' and Luria's psychological studies. For Eisenstein the 'plasmatic' appeals to or recreates alternate psychologies, be that altered states or the childlike or primitive. The animated cartoons of the 1920s show a parallel concern with this idea, depicting not only altered states brought about by physical trauma or chemical intoxication, as in the above examples, but also the childlike and the primitive.

J. S. Anderson's *The Smoke from Gran-pa's Pipe* (1920) uses a narrative of perception structure, divorced from the direct context of the lightning cartoon, but, nevertheless, concerned with examining the mind's ability to resolve ambiguity and its relationship with both childlike perception and intoxication. The film opens with a pipe suspended out of any context, from which the smoke forms a series of unrelated animated images, including a dog and a crying face. The 'Gran-pa' of the title then appears along with a young boy. Gran-pa proceeds to tell two 'tall tales' to the boy, the smoke from his pipe forming moving drawings which illustrate the stories, the images forming, as in a lightning cartoon, from out of thin air, only to dissolve again into another image. This film constructs a productive analogy between the ability of a young child to see the images of his gran-pa's stories in the amorphous (and presumably intoxicating to a young child) smoke from his pipe, with the spectator of animated cartoons who

must resolve ambiguous line drawings into definite images. Just as the boy is constantly surprised to see the concrete images dissolve and transform into another shape, so the spectator of the animated film is made aware, through the narrative of perception, of the ambiguity of the line drawings and the ability of the mind to resolve them. That the film depicts the spectator of these visions as a child clearly relates to both Eisenstein and Gombrich's notion that cartoons, especially animated ones, places the spectator in a naive psychological state, stripped of the rational mind which categorises objects.

The 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' and 'Bonzo' series regularly describe a world that is structured not by physical verisimilitude with the world or by a rational categorisation, but rather by a childlike logic, or to use Luria's term, 'graphic-functional'. In *Never Say Die* Jerry is run over first by a train and then by a steamroller. In both cases Jerry does not come to the expected harm, rather the train bumps harmlessly over him and the steam roller is simply stopped in its tracks, thwarting Jerry's suicidal ambition. Trains also behave in a childlike way in *Sandy McBonzo* where a head on collision between two trains results not in a disaster, but rather the two trains both driving straight up into the air. In *Aladdin Bonzo* the canine hero, having used the power of the magic lamp to give himself forty wives decides 'I'm tired of married bliss – get me a divorce' to which the genie transforms his dog house and wives into a sausage machine, out of which pours a string of sausages which are consequently stolen by bird. In these gags the world behaves according to a childlike sense, with a 'graphic-functional' logic, where events occur not according to any *a priori* knowledge but rather how a naive perception might expect them to behave, based on the immediate context. The appearance of a genie in the final example given here also draws attention to the relationship between this perceptual naivety and notions of the 'primitive' or 'exotic'.

'Primitivism': from thematic to aesthetic

The terms 'primitive' and 'primitivism' are complex and historically contingent ones. As discussed in the previous chapter Sergei Eisenstein's writings on Disney and animation are typical for their period in the way they indiscriminately use the term for a number of areas that in a post-colonial context are better considered distinct. The first is an evolutionary or atavistic one, referring to our genetic

forebears, such as those who created Palaeolithic cave paintings in Lascaux, France and elsewhere. The second is a developmental meaning, referring to the process of learning humans undertake in moving from infant to child to adult, and thus addressing the notion of ‘childlike’ perception. The third refers to a cultural meaning, referring to other contemporaneous cultures or ethnic groups, particularly those considered ‘indigenous’ or ‘exotic’. Finally, these terms can be understood as referring to basic perceptual functions, including dream states, residing at a physiological level before higher functions such as memory are effective. For Eisenstein emotion may also be considered part of this latter category, but the degree to which the sensuous and the emotional may be considered equivalent is not transparent. To consider the full implications and interrelationships between these differing notions of the primitive is beyond the scope of this thesis, and it is the latter of these categories which is of primary concern, the way in which the animated cartoons use and play upon the basic perceptual faculties of their historically situated audience. Yet the films under examination and the theorists used to discuss them do not isolate this notion of the primitive and it is therefore necessary to address their use of the full range of examples to understand their approach to perceptual investigation.

The depiction of ‘other’ cultures is widespread in animated cartoons of the 1920s and while by modern standards these may be seen as at best stereotypical and at worst outright racist, they demonstrate an interest in the psychological states that are central to Eisenstein’s notion of the ‘plasmatic’. ‘Native’ cultures regularly appear in the series of the 1920s when characters travel abroad, often to the archetypal desert island. In *The Six Armed Image* Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred encounter a group of cannibals who threaten to eat them, the human/animal duality of the characters confusing the cannibals who would no doubt be disappointed to discover they were eating cat, dog, and rabbit rather than their preferred human flesh were they to catch them. As its title suggests *Jerry is too Canny for the Cannibal* sees Jerry chased by a native of a desert island, a location that features in a series of episodes, which are linked by an on-going story that shows a concern with ‘other’ lands typified by the treasure island of the titles.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁶ The episodes in question, in the order they would have been screened, are *Treasure Hunting*, *Jerry’s Treasure Island Travel*, *Jerry is too Canny for the Cannibal*, *Jerry Tracks the Treasure*.

Genies feature in a number of cartoons of this period, evoking orientalist notions of magic, a realm outside the rational physical world. Victor Hicks' *A Geni and a Genius* casts a Genie as one of the two main characters. *Aladdin Bonzo and the Wonderful Lamp* not only features Bonzo entering a dreamlike world which features a number of exotic characters, but he also steals Aladdin's magic lamp and interacts with the Genie within. In *All Cod* Jerry finds a bottle in the lake and when he uncorks it a Genie, wearing a turban and floating ethereally above the ground, appears and grants Jerry his wish to be able to capture a fish by firing magical shock waves at the water before disappearing into thin air. Jerry receives help from another Genie, this time summoned by a 'wishing ring', in *Jerry Tracks the Treasure* where he is transported home by the Genie from a remote desert island. In each case, the Genie's ability to create and transform objects provides an apt analogy for the animation process. The genie is able to transform any object, to reject rational logic, produce from thin air anything requested, and to bring inanimate objects to life, just as the animator is able to. The power to do this derives from the genie's 'otherness', from a primitive or magical power, denied the other onscreen characters, thus making a connection between the power of animation and the primitive or other.

An undefined notion of the 'primitive' may be found to be an important component of the animated cartoons of the 1920s. Yet, these concerns do not overwhelm these films, as they remain in many ways tied to the rational mind, often reverting to psychologically coherent characters, strong narrative motivation, and physical verisimilitude in areas such as gravity and perspective. The end of the period in question saw the emergence of a film which equally embraced the many notions of primitivism described above, but was not tied to the more conventional aspects that accompanied them in 'Bonzo', 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' and the other series discussed already.

Len Lye's *Tusalava*, first screened in 1929, was produced outside of the main film industry which had produced the other films discussed here, having been financed by the London Film Society. The film draws on Lye's experience of indigenous art in his home country of New Zealand and travel in the South Pacific, as well as a number of Western sources including Ezra Pound's *Gaudier-Brzeska*; Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo*; and the 1923 documentary by

Frank Hurley *Pearls and Savages*.⁷⁴⁷ Equally Lye demonstrates a clear concern with the issues raised throughout this thesis, especially Eisenstein's linking of cultural and other forms of primitivism with the line and its movement. Such a similarity may not simply reflect the pervasive interest in such topics in the 1920s but also a specific meeting of minds: Eisenstein collaborated with the London Film Society (including Len Lye) on the film *Everyday* in 1929 when he and Hans Richter visited Britain after attending the International Congress of Independent Cinema in La Sarraz.⁷⁴⁸ Written in 1935 (with Laura Riding) Lye's article 'Film-making' reveals a clear parallel concern with Eisenstein's writing on Disney, drawing, and animation.

As already described, Lye saw lines as a history of the movement which made them, they inherently contain and evoke movement, a notion which may be related to Eisenstein's suggestion that a line is 'motori-subjectively sensed' by the eye's movement over it.⁷⁴⁹ Furthermore, Lye shares with Eisenstein a concern with a non-specific primitivism, whether evolutionary ('paleolithic paintings') or psychological/physiological ('reflex spontaneities as hereditary instincts').⁷⁵⁰ As with Eisenstein, Lye sees movement (inherent in the line) as appealing to the pre-logical or atavistic mind, stating 'when the mind is movement-conscious it is conscious of nothing else: movement, in fact, is something that precedes what is strictly called consciousness, as physical precedes mental'.⁷⁵¹ Lye sees the perception of movement as a two part process, the first a physical/physiological sensation occurring at a pre-logical level, before the conscious mind applies meaning and categorisation to what is seen: 'the mind gives the shape, the definition as something, but it is the geometric nothings and dots and lines in the relative perspective of movement that are the physical content of the shape – and which come before the shape', a description which is evocative of the narrative of perception, the 'geometric nothings and dots and lines' being formed by the mind into a meaningful 'shape'.⁷⁵² Both Eisenstein and the British animated cartoonists show a concern with the tension between

⁷⁴⁷ Horrocks, "Len Lye – Origins of His Art," 178-83.

⁷⁴⁸ Richard Taylor, "Introduction: Eisenstein at La Sarraz," in *Eisenstein Rediscovered*, ed. Ian Christie and Richard Taylor (London: Routledge, 1993), 63-65.

⁷⁴⁹ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 56.

⁷⁵⁰ Lye and Ridings, "Film-Making [1935]," 224.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 224.

pre-logical, physiological perception and the resolved, rational meaning. In contrast, Lye embraces and celebrates the pre-logical to the exclusion of the rational, urging that ‘a physical timesense can be physiologically cultivated’ and that ‘this gift of physical immediacy, which is the gift of a consciousness of movement, is discoverable through the brain in blood, organs, tissues, nerves’.⁷⁵³ Lye would explore this concern in great detail in his later sound films of the 1930s and beyond, but *Tusalava* at the end of the period under discussion here, demonstrates that Lye was already exploring these concepts in his first film.

Tusalava opens with a tri-part screen division. On the left a linked chain of circles progress up the screen, while on the right a large number of white circles rise up against the black background, before the middle section is filled with two further linked chains of circles. Although not revealed in the manner of a lightning cartoon drawing, the imagery necessarily evokes a narrative of perception, as the spectator attempts to discern what is being depicted. Its imagery, while abstract in comparison to other animated cartoons, evokes a number of the different interpretations of primitivism discussed here. Initially the images evoke an evolutionary primitivism, the linked chains of circles implying microscopic imagery and the single cell organisms with which all life began, the white circles on the right implying gas rising through a liquid. As the opening progresses, a series of black circles rise between the two linked chains of circles, buffeted and redirected as they touch the sides and one another, a movement which is reminiscent of the movement of blood cells in the circulatory system, shifting focus from an evolutionary reading to a physiological one, and highlighting the developmental narrative that drives the film. In the right hand panel a form appears, in which three cellular elements appear and proceed to subdivide several times, suggestive of an organism growing and developing. Reproductive themes continue to dominate the rest of the film, as the phallic snake like creature on the left of the screen repeatedly penetrates the cellular creature on the right of the screen. Notably this sequence also evokes a further form of primitivism, as the images increasingly recall a non-specific tribal fertility art, especially the anthropomorphic figure on the left.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., 224.

Lye's film can thus be seen as the final expression of the trajectory of the animated cartoons of the 1920s. While it has no visible links with the lightning cartoon, it engages the spectator in a narrative of perception both intellectually but also, importantly, at a base perceptual level, as the spectator attempts to discern what is being depicted. It associates this narrative of perception with a non-specific primitivism alternately evolutionary, developmental, and cultural. It celebrates the potential of life where form is not fixed but contains the capacity to be transformed and mutate into different forms, to be fused together or subdivide and reproduce. In so doing it also celebrates the qualities of the medium it chooses, the power of the black line on a white background and the mind's ability to see in them all forms.

Conclusion

Len Lye's *Tusalava* marks the chronological endpoint of the films under discussion in this thesis. While it is in some respects very different from the commercial products that have been the primary focus here, it shares substantial affinities and historical parallels with them. In this chapter the influence of prior forms has been shown to be dominant throughout the period under study. In previous chapters the structural importance of print cartooning, illustration, and music hall have been demonstrated and in this chapter this influence is seen to have extended to the aesthetic approach of the films themselves. From the earliest films in 1895, through to First World War animated cartoons, the music-hall lightning cartoon was adopted with little or no adaptation for moving images. The narrative of perception, the method of interrogating the spectators' perceptual processes which was central to the lightning cartoon act, remained a vital part of the pleasures and aesthetic approach of these films. As film makers began to utilise medium specific techniques, that which would later be called animation, the iconography of the lightning cartoon was slowly dropped and by the late 1920s the artist's hand or pen was rarely or never seen, as is the case in *Tusalava*. Nevertheless, again as demonstrated by *Tusalava*, a deep concern with perception remained, with the narrative of perception still a component of many films. These films extended the perceptual concerns to use techniques such as transformation and simultaneous meanings, or in Eisenstein's terms the 'plasmatic', to play upon the spectators' perceptions. In addition to this play on

perception is the direct appeal to a basic or primitive mindset. This is less consistently applied across the period, with Tom Merry's earliest films as well as the First World War films addressing topical subjects and appealing to higher mental functions that A. R. Luria calls the 'abstract, categorical'. In contrast other early films, such as those of Walter Booth (to be addressed in the next chapter), and the anthropomorphised animals of the 1920s, revel in the play and appeal to a primitive 'graphic-functional' perception in which the duality of line and image allow an endlessly mutable world, a pattern which finds its apotheosis in *Tusalava*.

Tusalava also coincides with two important changes to the film industry in Britain. Firstly, the arrival of synchronised sound or 'the talkies' shifted the nature of films being made. For Lye this was to be embraced, as combining sound and image in his later films would allow him to further express and appeal to the primitive mind, one unencumbered even by the division of the senses. For most animated cartoonists though, the arrival of mechanically reproduced and synchronised sound introduced a further technological move away the 19th century forms they had sprung from, even while it fulfilled the desire of the 'ventriloquial sketches' produced by Walter Booth and his peers in their music-hall acts.⁷⁵⁴ For the animated cartoon series discussed here, synchronised sound, and especially talking characters, would introduce a greater sense of solidity which worked against the mutability of earlier characters. This is readily apparent in *Mr York of York, Yorks* (1929) one of the earliest sound cartoons, with contributions from Joe Noble. While this film features rather limited animation and even starts with a lightning cartoon by Joe Noble, the addition of a voice to the Mr York character provides considerable personality and makes it hard to imagine him being transformed and the film consequently does not use any of the 'graphic-functional' techniques so visible in earlier 1920s animated cartoons.

The second important change in the industry at the time of *Tusalava*'s production was the introduction of the Cinematograph Films Act of 1927. This act addressed many of the economic concerns discussed in chapter three, introducing a quota system with an aim of protecting British producers from

⁷⁵⁴ *Era*, 3 September 1898, 22.

American imports. Whether this was successful or not, it did not explicitly protect short films, addressing only long films and the total length of all films acquired and exhibited. The quota therefore further damaged British production of short films, including animated cartoons, as exhibitors obliged to show British feature length films would have favoured American shorts, a point acknowledged when the Act was reviewed in the next decade. As that report wrote

the result of the quota in this manner has, it was represented to us, been definitely harmful to the production of short British films; for it is possible for a renter or exhibitor to compensate for the renting or exhibition of foreign short films by an increase in his proportion of British long films and this has in fact been done. The proportion of British short films shown in Great Britain in the year ended September, 1935, was 4.21 per cent, as compared with the previous year's percentage of 6.28; and this reduction was not attributable to a reduced output in the later year ⁷⁵⁵

The quota system, far from relieving the economic pressure seen in chapter three further damaged animated cartoons viability. As a consequence of these two major shifts, animated cartoons of the very late 1920s and 1930s must be considered in a very different context.

⁷⁵⁵ Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade, "Cinematograph Films Act, 1927. Report of a Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade," ed. The Board of Trade (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1936), 15.

Chapter 6. The contributions of neuroscience: A case study

Throughout the preceding historical discussion of the progression of early British animation, the nature of human cognition has been a consistent point of reference. It has been suggested that the lightning cartoon music-hall act directly engaged with and played upon its audiences' perceptual faculties through the narrative of perception; equally cartooning and caricature show a concern with a scientific understanding of human mental processes, both directly in their engagement with (and derision of) phrenology and in a more general concern with external physical attributes reflecting inner mental life. These concerns can be seen to have a continuity in animated cartoons just as these prior forms aesthetically influenced early film. Critics and theorists have drawn upon a scientific understanding of perception in examining these works, E. H. Gombrich arguing for the importance of considering mental processes in both the creation and consumption of art, and caricature in particular.⁷⁵⁶ Equally Eisenstein's conception of the 'plasmatic' places a notion of a primitive psychology at animation's centre, revealing the influence of A. R. Luria and other psychologists Eisenstein had collaborated with.⁷⁵⁷

The importance of an historical approach has also been emphasised in addressing the ways that pre-cinematic forms of cartooning and music hall were adopted and adapted by early film, acknowledging social, technological, economic, and aesthetic factors. Equally Luria's findings that perception is culturally and historically specific requires a diachronic approach to the concept of spectatorship as historically situated rather than idealised and homogenous.

Despite the historical approach applied in previous discussions, and the importance of perception to the history that emerges, the understanding of the human mind has thus far been treated a-historically. Yet the scientific understanding of the human mind has been neither fixed nor simplistically improving throughout the period under study. Both Gombrich and Eisenstein drew upon the latest research available to them at the time of their work in the 1940s and 1950s and their theories were considerably shaped by this. In the years

⁷⁵⁶ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*; Gombrich and Kris, *Caricature : With Sixteen Colour Plates and Nineteen Illustrations in Black and White*.

⁷⁵⁷ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*; Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*.

following their work, further research has been carried out which holds the potential to inflect and enrich these theories. In particular the growth of studies within the neuroscientific fields following the availability of scanning technologies, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), has expanded the terms in which perception can be empirically understood. This chapter will place the perceptual models discussed in the previous chapters in a historical context to understand their relationship with recent research. Through a case study of a single film it will then engage with that recent neuroscientific research to understand how this may begin to be applied to animated cartoons to further develop the arguments put forward throughout this thesis, with particular regard to the concern with the spectators' perception.

Luria, Eisenstein, and Gombrich within the history of science

To fully contextualise the work of Eisenstein, Luria, and Gombrich's referred to here would require a detailed history of the many and varied relationships between the study of art and scientific understandings of the human mind. No such history exists, but John Onians *Neuroarthistory* may be considered the first step in the creation of such a history.⁷⁵⁸ Onians book brings together the work of art historians, neuroscientists, and other thinkers whose work has engaged the intersection between the study of art and the study of the mind, arguing their combined work may be considered to make up the terrain of the new discipline its title coins. *Neuroarthistory* is formed from a series of chapters each detailing a single researcher and examining their biography and work to highlight their contribution to the cross-fertilisation of the two fields. As such it does not make the direct causal links between the individuals required to fully establish a continuous history; nevertheless, it establishes a network of thinkers into which Eisenstein, Luria and Gombrich can be placed.

Onians work may in itself be considered a contribution to the history it establishes: Onians was a pupil of Gombrich, who supervised Onians PhD research. Onians interest in recent neuroscientific research may be considered an extension of Gombrich's interest in the perception of art, an idea Onians encourages in his introduction as well as his chapter devoted to Gombrich.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁸ Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xii.

While not considered in *Neuroarthistory*, another of Gombrich's pupils belongs to the cross-fertilisation of the fields being addressed here: David Kunzle, whose work has done much to legitimise comic arts, and Rodolphe Töpffer's work in particular.⁷⁶⁰ Kunzle has described Töpffer as the 'Father of the Comic Strip' and in doing so indicates a continuation of two of Gombrich's concerns: attention to comic art and an art historical approach to perception.⁷⁶¹ Gombrich's work not only reflected upon the impact of cognitive processes on our understanding of art, but also used art to better understand those cognitive processes and he continued to engage with scientific explanations of the perception of art. His collaboration - an edited volume of papers - with experimental psychologist R. L. Gregory *Illusion in Nature and Art* (1973) featured work from both scientific disciplines (physiology, psychology, neuropsychology, zoology) as well as the humanities.⁷⁶² This interest continued up to Gombrich's death in 2001, with one of his last published contributions being for the interdisciplinary *Journal of Consciousness Studies* addressing the use of scientific findings in defining how we perceive art.⁷⁶³ Gombrich's short commentary was critical of the specific attempt made by Ramachandran and Hirstein⁷⁶⁴ to explain aesthetic experience through their neuroscientific research.⁷⁶⁵ Characteristically he challenged their failing to acknowledge within their theories historical and cultural dimensions. Equally characteristically, however, he did not reject the project of better explaining the processes underlying the perception of art, merely this speculative paper and its ahistoric arguments.

Gombrich's work may thus be considered within a historical lineage of scientific investigation of perceptual processes, encompassing the experimental psychology of Richard Gregory as well as recent neuroscientific research stimulated by scanning technologies such as fMRI. It is this lineage that Onians' *Neuroarthistory* begins to map out. While he is not directly profiled within Onians book, A.R. Luria might easily also have been included. Onians profiles

⁷⁶⁰ J. Heer and K. Worcester, *A Comics Studies Reader* (University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 13; D.

Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, 1990).

⁷⁶¹ D. Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer* (University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

⁷⁶² R.L. Gregory and E.H. Gombrich, *Illusion in Nature and Art* (London: Duckworth, 1973).

⁷⁶³ E. H. Gombrich, "Concerning 'the Science of Art' - Commentary on Ramachandran and Hirstein," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, no. 8-9 (2000).

⁷⁶⁴ V. S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein, "The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6, no. 6-7 (1999).

⁷⁶⁵ Gombrich, "Concerning 'the Science of Art' - Commentary on Ramachandran and Hirstein," 17.

American anthropologist Melville Herskovits whose work covers similar findings and who worked within the same tradition: Onians cites W. H. R. Rivers as a key influence on Herskovits⁷⁶⁶, whose work also influenced Luria's.⁷⁶⁷ The long history of Luria's work, having been researched and formulated in the 1930s but only published in the 1970s, means that despite his work predating Herskovits', Luria's book also cites Herskovits work from the 1960s, again indicating the affinity of their ideas and findings.⁷⁶⁸ Ultimately both Luria's and Herskovits' work established a scientific basis for the historical and cultural dimension to perception which Gombrich finds lacking in other accounts. They both gave particular attention to notions of the 'primitive' and its basis in perception conditioned by cultural and social environment, a key aspect of Luria's influence on Eisenstein.

In addition to this direct relationship with the lineage Onians maps out, in more general terms Luria's work has contributed significantly to the neuroscientific research this chapter addresses. His book *The Working Brain: An Introduction to Neuropsychology* (originally published in 1973) mapped out the nascent field and remains a standard reference work being used by many of today's researchers, for instance being cited in 2010 by Cubelli and Della Salla whose paper will be discussed later.⁷⁶⁹ The conventional measure of influence within scientific circles is the number of times a work is cited. By this measure Luria's 1970 *Scientific American* paper 'Functional Organization Of Brain'⁷⁷⁰ has proven most pervasive, with over 120 citations currently recorded by the *Web of Science*, including four citations in 2010 and five in 2011.⁷⁷¹ His many other papers continue to attract regular citations, indicating Luria's continued importance to the neuroscientific fields.

This necessarily brief and provisional contextualisation of the theorists cited in earlier chapters indicates that their ideas contribute not only to a purely aesthetic debate, but also to ongoing research into human perception. By drawing

⁷⁶⁶ Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, 151.

⁷⁶⁷ Rivers is cited throughout Luria's book: Luria et al., *Cognitive Development : Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, 8, 22-23, 42.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 31,32,42.

⁷⁶⁹ A. R. Luria and Basil Haigh, *The Working Brain : An Introduction to Neuropsychology*, Penguin Modern Psychology Texts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); Cubelli and Della Sala, "The Multiple Meanings of "Neuro" in Neuropsychology."

⁷⁷⁰ A. R. Luria, "Functional Organization of Brain," *Scientific American* 222, no. 3 (1970).

⁷⁷¹ "Web of Science," Thomson Reuters, <http://apps.isiknowledge.com>.

on more recent research within this tradition the case study presented in this chapter aims to expand the understanding these theorists work has provided into British animated cartoons.

Phrenology and the teleological history of scientific knowledge

The use of recent neuroscientific research should not be understood as creating a simple teleological trajectory in which the latest findings supersede earlier work, especially those which underpin the theories of Eisenstein and Gombrich. The case of phrenology indicates the more complex and circular route by which scientific knowledge operates historically. As described in chapter three phrenology has a significant relationship with cartooning. Not only was it the subject of satirical depictions by both Töpffer and Cruikshank in the 19th century, but its concern with outward appearance reflecting inner states is relevant to all cartoons where emotions and thoughts cannot be depicted directly but must be expressed indirectly through visual means. The roots of phrenology lie in the work of Franz Joseph Gall in Germany and Austria in the 1790s. Gall described his theories as ‘Schädellehre’ (doctrine of the skull) and ‘Organologie’; the term phrenology was only introduced later, in England, by Thomas Forster in 1815 and popularised in Anglophone countries by Gall’s student John Gaspar Spurzheim in the first half of the 19th century.⁷⁷² Gall’s work attracted considerable attention in Vienna, but was also controversial enough to be banned by a decree from Emperor Franz II in 1801.⁷⁷³ Following the ban, Gall toured Europe lecturing on his theories and attracting the patronage of distinguished figures including Goethe; King Friedrich II of Wurttemberg; the King of Prussia; and Friedrich VI, then Crown Prince of Denmark.⁷⁷⁴ At the time of his death ‘Gall was regarded as an honest investigator and a scientific pioneer’.⁷⁷⁵ Gall’s student John Gaspar Spurzheim popularised both the term ‘phrenology’ and the theories it describes in Anglophone countries, but it quickly

⁷⁷² J. Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature: The Schadellehre of Franz Joseph Gall," *British Journal for the History of Science* 35, no. 124 (2002): 18.

⁷⁷³ There is some disagreement over the motivation behind the decree. Many accounts identify the religious implications of Gall’s materialist theories as the cause (S. A. Tovino, "Imaging Body Structure and Mapping Brain Function: A Historical Approach," *American Journal of Law & Medicine* 33, no. 2-3 (2007): 196.), but Van Wyhe suggests professional rivalry was a more probable cause (Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature: The Schadellehre of Franz Joseph Gall," 25.)

⁷⁷⁴ Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature: The Schadellehre of Franz Joseph Gall," 31-34.

⁷⁷⁵ Tovino, "Imaging Body Structure and Mapping Brain Function: A Historical Approach," 197.

fell into disrepute due to both unscrupulous practitioners and scientific scrutiny, notably Thomas Sewall's *An Examination of Phrenology*.⁷⁷⁶

While the scientific credentials of Gall's work were rapidly eroded, with phrenology ranked as pseudoscience or quackery, the underlying principles of identifying the brain as the seat of cognition and the anatomical localisation of specific cognitive functions remained apparent in the work of anatomists such as Paul Broca and Carl Wernicke in the mid-19th century. By studying the effects of lesions and head injury on living patients and then examining the location of damage in autopsies following the patient's death (an anatomo-clinical approach) these scientists were able to identify specific areas of the brain associated with particular functions.⁷⁷⁷ The development of non-invasive techniques such as PET and fMRI in the 20th century have seen a huge growth in neuroscientific research which has focussed on this anatomical localisation of functions. This new research's inheritance of earlier work is highlighted by the continued use of the names 'Wernicke's area' and 'Broca's area' for specific areas identified by those anatomists. The conclusions of this work are coming under scrutiny, however, for overemphasising a modular approach to the brain to the exclusion of neural network models in its attempt to extrapolate sensory modularity to psychological questions.⁷⁷⁸

The ebb and flow of phrenology and subsequent cerebral localisation theories demonstrates the need for a more nuanced historical approach beyond the model of a simple teleological improvement. The use of contemporary neuroscientific research in the remainder of this chapter should not be considered as straightforwardly improving upon or superseding the psychological and perceptual theories discussed in earlier chapters, nor the work of Eisenstein and Gombrich which rest on those theories. Furthermore, there remain a number of substantial challenges to dealing with material of this kind.

The challenges of a neuroscientific approach

Given the emphasis on an historical approach suggested here, the apparent disregard of historical and cultural difference in many studies becomes problematic. Claims for universality and the reduction of complex human

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 203; Thomas Sewall, *An Examination of Phrenology* (Washington: B. Homans, 1837).

⁷⁷⁷ J. C. Marshall and G. R. Fink, "Cerebral Localization, Then and Now," *NeuroImage* 20(2003): S3-S4.

⁷⁷⁸ Pieter van Eijsden et al., "Neurophysiology of Functional Imaging," *NeuroImage* 45, no. 4 (2009).

behaviours (such as the creation and appreciation of art) to physiologically determined impulses have caused consternation for commentators in the humanities.⁷⁷⁹ Where cultural and historical specificity are acknowledged they are given diminished status, perhaps because the complexity and specificity of these areas makes them ill-suited to the statistical standardisation that allows fMRI to be effective at identifying and geographically placing low level functions.⁷⁸⁰

Interdisciplinarity, particularly between the humanities and sciences, places the researcher outside of the accepted wisdom and methodologies of their discipline. It limits the ability to critically interrogate methods, data, and interpretation of findings. In addition, the term 'neuroscience' encompasses a wide range of activities and that may in themselves be considered interdisciplinary. In a discussion from the context of neuropsychology, Roberto Cubelli and Sergio Della Sala highlight the range of approaches that fall under this category, including Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive Neuropsychology, Behavioural Neurology, and Cognitive Psychology, as well as the range of other disciplines utilised in experiments: 'speech pathology, neurology, psychology, computer science and linguistics'.⁷⁸¹ The use of 'neuro' has equally achieved mainstream popularity, its use as a prefix implying a degree of scientific rigor to an array of topics: 'neuroethics, neuroaesthetics [sic], neuromarketing, neurotheology, neuroeconomics and neuropsychanalysis'.⁷⁸² As well as macro-level concerns over disciplinary boundaries, particular technologies, methodologies, and interpretative approaches of the neuroscientific fields remain contentious and as with any scientific study may be subject to revision or reversal in future studies.⁷⁸³

Despite these challenges, recent research offers the potential to understand in a more structured and rigorous manner the perceptual processes discussed throughout this thesis, especially the lightning cartoon and its narrative of perception. In presenting this material through the framework of a case study

⁷⁷⁹ Ramachandran and Hirstein, "The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience.";

Ruth Wallen, "Response to Ramachandran and Hirstein," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6(1999).

⁷⁸⁰ Semir Zeki, "Art and the Brain," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6(1999): 94.

⁷⁸¹ Cubelli and Della Sala, "The Multiple Meanings of "Neuro" in Neuropsychology," 703-06.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 703.

⁷⁸³ van Eijsden et al., "Neurophysiology of Functional Imaging."; Tovino, "Imaging Body Structure and Mapping Brain Function: A Historical Approach."

it is possible to acknowledge these challenges without them overwhelming the historical and aesthetic reading provided. The case study also allows the exploration of the ways this material can be applied and the readings it may produce without making claims of totality and completeness, but rather to demonstrate the use value of further work in refining such an approach.

Case study: Comedy Cartoons (Walter Booth, 1907)

Walter Booth's 1907 film *Comedy Cartoons* provides an ideal candidate for the extension of the general perceptual concepts observed in earlier chapters, through the application of neuroscientific knowledge. On release this film would have been categorised as a trick film, despite its title, with cartoons not yet being recognised in the industry as a distinct genre, much less 'animation'. With no explicit narrative drive or coherent characterisation the film may be categorised within Tom Gunning's conception of the 'cinema of attractions' being 'plotless, a series of transformations strung together with little connection and certainly no characterisation'.⁷⁸⁴ Yet it is possible to discern two narrative aspects to this film which are central to the discussion here. Firstly, as a film by a former stage lightning cartoonist, and opening with a straight presentation of him performing that act, *Comedy Cartoons* provides a fine example of the narrative of perception central to the music-hall routine. Secondly, with its production date falling at the end of the period Gunning delineates, the film may also be considered to mark an example of Gaudreault and Marion's 'double birth' or 'second birth' of cinema.⁷⁸⁵ *Comedy Cartoons* provides a model for of the development of animated cartoons in the period under discussion, with both the ruptures and continuities present. As the film progresses there is a stylistic narrative as the outward symbols of the lightning cartoon are replaced by a technologically propelled animation while retaining the aesthetic mode of the narrative of perception. Thus it offers an opportunity to consider the narrative of perception both in the original form of the lightning cartoon stage act as well as the form it would take in later animated cartoons. There are two further important qualities which make *Comedy Cartoons* a suitable candidate for this case study. The film as a whole rests on the depiction and manipulation of faces, whose perception

⁷⁸⁴ Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," 58.

⁷⁸⁵ André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "A Medium Is Always Born Twice . . .," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 4.

has received considerable attention in recent research, affording the opportunity to address the film in these terms. Finally, the film plays with and contrasts drawn and photographic material prompting a discussion of the potential perceptual differences and a notion of animated cartoons as a distinctive perceptual experience.

The narrative of perception : A tool for perceptual investigation

Each of the four main sequences of *Comedy Cartoons* begin with a form of lightning cartoon, and consequently evoke a narrative of perception in the spectator. (A complete descriptive and visual breakdown of *Comedy Cartoons* may be found in Appendix A.) The film begins with a plan américain shot of Walter Booth performing a lightning cartoon on a chalk board, just as he would have done when performing on stage in the 1890s. The second sequence is framed far closer to the chalk board so only Booth's arm can be seen in frame, drawing the face of an old woman. The third sequence is shot at a similar distance and Booth's hands are still visible, but does not involve a drawn cartoon. Rather it sees Booth create a Pierrot figure out of a sheet of paper with scissors, an approach that would also be seen in another of Booth's 1907 films: *The Sorcerer's Scissors*.⁷⁸⁶ This sequence remains indebted to the lightning cartoon in its evocation of a narrative of perception as the spectator attempts to discern what is being cut out. The final sequence sees the elimination of human agency in the creation of the lightning cartoon, as the face of a man appears without Booth's hands being visible, the effect being achieved through stop-camera filming. In each of these four sequences the viewer is able to discern a common-sense phenomenology of perception, as the human mind actively seeks out identifiable faces or objects in ambiguous lines, and to marvel at its ability to resolve identification with such sparse input. The absence of any explicit motivation for the succession of images focuses attention on the concern with the most basic perceptual level of identification, recalling Eisenstein's argument that

⁷⁸⁶ Advertisement *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* 5 March 1908. p. 292.

animation appeals to the sensuous 'pre-logical'⁷⁸⁷ or 'primitive'⁷⁸⁸; this is the attraction of the film.⁷⁸⁹

This reading may appear sufficient, yet it is worthwhile pursuing the exact nature of this attraction. Gunning's 1990 revision of his original 1986 essay added a significant 's' to the title: 'The cinema of attraction'⁷⁹⁰ became 'The cinema of attractions'.⁷⁹¹ One aspect of this change is to highlight that any particular attraction is one among many, raising the question of why *this* attraction? In answer it may be suggested that Booth's concern was not simply to play upon the spectator's perception, but to systematically investigate and test it. Semir Zeki, a neurobiologist, has suggested that 'artists are neurologists, studying the brain with techniques that are unique to them and reaching interesting but unspecified conclusions about the organization of the brain'.⁷⁹² That Booth was pursuing an investigation into the brain is suggested by the parallels between the lightning cartoon and the experimental stimuli used within neuroscientific research. Furthermore, the empirical findings of research using such techniques may elucidate the intuitive findings suggested by *Comedy Cartoons*.

Perceptual tools: the lightning cartoon and its similarities to experimental stimuli

The design of a number of common stimuli for neuroscience and cognitive psychology experiments is intended to produce the same result as the lightning cartoon act: the deceleration of the perceptual process in order that it may be studied more closely. The process of identification seen in both these stimuli and the lightning cartoon is not unique to them. It simply reflects the process of perception and identification that occurs in any film or indeed any everyday circumstance. Of course normally these processes occur too frequently, too fleetingly, and involuntarily to be consciously observed or scientifically measured. fMRI technology remains limited in its ability to track real-time

⁷⁸⁷ Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 41.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁸⁹ It should be remembered that Gunning's notion of attraction was in part derived from Eisenstein's writing on theatre which revolved around a notion of 'sensual or psychological impact'. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," 59.

⁷⁹⁰ Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (1986).

⁷⁹¹ Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde."

⁷⁹² Zeki, "Art and the Brain," 80. A similar argument has been put forward by psychologist Patrick Cavanagh. P. Cavanagh, "The Artist as Neuroscientist," *Nature* 434, no. 7031 (2005).

neuronal activity, so any experimental technique which can slow the perceptual process can allow a more accurate account of the mental processes.

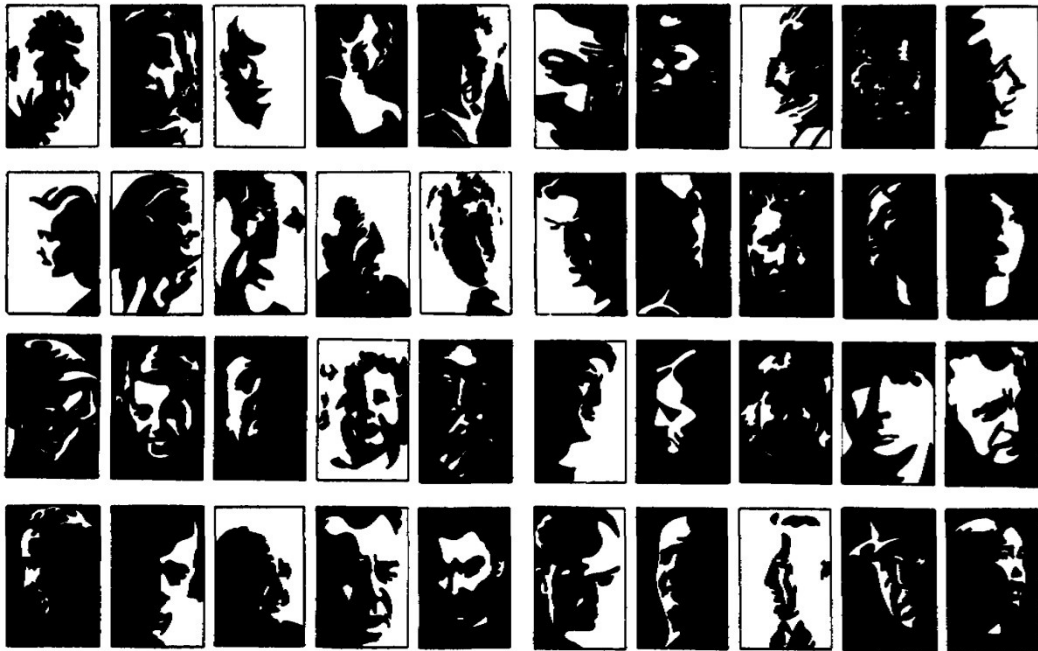


Figure 35: Mooney face stimuli from the original study (1957)

Mooney faces provide one example of this type of stimuli. Developed by Craig Mooney in 1957, this method of preparing 2-tone facial images leaves local features such as mouth, eyes, and nose too ambiguous to be discerned directly and must be identified through their configuration, the face being understood through the relationship of its parts (Figure 35).⁷⁹³ One use of these images is found in the delay in recognition they cause, as McKeeff and Tong state in one paper ‘we used ambiguous Mooney images to delay the onset of perception’.⁷⁹⁴ McKeeff and Tong further extended the perceptual decision-making process by including front, three quarter and profile views; by allowing the image to be presented in any orientation; and by interspersing them with similar nonface images produced by scrambling the Mooney faces (Figure 36).⁷⁹⁵ There is a strong parallel between such techniques and the experience of watching *Comedy Cartoons*. As has been suggested throughout this thesis, line drawings are inherently ambiguous or indeterminate. The faces in *Comedy Cartoons* are only identifiable as such based on their global configuration; their

⁷⁹³ Craig M. Mooney, "Age in the Development of Closure Ability in Children," *Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie* 11, no. 4 (1957).

⁷⁹⁴ T. J. McKeeff and F. Tong, "The Timing of Perceptual Decisions for Ambiguous Face Stimuli in the Human Ventral Visual Cortex," *Cerebral Cortex* 17, no. 3 (2006): 677.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 670.

constituent parts are too brief to fully connote eyes or ears. Furthermore, the film presents these faces in both profile and frontal views and intersperses them with the nonface object of a teapot meaning the image cannot be assumed to be a face until identified as such. Finally, the third sequence featuring a pierrot also plays with the orientation of the image as it rolls across the screen and spins round.



Figure 36: Mooney face and non-face stimuli used in McKeeff and Tong (2006)

Mooney faces are static images and any time course observed in experiments is purely due to their ambiguity and the time taken by the mind in the perceptual decision-making process. Other experimental stimuli introduce a temporal aspect to the image, using the gradual unveiling of an image to isolate the moment of identification and the perceptual events involved, bringing them even closer to the lightning cartoon. In one experiment James, Humphrey et al. used the gradual unveiling of an image which emerged either from behind a series of shrinking panels (akin to vertical window blinds) or from a decreasing level of pixel noise over a 46 second period.⁷⁹⁶ Other studies have used similar techniques to obfuscate an image and then gradually remove the obstruction over time, such as the use of Gaussian filters in Eger, Henson et al.⁷⁹⁷ The emergence of an image from a visual obstruction and the process of identifying what is emerging is analogous to the experience Gombrich describes of approaching a

⁷⁹⁶ T. W. James et al., "The Effects of Visual Object Priming on Brain Activation before and after Recognition," *Current Biology* 10, no. 17 (2000).

⁷⁹⁷ E. Eger et al., "Mechanisms of Top-Down Facilitation in Perception of Visual Objects Studied by fMRI," *Cerebral Cortex* 17, no. 9 (2006).

village and identifying the buildings seen, discussed previously.⁷⁹⁸ Likewise there is a striking parallel with the descriptions of wartime reviewers experiencing the emergence of ‘bits of France and trench life materialise out of nothing’ in a lightning cartoon film that indicates the affinity between the aesthetic experience of the lightning cartoon nearly one hundred years ago and these late-twentieth century experimental stimuli.

Striking as the similarity is between these stimuli and the lightning cartoon, this observation may be expanded. These experiments and the lightning cartoon aim not simply at the stimulation of the perceptual faculties but the interrogation of them, to reveal the fundamental principles of visual perception. It is in the findings of these experiments that the deeper implications for a reading of animated cartoons lies: in an explication of the method by which the human mind transforms lines on a page into forms and ideas. Yet the application of a single study’s findings is problematic. The studies cited so far belie the conventional impression of science as totalising. They examine small scale phenomenon and provide provisional results. The scientific knowledge arising out of these studies, published incrementally in myriad journals, relies upon the slow accretion of compatible results. Rather than applying the findings of one study to Booth’s film, findings which may be superseded or even erroneous, this case study will observe the common concerns of these papers to demonstrate their compatibility with a reading of animated cartoons.

Visual perception: the relationship between top-down and bottom-up processing
Each of the three primary studies cited thus far (McKeeff and Tong; James, Humphrey et al.; Eger, Henson et al.) have particular concerns; nevertheless, they share a common attention to the perceptual decision-making process that this thesis has equally identified as a central concern of the lightning cartoon, and by extension animated cartoons throughout the period in question. Furthermore, these three studies all engage with a model of perceptual decision making which rests on a generally accepted principle of cognition: the division of top-down and bottom-up processing. Top-down processing describes the application of knowledge or learned behaviour.⁷⁹⁹ Bottom-up processing describes the handling

⁷⁹⁸ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion : A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 187.

⁷⁹⁹ Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*, 2; "Top-Down Processing," in *A Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. Andrew M. Colman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

of primary sensory data and is dependent upon hardwired physiology.⁸⁰⁰ Further to this overarching distinction is a concern specifically with *visual* perception and the division of visual processing into two distinct streams: the dorsal stream and the ventral stream. These streams are also commonly described as the ‘what’ and ‘where’ or ‘how’ streams: the ventral stream processing visual data with the aim of identification and classification of visual input, the dorsal stream concerned with processing visual data for the purposes of sensorimotor action.⁸⁰¹

The top-down/bottom-up division may initially be considered analogous to Eisenstein’s overarching division between the rational/logical and the sensuous, which Naum Kleiman describes as central to Eisenstein’s thinking.⁸⁰² Such a parallel finds the rational/logical equivalent to top-down processing and the sensuous equivalent to bottom-up processing. As examined in an earlier chapter Eisenstein found Disney’s cartoons, and by extension much animation, appealed to the sensuous to the exclusion of the rational/logical.⁸⁰³ In relation to *Comedy Cartoons* these ideas draw attention to the film as a model of attraction rather than narrative or thematic content, engaging purely on the level of base visual excitation. The lightning cartoon extends the period in which the visual cortex is engaged in making basic categorisations and the information is passed through the ventral (‘what’) stream for identification. In a photorealistic narrative film these stimulations occur in the first few milliseconds of each shot at which point the information is engaged by top-down processing to understand the film in terms of language, memory, social relations, and so on. Conversely in *Comedy Cartoons*, and most lightning cartoons, identification marks the end of the process. In the second sequence of the film as soon as the drawing is identified as a woman’s face a new drawing is begun of a teapot, restarting the perceptual process and keeping the spectator’s cognition focussed on bottom-up processing.

The findings of the research cited thus far suggests that such division between rational/logical and sensuous is too strict. As indicated by the directional names *bottom-up* and *top-down*, information does not simply pass from the

⁸⁰⁰ Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*, 2; "Bottom-up Processing," in *A Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. Andrew M. Colman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁸⁰¹ David Milner and Melvyn A. Goodale, "Visual Streams: What Vs How," in *The Oxford Companion to Consciousness*, ed. Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans, and Patrick Wilken (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁸⁰² Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, ix.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

senses through the base perceptual areas, such as the visual cortex sited at the rear base of the brain, to the higher function areas situated towards the front and upper parts of the brain. Rather there is considerable cross-talk between areas and information may pass down from higher areas to guide bottom-up processing, as well as lower order areas contributing to higher order activities such as identification.

James, Humphrey et al. examined the role visual priming played in the time course of the activation of object processing areas in the brain. They find that this prior knowledge shifts peak activation earlier, rather than reducing the level of activation. In explaining this effect they suggest ‘interplay between bottom-up signal processing and top-down modulation from stored experiences could increase pre-recognition activation’ although cannot rule out local level effects of priming.⁸⁰⁴ Eger, Henson et al. extended this finding by using written word primes, a purely top-down influence due to their dependence upon higher order linguistic functions. They conclude that ‘top-down conceptual priming is sufficient to produce lower identification thresholds and to engender activity differences’. McKeeff and Tong found that ‘activity in ventral visual areas may be closely linked to the time of perceptual decisions’, indicating an important role for bottom-up processes in activity that might otherwise be associated with higher order areas, such as identification.⁸⁰⁵

The three studies selected, which utilise lightning cartoon-like stimuli, all conclude that even at the level of basic sensual processing and perceptual decision making, interaction between top-down and bottom-up processing can be observed. This observation does not negate Eisenstein’s division of the rational/logical and sensuous, as all studies continue to distinguish top-down and bottom-up processing. Rather it indicates that the two cannot be considered discrete and it is the degree to which each aspect is dominant that is in balance. Luria’s identification of the cultural basis of cognition is prescient here as it identified the importance experience and knowledge, associated with top-down processes, played in bottom-up perception, previously considered physiologically determined. His notions of the ‘graphic-functional’ and ‘abstract, categorical’

⁸⁰⁴ James et al., "The Effects of Visual Object Priming on Brain Activation before and after Recognition," 1022.

⁸⁰⁵ McKeeff and Tong, "The Timing of Perceptual Decisions for Ambiguous Face Stimuli in the Human Ventral Visual Cortex," 677.

cannot be considered isomorphic with bottom-up and top-down processing. Rather Luria's categories both require the interaction of higher and lower level processing, the distinction resting in the balance of power between the two. The implications of this for all the cartoons examined is to highlight that the identification of them as 'graphic-functional' or 'abstract, categorical' does not reflect an absolute engagement with top-down or bottom-up processing, but rather indicates a tendency towards the emphasis of one type of processing. For instance in Dudley Buxton's *John Bull's Sketchbook No. 15* (1916) the onscreen titles deliberately mislead the viewer in their interpretation of a lightning cartoon. The caption reads 'The German Fleet sets out to meet the British' leading to an understanding of the silhouettes as the funnels of Germans boats on the horizon (Figure 37). Following this the camera pans down to reveal a typical Victorian terrace, leading to a reinterpretation of the silhouettes as chimneys and rooftops (Figure 38). Here the use of incongruent primes may be seen as emphasising the use of top-down linguistic processing in the identification of the images; the widespread use of puns in wartime cartoons equally engages higher order processing. In contrast *Comedy Cartoons* strips away these higher order references just as the cartoons of the 1920s did. Nevertheless, it is clear that Booth's film's interrogation of the narrative of perception should be considered as encompassing both top-down and bottom-up processing.



Figure 37: *John Bull's Sketchbook No. 15* (1916) - German Fleet



Figure 38: *John Bull's Sketchbook No. 15* (1916) - Victorian Terrace

The decision-making process

A number of studies have begun to map out in more detail the process by which sensory visual input is processed and identified, taking into account the interaction between higher and lower operations. This work may be considered to

extend the phenomenological experience of the lightning cartoon's narrative of perception to provide a more nuanced understanding of the perceptual decision-making process. Wheeler, Petersen et al. examined the decision-making process in object identification with particular attention to what they describe as 'performance monitoring functions [which] identify erroneous responses and adjust future behaviour'.⁸⁰⁶ They describe a model of perceptual decision making which encompasses a feedback loop which would allow for performance monitoring and correction, with steps described in (Figure 39).⁸⁰⁷ Clearly such a process is central to the lightning cartoon and the animated cartoons which followed. This feedback loop is especially vital to, but not limited to, those cartoons which intentionally mislead the viewer, whether through incongruent labels (as in *John Bull's Sketchbook No. 15*) or those which transform objects over the course of the cartoon. Given this connection it is no surprise that Wheeler, Petersen et al. use a lightning cartoon-like variation on the unmasking stimuli described previously to extend the perceptual decision-making process.

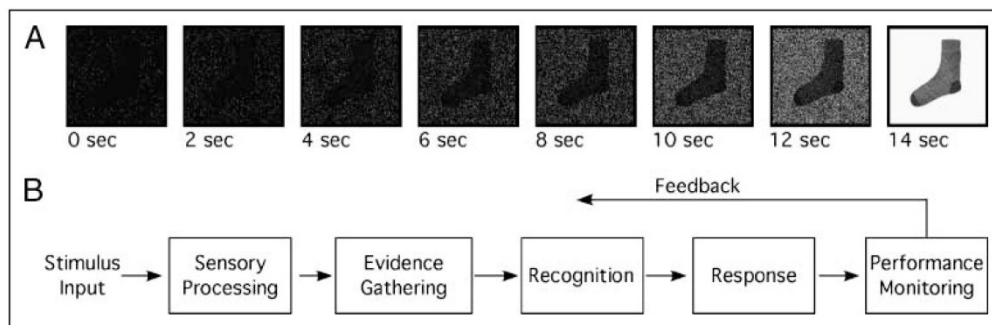


Figure 39: Decision-making process from Wheeler, Petersen et al. (2008)

A related field is that of prediction, the process by which the mind anticipates future events. While the study of prediction has far reaching implications the concern here is only with immediate visual prediction.⁸⁰⁸ Enns and Lleras outline a model of the perceptual decision-making process with specific attention to prediction which they see operating in three overall stages: activate-predict-confirm (Figure 40).⁸⁰⁹ The initial sensory activation (feedforward sweep) provides sufficient information to make hypotheses but

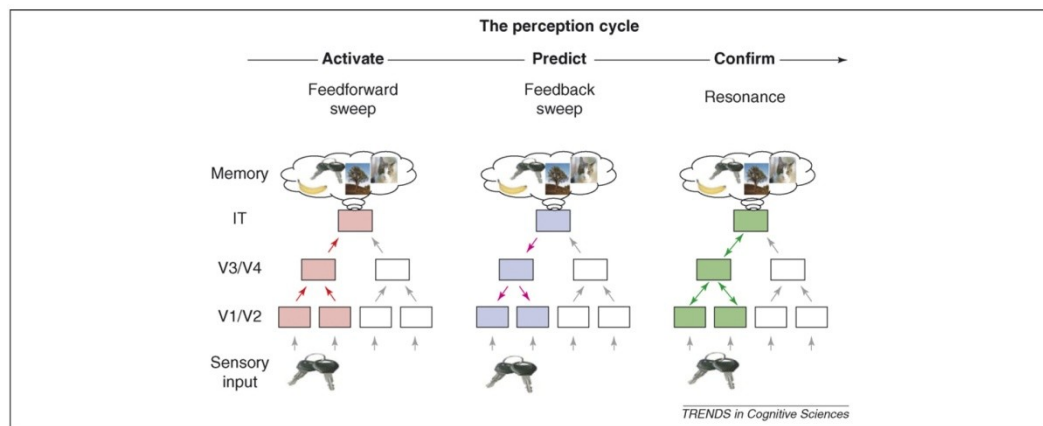
⁸⁰⁶ M. E. Wheeler et al., "Dissociating Early and Late Error Signals in Perceptual Recognition," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 20, no. 12 (2008): 2211.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2212.

⁸⁰⁸ For a broader discussion of the implications see A. Bubic, D. Y. von Cramon, and R. I. Schubotz, "Prediction, Cognition and the Brain," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 4(2010).

⁸⁰⁹ James T. Enns and Alejandro Lleras, "What's Next? New Evidence for Prediction in Human Vision," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 12, no. 9 (2008): 329.

cannot resolve ambiguity (there may be other stimuli which produce the same activation) or confirm that what has been perceived is the result of external input rather than memory. The feedback sweep attempts to resolve these issues. If it finds agreement with the hypothesis, confirmation and conscious perception occurs, otherwise a further hypothesis must be generated. It must be remembered that this process will occur at a neurological level many times during even the briefest lightning cartoon, that it will occur in any film and that, as Enns and Lleras point out, ‘The first two phases, although crucially important to seeing, are inaccessible to our experience’.⁸¹⁰ Nevertheless, this process clearly has strong affinity to what has been described here as the narrative of perception.



The perception cycle for identifying your keys, as described in Box 3. Although the levels of the anatomical hierarchy are labeled with brain regions involved in object perception, an analogous scheme would apply if we focused on motion or face perception. In the present example, V1/V2 represents the primary visual cortex with its local sensitivity to color and edge orientation, V3/V4 refers to extra-striate regions that are sensitive to shape and surface properties, and IT represents the inferotemporal cortex, where neurons respond to object identities and their functions.

Figure 40: The perception cycle from Enns and Lleras (2008)

In the second sequence of *Comedy Cartoons* these models of perceptual decision making and prediction help refine the understanding of the narrative of perception. It becomes apparent that there are two distinct aspects to the narrative. Firstly, involuntary perception and prediction (the process explored by the aforementioned studies); and secondly, the conscious guessing game. The initial images, of Booth’s arm drawing lines on a chalk board, see both aspects synchronised: Booth’s arm has sufficient detail that the feedforward/feedback process would rapidly achieve resonance; consciously the spectator is aware of this simply as a lightning cartoon act, which is to say a man drawing a picture. Attention is then transferred to the lines Booth is creating. As regards involuntary perception there is little change, the preliminary lines are too ambiguous to suggest any concrete form, the image remains simply a man’s arm drawing chalk

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 329.

lines. Conversely at a conscious level the awareness and expectation of the lightning cartoon (top-down processing) leads the spectator to start anticipating what may be drawn. While the predominance of human facial subjects in lightning cartoons, not least in the prior sequence of this film, may lead to an expectation of what is to appear there remains a large degree of uncertainty. This uncertainty derives not only from the question of what the subject may be but also its configuration: profile, frontal, or some other viewpoint. As the lightning cartoon progresses involuntary perception must begin to discern more than simply chalk lines on a board and the feedforward/feedback loop will be actively seeking a stable perception. Consciously a decision may have been reached on a likely subject, although the timing of this will be heavily dependent upon the specific viewer, including their prior knowledge of acts of this type and even prior knowledge of this particular film. If the viewer has not simply prior knowledge of this type of film, but of this film in particular (their perceptual search is primed) their ability to find a stable understanding will be accelerated. Finally, the level of detail in the drawing becomes sufficient for an involuntary identification of the image as a human face. As suggested above the moments leading up to this may not be consciously accessible and only through indirect monitoring, such as fMRI scanning, could the exact moment of resonance be confirmed. Nevertheless, there is a palpable sense of a shift at the point, 13 seconds into the drawing, when Booth draws first the glasses framing the eyes and then the eyes of the woman themselves. There is a degree of certainty in both involuntary and conscious understanding. It is revealing that this marks the conclusion of the first part of this sequence which in total takes 23s. The first 17s, that is the majority of the sequence, occurs before resonance is achieved, and the final 6s are used to provide further confirmation in the form of nose and mouth before the image crossfades with a photographic image of the woman. This crossfade would seem to act as an analogy for the involuntary confirmation of the perception of the human face, and is suggestive that Booth was aware that this marked the moment of perceptual decision making.

Comedy Cartoons may thus be better understood through the framework of neuroscientific research which elucidates the perceptual decision-making process and helps expand our understanding of the narrative of perception as it is perceived phenomenological during the film. Thus far the neuroscientific studies

examined have proposed a general model of this perceptual process abstracted from specific studies, whether of faces (McKeeff and Tong) or objects (Eger, Henson et al; James, Humphrey et al.; Wheeler, Petersen et al.). Yet *Comedy Cartoons* is almost exclusively concerned with the perception of human faces (the only exceptions being the teapot drawn in the second sequence and the bottles and glasses in the final sequence). Facial perception has come to be recognised as a special aspect of the perceptual decision-making process. Booth's concentration on this as a subject is again suggestive of the idea that *Comedy Cartoons* is a form of perceptual investigation and exploits the way the human brain understands faces. By examining studies which consider this particular perceptual function, the use of faces in *Comedy Cartoons* may be better understood.

Facial recognition: A specialised perceptual function

The consideration of facial recognition as being both a distinctive function and geographically specific has a lengthy history in lesion studies. Lesion studies look at the effect of localised brain damage to understand the functional impact which may allow anatomical geography and function to be correlated. Such studies had begun to identify facial recognition as a distinctive function well before fMRI and other scanning technology was available, through the study of prosopagnosia, the inability to recognise familiar faces.⁸¹¹ More recent work on facial recognition has confirmed the findings of these studies, locating increased activity in a number of defined regions of the brain when faces are viewed in comparison to non-face objects, especially an area in the fusiform gyrus, since labelled the Fusiform Face Area (FFA).⁸¹² Further studies have confirmed the relationship between this area and prosopagnosia.⁸¹³ Studies such as McKeeff and Tong, and Gilaie-Dotan, Gelbard-Sagiv et al. use the face specific regions as a basis for studies of more advanced perceptual principles, indicating that the

⁸¹¹ S. Pevzner, B. Bornstein, and M. Loewenthal, "Prosopagnosia," *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 25(1962); B. Bornstein and D. P. Kidron, "Prosopagnosia," *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 22, no. 2 (1959).

⁸¹² J. V. Haxby et al., "The Functional-Organization of Human Extrastriate Cortex - a Pet-Rcbf Study of Selective Attention to Faces and Locations," *Journal of Neuroscience* 14, no. 11 (1994); N. Kanwisher, J. McDermott, and M. M. Chun, "The Fusiform Face Area: A Module in Human Extrastriate Cortex Specialized for Face Perception," *Journal of Neuroscience* 17, no. 11 (1997).

⁸¹³ N. Hadjikhani and B. de Gelder, "Neural Basis of Prosopagnosia: An fMRI Study," *Human Brain Mapping* 16, no. 3 (2002).

function and location of the FFA have been widely accepted.⁸¹⁴ In identifying a region of the brain dedicated to facial perception these studies have provided strong evidence for a modular model of the brain, with geographically specific regions fulfilling specialised functions. Of particular relevance to *Comedy Cartoons* are three qualities of facial recognition. First is the Facial Inversion Effect which considers the distinction human minds make in viewing upright and inverted faces. Second is the process by which a face is identified through the feedforward/feedback process described above, which includes the search for particular features. The last area of consideration is the relationship between the viewing of cartoon, photographic, and real faces as the activation of the FFA has been demonstrated to occur with all of these.⁸¹⁵

The Facial Inversion Effect

The Facial Inversion Effect (FIE) describes the phenomenon of delayed recognition observed when a face is seen inverted, relative to the time taken to recognise the same face in its usual configuration. For other kinds of objects recognition time is not greatly affected by the arrangement of that object (a house is recognised in the same time whether upright or upside down) whereas facial recognition shows measurable difference both in time and in activation of the FFA measured by fMRI. This effect was identified in experimental psychology before recent scanning technology became prevalent, but these newer techniques have allowed understanding to be further refined.⁸¹⁶ In relation to the arguments put forward here of the lightning cartoon engaging with, and being an investigation of, perceptual processes this effect is clearly important. In chapter two examples of music-hall lightning cartoonists drawing inverted faces were described based on trade newspaper descriptions of their acts, and it seems probable other artists would have adopted the same technique.⁸¹⁷ In isolation this addition to the act might appear peculiar, but when viewed in light of this

⁸¹⁴ McKeef and Tong, "The Timing of Perceptual Decisions for Ambiguous Face Stimuli in the Human Ventral Visual Cortex."; Sharon Gilaie-Dotan, Hagar Gelbard-Sagiv, and Rafael Malach, "Perceptual Shape Sensitivity to Upright and Inverted Faces Is Reflected in Neuronal Adaptation," *NeuroImage* 50, no. 2 (2010).

⁸¹⁵ Loffler et al. found 'synthetic faces activate FFA 84% as strongly as full greyscale faces'. G. Loffler et al., "fMRI Evidence for the Neural Representation of Faces," *Nature Neuroscience* 8, no. 10 (2005).

⁸¹⁶ Robert K. Yin, "Looking at Upside-Down Faces," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 81, no. 1 (1969); Kanwisher, Tong, and Nakayama, "The Effect of Face Inversion on the Human Fusiform Face Area."

⁸¹⁷ 'Mr Edgar Austin' *Era*, 15 September 1883, 19. 'The Drama in America' *Era*, 4 November 1893, 8.

perceptual principle it is readily apparent that the lightning cartoonists were aware of the effect inversion had upon the spectator, even while they could not have access to the exact cause. By using this technique the lightning cartoonist could further decelerate the perceptual process and extend the narrative of perception. Facial inversion was used in an early lightning cartoon film produced by Lumière thought to feature Tom Merry titled *Peinture à l'envers* [*Painting Upside-down*] (1898).⁸¹⁸ As the title indicates, the film features Merry drawing an inverted image of the head and shoulders of a woman. While the extant film's running time is just one minute, it indicates that this technique was a common one for the act, from 1883 through to 1898.

Given Walter Booth's familiarity with the conventions of the lightning cartoon, and *Comedy Cartoons*' proximity to this period the third sequence of the film can be seen to clearly engage with both the use of this technique in the lightning cartoon act and the FIE. Following the lightning scissor cut out described earlier, the pierrot clown (viewed in full length shot) is spun round until it is just a blur. As this blur slows it emerges that the pierrot's face now fills the circle in close-up, engaging the Facial Inversion Effect as the circle and pierrot's face rotate back and forth across the screen. As with the other aspects of the film Booth can be seen to be investigating and playing with the spectator's basic perceptual functions. As the pierrot's face rolls across the screen the changing phenomenology of the spectator's recognition of the face draws attention to the underlying perceptual principle, producing an unsettling effect that would be heightened when projected on a large screen.

The salient features of a face

The lightning cartoons of faces in *Comedy Cartoons* can be seen to engage with another aspect of the perceptual principles underlying facial recognition: the attention on features which identify a face as a face. Two studies by Tchalenko and Miall have examined the way faces are identified using both the previously described fMRI scanning and eye tracking.⁸¹⁹ Eye tracking uses a number of monitoring methods and apparatus to record the rapid changes in focal fixation,

⁸¹⁸ Donald Crafton reprints a frame enlargement of the inverted image being drawn. Crafton, *Before Mickey*: *The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 51.

⁸¹⁹ J. Tchalenko and R. C. Miall, "Eye-Hand Strategies in Copying Complex Lines," *Cortex* 45, no. 3 (2009); R. C. Miall, E. Gowen, and J. Tchalenko, "Drawing Cartoon Faces - a Functional Imaging Study of the Cognitive Neuroscience of Drawing," *Cortex* 45, no. 3 (2009).

called saccades, typical of fixed head vision.⁸²⁰ Tchalenko and Miall used an optical recording device, in this case a head mounted camera, which accurately registers pupil diameter and eye position relative to head position. These data can be combined with a record of head position using a magnetic tracker and video of the image shot from a fixed position close to the head. The accuracy of the data can easily be verified by calibrating the equipment against a control image which the subject is directed to view specific parts of rather than being left undirected.⁸²¹

Tchalenko and Miall's main interest is in understanding the mental processes underlying the act of drawing, but their comparative tests with non-drawing tasks also reveal significant details about how facial recognition differs from the memorisation of a face with the intention of drawing. In their eye tracking experiment they asked subjects to perform four tasks: firstly, copy a face image with both original and their own drawing visible; secondly, copy a face image with their own drawing hidden; thirdly, to memorise a face image and then draw it without the original visible; finally, to memorise a face image without being aware they would be asked to draw it. In the first three tasks, where drawing was performed or expected to be performed, the subjects fixated on the outline of the caricature faces and proceeded to draw the contours of the face first. In contrast when studying the face purely for facial recognition the subjects' fixations were principally on internal features of the face: eyes, nose, and mouth. These findings are consistent with other studies of eye movement during facial recognition which equally found that fixation on the internal regions of the face, especially the eyes, was dominant with little attention given to the outline of the face.⁸²²

These findings again provide rigorous experimental evidence of the phenomenological experience of watching *Comedy Cartoons*. In both the second and fourth sequences of the film Booth begins with a lightning cartoon of a

⁸²⁰ Richard L. Gregory, "Saccades," in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L. Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁸²¹ Tchalenko and Miall, "Eye-Hand Strategies in Copying Complex Lines."

⁸²² G. J. Walkersmith, A. G. Gale, and J. M. Findlay, "Eye-Movement Strategies Involved in Face Perception," *Perception* 6, no. 3 (1977); P. C. Stacey, S. Walker, and J. D. M. Underwood, "Face Processing and Familiarity: Evidence from Eye-Movement Data," *British Journal of Psychology* 96(2005); B. R. Manor, E. Gordon, and S. W. Touyz, "Consistency of the First Fixation When Viewing a Standard Geometric Stimulus," *International Journal of Psychophysiology* 20, no. 1 (1995).

human face in a frontal configuration: the second sequence features Booth's hand performing the sketch, the fourth sequence is technologically propelled through the use of stop-camera techniques. In both cases the outline of the face is drawn first with the internal features reserved to the end of the drawing. This arrangement denies the spectator immediate recognition of the drawing as a face and thus further contributes to the deceleration of the narrative of perception central to the lightning cartoon. That this is a fully intended effect is further indicated by the end of the second sequence. This sequence ends with a reverse lightning cartoon in which the chalk drawing is erased line by line, but this is not simply a repeat of the footage of the creation of the drawing as might be expected. Booth's arm and hand are not visible and importantly the sequence of the erasures does not follow the same order as the creation. Here it is the outline of the face which is eliminated first, leaving the internal facial features on screen for as long as possible. The result is that here the spectator is aware how long they are able to perceive a face in the rapidly diminishing number of lines, right up to the very end when the eyes of the face are erased leaving a blank screen. The difference between the appearance and erasure both demonstrates and plays upon the perceptual principles clarified by Tchalenko and Miall.

Comedy Cartoons demonstrates a keen awareness of the features the mind considers salient to perceive an image as a face. Booth withholds the internal features at the beginning of his drawing of the woman's face and leaves them visible till the end of the erasure of the face, an approach that would have required far more effort than simply running the film of the creation in reverse. That Booth goes to these lengths indicates an awareness that the order features appeared could make a distinctive difference to the spectator's perceptual process, along with the desire to interrogate and bring that process to the fore.

Distinctions between physical, photographic, and cartoon faces

The final aspect of facial recognition which will be addressed here is the degree to which perception of cartoon faces is distinctive from the perception of human faces. At a conscious, phenomenological level there is an obvious distinction, as the opening sequence of *Comedy Cartoons* demonstrates. In this first sequence there are two faces visible: the cartoon face Booth draws and Booth's own face.

These appear quite distinct in a number of ways, including scale, textural detail, depth cues, and movement.

Studies of individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD, commonly referred to as autism) would seem to confirm this phenomenological experience. The distinctive facial recognition abilities of typical individuals described above are not seen in those with ASD. Autistic subjects show no difference in response time to recognise human faces compared to response time to inanimate objects. This is reflected in ERP (Event Related Potential) studies which indicate no distinctive electrical pattern in the brain of autistic subjects, as would be seen in a typical individual. Furthermore, fMRI studies indicate that the FFA area associated with facial perception and recognition is hypoactivated (shows reduced activation) in autistic individuals. Importantly for this study, these responses are not seen when the subject is presented with cartoon faces. Individuals with ASD exhibit far more typical responses to cartoon faces, such as enhanced recognition ability compared to inanimate objects and are subject to the Facial Inversion Effect, whereby their time to recognition is impaired by the inversion of the cartoon face.⁸²³ While such experimental findings are suggestive of a distinctive mode of perception for cartoon faces, there are a number of other explanations for these data, and the focus on atypical individuals means extrapolating conclusions to typical individuals is speculative.

Other research into the perception of human faces compared to cartoon faces has conversely suggested that at the base perceptual level that is the main concern of the lightning cartoon (and this study) no distinction is made between cartoon and human faces. Tong et al. performed a series of experiments which interrogated the response of the FFA to a variety of face stimuli to clarify the role of this region of the brain, including its response to cartoon faces. They observed FFA responses were

- (1) equally strong for cat, cartoon and human faces despite very different image properties,
- (2) equally strong for entire human faces and faces with eyes occluded but weaker for eyes shown alone,

⁸²³ D. J. Grelotti et al., "fMRI Activation of the Fusiform Gyrus and Amygdala to Cartoon Characters but Not to Faces in a Boy with Autism," *Neuropsychologia* 43, no. 3 (2005); D. B. Rosset et al., "Typical Emotion Processing for Cartoon but Not for Real Faces in Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 38, no. 5 (2008); D. B. Rosset et al., "Do Children Perceive Features of Real and Cartoon Faces in the Same Way? Evidence from Typical Development and Autism," *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology* 32, no. 2 (2010).

- (3) equal for front and profile views of human heads, but declining in strength as faces rotated away from view, and
- (4) weakest for nonface objects and houses⁸²⁴

They concluded from these findings that the FFA is tuned for faces, rather than more specific features such as eyes, or a more general category of heads, findings which have been repeated in other more recent studies.⁸²⁵ The empirical findings and the interpretation of them add another example to those addressed above of the prescience of Booth's *Comedy Cartoons* in addressing the types of questions neuroscientists would ask of face perception faculties, as well as foreshadowing the stimuli those scientists would use.

The first of Tong et al.'s findings, concerning the comparison between photographic human faces and cartoon faces, is apparent from the first sequence of *Comedy Cartoons*. Booth is shown alongside the cartoon he is drawing presenting an implicit comparison. This is extended in the second and fourth sequences, where cartoon faces are crossfaded with photographic images of human faces, inviting the spectator to consider the affinities and differences in the perception of the two images. This comparison would have been present in the music-hall lightning cartoon act which Booth had performed and his film calls upon, but equally it anticipates another widespread concern in animation, the integration and contrast between live action and animated characters. Within the films addressed in this study, this is most heavily utilised in the *Jerry the Troublesome Tyke* series in which Jerry regularly interacts with his real world creator, but is seen throughout animation history and continues into contemporary debates surrounding digital characters and the notion of the 'uncanny valley' which informs Chen et al.'s investigation of cartoon faces.⁸²⁶ *Comedy Cartoons* may thus be seen as typical of many animated cartoons in directly addressing the relationship between live action and drawn characters, inviting the comparison of them.

The *Jerry* series is also relevant to the other component of Tong et al.'s first finding, namely the consideration of animal faces alongside cartoon and human faces. Although no animal faces are seen in *Comedy Cartoons* the use of

⁸²⁴ F. Tong et al., "Response Properties of the Human Fusiform Face Area," *Cognitive Neuropsychology* 17, no. 1-3 (2000): 257.

⁸²⁵ H. W. Chen et al., "Crossing the 'Uncanny Valley': Adaptation to Cartoon Faces Can Influence Perception of Human Faces," *Perception* 39, no. 3 (2010).

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

anthropomorphised animals has been shown to be a central aspect of British animated cartoons, especially in the post-war period. The finding that at a basic perceptual level the brain does not make a distinction between human, animal and cartoon faces is in keeping with observation of the simultaneous meaning present in Jerry, Bonzo, Pongo, and their peers where these cartoon characters are simultaneously both animal and human. As described in chapter five, the 1920s animated cartoons which featured these characters saw a flattening of distinctions between these categories. Sergei Eisenstein's notion of the 'plasmatic' was used to understand this, with the suggestion that such lack of categorisation, the fluidity with which characters embody multiple, discreet meanings simultaneously, indicated animated cartoons' appeal to a pre-logical mind. As already shown, Eisenstein's notion of the pre-logical encompassed a range of meanings including developmental and cultural as well as purely perceptual. Nevertheless, Tong et al.'s findings provide empirical evidence that at the level of basic visual perception the treatment of characters as both simultaneously animal and human matches the lack of distinction a typical adult human makes between animal and human faces. Clearly this observation should not be extrapolated too far; from a phenomenological perspective typical adults are perfectly able to identify and distinguish animals and humans, photographic and cartoon faces. What Tong et al.'s findings indicate is that this distinction is made by higher functions and not at the basic perceptual levels which this thesis argues is of fundamental concern to the lightning and the animated cartoons which followed.

Tong et al.'s other findings are equally observable as a concern within *Comedy Cartoons*. Booth displays his cartoon faces in both profile and frontal arrangements. This play may be interpreted to be not only concerned with the degree to which these viewpoints affect face recognition, but also they may be seen as a prime for the spectator so when attempting to understand following lightning cartoons of faces they cannot even be sure if a face will be drawn in profile or frontal configuration, further extending the narrative of perception. A similar role may be ascribed to the non-human object (a teapot) which is drawn in the second sequence and the real objects (drinks paraphernalia) in the final sequence. These non-face objects provide contrast with the faces that make up the rest of the film and their presence would encourage the active spectatorial

process as the FFA would be continually activated and deactivated as attention is shifted between face and non-face stimuli.

The play in Booth's film with the display and withholding of facial features described earlier clearly engages with the Tong et al.'s second finding, the principles identified when faces are viewed with features obscured, or displayed as isolated elements. Tchalenko and Miall's gaze analysis demonstrated the strong attention paid to internal features, but was silent on how this information is exactly processed.⁸²⁷ Tong et al. raise an important nuance to this observation, finding evidence that it is not salient features alone that trigger FFA activation and consequently face recognition, but the configuration of features.⁸²⁸ This evidence that facial recognition is concerned with the total arrangement of elements rather than individual features recalls the tenet of Gestalt psychology discussed in relation to E.H. Gombrich's work earlier, thus providing another example of cyclical rather than teleological progression of scientific knowledge.

The evidence of a configural approach to face recognition may initially be considered to undermine the reading of the second sequence provided above, in which the retention of the lady's eyes as the last element being erased in the reverse lightning cartoon was described as extending the recognition of a face by retaining the salient details till the last. Tong et al. certainly find that eyes are neither sufficient nor necessary for FFA activation but this does not negate the reading, rather it simply indicates that the lingering perception of the lady's face as it is erased cannot be ascribed to the low level facial recognition of the FFA. This implies that the effect is a result of top-down higher function, a memory of what has been erased, not simply bottom-up processing. Thus the boundaries of using these neuroscientific studies to aid the understanding of a film such as *Comedy Cartoons* is evident: they can guide our understanding of the process of perception, especially in terms of the low level bottom-up processing of basic visual stimuli. Yet they cannot, at least at present, account for the range of processing that occurs in even the simplest of images, especially top-down processing and the role of memory.

⁸²⁷ Tchalenko and Miall, "Eye-Hand Strategies in Copying Complex Lines."

⁸²⁸ Tong et al., "Response Properties of the Human Fusiform Face Area."

Comedy Cartoons: A landmark British animated cartoon

Walter Booth's *Comedy Cartoons*, originally released in 1907, has until now received little attention and has generally been considered a minor work even within Booth's own undervalued oeuvre. Donald Crafton describes it as 'clearly inspired' by Blackton's *Humorous Phases* (1906) and gives greater emphasis to Booth's 1906 film *The Hand of the Artist* which Denis Gifford had proclaimed 'the first British animated cartoon film'⁸²⁹. Giannalberto Bendazzi equally highlights *The Hand of the Artist* and ignores *Comedy Cartoons*. To a large degree this assessment of the relative worth of the two films reflects the fact that neither were known to exist and these writers had to rely upon brief descriptions of the films in the Urban film catalogue. The earlier date of *The Hand of the Artist* placed it in the same year as J. Stuart Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* and therefore a contender for the first fully animated drawn film. Furthermore, its plot, a variation on the Pygmalion story in which an artist's creation comes to life, is particularly apt to illustrate the birth of this new form of filmmaking.

As described in chapter two, Booth's films had in fact survived, in the National Library of Australia, but were only identified, catalogued and publically screened in 2008 and 2009.⁸³⁰ Viewing these films immediately demonstrates some limitations to the prevalent view of the two films. *The Hand of the Artist*, while of considerable interest, should be considered within the trick film genre rather than representing the first in a new class of animated films, although it may be considered to contain some techniques later described as animation. Yet even with the benefit of the films themselves, a conventional approach may still find Booth's earlier film of greater interest, as Leslie Anne Lewis' notes on the films for *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* do. Lewis sees *The Hand of the Artist* as inaugurating Booth as 'one of the first British animators' placing it in an animation canon alongside Chuck Jones' *Duck Amuck* (1953), emphasising its narrative qualities and the parallel between it and the notion of the animator as a creator of life.⁸³¹ In contrast she describes *Comedy Cartoons* as 'restricted to the

⁸²⁹ Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*, 25; Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*, 134; Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*, 9.

⁸³⁰ A more detailed account of the history of the Corrick collection, both in its original exhibition and within the Australian archives can be found in Lewis, "The Corrick Collection: A Case Study in Asia-Pacific Itinerant Film Exhibition (1901-1914)."

⁸³¹ Leslie Anne Lewis, "The Hand of the Artist," in *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* (Pordenone 2008).

chalkboard' despite it featuring a greater level of frame by frame animation, and considers it 'takes a more predictable path'.⁸³²

This case study has examined *Comedy Cartoons* within an alternate context. While it seems probable that its creation was prompted by Blackton's *Humorous Phases*, its derivation extends far further to Booth's own experiences as a lightning cartoonist, a historical lineage Blackton's film shares. In this aspect *Comedy Cartoons* is a landmark British animated cartoon, not because it originates any particular technique, rather because it belies the concept that any film could lay claim to have originated qualities that were present in the lightning cartoon music-hall act, before the technology of moving pictures had coalesced in 1895-6. Of central importance to this inheritance is the unerring attention to the perceptual processes of the spectator. The absence of a fictional narrative in the film does not reflect that it is a 'more predictable' late example of the cinema of attractions. Rather it reflects the intense focus on the other narrative, the narrative of perception. By excluding, as far as possible, anything which might stimulate higher-function brain processing, such as narrative, *Comedy Cartoons* may be seen as a dedicated investigation of the basic perceptual functions of humans. While this might be determined purely through phenomenological observation of the film, this case study has indicated the benefit of utilising recent scientific research to draw out the nuances of the way Booth interrogates perceptual faculties.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated not only the utility, but also the appropriateness of using neuroscientific research to understand animated cartoons from a much earlier period. The similarities between Booth's film and the stimuli used in a number of neuroscientific experiments is striking and indicates a shared concern, not only with the stimulation of the perceptual processes of the spectator, but also the deceleration and direction of that perceptual process. The principles of visual perception and the decision-making process would be engaged by any visual stimuli to a greater or lesser extent, but *Comedy Cartoons* is exclusively concerned with a particular specialised component of visual cognition: facial perception and recognition.

⁸³² Leslie Anne Lewis, "Comedy Cartoons," in *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* (Pordenone 2009).

The discovery that facial recognition is a specialised function of the human brain has played an important wider role in neuroscientific research, particularly that utilising Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) techniques. While these studies provide an insight into the physiology of these perceptual principles, *Comedy Cartoons* demonstrates that the phenomenology of them was understood by lightning cartoonists more than a century before these neuroscientific studies. The Facial Inversion Effect (FIE); the salient features required to perceive a face; and the way the FFA handles drawn and photographic material are all important principles of facial perception that are interrogated by Booth's film. The findings of this case study not only help identify *Comedy Cartoons* as a landmark film, but also have considerable implications for the overall arguments of this thesis that will be addressed in the following concluding chapter.

Conclusion

A new perspective on established theories

Theories and historical accounts that directly address British animated cartoons have been critically assessed and considered explicitly throughout this thesis. Yet this work also has implications for a number of topics which, while not wholly or explicitly addressing British animated cartoons, may be applicable to the films examined here. Amongst these are some of the dominant theories within film and media studies, or the humanities more generally, theories which are by turns upheld, nuanced, or undermined by the new facts and critical assessments provided here. Tom Gunning's notion of the 'cinema of attraction(s)',⁸³³ and Bolter and Grusin's theory of 'remediation',⁸³⁴ have become dominant meta-narratives of cinema and media history, and might be seen as frameworks to place the research presented in this thesis into a wider history of the moving image. Certainly I have not directly contradicted the trends described in those authors' work, although variations - such as the balance between narrative and spectacle - indicate the importance of addressing animated cartoons specifically, rather than absorbing them into a wider media culture. Given the pervasiveness of these theories, a fully realised alignment of them with the specific history presented here would demand a detailed engagement with the surrounding literature, and must remain for future research.⁸³⁵

The worldwide economic - and consequent technological and aesthetic - dominance of American cinema is a further prevailing narrative of film studies. The new material presented here on the production and distribution of animated cartoons in Britain has been broadly in agreement with Kristin Thompson's detailed account of the rise of the American industry during the 1900s and 1910s.⁸³⁶ The specific focus on Britain and on animated cartoons has, however, produced better understanding of the details of the changes that occurred and their aesthetic implications. The 'Jerry' series amply demonstrates the complex

⁸³³ Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde."; Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde."

⁸³⁴ J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation : Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 1999).

⁸³⁵ Gunning's short article has even warranted a book length study of its history, meaning and implications: Wanda Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

⁸³⁶ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34*.

transnational topography of the British film industry of this time: animated by a Welshman (Sid Griffiths); produced by the British arm (British Pathé) of a French company (Pathé Frères) to replace the American films ('Felix the Cat') on which it had built its market position; and competing with American produced films (the new 'Felix the Cat' series), underwritten and distributed by a British firm (Ideal). Furthermore, it also demonstrates that the British film industry was not always a passive victim of American trade practices. Rather, in underwriting the 'Felix' series, Ideal were active partners in securing American dominance of British screens, to the detriment of British animated cartoon production. The specificities of both short and animated film production give this history further nuance with the added economic and technological difficulties those forms of filmmaking respectively brought, exacerbated by short films being a notable area of filmmaking not protected by the quota system introduced at the end of the 1920s. Finally, the economic analysis of these films that has been presented here underlines the shaping role played by economics in establishing aesthetic criteria that shaped British animated cartoons, both at the time and in their consequent place in later histories.

The debate over the nature of the terms 'animation' and 'animated' has been addressed in the introduction, and this thesis has followed the principle established there of using the historically specific term 'animated cartoon' rather than enter into a debate on terms which were formulated after the period in question. Nevertheless, my research does contribute to that complex and ongoing debate. On the one hand there is clear evidence that this type of film was considered a specific genre from 1914 onwards; equally I have argued not for a more expansive view of 'animation' that encompasses all moving images, but rather for greater specificity in addressing line drawings, as distinct from stop-motion or other techniques often considered under the umbrella of 'animation'. Yet, on the other hand, the pre-cinematic music-hall lightning cartoon act has been seen to exhibit many qualities associated with cinematic 'animation', such as transformation and the movement of line drawings; equally, the hybrid nature of the whole of this history -- drawn and photographic material integrated; myriad techniques for producing movement; the central role of print cartooning and music hall -- defies any easy definitions. By drawing on neuroscientific studies we may add further to this to suggest that, at a base perceptual level, there

is no distinction between drawn and photographic faces, by far the most common subjects in moving images. Clearly, at a conscious level we are able to differentiate cartoon and photographic images, but this differentiation is not present in regions of the brain associated with facial recognition, in particular the FFA. Therefore the distinction must derive from higher function top-down processing. These findings challenge essentialist claims for animation as fundamentally distinct from live action. This is not to say that such a differentiation can never be made, but that it must be socially and culturally constructed, based upon learning and memory, and does not derive from the spectators' basic perceptual processes. Ultimately it is hybridity and intermediality which this thesis has found to characterise the body of work examined, as well as early cinema in general. Rather than pursue essentialist boundaries or limitless inclusivity, I have interpreted this intermediality as necessitating an interdisciplinary approach which acknowledges historical specificity while drawing on a range of disciplinary fields that converge on the films in question, including theatre and performance studies, art history, and the various sciences of the mind. Through this range of perspectives the full meanings of British animated cartoons can be revealed.

The dichotomy between 'active' and 'passive' audiences is a further important topic of debate within film and media studies to which this study contributes.⁸³⁷ As seen in chapter one, music hall in the late 19th century was characterised by vocal interaction between performers, such as lightning cartoonists, and the audience. This vocal participation continued into early film presentations, which often occurred in music halls, and it has been seen to be a part of animated cartoon presentation throughout the period in question, culminating in the sing-along films of the 1920s. Beyond this very obvious form of active spectatorship, other areas of study have indicated a complexity to audience reception beyond any simplistic 'active' or 'passive' dichotomy. The labelling of First World War animated cartoons as 'propaganda' has been shown to require tempering, not only to acknowledge that the majority of films were produced for primarily economic reasons, but also that their complex imagery is

⁸³⁷ Frank Biocca provides a useful breakdown of the many meanings these ambiguous terms can refer to: Frank A. Biocca, "Opposing Conceptions of the Audience: The Active and Passive Hemisphere of Mass Communication Theory," in *Communication Yearbook 11*, ed. J.A. Anderson (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

based upon evoking simultaneous meanings which cannot be reduced to simple jingoism. Furthermore, the emphasis upon perception, which is central to all the films considered here, clearly indicates that the viewer contributes to the construction of meaning in watching animated cartoons.

Within film studies there has been a growing awareness of the process by which audiences construct meaning in moving images through a range of cognitive theories of film.⁸³⁸ These theories have tended to concentrate on live-action, narrative, feature length films. Consequently, they are concerned with higher cognitive functions, such as the integration of narrative or the construction of space from discrete shots, and are not directly applicable to the work under consideration here. This thesis has contributed a new facet to the perceptual study of moving images by demonstrating the extent to which even apparently simple animated cartoons with limited or absent narratives excited activity in the spectator at a base perceptual level.

The narrative of perception inherited from the lightning cartoon act clearly foregrounded this process, and drew the viewers' conscious attention to the complex processes which normally occur repeatedly, involuntarily and almost instantaneously in the viewing of other moving images. While the lightning cartoon and the narrative of perception disappeared as onscreen elements in the animated cartoons of the 1920s, their legacy remained in the type of gags typically found in the 'Jerry the Troublesome Tyke' and 'Bonzo' series. For the 'white space' gags to be funny (and they are funny, even at this historical remove) requires a multifaceted cognitive process which makes a number of assumptions to resolve the ambiguity of the images before they are then confounded, requiring a rapid adjustment of our perception of the situation. As the title of the thesis implies, the animated films examined here not only launched cartoon characters into movement, they also animated the audience and their perception.

Avenues for further research

Having established the core history of the development of animated cartoons in Britain between 1880 and 1928, two areas for further research are opened up:

⁸³⁸ The Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image (SCSMI) and associated journal *Projections* have been central to the dissemination of such ideas.

international filmmaking in this genre, and the periods before and after that of my study. Addressing the former, there is scope to research distinctive national traditions in other countries, and to understand the role British artists may have played in stimulating those traditions. Chapter three makes clear that British animated cartoons and their precursors operated within an international network. 19th century lightning cartoonists travelled widely, including to the United States; international cartoonists travelled to Britain at various times, including Emile Cohl and Louis Raemaekers; animated cartoons from the United States and other countries were shown here, influencing film makers in this country; British films were exported widely, if not in bulk, as substantiated by Walter Booth's films being preserved in an Australian film archive. Further research at an international level would be rewarded with a better understanding of this cross-border network of animated cartooning. There are a number of research questions this could answer, the most pressing being 'did the lightning cartoon originate in Britain and to what extent did it influence international adoption of this entertainment form?'

Certainly this act was formalised as a music-hall genre and exported internationally in the late 1870s and early 1880s, long before J. Stuart Blackton or Winsor McCay adopted the form which led to their work on film. The appearance of the act in Australia and Canada may be explained by their shared history within the British empire.⁸³⁹ Yet the act has distinctive qualities in different regions, demanding further research that is sensitive to regional specificities. While the parallel tradition of 'chalk talks' in North America shares the general principles of the lightning cartoon act,⁸⁴⁰ this act would seem to have emerged in parallel with, if not before, the British music-hall act.⁸⁴¹ Furthermore, it is associated not simply with vaudeville, the American equivalent of music hall, but a range of religious, educational, and advertising purposes, with distinct

⁸³⁹ In Australia the Harry Julius film *Cartoons of the Moment – Crown Prince of Death* (1915) indicates the influence of touring performers bringing the act to the Southern hemisphere in the 19th century, such as Edgar Austin in 1885 (*Queensland Figaro and Punch* (Brisbane, Australia) 22 August 1885, 287). In Canada J. W. Bengough was clearly influenced by the European tradition of political caricature: J. W. Bengough, *Bengough's Chalk-Talks* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1922).

⁸⁴⁰ Charles L Bartholomew, *Chalk Talk and Crayon Presentation: A Handbook of Practice and Performance in Pictorial Expression of Ideas* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake and co., 1922).

⁸⁴¹ The first use of the phrase 'chalk talk' as a genre of entertainment would appear to be in the 1870s (*Ashtabula Telegraph* (Ashtabula, Ohio, United States) 16 November 1877, 3; *National Republican* (Washington City, D.C., United States) 17 December 1877, 4) and Canadian J. W. Bengough claims to have begun his career on 20 March 1874: Bengough, *Bengough's Chalk-Talks*.

regional variations, such as J. W. Bengough's Canadian work.⁸⁴² This thesis has demonstrated the centrality of the lightning cartoon to the development of animated cartoons in Britain. Further research is required to map, amongst other topics, the similar relationships between the chalk talk in the United States and the 'dessinateur express' in France;⁸⁴³ these entertainments' influence upon J. Stuart Blackton, Winsor McCay and Georges Méliès; the degree to which the prior forms continued to influence animated cartoons after the work of these pioneers; and to determine the extent of international interaction or whether a wider cultural influence led to the innovation of a similar act simultaneously in three separate countries.

In light of the findings presented here, a second opportunity for further research would involve considering what preceded or followed the formative events described in detail here. As the start of this study the choice of the codification of the lightning cartoon as a music-hall genre provided an important marker of the growing desire for the animated cartoon. The lightning cartoon also, however, belongs to a longer history of entertainment performances which may prove fruitful for further examination. Walter Booth's *Comedy Cartoons* and *The Sorcerer's Scissors* indicate the parallel tradition of paper cutting, a parlour performance which might in turn be related to Asian folk arts, or further relationships with animated forms in relation to silhouettes or shadow plays, including the films of Lotte Reininger.⁸⁴⁴ At the chronological end of this thesis, the move towards synchronised sound and the quota system introduced significant changes to the business and aesthetics of animated cartoons. Nevertheless, there were also a number of continuities, most notably as many of the filmmakers discussed here continued their careers beyond 1928, including Anson Dyer, Joe Noble, and Sid Griffiths (Griffiths continued to work into the 1960s).⁸⁴⁵ Further research might reveal how these filmmakers' experience in the 1910s and 1920s continued to play a role in their later work.

⁸⁴² Bartholomew, *Chalk Talk and Crayon Presentation: A Handbook of Practice and Performance in Pictorial Expression of Ideas*; Bengough, *Bengough's Chalk-Talks*.

⁸⁴³ The term 'dessinateur express' was used by Méliès according to Donald Crafton: Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928*.

⁸⁴⁴ Mareile Flitsch, "Papercut Stories of the Manchu Woman Artist Hou Yumei," *Asian Folklore Studies* 58, no. 2 (1999); R. Russett and C. Starr, *Experimental Animation: An Illustrated Anthology* (Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1976), 81.

⁸⁴⁵ Gifford, *British Animated Films, 1895-1985: A Filmography*.

Further research opportunities beyond the end of the period addressed here need not be limited to cinema. While by the late 1920s the explicit influence of the lightning cartoon on animated cartoon films was on the wane, from 1936 the music-hall act found a new venue: television. Ernest Mills, previously a star of both the music-hall stage and First World War animated cartoons, was broadcast on numerous occasions performing his lightning cartoon act on the 'London Television Programme' from Alexandra Palace.⁸⁴⁶ Other cartoonists also appeared in broadcasts, including Bruce Bairnsfather⁸⁴⁷; Van Dock⁸⁴⁸ (seen previously performing his lightning cartoon act in the 'Gaumont Graphic' newsreel); Michaelson⁸⁴⁹; Harry Rutherford⁸⁵⁰; Patrick Bellew⁸⁵¹; and Joss⁸⁵². The appearance of these cartoonists in the earliest television broadcasts can partly be explained in simple economic and technological terms: they were inexpensive and easy to film. Yet, in the light of my discussion of the lightning cartoon, its presence at the birth of this transformative medium is fitting. With this new visual medium came a new way of seeing, and the lightning cartoon provided an ideal tool for refreshing the spectator's perception.⁸⁵³

The most productive arena for new research, however, is one demonstrated within this thesis: the reassessment of history in the light of new findings. Walter Booth's *Comedy Cartoons* (1907) has only recently been rediscovered having thought to have been lost.⁸⁵⁴ The meagre discussion of this film in previous histories had not identified it as an important work, no doubt

⁸⁴⁶ His first appearance was noted in *The Times* 23 November 1936, 23. Other appearances are documented in *The Times* 17 May 1937, 2; *The Times* 10 June 1937, 10; *The Times* 21 July 1937, 12; *The Times* 28 August 1937, 6; *The Times* 2 December 1937, 9.

⁸⁴⁷ *The Times* 20 January 1939, 10.

⁸⁴⁸ *The Times* 27 November 1936, 20.

⁸⁴⁹ *The Times* 30 January 30, 8.

⁸⁵⁰ *The Times* 22 October 1938, 8.

⁸⁵¹ *The Times* 16 August 1938, 7.

⁸⁵² *The Times* 1 September 1939, 8.

⁸⁵³ From a much later period of television, the resemblance between the lightning cartoon act and Rolf Harris' work is intriguing. Harris presented introductions to classic mid-century Warner Bros. cartoons - those featuring Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, among others - on the BBC production *Rolf Harris Cartoon Time* broadcast from 1979 (*The Times* 13 November 1979, 31) until the mid-1980s, when the format was transferred to the HTV West production *Rolf's Cartoon Club* which began in 1989 (*The Sun Herald* (Sydney, Australia) 23 April 1989, 10). Although the format of the programme changed over the period, a principle component was Harris drawing the Warner Bros. characters in a lightning cartoon manner. Two aspects of this provide an interesting parallel with the topic and period addressed in this thesis. Firstly Harris' use of the lightning cartoon as part of the presentation of animated cartoons indicates the logical affinity between these two forms of entertainment. Secondly Harris' famous catchphrase which arose from this presentation ('Can you tell what it is yet?') succinctly captures the narrative of perception guessing game which this thesis has demonstrated to be central to the lightning cartoon music hall act.

⁸⁵⁴ Lewis, "The Corrick Collection : A Case Study in Asia-Pacific Itinerant Film Exhibition (1901-1914)."

largely because the authors had been unable to view the film and had to rely upon newspaper or trade journal descriptions. The analysis presented in chapter six, achieved with the help of recent neuroscientific research, and in the light of the contextual history of music hall and print cartooning, demonstrates this film as pivotal. From an aesthetic standpoint, it is positioned between the early period of the direct filming of lightning cartooning and the use of medium specific techniques to manipulate the image, while retaining the perceptual concerns of the stage act. This study also demonstrates the utility of a neuroscientific approach, an approach which could undoubtedly be extended almost indefinitely, given the huge volume of scientific research currently being carried out in this area, as well as the number of films available, or awaiting discovery.⁸⁵⁵

This study has equally benefitted from the capabilities of digital archives which allow full text searching on written sources. These allow the identification of references which could not be accurately found via older paper or microfilm/fiche based research, and offer the opportunity in future of adding accurate statistical analysis to traditional textual methods. Ultimately the important principle demonstrated here is not simply the benefit of digital newspaper archives or the utility of neuroscientific methodologies in particular, but the more general need to look at old work with new criteria, and reconsider canonical histories in the light of new findings and methods, be they theoretical, scientific, or archival.

British animated cartoons: A new field of study

The original contribution to knowledge this thesis has aimed to provide may be considered in three layers of increasing detail. The first layer, at the broadest level, has established a new field of British animated cartoons in the silent film period, a body of work that had been largely ignored by film and animation historians. Through the discovery of new facts derived from primary sources, particularly from trade and popular press of the period, it has presented a detailed

⁸⁵⁵ The productive area of mirror neurons represents one notable entry in this potential field. Mirror neurons are those which are activated both by an action and by observing someone else performing that action. Such neurological function clearly bears comparison to Eisenstein's 'motori-subjectively sensed metaphor' and Lye's discussion of form containing the history of the movement which made it, suggesting an embodied spectatorship that would further add to the active spectatorship discussed earlier. Vittorio Gallese, "Mirror Neurons," in *The Oxford Companion to Consciousness*, ed. Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans, and Patrick Wilken (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Eisenstein et al., *Eisenstein on Disney*, 56; Lye and Ridings, "Film-Making [1935]," 224.

history of the production, distribution, and exhibition of early British animated cartoons, from the first appearances of projected moving images to the adoption of synchronised sound. As part of this history the first detailed examination of the economics of animated cartoons in Britain, and the impact of American imports on British producers, has been presented. This has shown the reason for British films' denigration at the time and in later histories, with American films being found to have dominated not only at an economic level but also at a technologic and aesthetic one, establishing the criteria by which all later animated cartoons were judged.

The second layer, arising from this general history, has been an awareness of the centrality of prior forms in the formation of British animated cartoons. Graphic arts - especially print cartooning and illustration - and the music-hall lightning cartoon act have been shown to have played a formative role. This thesis has demonstrated that the artists who made these films were almost exclusively drawn from one of those two fields, and thus British animated cartoons may be considered to form a parallel history of 'artists' film', a tradition distinct from the modernist, avant-garde meaning that phrase normally evokes. These artists brought with them to film a range of concerns from those prior forms that would shape British animated cartoons. By stepping back and examining that context, it has been possible to understand and explain the ways British animated cartoons developed in technological, economic, and aesthetic terms. This work has included the first detailed history of the music-hall lightning cartoon act, using newly discovered facts from music-hall trade press and personal archives. This research has found that the lightning cartoon act anticipated cinematic animation, featuring qualities such as transformation, the movement of line drawings, and the desire to bring drawings to life.

At the third layer, building on the previous two, this thesis has established a new critical framework which emphasises the role of the spectator and their perceptual processes in understanding these drawings, and the extent to which these films played upon and appealed to basic perceptual faculties. These qualities were readily apparent in the lightning cartoon and graphics arts which preceded British animated cartoons. Tracking changes to these concerns over the period provides an aesthetic history to sit alongside the institutional history described above. A key contribution of this history has been offering new

aesthetic readings of rarely screened films through the aforementioned critical framework. This framework has drawn upon the work of E.H. Gombrich and Sergei Eisenstein, both of whom addressed the perceptual interrogation and appeal of drawings and whose work was grounded in the antecedent forms which British animated cartoons share. In addition to examining these theorists' writings directly, their scientific influences have been considered, as well as extending the understanding of perceptual processes to include recent findings from neuroscientific fields. The result is an original aesthetic reading of this body of work which finds the films to have a deep engagement with the basic perceptual processes involved in viewing moving line drawings.

The underlying motive of this thesis has been one of rescuing British animated cartoons from judgements based upon *a priori* knowledge of the field. In the introduction, British animated cartoons were situated within two disciplines: British film history and animation studies. Implicit in both fields has been their minority status, defined as they were in opposition to what they were not: 'Hollywood' and 'live-action' cinema. Such disciplinary hierarchies have been shown as inheriting or replicating the industrial conditions of the period in question. Animated cartoons - with their time consuming and costly production process - were inevitably short subjects, a form of filmmaking increasingly marginalised by distribution and exhibition practices, and finally being forgotten by the legal protection afforded live-action feature length films by the Cinematograph Films Act of 1927. While wartime films may have displayed a wholly adult subject matter and temperament, post-war animated cartoons were increasingly considered as children's films, at best light-hearted relief from the adult drama of the narrative feature film. British animated cartoons were equally subject to a constant and unflattering comparison to American productions at both an economic and aesthetic level, a microcosm of the reception of British films in general.⁸⁵⁶ Furthermore, the fundamental links between these films and commercial graphic arts and music hall were amply demonstrated. Again, these prior forms were not afforded the status of their hallowed siblings: music hall was legally defined in opposition to legitimate theatre, while print work was

⁸⁵⁶ The general overshadowing of British film by Hollywood is noted in Low and Thompson, among others: Low, *The History of the British Film. 1918-1929*; Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment : America in the World Film Market 1907-34*.

denigrated as ‘cheap popular art’ by Ruskin, its lowly position in the academy visualised in Harry Furniss’ cartoon (Figure 14).⁸⁵⁷ Animation, British films, and cartooning have all been relegated to the lowest levels of artistic achievement; what hope could there be for British animated cartoons, the convergence of all three?

The bases of these judgements have come under increased scrutiny since British animated cartoons were cast in this light. Caricature and illustration are now recognised within art history as important forms.⁸⁵⁸ Furthermore, comic art is increasingly being seen as an autonomous field of study.⁸⁵⁹ As suggested previously, digital technologies have led to a convergence of animation and live-action techniques that makes any easy distinction or relative valuation of them problematic. Simultaneously, animated forms have been recognised for their ability to go beyond the dominant model presented by Walt Disney and his legacy. British films have been reconsidered and new discoveries, such as Maurice Elvey’s 1918 film *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*, have cast doubt on the pessimistic undertone of Rachael Low’s history.⁸⁶⁰

Until this study, these new critical perspectives had not come to bear upon British animated cartoons. It is now clear that the very attributes which led to them being wholly ignored by previous historians may be their most valuable qualities, and are those which constitute them as a distinctive body of work. They are characterised by the uniformity of their makers background, derived from the most vital popular entertainments of the 19th century. This intermedial presence gave the films access to a strong aesthetic tradition, as well as equipping their artists with the tools required to succeed in a mechanically reproduced popular art form. This bond also provided a distinctly British tone to the work. While the animated cartoons of the First World War most obviously expressed a British viewpoint, as explored in the discussion of those films, all cartoonists expressed their national temperament more through a continuation of aesthetic tradition

⁸⁵⁷ Ruskin, *Ariadne Florentina, Six Lectures on Wood and Metal Engraving with Appendix* 264.

⁸⁵⁸ Two recent exhibitions on the topic at leading art museums provide ample demonstration that these forms are now valued by the art establishment: *Rude Britannia* at London’s Tate Britain (2010) and *Infinite Jest* at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (2011) documented in two catalogues: Batchelor, Lewisohn, and Myrone, *Rude Britannia : British Comic Art*; C.C. McPhee and N.M. Orenstein, *Infinite Jest: Caricature and Satire from Leonardo to Levine* (Yale University Press, 2011).

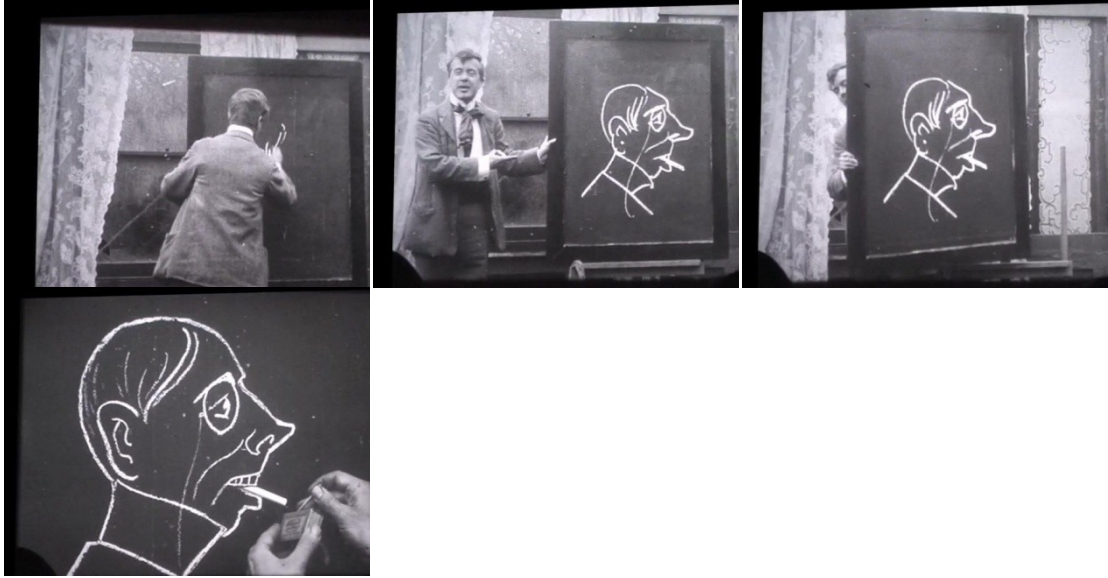

⁸⁵⁹ Thierry Gronsteen, "Why Are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization," in *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. J. Heer and K. Worcester (University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

⁸⁶⁰ Gledhill, *Reframing British Cinema, 1918-1928: Between Restraint and Passion*.

than any particular subject matter. If economic conditions dictated particular animated character types, this did not preclude artists drawing upon the music-hall and print heritage for their aesthetic mode, especially their close attention to the spectators' perception.

Recognising this deep rooted engagement with perceptual play allows us to challenge the notion of these films as childish. Rather they revelled in an increasingly 'graphic-functional' world in which conventional categorisation does not exist, and revealed the way our basic visual perception makes sense of what it sees, especially when what is seen are ambiguous line drawings. That many of these cartoons resemble the stimuli used to scientifically understand the human brain in the present day, and that the findings of those studies merely confirm what those films identified at a phenomenological level, demonstrates that these films are not simply historical footnotes but remain relevant to present-day concerns. More importantly, the films' concern with fantasy-play indicates that they were not archaic remnants of 19th century forms but prescient extensions of a distinctly British tradition. It could be said that they have waited quietly for a century for us to catch up with them and to reassess economic dominance and its received wisdom; to catch up in our understanding of the human brain; and to catch up in our appreciation of animation as an intermedial and expansive form.

Appendix A: Comedy Cartoons (Walter Booth, 1907) Sequence Breakdown

SEQ	DESCRIPTION	LENGTH
1	<p>Booth lightning cartoons face on chalk board Booth carries chalk board to camera Jump cut to close up of cartoon face Human hand lights cigarette in cartoon's mouth Cartoon mouth moves (cut out) cigarette drops out, is replaced by human and lit Cigarette shrinks as if being smoked Fade to black</p>	31s
		
2	<p>Hand draws lightning cartoon of woman's face, crossfade with human woman's face Lightning cartoon of teapot next to face Cartoon transformed to real teapot through substitution splice, woman drinks from it Both teapot and woman returned to chalk drawing and erased in reverse lightning cartoon Cut to:</p>	56s
		

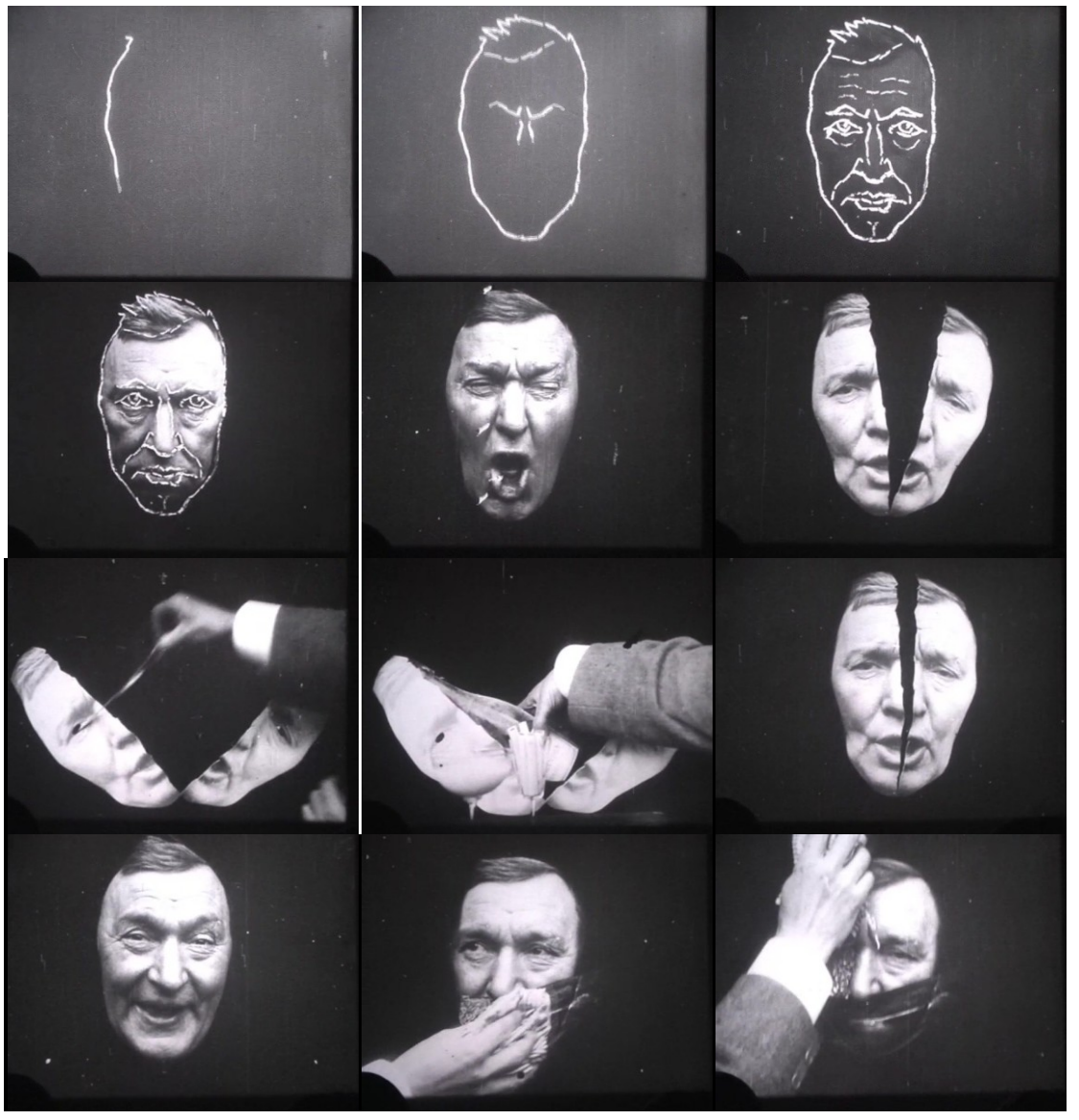


3	<p>Human hands cut-out paper with scissors in form of pierrot Paper pierrot stuck within chalk circle on blackboard Paper pierrot crossfaded with human pierrot Human pierrot dances, plays with hoops Human pierrot spins round in circle until image is blurred Spinning slows, human pierrot's face now fills circle, laughs then blows smoke out of mouth Human pierrot face and chalk circle spin and roll off screen Cut to:</p>	91s
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4	<p>Lightning cartoon of face appears without visible artist Crossfade of cartoon face with human face Human face makes gurning expressions Human face splits into two halves Human hand retrieves string from eyes of split face, then pulls cigarettes, champagne glass and champagne bottle, brandy</p>	78s
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glass and brandy bottle, cigars from gap in head.
Head closes back up and makes comical faces.
Human hand erases head with cloth



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