ANIMATION

A WORLD HISTORY

VOLUME 2

THE BIRTH OF A STYLE
THE THREE MARKETS

GIANNALBERTO BENDAZZI

ANIMATION: A WORLD HISTORY, VOLUME II

A continuation of 1994's groundbreaking *Cartoons*, Giannalberto Bendazzi's *Animation: A World History* is the largest, deepest, most comprehensive text of its kind, based on the idea that animation is an art form that deserves its own place in scholarship. Bendazzi delves beyond just Disney, offering readers glimpses into the animation of Russia, Africa, Latin America, and other often-neglected areas and introducing over fifty previously undiscovered artists. Full of firsthand, never-before-investigated, and elsewhere unavailable information, *Animation: A World History* encompasses the history of animation production on every continent over the span of three centuries.

Features include:

- Over 200 high-quality head shots and film stills to add visual reference to your research
- Detailed information on hundreds of never-before-researched animators and films
- Coverage of animation from more than ninety countries and every major region of the world
- Chronological and geographical organization for quick access to the information you're looking for

Volume II delves into the decades following the Golden Age, an uncertain time when television series were overshadowing feature films, art was heavily influenced by the Cold War, and new technologies began to emerge that threatened the traditional methods of animation. Take part in the turmoil of the 1950s through the 1990s as American animation began to lose its momentum and the advent of television created a global interest in the art form. With a wealth of new research, hundreds of photographs and film stills, and an easy-to-navigate organization, this book is essential reading for all serious students of animation history.

A former professor at the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore and the Università degli Studi of Milan, Italian-born **Giannalberto Bendazzi** has been thoroughly investigating the history of animation for more than forty years. A founding member of the Society for Animation Studies, he authored or edited various classics in a number of languages, and has lectured extensively on every continent.

'Giannalberto Bendazzi is a highly gifted historian, scholar, observer, teacher, and most of all, lover of animation in all of its many forms. His painstaking and detailed research, as well as his social and cultural observations about the various times during which many animated pieces were produced, give his writing an authenticity rarely seen in other books on the subject. I cannot think of anything better than to curl up with one of his books and have him tell me the world history of the animation medium I love.'

Eric Goldberg, Animator and Director,
Walt Disney Animation Studios

'Giannalberto Bendazzi's book gives us the complete overview of how the art of animation developed around the world in the last one hundred years. It is a book global in scope for an art form now global in appeal and being created around the world. This work is an essential addition to the library of any serious scholar of cinema.'

Tom Sito, Chair of Animation,
University of Southern California

'A staple of any animation library, this encyclopedic book covers the far reaches of production worldwide, throughout history. It is an incredible resource from one of the animation world's leading scholars.'

Maureen Furniss, Director of the Program in
Experimental Animation at CalArts

'Giannalberto Bendazzi is one of the world's finest historians and scholars of the art of animation. We are indeed fortunate that his thorough research, cogent perceptions, and eloquent writing is now in this ... acclaimed masterly tome on world animation.'

John Canemaker, Oscar winning independent Animator,
Animation Historian, Author, and Professor

'I feel that one looks into Giannalberto Bendazzi's exhaustive book as one does into a mirror – it is the whole history of the animated film and all its creators... In taking up such a grand endeavor, Bendazzi has shown a determination, a predisposition, and above all, a talent comparable to that of the finest filmmakers... With this talent Giannalberto Bendazzi gives meaning to our work. To our creativity and volition, to both the ability to withstand hard work and the temperamental nature of a creative spirit, to study, to our artistic caprices, to accuracy, and to our eccentricities, creative perfection and human imperfection, expectations and improvisations, passions and doubts, successes and failures...This is a book that has long been anticipated by professionals and enthusiasts of animation from all over the world.'

Jerzy Kucia, Director, Poland

'Giannalberto Bendazzi is the greatest animation historian I have ever met.'

Priit Pärn, Director, Estonia

'I am extremely proud that Giannalberto Bendazzi, at the beginning of my career, was my first official biographer. And I like to believe that I was the flame that led him to become one of the world's top experts in the field of animation.'

Bruno Bozzetto, Director, Italy

'I don't know any historian of animation more reliable than Giannalberto Bendazzi.'

Yamamura Koji, Director, Japan

'I have been anxiously waiting for this sum total on animation...Giannalberto Bendazzi monitored, saw, and noted everything and met everyone in the world of my beloved profession – and for so long, way before it was fashionable. Wherever I went – to both festivals and meetings throughout continents - he was there. Welcome to the monumental book that takes into account a great art and the whole planet.'

Michel Ocelot, Director, France

ANIMATION: A WORLD HISTORY

Volume II: The Birth of a Style—The Three Markets

Giannalberto Bendazzi

CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group
A FOCAL PRESS BOOK

First published in paperback 2017
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

First published in 2016
CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group
6000 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Suite 300
Boca Raton, FL 33487-2742

CRC Press is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A calalog record for this title has been requested.

ISBN: 978-1-138-85481-9 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-03532-4 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-72075-3 (ebk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-94307-0 (hbk pack)
ISBN: 978-1-138-03534-8 (pbk pack)

Typeset in Baskerville and Optima
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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and the CRC Press Web site at http://www.crcpress.com

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The Fifth Period

The Fifth Period begins with the blooming of the television series and *auteur* animation and ends with the conclusion of the Cold War. Although it is varied and subjected to strong changes within the market (in the field of television or advertising) and within technology (e.g. computers), it is substantially uniform, as it obeys the political and economic division of the world into two major areas: one influenced by the liberal United States and one influenced by the communist Soviet Union. This period is called 'The Three Markets (1960–1991)'.

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THE FOURTH PERIOD

The Fourth Period is short and runs from 1951 (the date of projection of the UPA short *Gerald McBoing Boing*) to 1960, the date of the first international animation film festival (Annecy, France). It is characterized by indecision. Disney and his imitators lost momentum, the UPA proposed a new style, the television age began and an original animation output was born in Europe. We'll christen it 'The Birth of a Style (1951–1960)'.

1
AMERICA

After the Long Telegram

On 2 September 1945, Japan signed the official surrender to the United States and the Second World War was over. Almost immediately (although both the USA and the USSR heavily demobilized), the Cold War started.

In February 1946, the US State Department carefully read the 'long telegram' of the American chargé d'affaires in Moscow, George F. Kennan. The Soviets, Kennan said, were aiming at eroding the capitalist nations and imposing their ideological rule on the world, and they were doing so in order to justify their internal power in the face of their population's sacrifices. On 12 March 1947, President Harry Truman addressed a speech to the Congress, declaring that the USA, as the leader of the Free World, would support everywhere democracy against communism (Truman Doctrine).

In 1948, Czechoslovakia fell last into the group of the 'satellite' European states of the Soviet Union, along with Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia and the eastern section of Germany. The continent was politically split into two different areas, separated by the so-called Iron Curtain. In 1949, the communist People's Republic of China was proclaimed, under Mao Zedong's leadership.

In the same year, the Soviet Union showed that it, too, was equipped with atomic bombs. This meant that the Cold War could not become a hot one, but at the high price of the end of humankind. The two superpowers would always carefully handle any regional crisis (the main ones being the Korean War, 1950–53, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Vietnam War, which involved the US in the 1960s and early 1970s) in order to avoid the triggering of an atomic confrontation.

Former US enemies such as Japan, Germany and Italy were hurriedly backed up and pushed to recovery and reconstruction (although not rearmed), in order to serve as anti-communist allies.

In February 1945, at the Yalta conference, Winston Churchill had snarled: 'While there is life in my body, no transfer of British sovereignty will be permitted'.[1] Six months later, on 26 July 1945, the electorate voted him out of his Prime Minister's chair. His Labour Party successor, Clement Attlee, did all he could to decolonize. India became independent in 1947, and India was the hub around which the British Empire revolved. In a couple of decades, most of the former colonies became independent states.

Not the British colonies only. The Netherlands tried to resist, but had to let her own empire go. France resisted strongly and fought in Indochina and northern Africa, but was defeated. By the early 1960s, residual colonies were small and few, with the exception of some Portuguese territories that would become independent ten years later.

On 5 March 1953, Joseph Stalin suddenly died in Moscow. Most of his compatriots both worshipped him and were terror-stricken by him, so his demise left in the Soviet Union an immense empty space, which lasted for three years, until the very different figure of Nikita Khrushchev took over.

On 18–24 April 1955, about twenty-five representatives of newly independent states from Asia and Africa gathered in Bandung, Indonesia. Indonesia's Sukarno, China's Zhou Enlai, India's Nehru, Egypt's Nasser, Cambodia's Sihanouk, Ghana's Nkrumah and Cyprus archbishop Makarios were among the participants.

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[1] Entry in Admiral William D. Leahy's diary, quoted in Terry H. Anderson, *The United States, Great Britain and the Cold War 1944–1947*, Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1981.

The policy and myth of the Third World[2] were actually born there, along with the practice of nonalignment. Young, tolerant, pacific, purged of the White nations' vice, the Third World countries shone. The Third Worldism pleased the young intellectuals of various nations just as, in the nineteenth century, the proletariat had been seen as the example of moral excellence.

Actual events would prove less romantic. Many out of those young nations became dictatorships, and the Third World as a whole played an ambiguous and complex international role of stratagems, alliances/reversals of alliances with the Superpowers. Often it was the battlefield in case of tiny, hot 'wars by proxy' that the Cold War allowed itself.

Culture

World War II shocked the world culture no less than the world politics and the world economy. In Western Europe the main problem, for some decades, was 'should an intellectual be committed?' 'Committed' meant 'working within the actual political situation' and forgetting the ivory tower. In most cases it meant to be a leftist, which meant to be a full-fledged communist or (in political jargon) a 'fellow traveller' or a 'useful idiot'. Mountains of pages and billions of neurons were spent on this theme and this practice, on the ground that communism was the only real alternative to Fascism/Nazism.

Actually, writers, artists, musicians and philosophers didn't produce anything meant to be stable. They were rebellious and uncertain.

In 1945, Jean-Paul Sartre founded in Paris the journal *Les Temps modernes*, starting to build his role as Europe's cultural and political leading opinion maker, and Jean Dubuffet opened his first one-man exhibition. In 1946, 1948, 1949, 1951 and 1958, William Carlos Williams published the five volumes of *Paterson*. In 1946, Jackson Pollock abandoned the brush and inaugurated the technique of squeezing, pouring, dribbling paint on canvas that would lead to the Action Painting. In 1947, Albert Camus's *The Plague*, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, Anna Frank's *Diary* and Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* were published. In 1949, Jorge Luis Borges published *The Aleph*, George Orwell *1984*, Arthur Miller *Death of a Salesman*, Konrad Lorenz *King Solomon's Ring* and Margaret Mead *Male and Female*. In 1950, Kurosawa Akira directed *Rashomon*. In 1951, Julian Beck and Judith Malina founded the Living Theatre. In 1952, Ernest Hemingway published *The Old Man and the Sea* and John Steinbeck *East of Eden*, architect Le Corbusier completed in Marseilles the building of the Cité Radieuse. On 5 January 1953, in Paris, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* premiered; in the same year sculptor Henry Moore created *King and Queen*, Jacques Tati directed *Les vacances de M. Hulot* and Mizoguchi Kenji *Ugetsu Monogatari* (Ugetsu); and James D. Watson and Francis H. Crick discovered the double helix of DNA. In 1954, Ilya Ehrenburg published *The Thaw*. In 1955, J.R.R. Tolkien completed the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* (in Paris), Claude Lévi-Strauss *Sad Tropics*, Satyajit Ray directed *Aparajito* (The Unvanquished). In 1956, John Osborne published *Look Back in Anger*, Allen Ginsberg *Howl and Other Poems*, Tanizaki Junichiro *The Key*; the Free Cinema movement was born in London, Ingmar Bergman directed *The Seventh Seal* and Ichikawa Kon *The Burma Harp*. In 1957, Boris Pasternak published (in Italy) *Doctor Zhivago*, Jack Kerouac *On the Road*, Vance Packard *The Hidden Persuaders* and the Nouvelle Vague took shape in Paris. In 1959, Raymond Queneau published *Zazie in the Metro*, Eugène Ionesco *Rhinoceros*; Charles P. Snow gave the controversial lecture *The Two Cultures*; Frank Lloyd Wright built the Guggenheim Museum in New York; Alain Resnais directed *Hiroshima mon amour* and Federico Fellini *La dolce vita*. In 1960, the New American Cinema was born and American Pop Art took shape.

For the United States, and for the many nations that imitated her, a novel of 1951 was indelible: J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. It told, with adolescent language, adolescent alienation, confusion, rebellion. Independently from its literary value, it depicted the themes and the times of a whole generation that was supposed to be happy, and became synonymous with it.

Almighty and Suspicious

The fifteen years from 1945 to 1960 were a contradictory time for the United States. Victory in the war, together with an extraordinary economic expansion and the simultaneous collapse of the traditional world powers (UK, France, The Netherlands, Japan), gave the US a position of planet leadership. To the rest of the world, America presented a picture of prosperity, generosity and optimism – an image reinforced by American financial aid, particularly to Europe.

[2] The First World being the capitalist West, and the Second the totalitarian, communist East.

Such splendour, however, was not faultless. The Cold War against the Soviet Union hid psychological disquiet and phobia, which materialized in the 'McCarthyist' persecution of the Left. Cinema replaced the portrayal of the bold American – naïve, perhaps, but always inexhaustible – with new characters and new actors (from Montgomery Clift to Marlon Brando, James Dean and Anthony Perkins) who expressed anxiety, uneasiness and neurosis. Juvenile crime increased, and the large American middle class gradually became aware of its sociocultural fragmentation. Beatnik communities arose to propose an autonomous counterculture. The consumer age broke out with the popularization of television and modified decades-old patterns of thought and behaviour.

It was precisely television that helped precipitate the crisis of cinema. Starting in 1946, the sale of television sets increased dramatically; shortly afterward, the networks began broadcasting in colour. This new kind of home entertainment kept huge numbers of spectators away from the theatres. Then, in 1948, with a decision which ended years of litigation, the Supreme Court upheld the ruling in the *United States vs. Paramount et al.* trial, involving all major California movie companies, pursuant to the antitrust law. From that time on, the three components of production, distribution and exhibition were to be separated. The verdict terminated the companies' monopoly over the audience and ended the lifestyle and work methods that had characterized the entertainment field. In short, it marked the end of legendary Hollywood.

Comedy evolved. Deprived of artists such as Capra, Lubitsch and Stevens, it survived through the work of craftspeople and through the caustic films of Billy Wilder.

In the late 1950s, causticity became a rule outside cinema, with the 'sick comedians' – educated entertainers, well versed in quick political gags and dirty words, who addressed students and intellectuals in the thousands of night clubs which spread like mushrooms after the war. Their favourite topic: the American malaise. The group, which included Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl and Dick Gregory, exerted its influence for years, spawning artists such as Woody Allen. In contrast, the old slapstick comedy, with its absurd pyrotechnics, was dismissed as being definitively naïve, as the inheritance of a 'childish' age; Jerry Lewis and Bob Hope, who partially hearken back to it, became isolated phenomena.

In music, alongside the concert-hall experiments of the likes of John Cage, bebop reigned; a form of jazz born in the black ghetto, it was, by its own definition, the expression of an 'alternative' culture. Artists such as jazz musician Charlie Parker, writer Jack Kerouac, poet Allen Ginsberg and painter Jackson Pollock were all heralds of a marginal world and the bearers of stylistically overflowing, rebellious ideas. Initially, what they all wanted was to detach themselves from the mainstream of American culture; inevitably, they were absorbed and embraced by the market (especially Pollock and his colleagues of Action Painting).

Hollywood animation shared the fate of the film industry in general; as its most frail branch, it was the first to dry out. Animated shorts, which had always been regarded as fillers, were eliminated without being really missed as costs rose. Studios shrank and gradually closed. Very few young artists joined studio staffs. Disney was the first to reduce the production of shorts, concentrating on feature films and, later on, other projects such as live-action features for children, documentaries on the wonders of nature and the very successful amusement parks. In the meanwhile, avant-garde groups collected the spiritual inheritance of Mary Ellen Bute and Oskar Fischinger and gave rise to new, rich productions of abstract animation, which perfectly complemented the stylistic and linguistic research of off-Hollywood filmmakers.

Traditional, round-shaped drawings ('O-style') could no longer compare with the drawings of comic-strip artists, fashionable cartoonists and advertisers. American animation was born from popular comics and their inevitably poor drawings had flourished in the caricature/children's book style of Walt Disney; now, for the first time, it would join the group of the major commercial arts. Animators found themselves looking with awe at the style of artists, such as the *New Yorker* cartoonists James Thurber and Saul Steinberg, and at the subversive humour of the corrosive New York magazine, *Mad*. For the first time, American animation would follow the national and international trend, and would even contribute to set it. This was a vital boost, if also a temporary one: after some years, that approach, too, would fall irremediably out of fashion. In other words, for animation this was a time of indecision, incertitude and even opacity in the USA and the rest of the world as well.

Gerald McBoing Boing

Released on 25 January 1951 and winner of the first UPA Academy Award on 29 March 1951, *Gerald McBoing Boing* was the epitome of the stylistic gospel that would change again, and forever, the accepted approach to animated films.

Cahiers du cinéma commented from Paris: 'The work of Mr Bosustow and Mr Cannon contains such a blasting

charge that we can't but compare it to the one that long ago exploded the silent cinema and gave birth to the sound film'.[3]

Based on a story by Dr Seuss,[4] written by Bill Scott and Phil Eastman and directed by Bobe Cannon, *Gerald McBoing Boing* tells the story of a child who can't speak words, but speaks in sound effects instead. Rejected by the school, spurned by other children and even rebuffed by his father, Gerald runs away from home and sets about becoming a tramp; but just as he's trying to catch a departing train, a radio producer hires him. In a very happy ending, he becomes famous coast-to-coast as a one-man sound-effects department.

Although strictly traditional in its values, the scenario itself has something new: no gags. *Gerald McBoing Boing* is a little moral play about a handicapped person who can, nonetheless, climb the ladder of success. Funny, of course, but not in the traditional, slapstick way.

Second: the drawings. Sharp, angular outlines around the distinctly bidimensional characters and objects: an 'I' style instead of the volumetric 'O' style championed by Disney.

Third: the colours. Casually thrown within the outline of an armchair or of a carpet, just to suggest that that piece of furniture is red or brown.

Fourth: the music. Gail Kubik (1914–1984) was not a popular-song strummer, but an important American composer, who would win the 1952 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and who produced an innovative score.

Fifth, and most important: the limited animation. In one of the first frames we see Gerald's mother embroidering; her arm, only, is in motion. The doctor comes to visit the child; he's a very dignified, stiff-necked gentleman, and only his legs are in motion – a very mechanical motion. Disney's full animation, personality animation and plausible impossible are gone. Instead, a bold, simple conciseness has told us a lot about who the housewife and the physician are. Bobe Cannon had fluidity as an animator and conveyed it into his directorial style. His metamorphoses are an example: he loved to keep the character on the screen, while dissolving the background in such a way that the story continues without edges and interruptions, flowing delicately ahead.

Limited animation and two-dimensional design would become, in the following decade(s), the young frontier of quality animation all over the world.

UPA

In 1943, Stephen Bosustow,[5] David Hilberman,[6] and Zachary 'Zack' Schwartz,[7] three former employees of Disney, formed Industrial Film and Poster Service. One year later, the United Auto Workers hired them to make a film to endorse Franklin Delano Roosevelt's reelection: *Hell Bent for Election*. The short was designed by Zachary Schwartz and directed – for one single dollar – by moonlighting Charles M. (Chuck) Jones. Another film for the United Auto Workers, *Brotherhood of Man* (1946), was directed by Robert Cannon.

On 1 May 1944, the company's name was changed to United Film Productions and, on 31 December 1945, to United Productions of America (UPA). In July 1946, Hilberman and Schwartz withdrew from the enterprise, and Stephen Bosustow remained as the only executive producer.[8]

Bosustow[9] had a complex, contradictory personality. Born in Canada, he moved to California years before his debut at MGM in 1931. A good scriptwriter, he worked for Ub Iwerks and for Walter Lantz before joining Disney in 1934. Once at Disney, he collaborated on a Mickey Mouse series and on films such as *Snow White*, *Bambi* and *Fantasia*. He was dismissed on 20 May 1941, eight days before the Disney strike, along with twenty other employees.[10] As the leader of UPA, he demonstrated respect for

[3] Francois Chalais, 'Le fil à couper Disney', *Cahiers du cinéma*, No. 6, Octobre–Novembre 1951, Paris.

[4] Pseudonym of children's writer and cartoonist Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904–1991).

[5] Born in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, on 6 November 1911, he died in Los Angeles, California, on 4 July 1981.

[6] Born in Cleveland, Ohio, on 18 December 1911, he died in Palo Alto, California, on 5 July 2007.

[7] Born in New York on 6 March 1913, he died in Tel Aviv, Israel, on 12 January 2003.

[8] Hilberman and Schwartz moved to New York and founded the Tempo Animation Studio to produce commercials. Both leftists, they were suspected during the most brutal period of the United States's witch hunt. In 1947, during a hearing of the HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), Walt Disney himself openly accused Hilberman of being a communist. In 1953, 'the FBI announced there would be an investigation, and Tempo's clients soon broke off all contact. The FBI never followed through, but Tempo closed its doors, laying off 150 artists (Tom Sito, *Drawing the Line* [Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2006]). Zack Schwartz devoted himself to teaching; Dave Hilberman freelanced in Europe and then back home in the States, eventually becoming a university professor, too.

[9] The name, which suggests Slavic roots, is actually from Cornwall.

[10] He would be among the strike leaders.

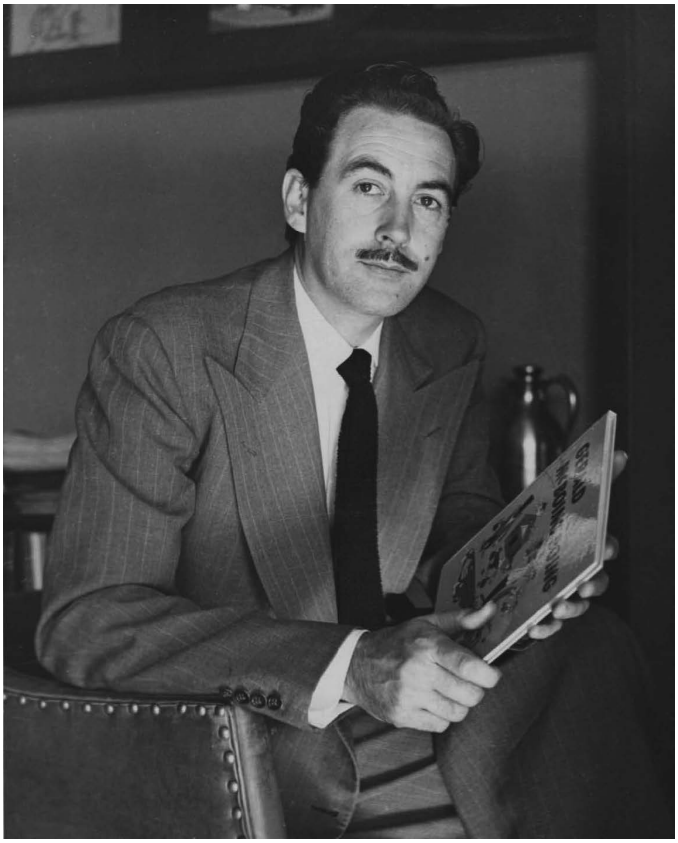

Figure 1.1 Stephen Bosustow.

the talent and culture of his collaborators,[11] great energy, and, above all, a vision: not to make money, but to make quality films. At times, he was naïve and tactless. Basically a shy man, he often blamed himself retrospectively for making wrong decisions and for having been weak. With uncommon modesty, he also downplayed his artistic talent. He did not teach anything to his filmmakers, he said, but left them free to express their intellectual needs; he dismantled the assembly-line system and supported the forming of small, spontaneous teams of animators.[12] This is the appreciation of Adam Abraham, the UPA historian: 'The most complaisant of managers, Bosustow gave his employees extraordinary freedom as he presided over that rare anomaly: a for-profit company dedicated to Art'.[13]

The innovative research that would characterize the years to come was largely due to a newly hired staff of scene designers and layout experts (John Hubley, Paul Julian [by birth name Paul Hull Husted, Terre Haute, Indiana, 25 June 1914–Van Nuys, California, 5 September 1995], Jules Engel, Bill Hurtz [1919–2000] and Herb Klynn [1917–99]), directors (John Hubley again, Bobe Cannon, Pete Burness) and screenwriters (Phil Eastman, 1909–86; Bill Scott, 1920–85).

The fortunes of the newly founded company turned for the better when Columbia, which was now ready to terminate its contract with Screen Gems, agreed to become a distributor for UPA shorts. *Robin Hoodlum* (1948) and *The Magic Fluke* (1949) still featured the same characters (the

[11] Just an example: although, according to the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences' regulations, the Oscar for the animated short subject was presented to the producer, Bosustow let the winning shorts' directors go to the ceremony and collect the statuette.

[12] Personal communications from Stephen Bosustow to the author (1973).

[13] Adam Abraham, *When Magoo Flew: The Rise and Fall of Animation Studio UPA*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012, Introduction, p. x.

Fox and the Crow) most recently used by Screen Gems. The films were cleverly spectacular. Characterized by an original, thoughtful comicality and by already quite stylized drawings, they were less furious than traditional comic Hollywood cartoons. (Years later, the filmmakers at Disney remembered *Robin Hoodlum* when they made their feature film, *Robin Hood*.)

Still in 1949, Mr. Magoo, who became UPA's most famous character and a sort of new-generation Mickey Mouse, made his debut in *Ragtime Bear*. The short featured Magoo (still without a name), his nephew and a friendly bear. The legend goes that Columbia proposed a series based on the bear, and UPA was adamant about a series based on the old man.

Magoo was a novelty. He was human rather than zoomorphic and an adult rather than a child. Moreover, his psychological and physical traits were far from the typical Hollywood glamour. With his scratchy delivery (due to actor and writer Jim Backus, 1913–89), shabby aspect and baldness, Magoo was a hard-headed grouch, appealing only because of his naïveté and incurable nearsightedness. His adventures developed into a ten-year series – the only one produced by UPA, which preferred individual shorts.

Directed at first by John Hubley, Magoo's cartoons were later entrusted to Pete Burness.

Pete Burness

One of the least acknowledged of the great American animators, David Petrie Burness Jr. was born in Los Angeles on 16 June 1904. His lifelong nickname, 'Pete', was bestowed upon him by his youngest sister Ruth. He died in Pasadena on 21 July 1969.

A graduate from Manual Arts High School, as a teenager he nursed the ambition to have his own cartoon strip in the daily newspapers. While attending the University of Southern California (USC), he was heavily involved with the campus humour magazine. However, after about three years, he abandoned USC before graduating[14] to leave for the East Coast and become an animator at the Fleischer Studios – where he attended to Betty Boop as a Grim Natwick assistant. There is evidence of him working later, in 1933, at the Van Beuren studios. In those times, the Burness family lived in Connecticut, near New York City.

Somewhere around 1939, Pete Burness went back to California to work for MGM and animated the very first Tom and Jerry short film, *Puss Gets the Boot*, released on 10 February 1940. The popularity of the cat-and-mouse duo caught by surprise the movie theatre operators, who put a lot of pressure on MGM to produce more Tom and Jerry cartoons. MGM could not find enough talented animators in the Los Angeles area, but did find a good pool of them in Mexico City. Pete Burness had learned to speak Spanish in school so, in 1943, MGM sent him to Mexico City to manage the local Tom and Jerry artists. Eventually the logistics got to be too big a problem and, one year later, MGM gave up on the idea. The last Tom and Jerry that Burness animated was *The Mouse Comes to Dinner* (1945).

In the five following years, Burness went to work for Walter Lantz and possibly Terrytoons. In 1948, he worked at Warner Brothers, animating Bugs Bunny. He left Warner Brothers in 1950 to go to UPA.

Shortly after arriving at UPA, he was asked to be the director of the Mr. Magoo series. This was the first directing opportunity of his long animation career. He debuted with *Trouble Indemnity*, the third Mr. Magoo film. It was nominated for an Academy Award, but so was UPA's *Gerald McBoing Boing*, which was the winner.[15] Pete Burness got his Academy Award in 1955 for *When Magoo Flew*, and repeated the performance in 1956 with *Magoo's Puddle Jumper*. In all, Pete Burness directed thirty-five Mr. Magoo shorts.

Burness's style is clear, dry, without frills, and based on a perfect timing. Had he been a slapstick

[14] However, he did receive an honorary diploma from USC many years later because of the two Oscars he won for Mr. Magoo animated short subjects.

[15] Bruce Burness, Pete Burness's son, wrote: 'In many conversations with my father it was clear that he felt *Trouble Indemnity* was the best film of his entire career; but he was thrilled that Bobe got the Academy Award. My father held Bobe Cannon in the highest regard. The Cannon family and the Burness family got together socially many times over the years at either our house or the Cannon Ranch' (e-mail message to author, 26 February 2010).

comedian, he would have been a Buster Keaton or a Stan Laurel instead of a Charlie Chaplin.

His last work for UPA was the feature film *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, which started in 1957 and was released in 1959. He didn't finish it, instead handing the directorship off to Jack Kinney and leaving the company.[16]

After UPA, Pete Burness moved from studio to studio on a regular basis, and during this freelance period, created a couple of cartoon characters that are still well-known in America. The first one was a lounging bird that would choose to sit on the tail of a Western Airlines airplane when he travelled, instead of flying himself. The second one was Captain Crunch, who appeared on a cereal box. Captain Crunch also appeared in many television commercials.

Pete Burness's last work was for Jay Ward on the *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. He was responsible for the Boris Badenov and Natasha episodes and also the Dudley Do-Right segments.

A master of UPA's 'limited animation', he was never comfortable with the 'partial animation' demands of producing a new show on a weekly basis for television. Eventually he accepted 'partial animation' (e.g. hands and feet animated separately from a held character) as the only viable way to produce a weekly show.

Pete Burness was still working hard when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Jay Ward kept him on the payroll until after he had died, on 21 July 1969.

Robert Cannon

Another great – but little-known and barely investigated – American animation director was Robert 'Bobe'[17] Cannon (Alliance, Ohio, 16 July 1909–Northridge, California, 8 June 1964). A strong but taciturn man, he was poorly fit to rise to fame. He first stepped into the limelight as an animator in the Chuck Jones team at Schlesinger's (his animation for the short *The Dover Boys at Pimento University – Or The Rivals of Roquefort Hall*, 1942, is memorable), then made his director's debut in 1949 with the already mentioned anti-racist short *Brotherhood of Man*. Although basically interested in one-shot cartoons, under audience pressure he directed a good three sequels of *Gerald McBoing Boing*.[18] Among other Cannon's hits, *Willie the Kid* (1952), *Madeline* (1952, from a book by children's writer Ludwig Bemelmans), *Fudget's Budget* (1954, humorous and very brilliantly designed), *The Jaywalker* (his swan song, 1956) are worth mentioning. Another problematic child who came out of Cannon's imagination was *Christopher Crumpet* (1953), the neurotic only son of a suburban couple, who transforms himself into a chicken when annoyed. The one sequel, *Christopher Crumpet's Playmate* (1955), was good, too: the kid has an elephant for an imaginary friend and his father's rival takes the boss to the Crumpets, to show how badly he was brought up . . . but the boss himself had an imaginary friend when he was a child – a hyena. Bobe Cannon directed a couple of Mr. Magoo shorts in 1958 before leaving the sinking UPA boat. He freelanced making various commercials before suddenly dying of a heart attack at 55.

His directing style was based on ellipses and suggestions, the transition from one scene to another could be done with a metamorphosis (Gerald is standing on a kitchen stool, which becomes a scooter to play in the park), the scenery can show how fictional it is (in *Willie the Kid* the courtyard has become a Painted Desert for the playing children, but when Willie has to talk to his mother, a slot opens in the rock wall and she appears). It's the realm of unbridled graphic-animated imagination, happily implausible.

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[16] Pete Burness's son Bruce wrote: 'My father really struggled with the idea of doing a feature-length Mr. Magoo. As the film progressed he became more and more distressed by what he felt was the overcommercialization of Mr. Magoo. Directing and nurturing this Mr. Magoo character had been the pinnacle of his career. My father had agonized over how to develop and present Mr. Magoo's identity since the day he arrived at UPA. He could not bear what he felt was the complete corruption of Mr. Magoo's identity' (e-mail message to author, 26 February 2010).

[17] In the filmographies he's variously credited as 'Robert', 'Bob' or 'Bobe'. Friends also called him 'Bobo'.

[18] *Gerald McBoing Boing's Symphony* (1953) was the simple story of Gerald asked to substitute for a whole orchestra, with a seemingly disastrous result but an eventual success (some scenes of Gerald wandering in the middle of a transparent, anonymous crowd set a fashion). *How Now McBoing Boing* (1954) was meant to put an end to the saga: Gerald's parents take him to the greatest specialist in the world, and he eventually discovers the boy just has an upside-down larynx (some scenes of people running as if they had wheels instead of legs set a fashion). The fourth, tacked-on instalment, *Gerald McBoing! Boing! on Planet Moo* (1956), brought the kid into space, with the result of convincing aliens that on planet Earth people didn't speak words, but went 'boing, boing' instead (and here the only interesting point is the original graphics).

John Hubley

The real directing star at UPA was not self-effacing Bobe Cannon, but dashing, outgoing John Hubley. This great filmmaker had joined Disney's in 1935 at twenty-one, had participated until the 1941 strike, and had left in 1941 for Screen Gems, where he had been promoted from layout man to director. In 1942 he joined the army and was assigned to the Army Air Force First Motion Picture Unit; then, in 1944, was back to civilian duties and was hired by Bosustow. He directed three Fox and Crow films (*Robin Hoodlum*, 1948; *The Magic Fluke*, 1949; *Punchy de Leon*, 1950) and the already mentioned, and fundamental, *Ragtime Bear*.

Rooty-Toot-Toot (1951) is a funny, rhythmic, ironic version of the traditional ballad of *Frankie and Johnny*. The title comes from the fifth stanza of the ballad, where it has mere onomatopœic value. Betrayed by Johnny, Frankie kills him. She is acquitted but, after the trial, she kills her lawyer, again out of jealousy. No subject for children at all; the ballad, moreover, belongs to the adult-only rhymes most suitable for a tavern or brothel. Brilliant and disenchanted, the short musical confirmed the innovative UPA use of drawings and colours. The drawings are purposely flat, two-dimensional, with oblong or angular shapes, and the limited animation contrasts with the *continuum mobile* of the style which was considered 'classical' at that time. Strongly antirealistic backgrounds are here often limited to a few sketches or to large areas of solid colour. Everything is clearly, deliberately dominated by a visual culture influenced by Matisse, Picasso and Klee: no longer animated comic drawings or films with drawn actors. These were the works of cultivated art directors who gave drawing and painting a major role.

It is said that Warner Bros. director Friz Freleng once declared: 'When I die, I don't want to go to Paradise. I want to go to UPA'. But even UPA was this side of Paradise, and the witch hunt was scaring the hell out of the United States. John Hubley refused to cooperate with investigators looking for supposed communists, and pressure was placed on UPA. On 31 May 1952, John Hubley was forced to leave.[19]

Theory from Practice

In July 1946, John Hubley and Zachary Schwartz published an interesting – as much as unnoticed – essay: 'Animation Learns a New Language' (*Hollywood Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4).[20] After both having substantially worked on animated army educational films, they wanted to share the lesson they had drawn.

They wrote:

> Six months before America entered World War II, the animated motion picture industry of Hollywood was engaged in the production of the following films: 1 feature-length cartoon about a deer; 16 short subjects about a duck; 12 short subjects about rabbits; 7 short subjects of a cat chasing a mouse; 5 short subjects with pigs; 3 short subjects with a demented woodpecker; 10 short subjects with assorted animals; 1 short technical subject on the process of flush riveting.
>
> Since that time, the lone educational short, dubbed by the industry a 'nuts and bolts' film, has been augmented by hundreds of thousands of feet of animated educational film. Because of wartime necessity, pigs and bunnies have collided with nuts and bolts. [. . .] Many professional studios producing educational films of infinitely varied subjects soon discovered that, within the medium of film, animation provided the only means of portraying many complex aspects of a complex society. Through animated drawings artists were able to visualize areas of life and thought which photography was incapable of showing.
>
> [. . .] We must [therefore] examine the basic difference between animation and photographed action. [. . .] A drawing's range of expression, its area of vision, is wider than that of the photograph, since the camera records but a particular aspect of reality in a single perspective from a

[19] Sadly, he was not the only one. The victory over UPA, the leftist, heavily unionized studio, was a triumph for McCarthyites. For deeper insight, see Karl Cohen, *Forbidden Animation – Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America*, Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 1997.

[20] Now published by the University of California Press, Stable URL; http://www.jstor.org/stable/1209495.

> fixed position. In short, while the film records what we see, the drawing can record also what we know. The photograph records a specific object; the drawing represents an object, specific or general.
>
> [. . .] We have found that the medium of animation has become a new language. [. . .] We have found that line, shape, color, and symbols in movement can represent the essence of an idea, can express it humorously, with force, with clarity. The method is only dependent upon the idea to be expressed. And a suitable form can be found for any idea.

This was the sharpest out of the few essays written on animation, in Northern America, in the first half of the twentieth century. It was the only one that was based on the actual nature of animation – without any attempt at co-opting animation into the aristocracy of Fine Arts as just the youngest of them and out of intellectual condescension.

The Galaxy

Two other important films were released by UPA in 1953. Bill Hurtz's *A Unicorn in the Garden* was an adaptation of a bittersweet tale by James Thurber, rendered in the style of the humorist's own drawings. A compact and clever work, it was Bill Hurtz's directorial debut and probably the most highbrow American cartoon released until then to general audiences.

The Tell-Tale Heart was innovative by virtue of being a noncomical cartoon. Illustrating a work by Edgar Allan Poe, it emphasized the nightmarish qualities of the story and was a first example of an animated horror movie. The staff included star voice actor James Mason, director Ted Parmelee (1912–1964), scriptwriter Bill Scott and especially scene designer Paul Julian, one of the best of American animation ever.

By the mid-1950s, UPA's life began to dim and success basically came from the episodes of the Mr. Magoo series. Bosustow insisted in the approach he had devised since the beginning: no once-and-for-all fixed teams, but flexible groups according to the project. This open-minded recipe would be the one that all auteurs of animation would apply in the next six decades. Also, he let talented people, who never had directed a film, try: Ted Parmelee, T. Hee,[21] Paul Julian, Art Babbitt and Aurelius Battaglia. Other contributors to UPA included Bill Meléndez[22] abstract animator John Whitney, the young Ernest Pintoff, Jimmy Teru Murakami, George Dunning and Gene Deitch. Nevertheless, the ones who left were more than the ones who came in.

People at UPA were aware that television was the territory of the future, as scary as it could be. Their most ambitious project was a TV programme entitled *The Gerald McBoing Boing Show*, produced by Bobe Cannon and emceed by Gerald in person. It was a combination of old theatrical shorts, new entertainment footage and a good dose of didactic sequences. CBS broadcast the show from 16 December 1956 to 24 March 1957 – four months. *Disneyland* and its sequel *The Mickey Mouse Club* lasted from 1954 to 1959 and *The Woody Woodpecker Show* was syndicated from 1958 to 1966. Against rave critics' reviews, the audience turned its back. Too sophisticated.

In 1958, the New York and London branches closed. In December 1959, *1001 Arabian Nights*, the Mr. Magoo feature film directed by Jack Kinney – after Pete Burness' withdrawal – flopped, thereby precipitating a crisis. By early 1960, Stephen Bosustow sold UPA to TV producer Henry Saperstein and put an end to the artistic trajectory of the company.[23]

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[21] The real name of this quick-witted (and underestimated) screenwriter and gagman was Thornton Garfield (1911–1988). Animation director Bob Kurtz wrote: 'About my mentor and writing partner T. Hee [. . .] His closest friend throughout his career was Marc Davis and he didn't know Tee's abandoned given last name. Tee's name reflected his gentle spirit and his view of life. I don't know if Tee hated Garfield as much as it didn't fit him. T. Hee fit him well'. (E-mailed letter to the author, 3 February 2009)

[22] José Cuauhtémoc 'Bill' Meléndez was born in Hermosillo, Sonora State, Mexico, on 15 November 1916, and was brought up in Arizona and California. He joined Disney in 1938, Leon Schlesinger/Warner Bros. in 1941 and UPA in 1949. He established Bill Meléndez Productions in 1964, becoming famous with his cinematic renditions of Charles M. Schulz's Peanuts and Jim Davis's Garfield the Cat. He died in Santa Monica on 2 September 2008.

[23] Saperstein (1918–1998) produced dozens of hurried TV Mr. Magoo cartoons, plus the TV series *The Famous Adventures of Mr. Magoo*, in which the character starred in adaptations of classics from world literature. Abe Levitow (1922–1975) directed both the series and the feature-length theatrical film *Gay Purr-ee* (1962), which unsuccessfully aimed at catching the attention of the cultivated audience.

It is necessary here to discredit an endlessly repeated legend: that limited animation was adopted in order to save money. It wasn't. Most of the UPA shorts were over budget – money was never a priority for Stephen Bosustow, who cared for quality – and in 1960 the studio was heavily indebted to Columbia. UPA limited animation should better be called stylized animation, necessary to match stylized drawings.

Not everybody properly used the recipe. Some applied it to old slapstick comedy, hoping to reduce work, but missed the implications of stylized animation. Others heavily applied it to TV series, where actually work and money had to be saved, and rejected criticism on the ground that the highly praised UPA films had used it, too. In UPA's productions, on the contrary, precise correlations existed between humour, drawings and animation. The consequences of this style must be considered over an extended period of time. When Bobe Cannon let colour overlap the contours of his characters and considered both lines and colours as one plastic whole obeying pictorial rather than narrative laws, he claimed his right to a specific language. In other words, and on a minor scale, he did what Jackson Pollock had initiated some time before in paintings with his 'unfinished', incidental style.

Without exaggeration, it can be inferred that the very idea of animation as an art form, in the United States as well as in other countries, became commonplace with UPA. Entertainment animation left the exclusive realm of comedy and became the foundation for graphic and pictorial research as well as for diverse styles, themes and 'genres'. In short, it became a medium for the greatest freedom of expression.

It should be added that the audiences did not always adapt to the new language. Those who loved tradition criticized stylization as poor drawing, and segmented animation as a sign of incompetence. *Full animation* was later re-evaluated, and today, the two schools still vie for the favour of the public.

Walt Disney

As strange as it may seem, the roots of the UPA approach sink into the Disney production: it's sufficient to watch the rather forgotten feature *The Reluctant Dragon* (1941) and its segment *Baby Weems*, which actually is nothing else than a filmed storyboard. *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom* (directed by Ward Kimball and Charles A. Nichols in 1954) looked just like a UPA production and, despite initial scepticism, was awarded an Oscar.[24]

The late 1940s/early 1950s were difficult years for Disney animation. Mary Browne Robinson Blair (1911–1978), an exquisite watercolourist from Oklahoma, was the one who didn't let its artistic look lose its shine. She set her mark into such films as *Saludos Amigos*, *The Three Caballeros*, *Make Mine Music* and *Melody Time*, and then *Cinderella* and *Alice in Wonderland* up to *Peter Pan*, with her bidimensional, modernist, faux-naïf 'inspirational paintings' based on sharp chromatic contrasts. Mary Blair took her leave of Mickey Mouse's father in 1953, but was called back ten years later to create *It's a Small World*, an 'attraction' for the 1964 New York's World Fair that was later moved to Disneyland in California.

Walt Disney was not actually a conservative, as far as art was concerned, and even enrolled undisciplined surrealist painter Salvador Dalí to make a short for him.[25] Nevertheless, theatrical animation – especially theatrical animated shorts – weren't his cup of tea anymore, and the animation department of the company gradually grew smaller and smaller.

Out of the animated feature films produced in the 1950s, none was bad, but none was really good, either. They were formulaic. *Cinderella* (1950, directed by Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson) still had some *Snow White* charm and some charming characters and villains. *Sleeping Beauty* (1959, supervising director Clyde Geronimi) is rather original in its look, as artist and illustrator Eyvind Earle (1916–2000) was given – or took – the full responsibility for colours and design. Its shining and flat chromatism reminds us of the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Age in which the story is set.

Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. lost one of its best directors in 1946, when Bob Clampett left to work at Screen Gems and, subsequently, to devote himself to hand-animated puppets for

[24] Contrary to expectations, evidence exists that both Walt and Roy Disney admired UPA's output.

[25] Dalí worked more devotedly than anybody would have expected for eight months, between 1945 and 1946, along with writer and layout man John Hench (1908–2004). Due to economic difficulties, the production was discontinued. A short by the title of *Destino* was released in 2003, under the auspices of Roy Edward Disney. It was produced by Baker Bloodworth and directed by Frenchman Dominique Monféry, on the basis of the original storyboards and paintings.

television (Clampett's TV show *Time for Beany* began in 1949). Friz Freleng and Chuck Jones remained at Warner's and, in 1946, were joined in the directorial role by Robert McKimson (Denver, 13 October 1910 – Van Nuys, 27 August 1977).[26]

The first to play under McKimson's baton was Foghorn Leghorn, a Southern rooster who was nominated for an Oscar at his very debut (*Walky Talky Hawky*, 1946), but was never a winner abroad, since most of his comedy resided in his mangled verbal delivery. A strange case is instead the character of the Tasmanian Devil, who starred in five shorts altogether from 1954 to 1964. His figure doesn't look like a real Tasmanian devil at all; despite that, he became a celebrity and T-shirts and other memorabilia are on sale everywhere many decades later. McKimson is generally considered the least inspired of the long-term Warner directors; timing was not his forte, and he liked a good drawing better than a good laugh (which is a mistake in a slapstick world).

Above all the Warner's fighting animals, the rival duo of Tweety and Sylvester stood out. Originally created by Clampett, Tweety achieved stardom after Friz Freleng matched him with Sylvester the Cat in *Tweety Pie* (1947). The new antagonists basically repeated the MGM-produced cat-and-mouse struggle between Tom and Jerry, but with enough fresh material for a good new series. Tweety and Sylvester displayed richer personalities than Hanna and Barbera's two characters. Tweety is a baby canary, with childish traits and big, blue eyes. But, underneath his angelic aspect, he is sly and often ferocious. Naturally, luck and the many allies he cleverly enlists protect him against Sylvester. As for the cat, he is far from innocent – double-crossing and acting mean as often as he can. But fate is against him. Furthermore, he is plagued by the David-and-Goliath rule, which grants the weakest – or the one who appears the weakest – everybody's favourite. This contrast between appearance and substance was new to American cartoons, which were until then immune to duplicity. A flavour of malaise and uncertainty, perhaps as a symptom of the new times (the spiteful bird was never punished), was beginning to insinuate itself in animation.

Friz Freleng

A short-tempered, short man, Isadore 'Friz'[27] Freleng (Kansas City, Missouri, 21 August 1905–Los Angeles, 26 May 1995) seemed ill-equipped for having a happy life in a universe full of practical jokes, endless teasing and caricatures like the Hollywood animation of the Golden Age. Actually, he was one of its rulers.

His beginnings were the most promising ones. He was from the same town as the Disney brothers, four years Walt's junior. At eighteen he was drawing for the Kansas City Film Ad Company, at twenty-one for the Alice Comedies made by Disney on the West Coast. The highly competitive atmosphere reigning in the company, and the bad character of Walt himself, brought him to join the group of 'traitors' who, lured by Charles Mintz, left in 1928.

Freleng's star shone again in 1933, when Leon Schlesinger promoted the twenty-seven-year-old veteran to the role of director. He would invent or redesign almost all of the characters that made the fame of the studio, including Yosemite Sam (diminutive, red-moustached, angry, sadistic, losing his temper every two seconds), whom Robert McKimson apparently had shaped after Freleng himself. He skilfully developed Bugs Bunny into the most faceted and most experienced actor in the history of the studio. Bugs needed a straight man and was opposed perfectly to Yosemite Sam, always ready to humiliate everybody and eventually ending up humiliated. A readapted Daffy Duck was the second choice. Envious of Bugs's insuperability, he would incessantly challenge him, only to incessantly return defeated. Even Speedy Gonzales, a Mexican mouse characterized by an extreme velocity and little else, became an interesting Oscar winner under Friz Freleng's direction.

Nobody was Mr. Warner Animation more than he was. By the end of his career, this master of comedy and pure entertainment would count four Academy Awards[28] and many honours and be regarded as a living legend.

Timing was his ace in the sleeve. Every character, every gag, every scene of his was punctual. Animation historian

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[26] Robert was the best known of the three McKimson brothers who worked in the same time in Hollywood animation. Thomas McKimson (1907–1998) was hired at Disney's in 1928, then worked for Harman and Ising, later for Bob Clampett and eventually for his brother Robert and for Art Davis. In 1947, he left animation to join the comic-book industry. Charles McKimson (1914–1999) started his career in Tex Avery's team in 1937, was drafted during the Second World War and in 1946, upon his return, entered his brother Robert's unit. In 1954, he too left animation for comics.

[27] According to some sources, the nickname derived from a comics character, which Freleng closely looked like: fictional congressman Frizby, who appeared in a column of the *Los Angeles Examiner* newspaper.

[28] *Tweety Pie* (1947), *Speedy Gonzales* (1955), *Birds Anonymous* (1957), and *Knighty Knight Bugs* (1958).

Charles Solomon emphasized: 'Timing is the essence of comedy, and every comedian knows that a fraction of a second can make the difference between a joke receiving a big laugh, getting a polite chuckle, or falling flat. Freleng honed the timing in his films down to the individual frame'.[29]

Wrote Steve Schneider: 'As a director, his impeccable timing and ability to fashion fully-rounded, credible characters gave his cartoons a kind of classicism. [. . .] While his showman's sense generally favoured pratfalls and pain gags of slapstick, he often found room for moments of tenderness'.[30]

Schneider's sentence seems caressing, but it actually states the director's limitations. Pratfalls plus tenderness was the recipe of the outdated, silent movies slapstick comedy. Despite the laughs he could provoke, Friz Freleng never was as great as his contemporaries Avery, Jones and Clampett. Michael Barrier's judgement is sharp: 'He was [. . .] too cautious. Freleng never took any risks in his choice of camera angles or in his cutting from scene to scene – Clampett-style pyrotechnics were completely foreign to him – but his caution showed up most tellingly in his handling of his characters' layouts. Freleng's own layout sketches were rough [. . .] Rather than risk giving his sketches to his animators, Freleng usually had them redrawn by his layout artist [. . .] Freleng's animators thus picked up scenes hobbled by a vagueness that was itself a sign of caution, reluctance on Freleng's part to commit himself'.[31]

In 1955, Jack Warner closed his cartoon studio for the first time, believing that stereoscopic cinema was unstoppable and the costs for producing 3D animated films were too high. Arguing that, in any case, humans were not born with red and green retinas,[32] Chuck Jones joined Disney. Once there, he realized that Walt held the only good position within the company. A few months later, Jack Warner reopened the doors. In 1963, the studio closed for a second time, after a five-year decline in product quality and burdened by the increasing general costs of labour. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the studio reclosed and reopened briefly, often working as a subcontractor for other producers.

Chuck Jones[33]

Charles Martin 'Chuck' Jones (Spokane, Washington, 21 September 1912–Corona del Mar, California, 22 February 2002) grew up in Hollywood near Charlie Chaplin's Lone Star studio. He occasionally worked as an extra in Mack Sennett comedies, and the great silent comedians would be an enduring influence in his work. As a child, he was a voracious reader with a predilection for Mark Twain. He graduated from Chouinard Art Institute where he went on taking night drawing lessons for fifteen years. He entered animation in 1930 at the Iwerks studio. In 1933, he joined the Schlesinger studio (later Warner Bros.) and, in 1935, he was assigned as animator to the Avery unit at Termite Terrace. He directed his first film, *The Night Watchman*, in 1938.

For the first two or three years, Jones's work is not actually satisfying. His cartoons are heavily influenced by Disney. They are sentimental, cute, slow and not very funny. It is clear that he initially approached directing with the mindset of a student. However, he experimented with unusual points of view, often showing the world as seen by some small character, as in *Sniffles Takes a Trip* (1940) and *Tom Thumb in Trouble* (1940).

The other great influence came from Tex Avery. Jones writes: 'I learned from him the most important truth about animation: animation is the art of timing, a truth applicable as well to all comedy. And the brilliant masters of timing were Keaton, Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Langdon – and Fred (Tex) Avery'.[34] He would pay homage to the master with *Fair and Worm-er* (1946), a *reductio ad absurdum* of Avery's chase cartoon: a worm who wants to eat an apple is chased by a crow, who is chased by a cat, who is chased by a dog, who is chased by a dogcatcher, who is chased by his wife, who is chased by a mouse . . . until everybody is chased away by a skunk.

[29] Charles Solomon, *The History of Animation – Enchanted Drawings*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989, p. 149.

[30] Steve Schneider, *That's All Folks!*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1988, p. 42.

[31] Mike Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons – American Animation in Its Golden Age*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 472.

[32] In order to enjoy these early 3D films, spectators must wear plastic glasses with one red lens and one green lens.

[33] By Silvano Ghiringhelli.

[34] Chuck Jones, *Chuck Amuck – The Life and Times of an Animated Cartoonist*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989, p. 97.

Figure 1.2 Chuck Jones. Image Courtesy of the Chuck Jones Museum.

His most intriguing creation of this period is the Minah Bird, who appears for the first time in *The Little Lion Hunter* (1939). This uncanny animal periodically materializes in the midst of the action, walking to the syncopated pace of Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave*, disrupting the cartoon's world as well as its form, with the invulnerability and indifference of a supernatural creature.

From 1942 on, Chuck Jones experimented with unrealistic, stylized backgrounds, influenced by modern art. He accelerated the timing of his films, using a much more subtle editing. He tried unusual expressive camera angles. In *Conrad the Sailor* (1942) he says he used graphic matches theorized by Eisenstein: 'first we'd show a gun pointing up in the air, then, in the next shot, there'd be a cloud in exactly the same shape'.[35]

The cartoons of this period are innovative and full of stimulating ideas. But they are often plagued by unresolved aesthetical contradictions as well.

During the Second World War, Jones directed some educational black-and-white cartoons for the army featuring Private Snafu. In these shorts, he had to animate graphics and numbers, which helped develop his ability to give life to inanimate objects or even to abstractions.

The Dover Boys (1942), a spoof of turn-of-the-century dime novels, makes revolutionary use of both animation and design. The characters move from one rigid pose to another with only a few drawings in between. Animator Bobe Cannon used in some scenes the technique of smear animation: rapid movement between two extremes portrayed in only one or two smeared drawings. The *Dover Boys* has been acknowledged as a precursor of the UPA style because of its stylized backgrounds and aggressively streamlined animation. It was also crucial in the development of Jones's style because of its use of character poses.

At the Warner's animation department, the production of a cartoon was the result of a collaborative effort and could take more than a year. The director's involvement in each stage of the production varied greatly. But the best directors all knew what was important to them in order to keep control of the final result.

[35] Greg Ford and Richard Thompson, 'Chuck Jones: Interview', *Film Comment*, January–February 1975, p. 27–28.

The actual animation of the characters was carried out through three stages. The director drew 'character layouts' that indicated the main movements of a character for each scene. Based on them, the animator drew the 'extremes' that precisely define the key stages of every single movement. Finally, the assistant animator and/or inbetweener provided the drawings needed to animate the character from one extreme to the other. Typically, twelve drawings were needed for every second of film.

Jones was more or less involved in every stage of the production. But his main means of control over his cartoons were the character layouts. He always drew more than his colleagues. For his first cartoons, he was drawing so many that not much was left to do for the animators. He learned progressively to focus on a limited number of strong, expressive poses.

After *The Dover Boys*, the poses became the structuring elements around which everything in Jones's cartoons takes its place. They dictate the timing of the scenes, the editing and the choice of angles. But they are not merely a formal device. They allow him to tell a tale through the character's facial expressions and body postures, to reveal the character's psychology with great subtlety and to dispense many comical touches.

So the centrality of the poses reflects Jones's main concern in filmmaking: the personalities of his characters. The psychological interplay between the characters is more relevant in his cartoons than situations or gags.

Under Jones's guidance, the studio's main stars, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, acquired richer personalities and became much more coherent from film to film. He also created many new unforgettable characters. The most notable were Wile E. Coyote, the Road Runner, Pepe le Pew and the Three Bears.

In the second half of the 1940s, his learning years were through, and Jones emerged as the most intellectual and artistically ambitious Hollywood cartoon director of his era. For more than a decade, he would create a number of great works showing full mastery of the different aspects of his art.

His cartoons are beautifully drawn. Jones was the best draughtsman of the great Warner directors. He worked with the same team of very talented animators for almost all his career, even after he left Warner's. And they knew how to best serve his intentions.

From 1952 on, background artist Maurice Noble gave a decisive contribution to the visual aspect of the cartoons. With his help, Jones carried on his experiments with sceneries, using distorted perspective, abstract geometrical settings (*Duck Amuck* [1953], *Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century* [1953]) or unnatural colours (*What's Opera, Doc?* [1957]).

Jones's mise-en-scène is very refined. He is more aware of camera placement than any other Warner cartoon director after Tashlin. If needed, he uses the most unusual angles: in *Bear Feet* (1949), after Junior has inadvertently propelled Pa into space, there is an extreme low-angle shot from the ground as we see Pa flying above the treetops and Junior running after him. His editing can also be quite creative: in *Dripalong Daffy* (1951), the final duel between Daffy and Nasty Canasta is introduced by a sequence of shots reminiscent of *High Noon*, with a shot from under Daffy's arched legs and a tilted camera angle of Canasta.

Avery's lesson was not lost on him. The slowness of Jones's first years gave way to a refined, complex timing in which extreme quickness cohabits with pauses of great effect, as in the Road Runner and Coyote series.

His art of timing is perhaps best shown in an opera parody he directed in 1950, *The Rabbit of Seville*. The canonical Elmer Fudd–Bugs Bunny chase lands on the Hollywood Bowl during a performance of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. In 1946, Jones had written an article on music and animation in which he praised Friz Freleng's *Rhapsody in Rivets* with these words: 'The music was not used as a background, but as the dictating factor in the actions of the characters'.[36] *The Rabbit of Seville* follows the same principle with great ingenuity.

Jones inherited a vast repertoire of gags from the silent comedians. In *The Rabbit of Seville* there are two borrowings from Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*: the barbershop scene and the barber chair gag.

[36] Chuck Jones, 'Music and the Animated Cartoon', *Hollywood Quarterly*, July 1946.

In *Rabbit Hood* (1949), a riff on the legend of Robin Hood, we find what has to be the longest double take in film history: Bugs Bunny, with a Groucho Marx turnaround, convinces the Sheriff of Nottingham to build a house in the King's Rose Garden. After a fade-out, we see a huge mansion, half built and the sheriff working on the roof – when it finally dawns on him that he has been swindled.

Like Buster Keaton and other silent comedians, Jones loved to elaborate contrived contraptions. The inventions of the Coyote in the *Road Runner* series first come to mind. In *Bully for Bugs* (1953), Bugs Bunny, here a bullfighter, wins his fight against a bull in the arena thanks to a very precisely timed mechanism. He makes the bull run on a greased gangway and take off through midair. His flight sparks a chain reaction that provokes the explosion of a TNT barrel at the exact moment the bull passes over it.

Jones's cartoons often have a literary quality, which is rather unusual in the context of Hollywood animation. His later work benefited from the talent of writer Michael Maltese, who provided gags and witty dialogue. A famous example is Bugs, Daffy and Elmer's brilliant 'pronoun trouble' banter in *Rabbit Seasoning* (1952). The dialogues of *Rabbit Hood* are in a funny archaic English: when Bugs Bunny knocks him down, the Sheriff of Nottingham, always deferential to the crown, dizzily sees spinning around his head, in place of the usual cartoon stars, little kings, instead, and exclaims: 'Odds fish! The very air abounds in kings!'

But Jones and Maltese could also tell a complex tale without the use of words. A great example is *One Froggy Evening* (1955), a morality play about greed: a man finds a frog that can sing and dance a vast Broadway repertoire. He imagines the heaps of money he will make with the attraction – but the frog will only perform for him: as soon as anyone else is watching, he reverts suddenly to the limp, silent demeanour of a normal frog. As a result, the man is driven to poverty and even to the madhouse.

Jones is master of a vast emotional palette. Some of his films are sentimental and moving. The first scene of *Feed the Kitty* (1952), in which a bulldog falls in love with a kitten, is unforgettable: the dog's expressions and attitudes are rendered with such precision and sensibility that it is hard not to feel a deep empathy. *No Barking* (1954) portrays a very lively and likeable dog.

But Jones also directed some cynical contemporary tales. *Fresh Airedale* (1945) is a parable about injustice. *Chow Hound* (1951) tells the grim story of a dog running a racket and his victims' cruel revenge.

He went so far as to make semi-abstract films within the context of Hollywood studios. In *High Note* (1960), he succeeds in giving life to music notes and other sheet music symbols. *The Dot and the Line, a Romance in Lower Mathematics* (1965), directed for MGM, is literally a love story between a dot and a line.

The cartoon that best displays Jones's abilities may be *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957). This time, Bugs and Elmer find themselves in a Wagner opera. Everything in this cartoon is at the same time highly ambitious and ironic. Carl Stalling's score is a masterful collage of Wagnerian themes. Maurice Noble's epic design is maybe his most inventive. And Jones's direction has never been as refined. As Joe Adamson writes, '*What's Opera, Doc?* sends you away with the notion that there's something funny about everything grand and something grand about everything funny'.[37] It is the cartoon of which Jones was most proud.

In *Duck Amuck*, Daffy Duck has to contend with the very cartoon world in which he dwells as its established conventions, one by one, are broken: the background changes abruptly behind him – it disappears altogether – it reappears as just an outline, childishly drawn and without colour – Daffy himself is erased – the sound effects disappear, or they are totally inappropriate: a guitar sounds like a machine gun, Daffy's voice like various exotic animals – his body takes the aspect of the most unlikely imaginary quadruped, with front and back legs moving at different paces – the film frame starts shifting in the 'projector' until the screen is split in the middle by the frame line, and so is Daffy, who immediately starts fighting with his double – and so on. The playful subversion of the language of cinema has its roots in Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.* and belongs to a venerable tradition of American animation:

[37] Joe Adamson, *Bugs Bunny – Fifty Years and Only One Grey Hare*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1990, p. 160.

Messmer's *Trials of a Movie Cartoonist* and *Comicalamities*, the *Out of the Inkwell* series, and the cartoons of Avery and Clampett (*Porky in Wackyland*). Thanks to his culture and his critical awareness, Jones was able to give us the crowning achievement of this tradition. But *Duck Amuck* is also a radical statement about character animation: when nothing has stability, when even his body disappears, the only thing that remains is Daffy's personality. As Jones stated: 'What I want to say is that Daffy can live and struggle on in an empty screen, without setting and without sound, just as well as with a lot of arbitrary props. He remains Daffy'.[38]

In the 1950s, Jones directed a series of parodies with Daffy Duck and Porky Pig. In these cartoons he makes fun of genre conventions without treating them with complacency. Daffy always does his very best to live up to the greatness of the heroes he impersonates, but he fails miserably and remains totally unaware of his inadequacy. Porky is an unassuming sidekick who turns out to be the wise and effective character. The duo is reminiscent of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

In *Dripalong Daffy* (1951), Daffy, identified in an onscreen title as 'Western-Type Hero', appears riding a horse, while Porky ('Comedy Relief') follows him on a donkey, just like Cervantes's immortal characters. Other cartoons of the series are: *The Scarlet Pumpernickel* (1950), a mock swashbuckler; *Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century* (1953), a science fiction parody; *Rocket Squad* (1956), a Dragnet set in outer space; *Deduce, You Say* (1956), featuring the duo as 'Dorlock Homes' and 'Watkins'; and *Robin Hood Daffy* (1958), maybe the funniest of all.

The Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner series may be Jones's most memorable achievement. This comical version of the myth of Sisyphus shows obsessed Coyote endlessly inventing new methods to catch the supernaturally fast bird. In *Beep Beep* (1952), the situation is reduced to its quintessence: the Road Runner and the Coyote go into a mine shaft wearing headlamps, and the chase, seen through a cross-section of the orthogonal galleries, becomes an abstract ballet of a green and a red light.

In this series, Jones turns the commercial pressure to repeat successful formulas into a subtle play of variations on a theme. 'Like Monet returning to Rouen Cathedral to capture the varying play of light upon its façade', Steve Schneider writes, 'Jones returns to his situations to capture the play of his characters' personalities, refracting in differing and beautiful ways'.[39] These cartoons are also an exercise in restraint, as they all follow strict rules both in their form and argument:

> 'The cartoons always take place in the same desert setting', Leonard Maltin writes, 'The Road Runner and Coyote never speak. The Road Runner never leaves the road. The Coyote's injuries are always self-inflicted. No matter what misfortune the Coyote suffers, he always appears intact after the fade-out, ready to try again. His mail-order machines and appliances are almost always from the Acme Corporation. He and the Road Runner are always introduced by bogus Latin names. And finally, the Coyote never catches the Road Runner'.[40]

As an example of the way the cartoons of the series refer to each other, there is a recurring gag of the Coyote painting a false road (in 'trompe-l'oeil' perspective) on a rock face to lure the Road Runner. In *Fast and Furry-ous* (1949), the Road Runner simply runs on the painted road and disappears, as if within the painting, into the distance. When the Coyote tries to follow him, he smashes into the painted rock. Finally, the Road Runner comes back from the false road and runs him over. In *Going! Going! Gosh!* (1952), the Road Runner again runs on the painted road (this time on a thin panel, carefully arranged to block a dangerously high precipice) but, while the Coyote stares in amazement, a truck comes out of it and knocks him down. When he tries the same route, he plunges through the painted board and falls into the precipice. In *Gee Whiz-z-z-z-z-z-z* (1956), the Coyote paints a broken road with an abyss opening in its middle. This time, the Road Runner travels on the real road as if the painting was not there. When the Coyote tries to follow him, inevitably he falls into the painted abyss.

[38] Quoted in Greg Ford and Richard Thompson, 'Chuck Jones: Interview', *Film Comment*, January–February 1975, p. 43.

[39] Steve Schneider, *That's All Folks! The Art of Warner Bros. Animation*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1990, p. 107.

[40] Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoon*, New York: The New American Library, 1980, p. 261.

Two of Jones's other series, besides being very funny, are striking sociological comments on contemporary society.

The Three Bears must be the most neurotic family in American cartoons, far ahead of the Simpsons. Pa is short in stature and in temper, perpetually angry with Junior (whom he calls 'stupid'), his overgrown slow-witted son, and Ma is a fool with some degree of sexual frustration struggling to surface. *A Bear for Punishment* (1951), in which the reluctant Pa has to endure the celebrations of Father's Day, is a dire satire of family life.

In the Wolf and Sheepdog series, Ralph Wolf (who looks exactly as Wile E. Coyote except for a red nose!) tries to steal the sheep guarded by Sam Sheepdog and inevitably ends up beaten. The peculiarity of these cartoons lies in the fact that we see our heroes punching the clock in the morning and at night just as salaried workers. They even interrupt the action (i.e. Sam giving a bashing to Ralph) when a siren calls for lunch. However fiercely they fight during work hours, they are very civil and even friendly during their free time. In *Steal Wool* (1957), as they walk home together, Sam says to Ralph, who is visibly in pain: 'You've been working too hard, Ralph. Why don't you take tomorrow off? I can handle both jobs'. And Ralph gasps: 'Gee tha . . . thanks Sam. You're a . . . pal'. An accurate depiction of the modern duality of work and private life.

In 1962, Jones left Warner. He went to work for MGM where he directed some one-shot cartoons and nineteen new episodes of *Tom and Jerry*, but he was never able to really capture the spirit of the series (although some episodes are good). He made a feature, *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1971), and worked with some success for television. But the Golden Age of the American cartoon was over.

Having received from fate the privilege of longevity, our artist could enjoy in life the pleasure of being considered a legend. He was awarded, applauded, interviewed, written about, asked for advice, paid a high price for his original drawings. In fact, we can say that in the Hollywood Golden Age of animation there were a lot of true geniuses, but there were only three minds of a superior league: the collective mind of Disney, the disruptive mind of Tex Avery, and Chuck Jones.

Michael Maltese

Born in New York on 6 February 1908 and passed away in Los Angeles on 22 February 1981, Michael Maltese was one of the best screenwriters of Hollywood animation. After a difficult apprenticeship as an inbetweener at Fleischer's, he moved to Hollywood in 1937 and worked for a couple of years at Schlesinger's (later Warner Bros.), obstinately attached to his dream to make a living out of his drawings. Eventually he accepted to be moved to the story department and, when this was dissolved because of war restriction, he made a pair with Chuck Jones. With some interruptions, the partnership lasted until 1958, when Maltese was hired by Hanna and Barbera to work for their TV series.

The intellectual director Jones (preoccupied to match both Disney's psychological character development and UPA's form) and the popular prankster Maltese (incessantly aiming at sure-fire laughter) perfectly balanced each other. However, Maltese had precious qualities of his own. In a world where draughtsmen refused to understand anything but drawings, he could at least properly draw his storyboards. He also could act as a skilled entertainer in front of the animators: they would catch the core of his scenes at first sight. *Rabbit Fire* (1951) boasts the Abbott and Costello-esque routine 'Rabbit Season!', 'Duck Season!'; *Duck Amuck* (1953) challenges the 'suspension of disbelief' convention and plays on self-referentiality, like the best avant-garde work. He was sometimes blamed (by background artist Maurice Noble, for instance) for looking for cheap and quick ways out, but generally he was able to invent the unheard-of, the ultimate gag.

Maltese complied with a writer's further duty: the characters' invention and/or refinement. Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Yosemite Sam, the Roadrunner and Coyote, and Pepe Le Pew grew in psychological originality and credibility as soon as he started taking care of them; upon joining Hanna and Barbera, he permitted the seminal, though low-budget, series of Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear and the Flintstones to take off because he gave the drawn actors a human substance that only words could do, in times of frozen animation.

The Resurgence of Terrytoons

In 1946, Terrytoons added the two black crows, Heckle and Jeckle, to its limited number of stars, which included Mighty Mouse. The two birds, self-confident and surly, further proof that the age of good feelings had ended, were well liked by the public, particularly for the snooty tone they displayed in the face of apparently invincible adversaries or situations. Actually, the New Rochelle–based studio continued to enjoy the favour of the public despite its monotony. Without being rich, the company was financially healthy and productive. Thus, when Paul Terry suddenly sold it to the CBS television network and retired to private life in 1955, the move came as a complete surprise to his associates of many years, who had likely expected some acknowledgment for their fidelity and hard work.

It was at that time that Terrytoons experienced an unexpected resurgence. Thirty-one-year-old Gene Deitch (Chicago, 8 August 1924), who had been trained at New York's UPA, was entrusted with the artistic direction. Deitch created shock waves in the traditionally structured studio, immediately changing its style, neglecting the most well-developed characters and introducing new ideas by hiring young artists (Ernest Pintoff, Al Kouzel, Eli Bauer and scriptwriter–cartoonist Jules Feiffer, among others). The short *Flebus*, by Pintoff, featuring a human protagonist and a bare graphic style, took UPA's lesson to its extreme. *Another Day, Another Doormat*, by Al Kouzel and Jules Feiffer, featured John Doormat, a little man who changed personality whenever he was far from his virago of a wife. *The Juggler of Our Lady* was the film adaptation of a book by the then not-yet-famous artist R. O. Blechman, who contributed to the project with his own drawings.

Among the characters developed for series, the most promising was Sidney the Elephant, a shy animal who was given to whine and, neurotically, suck his trunk. Deitch also created a good television series featuring Tom Terrific, a blond child with a magical funnel as a hat. All this, and much more, was accomplished during the two years under the direction of Gene Deitch, who was fired on May 1958. The chief executive of Terrytoons, Bill Weiss, assumed the artistic direction himself. In the following years, the Terrytoons studio partially returned to the past, reviving some old characters.

Walter Lantz's Oasis

The longest-lived of the older studios was Walter Lantz's, which eventually closed in 1972. The studio was quite different from the others because Lantz continued production on a tight budget and remained faithful to his characters. His relaxed work environment was a peaceful oasis, attracting many excellent artists from other production companies. In fact, Lantz's collaborators included more experienced professionals than young, hopeful artists. Among the many who came from Disney were Dick Lundy, Ken O'Brien, Homer Brightman and Jack Hannah. Other talented artists included scriptwriter Mike Maltese (formerly of Warner's), Tex Avery, Alex Lovy and Sid Marcus. As Lantz later remembered, Disney was an authoritarian, and many favoured Lantz's friendly attitude; while Disney was a prophet, Lantz was a pragmatist.[41]

The *Woody Woodpecker* series lasted throughout the life of the studio, although the character underwent changes. As often happens in real life, Woody Woodpecker became sober and indulgent in his old age, abandoning his destructive rage, reacting only when provoked and acquiring quiet, middle-class tendencies (Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny underwent similar transformations). Woody Woodpecker's physical appearance also evolved into a more pleasing, smaller, softer form.

The screen adventures of Andy Panda came to an end after the 1940s. A character similar to Mickey Mouse in form and mannerisms, Andy shared the same fate of no longer having a role to play in the world of cartoons. His shorts needed the support of new characters, and Andy became simply a linking device.

Another Disney character, Pablo the Penguin (from *The Three Caballeros*), inspired Chilly Willy, a penguin who is sensitive to the cold. Making his debut in 1953 under the guidance of Alex Lovy, Chilly Willy was Lantz's last significant creation. It was with Tex Avery, however, during the artist's short stay at Lantz's studio, that the character became popular in *I'm Cold* (1954) and *The Legend of Rockabye Point* (1955). Chilly Willy was a small penguin with a mechanical walk, dressed in warm clothes to shield him from the cold; although he lacked the psychological traits necessary to last, he managed to survive until the studio ceased its activities.

Over the years, the studio's comic vein and inspiration ebbed significantly, following a parallel course with the decline in quality of its competitors. Lantz did not disdain

[41] Walter Lantz, personal communication to author (1986).

television and even made a personal appearance in the *Woody Woodpecker Show* (1957). Finally, when costs rose dramatically, Lantz closed the studio, devoting his time to merchandising his characters, selling his old productions worldwide and painting.

MGM's Cat and Mouse

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, with their creations Tom and Jerry, enjoyed great success with the public (and with artists as well, as the seven Oscars from the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences attest). Tom and Jerry survived Hanna and Barbera's MGM years without undergoing major changes. From time to time, their stories were enriched by the intervention of a big bulldog or the appearance of Little Nibbles, also known as 'Tuffy', as a third protagonist and a child counterpart to Jerry. Sometimes, an unusual environment was used, such as in the costume film *The Two Mouseketeers* (1952). The substance of the cartoons, however, remained the same, and the best movies of the late 1950s did not show fatigue when compared to the productions of fifteen years before.

Just as it was possible to adapt the cast and narrative structure with small modifications, so too was comic style slightly altered from time to time. When the friendly competition with Tex Avery's team was most heated, Hanna and Barbera quickened the action in their movies and adopted exaggerated deformations and violent expedients. Later, they found a compromise between slapstick and screwball comedy, as in the well-known *The Cat Concerto* of 1946, in which an elegant pianist (Tom) performs the *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* by Liszt and disturbs Jerry, who is sleeping inside the piano. The two animals tease each other, without ever interrupting the musical performance, until the finale, when the unlucky cat is forced to hear the opus repeated endlessly. This was probably the duo's best movie, elegantly animated, with expert timing and a tasteful construction of action.

Quite similar was *The Two Mouseketeers*, where the newcomer Little Nibbles directs a good deal of childish mischievousness against the cat. More than all other novelties, Little Nibbles was able to refresh the old formula, as his relation to the other characters (a sort of pesky, little brother for Jerry, and another, much worse Jerry for Tom) introduces subtle psychological nuances.

It should be briefly noted that these cartoon heroes also left traces in feature films with live actors. Gene Kelly – who embarrassingly had asked Disney's studio to design a dance for him with an MGM cartoon character – danced with Jerry in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945). This is, to this day, probably the most celebrated sequence of live-action and cartoon mixing. Esther Williams followed in his footsteps with *Dangerous When Wet* (1953), and it was Kelly's turn again in *Invitation to the Dance* (1953).

In 1955, when Fred Quimby[42] left his job at MGM as director of animation, Hanna and Barbera were invited to be his successors. After only two years, when the company decided to close its animation department, Hanna and Barbera founded their own company and began producing low-cost series for television. Their empire is discussed in the coming chapter.

From Fleischer to Famous

Fleischer, once the second largest animation studio in America, continued its activities through its successor, Famous Studios. The new name came from Paramount's Famous Players-Lasky. Having dismissed the Fleischers in 1942, Famous Studios transferred its equipment from Miami to New York and reduced the overly large staff remaining from the time of feature films. The studio was managed by three members of the old staff: Sam Buchwald, Seymour Kneitel (Max Fleischer's son-in-law) and Izzy Sparber (who revived Dave Fleischer's habit of taking credit for films on which he had collaborated little or not at all).

The production turned from Superman's adventurous line to comics, such as the traditional *Popeye* films and Little Lulu. This girl, characterized by a static face, had already been a popular comic strip by Marge in the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Lulu lasted five years. Thriving at first and then becoming monotonous, she was another victim of the difficult passage from still drawings to animation.

A more successful character was Casper the Friendly Ghost, introduced in 1945 by animator and scriptwriter Joe Oriolo (Union City, New Jersey, 21 February 1913–Hackensack, New Jersey, 25 December 1985). Casper's series began only in 1950, but lasted and flourished also as a comic strip. Casper is a child-ghost who constantly seeks friends, but is always rejected. Based on one of the most elemental components of child psychology, the desire for acceptance and the fear of abandonment, Casper

[42] Frederick C. Quimby (1886–1965) entered history as a humourless, cold, stingy, skiver bureaucrat who never understood nor encouraged his animators. The freedom he left them, however, let them produce the best works of their career, with eight Academy Award wins.

appealed to children, although his films never excelled in quality or originality. Due to a complex story of unfulfilled legal obligations, Joe Oriolo did not enjoy any financial gain from the successful goldmine he instituted.

Activities at Famous Studio (or Paramount Cartoon Studio, as it was called after 1956) continued sleepily for several years, scoring more losses than gains. In 1951, Sam Buchwald died. The production of *Popeye* stopped in 1957, followed by the deaths of Sparber and Keitel. In 1961, the company had a short period of success when it bought an Oscar-winning film, *Munro*, which had been produced externally by Gene Deitch. Later, Shamus Culhane, back for the third time, and Ralph Bakshi attempted to revive the studio by addressing the omnivorous television market, but with scant success. The studio finally closed in 1967.

Bunin's Puppets

In the field of puppet animation, Lou Bunin is worth a mention. Born in Kiev (28 March 1904), the Russian émigré directed a puppet theatre in Chicago where he dared to put on Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. He turned to filmmaking with *Pete Roleum* (1939) and *Bury the Axis* (1943, with strong satire against Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito). In the mid-1940s he moved to Hollywood where, among other things, he created a few animated puppet sequences for an MGM feature film, *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945), by Vincente Minnelli. An alumnus of the Paris academy of Grande Chaumière, a sculptor, an assistant to muralist painter Diego Rivera and a reader of Brecht and the classics, Bunin had too many intellectual ambitions to feel at ease in Hollywood, and went on to work independently.

In 1949, he made *Alice in Wonderland* (a European co-production), a feature film mixing a live protagonist (Carol Marsh) with animated puppets. The movie was ready earlier than Disney's own adaptation, but a lawsuit from the Disney Company prevented it from being immediately released. Eventually the two films were simultaneously released in the US market (Bunin's on 26 July 1951, Disney's on 28 July), but the former had a weak promotion and anyway never gained popularity. From an aesthetic viewpoint, it came up short of expectations; rhythmically weak, unimaginative and unoriginal, it should be included in the number of daring but unmemorable works. Later, in collaboration with his wife Florence, a costume specialist, Bunin undertook a successful career in advertising, briefly contributing to fiction films such as *The Sly Little Rabbit and How He Got Long Ears* (1955) and *The Dingo Dog and the Kangaroo* (1956). He died in Englewood, New Jersey, on 17 February 1994.

Television 101

History of television is a never-ending maze. Let's be laconic: German student Paul Gottlieb Nipkow (1860–1940) patented an image-scanning disk in 1884, British John Logie Baird (1888–1946) showed televised images in 1925, American Philo Farnsworth (1906–1971) and Russian-American Vladimir Zworykin (1888–1982) worked on the cathode ray tube in the late 1920s–early 1930s, Hungarian Tihanyi Kálmán (1897–1947) patented his Radioskop in 1928, big companies like Bell, RCA, or Marconi-EMI heavily financed research and bought patents.

Regular, but very crude, broadcasting started in the USA in 1928. Professional broadcasts in New York and Los Angeles date back to 1938; NBC came on stage in 1939, with almost thirty hours of programming per month to about two thousand TV sets scattered throughout New York City.

In Great Britain, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) inaugurated a regular TV service in 1932, but stopped it in 1935. One year later, with better technology, it resumed work until the next stop in September 1939, at the outbreak of WWII. Londoners could watch an average of four hours of programmes a day, on about twelve thousand sets. On June 1946, BBC-TV got started again.

By 1941, the NTSC (National Television System Committee) was able to propose to American viewers a definition of 525 lines per frame, while the Soviets introduced in 1948 the 625 lines standard that would be perfected in Western Europe and would become the European option.

In the US, by 1948 both CBS and NBC were broadcasting on a regular, day-by-day basis; in 1954, the third giant, ABC, would step in.

In 1953, colour TV was standardized, too: a modified version of the NTSC system allowed colour broadcasting compatible with the already-sold black-and-white TV sets. NTSC was widely accepted but criticized: a joke went that the acronym actually meant Never Twice the Same Colour. The development of cable and satellite television in the 1970s allowed for more channels and encouraged executives to target programming towards specific audiences. On June 2009, NTSC in the United

States was replaced by the ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee) set of standards, to be used by digital TV.

In Europe, even in the Western area, private TV companies were not allowed for decades. Networks were state owned and government controlled, sometimes open-mindedly, most of the times not. The European colour systems were French SECAM and German PAL, and their competition in the 1970s ended with the victory of PAL.

TV and American Animation

By 1950, there were six million television sets in the United States, which meant about twenty-six million people watching. It was not difficult to realize that, with such figures, entertainment (and politics, and sport, and journalism, not to mention society) would never be the same anymore.

The usual pathfinder, Walt Disney, had entered the new world on 3 May 1939, getting NBC to show a preview of the short *Donald's Cousin Gus*, directed by Jack King (not a masterpiece: a series of gags based on the voraciousness of the goose Gus, sent over by an aunt Fanny to visit Donald Duck). After the war, in the decade between 1946 and 1955, several distributors of second-rate, out-of-copyright cartoons (Van Beuren, Ub Iwerks, and early Walter Lantz) enjoyed a modest windfall. After 1955, the increasing weakening of the movie industry and the consequent expansion of the TV market opened more vaults: Bugs Bunny and Betty Boop, Popeye and Mighty Mouse, Porky Pig and Superman went to visit their customers in their parlours.

This basically was the recipe of the 1950s animated show: an adult host (Dick Van Dyke, Walt Disney) or a drawn character voiced by an actor (Barker Bill, Gerald McBoing Boing) emceed a variety show for kids. This detail must be emphasized: even though Walt Disney had aimed his own production to children since the mid-1930s, theatrical cartoons still were considered for a young family audience. Television animation had to wait for *The Simpsons* to get out from the children's box.

Jay Ward

The precursor of the made-for-TV cartoons was *Crusader Rabbit*, which aired in 1949. Jay Ward (San Francisco, 20 September 1920–West Hollywood, 12 October 1989) was by no means an experienced animator. He founded Television Arts Productions in 1948, along with childhood friend cartoonist Alex Anderson, avoiding any cinematographic apprenticeship and immediately thinking of television. After some insecure attempts at inventing a specific show, Ward and Anderson recycled one of their first characters and put him at the head of the first series expressly made for TV: *Crusader Rabbit*. The floppy-eared rodent's adventures were aired by NBC in the fall of 1949, and continued until 1951.

It left a mark in chronologies but was not a hit, so the company was dissolved and Ward forgot about television animation. At least he let other people think so. In 1958, he reappeared, setting up partnership with UPA scriptwriter Bill Scott[43] and founding Jay Ward Productions. He would later find fame and fortune with *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *The Adventures of Hoppity Hopper* and other enterprises aimed at children and often clever enough for adults.

But the characters that would establish the animated TV series as a rule were Hanna and Barbera's Huckleberry Hound, Quick-Draw McGraw and Yogi Bear, in the years between 1958 and 1963. We will discuss them later.

TV and Animated Commercials

The first duty of a commercial is to surprise the consumer and settle in his or her memory. Novelties do so; clichés don't. The new market that television was offering – advertising – looked intellectually exciting to American animators for about fifteen years, until the advertising agencies got more power and assumed greater creative control.[44] Veteran Shamus Culhane, chief of one of the busiest new studios (bearing his name), recalled: 'For ego gratification, we tried very hard to have an animator do a complete spot himself. Although it would have often been easier to turn the work over to two or three men, I wanted the animators

[43] This good dialogist and character modeller was also a voice actor (Bullwinkle, Dudley Do-Right, Mr. Peabody, George of the Jungle).

[44] About animated commercials, see More About It at the end of this chapter.

to enjoy their work and have the feeling that they had each made a unique contribution'.[45]

Well-paying, somehow creative and booming, the new opportunity seemed a promised land to the many who were suffering from the semi-demise of the animated theatrical short. A lot of new studios opened and soon won credibility: the concise audiovisual language of animation beat live action in conveying complex messages in a limited time, thus saving money.

Televised animated commercials were on the same stylistic wavelength that we already have described discussing UPA and would be imitated everywhere else in the world in the next decade.[46]

The West Coast Experimental Film Movement

In 1946, the first Art in Cinema Festival opened in San Francisco. Sponsored by the San Francisco Museum of Art, it featured ten programs on the best of 'traditional' avant-garde cinema, animated and otherwise. These included *Diagonal Symphonie*, *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, *Entr'acte*, Oskar Fischinger's films, *Rien que les heures*, *Le sang d'un poète*, surrealist cinema and the new American avant-garde with, above all, Maya Deren, then Douglass Crockwell, the Whitneys and the James Broughton–Sidney Peterson duo.

To West Coast filmmakers, the Art Cinema Festival became what the New York City gatherings of refugees from the European Surrealists and other pictorial currents had been for painters a few years before. The Festival represented the occasion to cross the vast distance separating provincialism from the avant-garde. Just like Peggy Guggenheim, who exhibited works by Miró, Ernst, Tanguy and Matta at her Art of This Century Gallery but also launched young Americans, the California festival's directors, Frank Stauffacher and Richard Foster, presented films by the great and introduced new American artists. This led to a sudden flowering of talent, proposals, novelties and revolutions. In the same way that Action Painting paved the way for Pop Art approximately ten years later, the West Coast Experimental Film Movement gave rise to the phenomenon of Underground Cinema.

The West Coast Experimental Film Movement did not distinguish between live action and animation. The 'experimental' concept of the filmic image was precisely the unifying element among so many different filmmakers who considered the image as nonrealistic, capable of being manipulated in any which way: by expanding the traditional timing of 'live-action' framing, by breaking the convention of scene design or by painting on frames. Authors wished to create more personal films in such a way as to completely separate themselves from (even more than oppose) Hollywood philosophy. Many, including Hy Hirsh and later Larry Jordan, made both live-action and animated films; others, such as Anger, were more abstract in their live-action works than the openly declared abstractionists. Their cinema was influenced by many elements, from Buddhist philosophies to jazz to Surrealism to Cabala, but was still autochthonous and innovative, following a parallel course with the literary currents of the time and making rich contributions to culture. The Art in Cinema Festivals lasted some years, revealing talented artists in the field of animation, including Jordan Belson, Harry Smith and Hy Hirsh.

Jordan Belson

Abstract filmmaker Jordan Belson (Chicago, 6 June 1926–San Francisco, 6 September 2011) discovered in his adolescence an interest in painting and graduated in Fine Arts from the University of California at Berkeley in 1946.

His silent, black-and-white film, *Transmutation*, made in 1947 under the direct influence of the Art in Cinema Festival, was more a 'painting in movement' than an actual film.

In 1948, Belson made his second abstract work, *Improvisation No. 1*, also a silent, black-and-white film. Meanwhile, he continued creating cinematic paintings, which sometimes were images of the films, detached from their context and reworked. He became affiliated with the New York–based Guggenheim Foundation, which exhibited his paintings in New York and Paris.

Throughout the 1950s, Belson kept a balance between painting and cinema, resuming his camera

[45] Shamus Culhane, *Talking Animals and Other People*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

[46] For deeper insight, see Amid Amidi, *Cartoon Modern – Style and Design in 1950s Animation*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006.

work in phases. In 1952 and 1953 he made four short colour and sound films, entitled *Mambo*, *Caravan*, *Mandala* and *Bop Scotch*. The first two were 'free' exercises in painting on paper rolls, while the third beautiful film made use of the traditional frame-by-frame animation technique. *Bop Scotch*, instead, was a clever experiment with objects, in which images of paving stones, bricks, tiles and other mineral elements were rhythmically combined through fast editing.

From 1957 to 1959, Belson was the artistic director of Vortex Concerts, a programme of electronic music and abstract images simultaneously performed live at San Francisco's Morrison Planetarium. Belson used up to seventy coloured projectors, while composer Henry Jacobs took care of the musical aspects of the performance.

In those same years, Belson resumed his cinematographic activity. His 1961 *Allures* marked his passage from a formative stage to maturity. It is a 'mathematically precise' film:

> '[O]n the theme of cosmogenesis – Teilhard de Chardin's term intended to replace cosmology and to indicate that the universe is not a static phenomenon but a process of becoming, of attaining new levels of existence and organization'.[47]

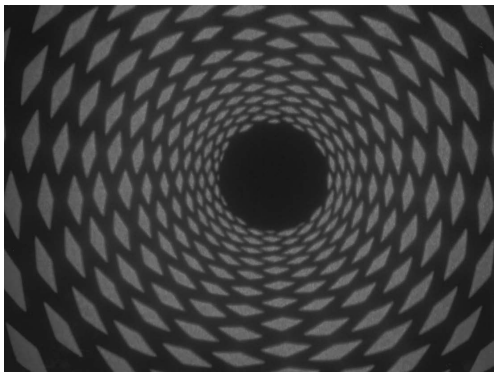

Figure 1.3 Jordan Belson, Allures, 1961. Image Courtesy of the Center for Visual Music.

Cosmogenetic figures of molecules and stars catch the eye at a superficial level, but the transcendent value of the film emerges from its dynamic development. The elegant rhythms dominating its images are not merely illustrative or decorative, but suggest a musical path of transformation; according to Belson, the film moves from matter to spirit. *Allures* is still a graphic film, displaying lines, curves and periods. Belson's successive works, instead, consisted of lights, irises, dawns, gases, opals and flames, based on an uncompromisingly mystical search for spirituality which went beyond art itself and which was joined with other stimuli such as an enchanted wonder of space conquests.

In *Re-entry* (1964), Belson drew his inspiration from *Bardo Thodol* (the Tibetan Book of the Dead), and astronaut John Glenn's first journey into space. The Bard, a Limbo-like form suspended between death and rebirth, is formed by three phases in the film: the rocket leaving Earth (death), the space flight (karmic illusions) and the return to the terrestrial atmosphere (rebirth).

The next film, *Phenomena* (1965), displays Belson's growing interest in asceticism. Two extremely rigorous years of yoga resulted in the 1967 film *Samadhi* (that state of conscience in which the individual soul amalgamates with the universal soul). While filming what came out as a 'documentary on the human soul', Belson became aware of the fact that the soul was a true physical identity, and he was actually surprised not to have died after having run the creative distance. *Momentum* (1969) derived from the impulses left over from the visions of *Samadhi*, which the artist found to correspond with solar effects. In 1969 and 1970, Belson directed *Cosmos*, for which he used videotape; in 1970, he released *World*, which recalls the geometrism of Belson's first works, followed by *Meditation* (1971), *Chakra* (1972), *Light* (1974) and *Music of the Spheres* (1976).

A detailed description of Belson's films would be superfluous here as it has already been excellently done by others.[48] It would also be difficult, as the

[47] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, London: Studio Vista, 1970, p. 160.

[48] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970; P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 300–312; Ernest Callenbach, 'Re-Entry', *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1965; Ernest Callenbach, 'Phenomena and Samadhi', *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1968; William Moritz, *Non-Objective Film: The Second Generation*, *Film as Film*, London: Hayward Gallery, 1979, catalogue of the exhibition.

filmmaker's works from 1961 on appear as diverse cantos of an extended, logically connected whole poem on light and spirit. Belson's technique differs from the usual approaches to animation – or even the abstract ones – in that pure light and pure space appear on the screen without visible human contribution. His cinema is made of visions, hallucinations and beatifications.

> I reached the point that what I was able to produce externally, with the equipment, was what I was seeing internally. I could close my eyes and see these images within my own being, and I could look out at the sky and see the same thing happening there too.[49]

For this reason, his works go beyond technique and should be viewed as audiovisual, spiritual experiences. He threw away hundreds of feet of film when he feared that technique was becoming dominant.

This spiritual component has become an uneasy heritage for the critics to judge, and for the author himself to evaluate during his rare interviews. Considered more important from philosophical or religious perspectives than from the aesthetic standpoint, his films have been interpreted according to Hatha Yoga or the texts of Tibetan Buddhism. Only recently, concluding a lengthy examination of himself and his work, did Belson re-evaluate his artistic motivations.[50] 'Right now I think of my films only as works of Art', he wrote.

He also denied the all-embracing influence of Oriental religions and philosophies: 'Over the years I have been interested in, and influenced by, *many* subjects – yoga, Buddhism, mandalas, Indian holy men, Tibetan mysticism, Theosophy, Egyptology, Rosicrucianism, Gurdjieff and Rodney Collins, Cabala, Jung, magic, Tantra, alchemy, symbolism, astronomy, Japanese mon design, Arabic patterns, non-objective art, optical phenomena, science imagery, surrealism, visual art (all kinds, ancient through modern) and romantic classical music – to mention a few'.

The most relevant and unifying characteristic in Jordan Belson's films is his obsession with centrality. No matter whether the composition is round or spiral, it always grows from the centre of the frame – an immovable point of movement, converging colours and lights. Belson's films have no camera movements, but are like open windows to the secrets of the eye and soul and develop according to their own rhythm. Echoes and solemn notes constitute the sound track, without reference to traditional musical accompaniment.

This preoccupation with centrality reveals its Mandalic origins. The mandala is a cosmogram – of the universe, considered through its spatial extent and temporal revolution – rotating around a central axis. Mandala is also a psychogram, revealing psychic experiences which flow towards concentration, to find unity of conscience and to discover the ideal principle of things. In this perspective, Belson's 'major' films are a mandala, or a unified search for the union between the artist and objects, although a religious reading of Belson's opus should not be exaggerated, as the Buddhist complex magic rite of initiation goes beyond Belson's intentions as well as his results.

Centrality can also be found in *Allures* and in *Raga* (1959), which belong to Belson's formative, or pictorial and graphic, stage. The two films recall the designs of a kaleidoscope, combining the need for a central visual pivot with the most absolute chance. In a similar way, Belson joins together visual and spiritual quests, the most subtly significant ritual constructions with the uncontrolled search for chance preached by the surrealists and the painters of Jackson Pollock's school.

Above everything else, his skills as a visionary captivate viewers and lead them into his fluid, delicate

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[49] Thomas Albright, 'Imagery on Film', *Sunday San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 April 1968. Belson also wrote, 'Even if I were to say exactly how my images are produced, would that explain the patient care, attention, and discrimination that goes into every scene (to make sure the technique does *not* show?) Then, of course, much of my style is the result of editing and composing the material – along with sound and synchronization – as smoothly as possible; this process takes longer than the actual photography. Also, my films come out of a wide *variety* of means – all kinds of experiments, some natural phenomena, electronic enhancement, etc., blended together.' (Jordan Belson, letter to the author, 5 August 1986).

[50] Jordan Belson, letter to the author, 2 June 1986.

colours (seldom does Belson use violent colours). Images of the real world are thrown as dreams into the conscious stream of iridescent nebulae: people, landscapes, a rocket, volcanoes, airplanes, a diver. An isolated, almost unapproachable man, Jordan Belson was one of the most original, least publicized masters of post-war, avant-garde cinema.

Harry Smith, Heaven and Earth Magician

Harry Smith's first four movies were shown in 1947, at the second Art in Cinema Festival. The dates of the actual filming are unknown, a common trait of the entire production of this hermetic, ambiguous, sometimes indecipherable artist.

Smith was born on 29 May 1923, in Portland, Oregon, and died in New York on 27 November 1991. From his family he inherited an interest in alchemy and occultism, his skills as a craftsman and a passion for music and films. His parents' separation left a less-than-ideal family situation for young Harry, who lived an isolated childhood. While in college, he became interested in anthropology and worked as an assistant to an anthropologist. He lived for some time with an Indian tribe and was invited to observe their rites – he was actually one of few outsiders allowed to enjoy such a privilege. There, he experienced hallucinations, which he tried to repeat by using drugs, especially peyote, and to reproduce in his painting, once back in San Francisco.

Smith's first films were abstract experiments, directly painted on film. According to the filmmaker (who candidly admitted his tendency to predate some of his works), they were made in 1939. More probably, the date should be moved forward five or six years.

The films shown at the Art Festival do not correspond to the ones which have remained today, and which have been numbered from 1 to 4. For more than thirty years, Smith manipulated his films, cutting and discarding, changing their structures or titles, making them fit his idea of a whole opus. As he wrote in the introduction to a 1963 catalogue, his films were to be seen all together or not at all.

Smith's works attained their final form in the mid-1970s. They are surprisingly expressive films, which strike even those who miss the artist's many hermetic references. The works painted on clear film stock (collected in an anthology, *Early Abstractions*, which does not always correspond to the rest of the opus) are worthy of Len Lye or Norman McLaren, although their complexity and intricate references or subtleties are foreign to those two more dynamic artists.

Unlike Smith's other films, *Film No. 5* was given a title, *Homage to Oskar Fischinger*; it featured multicoloured circles recalling those animated by the German master in *Kreise*. *Film No. 7* is a masterpiece of Smith's first phase. It contains

> very intricate, multi-layered images rephotographed by repeated rear-screen projection to build up elaborate constructs reminiscent of Kandinsky's later geometric paintings, moving in a vibrant, organic, truly symphonic interlacing [. . .]. The soft luminescence of the rephotographed images reminds us continually that we are watching a movie of a movie, like reflections in parallel mirrors, opening the aggressively flat screen into a conceptual infinity.[51]

Film No. 12 (named *The Magic Feature* by Jonas Mekas, and conventionally known as *Heaven and Earth Magic*), belongs to Smith's most fascinating and meaningful chapter. '[It] was originally about six hours long, and then it was edited down, first to a two-hour version, and then to a one-hour version', recalled Smith.[52]

Filmed between 1950 and 1960, this black-and-white work is a story-without-a-story, alternating many images in an inextricable turmoil of references, hints, symbols and metaphors. Bright, white cuttings of objects from the nineteenth century show up against a black background:

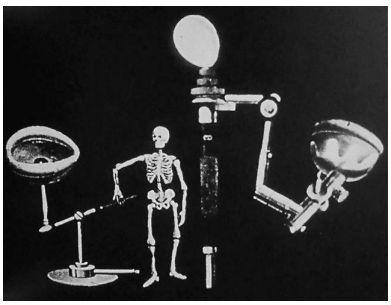

Figure 1.4 Harry Smith, Heaven and Earth Magic, 1950–60.

[51] Moritz, 'Non-Objective Film', in David Curtis and Richard Francis (eds.), *Film as Film – Formal Experiment in Film, 1910–1975*, London: Hayward Gallery and Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979.

[52] Adams Sitney, 'Harry Smith Interview', *Film Culture*, No. 37, Summer 1965.

wheels, eggs, hammers, portraits, Egyptian mummies, watermelons, syringes, butterflies, crocodile-skin bags, birds, mannequins, drops, skulls, skeletons and wrestlers. The sound track features wind, voices, screams, bells, traffic and water noises. Although the images refer to Max Ernst's collages or to Joseph Cornell's 'boxes', the film narrative resembles the hermetic and symbolist languages of twentieth-century poetry. Smith bases his method and style on free association and analogy. He is like a poet who skips the passage of similitude and puts two seemingly unrelated elements side by side, so that they can reverberate on each other – or who builds a comprehensive discourse on banalities (T.S. Eliot's objective correlative). Smith's associations of seemingly insignificant images or compositions of apparently clumsy, taken-for-granted actions create a compact poem which is a long journey – an hypnotic experience – into the mind.[53]

In later films, Smith was more inclined towards 'live action'. His last known work, dating approximately from 1967, is the fifteen-minute *Film No. 16*, or *The Tin Woodman's Dream*. He admitted to being a magician and an alchemist, as well as the worshipper of innumerable sciences and parapsychology, arts, cults and experiences. This turbulent cultural and intellectual background that provides material for his art is also a whole field for critics to decode. The most appropriate judgement of Smith is probably Carol Berge's. As a poet judging another poet, with a witticism that would please Smith, she wrote:

> Flash of Beckett, yes, he is much with Beckett. Joyce a bit. Kafka of course. Bosch, Heinrich Kley. The other viewers are mentioning Jung. I don't give a damn for Jung but I know art when I see it.[54]

The Enigma of Hy Hirsh

Born in 1911 in Chicago, Hy Hirsh worked all his life as a camera operator and a photographer in advertising. In 1937, he turned to avant-garde cinema and collaborated on a few projects as a comic actor and a camera operator in San Francisco. A friend of Belson and Smith, he counselled the two artists during their first experiments and was inspired by them to create films of his own. In about a twelve-year span, Hirsh made a large number of films, in the United States first, then in The Netherlands and finally in Paris, where he died in 1960 of a heart attack.

His disorderly life and his lack of interest in his own works make Hirsch's conjecture about the actual form of his surviving works impossible, as some of them have been mutilated. Treating each showing as a happening, Hirsh edited and re-edited his films according to the need, favouring live-music over sound tracks and, at times, choosing multivision. In short, he acted as a choreographer of cinema, refusing to bring his films to completion. What is left shows a genial and uneasy jack-of-all-trades. Gifted with great visual and rhythmic sensitivity, vivacious taste and unrestrained vitality, Hirsh was probably too attracted by the novelty of the next experiment to complete the artistic themes he had just discovered.

Chasse de touches (The Chase of Brushstrokes) is a beautiful, elegant graphic game, marred only by a banal ending of fireworks. The film employs the same technique of drawing in dense oils used in the late 1940s by John Whitney.[55] *Come Closer* is a festive, carnival-like three-dimensional experiment, best viewed with 3D glasses, which is held together by a sure-handed use of form and rhythm. *Scratch Pad* mixes graffiti on film stock and live action, while *Gyromorphosis* frames the close-up of a metallic structure as a three-dimensional sculpture, and enriches it with superpositions. *Autumn Spectrum* is a 'liquid' film, edited with live-action shots of water effects, reflections and waves; it is similar to *Défense d'afficher* (Post No Bills), a sequence of peeled-off walls and pieces of old posters.

Hirsh's finest remaining work is *Eneri* (almost certainly made for 3D) which recalls McLaren's *Around Is Around* or Alexeïeff's *Fumées* (Smoke, 1951); a complex film, it includes a brilliant use of the split screen and a reappearance of Hirsh's fireworks theme (presented here in a figuratively coherent manner).[56]

All this happened in San Francisco. In 1954, the soul of the Cinema Festival, Frank Stauffacher, died. With him,

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[53] For a study of Harry Smith's work and a description of *Heaven and Earth Magic*, see P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 270–300.

[54] Carol Berge, 'The Work of Harry Smith', *Film Culture*, No. 37, Summer 1956.

[55] For more information on John Whitney, see pp. 129–130. When asked about this film by this writer, Whitney maintained that he never told Hirsh about this technique.

[56] Numerous other artists experimented with cinema within the Californian movement. Patricia Marx, an Australian landscape painter, was so influenced by Harry Smith that she turned to non-objective art. She made *Obmaru* (1951) and *Things to Come*, assisted by Jordan

the cohesive spirit of young artists discovering new worlds, no less than their use of the festival as a means of sharing their progress in such discoveries, also disappeared. In the mid-1950s, the artists began working with a spirited independence, and an attempted festival comeback did not succeed. By the 1960s, New York became the major centre for experimental animation.

The most important among Los Angeles independent animators was Saul Bass who, curiously enough, found room for his inventions within the Hollywood film industry. A famous designer and graphic artist, Bass (New York, 8 May 1920–Los Angeles, 25 April 1996) was commissioned by director Otto Preminger to draw credit titles for *Carmen Jones* (1954). One year later, in Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm*, featuring Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak, Bass drew attention with his revolutionary approach. Putting aside the informative characteristics of the credit titles, he transformed them into a true preamble to the movie, with its own narrative and figurative importance.

Afterward, Bass produced title credits for innumerable films, including *The Seven Year Itch* by Billy Wilder, *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Michael Anderson (for whom Bass created a delightful animated sequence), *Saint Joan and Bonjour Tristesse*, as well as *Anatomy of a Murder* by Otto Preminger. Bass was also a favourite of Alfred Hitchcock's with *Vertigo* (in which Bass collaborated with John Whitney, responsible for many of the obsession scenes), *North by Northwest* and *Psycho*. In later years, Bass directed one live-action film (*Phase IV*, 1973) and won an Academy Award for one of his short animated films (*Why Man Creates*, 1968).

Bass's avant-garde drawings led to advancement in Hollywood graphic culture, although his sequences were actually works of art direction as opposed to works of avant-garde cinema. In the 1950s, their influence extended all over the world to those artists who tried to bring animation into the circle of 'serious', more sophisticated, graphics.[57]

The Canadian Phenomenon

Canadian animation was able to boast an avant-garde production which was state of the art in style and form. Still, the goal of the Film Board was to perform a public service rather than finance young artists. An anecdote tells

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Belson who animated her drawings. In *Obmaru*, a film inspired by the traditional culture of New Zealand, she showed hands, feet and ocean symbols in 'sandy' images.

Denver Sutton made some abstract films from 1948 to 1950, of which *Film Abstraction No. 2* and *Film Abstraction No. 4* have survived. Elwood Decker filmed mobile, three-dimensional sculptures made of wire in *Color Fragments* (1949). Martin Metal, who studied at Chicago's Institute of Design with László Moholy-Nagy, filmed *Color* (1947, a constructivist film) and *Form Evolution* (1949). Robert Howard, a San Francisco painter, filmed *Meta* (1947), featuring a sequence of fluid forms obtained by dropping oil colours on water. In 1951, La Jolla photographer Lynn Fayman made *Color in Motion* (which was divided into *Greensleeves* and *Sophisticated Vamp* in 1958) and *Red Dot*.

Dorsey Alexander, a painter and graphic artist from Berkeley, began producing silent, black-and-white, abstract films in 1947. His first titles were *Mood, Improvisation* and *Dime Store* (this last is considered the best) followed, in 1948, by *Life and Death of a Sphere*, a cycle of forms based on the circle. In 1948, Leonard Tregillus and Ralph Luce made *No Credit*. It was one of the first times clay was used for abstract purposes. In 1949, they repeated the experiment in *Proem*.

Musicians also were attracted by abstract cinema. This was the case with Hal McCormick who showed his *Suite No. 2* at the 1947 Art in Cinema Festival. The film was followed by the interesting *Compendium of Marvels*, divided into a first part of animated comic cut-outs, and a second part of abstract and geometric drawings. In 1957, Jane Conger, who had been a student at the California School of Fine Arts and was at the time Jordan Belson's wife, produced *Logos*, a two-minute film based on forms resembling snow crystals and accompanied by music from Henry Jacobs (musician of the Vortex Concerts). In 1959, she experimented again with *Odds and Ends*.

[57] Los Angeles had a few experimental filmmakers of its own. Charles Eames was a successful advertising artist when, in 1951, he filmed *Blacktop*, an essay on the reflections of light on water and on the bubbles that water produces upon impact with pavement. *Parade* (1959) features marching animated toys and *Communications Primer* (1953) gave the first proof of Eames' graphic skills.

Art Clokey (Arthur Farrington, Detroit, 12 October 1921–Los Osos, California, 8 January 2010) created the abstract work *Gumbasia* (1953), in which he synchronized abstract forms of clay to jazz music. The film was viewed by 20th Century Fox producer Sam Engel, who suggested a commercial adaptation. The result was the television series *Gumby*, (1956), shown on NBC. The *Davy and Goliath* series (1961–1975) followed, and in the 1980s the ninety-nine episodes of the new *Gumby Adventures* (packaged as thirty-three half-hour shows).

Donald Bevis made *Danse macabre* when he was still a student at the University of Southern California. Later on, with financing from the film collector and distributor Raymond Rohauer, he filmed *Parade* and *String Time*, television interpretations of two *scherzos* by Jacques Ibert, as well as *Whistle Stop*, based on a jazz piece, *Night Train*, and featuring abstract animation of objects. *Carnival* followed, with music by Darius Milhaud. Hank Stockert should be remembered for *Scopes 2*, an abstract film made with the oscilloscope technique and an electronic sound track by Henry Jacobs.

Figure 1.5 McLaren at work.

of a bureaucrat's furious opposition to McLaren's *Begone Dull Care* on the ground that the public's money had been wasted on useless experiments. Dissatisfied with the lack of creativity involved in their jobs, some of the most talented artists left the Film Board. Filmmaker Pierre Hébert wrote:

> After the war the style of the animation department at the Film Board underwent radical changes. A sort of professionalization came about. Works became more and more polished and precise, whereas in wartime animation was performed with everything and nothing, and certainly not with the cel process. Some professional standards, as well as the victory of graphic style over 'animated style' came about – these were well-drawn films, somewhat similar to those of UPA, with accurate scene design.[58]

The Canadian animators, limited in number, joined Californian 'rebels' in their new stylistic directions, as the bearers of a revolutionary message – full creative freedom. In fact, Canada would become a patron of animation in the following decade.

Finally, the 1950s were witness to another milestone, the creation of the first Canadian animated feature film. Entitled *Le village enchanté* (The Enchanted Village, 1955), it resulted from the efforts of Marcel and Réal Racicot, young filmmakers who learned their trade at the National Film Board (NFB). Based on Quebec legends from the colonial age, the film was amateurish, prompting condescending reviews.

Norman McLaren

Born in Stirling, Scotland, on 11 April 1914, Norman McLaren showed a precocious inclination towards the arts. His father, an interior designer, had a natural interest in painting and did not refuse his son's request to study at the School of Fine Arts in Glasgow, in 1933. There, young McLaren discovered cinema; he organized a school film club, tirelessly viewing films by the contemporary masters, the Soviet filmmakers and the German 'expressionists'. Eventually, he discovered a 35mm projector which had been abandoned in the school basement

[58] Pierre Hébert, *Rétrospective du cinéma canadien – Animation ONF 1947–1959*, Montreal: Cinémathèque Canadienne, 1967.

and which was practically out of order. McLaren repaired it, hoping to use the machine to project his own film. Not owning a camera, he thought of painting directly on stock. He immersed an old positive film in a water bowl in order to detach the emulsion and, after two weeks, he began drawing coloured circles and dots on the transparent stock. Although this work did not result in an actual film worth projecting, it was a promising experiment.

From 1934 to 1936, McLaren made some 16mm films, which obtained praise from the school directors and which stood out in local festivals. They were live-action films, enriched with slow motion, special effects and colour; among them, *Hell Unltd.* (1936), a pacifist film that attacked the nationalists with a harshness uncommon to McLaren, took an appealing, direct stance against war and militarism.

In 1937, McLaren joined the General Post Office (GPO) in London, under the sponsorship of John Grierson and Alberto Cavalcanti; he worked with Len Lye, the artist who had preceded him in painting directly on film stock. There McLaren created two live-action documentaries and two animated shorts scherzos, *Money a Pickle* and *Love on the Wing* (both 1938). The latter film contained excerpts which had been painted on the frame; it was McLaren's first official use of this technique.

Having left the GPO, after a brief collaboration with the Film Centre in London, McLaren moved to the United States. He landed in New York in 1939, with three hundred dollars and the determination to work. After a job search of several months, he finally obtained financing from the Guggenheim Foundation for some very short films such as *Dots* and *Loops*. They were little more than two minutes long, again painted directly on the film frame. They featured coloured forms attracting and repelling, engulfing and then separating. The sound, also, was abstract, obtained through mechanical modification of the sound track. McLaren's interest in synthetic sound culminated with *Rumba*, a film without images, composed only of artificially obtained music. *Stars & Stripes* was more traditional, painted directly on film stock, with images referring to the American flag, featuring the popular song of the same name.

For his last film in New York, *Spook Sport*, McLaren worked with Mary Ellen Bute, author of abstract films. The effort was, however, faulty, satisfying neither McLaren nor, most likely, Bute. Meanwhile, John Grierson, who had been put in charge by the Canadian government to organize a national office for film production, invited McLaren to renew their collaboration in Ottawa. Still, in April 1941, Grierson made an agreement with Disney for five cartoons of war propaganda. Later, he entrusted the job completely to McLaren. It is curious how these two diametrically opposed animators happened to compete at the same time, on the same topic. In Canada, the twenty-seven-year-old McLaren found favourable ground for his research. For two years, he created short films, with the precise goal of helping the Canadian war effort by moving citizens to buy Defence Bonds, explaining the danger of inflation and promoting savings. Those same films, *Hen Hop* (1942), *Dollar Dance* (1943) and *V for Victory* (1941) were also extraordinary experiments in filmmaking.

In 1943, McLaren was asked to organize a separate department of the National Film Board of Canada that would be dedicated to animation and to hire the most promising young animators, students of art schools and amateurs. As a consequence, George Dunning (the future author of *Yellow Submarine*), Jean-Paul Ladouceur, René Jodoin, Jim McKay and Grant Munro joined the NFB. In 1944, in collaboration with Jodoin, McLaren made a film with cut paper, *Alouette* (The Lark) which marked the beginning of a second stage for experimentation.

By illustrating three popular songs of French Canada, *C'est l'aviron* (It Is the Paddle, 1943), *La poulette grise* (The Young Grey Hen, 1947) and *La-haut sur ces montagnes* (Up There on Those Mountains, 1945), McLaren perfected two techniques which also represented two styles: the perpetual travelling forward in space (*C'est l'aviron*), and the continuous metamorphosis of pastel drawings (*La poulette grise*). He applied an analogous process – the drawing making itself – to pictorial works, the first of which was *A Little Phantasy on a 19th Century Painting*, an elaboration of Arnold Boecklin's *The Isle of the Dead*. This film, however, was one of the least successful works by the Scottish animator. Similar defects emerged in the second film *A Phantasy*, an elaboration of a painting vaguely inspired by Tanguy.

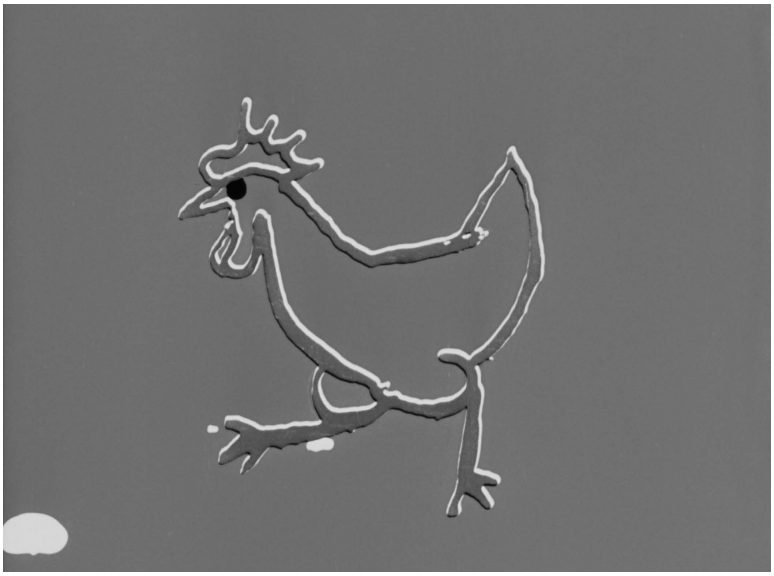

Figure 1.6 Norman McLaren, *Hen Hop*, 1942. Hen Hop ©1942 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

In 1947, McLaren returned to painting directly on film. This time, he wanted to escape the slavery of frames by painting, instead, lengthwise on the stock. The first attempt at this new technique was entitled *Fiddle-De-Dee*, lasting four minutes. The second, more complex film was the ten-minute-long *Begone Dull Care* (1949, with jazz music by Oscar Peterson's trio). *Begone Dull Care* won several prizes and praise by Picasso: 'Finally, something new!'

In 1949, McLaren left for China on a mission sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the goal of teaching visual communication to the local artists working on preventive medicine propaganda. He came back satisfied and spiritually enriched, reassuring his friends who had feared for his safety (at that time, the region of Szechuan where McLaren had worked had been the stage of the withdrawal of the nationalists and the advance of the revolutionary troops). In 1951, McLaren approached the problems of stereoscopy with *Now Is the Time (to Put On Your Glasses)* and *Around Is Around*.[59] One year later, he applied the frame-by-frame technique to live actors. In *Neighbours*, his colleagues Grant Munro and Jean-Paul Ladouceur played two neighbours who like and respect each other until a matter of boundaries (a flower born on the dividing line between their two lots) leads to hate, violence and mutual destruction. The effects of the frame-by-frame process on human movement – called pixilation since then[60] – are surprising. The original work was awarded an Oscar. McLaren received the telegram of congratulations in India, where he was involved in a social project. He answered, candidly: 'Thanks, but who is Oscar?'

In 1954, he made *Blinkity Blank*, by engraving black stock with a pin and a small blade. After the comic *Rythmetic* (1956), *A Chairy Tale* (1957) and *Le merle* (The Thrush, 1958), he returned to

[59] Most filmgoers, since 1951, have seen these films in their 2D version only. The stereoscopic version is much more exciting and rich; especially rich is *Now Is the Time*, made as a rough exercise and therefore free and nonchalant. *Around Is Around* is charming, too, but arty and overpolished.

[60] McLaren had gone to the movies. In Frank Capra's *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), the judge of the trial against Longfellow Deeds (Gary Cooper) is surprised by a word uttered by two old sisters who are witnessing. One of the attending doctors says: 'Perhaps I can explain, Your Honour. The word pixilated is an early American expression, derived from the word *pixies*, meaning elves. They would say, 'The pixies had got him' as we nowadays would say, 'That man is balmy'. In other words, pixilation was the animation that made people look balmy.

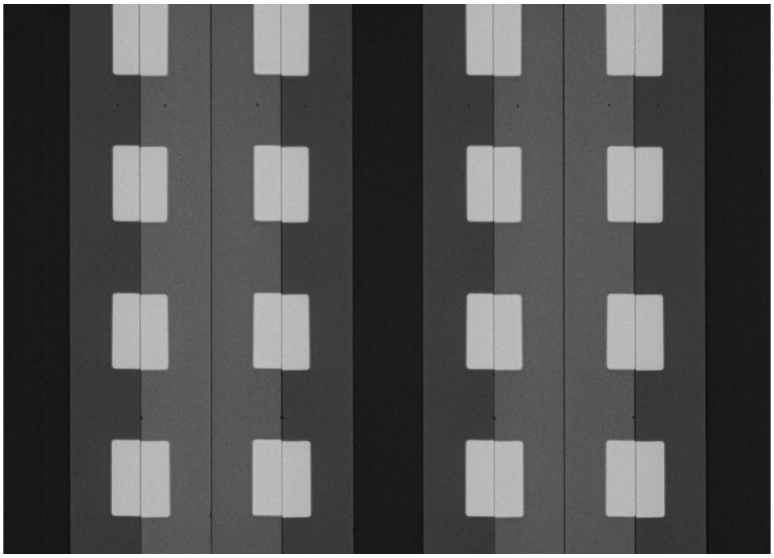

Figure 1.7 Norman McLaren, *Synchromy*, 1971. Synchromy ©1971 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

abstractionism. *Lines Vertical* (1960) featured the dance of a line which splits in two, then in four and so on, eventually returning to a single line. This pure, geometric abstraction takes place on a background of pale colours. *Lines Horizontal* followed: a similar film, transposed on the other Cartesian axis by means of a prism. After *Opening Speech* (1960), *Canon* (1964) and *Mosaic* (1965), McLaren directed *Pas de deux* (1968), probably his masterpiece and certainly one of the best animated films overall.

The purity and essentiality of the images are enchanting. In a black limbo, a ballerina dances alone; then she's joined by a male dancer. The light is so sharp that the human figures look like shining lines. Dobre Constantin's panpipes and the additional sound and music by Ron Alexander and Maurice Blackburn are no less pure. Little by little, the bodies multiply (the effect being obtained with the optical printer on slow motion images) until they fray and become almost abstract, a dance of crystalline light. Although stunningly beautiful to watch and to listen to, the film is not a gratuitous exercise; it has a clear meaning. In classical ballet, every pas de deux is the story of the meeting of a woman and a man, a story generally of falling in love; in this case, the solitude of the woman, at the beginning, is highlighted by her dancing with the duplicate image of herself, and the joy of love, at the ending, by the blossoming of the repeated images of the two bodies.

The choreography was created by Ludmila Chiriaeff (1924–1996), one of the founders of the Canadian school of ballet. 'From a strictly choreographic standpoint', writes Ambra Senatore, 'it's a highly refined, but not particularly innovative work; especially considering that those years were full of experiments and research, that they were the years of the post-modern dance. [McLaren] was probably interested in the linearity and cleanliness of academic dancing, and in a pattern of ballet that audience could easily recognize, in order to better intervene with his own cinematographic experimentation'.[61]

In 1969, the artist made the sound track, with music by Bach, for his *Spheres*, a film which had been lying in a drawer for twenty years. He then released *Synchromy* (1971), simultaneously featuring the music of the eye and of the ear, and *Ballet adagio* (1972), using the technique of slow motion – a film in which baroque music (Albinoni's *Adagio*) corresponds to 'baroque' images of unreleased impulses and knotty muscles. McLaren's last work was *Narcissus* (1983), the conclusion to the trilogy about

[61] '*La danza, Pas de deux e Norman McLaren*', in Giannalberto Bendazzi and Raffaella Scrimitore (eds.), *Il cinema d'animazione e la nuova critica*, Milan: CUEM, 2006.

dance. For reasons related to production, health and perhaps lack of inspiration, the completed film differed from the initial project and was unsatisfactory in several aspects, lacking the visual creativity and the figurative precision which had characterized the artist's finest works. The filmmaker died in Montreal on 26 January 1987.

The events of McLaren's life mingled with his work and research, which took place within the economic and social security offered by the Canadian National Film Board. With the very rare position as a 'court artist inside a democratic state', McLaren was a producer of culture, supported and financed so that he could express himself. This privilege was even more unique as his films were never made for a large public, but contrarily, were the work of a tenacious, hermit-like personality, quite isolated from his contemporaries.

At a first viewing, McLaren's work usually baffles the spectator. The exuberance of the unusual techniques, the absence of a 'meaning' and the apparent coldness are difficult elements for an audience used to other means of visual communication. Although many years have passed since Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, many audiences have not yet acquired a taste for non-objective art, including non-objective cinematographic art. Undoubtedly, McLaren's works, not all of which are abstract, have 'content'. For instance, *Neighbours* and *A Chairy Tale* are two short, enjoyable philosophic tales, and some of his abstract films are rich with figurative or narrative passages. The inclusion of content, however, was McLaren's least concern. In his words, animation is not the art of moving drawings, but of the drawn movement; the key is not what one finds in a drawing, but what is created between drawings.

> Every film for me is a kind of dance, because the most important thing in film is motion, movement. No matter what it is you're moving, whether it's people or objects or drawings; and in what way it's done, it's a form of dance.

Once more, we have the distinction between abstract film and music, rhythm of light and rhythm of sound. Abstract films are like a symphony, from which ordinarily one does not require any rational 'meaning', and which often lacks narrative and figurative content. McLaren's style consists especially of rhythm and coherence (or even fusion) of the visual rhythm with the rhythm of sound. Just as a musician writes parts for different instruments, McLaren gives rhythm to human figures, objects, drawings and graffiti on film.

The scholar who chooses to evaluate McLaren's opus as if it were the work of a composer will notice that *Blinkity Blank* is more than just a clever discovery by the inventor of the technique of graffiti on black film stock. The film is a passage of visual jazz as it had never before been conceived. The black spaces, the dark moments, have the same meaning and the same effect as certain pauses in contemporary music. Conditions of perception are created in which even flashing images, perhaps lasting one frame only, acquire life and strength, and the line of light erupting from the obscure background weaves and dances in tempos which have never before existed.

'I am not simply "*un auteur expérimental*", but also, or even rather, "*un auteur expérimenté*"', said McLaren.[62] His complex personality escapes facile definition; a spiritual descendant of Leonardo da Vinci, he considered science, art, technique and style as one whole, belonging to the same system of values. For him, it was important to have a technical challenge; he often researched the technique first and later established the subject of a film. Once he accepted the technical rationale, he accepted the creative challenge with a perfectly 'surreal' method: in the making of a film, he believed, animation is not premeditated, but evolves from day to day, with concrete and imaginary attributes deriving from a subconscious current which the artist himself, by his own admission, does not dare to control. McLaren's work is clearly marked with this perennial dialectic between applied reason and creative feeling. Just as he used graphics and a nearly Hellenic structural balance, he was also exuberant in the invention of sounds and images.[63]

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[62] Norman McLaren, letter to the author, 22 June 1972.

[63] In spite of their diversity, many works such as *Little Phantasy*, *Rhythmetic*, *Lines*, *Canon*, *Pas de deux* and *Synchromy* share the same clear-cut structure: 'introductory theme–development–return to theme'.

Synchromy, the work of his maturity, was a sort of summation of his long research. Here, the same images that produced music on the sound track had been impressed on the visual film by the author.[64] The movement of images *is* the movement of sounds: the ambitious goal of composing a work in which image and sound coincide is reached here more than anywhere else.[65] Paraphrasing Shakespeare, Gavin Millar remarked, 'the eye hears, the ear sees'. With meticulous research and rigorous logical construction, McLaren displays his artistic taste, almost disarmingly unsystematic in the use of colour.

> 'I did not make this a B&W film, as it would have been less tolerable to look at, and also because I was trying to use the colour functionally wherever possible. True, I kept the decorative aspect in mind, but I used colour also with certain relationships to the sound in mind.
>
> The *loudness–quietness* gamut was often related to the degree of *colour saturation* and tone-value (luminosity) contrast. For example, for a pianissimo passage I would use colours of low saturation, and low mutual contrast in luminosity. For *fortissimo* I would use maximum saturation, maximum light-value of the colour, irrespective of which hue was used [. . .] These are my general principles, which I have not theorized about, but only felt intuitively, and which I used *loosely* in many abstract films, such as *Begone Dull Care*, *Mosaic* and *Lines*.[66]

A loner in cinema, McLaren never forgot his social role as an artist.

> I'd always been interested in human problems, but particularly when as a teenager [. . .] Currently I am detached from human problems but [. . .] two months after I went to China the communists took over and I saw what was happening in our village because of them, and a lot of good things happened. [. . .] So I became fairly sympathetic to the new regime. [. . .] When I came back to Canada, it was just at the beginning of the Korean War and I felt myself being estranged to some extent, or being pulled between one culture and another, one side and another side – and [with] the tension that built up in me because of this I produced *Neighbours*.

As to why he did not return often to the theme of *Neighbours*, McLaren explained that it depended on his interest in abstractionism.

> Abstract cinema [. . .] is like music, which is an abstraction. It doesn't refer to things outside of itself [. . .] I've been really concerned about exploring the field of abstraction; in other words visual ideas that do not refer to anything outside of themselves.[67]

The concepts McLaren expressed in his films have various degrees of acceptability: the antiwar indignation of *Neighbours* is sincere, but the fable of human greed and egotism as a source of war is quite simplistic. In fact, McLaren is not a polemicist. If *Neighbours* was a good film, this was due to its cinematographic 'form'.

McLaren also had a comic side, which should not be overlooked. Subtle and discrete, in a very British manner, his humour filters throughout his productions, from the films which had been painted on stock (*Hen Hop* featured a hen who lost her legs), to the graffiti (as in some sequences of *Blinkity*

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[64] Starting from the fact that the optical track is formed by images (optical translations of sound vibrations, which are read by an electronic instrument and later retransformed into sound at the time of projection), McLaren researched for years a way to obtain sounds not existing in nature, by drawing images to be inserted in the sound track. He finally obtained six 'synthetic' octaves, on which he composed the music he later illustrated in *Synchromy*.

[65] A very similar experiment had been made in 1933 by avant-garde artist László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) in *Tönendes ABC* (ABC of Sounds). He made letters of the alphabet, silhouettes and fingerprints produce noise on the sound track. This experiment did not have any immediate relevance until McLaren started his research. Work on the drawing of sound tracks was performed also in other countries, such as Germany (with Fischinger and Pfenninger) and the Soviet Union.

[66] Norman McLaren, letter to the author, 9 August 1972.

[67] Gavin Millar, *The Eye Hears and the Ear Sees*, post-production script for the documentary produced by the BBC and ONF, 1970.