

Defining "Animation": The Animated Film and the Emergence of the Film Bill

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Introduction

In this article I shall explore the position of animated films in the first decades of the cinema's existence. This will involve outlining not only how definitions of "animation" changed throughout this period, but also how these changing definitions were signs of major shifts in production, distribution and exhibition. One of the key points of this piece will be to trace how different kinds of film - the focus being on animated films - came more and more to be recognised as precisely that: *different*. Issues of product differentiation have been discussed before in relation to the emerging Hollywood studio system (e.g. Staiger in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1985). Such product differentiation works together with industrial standardisation and streamlining, and is a defining characteristic of modern capitalist business practice, which operates around the apparent contradiction between repetition and novelty. A similar process can be seen to be at work in relation to the increasingly sophisticated exhibition practices adopted by the people showing films: the refining of the early period's (i.e. up to c. 1906) "variety" system of presenting films, into the "film bill", where the range of films on show was emphasised. Crucially though, there was not only an emphasis on range and variety, which had been there from the very start anyway, but also on some types of film being more important - a greater attraction - than others, which were subordinated. Thus I shall be tracing the historical moment at which longer, fictional films became the chief attraction on the film bill, but the main focus will be on how this shift impacted upon animated films. Indeed, the impact was such that production moved away from certain types of animation technique, such as the "retracing" method used by Winsor McCay, and the cel process became the standard. The main reason for this was that it was a system that best suited the new conditions of exhibition, providing a regular flow of short, animated cartoons, often as part of a split-reel package with other "supporting material" such as newsreels or educational shorts. The argument is not that these films were unimportant: on the contrary, they were vital to the system in that they added emphasis to the primary product, the narrative feature film. As we shall see though, the ultimate positioning of specific types of film was the result of complex historical forces. In many ways, this essay attempts to delineate similar terrain to that covered by Eric Smoodin (Smoodin, 1993). Or rather, it wishes to outline some of the issues and developments in this area in the period just prior to where Smoodin's excellent study begins.

Changing Definitions of "Animation"

One of the key points of this article is to trace when the terms "animated film" or "animation" (and related terms such as "animated cartoon") became consistently used to describe and categorise a specific type of film, but also to account for why such changes took place. Most definitions of animation tend to dwell upon the production process, and what marks out animation as different from live action film in these definitions resides in the

practical/technical details. This "how to do it" dimension is partly explicable as a tendency that has been encouraged by animators, deliberately to mark out their work as different. Thus, the (comical) emphasis on animation as labour-intensive and time-consuming that we see in Winsor McCay's work can be seen as part of this tendency, as can the "self-figuration" or "lightning sketch" tropes seen in other animators' work (e.g. the Fleischers' *Out of the Inkwell* series). There is a concentration on animation's distinctive features at the level of form and production process, which serve to mark out these films as different from other types of film, with particular play being made of their "magical" or novelty value.

A commonplace phrase that occurs in definitions of animation - and another signifier of this concentration on the production process - is "frame-by-frame", referring to the act of frame-by-frame manipulation, or the construction of a film one frame at a time (e.g. Small and Levinson, 1989). However, it must be remembered that in the early cinema context the chronophotographic experiments of Muybridge were in very recent memory, and the notion of all "moving pictures" being "animated" was a common one. Indeed, in the period from 1895 to around 1907, and even later, the term "animated" often referred generically to *all* films that were shown, and terms such as "animated photography" were commonplace when referring to films in general, and not just those where some sort of frame-by-frame manipulation had taken place. As Kristin Thompson states:

The term "animated film" meant not just cartoons but any motion picture film ... As late as 1912, Frederick A. Talbot makes cartoons a mere subset of his lengthy section on "trick films" in *Moving Pictures; How They Are Made and Worked*. Animation, then, constituted a minor aspect of special effects; quite possibly the majority of audience members at this period had never seen a cartoon. By 1920, however, E. G. Lutz is able to write a whole book on animation and entitle it *Animated Cartoons*. At some point in the intervening eight years, animation had become recognised as a distinct type of filmmaking. (1980: 106-107)

Thompson argues that the ultimate position of animated cartoons in Hollywood must be read in relation to the production and exhibition contexts and what she sees as the "disruptive properties of animation" (108). In other words, cartoons came to be positioned in such a way that their potentially disruptive formal properties were contained and they were placed in a secondary, supporting role in the range of products produced by classical Hollywood. I do not disagree with the basic tenets of Thompson's argument, but I would like to trace in more detail precisely how animation emerged and became such a clearly separate type of film. Thompson's account focuses on the ways in which cartoon animation was distinguished from live-action filmmaking, but in doing this she tends to concentrate on the formal aspects of these texts. What is glossed over somewhat is the contextual detail of how and why these films came to be perceived as different. This has implications at the levels of production, distribution and exhibition. Certainly, cel animation - the specific focus of Thompson's study - was a development in terms of the production process but, as we shall see, this development was strongly related to changes in distribution and exhibition. It is important to remember, in fact, that cel animation as a specific production technique - and the cartoons produced by it - should not be confused with, or allowed to stand in for, animation as a whole. (The same might be said of using the term "film" or "movies" when referring only to live action films). Michael Frierson's discussion of clay animation is useful in this respect, reminding us as it does that animation is an extraordinarily diverse field (Frierson, 1994). However, the ultimate dominance of cel techniques and, therefore, the secondary status of other animation

techniques such as clay, puppets or cut-outs (which were very much more prevalent in Britain and continental Europe) was a result of their applicability in a standardised industry. What was potentially a very varied approach to filmmaking, producing animated films with a range of techniques, soon became limited by the demands of a certain regime. In short, our conception of what the term "animation" might mean was changed by the hegemony of one mode of production, but this hegemony is only explicable by looking at the wider contexts of production, distribution and exhibition.

Changing Contexts of Production, Distribution and Exhibition

In the first few years of the cinema, the films were short, simple, and existed purely to raise interest in the apparatus, which was seen as the exploitable commodity. Films were sold outright to the showmen-exhibitors, who took much of the creative responsibility for juxtaposing these one-shot films so as to create an interesting programme (Musser, 1990: 258ff). There were a range of types of film present - scenic presentations of distant places, (often re-enacted) news events, quotidian views or actualities, comic sketches, and some trick films which might experiment with the mechanical capabilities of the apparatus (ibid.: 259, 302, 312-13). There were a number of possible exhibition strategies in the early period, as Musser notes of the Biograph of 1902: "a typical Biograph program relied on a variety format of short actualities with a few trick films and comedies thrown in for relief" (312). As he goes on to suggest, however, the Biograph shows suffered in comparison with those of the rival Vitagraph, not because of lack of quality of the films themselves, but because the latter were more innovative in terms of programming. Thus: "[n]o news films or multi-shot productions were included on the [Biograph] program. ... travel scenes of Turkey were scattered throughout rather than consolidated into a single headline attraction as Vitagraph was then doing" (313). What this appears to demonstrate for Musser is that, as early as 1902, certain types of film were perceived to be more valuable on the bill than others (e.g. "news films" as opposed to the rather more quotidian "actualities"). But not only that - the emphasis on the exhibitor actively shaping the material is clear, whether this is in the sense of "creating" multi-shot films by juxtaposing different, but similarly-themed, one-shot films, or deliberately emphasising how varied the bill was by sequencing diverse/contrasting films.

What interests us here is why and how certain films came to be positioned on this programme or bill. It is the changes in how film was viewed as a commodity, and how the film business actually functioned, that are central here. It is important to keep in mind the distinction between the terms "film" and "cinema" in this respect. The former should be seen as the actual textual artefacts, whether feature-length narratives, newsreels, or animated cartoons; the latter should be seen as a broader term, which encapsulates "the film business", from production through distribution to exhibition. In many ways, my argument here is one that explores the ways in which these two terms have been used interchangeably, or the distinction between them blurred to some extent. In order to understand why specific types of filmic text began to emerge, and be positioned in the way that they were, we need to look at the institutional/industrial (or "film business") aspects. Or, to put it another way, the textual is inextricable from the contextual. For, over the next decade (i.e. up to c. 1907) there were two important shifts in emphasis, neither of which were production-related: firstly, the move over to renting of films rather than outright purchase; secondly, the move to fixed-site exhibition. What impact did such shifts have on the development of animation?

Elsaesser cites a number of factors in institutional changes in the early period of cinema history, but "most fundamental of all [was] the standardisation of an agreed commodity,

recognised by producers and audiences alike" (1990: 154). Once the nickelodeon boom brought increased demand via the fixed-siting of exhibition, there were other changes, the most "momentous event [being] the transition from single reel to multi-reel film, and the changes this brought in the structure of the industry, the textual organisation of the film, and the commodity form of the product" (154-155). The problem here is that, in correctly pointing to the ways in which *one* kind of film - the fictional narrative - gradually increased in length and commodity-worth to become the main attraction, the fact that the film industry was actually producing a *range* of different films is being rather underplayed. Certainly it is true that live-action, narrative films (later moving to feature-length), soon became recognised as the chief commodity, but they were only really meaningful in the context of the whole show, which consisted of a variety of filmic items - including animation - and often also live performances, some of which would be prestigious and spectacular stage shows, especially once the exhibition of films moved into "picture palaces", after c. 1915 (see Koszarski: 34-61).

In terms of a study of animation, the result of these changes in business practice was an increasingly marked notion of "the animated film". During the period 1908 to 1915, the gradual differentiation of various parts of the film bill took place, a process that reached its peak in the mature classical years (i.e. after the introduction of synchronised sound). Thus, the idea of "animated films" was realigned to mean the highly specific "animated cartoons", rather than the general sense of "animated photography" mentioned above. Similarly, the various kinds of actualities evolved into newsreels, which could include the quotidian, the extraordinary, and the staged/reconstructed, depending on what news story was being represented. Last but not least, narrative live action films became longer and more complex, resulting in the category "feature film" - a multi-reel production, often with stars, and crucially, advertised as the main (feature) attraction. However, the increasing primacy of one type of film did not mean that other types of film disappeared: they evolved and were refined in order to fit their position in the new exhibition regime (to coin a phrase - they were made to "fit the bill").

One of the potential difficulties here is that we need to account for the reasons why a profit-motivated business should follow such a pathway. As Janet Staiger has suggested, the film business in its first few years "marketed [films] on the basis of the technological novelty of moving pictures". However, this novelty was short-lived and would not support an industry that required a constant turnover of audiences. She continues:

The problem was to find new rationales for consumers to repeatedly purchase the product. The solution was to shift the publicity emphasis from films as a technological novelty to a variety of consumer appeals: stories, genres, spectacle, information, new novelties. Selling the product by differentiating it . . . resulted in a need for a varied and increased supply of films (Staiger, 1985: 114).

As the move to fixed-site exhibition increased demand, however, it became clear that this demand could only be met by a strictly regulated production schedule and, for obvious reasons, fictional narratives lent themselves to such regulated production (which was linked to equally streamlined distribution and exhibition). As these films increased in duration, to become the aforementioned "features", more and more industry resources were poured into their creation. But the question remains: if live action feature films were the chief commodity, and the investment in such narrative fiction films was due to the relative ease

with which they could be planned and executed in comparison with news events/documentaries, then why did the industry continue to bother making these other, increasingly subsidiary films? This is a particularly vital question in relation to the animated film, which was, typically, highly labour-intensive and expensive in comparison to live action films.

There are two factors in the answer to this question, intimately related: variety and marketability. Since the beginnings of cinema there were a number of ways in which the notion of "variety" was important. Film shows were more often than not only one attraction on a bill of entertainment that would include live performances. Within the film show itself, strategies were used to emphasise the variety of what was on offer. Such ways of structuring an afternoon's or evening's entertainment were carried over when films became the predominant attraction, and this meant that a whole range of different types of film had a value which went beyond their ostensible length and production costs. In short, the main feature was only "main" by virtue of its juxtaposition with these supplementary films, and the variety of the film bill was something which remained the foundation of exhibition practices, with few alterations, for much of the next five decades.

The variety of products on offer therefore became one of the keys to effective marketing. In many respects, the promise of a range of cinematic goods, shown in comfortable surroundings, was what people paid for, rather than particular films. This is borne out by the words of the exhibitors themselves: the publicity tag-line of Balaban And Katz's Chicago-based Publix chain of theatres (c. mid-1920s on) was "You don't need to know what's playing at a Publix house. It's bound to be the best show in town" (quoted in Gomery, 1985: 225); Marcus Loew (the head of Loew's Inc., the theatre chain that owned MGM) is reported to have said, "We sell tickets to theaters, not movies" (quoted in Koszarski, 1990: 9). Various historians have documented the ways in which non-filmic aspects of the cinema-going experience played a crucial role in increasing its appeal (e.g. Gomery, 1992). Such factors as the opulence of the theatres, helpful staff, comfort and so on, must be seen as only one strategy though; the show itself was clearly vital, and the show had become a large number of clearly differentiated items, which stressed the abundance of going to the cinema. As Russell Merritt points out, nickelodeons began by showing "a miscellany of brief adventure, comedy, or fantasy films that lasted about an hour", and they readily adapted exhibition techniques found in vaudeville and "enhanced their programs with sing-alongs, inexpensive vaudeville acts, and illustrated lectures." (Merritt, 1985: 85) There is some imprecision, though, in the way Merritt states "movies were always the main attraction" (ibid.) in this "variety" mode of exhibition: again, the term "film" or "movie" is used as a catch-all category that glosses over a number of crucial distinctions, and thereby tends to conflate such terms with the highly specific live action film.

Animation, Distribution, and the Film Bill

Up to the early 1910s, however, there were few instances of animated films as we now know them. The animated films that were made were predominantly trick films which used the stop-motion technique, and they were exhibited and recognised as a distinct form or type of film only insofar as they included the kind of mechanical trickery which had a novelty impact. As Crafton has demonstrated, the trick film "object animation" experiments of people such as Blackton (from c. 1907), followed by the *dessins animés* of Emile Cohl (from c. 1908), played a major part in the emerging category of animation (Crafton, 1990: 115-152). He argues though that they functioned as "program lighteners" in the range of subjects

shown: "there were travelogues, humorous stories, educational and historical features, and . . . a *feerie* or trick film [like] Cohl's *L'Omelette fantastique*." The appeal of such films for exhibitors was that they helped "to round out a selection of subjects that would appeal to all and offend no one" (Crafton, 1990: 105). Thus, these films were an integral part of a rounded film bill, offering a range of entertainments under the rubric of a "show".

However, it is apparent that the appeal of these films was limited in the sense that such novelty could - and indeed did - wear off. Or rather, the novelty value of animated films needed to work within the parameters of regular production schedules and distribution/exhibition practices that positioned animation as a certain type of film, with a distinct place on the film bill. In other words, it became a paradox of sorts: a regular, "conventional" novelty. If we look at Winsor McCay's *Gertie* (1914), for instance, we can see traces of how such an animated film was perceived at the time. This, then, is indicative of some of the shifts in distribution and exhibition that were contributing to changes in the definition of the animated film. It is interesting to compare the ways in which *Gertie* was advertised in two different trade papers, and how different discourses are drawn upon, different "versions" of what animation offered to the cinema-goer. In *Variety* (19 December 1914: 44) there is a one-page ad for

Mr. Winsor McCay's Great Act . . . *Gertie*. She's a scream! She eats, drinks and breathes! - She laughs and cries! - Dances the tango, - Answers questions and obeys every command! - Yet, she lived millions of years before man inhabited this Earth and has never been seen since!!

Most of the page is taken up by a large cartoon rendering of *Gertie* herself, with a very small McCay standing beneath her, holding a whip, and the line across the bottom of the page is "The Greatest Animal Act in the World!!!" McCay had presented a "live" version of *Gertie*, wherein he, dressed as a ringmaster, would appear live on the vaudeville stage and proceed to exhort *Gertie* to perform. The ad is actually for the film version of the *Gertie* act, in which the sequences with *Gertie* were bookended by a live action intro/outro involving the familiar McCay device of the wager, along with inter-titles showing McCay's orders to *Gertie*. (There is a review of the "live" stage version of the *Gertie* act in the same issue of *Variety*: 26). However, it is clear that the film is being positioned as an "act", something for vaudeville audiences to wonder at, but to do so within the parameters of the vaudeville experience. (The tone of this ad is partly explicable by its location too: in the trade paper for vaudeville, *Variety*.)

In *Moving Picture World*, on the other hand (26 December 1914: 1863), the ad for *Gertie* stresses other aspects of the film, not least the fact that it is a film, or rather "ONE REEL of 10,000 hand drawings [by] Winsor McCay The Greatest Cartoonist in the World". It is "the greatest comedy film ever made". The ad also notes McCay's other achievements - "Creator of *Little Nemo*, *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend*, and other newspaper cartoons" - and the only visual accompaniment to the text is a modest and sober photographic portrait of McCay. Instead of the "roll up! roll up!" vaudeville/circus discourse of the *Variety* ad, this one stresses the rather more "scientific" aspects ("*Gertie* is a trained prehistoric monster which long-haired scientists call DINOSAURUS"), as well as elements which highlight the technology (one reel, 10,000 drawings) and institutional position of the text (a hand-drawn novelty, by the great McCay). Although the *Variety* ad makes a gesture towards "science" ("According to science this monster once ruled the planet . . ."), it is very much within a framework of the "live" vaudeville act, science as the point-of-departure for theatrical

wonder. *The Moving Picture World* ad, reasonably enough, dwells upon the more "cinematic" aspects of *Gertie*. This tension between animated films as, on the one hand, a novelty in terms of technique (or process) and, on the other, a novelty in terms of presentation, is something that resonates throughout the history of animated films. Rarely is it so pronounced as it is here, and this is partly due to the fact that *Gertie* was, in some respects, a unique work. However, it is indicative of some of the ways in which animated texts were being positioned differently at this point in cinema history.

The emergence of "modern" animation in the US, as typified by cartoons produced using streamlining procedures such as Barre's "slash" system and, ultimately the cel process patented by Hurd and Bray, came at a time of expansion in the film industry as a whole. Such expansion was both a cause and a consequence of shifts in how production, distribution and exhibition were developing. There was an increase in the demand for a regular supply of animated cartoon productions, prompted in all likelihood by the success of the appearance of animated cartoon series such as Cohl's *The Newlyweds* (from 1913), and other cartoons which utilised a series format, often - though not always - with series protagonists (Crafton, 1990: 162-166; 1993: 81-84, 259-299). These films were initially treated as novelty productions - in many respects one could say they assumed the mantle of "cinema-as-novelty" (cf. Thompson, 109) - but it is not solely due to this that they became essentially subsidiary forms of film. The processes of standardisation and differentiation meant that the films quickly became standardised to a regular format, where length, characters, scenarios and so on were kept within certain parameters. Thus, the animated cartoon soon became a standard length, one which facilitated ease of exhibition, but also allowed for the recently developed cel technology - another aspect of standardisation - to maximise production and fit to weekly schedules. The cartoon therefore became part of a "split-reel" with that other crucial, but also subsidiary, part of the film bill - the newsreel. As David Callahan points out, cartoons of this period (i.e. c. 1915 onwards) were "usually shown on the same reel as a newsreel, travelogue or scenic, and the entire reel was marketed by exchanges as a 'film magazine'" (Callahan, 1988: 226).

Thus, and as noted above, the modern film bill (i.e. that seen in the classical period, from c. late 1910s/early 1920s onwards) was not only a manifestation of Hollywood's abundance and ability to produce a range of goods, but it was also a strategic development in the evolution of particular types of film. The actualities and topical news items seen in the early period evolved into the news items of the newsreel; the various kinds of trick film evolved into the modern cartoon. (Arguably, aspects of the trick film tradition can also be found in avant-garde/experimental cinema, but they fall outside the bounds of this essay). It is also important to note in this context the ways in which this "evolution" of particular types of film is strongly related to business practice, and what would today be called synergy. For instance, William Randolph Hearst's International Film Service was essentially a provider of newsreel-animated subject combinations, something which drew attention to the source material for many of the cartoons. As Crafton suggests, "Hearst enjoyed comic strips and movies immensely, so it is not surprising that he would be interested in combining the two - especially since the films would publicize the comics, and vice versa, and that was good business" (Crafton, 1993: 178). Here Crafton correctly states that the animated versions ("films") of already-famous newspaper cartoon characters ("comics") existed in a relationship of mutual support: people read the comic strips and watched the cartoons. It seems worth stressing that a similar level of support existed in the way in which the different elements of the International Film Service reels "publicised" one another. That is, these reels of "subsidiary" subjects were the cinematic equivalent of the range of goods that someone such as Hearst offered in his newspapers -

news, current affairs, editorial comment, with light relief and comedy. (Crafton makes a similar point about French producers and exhibitors imitating "the range of subjects found in popular family periodicals as *Lectures pour Tous*" (Crafton, 1990: 105)). As such, the interventions of Hearst and others like him, can be seen as their attempt to expand their print concerns into the cinema. Again, this complicates the history of the development of animated cartoons, as their short duration, use of specific comic strip characters, and (predictably) comic scenarios need to be contextualised within these broader media business conditions.

It is interesting to note that evidence in the trade press suggests that distributors also played a key role in encouraging the formation of the film bill as a combination of different products. In *Moving Picture World* for example (26 September 1914: 1740), there is an advertisement for The Eclectic Film Company (slogan: "The Cream of American and European Studies" [i.e. films]). Included in the ad is direct reference to John Bray's *Colonel Heezaliar in the Wilderness*, noting that it is supplied on the same reel as *Strange Animals*, resulting in "a combined comedy-educational split reel that leads the field". Also plugged in the ad, along with this cartoon-and-educational-short combination, is a "three part drama", a serial (*The Perils of Pauline*), and "an extra special release", a war newsreel of action from the European Front in Belgium.

Such variety in an ad is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it raises the issue of what relationship, exactly, did such distribution strategies have on what was exhibited? It is tempting to assume that exhibitors merely followed this "ready-made" programme, or perhaps were encouraged to do so by the distribution companies. In other words, a form of package deal was in operation, where exhibitors were encouraged to take a whole range of products. Certainly, this is borne out by comments made by animator Dick Huemer (cited in Koszarski, 1990: 172), who "recalls widespread antipathy to cartoons" because of their "threadbare assembly-line methods". As Koszarski notes of Huemer:

he felt [cartoons] survived only because of their status as part of a program package. They were able to maintain a position here because of their low cost and the occasional use of popular comic-strip characters whose names had value (ibid.).

Perhaps this can be seen as a precursor to the studio-era "block-booking" system, which operated along similar lines, but used the pulling power of a sure-fire box-office attraction to force exhibitors to also book a whole swathe of less desirable films. It is certainly the case that any exhibitor wishing to show the *Colonel Heezaliar* cartoon mentioned above, is also compelled into taking the educational short *Strange Animals* (and vice versa), simply because they are on the same reel of film. The practice of "split reeling" clearly has a pragmatic, economic dimension in the sense that splicing two short items together, so that they constitute one reel of film, cuts transport and storage costs. There is no sound economic reason for keeping such short items on separate spools. However, such a practice has implications at the level of exhibition: not only *what* was exhibited, but also in what *order* (it is unlikely that anyone but the most eccentric of projectionists would try and show the second film of a split reel first.) Clearly, the exhibitors could reorder the sequence of material by splicing reels, but my suggestion is that most would not do so. Why bother, when the films come pre-sequenced, in a package? To do so would take time and effort, and cost more money. It is a much more convincing hypothesis to suggest that, in the vast majority of cases (as there would always be a minority of prestige exhibitors who *would* take the time and effort to tailor

their very own, unique bill), how the material was *distributed* (and such an ad is evidence of this) had a direct influence over how it was *exhibited*.

The comments cited above point to the fact that the move towards regular exhibition, and the demands that this placed on animators, was seen by some (or by many, if Huemer's comments are taken at face value) as particularly negative. The new cel technology could save time and money by enormously reducing the amount of labour required to produce a cartoon, but, perhaps inevitably, further savings were sought, and this led to some of the productions looking decidedly "threadbare". Donald Crafton underlines the reasons for this:

During the American studio period, the pace of technical innovation slowed while the quantity of films increased dramatically. . . . Although criticized for being repetitive and formulaic, the animated film of the teens and twenties was in fact consolidating its content to meet the demands of mass production (Crafton, 1993: 259).

The long and the short of it was that labour-saving techniques could only go so far within the technological paradigm that existed. After that, short cuts would have an adverse effect on the films. As Crafton suggests though, there was a "slippage" between the increase in demand by exhibitors in this period, and the producers' ability to make enough animated films to meet this demand. He goes on to link the need to close this gap with the development of specifically "cartoonal" codes and conventions (ibid.). Thus, the emergence of particular very simple narrative scenarios - the "assault-chase sequence", for instance - and the repetition of certain characteristic poses and gestures were also a result of imperatives set by the broader demands of the industry as a whole.

Conclusion

This essay has attempted to demonstrate how looking at the development of the animated film can provide useful insights about exhibition strategies in general. It has traced how changes in production, distribution and exhibition contributed to the emergence of distinct categories of film, which were then deployed on a film bill which was distinguished by its "ranking" of films in a hierarchy. These shifts resulted in the prioritising of fictional narratives - increasing in duration to "feature" length - and the subordination of other material such as cartoons and newsreels to a supporting role. While these developments may seem obvious, it is important to stress that it was a complex set of forces that produced such an exhibition regime. The ability to plan and make a large number of films, on a regular basis, led to the shift over to fictional narrative films, which increased in duration, "quality", and prestige, as other institutional strategies such as genre and star systems further refined the process of standardisation and differentiation. The same mass-production imperatives were at work in animated films. While clearly "less important" in terms of duration and placement on the film bill, we can see very similar tactics being used - standardisation of the technology and mode of representation - resulting in the regular production, distribution and exhibition of a basically uniform product, with minor variations of character and scenario. The particular characteristics of this form of exhibition required a variety of products, and the animated film developed in such a way as to fit this institutional bill.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the anonymous readers of the original draft submission for their helpful comments.

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