

NOTES TOWARDS A THEORY OF ANIMATION

Styles and approaches

It may be argued that Disney's art and the hyper-realist animated film remain the dominant discourse of animation. The proliferation of mass-produced 'cel' animation has done much to overshadow the styles and approaches adopted by other animators in other contexts. Inevitably, the amount of cheaply produced, highly industrialised cel animation made in the USA and Japan has colonised television schedules, and perhaps, more importantly, the imaginations of viewers. Although this is to discredit the quality and variety of work in cel animation, it seems necessary to reclaim, re-introduce and re-validate animation made with other materials, with different creative impulses and aesthetic interests, outside the context of mass production, to properly evaluate the achievements of the animated film. It also provides an opportunity to theorise the textual apparatus of different forms of animation which, for the purposes of this discussion, I have called *orthodox animation*.

Developmental animation and experimental animation

These tentative definitions attempt to address certain modes of expression and construction in the animated film linking these aspects to the techniques employed.

The table on p. 36 represents a definition of orthodox and experimental animation as opposing but related forms. Developmental animation operates as a mode of expression combining or selecting elements of both approaches, representing the aesthetic and philosophic tension between the two apparent extremes.

Cel animation remains the most convenient technique for the mass production of cartoons and, therefore, the most commonly seen form of animation. Consequently, it constitutes what may be understood as *orthodox animation*, and is most associated, even in its most anarchic or fantastical form, at the level of narrative, along with the hyper-realist style discussed earlier. This may seem extraordinary to the viewer who sees the cartoon as an intrinsically non-realist form, but as will become clear, this sense of unreality only operates with regard to the representation of events in a cartoon, and not the 'realist' conventions by which it is understood. Significantly, these kinds of films are usually storyboarded first, after

