

Den rörliga skämtteckningen

Stil, transformation och kontext

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Abstract

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The Moving Cartoon: Style, Transformation and Context

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The purpose of this inquiry is to critically discuss a distinct mode of filmic expression, the moving cartoon, and its stylistic features across multiple cultural contexts from circa 1900 to 1980. The moving cartoon is a subgenre within drawn animation and pivoted around the purely visual humour and its gags and puns developed in caricatures and caption-less cartoons. The basic means of cartoon expression are pictorial incongruities where the humour arises from mismatches between elements within a certain recognizable situation. By way of an askew visual strategy, which reflects world views in recognizable historical contexts, caricatures and cartoons function as satire or parody. This study is thus predicated on elaborating the multiple connections between the moving cartoon and its stylistic features as well as its socio-historical contexts and cultural reference points.

The study is divided into two parts. The first part, chapters 1–4, outlines the study's central concepts—film animation, caricature and cartoon—in terms of form, style, and function. The second part of the study, chapters 5–13, suggests a historical process of development of the form in which evolutionary stages are analyzed as the result of interaction and engagement with artistic, industrial, social, historical, and cultural contexts. This part of the study is in turn divided into three sections. It begins with an account of the earliest caricatures as a backdrop for the silent animated cartoons by Émile Cohl and early U.S. animators before 1910s, which was heavily influenced by contemporary comics. Some animated series which had emerged by the early 1920s introduced visual humour founded on the cartoon characters self-reference to its drawn status.

The discussion of early sound animation takes off from the Disney model before moving on to Disney's domestic competitors: Max Fleischer's adult-oriented films using a freewheeling structure influenced by jazz, Tex Avery's crazy parodies based on rapid-paced gag style and incongruous humour, and UPAs minimalist cartoon style introduced during the 1940s.

The dissertation's final section deals with European animation and starts with the Zagreb School from the late 1950s. The Zagreb animators launched an influential allegorical critique of the Cold War's polarized worldviews. From a related perspective, Fyodor Khitruk's incisive satire on life in the Soviet Union was produced during a period of political thaw in the 1960s. Finally, British female animators widened the scope for social criticism in the 1970s.

Keywords: Animation, film animation, single-frame shooting, humour, cartoon, caricature, microshot, micro-editing, metamorphoses, incongruity, parody, satire.