of reference (see Canemaker, 1988). The speed of the visual changes matches Williams' verbal delivery and even extends beyond it. Such rapidity of visual invention, over and beyond its recall and deployment of cartoon conventions, and the assurance of its execution, takes the animated form a stage further in its development. The genie is located in the contemporary era and directly addresses a contemporary culture aware of the terms of reference Williams brings to the character – the 'laughs', as it were, often occur outside the context of the narrative. The genie, though, is also the definitive embodiment of the possibilities inherent in the animated form and an expression of the capacity for animation to resist conventional modes of expression. At once he is confirmation of the form's modernity and a demonstration of its post-modern credentials. Even his last line of dialogue confirms this. He says, 'I'm history, no, I'm mythology; I don't care what I am, I'm free!' As this chapter has hopefully illustrated, only in an animated comedy could that be said.

5

ISSUES IN REPRESENTATION

The idea that animation is an *innocent* medium, ostensibly for children, and largely dismissed in film histories, has done much to inhibit the proper discussion of issues concerning representation. The modes of narration and the strategies for comedy described in previous chapters have deliberately concentrated on the structural premises by which certain ends may be achieved in the animated form. Though some attention was paid to the ostensible content of certain films, the complex ways in which animation problematises the representation of gender and race have yet to be discussed and that is the focus of this chapter. As is by now obvious, the distinctive language of animation raises some important questions which are as much about the unique parameters of expression available to the animator as they are about socio-political issues. The conventional methods by which such issues are addressed will always be further complicated by the use of animation which, almost by definition, transforms the codes and conditions by which traditional or dominant modes of representation are considered.

Like many art forms in the twentieth century, animation has been subject to the revisionist readings of the lobby for political correctness, and has inevitably been found wanting, particularly in its use of racist caricature and in its sexist bias. Clearly, there always remains the apparent defence that these kinds of representation were innocent in their intention and did not mean to cause offence. Further, it is sometimes argued, for example, that female and black artists were involved in aspects of production, and contributed to the creation of works which are now criticised for their misrepresentation of these people. These codes of representation, of course, occurred mainly in the American animated cartoon, and it is important to remember that this kind of work prefigured the lobbies of the Civil Rights and Feminist movements who demanded political sensitivity in all aspects of society and, critically, in popular art forms. It would be easy to perceive the animation industry in the West as pathologically male, run by men in the spirit of expressing the interests of men, creating patriarchal hierarchies in major studios. In many senses this is true, but part of a historical orthodoxy, that is now subject to revisionist research, and which is reclaiming the place of marginalised or unrecognised figures in the evolution of the animated form (see Pilling, 1992; Langer, 1993; Allan, 1994; Klein, 1994). Though this does much to properly

reconstitute the place and influence of neglected artists in the creation of important animation work, it does not necessarily redress problematic issues of representation within the films themselves.

Issues of representation are complicated, first, by the purpose of the representation, and second, by its expression. Cartooning has always been informed by the tradition of caricature, that both operates as a *satirical mechanism* which makes comment through its exaggeration of certain physical traits, and *as a design strategy*, which concentrates on redefining and exaggerating aspects of the body or environment, for purely *aesthetic* purposes. It is here that any discussion of representation properly begins, because animation is unique in its address of the body and, as such, in its creation of the codes and conditions by which *masculinity* and *femininity* may be defined, and by which questions concerning *race* may be advanced. Animation has the capability of rendering the body in a way which blurs traditional notions of gender, species and indigenous identity, further complicating debates concerning the primary political agendas of men and women, and enabling revisionist readings which use the ambivalence and ambiguity of the animated form to support the view that traditional orthodoxies in society itself must be necessarily challenged. It is in this sense that animation as a *form* is acknowledged as having a potentially radical vocabulary, even in spite of some of its earlier tendencies towards insensitive caricature. Women in particular, as will be discussed later, have especially benefitted from the *open-ness* of the animated form in the development of a *feminine aesthetic* unique to animation and not available in the live-action context. It is this tension between animation as a radical language, and the necessary reconciliation of the representational *embarrassments* in its evolution as a form, that will be discussed, first, by engaging with the issue of the body.

The body in question

Some of the narrational and comic dimensions of animation already addressed are clearly predicated upon an attitude about the body, whether it be the body of a human being or an animal or, indeed, where these two states meet as an anthropomorphised creature. Orthodox animation and developmental animation, in largely engaging with the figurative, are perpetually concerned with construction and symbolic expression of the body yet, ironically, it is in the design or narrational use of the body that most orthodox or developmental animation moves towards the condition of the experimental. The figurative aspects of the body substantially collapse into the abstract. Bodies merely become *forms* subject to manipulation, exaggeration and reconfiguration. The capacity and capability of the body in animation may be broadly defined in the following eight ways:

1 The body is *malleable* – it may be stretched over long distances, be compressed or extended, take the shape of another form, fit into incompatible spaces, etc.

2 The body is *fragmentary* – it can be broken into parts, reassembled and conjoined with other objects and materials.
3 The body is a *contextual space* – it can be a physical environment in itself, which may be entered into and used as if it were ostensibly hollow.
4 The body is a *mechanism* – it may be represented as if it was a machine.
5 The body has *impossible abilities* (i.e. it can fly, lift heavy objects, experience violence without pain etc.).
6 The body directly expresses *explicit emotions* (i.e. it fragments in surprise, contorts in terror etc.).
7 Bodies of humans/animals/creatures which are apparently incompatible are rendered equable in size, strength, ability etc.
8 Bodies may redetermine the physical orthodoxies of gender and species.

These conditions are principally considerations of the form the body may take in any animated scenario and ignore the social or political implications of the body's formation as a *character*, or interaction with other characters and the environment. Clearly, the ability for the body to take on many forms and adhere to many conditions often places its actual meaning in flux. The animated body frequently becomes a fluid form which, even when it closely adheres to the codes of **realism** defined earlier, still exhibits an instability when scrutinised at the level of ideological coherence. Significantly, Eisenstein has suggested that this level of mobility cannot wholly be recognised as the pure domain of form, and inevitably extends to subject matter and theme. Citing early Disney, he admires the destabilising effects of the animated form, and the implicit resistance to the 'logical case', but states that this fundamental premise necessitates that the subject is not rigorously interrogated. He says, 'Disney doesn't go to the roots, but has fun and entertains, mocks and amuses – jumping like a squirrel from branch to branch somewhere along the surface of the phenomenon, without looking beneath to the origins, at the reasons and causes, at the conditions and pre-conditions' (Leyda, 1988: 23). In recognising this tendency, Eisenstein articulates the chief problem of addressing representation through the body in animation. The animated form itself enjoys engaging with the 'surface of the phenomenon' and resists the agendas of the historical source, the cultural position, and the acceptable limits of representing the subject. Whilst suggesting that Disney is not guilty of obliviousness or a lack of responsibility, Eisenstein still, in a sense, excuses Disney by asserting, 'Disney is simply "beyond good and evil". Like the sun, like trees, like birds, like the ducks and mice, deer and pigeons that run across his screen' (ibid.: 10).

Eisenstein is essentially seduced by the purity of form in Disney's work, which leads him to conclude that it is in some way part of a *natural* order, an order which is self-evidently acceptable and beyond political scrutiny. He thus endorses the view that by sustaining its engagement with the 'surface of the phenomenon', the animated form remains ideologically neutral. This seems naïve, and is an argument which only retains credibility if animation is perceived as an *innocent form*. The reclamation of the status of animation beyond its self-evident aesthetic

credentials as an art form, thus necessitates that all the things that Eisenstein suggests Disney excludes – origins, reasons and causes, conditions and preconditions – become the crucial premises of enquiry, not merely in how the body is constructed, but in what it means, even in despite of its mutability. To a certain extent, this level of analysis has already been engaged with, particularly with regard to films like *Girl's Night Out* and *Daddy's Little Bit of Dresden China* in Chapter Two. The focus of the discussion here, though, is on the issues raised by notions of masculinity and femininity in animation, and the questions raised by the facility of animation to blur gender distinctions.

'Faster than a speeding bullet . . .': Men and masculinity

> Rather than understanding the muscular male hero as either a re-assertion, or parodic enactment of masculinist values, we can examine the ways in which he represents both, as well as being produced by the ongoing and unsteady relationship between these, and other, images of masculinity.
>
> (Tasker, 1993: 109)

Writing here about the relationship between gender, genre and contemporary mainstream action cinema, Yvonne Tasker stresses the tensions informing the reading of the (muscular) male body in live-action films. Since the animated male body, in aesthetic terms, has been principally defined by muscularity, with its connotations of power and strength, these issues also fundamentally inform the animated form, where the 'unsteady relationship' of various modes of representation is compounded further by the fluidity in the construction of the body cited earlier. Masculinity as it is directly expressed through representations of men is actually remarkably stable and consistent, however, largely playing out modes of excess and spectacle in a similar manner to models offered by the live-action movie. Masculinity, as it is expressed anthropomorphically through animals, is a little more complex, though, and will be addressed later. The Fleischer Brothers Studio created the two best-known animated versions of masculine heroism in their adaptation of the comic book figures of Popeye and Superman. Popeye, with his appeal to the common man and the blue-collar ethos, spoke to parochial interests during the Depression, and was the perfect antecedent of Superman, the American everyman, suitably empowered to champion not merely the USA, but the democratic principles of the West during World War II. The different models of muscularity on offer here serve as important examples of the dominant kinds of masculinity in the animated film.

Popeye, created by cartoonist Elzie Segar for King Features, first appeared in comic strip form on 17 January 1929, where he joined the cast of the Thimble Theater on a journey to Dice Island. Reputedly based on Frank 'Rocky' Feigle, a local character in Segar's hometown of Chester, Illinois, Popeye was initially a

bit-player in the strip, often characterised by small acts of cowardice, but soon he developed into a character with moral certainty who fought to defend his point of view. As is well known, Popeye's transformation into a highly muscular, super-human figure was catalysed when he ate spinach, a choice made by Segar on the basis of its promotion by the medical profession in the late 1920s. Such is the mark of Popeye's popularity, and his persuasiveness as an ideological influence, spinach consumption in the USA rose by 33 per cent between 1931 and 1936 (Sagendorf, 1979: 43). In 1932, the Fleischer Brothers Studio started to make Popeye cartoons. In 1933, newspaper proprietor, William Randolph Hearst, ordered that King Features monitor Popeye's behaviour in the light of his popularity with children, and the stories that followed, both in comic strip and cartoon form, represented Popeye as a much less randomly antagonistic character, fighting only as a last resort, and self-evidently for the right cause. Though the spinach motif was not regularly used by Segar, the Fleischer Brothers used it throughout the nine years in which they made Popeye cartoons, defining his awesome strength through ever more exaggerated extensions of his muscular prowess. As Fleischer historian, Leslie Cabarga, has noted:

> With each new cartoon the bicep gag became more outrageous. The muscle might grow into the form of an anvil, a horseshoe or a machine gun. As the camera came in for an extreme close-up there might be a super-imposed image (in motion, no less) of a battleship cutting through the ocean waves or a speeding locomotive.
>
> (Cabarga, 1988: 87)

Popeye's masculinity is predominantly defined by the association between his own organic expansion and the strength of hard metal and machines. In the comic strip, and to a certain extent in the cartoons, Popeye's manliness was also determined by the exaggerated view of his own heroism, and the idea that he was indestructible. Segar, writing in the character of Popeye in 1936, says 'I been shot a hun'erd an' twenty times, an' I ain't dead yet. When a bullit does go through me tough hide it don't bother me none', but assures the reader 'I never hits a man as hard as I kin on account of it ain't right to kill peoples' (Sagendorf, 1979: 43). What is important about this kind of character construction is that it is far more legitimate in animation because animation has the capacity to render figures indestructible in a more plausible way than in any live-action fantasy. The capacity of the animated body to assume any shape or form ironically de-physicalises the body in the corporeal material sense. Popeye's character transcends the things that actually happen to his body. As such, his exaggerations are supported by the capability of the form, and simultaneously, his mode of masculinity is defined through his ability to live through, and emerge victorious from, the conflicts he inevitably becomes part of. Though also only a bit-player in the original Thimble Theater cast, it is Bluto who becomes Popeye's masculine adversary. Though Bluto is on the face of it bigger and stronger than Popeye, he is never the champion of

the proper cause, seeking to undermine Popeye as he competes for the affections of Olive Oyl.

If Popeye is rarely undone in conflict, his masculinity, as it is expressed through his sex and sexuality is always threatened by Olive's fickleness. Cabarga notes that this is one of the key themes in the Popeye oeuvre, along with more absurdist stories concerning wasted effort and failed purpose, and the overt compassion for children (like Swee'Pea) and animals (Cabarga, 1988: 93–6). Significantly, he also mentions what happens if animation of this sort is interrogated beyond the surface of the phenomenon mentioned earlier:

> If anyone could eat spinach, one might ask, why didn't the vengeful Bluto keep a supply on hand and why did Popeye always wait until the last moment before he ate it? These questions are as silly as asking why Popeye and Olive never consummated their relationship, or who actually parented Popeye's 'nephews', Peepeye, Pipeye, Pupeye and Poopeye? One simply must not question cartoon conventions after all!
>
> (Cabarga, 1988: 98)

Perhaps unwisely ignoring Cabarga's advice, it is interesting to address what the cartoon conventions ignore or marginalise in not paying attention to logical narrative questions like the ones he raises. The spinach, for example, becomes a metaphoric talisman that actually defines Popeye's masculinity. It is the catalyst in the creation of a heightened muscularity that spectacularises his manhood, in a distinct mechanism that enables him to make the transition from put-upon comic oaf to a heroic common man. Popeye's heroism has to emerge from the very urbanity of his culture and, thus, must be prevented from assuming mythic dimensions. This is achieved by emasculating Popeye through his association with Olive Oyl. By not reconciling the act of consummation, and creating characters who appear to have no plausible ancestry, animation once more de-physicalises the narrative space in the *sexual* sense, but re-physicalises it in the *kinetic* sense. Important biological agendas are marginalised by prioritising the intrinsic capability of the animated form to extend and exaggerate Popeye's physical *action* and not burden his character with the complexities of physical *relationship*. Questioning cartoon conventions, therefore, only reveals how much men are defined through the obvious agency of action, and that women are located as complex embodiments of *difference* either through the overtness of their sexuality or through its implicit denial. These issues will inform the rest of the discussion, but it is worth noting here that by the time Popeye is required for propaganda purposes in *Fleets of Strength* (1942), Olive Oyl is not present, and Bluto's role as the enemy is assumed by the axis powers. As the viewer would expect, Popeye defeats his adversaries single-handed with one slug of spinach, along the way *becoming* an aircraft. Feminine absence only heightens masculine strength, especially as it is extended by the ability for animation to plausibly redefine the body. It is this very fact, however, which has encouraged women

animators to redefine the body in their own light and in the face of masculine hierarchies like those often defined in the Fleischer Brothers' *Superman* series.

Joe Shuster and Jerry Steel created Superman in 1938. Even though the comic strip was concerned with a fantasy character, the stories were set in a real world populated by human beings, and little emphasis was placed on humour. The Fleischer Brothers' *Superman* series was thus a radical departure from the ostensibly 'cute' sensibility that characterised animation by the end of the 1930s, largely due to the influence of Disney. Paramount agreed to substantial funding for the series, and considerable effort was made to create a feeling of darkness and foreboding in the cartoons, reflecting some of the deep-rooted anxiety in American culture during the war period. Whereas the early Fleischer cartoons revealed fears and phobias in a distinctly *surreal* approach, the conditions of war necessitated a *new realism*. The Fleischers abandoned the squash-n-stretch caricaturing of the Betty Boop and Popeye films, prioritising a design strategy predicated on sharp angles and dark wedges of colour. Clark Kent, Superman's everyday alter-ego, was often rotoscoped from the actions of an actor to properly authenticate his identity as a real human being not subject to cartoonal logic. This further accentuated the space between Kent's ordinariness and Superman's extraordinariness. Whereas cartoonal logic had primarily been applied for comic effects, here the capacity for animation to relocate the body is merely to extend human capability *believably* to its imaginable *superhuman* extreme. If Clark Kent is the helpless, well-meaning, inadequate, defined by the limitations of his human-ness (a condition shared by the ordinary American male in regard to the threat of war), then Superman is a mythic role model. Popeye is only a parody of muscular achievement. Superman is the hysterical (if understated) return to the necessary muscularity required to oppose alternative ideologies, and any sense of *otherness*.

This is especially the case in *Jungle Drums* (1943), in which an Allied spy plane is shot down by Nazis secreted in an ancient temple. On board is reporter, Lois Lane (the chief emasculator of Clark Kent), who is given some important papers by the dying pilot, Commander Fleming, who insists she must 'destroy them'. These papers are concerned with the movements of an American convoy; information which the Nazis are eager to secure. Inevitably, Lois doesn't obey Fleming's instruction and hides them. She is then captured and tortured by the Nazis, who are thwarted by her 'American stubbornness', and prepare her to be burned at the stake in a native ritual. It is here that the film betrays a range of anxieties, both in relation to modes of masculinity and with regard to codes of race and ethnicity. As Joan Mellen has suggested:

> In a primitive, ritualistic manner movies have defined manliness in terms of getting the 'enemy' before it gets you. It is a set of values designed to nurture suspicion, fear of one another, and the need to rely on authority, as well as to exorcise through images of male prowess the sense of helplessness that life in America really induces in us.
>
> (Mellen, 1977: 11)

The 'enemy' in *Jungle Drums* is not merely defined as the Nazis. It is clearly, all notions of *otherness*. The Nazi commandant poses as an ancient god, dressed to resemble a member of the Klu Klux Klan, and in silhouette, the devil himself. The natives of the jungle are in his thrall, and obey his every command, so they build the fire in preparation for Lois' ritual death. The film increases the tension by depicting the natives' actions as the descent into primitive delirium and madness. The dark-skinned warriors pummel drums and dance around the fire, the embodiment of uncivilised, irrational forces of destruction. During this sequence, the commandant finds the papers Lois has hidden and, seemingly, she is left without hope. This is compounded by images of the raging fire, threatening native faces complete with nose-bones, and the general sense of chaos evoked by flying spears and deafening drums.

Thankfully, Clark Kent and his air-force compatriot are flying overhead, and notice both the jungle fire and the crashed aircraft. Clark parachutes into the danger zone only to transform quickly into Superman and pluck Lois from the fire. Significantly, Superman emerges through the fire, eliciting shocked silence and awe in the natives, who perceive him as a new god. This only reinforces the mythic credentials of Superman to the home audience, and represents Superman's actions as the forces of reason in the face of unchecked barbarity. When fired on by the Nazi commandant, Superman bends back the gun barrel in what may be read as a moment of castration in view of a preferred masculine agenda. Lois manages to escape and warn the American convoy of the approach of Nazi submarines. The submarines are duly destroyed and the film ends with Hitler angrily switching off the radio bulletin informing him of the defeat.

Whilst in a period of war, it is entirely credible that propaganda will deliberately represent the enemy in a derogatory and threatening way, but here, the Fleischer Brothers Studios very much determine the unacceptable nature of the Nazis by associating them with the highly charged enactment of bodily sacrifice and ritualistic violence in primitive cultures. It is apparently a violence without reason, yet stylised and choreographed but, most importantly, it is allied with the open expression of physical pleasure and celebration, and in this case directed against a woman. Devoid of its cultural and historical context, and portrayed in highly stereotypical terms, a native ritual is deployed to heighten the alien-ness and distastefulness of the 'enemy'. It might further be suggested that the 'enemy' includes women, because the film is clearly ambivalent about the fact that Lois disobeyed the order to destroy the papers, and half-fetishistically enjoys her torture and endangerment. It may be argued that there is an acceptable sexism and racism within the codes of expression foregrounded in propaganda, but here the Fleischers go beyond acceptable limits in championing not merely Superman's implied defence of democratic principles but, contradictorily, his embodiment of white (American) supremacism.

The film clearly recognises a hierarchy of masculinities, and seeks to perpetuate that hierarchy by resisting the 'unsteady relationship' between masculinities which these codes of otherness clearly represent. Similarly, though Lois displays her

normal feistiness and courage, she is not allowed the customary ending to the film common throughout the series, in which she gains kudos for writing an exclusive story. She, like the men in the film, is contained and ultimately excluded. Like Popeye, in *Fleets of Strength*, Superman is allowed no possible dilution of his prowess within the context of war. Much animation enjoys the resistance of the easy binary of 'masculine' and 'feminine', but the neo-realist approach of the *Superman* series during this period, does much to insist that few factors remain in place which suggest any insecurity about the identity and ethos of the white male, and the dominant mode of masculinity he represents.

Interestingly, this kind of masculinity, predicated on physical spectacle and activity, is sometimes redefined in moments of crisis. In the mid-1960s, at a time when the USA found itself at a historic crossroads in the face of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the war in Vietnam and the escalation of a youth-oriented counter-culture championing new modes of civil liberty, an animated curiousity entitled *Norman Normal* (1967), directed by Alex Lovy, shows the corporate WASP American subject to introspection and a crisis of identity. All models of socially acceptable and/or successful codes of masculinity are challenged, leaving Norman uncertain of his role and function in society. Norman feels perpetually self-conscious, located in a morally unstable world, half-nostalgic for a former idyll, half-directed at a cosmopolitan idyll. The kind of racism directed at the enemy that was acceptable during World War II was not acceptable in the newly enlightened 1960s. The kinds of unchecked antagonism towards the Japanese exhibited in cartoons like Friz Freleng's *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944), or towards Stalin and Hitler in the chaotic surrealism of Bob Clampett's *Tin Pan Alley Cats* (1943), could not be repeated in an age uncertain of just exactly who 'the enemy' were, and sceptical of the kind of macho agenda endorsed by central government. Further, as has been persuasively argued by Amy Lawrence, historical moments, like the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, in which the enemy, or self-evidently unacceptable codes of otherness disappear, codes of masculinity become confused and directionless. She says, 'masculinity is depicted as the product of a difficult, contested relationship between a subject and his body, and between the body and the state' (Lawrence, 1994: 33). Discussing Jan Svankmajer's *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* (1990) and *Darkness, Light, Darkness* (1991), and Polish director, Piotr Dumala's *Freedom of the Leg* (1989) and *Franz Kafka* (1992), Lawrence stresses how men are torn between their psychological and physionomical lives, and their anatomical and socio-mythic functions and, further, wholly distantiated from their sex and sexuality in relation to women and the family. Seemingly, then, depictions of masculinity as it resides in representations of neo-realist male figures is intrinsically bound up with issues concerning the limits of the body and its ideological identity. To remove or complicate masculine function is to problematise male identity.

Significantly, one of the most popular forms of contemporary animation, the Manga films from Japan (see McCarthy, 1993), maintain the heroic tradition of masculinity by couching the violent Samurai codes of honour and sacrifice in

tales of apocalpytic mayhem, where technological advances result in urban chaos and socio-cultural collapse, most notably, in Otomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* (1987). Masculinity in this context is concerned with the survival of the fittest in the face of change and challenge, whilst engaging with a historically determined agenda about what it is to be Japanese. Folk-tale and fantasy meets a science-fictional cyber-world where identity is uncertain but largely determined by a technological power base. Interestingly, female characters in such stories are normally characterised by a mythic, and sometimes highly sexualised sense of magical power, which the urbanised, techno-literate male cannot deal with, for example, as in Takayama Hideki's *Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend* (1987). As David Vernal has suggested, though, some aspects of these narratives are related to the post-war generation's perception of World War II in the light of the quasi-appropriation of Japanese culture by Western (American) influences, and inform salutary stories which play out the reasons for ideological conflict and rehearse (ultimately) peaceful resolutions, for example, *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979) and *The Mobile Police Patlabor* (1988) (Vernal, 1995: 56–84). Once again, male identity is at the service of nationalist agendas but, significantly, in pursuit of a *specific* sense of Japanese being which is being eroded by other influences, and constantly undermined by the increasing presence of man-made (man-like) machines.

The concept of 'everyman'

If masculinity is not coded through role and function, it is often played out through the universalising concept of 'everyman', in which male figures, or figures which are assumed to be male, become the symbolic embodiment of humankind. This is still at its most prominant when the masculine figure operates in the service of function, but also informs scenarios in which a male character represents a victim alienated from civilised codes of society, i.e. a figure like Trnka's Harlequin in *The Hand*, which symbolises both the oppressed artist *and* the oppressed human being.[1] In other words, this universal role is coded masculine, and assumes to represent the interests and outlook of women, while mainly operating in a way that expresses the ideas and interests of men. This idea may be briefly discussed with regard to Disney's most distinctive icon, Mickey Mouse.

In his (psycho) analysis of Mickey Mouse, Martin Grotjahn suggests, 'Mickey Mouse symbolises the small, invincible, invulnerable, utterly victorious and triumphant, old and omnipotent child' (Grotjahn, 1957: 220). Arguing that Mickey triumphs over the age of the machine, humanising all before him, Grotjahn further notes that he is 'the mechanised symbol of the little and victorious phallus' (ibid.: 222). Disney historian, Brian Sibley, suggests this idea of achievement and victory is bound up with the idea that Walt Disney projected his own desire and ambition through Mickey, and perceived the character as one who would absorb and reflect the progressive aspects of popular culture.[2] This is evident in early films like *Steamboat Willie* (1928), which echoed Buster Keaton's film, *Steamboat Bill Jnr* (1928), or *Galloping Gaucho* (1928) which was

inspired by the Douglas Fairbanks vehicle, *The Gaucho* (1928), and *Plane Crazy* (1928) which was based on the pioneer aviator, Charles Lindbergh. This was further advanced when Mickey became the chief character in a number of genre parodies, and thus became a cowboy or an exploror depending on the story. As such, Sibley argues, that Mickey:

> . . . is symbolic of everyman. He is simple in outlook and expectations; he is unceasingly curious, as most of humanity is. He's prone to all failings, hopes and fears that all of us experience, but he is also, I suppose, the new man – the Renaissance man, because he is not content with life the way it is, any more than Disney was content with the medium of animation in the way he found it.[3]

While some aspects of this argument are persuasive, it is clear that Mickey is played out in purely masculine terms, an agenda which Eric Smoodin suggests was wholly concerned with the construction of cinematic exhibition in the early 1930s that used male characters to reinstate 'mythologised stereotypical American values, both contemporary and historical' (Smoodin, 1993: 66). Mickey essentially became *heroic*, and *intrinsically* male, the more he came to supposedly represent ideological certainty in the USA. Simultaneously, he became 'a star', and achieved 'growing importance as an aesthetic object rather than the mouse-next-door' (ibid.: 66).

This idea became even more important when Mickey became a 'real' character in Disney's theme parks, because the masculine integrity of Mickey's body takes on an obvious material status, whether played out through an actor or a mechanised puppet. Mickey's physical status as 'everyman' in this context may therefore be threatened by his actual presence and the possibility of interaction with real adults and children. To this end the Disney organisation forbid photography of back-stage tours at Disney World because, as Susan Willis notes, 'the "magic" would be broken if photos of disassembled characters circulated in the public sphere' and adds, sardonically, 'children might suffer irreparable psychic trauma at the sight of a "be-headed" Mickey; Disney exercises control over the image to safeguard childhood fantasies' (The Project on Disney, 1995: 196). This point is particularly significant when placed within the context of the representation of the body. Masculinity in animation is predominantly determined by the maintenance of the physical/material definition of the male body. Any mode by which it is deconstructed, acted upon and changed, or merely destroyed, inevitably refutes its masculinity, and its status as 'everyman' on purely male terms. Anticipating the subversive agendas of the feminine aesthetic and queer politics, to be addressed later, Susan Willis also suggests:

> As I see it, the individual's right to imagine and to give expression to unique ways of seeing is at stake in struggles against private property. Mickey Mouse, not withstanding his corporate copyright, exists in our

> common culture. He is the site for the enactment of childhood wishes and fantasies, for early conceptualisations of the body, a being who can be imagined as both self and other. If culture is held as private property, then there can only be one correct version of Mickey Mouse, whose logo-like activity is the cancellation of creativity. But the multiplicity of quirky versions of Mickey Mouse that children draw can stand as a graphic question to us as adults: Who, indeed, owns Mickey Mouse?
> (The Project on Disney, 1995: 197)

Willis' approach attempts to redefine Mickey through the availability of his image as a site for personal expression and interpretation. This, however, would inevitably refute the corporate and ideological conception of Mickey as a white, American, male figure, and make him the subject and object of other projections. Instead of being 'everyman' on masculine terms, he would be, ironically, 'everyperson' on more democratic terms than patriarchally determined commercial interests will allow.

Wayward girls and wicked women: The feminine aesthetic [4]

Though it is fair to suggest that men have been predominant in the creation of animated films, and the subject of many of them, it is ironically, women filmmakers who have recognised animation as a form in which they can work and achieve significant ends that are not available in any other film form. If men, in general, have used animation to echo and extend the premises and concerns of men in live-action film-making, then women have used animation to create a specific *feminine aesthetic* which resists the inherently masculine language of the live-action arena, and the most dominant codes of orthodox hyper-realist animation which also use its vocabulary. Evelyn Lambart, who worked with Norman McClaren at the National Film Board of Canada, stresses that 'derivative work was absolutely hated. We didn't do any cel work at all, in fact, we were highly contemptuous of Disney' (Pilling, 1992: 30). It is this which provides some of the first clues concerning the development of a feminine aesthetic. Lambart implies that the Disney industrial and aesthetic ethos was inherently informed by a lack of individuality and a fixedness in approach. Indeed, Faith Hubley, an American animator best known for her collaborations with her husband, John Hubley (ex-Disney and UPA animator), and her family, stresses the importance of 'eliminating the hard-cel and the hard line that I've always felt was ugly' (ibid., 1992: 26). The fluidity of line; the creation of an original design concept; the engagement with different narrational approaches that challenged lineal orthodoxies and the address of specifically personal, *gender*-led issues resulted in the direct politicisation of some women's animation, an example of which, would be the work of the Leeds Animation Workshop in England, of whom founder and ex-member, Gillian Lacy says, 'The work continues to be committed to issues and still embodies the aims of the workshop – use of a style that is accessible to a wide

audience combined with the creation of cartoon women who do not have huge tits and eyelashes' (ibid.,1992: 36).

The resistance to 'Boopism' (see Cabarga, 1988: 53–81; Hendershot, 1993; Smoodin, 1993: 30–9) is more than just a rejection of highly sexualised design. It is a direct response to the male representations of women; masculine codes of composition and narrational construction; and personal, social and political agendas concerning men. It is also a recognition of the possibilities available to women once these codes have been overturned. Essentially, animation, more than any other form of film-making, offers the opportunity to operate in a safe space and create *auteurist* cinema outside the constraints of patriarchal norms, both with regard to the means of production, and the modes of representation. Outside the industrial context, animation can be achieved relatively inexpensively, dependent upon the style and approach of the film, and once the location, materials and time have been secured to make the film, it is possible for women to have full control over the production process. This type of film-making is sometimes reliant on external arts funding or an educational context in which to start but because, in the first instance, it is intrinsically outside the commercial arena, it offers the possibility of being more radical, more experimental, and more irreverent. Fundamentally, it creates the context in which the absolutely personal becomes *inevitably* political, because it becomes defined through its gendered aesthetic, and is self-evidently opposed to male-dominated orthodox animation.

Perhaps most importantly, women's animation is less censored in its concerns, even when working in forms that move beyond hyper-realism, and seek to be more subjective. Women animators more readily seek to express themselves in ways that trust and exploit the ontological equivalence of imagery. The creation of animated dream-states mixes easily with subjective interpretations of fairytale or poetry, which in turn sits comfortably with the use of the documentary tendency, or the overt use of abstract symbolism. This enables women animators to address topics which many male animators could not deal with. Marjut Rimmenen and Christine Roche examine sexual abuse, incest and murder in *The Stain* (1991) (see Pilling, 1992: 38–40); the Leeds Animation Workshop address the phallocentric aspect of language and naturalised patriarchal norms in *Out to Lunch* (1989); American Suzan Pitt looks at female desire and its relationship to creativity in *Asparagus* (1979) (see Pilling, 1992: 57–61, 71–5); Emily Hubley, daughter of Faith Hubley, addresses sexual confusion, rape, pregnancy and social alienation in *The Emergence of Eunice* (1980); while Alison De Vere addresses how a woman becomes more conscious of herself *as a woman* by interrogating the roles she has imposed upon her and actively engages with, in *The Black Dog* (1987) (see Law, 1995: 39–49). All these films demonstrate a feminine aesthetic which could not have been achieved in live-action film-making. Such an aesthetic may be defined in the following terms.

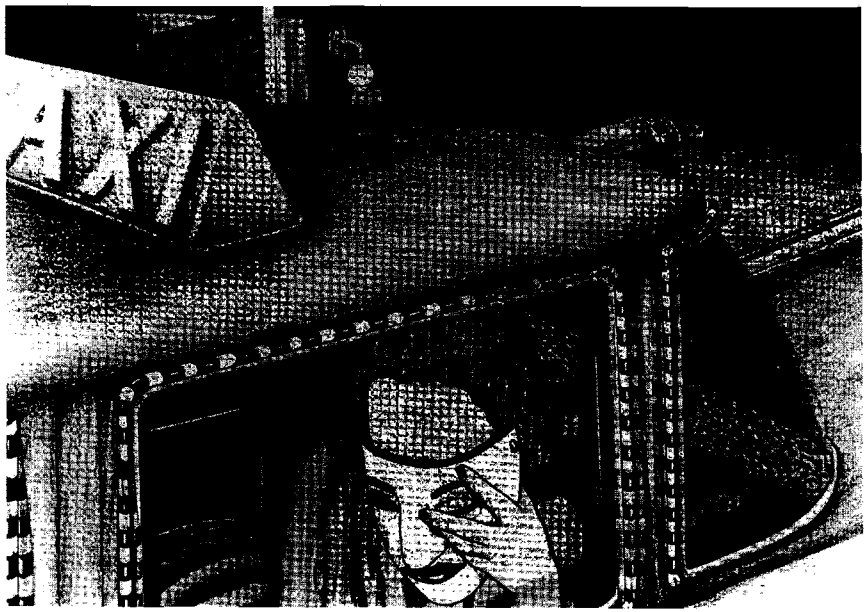

Figure 5.1 Suzan Pitt's extraordinary film, *Asparagus*, uses dynamic colours, an alienating soundtrack and challenging, highly sexualised imagery to: illustrate the feminine aesthetic; re-envisage the domestic space; and redefine the concept of 'the phallus' as the determinant of power in the contemporary world

- Women's animation recognises the shift from the representation of woman as *object*, to the representation of woman as *subject*. This seeks to move away from traditions in which women are merely erotic spectacles or of marginal narrational interest.
- The feminine aesthetic mistrusts language, perceiving it as the agent of masculine expression, preferring to express itself in predominantly visual terms, using a variety of forms, and reclaiming and revising various traditions.
- In order to construct a feminine aesthetic, it is necessary to abandon conservative forms, and create radical texts which may demand greater participation from the viewing audience.
- The feminine aesthetic seeks to reveal a woman's relationship to her own body; her interaction with men and other women; her perception of her private and public role; her social and political identity within the domestic and professional space, as determined by law; and also, the relationship between female sexuality, desire, and creativity.

The feminine aesthetic has become more recognisable, and more self-conscious, since the 1970s, when it informed the overt politicisation of female artworks *per se*, but it is important not to underestimate the importance of the female animation

pioneers who preceded this more politically driven work. In a sense, Lotte Reiniger's unparalleled works of silhouette animation, based on Chinese shadow theatre, exhibit a feminist tendency in that the language of such work is couched most specifically in the lyrical movement of the figures, and the emotional intensity of *gesture* – a profound departure from the (male) agendas of the evolving cartoon. This lightness of touch, this subtlety of expression, this desire to delineate emotional states in films such as *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1923–1926), (where she worked with Walter Ruttman and Berthold Bartosch, other renowned animators), *The Stolen Heart* (1934) and *Papageno* (1935), were clear statements of intent. Of Disney, she said, 'his films are technically perfect; too perfect' (Pilling, 1992: 15), hinting at the impersonality of industrialised, masculine cel-animation, and secure of her own femininity as an expressive tool in the creation of her own work. Reiniger's work seems a long way from the *abstronics* of Mary Ellen Bute, who suggests that her work is concerned with 'a method for controlling a source of light to produce images in rhythm' (Russett and Starr, 1976: 104). Combining 'abstractions' and 'electronics', Bute created animated patterns on an oscilloscope, and in doing so not merely made engaging abstract experimental films, but also dispelled myths concerning women and the use of technology. Like Reiniger, Bute enjoyed the *control* and *rejection* of functionalism in creating personal works. Similarly, she perceived her work as art and the expression of feeling, fully distantiating herself from cartoonal humour.

Female animators like Faith Hubley (see Peary and Peary, 1980: 183–192; Priestley, 1994: 23–32), Joy Batchelor (see Manvell, 1980), Sally Cruickshank (see Pilling, 1992: 51–3), and Kathy Rose (ibid.: 62–3), continued this tradition from different points of view and artistic perspectives. Constantly blurring lines between different cultural, artistic and performance traditions, each created a distinctive agenda which sought to distantiate itself from masculine forms and interests. The work of American animator Jane Aaron will be discussed below in the context of the feminine aesthetic as it is defined and expressed in one of her most personal films, *Interior Designs* (1980).

Interior Designs (1980)

Jane Aaron's first film, *A Brand New Day* (1974), perhaps includes one of the quintessential images within the feminine aesthetic. A lone woman within the domestic space opens and closes a window blind, revealing different landscapes in the outside world. On one occasion, she observes a snake in the desert and a blooming cactus flower. In a single image, Aaron encapsulates the restrictions imposed upon, and the liberties available to the female artist. Seemingly trapped by the domestic space, and subject to the inhibitions and intrusions of the phallic landscape – a frontier, both final and terminal – the central female figure seeks physical and poetic solace in the freedom of personal creativity. Aaron's profound desire to liberate her imagination further, and work beyond the confines of purely drawn animation, led her to address and animate the environment around her,

combining the two styles in the same frame. The interaction between these two modes of animation is revealing and serves to combine many of the narrational strategies defined in Chapter Two. Aaron deploys *metamorphosis* and *synecdoche* in her drawn style in order to maintain a tension with the *fabrication* and *associative relations* in her use of live-action footage. This results in a mode of *penetration* where one form of animation interrogates the other, drawing attention to the *choreographic* principles at large in the work, and the sparse deployment of sound, which serves to create particular moods and atmospheres.

Interior Designs begins in a bedroom filmed in live-action, but superimposed upon it is a frame of drawn animation featuring a couple apparently twisting, turning and rolling in space. As the frame starts to move across the room, however, and principally across a bed, it is clear that the movement is correspondent to the kind of restless movement which takes place during sleep. The objects and materials in the bedroom move as if they are being acted upon, but there is no sign of any live-action figures. Immediately, this calls attention to the mode of fabrication described earlier in relation to Svankmajer and the Quay Brothers, in which the tangible elements of the environment recall their function and inherent life. There is energy and kineticism in the bed which relates to the vitality of those people who use it. The figure, who appears to be the feminine figure in the couple, metamorphoses into a full-colour person who immediately fragments into lines and shapes, becoming a primitive, child-like drawing of a house and tree, set against a live-action urban background. The drawn aspect of the animation represents a recall of childhood innocence and the ease of expression, while the urban environment within which it is contextualised represents an inappropriate and oppressive reality. In deploying this technique, Aaron successfully uses *counterpoint* to simultaneously recall personal associative relations and juxtapose them with contexts which inhibit their expression or operate as the embodiment of change and constraint. The drawn aspects of the film thus increasingly represent the liberation afforded to the artist by transforming images through the free association of colour and form. Significantly, it is the female body which evolves into a range of shapes, signifying the primacy of the feminine aesthetic.

Aaron's image system then moves from the bedroom and urbanity into the Death Valley desert in California, in which she plays out further aspects of her creative sensibility by making animated Land Art, superimposing self-evidently paper shapes resembling cacti on to the rugged backdrop of rock formations and mountains. The quasi-plants appear to grow, and further draw attention to the disparity between nature and civilisation, between organicism and artifice, and between reality and illusion, and as Bendazzi has noted, this is 'Land Art where nature is not modified, but rather invited to act and assume attitudes and meanings' (Bendazzi, 1994: 253). The images fragment once more and contract back into the shape of a woman, but the drawn element of the frame is used to make the transition from the original scene in the bedroom to a new scene in the kitchen. The drawn figure appears to actually tear the frame, revealing a kitchen scene, whereupon the camera withdraws, revealing the real kitchen environment

on which the image is superimposed. Aaron plays upon the associative relations of the kitchen as a stereotype of containment for women and, most importantly, the scene of habitual domestic routines. She uses the synecdoche of numerous coffee cups to reinforce this point, half-historicising the space by the recall of the hundreds of domestic moments of drinking coffee, having meals and snacks etc.; half-criticising the banal and mundane execution of everyday existence. The sound of a dripping tap accompanies this sequence and further emphasises the passing of time and the sense of waste. A figure reads a newspaper and exits. Spaces that were once occupied become empty. Life goes on.

Aaron once more calls attention to her key theme of the role of the woman artist within both the spheres of influence determined by contemporary existence and the natural world, when the film again moves into this environment. She draws the changing shadows of some real trees which are filmed in live-action time-lapse photography, revealing the presence of the artist, and the artist's resistance to time passing. The feminine aesthetic particularly reveals itself here, in the sense that it is about the woman artist attempting to take control of, and redefine, the supposedly familiar and supposedly *naturalised* codes of existence. Thus, in the final sequence of the film, the woman figure resists the routines created within the domestic space, and with it the assumed agendas of an order fundamentally imposed by men, and enters her studio. To the sound of fairground music, created artefacts and drawings (mostly of women and objects seen earlier in the film) come to life and, in a blaze of light, acknowledge and endorse the female artist and the feminine aesthetic. These themes have been pursued in her subsequent work, *Remains to be Seen* (1983), *Travelling Light* (1985) and *Set in Motion* (1986) (see Pilling, 1992: 55–6), and all seek to expand the vocabulary of both animation and cinematography in the service of expressing the personal agendas of a woman artist and rejecting the dominant codes of expression and representation established by men. It is this aim which has created a feminine aesthetic in animation which is at once unique to the form, a progressive development in the form, and a radical addition to the conventions of film-making in general.

Cross-dressing, transvestism, gender-bending, cross-species coupling and other unusual trends

Anthropomorphic characters are a step removed from human characters and require a certain degree of imitation or impersonation of human traits in order to succeed. Thus, Bugs and Daffy are, in a sense, impersonating male humans with respect to their values and behavior, just as Petunia (Pig), Minnie (Mouse) and Daisy (Rabbit) are impersonating female humans in respect to theirs. The major difference is seen in the degree and type of abstraction: whereas the male characters are abstracted to actions and 'masculine' traits (for example, cunning,

> aggressiveness), the female characters are abstracted and reduced to physiological characteristics and recognizable 'feminine' traits (for example, shrewishness, passivity).
>
> (Delgaudio, 1980: 211)

Sybil Delgaudio usefully summates the dominant traditions of representing masculinity and femininity in the anthropomorphised characters of the animated cartoon. Simply, 'male' characters are defined by what they are, and how they behave, while 'female' characters are essentially understood by what they look like and through a vocabulary of stereotypical mannerisms. These codes were not confined to the Warner Brothers output. Disney animator, Fred Moore, who drew Mickey and Minnie Mouse, located key differences in the design of the two characters, even though Minnie was 'drawn the same as Mickey' (Thomas and Johnson, 1981: 553). In order to make one mouse female he used lace underwear, high-heeled shoes, a small hat and eyelids and lashes. He recommended that Minnie's 'poses and mannerisms should be definitely feminine' (ibid.: 553) and that a certain 'cuteness' be achieved through having 'the skirts high on her body – showing a large expanse of lace panties' (ibid.: 553). Most importantly, though, Moore suggested:

> In order to make Minnie as feminine as possible, we should use everything in her make up to achieve this end. Her mouth could be smaller than Mickey's and maybe never open so wide into a smile, take, expression etc. Her eyelids and eyelashes could help very much in keeping her feminine as well as the skirt swaying from the body on different poses, displaying pants. Carrying the little finger in the extended position also helps.
>
> (ibid.: 553)

It becomes clear that the cartoon female, as defined through the assumed traits of femininity, is designed in relation to the primary representation of the male character. Further, the female is predominantly defined as a set of signifiers of femininity, i.e. skirts, panties, high-heeled shoes, etc., which also function as additional signifiers of character differentiation from the male model. Particular attention is drawn to genital difference through the exposure of panties, but the chief mode of physical differentiation lies in the design of the face – most notably, in this case, Minnie's eyes. Unlike Mickey, she has eyelids and eyelashes, and a smaller mouth for smaller expressions and reactions. This stress on the suggestion of petiteness and prettiness in Minnie, as in the representation of Betty Boop, is a common design strategy for the idea of the child-woman in animation, and is significant in that it defines juvenilisation as feminine.

This issue becomes of particular note when, as Stephen Jay Gould argues in a reiteration of some of Konrad Lorentz's theories, that it is Mickey who has been progressively juvenilised in the attempt to give him the appealing characteristics

of a baby to court the affections of adult audiences (Gould, 1987: 500–8). This argument may be extended further by suggesting that Mickey has not merely been juvenilised but also *feminised*, and that the modes of *feminisation* inform the shifts of gender position in the apparently masculine contexts and agendas in the animated cartoon. Before embarking on a particular case study on this issue addressing the Tom and Jerry cartoons, it is useful to further examine how such *gender-blending* may be anticipated in the work of a number of key animators, and how this creates a context in which certain subversive readings may be legitimised.

Patrick McGilligan, writing about Warner Brothers animator, Bob Clampett, discusses the specific idiosyncrasies that defined each of the main directors' contributions to the Warner Brothers ethos and output. He examines Chuck Jones' liberal tendencies and Tex Avery's madcap comedy (see Chapter Four), but pays particular attention to a comparison between Frank Tashlin's 'subversive naughtiness' and Clampett's ultimate conservatism:

> While Tashlin taunted the censors and leered at the flesh and exulted in characters such as the overripe Petunia Pig – who, as Greg Ford has observed, is 'a Jayne Mansfield-progenitor' – Clampett veered closest to open sexuality by having Daffy Duck striptease before surrendering to an oven in *The Wise Quacking Duck* (1943). . . . Sex? It either embarrassed – as when the silkworm knits a brassiere for Porky Pig in *Porky's Party* (1938), triggering a mortified blush – or disinterested him. Sex was played strictly for laughs. Thus Clampett's secondary characters inclined towards bland sexless androgyny, in disposition as well as anatomy.
>
> (McGilligan, 1980: 153)

These are significant observations and serve to raise a number of issues. As has been stressed, the representation of the body constitutes the basic vocabulary by which particular aspects of masculinity and femininity may be expressed. The depiction of sexuality is clearly a dominant methodology by which to locate gender but it is also the most destabilised and ambivalent arena of representation in the animated cartoon. Tashlin *over-determines* the gender of Petunia Pig through some of the codes cited by Fred Moore, but chiefly, through her fleshly voluptuousness, and her sexual knowingness. Clampett, however, in being less overt reveals the ambiguous space in the animated cartoon which incorporates a number of complex gender discourses. Daffy's striptease engages with the idea of the body as a costume and the necessary vocabulary of feminised gestures which eroticise a dance. Consequently, he highlights the *performance* of gender practices. Porky's embarrassment about a silk brassiere fetishes the thought of *cross-dressing*, a practice which is explicit in many Warner Brothers cartoons, perhaps, chiefly in Chuck Jones' seven-minute distillation of Wagner's Ring Cycle, *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957), in which Bugs becomes Brunnhilde, complete with all the overt signifiers of femininity like eyelashes, lip-stick and long blonde plaits.

These are appendages, of course; merely the accessories required for the impersonation, but, as Kate Davy has noted, 'female impersonation, provides in short, a seemingly endless source of fascination because, unlike male impersonation, the man who appropriates his "opposite" is not simultaneously effaced by it' (Meyer, 1994: 137). Bugs remains 'male', and retains his masculinity, yet looks 'female' and clearly affects his posture and gesture in a feminine way. This is both the performance of gender practices and the significant blurring of gender distinctions, offering the opportunity for humour but also for subversive appropriation.

In recent years, for example, queer politics, the evolution of gay and lesbian ideological critique, has sought to create and appropriate texts which reinforce the idea of redefining historically determined, socially restrictive, definitions of sex and sexuality. As Moe Meyer stresses,

> Queer sexualities become, then, a series of improvised performances whose threat lies in the denial of any social identity derived from any participation in those performances. As a refusal of sexually defined identity, this must also include the denial of the difference upon which such identities have been founded. And it is precisely in the space of this refusal, in the destruction of the homo/hetero binary, that the threat and challenge to bourgeois ideology is queerly executed.
>
> (Meyer, 1994: 3)

The animated cartoon is predicated on such conditions. At any one time Bugs and Daffy *et al.* are merely involved in momentary performances which demonstrate that the definition and recognition of gender representation is in flux. Consequently, both the physical and ideological boundaries of the anthropomorphised body as it exists in the cartoon are perpetually in a state of transition, refusing a consistent identity. As Meyer implies, not only are aspects of masculine and feminine sometimes made indistinguishable, but the received notion of what constitutes the conditions of homosexuality and heterosexuality is also made ambivalent. This is not to say that character representation becomes fixated around the sexless androgyny McGilligan cites as the disappointing credential of Clampett's secondary characters. Rather this places 'sexlessness' and 'androgyny' as arenas in which discourses remain active and constantly open to interpretation.

What further complicates these discourses is the recognition of species. For example, novelist E.M. Forster once posed the question, 'But is Mickey a mouse?', and answered his own question by concluding that 'It is his character rather than his species which signifies'.[5] This view tends to desexualise, and in some senses, de-anthropomorphise the cartoon, prioritising the recognition of behavioural tendencies and outcomes as if the characters were indeed without proper identity. This way of viewing the cartoon essentially returns it to the domain of innocence and the free play of the 'surface of the phenomenon' cited by Eisenstein. It limits

the ways in which the characters can be viewed because, once more, it resists the significance of species and sexuality, and most particularly insists upon the acceptance of the Disney cartoon as innocuous, disavowed of political intent or possibility. One only needs, however, to place a Disney cartoon in an explicit political context to see how this apparent innocence merely disguises a whole gamut of ideological possibilities and assertions. Julianne Burton-Carvajal's exemplary work on Disney's part in the USA's war-time 'Good Neighbour Initiative' in Latin America, reveals that *South of the Border* (1941), *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Cabelleros* (1945), films made in partial collaboration with Latin-American artists, and constructed with the intention of showing Latin-American culture, all exhibit subversive tendencies. As Carvajal notes:

> Cartoons are an unlikely vehicle for propaganda. Disney is an unlikely locus for lasciviousness. Yet in addition to the predictable fun, frolics and fireworks, *The Three Cabelleros* (1945) indulges its audience in scenes of cross-dressing and cross-species coupling, of blatant sexual punning and predation, in tales of conquest in which the patriarchal unconscious and the imperial unconscious insidiously overlap.[6]

Whilst Donald Duck indulges himself in a highly sensualised *otherness*, which is not unrelated to the physical decadence of *Jungle Drums*, he exhibits, along with his Latino companion, José Carioca, a tendency to define himself through physical experience. The animation codes the excesses of this indulgence in the abstraction of the body and the sexualisation of the environment, another strategy which serves to blur the masculine/feminine boundaries in each scenario. Though Carvajal suggests that these images serve to mask and insinuate 'a patriarchal unconscious' allied to an imperialist sensibility in the films, the imagery may also be identified as the collapse of socio-sexual certainty. Gender and species become almost arbitrary constructions and performances which constitute a number of transgressions and points of contradiction. *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Cabelleros* (like much cartoon animation) *de-historicise* characters, so Donald, for example, is only a set of personality traits and not a fully rounded, experientially determined character. His expected physical bluster and belligerence is extended to incorporate the rhythm of Latin America, and its attendant association with sensual pleasure. Donald is literally played out through his bodily functions and imperatives, which sometimes operate in ways that render gender and species as unstable, legitimising unusual and excessive modes of behaviour unchecked by social norms. It is difficult to define, for example, what is implied by Donald's desire for a live-action woman, yet it is clear that a number of possible meanings are being generated. Donald's lasciviousness, for example, may be read as an adulterous act if he is re-historicised as Daisy's 'husband'. Similarly, his implied sexual coupling with a woman recalls the tradition of 'animal groom' stories, of which, *Beauty and the Beast* is the best known, and complex notions of bestial sexual taboos (see McLaughlin, 1993; Warner, 1994). This possible excess of meanings

is a highly significant factor in the reading of animated films, and requires further address.

Case study: Is Jerry a girl?[7]

From 1940 to 1967, 161 Tom and Jerry cartoons were produced in three distinct eras of production. For the first seventeen years, now seen as the classic period, the films were created by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera at MGM Studios. For a two-year period from 1960 to 1962, the films were made by UPA graduate, Gene Dietch, while from 1963 to 1967, Chuck Jones took on the challenge of sustaining the appeal of the series at the point when the animated cartoon itself seemed in a period of terminal decline.

Throughout these periods, however, Tom and Jerry remained ambiguous in the specificity of their gender, or, rather, in the ways in which the apparent certainty that both Tom and Jerry are 'male' has been manipulated to contradictory and often challenging ends. The instability of form, an intrinsic credential of the animation medium itself, has led to an instability of representational norms, particularly in the creation of comic effects. This is important because the comedy in the films distracts the viewer from noticing how the characters actually look and behave. The audience tends to laugh at what the characters do, not at what they particularly look like, and this serves to further mask the flux of gender positions in the narrative that this case study wishes to foreground.

Over-determining gender

Patrick Brion suggests that one of the most enduring questions raised by the Tom and Jerry cartoon series is 'Was Jerry a Female?' (Brion, 1990: 38). This question clearly arises from the number of occasions in the cartoons when Jerry overtly looks and behaves like a girl within the context of his relationship with Tom. Brion notes:

> The relationship of Tom and Jerry is very curious. It vacillates between hostility and friendship. The complicity of a latent love is carefully sustained by the ambiguity of Jerry's sex. The game between them evolves from teasing to violence. Despite the explosion of several hundred sticks of dynamite and bombs and innumerable blows of all sorts, the two characters keep – and this is in the tradition of the animated cartoon – the same appearance.
>
> (Brion, 1990: 38)

Whilst Brion is correct in his assertion that a latent (heterosexual) love is sustained by the occasional overt signification of Jerry as a female, this overlooks the possibility of a homo-erotic sub-text and, indeed, notions of cross-species coupling and the blurring of gender caused by cross-dressing. Brion also

suggests, here, that these sexual concerns become submerged beneath conflict and the maintenance of the same enduring appearance. This neglects the changes which inform their conflict before the resumption of physical continuity, and which are intrinsic to the idea of destabilised gender identities in cartoons in general.

The best, and yet most ambiguous, example of Jerry becoming a female occurs in *Baby Puss* (1942). Interestingly, the cartoon also uses the idea of juvenilisation as feminisation and, ironically, applies it to Tom. Only identified by her legs and skirt, a little girl plays at being 'mother', dressing Tom in a bonnet and nappy, placing him in a cot, and giving him a bottle of milk. Jerry, like three alley cats later in the cartoon, openly mocks him for his childishness and lack of apparent 'toughness'. This initiates the anticipated chase across the child's playroom. Jerry scampers into a doll's house, where (inexplicably) he takes a bath, only to be observed by Tom, as he looks through an upstairs window. While in the bath, Jerry behaves in a highly feminised way, and even sings in a high-pitched tone. Once he notices Tom at the window, he covers his body as if he were covering breasts and genitalia, turning his legs away as he screams in shock, before beating Tom on the nose with a loofah as punishment for his voyeurism. Jerry here is clearly coded as a girl and the intrusive factor of (peeping) Tom's gaze is emphasised. Running from Tom, however, Jerry leaps into bed with a girl doll, who cries 'Mama' in surprise. Perversely, it is now possible to code Jerry as male because he is embarrassed to be next to 'a girl' (coded in bonnet, skirt and frilled panties after the style of Minnie Mouse). Perhaps even more perversely this may be read as an extremely transgressive moment in which the feminised Jerry finds *herself* in a moment of lesbian exchange. The issue is further complicated by the fact that, following a cut-away to Tom, Jerry emerges from the doll's house wearing the doll's clothing, and masquerades as a 'Southern Belle' in the hope of deluding Tom that he is not Jerry. Important to note here is that it is implied that Jerry has undressed the girl doll. There appears to be no sexual implication in this, except perhaps Jerry's recognition that he has colluded with 'a doll', a material artefact which is ostensibly sexually innocent. Her clothes become 'props' for his disguise, but Jerry authenticates his femininity by remaining consistent with his gesture and posture in the bath. He is exposed, however, when his dress falls down, revealing his frilly panties and high heels. Distracted by the little girl's return, Tom lets Jerry escape. Jerry then goes to the playroom window, still wearing the panties and high heels, and overtly displays himself as a pretty young girl to the alley cats by 'showing an ankle', inciting wolf-whistles and lustful stares. At this juncture, it is clear that Jerry has transcended the assumed the knowledge that he is a 'male' rodent, and has become a 'female', made attractive to the maleness of the cats through this highly feminised sexual ritual.

The alley cats then mock Tom for his subjugation by the little girl. They hit him, steal his milk, inflate his face, play catch with him, throw him into a goldfish bowl and finally, in a mock operation, change his wet nappy. Consistently

hitting him over the head with a mallet to anaesthetise him, the cats use Tom as a musical instrument, playing his whiskers as harp strings in a wild routine of madcap celebration. This routine relates Tom to the other cats, and is significant in the sense that Tom is coded as a feminised domestic 'kitten' as opposed to a streetwise, sexually knowing, alley 'cat'. His assumed masculinity is normally only judged by his relationship with Jerry, in which his coding as an over-determined male seems consistent. However, it is the lack of consistency in these areas already illustrated which enables legitimate subversive readings. This is further reinforced by the 'carnivalesque' dimensions which characterise the alley cats' invasion of the playroom. Discussing the regenerative aspects of Bakhtin's conception of 'carnival', Karnick and Jenkins stress that 'through carnival, fixed social roles were abandoned in favor of a more fluid conception of identity, the hierarchy was shattered . . .' (Brunovska Karnick and Jenkins, 1995: 271). This is clearly the case in the playroom where the cats subvert dominant sexual codes in the midst of their song and dance. One cat kisses Tom, another (over)dresses as Carmen Miranda (a model for cross-dressing adopted by Daffy Duck in *Yankee Doodle Daffy* (1943)), and also dances with a doll dressed as a maid. This mode of play is entirely subject to its own self-determining laws, creating a fluidity of gender positions which service the surreality of the gag sequences by providing constant surprise. This is largely through violating expectations and the formation of incongruous relationships. Jerry's unexpected over-determination as 'female' incites libidinous rebellion in the cats, and undermines Tom's masculinity. The carnivalesque notion of a world turned upside down serves only to further enhance the representation of an ambivalence in orthodox sexual identity (see Lindvall and Melton, 1994).

Jerry's 'femininity' is largely determined by costume or moments of 'delicate' behaviour. In similar scenarios to that in *Baby Puss*, Jerry becomes feminine through his movements as a dancing girl in *Mouse for Sale* (1955), once again protecting his top half as if it were naked after having his disguise as a white mouse washed away revealing his real brown fur. This is taken to its logical extreme by Chuck Jones in *Snowbody Loves Me* (1964), when Jerry becomes a ballerina and dances in a tutu. Jones' more lyrical approach to the Tom and Jerry series is exemplified here. It also demonstrates the redesign of Jerry in Jones' films to good effect. Jones gives Jerry bigger ears, makes him a little plumper and accentuates his 'sweetness' in smaller, more deliberate gestures. The slower pace of the films supports the softer 'feminised' Jerry in essentially 'gagless' sequences which prioritise the grace of the animated movement for its own sake. In many ways, the narrative and context, as well as Jerry, are gendered feminine in Jones' films.

Whilst it is rarely in doubt that Tom is 'masculine', even if sometimes 'feminised' in the presence of other cats, he occasionally cross-dresses in the spirit of deceiving someone. This 'disguise' motif occurs in *Fraidy Cat* (1942), where he wears a set of curtains as a dress when he sits afraid after listening to 'The Witching Hour', and in *Flirty Bird* (1945), in which he disguises himself as a

female eagle to distract a male eagle protecting Jerry. This is especially pronounced in the Jones' vehicle, *The Brothers Carry-Mouse-off* (1965), when Tom becomes a perfumed female mouse, the catalyst once more for carnivalesque delirium. Jerry is initially attracted to Tom as a mouse, thus coding himself 'male', but he is deterred by the presence of more overtly masculine mice, who are also in pursuit of Tom. In trying to escape from the mice, Tom is then also pursued by cats believing him to be their prey. Ironically, the cartoon, thus reverts to its normal orthodoxy as a cat and mouse chase narrative, but with the main characters being redefined either by species or gender. The 'gags' in this sequence thus either result from the over-determination of gender, or the revision of Tom and Jerry as a set of dehistoricised character traits.

Significantly, though, some of the most poignant moments of gender destabilisation happen when Tom is behaving in a specifically masculine way, directing his lust towards an over-feminised (usually) white kitten. This brings out a particular kind of jealousy in Jerry, and, as he is reminded by the little green devil of envy in *Smitten Kitten* (1952), 'Everytime Tom meets a kitten, he falls in love, and that means you have problems again!' Tom is at his most Averyesque in these scenarios, and his gender is secure. Interestingly, however, in *Puss 'n' Toots* (1942), *Texas Tom* (1950) and *Casanova Cat* (1951), all Tom seduction scenarios, Jerry is presented as a possible competitor with Tom, especially as in all three he kisses the kitten in a spirit of victory over Tom. In *Solid Serenade* (1946) and *Salt Water Tabby* (1947), though Jerry is not identified as a masculine competitor, he does much to distract Tom from his attempted seductions, in the spirit of both spoiling his chances and winning back his attention. Such jealousy is also foregrounded in the narrative of *Springtime for Thomas* (1946). Jerry writes a forged love note to 'Dream Boy', the alley cat, from 'Toodles', the white kitten, to initiate conflict with Tom. Allied with Tom against Dream Boy, Jerry asserts their relationship, before he, in turn, is distracted by a passing female mouse. In *Blue Cat Blues* (1956), an unusually bleak episode, both Tom and Jerry contemplate suicide over lost loves and take solace in the inescapable and eternal bond that their relationship represents. It is no wonder that Tom kisses Jerry after a horrible nightmare in *Heavenly Puss* (1949) and after an extended chase in *Sweet Mouse-story of Life* (1965), the latter illustrating Jones' desire to romanticise the couple by temporarily feminising Jerry's response to Tom's kisses by giving him coy eyes, shuffling feet and a Disneyesque bashful demeanour. Simultaneously, then, the Tom and Jerry texts generate readings which can support both a cross-species heterosexual bond, a cross-species homosexual bond, and same species heterosexual bonds.

Contextual gendering

If certain moments represent over-determination in gender design discourses, other sequences imply a subtler view of gender positioning. This, once more, informs aspects of Jerry's narrative function in certain films. If Jerry is sometimes highly feminised in relation to Tom, he is determinedly masculine when he is

being pragmatic in relation to the protection of others, most particularly, Nibbles (sometimes called Tuffy), a little mouse, which featured in thirteen films, and the little duckling, which featured in eight films. Jerry becomes more muscular, walks with an upright confident stride, and less attention is paid to his face as a mechanism of 'cuteness', especially with regard to half-closed or wide eyes, or fluttering eyelashes. Rather, this is transferred to his highly juvenilised compatriots, the little mouse and duckling. His assertion and practicality are coded 'masculine', at least in so far as it informs his more overtly physical presence, echoing the muscular design of his cousin in *Muscles Mouse* (1951). It is in these moments that Jerry transcends size and appears to take on Tom on his own terms. As I stressed earlier, it is the condition of the cartoon that creatures have abilities and powers that they do not possess outside of a cartoon vocabulary, but the scale of abilities and powers does not necessarily equate with the creature that has them. Jerry can wield heavy objects as well as Tom and can take equal punishment; his size rarely impinges on his ability to combat Tom's aggression.

The notion of size, which is central to gender coding in the 'real world' relates more to sight gags in these cartoons. For example, in one episode, *Jerry and Jumbo* (1953), Jerry befriends a lost baby elephant who, despite his size, relies on the help and protection of 'a mouse'. He becomes instrumental in the deception of Tom, however, when he curls his trunk into a knot, paints it black, and superficially looks like a larger mouse. Tom is driven mad by the playfulness of Jerry and Jumbo as they constantly exchange places frustrating Tom's efforts both to capture Jerry and to understand why he apparently keeps fluctuating in size. This is compounded by the arrival of the baby elephant's mother, who joins in the game, and looks like an even bigger 'mouse'. In this situation, the rapid shift in power and status relations diminishes Tom's 'masculinity', especially when something taller and wider (including 'a mother' and 'a baby'), is coded as being more 'masculine' in moments of conflict. The premise of the 'gag' here – the escalating size of a small creature – overrides the necessity for gender certainty. The cartoon environment recontextualises gender by deploying established and expected gender codes in destabilised and unexpected modes of character behaviour and narrative necessity.

This *contextual gendering* also informs the redefinition of Jerry as a mermaid in *The Cat and the Mermouse* (1949) when Jerry loses his feet and gains a tail. In Susan White's discussion of the role of the mermaid in contemporary film, most notably in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and the Disney/Touchstone vehicle, *Splash* (1984), she deploys psychoanalytic theory in determining that the mermaid's tail 'despite its phallic shape . . . is not easily defined as either male or female, as threatening or reassuring' (White, 1993: 186). This ambivalence further complicates readings of Jerry as mermouse, readings already confused by the fact that he violates the notion of a mermaid as half human/half fish, by being half animal/half fish, a cross-species hybrid. Jerry may be read as either male or female in many of the Tom and Jerry texts, but this ambiguity is further compounded by the gender indeterminacy of the tail. This proves threatening

for Tom when he encounters Jerry underwater, at first rubbing his eyes with disbelief, then having his eyes pop-out in Avery style, as he cannot come to terms with the ease of Jerry's behaviour in circumstances so distant from and different to their 'normal' domesticity. Reassurance only comes at the climax of the film with Jerry's return to his normal state. This only occurs as the viewer discovers that the whole of the underwater sequence is in fact a hallucination that Tom has experienced while being unconscious, evidently having been pulled from the water after nearly drowning. Tom's hallucination clearly reveals his fears of a reconstituted 'Jerry'; fears located in the *otherness* of Jerry as an ambivalently gendered or genderless creature. Contextual gendering, in this instance, is about the blurring of gender and identity, a destabilisation which, once again, facilitates the comic exchanges resulting from the recognition of 'difference'.

Body and identity

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the body in animation is a form constantly in flux, always subject to redetermination and reconstruction. In the Tom and Jerry series, body formations carry with them particular agendas about identity. Tom, for example, is perpetually taking the shape of an object during particularly violent exchanges or chase sequences. He becomes a set of bowling pins in *Jerry's Cousin* (1951), a waterfountain in *Hatch Up Your Troubles* (1949) and *Posse Cat* (1954), a string of paper dolls in *Cat-napping* (1951), and a doormat in *The Brothers Carry-Mouse-off* (1965). It may be argued that when Tom becomes an object he is rendered both genderless and without identity. He is merely the subject *and* object of the 'gag'. This is achieved by violating the consistency of Tom as a *character* through relocating him as an infinitely flexible two-dimensional *form*. When Tom is hit by an iron, his character experiences pain, provoking sympathy in the viewer, while his form instantly changes into the shape of an iron, provoking laughter. This process of temporary depersonalisation diffuses the extent of the violence and legitimises the comic aspect of the incident. It is possible, however, to also argue that once Tom becomes a 'form', then his shape is redetermined in gender terms also. If it is possible to gender the whole visual environment of the animated film, then this is clearly an area which can be fruitfully discussed.

It may be suggested, for example, that dark colour codings and angular shapes possess masculine credentials while lighter pastel shades and curved lines are more feminine. Though these superficial extremes reflect stereotypical gender orthodoxies, they are useful starting points in the further address of contextual gendering. Is Tom 'masculine', for example, when he becomes an iron or a doormat, but 'feminine' when he is a string of paper dolls or a waterfountain and, further, does this reflect upon his status in the narrative at the time? Obviously, these are questions which need to be addressed within a broader framework of enquiry, but clearly inform the view that the animated body can facilitate a number of readings that place gender orthodoxies in crisis, a factor, as has already been

stressed, which favours the representation of the 'feminine', challenging, as it does, broadly masculine agendas and design discourses, in both the live-action and animated forms.

This also becomes especially interesting when the body is portrayed as a costume in its own right. Tom and Jerry strip away their outer fur as if it was a set of clothes, often revealing a set of underwear or naked skin. In *Of Feline Bondage* (1965), directed by Chuck Jones, Jerry becomes invisible and starts to shave Tom, who inevitably retaliates in kind. By the end of the cartoon, Tom sits with the top of his head and upper torso shaved, wearing an undervest, his hair intact on his legs and face, while Jerry sits shaved, appearing half-undressed in a fur bikini, his remaining hair resembling a fur swimming cap. Here body-as-costume clearly codes Tom as male and Jerry as female, their (romantic) intimacy acknowledged in the final sequence as they break into laughter in recognition of the ridiculousness of the situation. The film also features a female fairy, drawn like Jerry, but taller and dressed in the mode of costume-as-gendered appendage (i.e. blue blouse, green skirt, and high heels). The animated form essentially determines that the body-as-costume and the costume-as-gendered appendage have equal status. That is to say, the physical materiality of the body (in the cartoon) operates in the same way as any representation of clothing or accessory. This still raises the question, however, of nakedness. When, as it were, is a cartoon character naked? It may be argued that all cartoon creatures are naked if they have no costume, but this is clearly undermined by the example above in which bodily fur is treated as an outer garment, a frequent occurrence in many cartoons. If the skin beneath the fur is a cartoon character's ultimate nakedness, then nakedness is without gender because no physical signification of male or female remains. That said, the hair that remains on the skin after the body garment has been removed may still constitute a gender determinant. A 'stubbled' skin may still signify maleness while 'smoothness' may be understood as intrinsically female. The first largely leaves the body subject to a comic reading while the latter significantly juvenilises and/or eroticises the body, sometimes, once again, redetermining gender, for example, in Daffy's striptease in *Wise Quacking Duck* cited on p. 205.

The body, naked or otherwise, in the cartoon, is fundamentally free of the aging process. Tom and Jerry were perennially the same age in the Hanna Barbera period, unless aging itself could be used as a gag, for example, in *The Missing Mouse* (1953), when Tom rapidly ages with worry as he realises that the white mouse he is vigorously washing isn't Jerry, but an explosive mouse who has escaped from a laboratory, and who will 'go off' at the slightest touch! It is certainly the case, however, that in the post-Hanna Barbera period, Tom does seem to age while the perennially youthful Jerry seems even more baby-like. Chuck Jones, by his own admission, never really comfortable with the kinetic violence of the characters (see Peary and Peary, 1980: 131–2), gave Tom and Jerry a lyrical, almost nostalgic feel and, in doing so, humanised them to the point where Tom, in particular, had intimations of mortality. In *Year of the Mouse* (1965), Tom is placed in a series of situations, contrived by an invisible Jerry and his friend, where he seems to be

committing suicide – by shooting, hanging and stabbing himself – and, although he finally turns the tables, the cartoon posits the real notion of death within its text. Tom is also seriously injured in *The Cat's Me-Ouch* (1965), and far from instantly recovering in the spirit of the Hanna Barbera cartoons, he is covered in bandages, uses crutches and is hospitalised. It is the final irony that in the last Tom and Jerry cartoon, *Purr-chance to Dream* (1967), Tom actually takes sleeping pills to help him sleep – a sleep from which, of course, he never wakes.[8]

Tom and Jerry are merely one model of animated animals playing out the complexities of gender identity and social positioning, and the model of address used here raise more issues than it has properly engaged with. Over-determination of gender, contextual gendering, and the body and identity are appropriate starting points, however, because they are posited upon the intrinsic link between the fluid language of animation and the *inevitable* engagement first, with the representation of men and women, but second, and more complexly, with the representation of creatures, objects and environments which are playing out masculine and feminine agendas, both by accident and by design. The more removed animation is from representations of the real world, the more its texts are subject to the kind of fissure which locates gender in a contradictory and ambiguous way. Issues concerning the representation of race in the cartoon operate a little differently, however, largely because the representation of African-Americans, the Japanese etc., has been crude, perpetuating racist stereotypes which do not allow alternative readings. Importantly, though, contemporary scholarship is attempting to properly contextualise these works, address the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) in America with regard to animation, and promote the evolution of national cinemas as a mode of resistance to these dominant forms.

Race in context

The issue of the representation of race in animation is essentially clouded by the self-evident racism of cartoon caricaturing from the early teens of the century to the late 1940s.[9] Klein has usefully delineated the sources of graphic caricature in the depiction of black people, and suggests that American animators used E.W. Kemble's illustrations of the freed slave; the Dogtown lithographs of Currier and Ives; images from the popular *Uncle Remus* tales; jokes from the minstrel shows and black cast musicals like *Showboat*; one-reel films of black swing-bands in the 1930s and 1940s; and finally, the comic strip and radio incarnations of *Amos 'n' Andy* (Klein, 1993: 191). These stereotypes found fresh purchase in the light of the general agendas about 'race' during World War II. With the imperative to properly delineate 'the enemy' came the inevitable delineation of 'the other'. Interestingly, though, the war was also a period in which the NAACP made proper claims for the recognition of racial equality as a principle in the light of the ways in which the Axis powers had mobilised racial hatred as one of their major

political agendas (see Cripps, 1993: 52). Racial stereotyping in the USA was familiar, almost reassuring to white audiences in its popular fictions and entertainment, and continued to be so until the 1950s. While such stereotyping is inexcusable, it may be understood as a product of an insensitive climate so naturalised in its political inequalities that these kind of representations were perceived as an aesthetic orthodoxy, operating as a playful rather than malicious presentation of black tropes. The perpetuation of such representation, ironically, seemed a manifestation of the status quo that the USA was drawn into the war to maintain. However, the ideological questions raised by the outbreak and conduct of war, did aid the black political cause. Indeed, it may be argued, that black artists had already subverted white orthodoxies by insinuating black culture in previously white-only domains of expression in the 1930s. Those artists who worked with the Fleischer Brothers or at the Warner Brothers Studios were recognised as important figures, bringing a different mode of entertainment into a popular form, still perceived and dismissed as part of low cultural ethos. This, in many ways, explains their acceptance, and their featured presence.

Clearly, the Fleischer Brothers, and their predominantly white audience, only partially understood the sinister scenarios of 'Minnie the Moocher' or 'St James Infirmary Blues', sung by renowned orchestra leader, Cab Calloway, when they appeared in albeit more adult cartoon noirs, featuring Betty Boop. Similarly, the ambiguity of the line, 'You gave my wife a coca-cola, so you could play on her vagola', as sung by Louis Armstrong, from a song called 'I Wish You were Dead, You Rascal, You', escaped both the censors and the Fleischer Brothers, who merely couched Armstrong's live-action presence in the cartoon within a stereotypical scenario featuring cannibals chasing Koko and Bimbo in the jungle (see Cabarga, 1988: 64–72). While the character of Bosko, the black boy, who featured in the first Warner Brothers Looney Tunes, cannot be considered a subversive representation, once more, the presence of black-oriented musical forms in films like *Sinkin' in the Bathtub* (1930) and *Box Car Blues* (1931), determined an ethos in the cartoons which half-promoted the codes and conditions of black aesthetics (see Beck and Friedwald, 1989). It was this aesthetic that was actively deployed, enjoyed and exploited in Bob Clampett's films, *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* (1943), an obvious parody of the Disney film (see Klein, 1993: 192–6), and *Tin Pan Alley Cats* (1943), in which a character, based on pianist, Fats Waller, is literally blown away by the raucous exuberance of the jazz idiom into a surreal heaven. Here Stalin kicks a blue-bottomed, long-necked Hitler; huge red lips operate independently of a face or body; legs walk independently of their owner; and a 'string' band made of elastic plays a tune!

By the end of the film, the Fats Waller figure finds that he cannot ultimately cope in jazz heaven and joins the neighbouring gospel choir singing 'Gimme that old time religion'. This epitomises a recurring motif of the containment of black idioms which, as Klein has suggested, 'cloaks White anxiety about modernization' (Klein, 1993: 188). Further, it signifies a deep ambivalence about 'otherness',

half-attracted to its freedoms, half-frightened of its ultimate repercussions. In *Minnie the Moocher* (1932) and *Betty Boop's Snow White* (1933), for example, Betty Boop is drawn into the dark, mysterious underworld, characterised by transgressive behaviour and taboo imagery. Even in its crudest forms, representations of black-ness or black-oriented contexts, operate as signifiers of danger and cultural threat. Its potency, however misunderstood, is not ignored. The sensuality and abandon of certain black caricatures is simultaneously frightening and profoundly appealing to white audiences (see Watkins, 1995: 207). When couched as part of an inevitably destructive 'otherness', as in the Fleischer Brothers' *Jungle Drums*, black characters have no identity but as the cannibalistic savage native. When absorbed into white mainstream culture, however, the black idiom works as a mechanism by which white animators and audiences can rehearse their fears and play out scenarios which are supposedly outside WASP society. These include the temptation of excessive physicality, over-determined sexuality and sexual practice, gambling, drinking etc. Black caricature is ultimately the reflection of the apparent prohibitions placed upon white desire. Black stereotypes are essentially the symbolic embodiment of white hypocrisy.

As Smoodin has argued, though, the representation of black people in film texts bore close relation to representations of other marginalised and oppressed social groups, and most specifically, women and the working classes (Smoodin, 1993: 44–71). Consequently, film bills were constructed in a way which appeased these social groupings, simultaneously locating such groupings as discernible markets, and operating as a mode of social control. For example, in 1934, the Frank Capra feature, *It Happened One Night*, was paired with *The Lion Tamer*, one of only two Van Bueren cartoons featuring Amos and Andy, black characters played by two white performers, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll. *Amos 'n' Andy* was the most popular radio comedy of the 1920s and 1930s and was characterised by Amos' and Andy's attempts to improve their social and financial status in numerous madcap scenarios, normally involving their manipulative friend, Kingfish, and usually resulting in Andy falling prey to his absurd schemes. This kind of story had great comic purchase, and in a similar way to Depression-era comedies like *It Happened One Night*, provided both identification and escapism. Those most affected and disenfranchised by poverty, were encouraged to find solace in laughing about their predicament. The success of the *Amos 'n' Andy* radio series persuaded the Van Beuren studios to make it as a cartoon in the hope that its popularity would be maintained in another medium. Unfortunately, for the studio, this proved not to be the case, and like the later *Amos 'n' Andy* television series, suffered because blackface caricature ultimately undermined the persuasiveness of black characters in the sound idiom. Even though the Van Beuren cartoons are well executed (though far behind the Disney works of the same period), their form fundamentally distracted from the quality of the writing in the radio series, and the necessity for the public to *imagine* what the characters looked like. Even though it may be argued that the radio series was still informed

by racist traits, it self-evidently could not create an image of the characters, and clearly presented Amos and Andy with a degree of complexity and streetwise cunning not present in the cartoons. Inevitably, the cartoon sought to present the characters in *cartoonal* terms and prioritised the visual and physical over the verbal, and thus, diminished the established personas of the couple. Further, this drew attention only to their stereotypical representation which, however necessary to the cartoon, merely highlights its racist dimension.

In *Rasslin' Match* (1934), Andy is persuaded by Kingfish to take part in a wrestling match with 'Bullneck Mooseface'. Already humiliated by his own shadow when 'shadow-boxing' in the gym, and wholly out of condition when training, Andy, still wearing his hat and smoking his cigar, attempts to fight Bullneck, who in the course of the match metamorphoses into a moose. Their bodies become knotted and Andy bites his own leg in the ensuing attempts to liberate himself. He bounces off the ropes a number of times, and after an accidental head-clash, falls on his opponent and wins the bout. In *The Lion Tamer* (1934), Andy is this time persuaded to be a lion-tamer at the circus on the basis that it will not be a real lion that he is supposedly taming, but 'Brother Crawford and Lightning dressed up like a lion' in pantomime style. Inevitably, Andy ends up attempting to tame the real lion, but before he realises, he puts his head in the lion's mouth and is surprised when he does not find Brother Crawford and Lightning! An interesting dimension to these cartoons is that there are audiences at both the wrestling match and the circus, and perhaps unsurprisingly, they are wholly populated by black characters, but obviously, the cartoon played to principally white audiences. Despite the prevailing social distinctions between black and white, the everyday conditions that they actually shared informed these simple stories and the contexts in which they were seen. Sometimes, therefore, the race dimension may be seen as a less important aspect within some stories when the dominant narrative concerning *common* experience overcomes the possibly negative aspects of its presentation.

Unquestionably, there are few arguments that justify or legitimise the kinds of representation of black characters that we may witness in the cartoons addressed here. Beck and Friedwald remain coy, for example, when they cite Bugs Bunny's adversary in Tex Avery's *All This and Rabbit Stew* (1941) as 'a lazy hunter' (Beck and Friedwald, 1989: 121). This is a self-evident caricature of the thick-lipped 'lazy darkie' which prevailed as a popular stereotype. Watkins argues that the perpetuation of such images was partially as a result of an ignorance of black history, and therefore, the possibility of more accurate representations was unlikely, (Watkins, 1995: 192), but interestingly, the response to this by white artists in this period, is not to revise their view and depiction of black characters, but to ignore or marginalise them, or find new victims for their jokes. One might suggest that some degree of race sensitivity had taken place, for example, when the same sequence in which Bugs humiliates the black hunter in a routine with a hollow log, in *All This and Rabbit Stew* is re-used in Bob Clampett's last Warner Brothers cartoon, *The Big Snooze* (1946), in which the black hunter is replaced by

Elmer Fudd. Equally one might suggest that by this time Elmer was properly established as Bugs' adversary, and that the sequence suited their scenarios, and thus, was used to save time and money, and engage the popular audience on purely commercial terms.

This notion of 'absence' is often coupled with allusion to black stereotypes in marginalised roles. For example, in Disney's *Three Orphan Kittens* (1935), a black maid is depicted only by her legs and long anticipates a similar representation of 'Mammy Two Shoes' in the Hanna Barbera *Tom and Jerry* cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s. MGM's version of racial sensitivity in this case was to merely make her an Irish maid in later cartoons (see Adams, 1991; Brion, 1990). Perhaps one of the most influential aspects of change in the animated cartoon, however, was the shift of emphasis in representation in comic strips. Pre-war strips like *Joe and Asbestos* and *The Spirit* became more realistic and, therefore, more racially and ideologically sensitive. Similarly, with the escalating popularity of comic books during the war, there was a recognition that their influence could be profound. Parental groups mobilised to form the Parents Institute and produced *True Comics*, while the Writers' War Board released *Master Comics* and the National Urban League brought out *All-Negro Comics*, all of which demonstrated more sensitive, revisionist attitudes towards the representation of race (Cripps, 1993: 154). The crass caricatures of George Pal's puppetoons featuring Jasper were recognised by Pal himself as poorly judged, and *John Henry and Inky Poo* (1946) and *Tribute to Duke Ellington* (1947) were made in what Cripps describes as a spirit of 'atonement for his guilt' (ibid.: 186). The chief agent of change, though, was the NAACP, and its response to the post-war insensitivities of Disney's *Song of the South* (1946), a part-cartoon, part-live-action feature based on the *Uncle Remus* stories.

Though lobbied by black political groups and academics, Disney perpetuated a highly sentimentalised version of the 'good darkie' stereotype in the film, but the enormously endearing performance of James Baskette as Uncle Remus only served to confuse the political issues raised by the very making of such a self-evidently regressive narrative in the post-war period. Critical lobbying for an Oscar for Baskette proved more successful than the political lobbying which could not properly clarify its objections to this system of representation, when the character seemed so dignified, clever and appealing. This apparently 'positive' representation ultimately seemed, however, to once more diminish the status and identity of black people by still couching them in a plantation-era idiom and, thus, a mode of behaviour which was subservient, and inevitably 'other'. The modern black person; the modern black, *middle-class* person; the modern black *academic*; the modern black *parent*, saw no place for this persona in contemporary society. As a generational anomaly it was not part of a progressive black agenda, nor part of the educational premises that it was necessary to bring to previously disenfranchised black children. *Song of the South* was thus a crucial element of the debate, not merely to revise the representation of race in animation, but in film-making in general (see Cripps, 1993: 187–94).

In many senses, debates about 'good' or 'bad' representation are not particularly

useful, but clearly discourses about misrepresentation are very important. Though the depiction of black characters is a dominant racial trope, it is matched in cartoon animation by a preoccupation with the Arabian or Oriental stereotype. In Chapter Four, Disney's *Aladdin* was addressed, suggesting that it had chimed with timely debates about Orientalist representation. Said suggests that Orientalism is a discourse through which the West has colonised and reinvented the Orient as a mode of 'otherness' which simultaneously distantiates the dangers and complexities within the alien Eastern culture and encourages a belief in the identity and ideological superiority of the native Western culture (see Said, 1978; Said, 1994). This occurs in cartoon animation from the Fleischer Brothers' *Popeye Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) and *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp* (1939), through to the version of *Aladdin* made by Disney. The dark, sensual, often despotic, mysteries of the Orientalist identity in these films is once more the cloak for a multitude of Western anxieties about the loss of control and power. It is no accident that Disney's *Aladdin* may be read as a thinly veiled metaphor for the USA engagement with Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi military in the Gulf War. Indeed, it is almost the perfect vehicle to represent the enlightened, technologically advanced, self-evidently just rationale of the West, not only in its acts of political intervention, but in its popular entertainment.

Such texts often emerge at a point of national crisis but, more importantly in the contemporary era, such films indicate an anxiety about the collapse of global imperialism and decolonisation. The easy polarities of moral and political opposition between capitalist and communist nations have broken down. Political independence, achieved through the increasing fragmentation of territories worldwide, has resulted in the drive towards modernisation, and the reconstruction of cultural identities through the reclamation of regional and national traditions. Ironically, this agenda has always informed the field of animation, because studios in many nations, dedicated to the preservation of a national identity have had (1) to resist the influence of political agendas and censorship imposed on the creative context by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, and (2) produce work which denies the ideological and aesthetic influence of Disney animation. In order to become distinctive, animation studios have had to look back and reclaim their own graphic and performance traditions and reinvent old myths and folk-tales from their own countries for new audiences. This has led to a number of countries creating work which is for, and about, their own history, culture and socio-political identity, and serves to constitute a *national* animated cinema dedicated to the particular and specific orientations of its people, and their creative heritage.

Even though no conception of *national* animated cinema could possibly encompass the range and purpose of animated films in any one country, there is a sense in which the mobilisation and definition of creative work which is an expression of a variety of national interests both identifies the work and prevents its assimilation into other areas of aesthetic style or cultural recognition. For example, in the post-perestroika period of national fragmentation in the former Soviet Union,

animator and former Poet Laureate, Andrei Khrzhanovsky, creator of such extraordinary films as *The Grey Bearded Lion* (1994), *The King's Breakfast* (1985) and *There Was a Man Called Kosyavin* (1966), argues that animated work in Russia has survived periods of despotic rule, bureaucratic and military oppression, and the loss of any discernible national ethos, better than any other creative apparatus. He further suggests that the animated film should, therefore, be instrumental in the recovery of cultural coherence because the diversity of works in animation made by such luminaries as Yuri Norstein (see Chapter Three), Rein Raamat, Priit Parn, and Gazmend Leka (see Bendazzi, 1994: 367–82) represents the historical continuity of art and culture *in spite of* social and political change. Similarly, in China, the work of the Shanghai studio has operated in ways that have emerged as anything from a resistance to Japanese invasion through to a rejection of the Disney style. In returning to traditional texts in children's literature, the theatrical conventions of the Beijing Opera, and the six principles of Chinese painting conceptualised by Xie He (see Farquhar, 1993: 4–28), the animators of the new school of Chinese animation were able to recall what Marie-Clare Quiquemelle calls 'the originality of Chinese culture' (Quiquemelle, 1991: 182) through new technical forms. These were, principally, animated paper-folding techniques and animation achieved through an ink and wash style similar to that of Caroline Leaf (see Chapter Three), but more akin to older traditions of Chinese watercolour painting. These differing approaches self-evidently produced works in which *national character* may be viewed in a completely different way than that played out in Disney features. Such distinctiveness ensures that representation may only occur upon the terms and principles of the animators themselves, and the aesthetic and cultural traditions they are working in, rather than in the hyper-realist terms of global Disneyfication.[10]

Sequences no. 82, October 1975, published in the *Canada House Gallery Guide* for the exhibition of his films and paintings mounted in the same year. Munro had to take a rest after every twenty-five jumps, and McClaren achieved the effect by cutting his film using the frame which recorded the high point of each jump.

9 See Law, 1995. Candy Guard's narratives play out self-perpetuating situations in which women are constantly entrapped by their own self-doubt in the face of failing to attain the image and identity expected of them by a male-determined society. Guard's female characters are frustrated by their own attempts to come to terms with the received knowledge that defines them in contemporary culture. These narratives may be seen as detailed analyses of gendered ennui which provoke particular kinds of recognition in female audiences, who acknowledge the use of humour as a critique of passivity and socially determined oppression.

10 For a discussion of cartoonal parody, see Cohen, M., 'Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies', and Lowry, E. Obalis, L. & Black, L., 'Cartoon as Ritual', both in Pilling, J., *'That's Not All Folks!': A Primer in Cartoonal Knowledge*, London: BFI Distribution, 1984. Many types of animation have parodic elements, which often inform the self-reflexive aspects of many films. For example, Nick Park's Oscar-winning film, *The Wrong Trousers* (1993), includes a train chase in the silent film style, (actually based on the chariot race from *Ben Hur*) and numerous film noir effects, all given an eccentric English twist by being 'played out in a front room in Wigan'. (Interview with the author, February 1995.)

11 Interview with the author, February 1995.

12 Quoted in a Screen First Documentary, *Going to Work on an Egg*, broadcast on Channel Four, 1994.

13 See Bishko, 1994; Darley, 1993.

5 ISSUES IN REPRESENTATION

1 In a range of films including Mimica's and Marks' *Alone* (1958), Marks' and Jutrisa's *The Fly* (1966), and Dragic's *Passing Days* (1969), the Zagreb Studios have addressed the 'everyman' character, as a victim of loneliness, alienation and oppressive social and supernatural forces. This very much characterises work appearing in creative environments in Eastern Europe, subject to the political intervention from the former Soviet Union. For a full discussion, see Holloway, 1972.

2 Interview with the author, March 1988.

3 Ibid.

4 *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* was the title given to a series of video releases featuring the work of female British animators. For an overview of these films, see Kotlarz, 1992; and Winterson, 1992.

5 See E.M. Forster, 'Mickey and Minnie' in *Abinger Harvest*, London: Penguin Books, p. 64 (first published by Edward Arnold, 1936).

6 Burton (Carvajal), J., 'Don Juanito Duck and the Imperial Patriarchal Unconscious: Disney Studios, the Good Neighbour Policy, and the Packaging of Latin America' in Parker, A., Russo, M., Sommer, D., and Yaeger, P. (eds), *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 21–42. Updated as '"Surprise Package": Looking Southward with Disney' in Smoodin, E. (ed) *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, London & New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 131–48; see also Dorfman, A. and Mattelart, A., *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, New York: International General, 1975.

7 This case study concerned with Tom and Jerry was first addressed in Kirkham, P. (ed) (1996) *The Gendered Object*, Manchester: MUP.

8 *Tom and Jerry – The Movie* (1994), and further television spin-offs followed the original series, but with the continuing showings of the original Hanna Barbera cartoons still in regular circulation worldwide, the predominant and influential canon of work is still regarded as the 1940–1958 period. (See Adams,1991; Brion, 1990; and Sennett, 1989.)

9 Some cartoons during the 1930s and 1940s cannot be reclaimed as in any way defendable or celebratory in their representation of race stereotypes. A particularly offensive example, is Walter Lantz's cartoon, *Scrub Me Mama – with a Boogie Beat* (1941), which depicts exaggeratedly indolent slave caricatures, who shoe-shine, eat melons, and blow cotton, as a seemingly half-caste young woman stimulates music and mirth while a large washer-woman scrubs clothes at the laundry.

10 Animation is produced worldwide in many contexts, and in many nations may be constituted as a particularly *national* cinema in the sense that it properly represents the national preoccupations and aesthetic traditions of that country, resisting the influence of Disney, and creating distinctive works. This is only partially referenced in my discussion, but is addressed in Bendazzi, 1994; and in various monographs, essays and articles looking at particular cultures of animation (see the Bibliography, p. 250).

6 ANIMATION AND AUDIENCES

1 For an accessible discussion of these issues, see J. Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

2 Animation is particularly appropriate to the needs of advertising in the sense that its language is wholly correspondent to the short form. The very 'look' of various kinds of animation is distinctive; previously inanimate lifeless brands become colourful characters; impossible scenarios are executed with persuasive authenticity. Animation effectively dramatises the 'fantastic' premise/promise of the product beyond the limits of its actual capacity. This may be made literal through changing the scale, scope, and function of the product itself, or the objects/environment associated with it, in order to spectacularise the concept which effectively sells the product. From the Tetley Tea Folk to the Creature Comforts animals of the Heat Electric advertisements to the Canon Copier Man, animation has facilitated memorable and enduring product identity. For brief discussions of animated commercials by Richard Purdum, Nick Park, and Joan Ashworth, see Wells, P. (ed.), *Art and Animation*, Academy Group/John Wiley, 1997, and a range of animated campaigns involving new technologies in Noake, R., *Animation*, London and Sidney: Macdonald Orbis, 1988.

3 From *America – The Movie*, Reel Four: Utopia Unlimited, BBC Radio Four; broadcast June–July 1988; researched and compiled by Paul Wells; script and narration by Christopher Frayling; produced by John Powell; original source: BBC Archive: Walt Disney in conversation with Fletcher Markle.