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Not Just for Kids: An Alternative Look at Animation

Rich Johnson

Notes - Week 1

INTRODUCTION

Giants and Foxes and Bears, Oh My!

A selection of animated films that reflects and introduces how traditional style and techniques are still employed alongside modern technology, from one of the first (stop motion) animated features, *The Tale of the Fox* linking perfectly to Wes Anderson's adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic children's book, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970). Anderson is the perfect example of a director who bridges the gap between live-action and animated feature films with his whimsical eye for detail. The combination of both traditional and CGI animated processes will be introduced through recent hidden gem, *The Little Prince* (2015) along with the use of narrative structure that presents an example of an animated portmanteau.

The chosen films for the intro introduction to the course have been curated to give a flavour of style and themes that will follow throughout the course. Full list of films covered at the end of these notes.

The Tale of the Fox (produced: 1929-1930, released: 1937)

Directors: Irene Starevich and Ladislav Starevich

Studio: Independently produced

- The first feature-length stop motion film.
- This was stop-motion animation pioneer Ladislav Starevich's first fully animated feature film.
- Released eight months before Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.
- DNA can clearly be seen in...

Fantastic Mr. Fox (2009)

Director: Wes Anderson

Studio: Indian Paintbrush / American Empirical Pictures

- Has all the trademarks of a Wes Anderson film; incredible sense of style and design; symmetrical framing and use of detail
- Could be argued that it is more Anderson than Dahl.
- Anderson one of few live-action directors who have dabbled with animation; Tim Burton another obvious example.



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***The Plague Dogs* (1982)**

Director: Martin Rosen

Studios: United Artists / Nepenthe Productions

- The first adult MGM animated film.
- Animated in both Britain and the US (San Francisco, California) between 1979 and 1982.
- Often overlooked; disturbing and horrific. This is Kitchen Sink animation reminiscent of a Ken Loach film.
- The US crew included Phil Robinson, and Retta Scott who was a “Disney veteran who had animated the vicious hunting dogs in *Bambi*.”
- Also working as an animator on the project was Brad Bird...

***The Iron Giant* (1999)**

Director: Brad Bird

Studio: Warner Bros. Feature Animation

- Brad Bird would go on to direct Pixar’s *The Incredibles* (2004) and *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (2011).
- The film has found its audience over the years after failure at the box office based on poor marketing.
- One of the last great examples of 2D animation while bridging 3D.
- Emotional weight and depth. A mix of B movie homage and Spielberg sentimentality.

***Short Peace* (2013)**

Directors: Shuhei Morita (*Possessions*), Katsuhiro Otomo (*Combustible*), Hiroaki Ando (*Gambo*), Hajime Katoki (*A Farewell to Weapons*)

Studio: Sunrise

- Katsuhiro Otomo’s dynamic storytelling and artwork are almost unparalleled.
- *Memories* and *Short Peace* make the perfect double bill of animated portmanteau.
- Interesting use of 3D rendered in the style of 2D; similar to *The Iron Giant*.
- Much like the ‘Magnetic Rose’ segment in *Memories*, *Short Peace*’s segment, ‘A Farewell to Weapons’ is also based on an original Otomo self-contained manga.

***The Little Prince* (2015)**

Director: Mark Osborne

Studios: ON Animation Studios / Orange Studio

- *The Little Prince* is one of the few examples of mixing computer animation and stop-motion techniques.
- Same director as Dreamwork’s *Kung Fu Panda* (2008). Once again showing a mix of styles: hand-drawn sequence at the beginning that resembles Chinese shadow puppetry.
- Netflix have always championed animation and shows in their original animated in-house projects from 2018.
- Independent projects, such as French animated feature, *I Lost My Body* (2019) screened exclusively on Netflix.



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Useful Links

www.cartoonbrew.com

www.animationmagazine.net

www.theanimationblog.com

www.bcdb.com

Film List

Main examples of animation covered over the duration of the course. Please feel free to seek and watch prior to each talk.

The Tale of the Fox (produced: 1929-1930, released: 1937)

Fantastic Mr. Fox (2009)

The Plague Dogs (1982)

The Iron Giant (1999)

The Little Prince (2015)

Short Peace (2013)

Pauvre Pierrot (aka Poor Pete) (1891)

Little Nemo (1911)

Gertie the Dinosaur (1914)

El Apóstol (1917)

Out of the Inkwell: The Clown's Pups (1919)

Alice's Wonderland (1923)

The Adventures of Prince Achmed (1926)

The New Gulliver (1935)

Gulliver's Travels (1939)

Momotaro: Sacred Sailors (1945)

Animal Farm (1954)

La Planète sauvage (1973)

Alice (1988)

Paprika (2010)

Batman: Mask of the Phantasm (1993)

Ballerina (2016)

Ethel & Ernest (2016)

The Breadwinner (2016)

April and the Extraordinary World (2016)

Chico and Rita (2010)

Grave of the Fireflies (1988)

Sword of the Stranger (2008)

Big Fish and Begonia (2016)



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The King of Pigs (2013)
Porco Rosso (1992)
The Iron Giant (1999)
Song of the Sea (2014)
The Red Turtle (2016)
The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb (1988)
Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists! (2012)
The Lego Movie (2014)
Kubo and the Two Strings (2016)
Memories (1995)
Fear(s) of the Dark (2007)
ParaNorman (1988)
Persepolis (2008)
Loving Vincent (2017)
Isle of Dogs (2018)
Missing Link (2019)
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2014)