Animation criticism: debates and approaches in journalism and specialized literature

Crítica da animação: debates e abordagens no jornalismo e na literatura especializada

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the structure of critical analysis of animation across various audiovisual platforms, focusing on understanding the role of criticism, its presence, the creators or producers of the animation, and the significance of grasping technical advancements and dialogue between languages. The objective is to investigate the progressive perspectives of critical thinking and its impact on the dissemination and public comprehension of animation. It offers a comprehensive analysis with a literature review of criticism in journalism and academia, with the subsequent intention of conducting an in-depth study on the interplay of languages and arts in animation.

Keywords: Animation. Criticism. Journalism.

RESUMO

Este trabalho propõe analisar como se estrutura a análise crítica da animação em suas diferentes plataformas audiovisuais a partir da compreensão da função da crítica e onde ela aparece, quem são os criadores ou produtores da animação, e a importância do entendimento da evolução técnica e do diálogo entre linguagens. O objetivo é entender em qual perspectiva evoluiu o pensamento crítico e como isso influi na divulgação e no melhor entendimento público sobre animação. Trata-se de uma análise panorâmica com revisão da literatura sobre a crítica no jornalismo e no campo acadêmico, visando posteriormente aprofundar e desenvolver um estudo sobre o diálogo entre linguagens e artes na animação.

Palavras-chave: *Animação. Crítica. Jornalismo.*

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INTRODUCTION

Animated cinema and productions aimed at television, internet, and streaming have been, for a long time, topics of discussions about narrative, style, and aesthetics. However, little progress has been made in understanding animation itself and its potential for critical training and the creation of advanced projects addressing the most diverse application variables. This work initially addressed the existing characteristics of animation film criticism in the press in dialogue with the academic thought in specialized literature from an international perspective. The objective was to understand from which perspective critical thinking has evolved and how this influences the dissemination and better public understanding of animation. The methodology uses bibliographic and documentary research from books and specialized (more academic) magazines and a comparative analysis with some examples recorded in traditional press.

From this perspective, some important facts take place in the 20th century, such as the massification of television and the development of norms and moral codes. In the United States, the code became difficult to be applied following the massification of television in the 1960s. Television networks urgently needed content and the first solution was to explore the film studios' vast film collection. Animated short films were sold in packages to television networks in the international market. However, this content became the target of criticism as soon as television began to be seen as the "electronic babysitter" (KLEIN, 1993).

Millions of children spent hours watching animations or, in the more popular term, cartoons, and there was in fact no standardized control over what was broadcast. Animation was hit hard when the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDAA) created "The Motion Picture Production code" (or Hays Code) as a guide to moral rules to prevent a direct attempt by the United States government and to satisfy a public demand for productions that avoided sexual content and a high level of violence, very present in short films from the 1920s and 1930s (CRAFTON, 1982). Betty Boop was one of the characters most affected by the Hays Code, with subsequent short films softening or eliminating more adult situations from the previous period.

The code preached the defense of ethical standards, the provision of correct life conduct subject to drama and entertainment, and there could be no ridicule or expression of sympathy for illegal activities. Although its application was optional, the major Hollywood studios applied the standards, which influenced productions between the 1930s and 1960s (BARRIER, 1999). Moral codes were equally applied in other countries, especially when productions were State investments.

In the case of the popularization of animation on television, the largest television networks in the United States and other countries created their own ethics committees, analyzing the content in terms of the values and customs explored in their scripts and images. This created a self-censorship mechanism, eased only when a production was distributed to independent broadcasters. These norms helped to establish certain limitations on production and consumption, resulting in animation

becoming what common sense labeled as a "children's genre" or the euphemism of "family films". This is a mistaken view, as any historical consultation (BENDAZZI, 2016) will result in many examples of animation productions for different age groups and applications around the world.

OPINION AND CRITICISM

The classification proposals for journalistic genres are based on two different perspectives: information and opinion. José Marques de Mello (2003) developed a classification based on the source and intentionality of journalistic texts. Manuel Chaparro (1998), in turn, when publishing a comparative study between the journalism practiced in Portugal and Brazil, questions the paradigm that has historically become the basis of the discussion about the characteristics of the genres of journalistic texts — in this case, the separation between opinion and information. "This is a false paradigm because journalism is not divided by, but rather built with information and opinion" (CHAPARRO, 1998, p. 100).

The structure of informative genres is described based on references outside the journalistic institution. Firstly, it depends on a fact and evolution of events, and on the way in which journalism professionals establish dialogue with organizations and celebrities. In the case of opinionated genres, "the structure of the message is determined by variables controlled by the journalistic institution, and which takes on two features: authorship (who issues the opinion) and angle (temporal or spatial perspective that gives meaning to the opinion)" (MARQUES DE MELLO *apud* CHAPARRO, 1998, p. 107, translated by the author).

Manuel Chaparro (1998) contests Marques de Mello's classification proposal, stating that the investigation and verification of information with the aim of resulting in news texts, constitute evaluative interventions influenced by established assumptions, judgements, interests and points of view. In short, it would be impossible to comment — or issue an opinion — without being based on facts and data collected by journalists.

Another nomenclature was defined by Martínez Albertos (2001), with the division of information and opinion replaced by reports and comments. According to this explanation, the fundamental issue associated with the notion of gender is expressed more broadly in the news text. "News is a raw material on which journalistic communication professionals can work from three perspectives: information, interpretation, and opinion (ALBERTOS, 2001, p. 56). The interpretative character occurs from the focus on primary and related facts, being inseparable from the informative part. Interpretative reports and the chronicles are examples of this interpretative aspect. There is argumentative analysis (interpretation) combined with opinion (persuasion).

There is also the utilitarian genre, widely used to inform indicators, quotes, scripts, and services — information that is of interest to users of public services and consumers of industrial products and private services. It is in this space that one generally finds locations, dates and times of audiovisual entertainment programming in media outlets.

In the field of opinionated text, including what Albertos (2001) calls "interpretive", an important discursive language is criticism. It is an intellectual, public activity that is part of a society's mode of artistic production. It acts on aesthetic consciousness. The differences in the genre include digests, a detailed description of something; critical reviews, a text with value judgment; chronicles, a historical narration; and critiques, aesthetic appreciation linked to the opinionated genre.

Among the functions of criticism are: informing readers; raising cultural levels; reinforcing community identification; encouraging artists; defining what is new; documenting History; building the historicity of the work, of the artistic genre, bringing up its past and pointing out its future. Criticism also helps in forming an audience, opening up space for works of art (not just those with marketing content), doubling the meanings of the work, improving aesthetic awareness by leading people to "think aesthetically", valuing journalism as an activity, relating it to human knowledge, and sharping in men a critical and inquisitive view of the world.
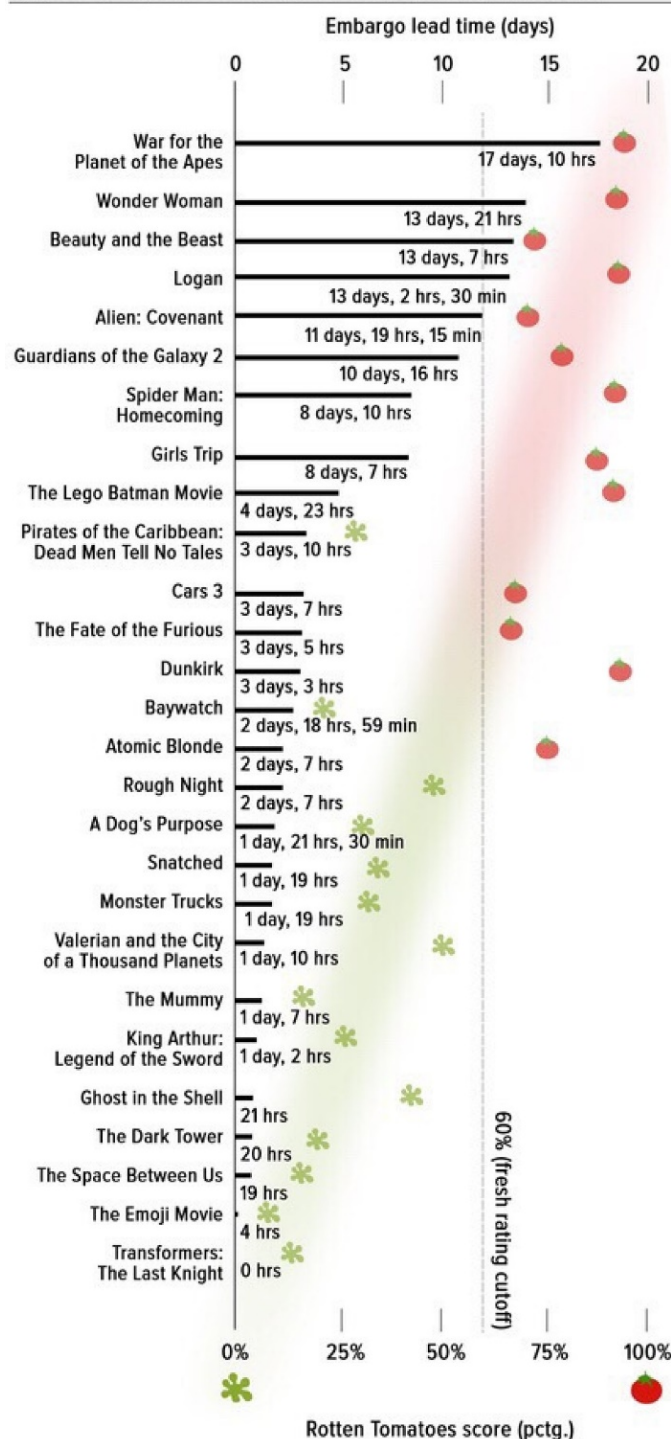
The film industry tries to control the effects of criticism so as not to compromise financial results with box office sales and ticket pre-sales. One of the tools used is the embargo imposed by the film's publicity team and not exactly by the press office. The journalist (critic) signs a term of commitment in which he agrees to publish his review only on a certain date. This date may vary from weeks, days, and even hours before the release in theaters. One of the fads has been to allow journalists to say that they were invited to check out the screening and publish what is called "first impressions" without, however, passing judgment on the merits or listing details of the film (DICKEY, 2017). This is clearly intended to "hype" the public's desire to check out the new film.

Journalists are not the only ones affected by the embargo. The so-called "digital influencers", people with engagement profiles on social media, are coveted by press offices in order to promote a release. Most of the time, without any condition to pass critical judgment, influencers provide more of a service of informing a launch than actually analyzing it. It should be noted that the renewal of the business models of journalistic vehicles has forced the migration of professionals qualified in criticism to the creation of profiles and channels on social media. Although they are few in relation to the set of channels that call themselves "critical", these professionals try to adapt the content that in the past was basically in print media to a more dynamic and visual language.

A recurring question is whether the control of information imposed by the embargo results in a change in the perception of criticism. The answer is usually no. A survey carried out by the website Mashable (DICKEY, 2017) compiled 27 films with different embargo dates and average rating (Figure 1). Data shows that the longer studios try to delay the publication of a review, the greater the number of negative reviews. The exception occurs when there are films whose franchises (brands) are very strong and the studios know that the box office depends much less on reviews. An animation like "The Emoji Movie" from 2017 had the embargo lifted just 4 hours before its premiere and the reviews published were, for the most part, negative.

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Rotten Embargoes

There's a direct and undeniable correlation between a film's Rotten Tomatoes score and the amount of time a studio allows between its review embargo lift and its public release. Below, we've charted 27 of the year's biggest releases, with embargo time overlaid on their final RT scores.

Embargo lead time (days)

Film	Embargo lead time
War for the Planet of the Apes	17 days, 10 hrs
Wonder Woman	13 days, 21 hrs
Beauty and the Beast	13 days, 7 hrs
Logan	13 days, 2 hrs, 30 min
Alien: Covenant	11 days, 19 hrs, 15 min
Guardians of the Galaxy 2	10 days, 16 hrs
Spider Man: Homecoming	8 days, 10 hrs
Girls Trip	8 days, 7 hrs
The Lego Batman Movie	4 days, 23 hrs
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales	3 days, 10 hrs
Cars 3	3 days, 7 hrs
The Fate of the Furious	3 days, 5 hrs
Dunkirk	3 days, 3 hrs
Baywatch	2 days, 18 hrs, 59 min
Atomic Blonde	2 days, 7 hrs
Rough Night	2 days, 7 hrs
A Dog's Purpose	1 day, 21 hrs, 30 min
Snatched	1 day, 19 hrs
Monster Trucks	1 day, 19 hrs
Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets	1 day, 10 hrs
The Mummy	1 day, 7 hrs
King Arthur: Legend of the Sword	1 day, 2 hrs
Ghost in the Shell	21 hrs
The Dark Tower	20 hrs
The Space Between Us	19 hrs
The Emoji Movie	4 hrs
Transformers: The Last Knight	0 hrs

60% (fresh rating cutoff)

Rotten Tomatoes score (pctg.)

Source: Dickey (2017).
Figure 1. Survey of the compilation of criticisms in relation to the embargo period. There is a direct and undeniable correlation between a film's score on the Rotten Tomatoes website (review compiler) and the amount of time a studio allows between the end of the review embargo and its release to the public. The figure shows 27 of the biggest releases of 2017 with the embargo time superimposed on the final scores from the website Rotten Tomatoes. The embargo is used as a strategy to control criticism and delay any negative reviews at the release of films, which could affect production revenue.

There is, therefore, a perception that extending the embargo time may be hiding problematic aspects of a production. On the other hand, when a studio does not establish an embargo, it is because it needs the work of critics to help promote a new film. It is not uncommon for the embargo to also serve to guarantee exclusivity for a journalistic vehicle.

Unfortunately, many journalists, critics, and influencers adopt procedures to please the entertainment industry so as not to lose the future right to interview cast and production members, including: relying on press releases, focusing greater attention on blockbusters and productions that studio judges priorities, and exaggerate the use of positive adjectives and simplistic analyses expressed with commonplaces. The important thing is that the public and especially the artistic world and the industry lack a critical eye. It is important for the development of future films and helps with creative strategies. Journalist Daniel Piza (2003) prepared a summary of the characteristics that a good critical text must have:

> First, all the characteristics of a good journalistic text: clarity, coherence, agility. Second, it must inform the reader what the debated work or topic is, summarizing its story, its general lines, who the author is, etc. Third, one must analyze the work in a synthetic but subtle way, clarifying the relative weight of qualities and defects, avoiding the tone of "accounting balance" or the mere attribution of adjectives. So far, it's a good review. But there is a fourth requirement, more common among great critics, which is the ability to go beyond the analyzed object, to use it to read some aspect of reality, to be oneself, the critic, an author, an interpreter of the world (PIZA, 2003, p. 70).

There are several types of criticism; as for the style adopted for theater criticism we have Roland Barthes and the structuralist one, Bernard Dort and the dialectic one, Bakhtin and the polyphonic one, and even the criticism described by Oscar Wilde, who sees the critic as a creator (GARCIA, 2004). Now more focused on audiovisual, there are criticisms that can be content, psychological, sociological, psychoanalytic, and formalistic. Animated cinema and all its derivative productions in other media can take advantage of any of them. Each of them provides us with instruments for analysis based on different approaches and needs, which also contributes to different visions finding support among a diverse audience. Although an animated film may perfectly fit into the same parameters used for live-action films, the proposal below brings complementary elements to qualify the exercise of critical analysis.

ANIMATION CRITICISM: THE ISSUE OF AUTHORSHIP

The proposal is to offer complementary elements to those who analyze animation only from the theoretical framework of live-action cinema. This work's intention is not to suggest, for now, that animation deserves its own parameters, but that animation is a complex form of audiovisual production, capable of creatively adapting elements from different arts and languages. This dialogue is important for us to critically understand how production works, the aesthetic evolution, and even the audience's preferences. Let us first address the issue of authorship.

The authorship thesis in cinema can be divided into two poles, as described by Pegoraro (2016). One of them is the authorial, the romantic narrative that denotes a relevant individual contribution — be it from the director, screenwriter or producer, resulting in credit as the author of the work, despite their limited control. The second pole is the materialist/collectivist explanation that considers a certain apparatus, a set of industrial conditions or even a group of talents as the functional equivalent of an individual author (CHRISTENSEN, 2012).

There are several theorists who try to classify the role of creation in the film industry. In a more functionalist perspective, there is the author John Thornton Caldwell (2008), whose book *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* presents an ethnographic study developing what is called an "industrial authorial theory". The author divides the authorial group into three groups: the first would be linked to creative professionals responsible for idealizing, acting, and directing a film; the second would be made up of professionals who only execute ideas — studio workers; a third group is made up of those who make decisions — the executives — who consider the scripts elements that are part of a business plan, in which the author describes a theory of industrial identity.

Peter Bogdavich (1997), director and historian, states in his work that directors have a fundamental influence on the identity of films. Without a doubt, the role of directors such as Chuck Jones, at Warner Bros., or Tex Avery, at MGM cannot be underestimated. Directors are responsible for monitoring and approving all daily operational work on a production. Although there are many behind-the-scenes films showing different animators and screenwriters, directors have an important role in the studio in the Hollywood industrial scheme, especially if they have the necessary qualifications to obtain a certain creative autonomy, which can yield positive results. There is increasing interest in learning about directors' work processes, especially those of 20th century productions.

Producers and studio heads are figures with great decision-making power. Thomas Schatz (1991) states that the producer is the "chief architect" of a studio's style. In mid-20th century, a period when studios did not yet have equivalent financial conditions, several producers were studio heads with decision-making power over directors in creative matters even greater than what is seen in the 21st century. In the case of animation, Walt Disney was both owner and producer, and as such, he signed in the credits as creative responsible for short and feature films.

Although Hollywood is full of influential producers, one cannot state that they control the big studios. So how can we explain certain aesthetic standards and cultural identities that span decades in studios such as Warner Bros., Disney, Pixar, the former Hanna-Barbera, DreamWorks, Sony Animation, Laika, among others? Jerome Christensen (2012) has a thesis which highlights the segregation that exists between film criticism and the economic history of cinema. He points to an alternative to identify the author — not a real person, but an entity that qualifies for the intended author status: the corporate studio itself. In this case, the hypothesis is that studios, and not the director, screenwriter or even the producer, can be considered the authors of Hollywood films.

In the last chapter of his book, Christensen (2012) analyzes the merger between Disney and Pixar in 2006 as the execution of a significant revision of the corporate way of asserting "cultural authorship". This is a relevant analysis, as Disney publicly speaks of "Disney culture", "Pixar culture", "Marvel culture", to explain the strategies that lead to the production of films and their derivative products. If from a strictly economic point of view Disney is said to bet on franchises, from the point of view of cultural production we are talking about "cultural assumptions" that lead to certain choices — if the intention is, as is the case, to analyze the complex issue of productions nowadays.

From an authorship point of view, some counterpoints should be highlighted that are most prominent in the production of animated films. The main difference between commercial productions (regardless of the size of the production company) and more artistic ones is that it is much easier to find more original productions in short films — these productions are concentrated at international film festivals. This happens because it is possible for just one animator to produce all of his material without external interference, which is highly unlikely in a complex and collective production of a feature film.

There are also mainstream productions, that originate from large studios or commercial production centers, such as Hollywood in the United States, or centers that receive State subsidies for animation productions (for example, France and Canada). And there are independent animation studios that work in isolation and with much fewer resources compared to those located in large production hubs. Many of which, as in the case of Brazil, benefit from public policy notices aimed at audiovisual production.

Within a country, there may be many differences between centers located in metropolises or richer regions and centers on the outskirts. In Brazil, for example, although much of the production is carried out in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, from the 2010s onward the Northeast region became a hub for animation production. There are production hubs also responsible for secondary phases or for taking on the bulk of production from a parent studio located in a "metropolis" — what we can call outsourced production. A Hollywood studio may outsource its production to studios in Canada or South Korea.

There are cases in which two "metropolises" may try to compete for the production market. A classic case in the United States is New York, whose studios have never managed to surpass those located in Los Angeles (Hollywood) in economic power. However, in Russia, the cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg have a large feature film and short film production company in each city. From 2020 onward, home productions have expanded, in which it is possible for a studio to outsource production phases not to foreign producers, but to individual professionals or small studios located in different countries.

When it comes to professional training, it is important to keep in mind that there are different types of training. Many animators may have a degree in specific technical courses. Others come from undergraduate courses in the fields of

audiovisual, arts, and graphic design, where animation disciplines may not exist, or their presence may be no more than a satellite discipline. And there are those who manage to graduate from specific courses or specialized colleges or higher education schools, such as CalArts, in the United States, and Gobelins, in France. In Brazil, we have undergraduate courses focused on animation at Faculdade Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP), at Universidade Federal de Belo Horizonte (UFMG), at Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM Rio), at Universidade Veiga de Almeida (RJ), at Universidade Federal de Pelotas (RS), at Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR), at Faculdade Méliès (SP), among others.

Due to differences in training and market needs, especially in peripheral centers, it is very common for there to be generalist professionals — those capable of moving between scriptwriting, visual development, animation and direction — and not just the so-called specialists, who dedicate a large part of their careers in a single role in the studio.

To conclude, there is the role of applying animation. In audiovisuals, animation is not just an entertainment in the form of short and feature films. There can be documentaries that use animation techniques for the most diverse themes (ROE, 2013; SERRA, 2019). There is also a functional application through technical films that aim to instruct people for the purposes of propaganda, education, military application (KORNHABER, 2020), and technical education. There is also extensive use of animations in video games and in the development of smartphone applications.

Advertising is a very important application and, in many countries — such as Brazil —, it has become the school of many professionals who today work in large international studios. Working with advertising provides the experience of producing under pressure, under short deadlines, respecting agency guides and briefings, in addition to experimenting with the most different animation techniques (COOK; THOMPSON, 2019). Two great exponents of advertising animation are producers and animators Daniel Messias, in Brazil, and Richard Williams, in England.

Animation is also uses as a secondary application in live-action productions. This involves storyboarding, production design, visual effects (computer generated), effects animation, among others. These are works that take into account deadline and budget dynamics that are different from what normally occurs with animations. In Brazil, it has been common for animation to be included in public notices in the form of this secondary application. It needs maturing in relation to primary applications, taking into account the fact that animation takes much longer to produce.

SUGGESTED LITERATURE WITH EMPHASIS ON HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

Even the most knowledgeable film critics have some knowledge gap when it comes to animation. What is offered here is a compilation of reference works that serve as suggested reading for anyone interested in delving deeper into research or understanding techniques aimed at preparing critical analyses.

From a language point of view, animation primarily fits within what we understand about cinema. It is treated here as audiovisual, as we understand that animation was designed for other media platforms such as television, video games, the internet, etc. However, animation cannot be analyzed in isolation within the parameters of cinema. Over the decades, an intense dialogue with other arts and languages has been built. For example, comic books served as one of the earliest sources of narrative adaptation. Literature, with an emphasis on fairy tales, also contributed to the development of films. With the emergence of sound cinema, sound became a fundamental part of an animated production with the development of new techniques for creating sound effects, recording voices/dubbing and music. And there are also dialogues with theater, photography, and illustration.

The dialogue between languages and arts, therefore, is fundamental to understanding the complex dimension that animations are. In the essay *O Manifesto das Sete Artes* (CANUDO, 1927), the expression "seventh art" was mentioned for the first time, the then newly emerging cinema. For Riccioto Canudo, the cinematographic work was made up of elements of other expressions such as sound, music; movement, dance; color, painting; volume, sculpture; setting, architecture; representation, of theater; and the word of poetry.

There are other authors who deal with animation within discussions about the language of cinema. Lewis Jacobs (1972), Sergei Eisenstein (2018), and George Sadoul (1963) produced essays respectively in 1939, 1941, and 1963 about Disney production essentially from the first half of the 20th century. In the controversial discussion about what we can call art in animation — with the exception of actual authorial works — it is not possible to escape the discussions about the work of art in the era of its technical reproducibility by Walter Benjamin (1994) and the cultural industry by Theodor Adorno (1989). Both mention Mickey Mouse when discussing the topic.

Still on the discussion about art, there is a book by Robert D. Feild (1947), then an assistant professor at Harvard University in the 1930s, who raised controversy in the academic field by equating the artistic qualities of Disney production with works of the so-called noble arts. He believed that Disney films pioneered a new type of creative expression, overcoming the notion that only music, painting, sculpture, and architecture were arts. "By combining many of these old forms and transporting them to a timeless and spatially unlimited domain we would have the most powerful form of artistic expression ever invented" (WATTS, 1997, p. 101, translated by the author). Feild states that comic books were important in bringing subtlety to graphics previously seen as sophistication, and their appeal was aimed at the common man. Cinema was another force, whose rising power was related to the common man's desire for straightforward entertainment.

> Cartoons (animations) were experimented with for generations long before the creation of the camera and became a form of entertainment thanks to its interaction with photography. But, as Feild concludes, hand-drawing was never taken seriously as art. It was considered a series of resources used to entertain children's minds with absurd comical situations. But the

technique evolved, the process became more complex, and cartoons beca-
me part of the cinema repertoire, generally preceding (along with news-
reels) major productions. (PEGORARO, 2016, p. 84).

A film like Fantasia, from 1940, bringing together animation and classical mu-
sic, is a great source of analysis for critics and intellectuals, even those who, for some
reason, have rejected other Disney productions. In the United States, critics received
the film with great skepticism. They accused Disney of a certain arrogance with his
new production. The more serious ones used devastating phrases in their reviews
such as "A detriment to good music and the art of animation", "An endless bore",
or even "Wake me up when it's over"[1].

In Brazil, some critics also considered Disney's attempt to mix two dis-
tinct forms of art — music and cinema — to be pretentious. The screening of
the film in Brazil in 1941 caught the attention of intellectual exponents. *Clima*
magazine was published between 1941 and 1944 and featured long essays with
literary, theater, and film criticism (PEGORARO, 2012). Issue No. 5, published in
October 1941, is almost entirely dedicated to the study and criticism of *Fantasia*,
with works by Rui Coelho, Sergio Milliet, Oswald de Andrade, Paulo Emílio de
Sales Gomes, Francisco Luis de Almeida Sales, Flavio de Carvalho, and Plínio
Sussekind Rocha. Mário de Andrade, however, has written in favor of Disney's
first experiments.

In Europe, there are pioneering works that address language and produc-
tion processes. These are the cases of *Le Dessin Animé* by Lo Duca (1948), *How to
Cartoon* by John Halas (1958) and *The Animated film* by Roger Manvell (1954), the
latter basically behind the scenes of the British animation *Animal Farm*.

There are several hanbooks on computer animation, which become outdat-
ed as soon as the technology becomes obsolete. The present work will be focused
on the fundamental basis of drawn animation. In the United States, there are two
works considered the "bibles" of animation. *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*,
by animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston (1995), whose first edition is from
1981, presented to professionals from all over the world several techniques and
details of the Disney production process that were previously unknown. The anima-
tion handbook by animator Richard Williams (2012), *The Animator's Survival Kit*, is
an essentially technical work, which makes it the basic reference for those who wish
to know the techniques of drawn animation, with material taken from animator Art
Babbit's old courses.

There are many books with a historiographical and sociological bias dealing
with animations. However, the one that presents the best panoramic view of the
different faces of animation and its relationship with advertising, propaganda,
ideology, television, language, and *avant-garde* is *Animation Cinema* by French re-
searcher Sébastien Denis (2010). This is about filling a gap in academic production
on the subject and can help in deepening animation studies.

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1   Phrases quoted in the 1982 documentary *Walt Disney – One Man's Dream*.

Regarding innovations, any critical analysis must take into account aesthetic and technical evolution. In cultural journalism, it is important to dedicate considerable time to readings that teach you to reflect on broader theoretical issues such as the matter of taste, artistic nationalism, understanding the consumption of cultural production, conservative critical thinking, and the importance of the *avant-garde* (COELHO, 2006). This helps us understand why animation "schools" with such unique styles are so important to the history of animation. The experimental productions of Norman McLaren from the National Film Board of Canada, the alleged simplification of the films of the United Productions of America (U.P.A.), the aesthetic diversity of the Zagreb school, and the creative explosion of Japanese anime and Russian productions form a valuable set of important creations with strong economic, political, and aesthetic influences.

From the point of view of historical revisionism, there are important works that seek to bring women who worked in animation in the 20th century out of the shadows. This is the case of *The Queens of Animation: The Untold Story of the Women Who Transformed the World of Disney and Made Cinematic History*, by Nathalia Holt (2019), which presents an overview of the presence of women in Hollywood animation. Researcher Mindy Johnson (2017) has not only written about women who have been omitted from the official historiography of the Disney studios but is also researching the first decades of Hollywood production in general. In 2022, she released the first information about a pioneering woman — Bessie Mae Kelley, whose career began in 1917. In Brazil, we have the *Mulher Anima* project (SCHNEIDER et al., 2021) with the purpose of presenting the presence of women in the history of Brazilian animation.

In this section with literary suggestions, it is essential to list some general and specific historiographical works. The three volumes with the historical overview of world animation by Italian researcher Giannalberto Bendazzi (2016) present basic information about animation data in the most different countries. In relation to local historiographies, two publications by the British Film Institute have been highlighted: *The Story of British Animation* (STEWART, 2021) and *Anime: A History* (CLEMENTS, 2013), which deal with British and Japanese productions. The books by L'Harmattan written by Sébastien Roffat (2005, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2020, 2021, 2023) introduce us to the history of Les Gémeaux studios, a creation by Paul Grimault and Émile Reynaud, French aesthetics and production between 1936 and 1944 with discussion about State policies regarding culture, and the relationship between animation and propaganda. Each country has its own production whose scale and importance must be assessed according to the need for criticism. The Belgian production (MAESLTAF, 1976), for example, shows us that there is an entire aesthetically diverse collection that surprises those who only know Tintin and The Smurfs. In another example, the production of Toonder studios (DE VRIES, 2012) presents us with the graphic sophistication of one of the largest producers in the Netherlands with experimental projects, advertising and very popular films — with a link to comic books. We could continue with examples from Argentina, Canada, China, the Czech

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Republic, Russia, among others. Two more countries were highlighted in this search for greater understanding of these productions.

Japan needs to be analyzed due to its importance in the dissemination of anime in the popular culture of so many countries and the commercial impact generated from Asia. There are dozens of good Western authors with works that classify and present to us the narrative and aesthetic characteristics of anime. Instead of citing general works, two works are initially highlighted that analyze the production of Hayao Miyazaki, one of the greatest exponents of Japanese animation. Frenchman Emmanuel Trouillard (2019), for example, makes a retrospective analysis of Miyazaki's films based on the elements seen in the animation *Lives in the Wind*. Spaniard Raúl Fortes Guerrero (2019) wrote a denser monograph with an analysis of the ethics and aesthetics of Miyazaki's films and why, according to the author, he surpasses other Japanese animation directors in importance.

The best way to understand anime — and manga — is to learn about the works of Japanese theorists. A seminal article is authored by Eiji Otsuka and Marc Steinberg (2010) with English translation and complements by Professor Marc Steinberg. We are introduced to the fandom (fan culture) of manga and anime in Japan. With an ethnographic view of Japanese production, Otsuka introduces us to a reflection on the reproduction and consumption of narrative. Their main academic interlocutor were researchers Lamarre *et al.* (2007), a philosopher and cultural critic who became an exponent in Japan in the analysis of representation, narrative structure and otaku subculture, a term already widespread among manga and anime consumers in Brazil. The two articles are good starting points to begin understanding Japanese animation from the cultural point of view of its country of origin.

In the case of Brazil, not only the production and volume of titles since the turn of the 21st century has accelerated, a solid group of researchers is also being built, who work on building the critical formation of the public, and of the different technical aspects, of the history of Brazilian production and market issues and cultural policy formulations. The works already published range from the analysis of technical aspects — *The Art of Animation: Technique and aesthetics through history*, by Alberto Lucena Barbosa Junior (2002) — to the compilation of interviews with independent animators (LEITE, 2015), overview presentation on the diversity of techniques prepared by the organizing committee of the Anima Mundi International Festival (WIEDEMANN, 2007) and the films considered essential by the Brazilian Animation Cinema Association (*Associação Brasileira do Cinema de Animação* – ABCA) and the Brazilian Association of Film Critics (*Associação Brasileira de Críticos de Cinema* – ABRACINE) — Brazilian Animation – 100 films essential (SILVA; CARNEIRO, 2018). The Northeast Region has stood out for becoming a hotbed of new talent and a new hub for Brazilian animation, escaping the common sense of the Rio-São Paulo axis. Professor Marcos Buccini (2017) did relevant research on the history of animated cinema in Pernambuco.

For a history of animation in the world cinema period, the best reference is the book by Donald Crafton (1982), focused on productions released between 1898

and 1928. Robin Allan's doctoral thesis (1999) on Disney productions and artistic inspirations in Europe is an example of research on dialogue between languages. Other essays on this dialogue with European references can be read in the book by Bruno Girveau (2007).

For a historical overview of classic Hollywood animation, in order, the book *Hollywood Cartoons*, by Michael Barrier (1999), is the one that best presents in detail the evolution of production at the different studios. With a less dry text, but maintaining research rigor, *Of Mice and Magic*, by Leonard Maltin (1980), is usually the ideal introduction for beginning researchers. The same goes for Charles Solomon's *Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation* (1994). Any book by animator and researcher John Canemaker (2018) is a reference for those who study the history of animation, so here we highlight *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art* about one of the greatest icons of comics and animation.

In addition to the Hollywood mainstream known for productions by Disney, Warner, MGM — and currently by studios such as DreamWorks, Pixar, Sony Animation, among others —, we cannot ignore the *avant-garde*. There are at least three worthy of note in the 20th century: firstly, Norman McLaren's experimentalism in his animations for the National Film Board of Canada (DOBSON, 2007). Secondly, Disney's "communist" dissidence that formed the U.P.A., innovating by exchanging the realistic style for the "flat" one, avoiding anthropomorphized animals for human protagonism, and investing in what became known as "limited animation" — an efficient animation technique with fewer drawings and which would later be explored on television by the Hanna-Barbera studio and its competitors (ABRAHAM, 2012). Mr. Magoo may be U.P.A.'s most popular character, but its collection is full of experimental animations for cinema and television. And finally, we have the "Zagreb School" in Yugoslavia (current Croatia), also exploring stylization rather than realism, but with elements of cynicism, self-irony, manipulation, and an adult-centered worldview (HOLLOWAY, 1972). The most important animator of this studio (Zagreb Film) was Dušan Vukotić.

Regarding the study of language, Croatia had an important critic, journalist and theorist called Ranko Munitić (2007). Not only has he helped preserve Zagreb's animation history, but he has also authored a series of articles on criticism and a book on animation aesthetics. For him, animation is a system of morphological values whose meaning and significance become legible through the analysis of certain morphological forms and characteristics. He valued the visual parts (the trace, the space, and the volume) and the kinesthetic (the animation itself, the filming, the sound, the music, and the editing). As most of his writings are in the Serbo-Croatian language, the suggested work in English is the book *Understanding Animation*, by the British Paul Wells (1998). This is a suitable introduction for anyone who wants to understand animation in its cinematic form, how to interpret its different methods and technical elements, it presents narrative strategies for animation and discusses a little about representation, focusing on race and gender. Wells uses case studies taking advantage of productions by famous names in animation, such as Chuck Jones, Tex Avery

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work presented at the Animation Studies Seminar (*Seminário de Estudos de Animação* – SeAnima 2021) was a contribution to discussions on proposals to expand academic dissemination, promote more meetings, encourage new researchers, and assist in the search for bibliographic references.

The bibliography published in Brazil still lacks titles and there are few international scientific journals with space for works that discuss animation. The Society of Animation Studies is one of the leading academic journal research forums available. Criticism appears in articles and issues of magazines and catalogs, such as those from Siggraph, or in special dossiers, such as those offered by scientific journals in different fields. *American Music*, for example, a periodical from the University of Illinois, had a specific dossier on Disney music.

What we hope is that this article will help journalists access documentary and bibliographic material, and that they will be encouraged to develop in-depth research on the language, history, theory, aesthetics, and techniques of animation. It is also expected that researchers and teachers who deal with themes related to animation will have more support to deepen future research in the area. Criticism is essential so that the public, the market, and the State really know what animation is, beyond generalizations and childish labels, and so that public policies and production strategies take into account all its creative and communication potential.

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