Developments in Peplum Filmmaking

Disney's Hercules

Chris Pallant

Many of the trailers released to promote the recent re-imagining of *Clash of the Titans* (2010) made ubiquitous use of one sequence from the movie in particular: the giant scorpion battle. While its inclusion suggested a degree of continuity with the 1981 movie of the same name, which also saw Perseus battle a nest of scorpions, it also revealed that animation would again play a central role in helping to realize the movie's mythological world.[1] In the 1981 version, Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion animation provided the basis for much of the fantastical action, while in the 2010 edition, computer generated animation proffers the technological bridge into more fantastical realms. In fact, the recent sword and sandal renaissance could not have scaled such epic visual heights had it not been for the contributions made by the many legions of CGI special effects animators. *Gladiator* (2000), *Alexander* (2004), *Troy* (2004), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), and *300* (2006) all rely on a multitude of animated components such as synthetic performers, enhanced locations, and three-dimensionally modeled monsters to provide much of their spectacle.

While the use of computer generated animation in these movies is hardly surprising, what is unexpected is the lack of extant scholarship directly concerned with this intersection between animation and sword and sandal filmmaking. Animation shares a longstanding relationship with sword and sandal filmmaking, with Harryhausen being perhaps the most prominent figure in this respect, having produced the iconic stop-motion set-pieces for *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963), *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1974), *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977), and the original *Clash of the Titans*. Paul Wells rightly asserts that none of the movies "Harryhausen was instrumental in creating were 'star' vehicles, nor did they enjoy the possibility of being sought after because of their directorial credit" (*Genre and Authorship*

92). Rather, they were "vehicles for the spectacle Harryhausen created" (*Genre and Authorship* 92). This, Wells argues,

> elevates Harryhausen above the normal rigours of live-action film-making, and out of the ghetto of an effects tradition that often refuses to acknowledge the primacy of animation as a form at its heart; a situation echoed in contemporary "blockbuster" film-making where much of the huge spectacle is in some way facilitated by traditional, and more progressive, applications in animation [*Genre and Authorship* 94].

Harryhausen's involvement with sword and sandal filmmaking, however, can be best attributed to the simple but undeniable fact that he was a master of the special affect. In his day, Harryhausen's stop-motion animation was cutting edge, advanced for the time and refined in its ability to create fantastic beasts and beings on the screen. His connection to sword and sandal films is almost accidental then, since he achieved peak productivity and fame during the 1950s and 1960s, when the sword and sandal genre also exploded in popularity.

Creating worlds is key to understanding the role of animation in an affects-driven movie, including those films for which Harryhausen is most famous. Though sword and sandal films are not necessarily as dependent upon the creation of a wholly differentiated terrene as, say, fantasy films are, the use of animation to fabricate and fashion amazing creatures and fantastic feats within the fabric of the sword and sandal film is well documented. In this regard, animation allows the viewer to transcend the dictates of filmic reality, which, in turn, creates the conditions in which the unnatural strongman (usually played by an actor who already possesses an unnatural — or, to be more precise, *hyper*-natural — physique) can perform his various acts of astonishing muscularity. Thus animation is the conduit through which reality can be suspended just enough to create the onscreen conditions necessary for the development and function of the strongman figure and the genre as a whole.

Understanding the role of animation in the sword and sandal film is key to understanding the inherent possibilities of the films themselves to fashion figures and schemas that are, quite literally, otherworldly. Thus it stands to reason that feature-length animation would offer filmmakers the most potential and diverse range for fashioning sword and sandal movies. This has not, however, quite proven to be the case. Although a handful of recent feature-length animated productions, such as *Prince of Egypt* (1998), *Joseph: King of Dreams* (2000), and *Ben Hur* (2003), have engaged with aspects of the sword and sandal tradition, their progenitors remain biblical narratives, and their tradition owes more to *The Ten Commandments* (1956) than to *Spartacus* (1960) or even the original *Ben Hur* (1959). In shorter, serialized formats, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (1983–85) and *Hercules: The Animated Series* (1998–1999) represent the longest running and most consistent extensions of the sword and sandal tradition for children's television, though each is—for various reasons—somewhat far removed from the peplumic tradition. Some themed Looney Tunes shorts, such as *Roman Legion-Hare* (1955) and *See Ya Later Gladiator* (1968), have likewise made occasional use of the genre's identificatory framework. Nonetheless, there has been little opportunity, especially recently, for this genre to develop within feature-length animation. Despite the inherent possibilities feature-length animation proffers the sword and sandal movie, and despite the recent growth, popularity, and seeming box office reliability of the contemporary sword and sandal film, the genre remains largely underdeveloped in this form.

In this context, the 1997 Walt Disney animated feature *Hercules* represents the clearest example of sword and sandal animated filmmaking. Interestingly, unlike many of its animated predecessors, *Hercules* constitutes a surprising renewal of the peplumic filmmaking tradition, embracing both its sword and sandal roots and many key peplumic conventions, including a focus on body culture and the use of camp in interpreting varying aspects of the classical Herculean legend. Despite this use of peplumic motif, or, more precisely, because the film so readily embraces the sword and sandal tradition, a tension is created within the film, a tension focused on the intersection of the dueling genres—Disney animated feature and sword and sandal movie — that inform the making and shaping of *Hercules*. This is an important tension, given the infrequency with which sword and sandal filmmaking, particularly in the peplum tradition, merges with other genres, but it is a tension that the film ultimately leaves unresolved. This generic opposition will ultimately manifest in the film's spin-off, *Hercules: The Animated Series*, whose use of generic hybridity will ultimately inhibit the extension of peplumic tradition found in the original film. Nonetheless, *Hercules* remains a significant achievement in both peplumic and animated filmmaking, an initial foray between two worlds and conventions that seem ideally configured for the other and yet, somehow, have never quite managed to come together in a manner that ultimately proves fruitful to both genres.

Hercules: *Happily After "Ever After"*

For many, the Disney name signifies a realm of children's entertainment predicated on the manufacture of fantasy. Furthermore, this body of work is likely perceived as being aesthetically inflexible, operating, for the most part, within a hyperrealist register that privileges a form of "realism" dependent upon "verisimilitude in ... characters, contexts and narratives" (Wells *Understanding Animation* 23). In fact, Disney's hyperrealism is frequently seen "as the yardstick by which other kinds of animation may be measured for its relative degree of 'realism'" (Wells *Understanding Animation* 25). This aesthetic condition, coupled with the fact that the protagonists in Disney's animated features are, with little deviation, pre-adolescent innocent children, heroines, or anthropomorphic alternatives, has established a generic paradigm that is taken to represent Disney animation *in toto*. However, Disney animation is far more

heterogeneous than popular notions of Disney allow for, and *Hercules*, with its peplumic subject matter, serves as a useful illustration of this.[2]

Hercules, the thirty-fifth animated feature to be released theatrically by Disney, chronicles the eponymous hero's early years, relating how, as part of Hades' plot to usurp Zeus (king of the gods and father to Hercules), the young protagonist is rendered mortal. Early in the film, however, Zeus visits his son, telling him that if he can become a true hero he will regain his godly immortality. After a series of failed attempts to assassinate Hercules (unsuccessful because the youthful protagonist has retained his godly strength), Hades is ultimately thwarted by Hercules' selflessness, with Hercules regaining his godly status after sacrificing himself to save the woman he loves.

Released towards the end of Disney's 1990s renaissance, *Hercules* followed a period of box office unpredictability. After *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* had established a positive trend, taking $351 million and $504 million in worldwide receipts respectively, *The Lion King* became the high watermark of hand-drawn animation, grossing an unprecedented $768 million worldwide.[3] Impressively, it is also estimated that in the years since its release, *The Lion King* has "generated over $1 billion in profits" (Tengler 209). The two movies that followed immediately after *The Lion King*, however, returned much lower box office grosses, with *Pocahontas* achieving $346 million worldwide and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* $325 million. Witnessing this comparative downturn during a period of growing competition within western animation, Disney's executives would certainly have had cause to re-evaluate the studio's production strategy.

In 1995 Pixar released *Toy Story*, providing a preview of what would quickly become the dominant form of mainstream animation. At the time of its release though, it was "too early to take seriously the possibility that the business landscape for Disney had just undergone a momentous change — that Disney might have unwittingly opened itself up to meaningful competition in animated feature films" (Price 156). Ultimately, writes David A. Price, "Disney still owned feature animation. It had always been so. It would always be so. Disney would dominate computer animation as it had dominated cel animation. Pixar would be the eager-to-please contractor. The stars and the planets seemed to be set in their courses" (156). Also at that time, Disney's executives would have been aware that Twentieth Century–Fox's animation department was developing a feature length hand-drawn animation film, *Anastasia*, that would likely debut in the same calendar year as *Hercules*. Furthermore, two former Disney animators, Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, had been installed as directors for *Anastasia*, indicating that Fox's project would most likely draw on traditional Disney animation both stylistically and thematically.[4] To what extent this competition influenced the immediate trajectory of Disney feature animation is impossible to say, but it is clear that the studio, with the production of *Hercules*, sought to produce something that would extend beyond the limits of conventional Disney filmmaking. Through its aesthetic progressiveness, and, decisively, its distinctive use of peplum convention, *Hercules* did just that.

Like *Aladdin*, *Hercules* actively acknowledged and embraced the "gaze" in a way that Disney had not done since its earliest cartoons (Wells *Animation and America* 110). This is most noticeable during, and immediately after, the "Zero to Hero" musical montage sequence. Disney's musical sequences typically provide an opportunity for the otherwise restricted animators to embrace their creative impulses, though this artistic freedom is usually framed in such a way as to legitimize any departure from the established story world. *Dumbo* was the first Disney animated feature to contain such a sequence, with the "Pink Elephants on Parade" number diverging stylistically from the established story world. Crucially, however, Dumbo is seen to unknowingly ingest alcohol, thus framing the "Pink Elephants" interlude as a drunken hallucination. During the "Zero to Hero" montage, visually, several anachronistic references are made to elements of contemporary material culture, such as American Express, branded soft drinks, Nike Air sports shoes, and, self-reflexively, Disney's own commercial activities, in the shape of a "Hercules Store" filed with Hercules merchandise. However, instead of being confined to the musical sequence — which, by virtue of its gospel rhythm played against the film's ancient Greek setting, is also acoustically anachronistic — these visual anachronisms spill comically into the surrounding story world.

An example of this can be seen when, after a failed attempt on Hercules' life, Hades smashes a vase sporting his nemesis' image, before turning to Pain, one of his minions, to issue an order. Hades is immediately distracted, though, when he notices that Pain is wearing a pair of "Herc Air" sandals. As Hades is berating Pain for his choice of footwear, a slurping noise interrupts him mid-sentence. A cut reveals Panic, another of Hades' minions, finishing what resembles a Hercules-brand soft drink. This "loosening" of the Disney text, which has become increasingly pronounced in the years following *Hercules*' release, acknowledges, according to Wells, "the increasing prominence of the cartoonal form and a greater trust in the public's ability to embrace its intrinsic vocabulary" (*Genre and Authorship* 110). Examples of this tendency are visible throughout *Hercules*, revealing the extent to which the film's creative team sought to push the boundaries of conventional Disney storytelling. In addition to this, *Hercules* stands out in the Disney canon, not only through its self-reflexivity, but also because it unexpectedly, yet quite literally, re-animated the peplum filmmaking tradition.

The Body: Regulating Signification in Hercules

Robert A. Rushing postulates that "one might plausibly define a peplum as an action-adventure film set in mythological antiquity centered on a spec-

tacular (and frequently eroticized) male body" (241). Although Ron Clements and John Musker, the directors of *Hercules*, embraced the muscularity of their eponymous character, they had to find a way to reconcile this sexually-connotative body image with Disney's censorial approach to sexuality and sexual maturity.[5]

The regulation of Hercules' sexuality echoes what was a common tendency in peplum filmmaking. From the outset, peplum movies featured hyper-muscular characters as a core constituent of their spectacle; however, such sizable performers risked "making the ordinary male body look defective, inferior (in short, symbolically castrated)" (Rushing 241). Taking *Cabiria* as a starting point, Rushing notes how the movie "uses the same tactic that later peplum films do to assuage the male viewer's potential anxiety: the bodybuilding hero is actually marked as a kind of neuter sex, asexual, and actually at the service of the heterosexual romances of the other characters" (241). While Hercules is not consciously depicted as a neuter sex (the main romance in the film is his), the very fact that he is depicted through animation renders him asexual. Not only does his condition as an animated product serve to strip him of any conventionally constructed sexuality, but also the very fact that he is animated potentially endows him with what Sergei Eisenstein termed "plasmaticness." Defined in the context of Disney's early animated shorts, Eisenstein saw animation's plasmaticness as a "rejection of once-and-forever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form" (21). It is this hermeneutic freedom, however, that makes the interpretation of masculine bodily culture and sexuality, as depicted in *Hercules*, problematic.

Masculinity is depicted in a largely uncomplicated manner by Disney in the animated features released prior to *Hercules*. Before *Sleeping Beauty* (after which point Disney went through a phase of favoring anthropomorphized characters to humans), masculinity is defined in terms of noble chivalry and romantic appeal, typified by characters such as The Prince (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), Prince Charming (*Cinderella*), and Prince Philip (*Sleeping Beauty*). In the films of the 1990s, when human characters made a return, depictions of masculinity remain relatively simplistic, albeit with the added binary between hegemonically conservative masculine characters, such as Eric (*The Little Mermaid*), John Smith (*Pocahontas*) and Phoebus (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), and characters exhibiting exaggerated hyper-muscular masculinity, such as Triton (*The Little Mermaid*) and Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*). Masculinity in these later films, despite being depicted as a social construction, nonetheless remains "shaped by and filtered through the patriarchal and conservative metanarratives that dominate the Disney culture industry" (McCallum 117).

Narratologically, *Hercules* could be seen to extend this tradition, depicting a heteronormative construction of masculinity that culminates with Hercules verbalizing his love for Meg, all of which works to contain any overt sexual signification. Visually, however, because Hercules' body is literally sculptured,

reflecting the synthesis of renowned caricaturist Gerald Scarfe's conceptual artworks with Clements and Musker's Greco ambitions for the movie, the protagonist's sexuality is less easily contained. Stephen Rebello and Jane Healy note this in *The Art of Hercules: The Chaos of Creation*:

> The Greek ideal says that lines carry movement. Lines should flow, not float, should be anchored in beginnings and endings. Check out Hercules' arm muscle. To sculpt muscle definition, one enormous, flowing line—rather than many internal, short lines—suggests dynamic strength, not sinewy beefiness. A simple, powerful body shape, long and lean in the Greek ideal, denotes his great strength. Such details as the tiny swoop line that defines his knuckles, the triangles to suggest kneecaps, the curlicue that denotes a dimple complement the boldness. Similarly, his hair is confined to only a simple few Art-Deco like lines to suggest a mass of curls. These lines are influenced by the simple graphic patterns of Greek border design [143].

By adopting this style, the film creates a space in which viewers familiar with the art of ancient Greece might, rather plausibly, associate Hercules' stylized depiction with the sexualized and often homoerotic scenes that populated such artworks. This connotation clearly problematizes the conservative and heteronormative masculine sexual identity that the film's narrative seeks to establish. While this construction of masculinity clearly conflicts with Disney convention, this transgressivity, and the regulation of it, was a core ingredient in traditional peplum filmmaking.

Camp Strategies: Subtext in Hercules

Peplum filmmaking has a long history of camp interpretation. Although the hyper-muscular male body of peplum cinema is often configured so as to lack sexual significance, in many instances, it becomes a site of homoerotic tension as a product of camp identification:

> The most striking feature of the later cycle of peplum films, for modern audiences at least, is how easily the asexual bodybuilding hero—or the film as a whole—can appear to be homosexually suggestive (part of what Americans call "camp," the ironic enjoyment of bad or vulgar culture, especially as it appears to offer meaning that were probably not intended by the original authors) [Rushing 241].

Although this Sontagian interpretation, this "love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration," is based on live-action peplum filmmaking, it is equally applicable to *Hercules* (Sontag 275). In *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens: The Walt Disney Company from the Inside Out*, Sean Griffin demonstrates how, by reclaiming the work of the animator, a position often obscured by the Disney studio's artistic and industrial ideologies, it is possible to reveal a camp subtext in *Hercules*. Focusing on the work of Andreas Deja, a supervising/lead animator at Disney since the early 1990s, Griffin writes: "Openly gay, Deja has announced in various interviews that his sexual orientation has had its effect on the char-

acters he draws" (141). Besides his work on the male villains Jafar (*Aladdin*) and Scar (*The Lion King*), Deja has supervised the creation of three hypermuscular characters: Triton, Hercules, and Gaston. Although Triton, Hercules, and Gaston are designed (slightly) differently, "all three spectacularize the male body in a way rarely seen in Disney animation prior to *The Little Mermaid*" (Griffin 142). Viewing Gaston as Deja's *magnum opus* in this context, Griffin observes how "his hairy chest, flexing muscles and stomping around in boots takes on a level of absurdity, ridiculing the hyper-masculinity that Gaston represents" (142). Reacting to the "'body fascism' that became a noticeable aspect of urban gay culture by the 1980s," Deja designed Gaston to symbolize the absurd narcissism of such behavior (Griffin 142). In his study, because Griffin is primarily concerned with legitimizing the reading of homosexual subtexts within Deja's work at Disney, it is understandable that he chooses to focus his analysis on the exaggerated Gaston rather than sculptured Hercules. However, Griffin's decision to ignore the role of gym culture and bodybuilding in *Hercules* is surprising.

As noted earlier, Hercules does not start the movie as a muscle-bound hero; instead, he builds his developed physical appearance only after meeting Philoctetes ("Phil"), who Zeus refers to as "the trainer of heroes" (*Hercules*). This bodily ambition is playfully acknowledged when, immediately before Hercules enters a two-minute montage sequence that sees him transform from a lithe adolescent to a muscle-bound young adult, he poses purposefully behind an immense headless statue. Furthermore, during the montage sequence, Hercules and his companions restore a dilapidated amphitheatre (a site associated with athletic expression), after which Phil turns personal trainer to guide Hercules through step-up, press-up, and single-leg squat repetitions until the sequence concludes with an upwards tilting shot revealing a now hyper-muscular Hercules. After the tilt shot comes to rest in a medium shot of Hercules, we see Phil attempt to measure his protégé's bulging bicep, but as the muscle flexes, to Phil's surprise (and delight), it snaps his tape measure.

This visual metamorphosis not only supports Griffin's subtextual identification of a commentary on male body fascism and gym-culture in Deja's work, but it also overtly acknowledges the bodybuilding tradition that was central to the Italian peplum cycle of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The American bodybuilders featured in many of the Italian pepla were not cast because of their acting prowess; rather their appeal lay in their "size and shape, frozen in moments of maximum tension" (Dyer 167). Filmed holding "a boulder aloft, [or] in a clinch with a lion, these and many other set-ups incorporate not only the posing vocabulary of bodybuilding competitions but also the *mise-en-scènes* of such non-narrative forms as physique photography and the strongman acts" (Dyer 167). Although Hercules' progression from adolescent to muscle-bound adulthood occupies only a small role in the movie, this early chapter in his life provided the basis for a spin-off show: *Hercules: The Animated Series*.

Generic Hybridity: Hercules: The Animated Series

The mixing and hybridizing of genres was a recurrent storytelling strategy employed by the peplum filmmakers of the 1950s and 1960s. Dyer writes:

> Hercules, Maciste and the rest appear in numerous other situations, far removed from their original stories. The whole of the ancient world was drawn upon; new fantasy lands were invented; even the post-classical world was not out of the question, Maciste showing up, for instance, in thirteenth-century Asia (*Maciste alla corte del Gran Khan*), in seventeenth-century Scotland (*Maciste all'inferno*) and Russia (*Maciste alla corte dello Zar*) as well as in non–European ancient worlds, for example, Africa (*Maciste nelle miniere del re Salomone*) and Central America (*Maciste il vendicatore dei Mayas*) [166].

Furthermore, it is this theme of generic hybridity that has underpinned much of the preceding discussion, with *Hercules* representing a filmic space in which the generic traditions of Disney feature animation and the peplum both collide and combine. Although understandings of film genre are necessarily fluid, reflecting the competing and changing cinematic, cultural, and societal influences that shape their development, the practice of combining multiple genres within a single containing story-world can still prove problematic. While *Hercules* explored peplumic tropes within a Disney idiom, the film's overarching narrative helped reconcile these competing genres. When this story world was extended through *Hercules: The Animated Series*, however, the show's heightened cartoonality resulted in a series that focused on Hercules' adolescent years, one which frequently — and knowingly — disregarded the temporal and spatial parameters established in the movie.

"Hercules and the Golden Touch," for example, offers a parodic take on the James Bond franchise. First, important information is established through an introductory theme song (sung by the Muses), which mirrors the typical opening arrangement of a Bond movie. Following this, Hercules visits Icarus to acquire some essential secret agent technology, referencing Bond's reliance on Q. Additionally, Hercules can be heard to paraphrase two of Bond's most iconic phrases, first asking for grape juice, "crushed, not strained," before introducing himself to his female companion as "Lees, Hercu Lees" ("Hercules and the Golden Touch"). Although referentially divergent, "Hercules and the Golden Touch" does not provide any significant temporal or spatial reconfiguration of the landscape established in the original movie. Contrastingly, "Hercules and the Arabian Night" relocates much of the action beyond the already established Grecian space. In this episode, Jafar, after arriving in the underworld, attempts to orchestrate, with the help of Hades, the mutual destruction of their long-time adversaries: Aladdin and Hercules. Consequently, much of the resulting conflict spills over into Agrabah.

The absence of an overarching causality in *Hercules: The Animated Series*, while representative of the cartoon genre as a whole, decentralizes the peplumic

tradition as one of the focusing generic paradigms within the series. Instead, referentiality and generic hybridization become the governing principles in *Hercules: The Animated Series*. On a broader level, this hybridity is perhaps most indicative of the developments that had begun to occur within the studio's animation at the turn of the millennium. During this period, with the movies *Tarzan*, *Fantasia 2000*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, *Lilo and Stitch*, *Treasure Planet*, *Brother Bear*, and *Home on the Range*, the studio's animation diverged, both artistically and narratologically, from Disney tradition to include genres such as science fiction and the Western, and locations such as outer space and the Incan empire of ancient South America.

Conclusion

Ultimately, *Hercules* represents a "Disneyfication" of peplum filmmaking rather than an innovative redevelopment of this genre within the animated medium. This is not to say, however, that *Hercules* represents a typical Disney animated feature; instead, as noted earlier, the fact that the film embraces or supports several key peplumic traditions (such as the muscular male hero, camp subtext, and generic hybridity) marks the movie as a particularly divergent feature in Disney's theatrical oeuvre. As a case study though, *Hercules* is revealing on two counts. First, it highlights how two genres that are perceived to be inflexible, the Disney animated feature and the peplum strain of sword and sandal filmmaking, can, in fact, combine and even develop through generic synthesis. Second, by analyzing the crucial peplumic themes of masculine bodily culture and camp sensibility via *Hercules*, it has been possible to prepare a new critical space — that of animation — in which to address sword and sandal filmmaking.

Notes

1. Given the network of practices and convergent mediums that underpin contemporary digital filmmaking, it is necessary to define precisely how the term animation will be used within this chapter. As Lev Manovich states, "Digital film = live action material + painting + image processing + compositing + 2D computer animation + 3D computer animation" (254–55). This equation remains relevant and applicable to the "live-action" sword and sandal movies identified in this chapter. This quiet, yet common, interpolation of the animated into the live-action should not, however, stop animated filmmaking from being understood in terms of its own formal conditions and artistic devices. Animation, in this chapter, will therefore be used to refer to a moving image that is "artificially created and not recorded from the real world," and which, to varying degrees, foregrounds its very artificiality (Wells *Fundamentals* 7).

2. Disney's animation actually constitutes an incredibly diverse body of work. As I highlight in *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation*, the studio's animation has adopted many forms over the years, including metamorphic and minimalist shorts of the late 1920s, the surrealist *Destino*, and the highly detailed yet playfully cartoonish features of recent Disney. On a superficial level, for example, consider the differences in visual style between *Hercules* and the films which immediately precede and follow it in Disney's animated feature canon (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Mulan*, respectively).

3. All box office data used in this chapter is obtained from www.boxofficemojo.com.

4. Reflecting the sense of malaise felt by the next generation of filmmakers in Hollywood at the end of the 1970s, many of the young animators at Disney, alienated during the production of *The Fox and the Hound*, chose to walk out on the studio in 1979. Bluth, who had wanted the studio to return to the standards of the late 1930s and early 1940s, headed this walkout and established Don Bluth Productions, which subsequently went on to produce animation inspired by Disney's Golden Era (such as *An American Tale* and *The Land Before Time*).

5. While the notion of an animated character connoting sexual maturity may seem like something of a paradox, given the medium's obvious artificiallity, American hand-drawn animation has a history in this respect, with Betty Boop and Jessica Rabbit being the medium's most famous sex symbols. In fact, because the perceived chemistry between Jessica Rabbit and Bob Hoskins' character Eddie Valiant in the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* was so strong, certain scenes had to be reanimated to reassure anxious parents that the cartoon character *was*, in fact, wearing underwear (Clemens and Pettman 66).

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Of Muscles and Men

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On the cover: Reg Park in the title role of *Hercules in the Haunted World*, 1961; details from poster art of the films (top) *Atlas*, 1961 and (bottom) *Samson and the Seven Miracles of the World*, 1961

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