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Hearing Stars: Popular Feature Length Animation and the Celebrity Voice

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Abstract

The thesis begins with the observation that all popular feature length animation films released since 1989 contain at least one example of the 'celebrity voice'. The thesis defines the celebrity voice as an incidence when well known films stars and/or popular celebrity figures provide the off-screen voices for the film's animated characters.

While one of the central concerns of the thesis is to locate the celebrity voice as a defining characteristic of the popular feature length film format since 1989, the main preoccupation of the thesis is to explore the relationship between celebrity and voice. The majority of existing work addressing the star image and persona tends to examine and analyse film stars from a visual perspective. Little work exists that attempts to understand the role and function of the voice in contributing to a star's screen presence.

Drawing upon a methodology accessed from the field of phonetics, and through a series of case studies, the thesis demonstrates the important role played by the voice in the construction of star meaning.

The celebrity voice, as it is heard in popular feature length animation film, becomes a crucial site of enquiry, presenting an original opportunity to reveal a previously unrecognised series of inter-connections between the film star, the body, and the voice.

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Introduction

Locating Popular Feature Length Animation and the Celebrity Voice

... Woody Allen, Kenneth Brannagh, Sandra Bullock, Billy Crystal, Cameron Diaz, Ralph Fiennes, Michael J. Fox, Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Jeff Goldblum, John Goodman, Tom Hanks, James Earl Jones, Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Michelle Pfeiffer, Meg Ryan, Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, Robin Williams ...

The above is a diverse list of names. It is representative of some of the most popular and well known of today's Hollywood acting talent. Between them, this collection of stars have appeared in a very wide variety of different types of Hollywood product – from action cinema to romantic comedy - but they also share one particular thing in common: they have all had starring roles in recent examples of popular feature length animation film, or at least their disembodied, 'celebrity voices', have.

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Shrek: An Animation 'Event'

When DreamWorks SKG released *Shrek* in May 2001 it was one of the new studio's earliest attempts at producing popular feature length animation.[1]   Throughout this thesis I shall be using the term 'popular feature length animation' to describe the films with which this research is preoccupied. At this early stage of the thesis it is necessary to offer a definition of my principal terms. The following section explores the composite elements of the descriptive term 'popular feature length animation'.

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[1] Prior to the release of *Shrek*, DreamWorks had produced only *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt* (both 1998) within its animation studio.

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'Popular'

As Hollows and Jancovich (1995) point out, the term 'popular' is fraught with problems of meaning and interpretation. Initially standing as meaning belonging to 'the people' – as opposed to 'the elite' - the term 'popular' is now more commonly used to mean something that is 'well liked' by a lot of people. However, when applied to mass media forms like film, this basic binary can become problematic. A film may be popular because it is of 'the people', but might actually be *unpopular* in the sense that not many people want to see it. In Britain, Hollywood film tends to be classified as 'popular' at least partly because of its association with the 'threat' of Americanisation. Where certain elements of British culture have tended to be associated with the notion of a 'legitimate' culture, cultural products emerging from the United States, and Hollywood in particular, have been linked to all that is bad about mass culture. According to the pessimistic perspectives of mass culture theorists, Hollywood film stands as one of the very worst examples of mass culture, leaving 'no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience', an audience that Adorno and Horkheimer believed were passive automatons, and 'victims' of the industrial processes that made up mass media forms like Hollywood film (2000: 9-10).

Despite such pessimistic interpretations of the Hollywood product, popular American film has not always been understood in such negative ways. Of particular relevance within this thesis on the popular animated form is Gaines' interpretation of the 'utopian sensibility' of Hollywood film (2000: 109-110). While Gaines suggests that popular cinema in general creates utopianising effects through camera work, special effects, and music, animation deserves special recognition within this argument due to

one of its main purposes being to showcase the vibrancies of colour, 'the virtuosity of special effects', and the physical creation of 'wishful landscapes' (110). Viewed in this light, popular film – specifically popular animation film – ceases to carry the negative associations expounded by mass culture theorists.

'Feature Length'

Early Hollywood films were generally the length of a single reel of film – approximately eighteen minutes (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 2002: 128). As filmmaking gradually became a more centralised enterprise, resulting ultimately in the 'classical Hollywood period', filmmakers began using multiple-reels – lengthening films to up to seventy-five minutes - as part of an industry strategy to increase profits by seeming to offer better value for money to consumers. However, initially films began to be classified as 'features' based on their differentiation from other shorter films in terms of narrative, characterisation, scenes, and settings, rather than their length. 'Feature films' were advertised as a 'quality' product, and to ensure that a level of value was inherent in the product, many of these films were adaptations, particularly of plays or novels of critical and/or cultural acclaim. Many of these adaptations were afflicted by problems of fidelity, and simply could not be fitted onto a single reel. Adaptations of this nature and the desire to produce them as quality 'feature films' were one of the driving forces behind the development of the multiple-reel film, so that after 1914 the term 'feature film' primarily referred to content; the film's length was only a secondary consideration.

In terms of animation's relationship to the feature length format, it is Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) that most historical accounts of the development

of the popular animated form recognise as being the first example of animation in a feature length format. Prior to this release, animation had favoured much shorter formats. However, Wells (2002) suggests that far from being a radical departure, certain developments had preceded and predicted Disney's *Snow White*. These included a cut-out animation called *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* released in 1926, which was 65 minutes in length (117), and an 'extended length' cartoon – *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor* – produced by the Fleischer Brothers studio in 1936 (119). Wells argues that *Snow White* ought to be more modestly reconsidered as a significant 'advancement' in longer animated formats, rather than the unquestionable breakthrough it is frequently held up to be.

'Animation'

There are many definitions of animation in circulation in film theory and analysis that focuses on this often-neglected film form. The common understanding of animation as a largely cartoon-based medium is probably derived from the popularity and dominance of the Disney form and tradition in Western cultures, particularly in the US. This represents a rather limited view of animation, however, and fails to incorporate the myriad of other styles and types of filmmaking – such as puppetry, and modelling, for example. Denslow (1997) confirms that it would probably be impossible for animation scholars to agree upon a definition of the form, because of the wide variety of techniques encompassed within the term. The word 'animation' derives from the Latin verb 'animare', meaning 'to give life to'. Wells (1998) has offered one definition of animation as, 'the artificial creation of the illusion of movement of inanimate lines and forms' (10). The Association of International Film Animation suggest a much broader but less precise definition of animation, as being

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'not live action', which seems to permit enough space to incorporate the wide variety of techniques which can also be categorised within the animation bracket. Such a definition does become problematic, however, especially as the development of recent technologies make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between live and non-live action elements of filmmaking.

As a result of the above elements of definition there are certain parameters to be set for the precise types of feature length animation films with which this study is preoccupied. It is perhaps easier at this stage to identify the types of animated film with which this thesis is *not* concerned. There are no international animated features included in this study - no Japanese anime, for example. There are also no made-for-television animated films, no straight-to-video releases, and no television spin-off films either, which eliminates the *Pokemon* films[2], *Rugrats*[3], *South Park*[4], *Digimon*[5], and *Recess*[6]. No animated shorts or cartoons will form the bulk of this study, and neither will any mixed live action and animated films.[7] These particular limitations leave us with a group of films that can stand as a definition of popular feature length animated film. All the 32 films that feature in this study are mainstream examples of feature length animation, that have had theatrical releases, and that are generally

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[2] The Pokemon franchise reached its greatest popularity during the late 1990s. In the UK this was achieved through cartoons shown during children's television programming, but cinematic film releases included *Pokemon the First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back* (1999), and *Pokemon the Movie 2000*.

[3] *The Rugrats Movie* (1998) and *Rugrats in Paris: the Movie* (2000) were released by Paramount, on the back of the success of the children's television series.

[4] *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* (1999) is a feature length version of the 'adult' cartoon. Similarly, this thesis does not include *Beavis and Butthead Do America* (1996), another television spin-off, and a further example of the rise in 'adult' animation forms.

[5] Based on the television series, *Digimon: the Movie* was released in 2000, and features three shorter cartoons run together to form a feature-length presentation.

[6] Disney's *Recess: School's Out* (2001) is a feature length version of the children's cartoon typically screened on The Disney Channel.

[7] This restriction removes such films as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *The Pagemaster* (1994), *James and the Giant Peach* (1996), *Space Jam* (1996), and *Osmosis Jones* (2001), amongst others.

discussed and labelled as 'Disney films'[8], and 'cartoon films'[9]. The Appendix at the end of this thesis lists all the films that feature as the basis of this study. It is a list that is inevitably dominated by Disney examples of the popular feature length animation film, but the following section aims to show that although this may initially have been the case, increasingly other studios are beginning to compete with Disney's dominance.

To return to the discussion of *Shrek*, far from being a naïve or unsuccessful venture, the film deserves to be understood as something of a watershed in the history of the genre. The following section functions as a feature length animation 'timeline', where to a certain extent, the history of Disney *is* the history of popular feature length animation. The importance of the releases from the DreamWorks studio, and the overall significance of *Shrek* specifically, are therefore best understood as challenges to the Disney stranglehold. The key date for this historical timeline is 1937, when Disney released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Referred to initially as Disney's 'folly', for the apparent absurdity of the idea, it was the first full-length and full colour animated film ever made. As a result of this film's unexpected popular success, it was followed in 1940 by Disney's *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia*, in 1941 by *Dumbo*, and in 1942 by *Bambi*. During the later war years, no more popular feature length animation films were produced by the Disney studio.[10] In 1950, Disney released *Cinderella*,

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[8] Because of Disney's long historical connections to the feature length form of animation, the studio name has become virtually synonymous with the genre, and despite the fact that other studios now regularly produce and release feature length animation, the phrase 'Disney film' still seems to stand as a generic description for all films within this format. Pilling (1997) confirms that animation has become defined by the Disney model (xi).

[9] There seems to be a problem relating to the generic status of these types of film. This partly stems from a less than clear relationship between animation and genre more generally (see Wells (2002)), but it seems to be particularly problematic within feature length animation examples, where generic categorisation seems to vary.

[10] However, the studio did produce animated propaganda films to support the war effort, such as *Victory Through Air Power* (1943), for example.

which functioned to secure the studio's economic re-stability after the war. During the 1950s, Disney's popular feature length animation films experienced mixed receptions. *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) was largely unsuccessful, and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) was similarly met with a lack of enthusiasm. The studio also released *Peter Pan* (1953) and *Lady and the Tramp* (1959) during this time, which were both a little more successful. In 1961, the Disney studio released *101 Dalmatians* which stands as the first popular feature length animation film to extensively use the Xerox process to transfer drawings to cels, thus removing the laborious and time-consuming practice of re-drawing. In 1963, *The Sword in the Stone* was released, but in 1966 Walt Disney - the driving force and inspiration behind the studio and all of its films – died. *The Jungle Book* was released a year after Disney's death in 1967 and was met by mixed reviews, but the film has proven to be one of the most endearing and enduring of Disney's canon. In 1970, *The Aristocats* was released as the first feature length film to have been completed without any of Walt Disney's guidance, and in 1973 *Robin Hood* became the studio's most financially successful film to date. *The Rescuers*, released in 1977, further secured Disney's success and popularity. No more popular feature length animations were released until 1985 with *The Black Cauldron*, which was not successfully received.

1989 stands as another key year in the history of the popular feature length animation film. *The Little Mermaid* heralded a new 'golden age' of Disney animation under the new chairman, Michael Eisner, and president, Frank Wells. In 1991, *Beauty and the Beast* became the most expensive feature length animation film ever made, and these two successful films were swiftly followed by *Aladdin* in 1992, and *The Lion King* in 1994, which at the time of release ranked as the fifth highest grossing film of all time.

In 1995, Disney released both *Toy Story* and *Pocahontas*. *Toy Story* was the first ever fully computer-generated feature length animated film, and it received a special Academy Award for this achievement. In 1996, Disney released *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and in 1997 *Hercules* was released. 1997 also marked the beginning of a series of challenges to Disney's dominance over the popular feature length animation market. Twentieth Century Fox released *Anastasia*, and in 1998 Warner Bros. released *Quest for Camelot*. 1998 also witnessed Disney's release of *Mulan* and *A Bug's Life* – a second, more sophisticated computer-animated feature, but these films were matched by those from the fledgling animation studio DreamWorks, that released both *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt*, also in 1998. Disney continued to maintain its release rate of a new popular feature length animation every year with *Tarzan* in 1999. In that same year, Warner Bros. countered with *The Iron Giant*, while Disney retaliated with a sequel to *Toy Story*. DreamWorks returned in 2000 with *The Road to El Dorado* and *Chicken Run*, which Disney matched with *Dinosaur* – the studio's first digitally created animation - and *The Emperor's New Groove*, and Twentieth Century Fox briefly re-entered the race with *Titan A.E.* However, this film proved to be such a disaster for the Fox studio that it resulted in the temporary closure of the studio's animation unit, and one of Disney's would-be competitors briefly exited the competition. In 2001, DreamWorks was dominant with *Shrek*, which significantly overshadowed the releases of Disney's *Atlantis* and *Monsters, Inc.* 2002 saw the return of Twentieth Century Fox and the release of *Ice Age*, DreamWorks released *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, and Disney released *Lilo and Stitch* and *Treasure Planet*. 2003 was another productive year, witnessing the release of Disney's *Finding Nemo* and *Brother Bear*, and DreamWorks' *Sinbad: Legend of the Seas*.

What becomes clear from an isolated look at the releases of popular feature length animations in a time-line format such as the above, is firstly that there are a surprisingly large number of these types of films being released over a relatively short period of time – precisely, 32 films over 14 years. This is a particularly impressive release rate when one considers that across some 50 years (1937-1985) Disney had released only 17 films. Clearly, there are some specific reasons for the fact that the popular feature length animation film should have exploded onto cinema screens at this time quite so vigorously, sometimes at the rate of several per year, especially in the years 1998, and 2000, for example, which appear to have been particularly productive. Certain technological advances had speeded up the production process for feature length animation filmmaking, and it is also worth noting that the production of these types of films was becoming increasingly less of a one-horse race, as other studios began to challenge Disney's dominance in the field.

Within these specific contexts, *Shrek* deserves to be recognised as a particularly important film on a number of specific levels. Firstly, *Shrek* secured significant economic success at the box office, making it the first really serious economic challenge to the stranglehold that Disney has had over the feature length animation film since its inception in 1937.[11] Secondly, although the popular feature length animation film has historically always carried broad audience appeal - traditionally loved by both child and adult audiences - *Shrek* seemed to more deliberately cultivate older audiences through its use of parodic humour based on multiple inversions of the traditions of the popular feature length animation film. Indeed, the source of much of

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[11] *Shrek* was created on a budget of approximately $60,000,000. In its opening weekend in the US the film grossed over $42,000,000. In the UK, the film took over £4,000,000 in its opening weekend (www.imbd.com).

Shrek's comedy is the prototype of the form - Disney's *Snow White*, lending a nice symmetry of importance and significance to these two temporally distant films.[12]

Thirdly, *Shrek* stands as an important film because of the technological breakthroughs that it showcased. *Shrek* was a wholly computer-generated film, but even within this elaborate set of technologies, certain elements carry particular importance.[13] There was a higher level of visual detail in *Shrek* than had been seen in previous feature length animation films. Every blade of grass had been individually generated in order to create the greatest authenticity possible. In particular, there was a recurring visual motif of liquids – mud, water, lava, beer, milk – functioning as an opportunity to showcase the new technology that had made this previously challenging substance easier to render. The history of popular feature length animation as a whole has always been marked and shaped by important developments in its technology, that have moved the form from a laborious hand-drawn exercise, to the advent of computer-generated imagery.[14] The standards of visual representation are always being raised higher, and *Shrek* continued this development.

Finally, *Shrek* is especially worthy of recognition because its popularity produced a sequel. While this is not terribly unusual in itself - many popular feature length

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[12] Similarities have been drawn between the two films. John Lithgow says of *Shrek* that it is so 'completely unusual and new' that it bears comparison with the impact that *Snow White* had on the Hollywood film industry in general, and the popular feature length animation industry more specifically. He says, 'I imagine this film is going to strike people the way *Snow White* did' (from an interview included in 'The Tech of *Shrek*', a mini-documentary included in the Extra Features DVD release of the film.)

[13] The mini-documentary 'The Tech of *Shrek*' which forms part of the Extra Features on the DVD release of the film, is at great pains to point out what a breakthrough film *Shrek* really was. It is described as 'the most ambitious computer animated film ever produced', and the work involved in such a product is emphasised by a listing of the numbers of personnel involved in the project, and other statistics intended to demonstrate the 'quality' of the product: 300 artists and technicians, 31 sequences, 1291 individual shots, 63 featured characters, 36 unique locations.

[14] Disney's *Toy Story* (1995) was heralded as the first feature length animation film to be generated entirely on computers.

animation films have been linked to sequels - these are most commonly only straight-to-video releases, that are not intended for and do not have a cinematic theatrical release.[15] It is in fact rare for a popular feature length animation film to generate a sequel for cinematic release. It is also rare for that sequel to be so successful in its own right.[16] It is rarer still for there to be plans for a third, and even fourth, film.[17]

Shrek undeniably demands to be understood as an especially important example of the popular feature length animation film. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that before, during, and after its release, *Shrek* received substantial amounts of media interest. One of the most interesting production tales to emerge from the production reports surrounding the release of *Shrek*, and one of the anecdotes that was most frequently taken up and recounted by the media and in the popular reporting press, was the story of how the cost of the film was driven over budget – by an estimated $4 million – because of a last minute decision to make changes to the voice of the central character. In a full-colour six-page spread, *Film Review* explains how the actor and comedian Mike Myers had been selected as a casting replacement to supply the voice of Shrek the ogre only as the result of the untimely death of the original cast member, Chris Farley in 1997.[18] On top of this misfortune, the co-directors of the film, Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, and the film's producer Jeffrey Katzenberg, faced another potential problem when, after watching a rough cut of the film, Myers

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[15] *Toy Story 2* (1999) is the only other popular feature length animation film that has also resulted in a sequel for cinematic release. However, originally *Toy Story 2* was intended for straight-to-video release. There are rumours of a third film.
[16] The budget for *Shrek 2* was an estimated $72,000,000, and in its opening weekend in the US the film's box office takings exceeded $108,000,000. In the UK, the film took £16,000,000 in its opening weekend (www.imdb.com).
[17] *Shrek 3* is 'in production', with an expected release date of 2007. Although unconfirmed, there are rumours of the possibility of a fourth film.
[18] *Film Review* #607, July 2001, 44-49.

announced that he was dissatisfied with the way his vocal performance had turned out, and requested the opportunity to record his entire role again.

Myers had been working on recording his voice for the *Shrek* project for four years – the whole film having been in production for five years. During this time, he had performed and recorded the voice of Shrek in his 'own' voice, but it seemed that ultimately he felt that the overall effect of this was 'missing something' (2001: 48). Myers' decision to request the opportunity to re-record his entire vocal performance was based on his feeling that he could 'come up with a better take on the character of Shrek' (48). The result of this change was that Myers ultimately provided Shrek with a new voice that has been described as a 'mixture of Billy Connolly and the Fat Bastard character' from his film *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999) (48). My purpose in drawing attention to the reporting of this production event is because it neatly serves to encapsulate and crystallise the three central concerns of this thesis.

The History of the Rise and Rise of the Celebrity Voice

Firstly, the decision to allow Myers to re-record his entire vocal performance at some considerable expense to the overall project – in terms of the film's budget, but also presumably in terms of the film's intended release timetable as well – demonstrates how very significant the 'celebrity voice' has become within the overall scheme of popular feature length animation film today. This thesis will argue that the celebrity voice is a defining characteristic of the popular films that make up what has become recognised as the 'renaissance' of feature length animation since 1989. Chapter 1 of this thesis sets out to explore the celebrity voice historically, by locating it as an

important aspect of the 'new wave' of feature length animation. The chapter will trace the genesis and historical development of the celebrity voice – from the first sound cartoons, through a cartoon tradition of inter-textuality, to the dominance of multi-celebrity voice casts. The chapter will demonstrate that although a relationship between animation and the voice is not an entirely new or original phenomenon, the nature of the celebrity voice, and the extent to which it is exploited in popular feature length animation today, is both new and original, and central to the current configuration of the form.[19]

The Celebrity Voice as an Industrial Technique

Secondly, the *Shrek* anecdote suggests that there is a close relationship between feature length animation as an *industry*, and the celebrity voice. As well as having become an important element of the popular feature length animated form, the story about Mike Myers reveals that the celebrity voice has a critical function within a project at the level of production, in terms of the time required to produce the voice track, and also in terms of the impact of any changes on the release schedule for the film. Although there is a popular assumption that there is something inherently 'natural' about the voice, in the sense that an actor or performer does not or should not need to 'work' at it – speaking does after all come 'naturally' to most people - the actual production processes attached to the creation of the celebrity voice challenge such a simplistic assumption. The time frame of Myers' involvement with the project, the option to repeatedly re-record, and the chance to make changes and alterations

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[19] It should be pointed out that the celebrity voice can be heard to exist in other formats too. For example, live action film has incorporated the disembodied voices of popular actors in various ways. The *Look Who's Talking* films of the 1980s that starred John Travolta and Kirstie Alley gave the voices of Bruce Willis and Roseanne Arnold to newborn babies and young children, with comic effect. Similarly, animals have often been voiced in mixed live and animation films, such as in *Stuart Little* (2000), and *Cats and Dogs* (2001). Animated 'adult' shorts, such as *The Simpsons* and *South Park* have also made use of well-known celebrities and their voices.

along the way, suggest that how the celebrity voice is generated is actually subject to many layers of editing and manipulation, and is not 'natural' at all. Chapter 2 will theorise the celebrity voice along these lines, and by examining the role of the celebrity voice within the processes of film production, distribution, and exhibition, the chapter will argue that a second useful way to understand and locate the celebrity voice is *industrially* - as an animation 'technique' - within certain specific industrial contexts.

Film Theory and the Celebrity Voice

While locating the celebrity voice both historically and industrially are interesting and useful approaches to this under-explored and under-theorised aspect of the feature length animation film, neither approach really enables us to account for exactly what is at stake in the Mike Myers story, or helps us to understand precisely how the celebrity voice 'works'. A variety of questions are raised by the *Shrek* anecdote, including: why was Myers chosen for the role of Shrek? What, specifically, did he bring to the vocal role that no other actor could have? What would have been the effect of the role if another actor had been cast instead? In what ways does a voice carry or contribute ideological meaning to a film? What does a voice 'say' about a speaker? How do we recognise someone – an actor, for instance - by voice alone? How are the 'associations' connected to an actor carried through in their voice? If an actor changes their voice, or 'puts on' a voice in some way, what impact does that have? Neither an historically or an industrially-based analysis helps us to address these sorts of issues circulating around the celebrity voice, yet it is with exactly this type of question that this thesis is preoccupied. This thesis argues that the celebrity voice is a useful point of focus for an analysis of the relationships between celebrity,

body, and voice, and raises questions about the role of the voice in the construction of a star's persona or screen presence. These sorts of concerns demand a more rigorously theoretical contextualisation.[20]

Chapter 3 begins by examining how film theory has attempted to address 'the voice' in and on film, and argues that because of its status as an aspect of a film's soundtrack, the voice has been persistently neglected within film theory. However, there is an emerging body of work, loosely grouped together under the bracket of 'voice studies', which has made a series of attempts to theorise and analyse the voice in film. The chapter will draw upon the influential work of theorists such as Pascal Bonitzer, Mary Ann Doane, and Michel Chion, in order to generate a review of the ways that film theory has attempted to deal with the voice. The chapter will especially examine how the voice has been explored within the theories of star studies, and this approach will be broken down into two specific sections. Firstly, the issue of the voice will be explored from an historical aspect, through an analysis of the historical relationships between film stars and their voices, which finds a particular point of focus during the transition from silent to sound filmmaking. Secondly, drawing predominantly upon the work of Dyer, the relationships between film stars, their voices, and their screen personas will be examined as an aspect of particular stars' screen performances. Ultimately, the chapter will raise a series of specific problems related to dealing with the voice on film in general, and because of these problems the chapter will argue, film theory and star studies are unable to

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[20] It should be pointed out that a relationship between celebrity and voice within popular feature length animation has not gone entirely unnoticed. Wells (2002) has acknowledged that 'The value and importance of 'sound' and especially 'voice' in animation cannot be underestimated, and in recent years have been highly significant in the ideological readings of Disney films' (116). Wells also objects to the over-simplified nature of many of these observations, and calls for a more detailed and rigorous analysis.

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adequately engage with all of the issues and problems raised by the celebrity voice. The chapter outlines and categorises these problems under some specific headings, and this section of the chapter will show that in fact film theory proves to be surprisingly inadequate for handling what is at stake in the celebrity voice.

This thesis is predominately concerned with finding a way to overcome what I find to be the limitations displayed by historical, industrial, and current theoretical approaches to the celebrity voice. The thesis looks to a different discipline for help and inspiration. Media and cultural studies has always been a cross-disciplinary enterprise. Cultural studies itself has established a reputation for being something of a 'pick pocket' discipline. Barker and Beezer (1992) have colourfully described cultural studies as:

> a street urchin of a subject area, nicking other people's handkerchiefs when it suited ... using them to shine shoes or patch clothes, thumbing its nose to academic manners, being cheeky to everyone (2)

Cultural studies has a long history of 'borrowing' from other disciplines, and adapting them to suit its needs. In particular, there is a significant and close historical relationship between linguistic disciplines, and film, media and cultural studies. After having established this relationship in more depth, Chapter 3 further goes on to explore how a *phonetic* approach to the celebrity voice may help to overcome some of the problems that film theory has experienced with the voice in general, and crucially suggests how such an approach may help us to access and analyse the celebrity voice more successfully. For the purpose of this research, the specific interest of this thesis in the field of phonetics is in its potential to facilitate the discussion around the para- and extralinguistic elements of the voice, and more specifically, draw upon theories and methods of *voice quality* as they appear within phonetic literatures. This enables,

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amongst other things, a methodological focus on the propensity of extralinguistic voice quality to reveal information about a speaker held in, carried by, and communicated by the voice. As a basic definition, a speaker's habitual voice quality refers to a variety of long-term muscular tensions, often referred to as 'settings', within the components of the vocal apparatus, that may affect a particular 'quality' of voice held to be virtually unique to an individual, and as such, indicative of their identity. By drawing upon this field within the discipline of phonetics, this thesis intends to show how some of the more difficult and challenging questions regarding the celebrity voice and star persona may be addressed.

There are three key areas within this thesis that will benefit from the application of a phonetic approach to the analysis of the celebrity voice. Firstly, an exploration of the phonetic theory of voice quality may help to uncover what is involved in the processes of recognition and identification of a celebrity when their voice is heard in popular feature length animation examples. It is part of the experience of watching popular feature length animation – at least for older and adult audiences – to play a game of 'spot the celebrity', and try to name the Hollywood actor behind the voices heard. Film theory proves to be rather inadequate at explaining this process, while phonetics and voice quality theory offers a means of understanding how voices can be identified and their sources recognised.

Secondly, other aspects of phonetic theory may be drawn upon to enable a theorisation of the connections to be made between a celebrity, their voice, and their screen persona, or presence. The phonetic theory of voice quality argues that a great deal of information about a speaker is carried in and through the sound of the voice.

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Therefore, Hollywood actors heard as celebrity voices in popular feature length animation films, may reveal themselves and their screen personas through their voices.

Thirdly, if a strong connection exists between star persona and voice, the vocal performance of a celebrity could be used in various ways within a film to support, contradict, or complicate the ideologies operating within the visual image. Phonetic theories may enable us to pinpoint exactly how this occurs. Like any other system of representation, phonetics holds the voice to be a site of meaning, and how the voice is put to use within a specific film, may be quite revealing about the messages and meanings to be taken from it.

Case Studies

The remainder of the thesis is divided into three case-study chapters in order to demonstrate how a phonetic approach can benefit an exploration of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation examples. In this thesis the celebrity voice is employed as a point of entry into a number of key debates within film and media studies. Each case study chapter begins by using the connections between celebrity voice and feature length animation to access key related discussions. Chapter 4, the first of the three case studies, takes as its focus the celebrity voice of Eddie Murphy as Donkey in *Shrek*. The chapter will explore the casting of Murphy alongside a discussion about the relationships between voice and race. By uncovering the history of Hollywood's representations of race on screen, the chapter develops an alternative discussion about the importance of *voice* to representations of race, in both live action and animated filmmaking. Building on observations about a black performance style

that draws heavily on a 'coon' aesthetic, the chapter then develops to show how a phonetically driven analysis of one particular aspect of voice quality - voice dynamics - can produce a useful and unexpected reading of Murphy's screen persona in general, and his role in *Shrek* more specifically.

Chapter 5 takes as its case study Tom Hanks as Woody the Cowboy in Disney's *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*. Byrne and McQuillan (1995) have described these films as revealing a profound anxiety within American masculinity, and this observation combined with the casting of Hanks himself, invites an analysis of the film within current debates surrounding Hollywood's representations of masculinity. Movie masculinity has always been explored exclusively in terms of the body, especially as this has related to the hyper-muscularity of the 'built' bodies of action stars like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. The focus on the male body as a site of spectacle and performance means that this body-centric approach has been film theory's dominant method of investigation concerning representations of Hollywood masculinity. This has resulted in a method for theorising masculinity that has never examined representations of masculinity from the perspective of the male voice. This chapter is concerned with exploring how a male star's voice may contribute to their star image and persona, and to what extent the use of a particular male star's voice might imbue an animation with a particular set of ideological associations. By accessing phonetic debates about gender and the voice, and by drawing on voice quality theories relating to innate voice quality, the chapter analyses Tom Hanks' vocal performance in *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*. In order to explore the ideology behind the casting of Hanks in these films, the importance of Hanks' voice quality to his screen persona will be assessed, and the chapter will also be used as an

opportunity for understanding the overall lack of engagement with men's voices within film theory.

Building upon the previous chapter, the final case study is also pre-occupied with the relationships between voice and gender. Chapter 6 explores the role and function of the celebrity voice of Meg Ryan as Anastasia in Twentieth Century Fox's film of the same name. The chapter begins by confirming a close relationship between the voice and representations of femininity. Women's voices as a whole in Hollywood cinema have a reputation for being represented and read as problematic. This historical perspective forms the background to the chapter – that there is a long history of understanding women's voices in film as troubled, and this proves to be no different in popular feature length animation examples. Films like *The Little Mermaid* for example, reveal a pre-occupation with women's voices as problematic. *Anastasia* though, would appear to present a more progressive use of the female voice, and this perspective will be analysed and evaluated. The chapter will contain a reading of *Anastasia* from a voco-centric and feminist perspective, and will in particular concentrate on a key scene, a specific sequence of transformation, from towards the end of the film, when the orphan Anya is revealed as the Princess Anastasia herself. It will be argued that in this particular scene Anya/Anastasia is rendered as an erotic spectacle of to-be-looked-at-ness, a conventional Hollywood device for the representation of women. However, it will also be argued that in this scene Anya/Anastasia is *aurally* objectified as an erotic spectacle to be *heard*, through the adoption of a voice quality defined by 'breathiness'. The experimental phonetic work carried out by Henton and Bladon (1985) will be used to explore the voice quality feature of breathiness, in order to suggest that some women may deliberately adopt a

breathy voice quality in order to sound more attractive. The chapter shall argue that this is the case in Ryan's vocal performance during the transformation sequence, and that this particular voice quality is being deliberately employed to signify sexual attractiveness and availability. Ultimately, the chapter will assess the contribution of Ryan and her breathy vocal performance to the overall ideologies of the film. By demonstrating how very few female celebrity voices are employed in recent popular feature length animation releases, Chapter 6 builds a case for the uniqueness of Ryan's celebrity casting in *Anastasia*. By drawing upon debates about gender and identity, this chapter will examine the complex relationships between femininity and voice before moving on to explore how voice quality as a learned behaviour can impact upon a gendered identity.

The over-arching intention of the thesis is to emphasise the importance of voice to star performance and screen persona. By applying some specific phonetic approaches, the thesis intends to overcome some of the problems and limitations experienced by film theory's previous attempts to access the relationship between voice and performance. The starting point for this thesis was the observation that since its 'renaissance', the popular feature length animation film has routinely exploited the celebrity voice, but film theory has not seen fit to explore the impact of this aspect of the film form in terms of film star performance. This thesis identifies that gap, and argues that current applications of film theory, and especially star studies, are inadequate for the task of analysing exactly what is at stake in the celebrity voice. An intervention, in the form of a cross-disciplinary project, is required. The implications of this thesis, and the potential for the application of a voice quality theory within film studies, may have a

wider impact, beyond that of star studies, and the Conclusion of this thesis will

gesture towards some of these opportunities.

Chapter One

From Mickey Mouse to DreamWorks SKG: A History of the Celebrity Voice

The use of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film has become increasingly established since 1989, which I will argue marks the beginning of the 'renaissance' of this genre. However, the celebrity voice is not a technique that has suddenly emerged. Rather, it has gradually developed over time. This chapter presents an over-view of the historical development of the use of the celebrity voice, driven by the central premise that the celebrity voice technique is not something entirely new – there is a pre-history to explore – but that it is the scale on which it appears in recent examples of the popular feature length animation film that makes it seem particularly striking, original, and worthy of detailed investigation and analysis.

The animation 'renaissance', and the celebrity voice

Since 1989 and the release of Disney's *The Little Mermaid,* popular feature length animation has undergone a renaissance. *The Little Mermaid* was Disney's first commercially successful feature length animation film after a period of marked financial difficulty and economic instability.[1] Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s the Disney studio had failed to capture audience interest with their feature length animation releases: *Robin Hood* (1973), *The Rescuers* (1977), *The Fox and the Hound* (1981), and *The Black Cauldron* (1985) were relatively unprofitable projects. Roy Disney, Walt Disney's brother, who had taken control of the studio after Walt's death in 1966, died himself in 1971, and it seemed that at this time Disney's success

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[1] The financial history of the Disney studio has frequently been characterised by peaks and troughs of success, but during the 1960s and 1970s the studio particularly struggled. This may have been due to issues of mismanagement, or more crucially, as Bell, Haas & Sells surmise, it may have been due to Disney's 'inability to find America's entertainment pulse during volatile social and political times' (1995: 6).

also withered. Some commentators have suggested that as well as a loss of clear direction and leadership, Disney's lack of success with their feature length animation releases at the box office during this period may have been because the studio had been prioritising time and money for its theme park enterprises and its live-action film production departments, and that as a result animated film-making had suffered from a lengthy period of under-investment (Wasko, 2001: 30). The 1980s was also a decade marked by the Hollywood film industry's negotiation of new media technologies, specifically cable television, and the explosion of the home video market. Disney proved to be slow to capitalise on the potential of these opportunities, and the cumulative effect of all of these problems resulted in the Disney studio being faced with a take-over challenge in 1984.

The new owners of Disney were Bass Brothers Enterprises, and several of the changes that occurred as a result of the take-over were responsible for the return of Disney's success, and the re-invigoration of its feature length animation film department. For example, there was a substantial change of personnel as Bass Brothers enticed key Hollywood 'moguls' to take over the management of the company. These included Michael Eisner, formerly the President of Paramount; Frank Wells, formerly the Vice-President at Warner Bros, and Jeffrey Katzenberg, also from Paramount. The recruitment of this team of high profile and influential figures was the driving force behind Disney's change of direction in the late 1980s, and its subsequent successes (Wasko, 2001: 32).

The Little Mermaid was followed by *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), and *The Lion King* (1994). These four films should be understood as heralding the

start of a new 'golden age' in the history of Disney animation, and in popular feature length animation more generally.[2] Some specific industry details and economic information about this group of films are useful to illustrate the extent of their financial success, and their wider impact and influence.[3] When *The Little Mermaid* was released in 1989 it had been created on a budget of approximately $20 million. This figure quickly escalated until only five years later *The Lion King* was produced on $79 million, nearly four times the amount. *The Little Mermaid* grossed over $9 million during its opening weekend in the United States, making it at the time the most successful animated feature film ever. However, this accolade rapidly changed hands, as each film proved to be more financially successful than the last: *The Lion King* grossed over $66 million in its opening weekend in the US. *The Little Mermaid* featured an award-winning musical score, and won Academy Awards for Best Original Score and Best Original Song ('Under the Sea').[4] *Beauty and the Beast*, however, achieved an industry breakthrough when it became the first feature length animation film to be nominated for an Academy Award alongside live-action films in the Best Picture category.[5] All four of these renaissance films have led to successful straight-to-video releases as well as television 'spin-off' series, which illustrates the popular appeal and endurance of each concept.[6]

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[2] Wasko refers to the 1990s as 'the Disney decade', expressing just how influential and important the new era was for the revival of the Disney studio (2001: 36).

[3] All financial information accessed via the website www.imdb.com.

[4] This trend continued. *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King* all won Academy Awards for Best Original Score and Best Original Song ('Beauty and the Beast', 'A Whole New World', and 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight', respectively)

[5] Since 2001 feature length animation has had its own category at the Academy Awards. The first film to take this honour was *Shrek*.

[6] *The Little Mermaid* led to the sequel *The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea* (2000), as well as *The Little Mermaid* television series (1992-1994). *Beauty and the Beast* led to two video sequels: *Beauty and the Beast: the Enchanted Christmas* (1997) and *Belle's Magical World* (1998). *Aladdin* was followed by *The Return of Jafar* (1994) and *Aladdin and the King of Thieves* (1996), and also a television series (1993-1995). *The Lion King* was succeeded by *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (1998), *The Lion King 1½* (2004), and the television series *Timon and Pumbaa* (1995-1998).

Despite the new faces and resulting changes in fortunes at the Disney studio, very little had changed in Disney's approach to the popular feature length animation film. The studio continued to look to fairy tales and myths for narrative inspiration, drawing on Hans Christian Anderson's 1836 tale for *The Little Mermaid*, for example. The studio persisted with the formula of cute talking animals, like Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*, a pet monkey for Aladdin, and Timon and Pumbaa in *The Lion King*. Frequent interludes of music and songs, and clear moral codes within the narratives were also retained as trademarks of the Disney feature animation canon since its inception in 1937.

However, despite continuing to rely on these established formulae, the renaissance films were different in important ways. For example, they offered a more sophisticated negotiation of key themes. In *The Lion King* the comedy, romance, and action typical of Disney's feature length animation films is mediated by a complex set of undercurrents engaging with filial duty, guilt, death, and forgiveness, that for some reviewers made *The Lion King* too 'traumatic for the very young'.[7] Disney's renaissance films had also become more visually sophisticated, and developed 'show-case' sections within the films that functioned as opportunities to display and celebrate creative and artistic imagination. The ballroom sequence in *Beauty and the Beast*, the magic carpet ride in *Aladdin*, and the stampede of wildebeest in *The Lion King* are examples of these visually stunning set pieces.[8] Typically, Disney's renaissance films further augmented their appeal by drawing upon music and songs, often specially commissioned for the project, and frequently performed by well-

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[7] Caren Myers, reviewing *The Lion King* for *Sight and Sound*, October 1994, Volume 4, Issue 10, page 48.
[8] It should be pointed out that these impressive scenes were only achievable because of advancements within animation technologies. In each of these cases the technology was developed especially to facilitate the specific sequence.

known popular performers. For example, Elton John wrote and performed songs for *The Lion King*, including 'Circle of Life' and 'Can You Feel The Love Tonight'. The combined impact of these visual and auditory effects produced a pleasurable multi-sensory experience for audiences, located within traditional Disney formats, but re-presenting them as bigger, better, and more impressive. However, some critics have observed increasing levels of self-awareness in the Disney renaissance films. Wells (2002) has suggested that the success of the Disney films of this new era was achieved through the combination of a return to the 'classical' Disney style combined with an added irony and a 'knowingness', more traditionally associated with products from the Warner Bros studio (131).

I would argue that this 'knowingness' is derived from the use of the celebrity voice. The celebrity voice technique – using well-known Hollywood actors and popular performers to supply the voices of the animated characters - is one of the recurring elements of Disney's renaissance films, a contributory factor to the multi-sensory pleasure for audiences, and a source of inter- and extra-textual effects. As will be discussed below, this thesis acknowledges the casting of Robin Williams as the Genie of the Lamp in *Aladdin* as the starting point of this pattern, but no Disney feature length animation film released since is without at least one, if not an entire cast of celebrity voices. *The Lion King* for example, includes the voices of James Earl Jones as Mufasa, Matthew Broderick as Simba, Jeremy Irons as Scar, Rowan Atkinson as Zazu, and Whoopi Goldberg as a hyena. This thesis argues that the popularity of the celebrity voice technique and its high profile status within many examples of popular feature length animation should be understood as a crucial and defining aspect of the animation renaissance, as marked by Disney. However, in this chapter, the celebrity

voice technique will be traced as a natural progression from, and development of, an already long-running practice. Despite being a dominant element of the most recent examples of popular feature length animation film, the celebrity voice technique is not a new or original idea. There is a pre-history that can be traced from Walt Disney himself supplying the voice for Mickey Mouse in 1929, to the scope of DreamWorks' multi-celebrity voice casts in two recent examples of the popular feature animation film, *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt* (both 1998).

Walt Disney: The first celebrity voice?

The story behind Walt Disney's creation of the most famous and popular cartoon character ever has become somewhat mythologised within both the history of Disney and of cartoon filmmaking more generally.[9] Walt Disney himself was rather fond of recalling how the success of his empire 'was all started by a mouse'. The most frequently recounted version of the tale of the genesis of Mickey Mouse recalls how the virtually penniless Walt came up with the idea for a cartoon series based on the adventures of a mouse whilst on a train journey from New York with his wife, Lillian. Mickey was originally christened Mortimer, but Lillian thought this to be too formal a moniker for a mouse, and suggested Mickey instead.

Walt, his brother Roy, and artist Ub Iwerks began work on the first Mickey Mouse cartoon *Plane Crazy* in 1927, but were unable to secure any commercial interest in the project. Refusing to give up, Walt used the last of his money to complete a second Mickey adventure *Gallopin' Gaucho*, but still with no success. Then, so the story

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[9] Wasko (2001) is particularly concerned to point out the number and variety of stories that circulate around key events in the life of Disney 'the man' as well as Disney 'the company', many of which were deliberately constructed and circulated by Walt himself. This preoccupation with the 'history(ies)' of Disney is the focus of the second chapter of her book, *Understanding Disney* (6-27).

goes, Walt witnessed the sound revolution coming to live-action filmmaking when he saw *The Jazz Singer* (1927), and decided that this was just the breakthrough that Mickey and the cartoon film needed. Walt made a third Mickey cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, and experimented by adding sound to the story in the form of synchronised musical effects. It seemed to add an extra dimension to the cartoon and bring it to life. Walt proceeded to add retrospective sound to *Plane Crazy* and *Gallopin' Gaucho* and marketed the trio of films together as a package of the first sound cartoons. There was huge demand. Suddenly, and at last, Mickey and Walt were successful, 'literally saved by the bell – bells, whistles, plinks, and toots' (De Roos, 1963: re-printed in Smoodin, 1994: 52).[10]

It was not quite the case however, as has been claimed, that suddenly 'everybody wanted the talking mouse' (De Roos, 1963/1994: 52). Mickey did not actually speak until his ninth cartoon, *The Karnival Kid,* was released in 1929.[11] Mickey spoke his first word, 'Hotdogs!' with the voice of Walt himself.[12] Unable to afford to hire a voice actor and typical of his characteristic drive to fully oversee and control his projects, Walt brought Mickey to vocal life himself, becoming perhaps, at least retrospectively, the first ever celebrity to voice a cartoon character.[13]

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[10] There is some debate about whether Walt Disney could justifiably claim to have been the 'first' to produce a synchronised sound cartoon. Crafton (1982) dismisses the suggestion that Disney was 'far ahead' of all the other attempts to produce sound cartoons as 'a myth' (212), and suggests also that the Fleischers studio had been producing cartoons with optional soundtracks for some years. It is also little known that Disney was actually denied his breakthrough by Paul Terry's cartoon *Dinner Time*, released just before *Steamboat Willie* in 1928, which featured synchronised animal noises and musical accompaniments (211).
[11] After *Steamboat Willie, Gallopin' Gaucho* and *Plane Crazy*, came *The Barn Dance, The Opry House, When the Cat's Away, Barnyard Battle*, and *The Plow Boy*, before *Karnival Kid*.
[12] *Karnival Kid* is also important because it is the cartoon where Mickey first 'tips his ears' at Minnie, leading to the development of the most famous of Disney's merchandising products, the Mickey Mouse Ears.
[13] Walt continued to supply the voice of Mickey until 1946 when too many business commitments forced him to hand over the role to Jim McDonald, a voice actor who played Mickey for two decades. The current 'voice of Mickey' is Bruce Allwine.

The 'carnival cartoon': A history of inter-textuality

Lindvall and Melton (1997) offer an historical analysis of the cartoon short, focusing on the layers and levels of inter-textuality that they argue have been typical characteristics of the cartoon short since its inception in the silent era. They locate their analyses within the Bakhtinian concept of 'carnival comedy', and claim that the cartoon short should be considered as an ideal although often under-appreciated site for an analysis of Bakhtin's notion of carnival, because 'like Medieval comedy, the cartoon mocks itself, romping with its audience' (203).

The cartoon short's propensity for mocking and romping emerges through a number of specific methods of self-reflexivity. Firstly, Lindvall and Melton focus on a selection of examples where cartoons have passed comment on the actual filmmaking process, and on the industry itself. They demonstrate this point with reference to such cartoon classics as Chuck Jones' *Duck Amuck* (1953) and Tex Avery's *Porky's Preview* (1941) that deliberately draw attention to and play with the conventions of animated filmmaking. *Duck Amuck* is especially famous for the methods it employs to effectively deconstruct itself. These techniques include Daffy Duck's frequent deliberate addresses to the audience and demands to the omnipotent animator, that break the 'laws' of realist cinema by acknowledging both the spectator and the creator. During the cartoon we also bear witness to several of the animation processes, especially when Daffy is erased from the screen, is forced to adapt to the animator's impromptu changes in background scenery, and when sound effects do not appropriately match their images (Wells, 1998: 38-42).

A second level of self-reflexivity is achieved in animated cartoons through what Lindvall and Melton call 'inter-textual footnoting', a technique whereby cartoons

'quote and refer to other cartoons and cinematic texts' (207). Here, Lindvall and Melton give the example of the part-animated part-live action film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988) as one that 'cascades with animated allusions, inside references and jokes' (207). This film features 'cameo' appearances from a number of famous cartoon characters including Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, Tweety Pie, and Betty Boop, and there are many opportunities for external referencing. For example, when Donald and Daffy Duck appear as competitive piano players in a 'speakeasy' scene, and argue over who is the better pianist, Daffy turns to the audience to ask, 'Does anyone understand what this Duck is saying? This is the last time I work with someone with a speech impediment!' The comic effect of this moment works by simultaneously dismantling the 'fourth wall' of cinema by acknowledging and appealing to the film's audience – Daffy's question is directed at us, as well as the 'speakeasy' audience – and by commenting extra-textually on Donald Duck's distinctive vocal patterns.

Part of this animated referencing process has also involved drawing on key Hollywood figures as sources of comic inspiration. Lindvall and Melton note that many cartoons have 'paid tribute' to Hollywood, its stars, and its films (207). They proceed to generate quite an extensive list of cartoons that have featured caricatures of Hollywood stars as proof of the popularity and prevalence of this technique, especially during the 1930s and 1940s.[14] These include Greta Garbo in *Mickey's Gala Premiere* (1933), Mae West in *Who Killed Cock Robin?* (1935), Katharine Hepburn in *Mother Goose in Hollywood* (1938), Clark Gable in *Hollywood Steps Out*

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[14] Overall, Lindvall and Melton generate a much broader historical context for their argument, drawing on examples from the very beginning of cartoon filmmaking as well as more recent cartoons. They also include examples from a variety of different countries. It is this project's specific preoccupation with Hollywood that weights the examples listed above.

(1944), Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in *Bacall to Arms* (1946), Bing Crosby in *Hollywood Daffy* (1946), and Gregory Peck in *Slick Hare* (1947), amongst others.

This tendency identified by Lindvall and Melton, for cartoons to use popular Hollywood stars as points of reference is of particular interest given the preoccupations of this thesis. Although these star 'appearances' often focused on the visual or physical characteristics of particular stars that could be readily caricatured, such as Clark Gable's large ears, for instance, they also occasionally drew on specific stars' *vocal* characteristics, such as Lauren Bacall's 'distinctive' voice or James Stewart's 'drawl' (207).[15] Such a foregrounding of key Hollywood figures, and especially the use of their idiosyncratic vocal performances shares similarities with recent examples of the celebrity voice technique as it is found in the popular feature length animation film.

Like Lindvall and Melton's cartoon examples, recent examples of popular feature length animation have similarly made extra-textual references to other Hollywood people and products. Disney's *Toy Story* (1995), for example, makes external referencing a recurring feature and central motif of the film. When Woody's (Tom Hanks) jealousy gets the better of him and he tries to dispose of Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) who threatens to usurp his position as Andy's favourite toy, Woody sets off a series of events that culminate in Buzz being pursued by a large rubber ball in a scene that recalls a similar moment in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) where Dr. Jones (Harrison Ford) is chased through caves by a huge rolling boulder. Similarly, when Woody and Buzz are trapped in Sid's bedroom, a toolbox in the background reads

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[15] It is not made clear in Lindvall and Melton's work whether these cartoons used the original voices of the stars concerned, or if the skills of voice actors or impersonators were employed instead.

'Binford Tools' which is a reference to the fictional tool company that sponsors Tim Allen's character in the television sit-com *Home Improvement*. When Buzz and Woody become lost at the gas station and separated from Andy they have a heated argument which results in Woody yelling at Buzz, 'You are a toy!' Buzz counters by saying, 'You are a sad strange little man, and you have my pity' and making a saluting symbol drawn from the television series *Star Trek*.

The effects of this self-conscious referencing of other film texts are various. By repeatedly calling upon examples from live action film and television, feature length animation generates a level of realism that it does not automatically possess. Similarly, repetitive inter-textuality creates a sense of historicity and stresses the inter-connectedness of the Hollywood product. Inter-textuality also functions comedically, but crucially its success depends upon the interactions of an informed audience, sufficiently invested in the Hollywood product to be able to recognise and identify where parody is being employed. The addition of extra-textual references can also function as a means for animators to leave their 'mark', or evidence of their creativity or imagination on a particular scene.[16]

However, I would argue that it is through the use of the celebrity voice technique that popular feature length animation generates the levels of inter-textuality characteristic of the 'carnival cartoon'. The celebrity voice draws attention to itself and its external voice source as a point of reference outside the world of the film. One way for this to

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[16] There is a history to this idea. Animators have allegedly often tried to leave evidence of their contribution in some way, especially during the earlier days of feature animation production when animators and artists were often not awarded on-screen credit for their work. Ostman (1996) explores some more recent claims of animators 'marks' left in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, arguing for a 'disgruntled employee' theory that could explain the 'secret messages' apparently observed by many (84).

occur is by incorporating a celebrity's physical characteristics into the animation. For example, in *Sinbad: Legend of the Seas* (2003) Sinbad 'looks like' Brad Pitt, or at least seems to embody some of Pitt's characteristic physical appearance. The celebrity voice also forges a connection between the animation and external points of reference by inviting audiences to 'spot the celebrity' and recognise the voice behind the animated character, or to recall other Hollywood texts, which sets in play a series of associations and negotiations driven by the celebrity voice.[17] When the celebrity voice is used in popular feature length animation film it is an extension of Lindvall and Melton's idea of the manufacture of closeness between the animated cartoon and the 'real' world of Hollywood, and operates as a further example of animation 'quoting' Hollywood. Lindvall and Melton's research enables an historical approach to animation's use of the celebrity voice by identifying a recognisable pattern of similar techniques throughout the history of American animation, and tracing a cartoon 'lineage' that pre-dates the current usage of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation.[18] Ultimately, the celebrity voice technique as it is used in popular feature length animation seems to fit rather neatly into the traditions of intertextuality identified by Lindvall and Melton.

Disney's *The Jungle Book*: The celebrity voice and characterisation

Disney's *The Jungle Book*, one of the studio's most enduring and endearing films, was released in 1967, a year after Walt's death in 1966. Given the likely length of time that it took to produce a feature length film at this period in animation's history, it is feasible that Walt did actually have the opportunity for a significant amount of

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[17] For a more detailed discussion of the exhibition and reception effects of the celebrity voice see Chapter 2.

[18] I will be returning to this discussion in more detail and re-engaging with some of Lindvall and Melton's ideas in chapter 2 where I will be addressing a selection of the issues governing the production and distribution of the celebrity voice, as well as examining some of its exhibition effects.

input into *The Jungle Book* before he died. However, the film had a mixed reception at its release, some critics believing that it was an inferior product, standing as evidence of the creative power that was Walt Disney, and the void that his death had left. In particular, the film was criticised for the way it had fallen short in its adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's stories,[19] for lacking a coherent narrative, that seemed to have been sacrificed in order to incorporate as many musical numbers as possible, and for being essentially short on characterisation (Maltin, 1987: 76).[20]

It is with this issue of characterisation and specifically the creation of character in *The Jungle Book* that this section is particularly concerned. The use of external points of reference for story-boarders, artists and animators working in the Disney studio was commonplace. Human and animal models were regularly consulted for character inspiration, as *aide-memoires*, and as visual sources to enable accurate and realistic animated renderings. Bell (1995) recounts how Disney used teenage models and professional dancers as points of reference for animators working on the physical movements of the characters of Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty (110). The figure of Peggy Lee was famously used as inspiration for the 'sashay-ing' movements of Peg in *Lady and the Tramp* (1959). However, *The Jungle Book* was unusual in at least two ways. It was the first of Disney's feature length animation films where the animators worked in very close collaboration with the voice actors

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[19] Criticisms based on inaccurate or unfaithful adaptations continue to be frequently levelled at Disney whenever an outside source is used. See in particular specific responses to Disney's adaptation of Andersen's story for *The Little Mermaid* - Sells (1995), White (1993), and Trites (1990/1991).

[20] Even today, the (over-) use of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film can lead to accusations of laziness. One newspaper report implies that the celebrity voice is a 'shortcut' to characterisation, and observes of *Antz* (1998) that, 'The use of such well-known actors [as celebrity voices] saves a lot of time in character development and exposition' (Phil Raby, *Bath Chronicle*, 11 November, 1998).

involved, and it was also the first of Disney's films where those voice actors were already particularly well-known performers in their own right.

The opening title sequence of *The Jungle Book* gives credit first to those responsible for generating the narrative, inspired by Kipling's stories, then to the directing animators, and to the character and effects animators, before listing the 'voice talents' of Phil Harris (as Baloo the Bear), Sebastian Cabot (as Bagheera the Panther), Louis Prima, (as King Louis of the Apes), George Sanders (as Shere Khan the Tiger), and Sterling Holloway (as Kaa the Snake).[21] Many of the names of these 'voice talents' would have been already familiar to audiences of the time. Holloway, for example, was particularly well known for his connection to Disney, having worked as a voice actor on a number of Disney's earlier animated films, including *Dumbo* (1941), *Bambi* (1942) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) as well as supplying the voice of Winnie the Pooh across a number of short films, including *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* (1966). Harris and Prima were both popular jazz and swing musicians and bandleaders, Harris being especially well known for his performances on radio. It is not hard to envisage, therefore, from where elements of the animals' characterisation were gleaned. Harris, well-known for his laconic monologues, supplied the voice of Baloo, the laid-back bear that takes Mowgli under his wing and teaches him about the 'bare necessities of life'. The more 'up-beat' Prima was the

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[21] The issue of credit listings and credit sequences in feature length animation, and especially the problematic relationship between accreditation and voice performances will be addressed in more detail in chapter 2, alongside a discussion of elements of the distribution processes pertaining to the celebrity voice. In brief, though, in Disney's early years credits were not routinely used, and animator's jobs were often not separately categorised, so individual artists may have played a variety of roles. Under pressure to award fair recognition, Disney began using crediting systems in the 1940s, but even these were not always reliably complete, and many contributors persistently went unrecognised.

inspiration behind King Louie the swinging, jiving leader of the Apes.[22] According to Maltin (1987), this was the first of Disney's films where the connection between voice source and animated character was deliberately cultivated, as the animators 'incorporated elements of [the] performing personalities into the animated characters', most obviously through their voices and their musical and singing talents (76).[23]

Although Maltin recounts that audiences warmed to the film and its vibrant characters, the technique of the celebrity voice received a disparaging critical reaction. *The Jungle Book* was criticised for being short on characterisation, and of needing to resort to the technique of the celebrity voice out of, as Maltin puts it, 'downright laziness' (76). The Disney studio was accused of having stolen the idea from Hanna-Barbera who regularly made use of distinctive voices in their animations.[24] Maltin does not appear to hold the technique in high regard either, since he comments that using the celebrity voice in this way 'didn't seem worthy of Disney' (76).[25]

Disney's *Aladdin* and the 'high profile' celebrity voice

Worthy or not, the celebrity voice has become embedded in the tradition that is now popular feature length animation. This section traces what this thesis argues is the

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[22] A *Sunday Times* supplement on 'How Disney Makes Magic' explains how 'the warmth and timbre of Harris' voice gave the animators the idea of a happy, bouncy, loose-limbed, furry hepcat of a bear' (1999, 7).
[23] A more detailed exploration of the deliberately cultivated connections between animated character and celebrity voice source can be found in chapter 2.
[24] Voice actors who worked for Hanna-Barbera include Mel Blanc – 'the man of a thousand voices' who provided the voice for Barney Rubble of *The Flintstones*, Daws Butler who was the voice of Yogi Bear and Huckleberry Hound, and Don Messick who supplied the voice of Scooby in *Scooby-Doo*. Although these voice actors were established figures within the industry, they were not celebrities. However, their voices were well known and memorable, and this may be the reason that Maltin recognises a strong connection between the cartoons of Hanna-Barbera and the use of distinctive voices.
[25] Feature length animation's preference for the celebrity voice is still frequently held in disregard today. Choosing Hollywood celebrities instead of voice actors is thought to devalue voice work as a skill, to 'cash in' on the celebrity's notoriety where most voice actors are unknown, and to undermine original characterisation since animated characters often 'take on' the personas of their celebrity voice sources. These thoughts and other ideas will be developed further in chapter 2.

genesis of the 'high profile' celebrity voice that characterises popular feature length animation film of the new animation era, through a case-study of Disney's *Aladdin* (1992) which features the voice of the well-known Hollywood actor and comedian Robin Williams, in the role of the Genie of the Lamp.[26]

As discussed in the opening section of this chapter, the new animation can be traced from the release of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* in 1989. Following in the pre-renaissance Disney tradition, *The Little Mermaid* featured a number of talented voice actors to supply the voices of the characters, but there were no celebrities in this voice cast. The voice of Ariel for example, is provided by Jodi Benson, a voice actor and singer who is also heard in *A Bug's Life* (1998) and as Tour Guide Barbie in *Toy Story 2* (1999). Kenneth Mars who supplies the voice of Triton, Ariel's father, has a long career history of voice work since the 1960s, while Pat Carroll (Ursula) and Samuel E. Wright (Sebastian) have established careers as television actors as well as voice performers.

Aladdin marks the introduction of the 'high profile' celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film. Robin Williams was the only celebrity voice to be cast in the film; the majority of the vocal performances were still provided by professional voice actors.[27] There may be a variety of reasons why this was the case, including the financial implications of hiring such a well-known performer, or uncertainty as to how a celebrity voice casting might be received. It may also be the case that the producers

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[26] By using the term 'high profile' I am referring to those Hollywood celebrities who carry the greatest financial and cultural powers, whose names are instantly recognisable, and whose very presence within a film can guarantee its box office success. McDonald (2000) uses the term 'high profile' to describe a star who stands as a sign of 'production quality', and whose star image ultimately becomes the 'image of the film' (75).

[27] The voices of Aladdin, Princess Jasmine, and Jafar are provided by Scott Weinger, Linda Larkin, and Jonathan Freeman, respectively, all of whom are television and voice actors.

were a little reluctant to allow a number of celebrity voices to dominate the film and overshadow the 'telling of the story', which was always so important to the Disney studio. However, Williams' performance does dominate the film. His comic presence, even when 'only' a vocal presence, is enough to overshadow the other characters within the film and dominate the narrative, allowing commentators and reviewers to discuss *Aladdin* as an animated film that 'stars' Williams.[28]

The similarities between the animated character of the Genie, the star persona of Williams, and the previous film and television roles he has played, are generated through the use of Williams' distinctive style of vocal performance, as a device that recalls and sets in play this series of comparisons. Williams has a reputation for delivering fast-paced performances that often draw on the vocal effects popularised through his stand-up comedy roots, and demonstrated to effect in film roles such as the energetic radio DJ Adrian Cronauer in *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), and his role as Mork in the television series *Mork and Mindy* (1978-1982). Williams' performances as the Genie in *Aladdin*, especially in the 'showcase' section during the song and dance number 'Friend Like Me', exploit his vocal talents to the full. Undergoing a series of rapid physical 'visually mesmerising' transformations (Addison: 1993, 5) featuring 'a compendium of American cultural iconography' (Wells: 2002 (a), 134), matched by any number of vocal impersonations, the instabilities and uncertainties attached to the Genie's character are demonstrated

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[28] Byrne and McQuillan (1999) confirm that Williams' performance as the Genie dominates *Aladdin*. They also remark that it is because of Williams' over-powering high profile presence that the character of Aladdin suffers from a 'curious hollowness'. However, they hold Williams responsible for the overall success of the film (80).

aurally by the celebrity voice casting, as well as visually through the animated imagery.[29]

DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt* and *Antz*: the celebrity voice as strategy

The final section of this chapter examines the scale of recent uses of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation, through a case study of two films from the DreamWorks animation studio - *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt* (both 1998). This thesis would argue that DreamWorks is at least partially responsible for the current use of high-profile celebrity voices, and that the studio is important to the contemporary development of the technique. Hiring big-name and high profile celebrities as voices in their popular feature length animation films is a deliberate DreamWorks strategy. This section will explore some of the reasons behind DreamWorks' decision to monopolise on the celebrity voice.

The two films chosen, *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt,* are important because they are the first two feature length animations to come from the new DreamWorks animation studio.[30] The full name of the studio is DreamWorks SKG, the final three letters standing in for the last names of its three principal figures - Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen. Katzenberg was responsible for launching the studio in 1994, after he had been sacked from Disney. When Frank Wells, Disney's president, was killed in a helicopter crash, Katzenberg fully expected a promotion, but

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[29] Addison (1993) explains how the Genie's sexuality remains undetermined and unstable because he is visually represented as 'formless from the waist down and as smoothly amorphous as a eunuch' (9). However, I would argue that the Genie's vocal permutations are equally responsible for the enigmas attached to his character.

[30] Although both released in the same year *Antz* was released on October 4th, fractionally before *The Prince of Egypt*, perhaps so that the fledgling animation studio could launch itself with something quite familiar to audiences, before surprising and challenging them with the more controversial content of *The Prince of Egypt.*

CEO Michael Eisner refused him. When he complained, Katzenberg was unceremoniously fired. The launching of DreamWorks could therefore be understood as an act of professional revenge.

Key to Katzenberg's revenge plan against Disney was to challenge the famous studio at what it was considered to do best – feature length animation. It is in DreamWorks' animated films that Katzenberg's animosity towards Disney is most evident. Initially, this animosity was observed to emerge in at least two incidences of competitive releases. DreamWorks released their first foray into feature length animation, *Antz*, in October 1998. The film draws on a long lineage of 'insect animation' and creates a miniature world inside an ant colony (Wells, 2002 (a): 158). It also bears a close resemblance to Disney's *A Bug's Life*, released in November the same year, and also featuring a cast of insects.[31] The two films competed against each other at the box office, and although the Disney version was indisputably the winner, Disney still accused DreamWorks of stealing the idea outright.[32] It is certainly feasible that the ideas for *A Bug's Life* were circulating before Katzenberg was removed from the studio, although he denied any accusations of 'poaching', claiming that Disney was being petty and stupid. However, the run of similarities continued with comparisons made between DreamWorks' *The Road to Eldorado* and Disney's *The Emperor's New Groove*, both released in 2000. This pattern of shared similarities was repeated once more when DreamWorks released their version of an underwater adventure *Shark Tale* (2004), inviting comparison with Disney's *Finding Nemo* (2003). The

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[31] The basic narratives of these films are almost identical. In each case a colony of insects is threatened by other more powerful insects and is only saved by the bravery and ingenuity of individuals who think outside 'the colony'.
[32] In its opening weekend at the US box office *Antz* took over $17 million, a respectable figure but modest by Disney standards. *A Bug's Life* took over $33 million in its comparable opening weekend in the US (www.imdb.com).

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frequency with which these comparable films have appeared and the distinct similarities between them are strong evidence that this pattern of releases is more than mere coincidence.

Animosity towards Disney is probably most heavily evident in *Shrek* (2001), the film that Katzenberg describes as DreamWorks' 'holy grail' and 'the way forward' for popular feature length animation.[33]   Arguably, the film is wholly driven by its mocking of the great Disney studio and its fairy-tale traditions. For example, the opening sequence of the film features a brief synopsis of the narrative via the trope of a voice-over reading from the pages of a decoratively illustrated storybook – a technique that Disney used to frame the opening of the feature length animation prototype *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Here, the device is ridiculed when the voice is revealed to belong to Shrek sitting in his 'outhouse' who unceremoniously wipes his backside on the illuminated pages. Later in the film Princess Fiona parodies the well-known scene where Snow White sings with the birds of the forest. In this version though, attempting to imitate Fiona's soaring soprano causes the poor bird to explode in a puff of feathers, and Fiona raids its nest and cooks its eggs for breakfast. *Shrek*'s attack on Disney continues with the ultra-clean ultra-pristine town of Duloc standing in as a parody of Disney's theme parks, and more personally from Katzenberg's point of view, the rather unfavourable representation of the vertically challenged character of Lord Farquaad (read, 'fuckwad') is allegedly held to be a rather vicious jab at the physically diminutive Eisner.[34]

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[33] *The Observer* Review Pages, (July 4th 2004, 6) – where Katzenberg admits that *Shrek* (and its sequel) have been the only true success stories from DreamWorks' animation studio.
[34] Peter Bradshaw's review of *Shrek*, for *The Guardian* (Friday, June 29th, 2001).

While *Antz* competed with *A Bug's Life* and secured reasonable success, *The Prince of Egypt* proved to be too controversial and fared less well, taking only $14 million in its opening US weekend.[35] Its biblical themes were certainly an unusual choice for a feature length animation; other popular feature length animation films have not chosen such potentially controversial topics.

However, *The Prince of Egypt* still stands as a significant film for the DreamWorks studio, and should be read as another reaction against Disney, specifically the 'cute' Disney visual style of the renaissance animations. While Disney animations tend to prefer a visual animated style based on smooth rounded shapes, the visual style of *The Prince of Egypt* is much more angular, making it appear as a more 'grown-up' animation. The film handles a more adult subject matter too, and although it retains the musical numbers that have always been entrenched within the genre, it disposes of the talking animals and cute sidekicks so typical of the films of the new Disney era.

However, despite these distinct differences, *The Prince of Egypt* did have something in common with several of the new Disney films. Like *Aladdin, The Lion King, Pocahontas* (1995), and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *The Prince of Egypt* suffered from significant criticism and negative press.[36] It was most frequently criticised for using a biblical tale for commercial ends, and for trivialising the story through its animated treatment; religion being considered too serious a topic for the frivolity implied by popular animation forms. Criticism was also levelled at the film's representations of violence, murder, and racial tensions, again topics considered inappropriate for the popular animated form. Although Katzenberg consulted with

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[35] www.imbd.com

[36] All of these Disney films have a history of critical receptions. Representations of race have been particularly singled out for criticism. See Byrne & McQuillan (1999), and Ward (2002), for example.

religious leaders including Billy Graham, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and representatives of the Vatican during the pre-production of the film, and also inserted a 'disclaimer' into the opening credits,[37] the film was still unacceptable to some countries, and was banned in Egypt, Malaysia, and the Maldives for what was considered to be an unforgivably inaccurate and misleading portrayal of the story (Wells, 2002 (a): 137-138).

To return to the discussion of DreamWorks' use of the celebrity voice, *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt* are most noticeable because of the number of high profile celebrities attached to the projects as voice sources. The voice cast for *Antz* lists ten high profile celebrity names: Woody Allen, Dan Aykroyd, Anne Bancroft, Danny Glover, Gene Hackman, Jennifer Lopez, John Mahoney, Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, and Christopher Walken. The voice cast for *The Prince of Egypt* lists nine high profile celebrity names: Sandra Bullock, Ralph Fiennes, Danny Glover, Jeff Goldblum, Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Helen Mirren, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Patrick Stewart. Such numbers of high profile celebrity voice figures are not seen in the feature animation releases of any other studio. The question emerges, why should DreamWorks be using so many celebrity voices, and especially so many high-profile celebrity voices, in its popular feature length animation films? The following is an attempt to explain and make sense of this trend and position it as a deliberate and conscious strategy.

DreamWorks is still a relatively new animation studio – it celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2004 - and although its founding team members are important

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[37] The disclaimer reads: 'The motion picture you are about to see is an adaptation of the Exodus story. While artistic and historical license has been taken, we believe that this film is true to the essence, values and integrity of a story that is a cornerstone of faith for millions of people worldwide. The biblical story of Moses can be found in the book of Exodus'.

Hollywood figures it still does not have the weight of the Disney reputation to rely upon.[38] The studio needs to raise its profile in other ways, and create its own identity. A variety of methods have been employed to achieve these aims. DreamWorks has attempted to challenge the Disney stranglehold over popular feature length animation by launching a sustained attack on the genre via a significant number of film releases. In the studio's first ten years it has produced ten feature length animations, and more are planned. Although other film studios have released feature length animation, these have been single, often tentative attempts, which have not had great impact.[39] DreamWorks has also aimed to push at the boundaries of traditional Disney animations in a number of ways. The choice of different and sometimes difficult narrative subjects, such as religious topics in *The Prince of Egypt*, enables DreamWorks to adopt an originality lacking from Disney. Similarly, by employing different artistic and stylistic 'looks', as in the 'art' of *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002) for example, and by drawing on different animation techniques, such as the plasticine models of *Chicken Run* (2000), DreamWorks is able to create its own visual style and identity. However, this thesis maintains that DreamWorks has achieved its success and its challenge to Disney primarily through the exploitation of the celebrity voice in multi-celebrity voice casts, as seen in *Antz* and *The Prince of Egypt*, and also

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[38] Both Spielberg and Katzenberg have great influence in Hollywood and many actors want to work on their projects. This explains the popularity of feature animation voice work amongst Hollywood's celebrities, where during 2000 there was a noticeable rush to get involved, and it may also explain why some celebrities have leant their voices to feature animation more than once - Kelsey Grammer, for example, appears vocally in *Anastasia* and in *Toy Story 2* (1999), the voice of Eddie Murphy is heard in *Mulan* and the *Shrek* movies, Michelle Pfeiffer stars in *The Prince of Egypt* and in *Sinbad: Legend of the Seas*.

[39] DreamWorks' full list of animated releases is as follows: *Antz* (1998), *The Prince of Egypt* (1998), *The Road to Eldorado* (2000), *Chicken Run* (2000), *Shrek* (2001), *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002), *Sinbad: Legend of the Seas* (2003), *Shrek 2* (2004), *Shark Tale* (2004), and the forth-coming *Madagascar* (2005), *Over the Hedge* (2006). It is the number of releases that make DreamWorks a contender against the Disney stranglehold on feature length animation. Most other studios who have attempted to jump on the animation bandwagon have made only inconsistent efforts – Twentieth Century Fox have had three attempts: *Anastasia* (1997), *Titan A.E.* (2000), and *Ice Age* (2002), and Warner Bros only two: *The Quest for Camelot* (1998) and *The Iron Giant* (1999). It is DreamWorks' *sustained* effort over time that is having an impact.

in *Chicken Run*. Using multi-celebrity voice casts has given the DreamWorks studio

a distinct and separate identity and has functioned as a means of setting it apart from

the competition. Most significantly, the technique sets it apart from Disney, and

secures the reputation of DreamWorks as a studio that is the antithesis of Disney's

traditionalism.

Exploiting the celebrity voice by having substantial casts of high-profile Hollywood

figures has also generated popular cultural kudos for DreamWorks by raising the

profile of popular feature length animation, frequently denigrated as merely children's

entertainment. By attracting high profile celebrity figures to an animated film

DreamWorks have added credibility to their own projects, and also to the genre as a

whole. Katzenberg claims that DreamWorks primarily makes animation for adults: 'I

went into DreamWorks wanting to make films with a new ethos: made by adults for

adults and for the adult that exists in every kid.'[40] Arguing that children are becoming

an increasingly sophisticated and knowing audience, Katzenberg inverts Disney's

claim that animated films are for everyone, especially the child inside us all. Beck

(2002) agrees that the success of popular feature length animation lies with adult

audiences: 'If one wants to continue in feature animation, you can't aim at the lowest

common denominator, which is kids. But if you aim at adults, the kids will follow.'[41]

Using the celebrity voice technique means that the resulting film has the potential to

appeal to a broader audience demographic of children *and* adults, and although not all

of DreamWorks' animated films can claim to have been lucrative at the box office,

the money-making potential of the celebrity voice as demonstrated by *Shrek* and

Shrek 2 (2004) is significant.

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[40] *The Observer* Review Pages (July 4th 2004, 6).
[41] From an on-line review of *Antz* (- accessed
13/05/02)

Another convincing argument for DreamWorks' preference for multiple celebrity voice casts is for them to function as cultural markers of the studio's ability to tap into what seems to appeal most to contemporary audiences. The Disney studio has often been unable to achieve this, and at moments in its history has been adrift from public popularity. DreamWorks has successfully identified the current fascination with celebrity, and has exploited the popularity of celebrity culture by employing the celebrity voice in all its feature length animation films. Identifying and analysing celebrity culture as opposed to the academic study of film stars, stardom, and the star system has provoked a number of recent interesting publications.[42] It would appear that 'stardom' is no longer confined to those who appear in Hollywood film. The concept has broadened and expanded out into wider fields of accomplishment, into television, theatre, sport, and music, for example, as well as into more general areas of everyday life.

Geraghty (2000) has suggested that the changing nature of stardom has resulted in the redundancy of the term 'star' which has become over-used and meaningless. The term 'celebrity' has mostly come to replace 'star' whilst also encompassing a much wider definition. There seems to be little significant difference between the academic definitions of the two terms – both depending as they do on a combination of public interest in both the public or professional face, and the private life of an individual. The precise relationship between stardom and celebrity in the body of literature that discusses the issue is confusing, and at times unhelpfully close. Rojek (2001) for example, seems to collapse the two terms – star and celebrity – and uses them synonymously and interchangeably. Similarly, Gledhill's definition of stardom, for

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[42] See for example Rojek (2001), Geraghty (2000), Dixon (1999), Gamson (1994), Fowles (1992), and Schickel (1985), amongst others.

example, is startlingly close to later definitions of celebrity. Gledhill writes, 'actors become stars when their off-screen life-styles and personalities equal or surpass acting ability in importance' (1991, xiv), while in Rojek's terms celebrity is similarly defined as 'the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere' (2001, 11).

It is arguable that film stars in the truest and most traditional sense, as manufactured products of the Classical Hollywood system no longer exist, and that everyone operating in the public sphere can now be classified as a 'celebrity'. The term 'celebrity' has now replaced 'star' (although the distinction between celebrity/star and *actor* is now in existence instead). Film actors are just one form of celebrity, and their fame does not necessarily need to reside in their acting achievements. Geraghty (2000) explains how the term 'star' has been used with reference to athletes and sports people, television actors, and pop singers and has subsequently become meaningless. Geraghty however, is quite clear on how the two terms should be separated. A star, she writes, is marked by a 'duality which emphasises a *balance* between the site of fictional performance and life outside' (184), while a celebrity 'indicates someone whose fame rests *overwhelmingly* on what happens outside the sphere of their work (187: my emphases throughout). I find Geraghty's definitions while helpful, ultimately too narrow and restrictive and therefore am particularly relieved when she begins to offer a series of composite terms to account for the various different kinds of stardom and celebrity in play today. Her term 'star-as-celebrity' is particularly useful. Geraghty writes that 'in the celebrity mode the films are relatively unimportant and a star can continue to command attention as a celebrity despite failures at the box office' (189). 'Star-as-celebrity' allows for significant emphasis on the circulation of

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information on the private life of a star alongside varying levels of interest in their acting performance. This allows for a much more fluid relationship between stardom and celebrity that can easily swing back and forth, allowing a public figure to be one thing more than another at any given time. It is the term 'celebrity' that will be used throughout this thesis because most of the Hollywood figures who provide the voices for popular feature length animation films are not only film actors, but are also well-known for other things too. Therefore the looser, all-encompassing term of 'celebrity' seems more appropriate. The ability of the DreamWorks studio to tap into this current trend for celebrity fascination through its multi-celebrity voice casts serves to locate DreamWorks as an important and very active participator in the circuit of contemporary celebrity culture.

More than just a passing trend, then, the DreamWorks animation studio would appear to have deliberately adopted the celebrity voice technique as a clear creative and business strategy. The celebrity voice fits in with an image of itself that DreamWorks is attempting to project, especially the DreamWorks that is defined by *Shrek*, drawing as it does on the traditions of inter-textuality and the 'carnival cartoon'. For DreamWorks, the celebrity voice now has a particular defining role and status, functioning as a means of 'getting back' at Disney, but also fitting in with their structuring vision of the future of popular feature length animation. Rather than being dismissed as a cheap and easy shortcut to characterisation, the celebrity voice as it is used by DreamWorks should be understood as an important and crucial element of the creative and business processes that surround the popular feature length animation film today. The next chapter engages with some of these production, distribution, and

exhibition processes in more detail, exploring the role and function of the celebrity voice within them.

Chapter Two

The Celebrity Voice at Work: Production, Distribution, Exhibition

In the Introduction to this thesis, the anecdote about the recording, then re-recording, of the voice of Mike Myers in *Shrek*, served to draw attention to the importance of the celebrity voice within the industrial contexts of the popular feature length animation film. This chapter builds on that initial observation, and argues that an analysis of the celebrity voice technique from within certain industrial perspectives is a useful and worthwhile practice. The overall purpose of this chapter is to engage with the celebrity voice at a level of detailed analysis that has been so far missing in work that has addressed the popular feature length animation format. Throughout this chapter this thesis will develop an original theory of the celebrity voice under the categories of Production, Distribution, and Exhibition. In recent years there has been a decisive move within film studies and film theory away from purely text-based approaches to film, towards approaches centred on the circuit of production, distribution, and exhibition. Film studies has become more preoccupied with those elements that circulate *around* a film, which as Neale (2000) demonstrates, may also include ancillary texts such as posters and film credit sequences, which all ultimately contribute to a film's 'inter-textual' relay (drawing on Lukow and Ricci (1984), 39). The theory of the celebrity voice outlined here does not attempt to be complete or exhaustive, but it stands as a starting point for addressing an aspect of popular feature length animation filmmaking that has so far gone under-explored.

Popular feature length animation becomes 'event movie'

This thesis argues for the importance and centrality of the celebrity voice to contemporary popular feature length animation film, and aims to situate it as a crucial

point of focus for a wide variety of issues. However, on one level it cannot be denied

that the celebrity voice is little more than a promotional tool or strategy, as was

suggested towards the end of the previous chapter – a marketing 'gimmick' or

advertising 'ploy' - and this is largely due to popular feature length animation's

newfound status as 'event movie'. The 'event movie' is the most recent manifestation

of the Hollywood blockbuster. The following section offers an overview of the

changes that have taken place within Hollywood, from the Classical era to the various

different versions of the 'New' Hollywood,[1] with a particular focus on the emergence

of the blockbuster and the status of popular feature length animation within these

developments. In particular, the section focuses on the celebrity voice as an element

of the popular feature length animation blockbuster's marketing and promotional

processes.

The blockbuster style of filmmaking can be understood as the popular film industry's

response to the changes in production aesthetics brought about by the break down of

the vertically integrated studio system that had characterised the 'classical'

Hollywood era. The 'classical Hollywood studio system' is a phrase commonly used

to describe the vertically integrated factory-style system of filmmaking that structured

Hollywood, roughly from the early 1920s through to the mid-1950s. The major film

studios – MGM, Paramount, Warner Brothers, Twentieth Century Fox, and RKO[2] -

maintained control over multiple aspects of the filmmaking process. That is, they

controlled all elements of actual film production, the supporting distribution networks,

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[1] King (2002) has structured his work on the New Hollywood around the notion of there being two different 'versions' of Hollywood filmmaking in existence. King situates 'Version I' as the 'Hollywood Renaissance' – an opportunity for filmmakers to challenge audiences and be more experimental. 'Version II' features what King calls 'corporate Hollywood' where the main form of film production is the blockbuster. See below for a more detailed discussion.
[2] This group of studios were known colloquially as the 'Big Five', while a smaller clique containing Universal, Columbia, and United Artists, were known, appropriately, as the 'Little Three'.

and the cinema houses for exhibition, hence the term 'vertically-integrated'. Film production tended to be based around 'blocks' of films that were often produced together, and frequently drew upon key personnel who were contracted to a particular studio for a set number of projects.

This studio system began to collapse after 1948, as a result of the Paramount Decrees that declared the studios' level of control over production, distribution, and exhibition to be unfair, and ultimately illegal. The court ruling forced the system to change its production practices, and instead of 'block' filmmaking, single packages became more financially preferable, where individual actors and other key personnel were signed up on 'one-off' deals.

However, the single package system was not only a more economically sound and viable option for Hollywood's studios, it also became a method for dealing with falling audience attendance. At roughly the same time as the Paramount Decrees were issued, cinema attendance was beginning to decline due to a number of converging factors. These included the increasing popularity of home entertainment and television, the mass exodus from urban centres to the suburbs where fewer cinema theatres were located, an increase in leisure time, and a preference for more affluent leisure activities. King (2002) has suggested that the cinema industry had a choice of two possible strategies for dealing with the problem of declining audience figures. Firstly, films could be produced with the aim of appealing to specific 'niche' markets. King imagines these films to form a Hollywood 'renaissance', and includes in this category films such as *Easy Rider* (1969), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and *The Graduate* (1967) that he argues are characterised by being

'edgy' and experimental (12). A second alternative for filmmakers was to tempt audiences back to cinemas by appealing to as broad an audience demographic as possible, and by offering an experience that was bigger and better than anything that could be viewed at home on television – the blockbuster.

While the blockbuster has its origins from the 1950s, it is a form of film making especially synonymous with popular Hollywood production from the 1980s onwards. Blockbusters can be defined by their economics; typically the blockbuster is expensive to make, much of its budget being lavished on the latest spectacular special effects technology that make the film essential viewing on the big screen. A lot of money is also spent on stars' salaries. A big star name is essential to the success of the blockbuster. Blockbuster films are also usually surrounded by substantial amounts of promotion and advertising. Sometimes a blockbuster film's budget for advertising can be as great as the initial production budget. The film is also often 'pre-sold' to audiences, meaning that it might be based on a best-selling novel, or be a sequel to an earlier film, or a remake, or draw upon concepts that are already very familiar to audiences. Blockbusters are also typically conservative in their narratives and ideologies in order to appeal to as broad an audience as possible. They are usually released across the country in cinema theatres at the same time, often over the same weekend, in order to secure 'saturation' and ensure maximum audience awareness and accessibility. Typically, blockbuster films are also associated with a number of merchandising 'spin-offs', such as soundtrack CDs, toys and clothes, books, computer games, fast-food tie-ins, and any number of other items across a variety of peripheral media formats. However, despite the large amount of money and effort invested into the blockbuster, the films are not always guaranteed financial

success, and many of the above strategies are also ways of trying to minimise risk and recoup any box office losses.

Popular feature length animation film contains many of the distinguishing features of the Hollywood blockbuster listed above. Like live action blockbusters, feature length animation films are also expensive to make. This is partly because of the length of time that a project can be in production – normally several years – but high production costs are also linked to the volume of personnel involved in animated filmmaking. There can be hundreds of personnel involved in a feature length animation project, with many animators often working in different teams on different characters or sections, not to mention story-boarders, those involved in software development, layout, editing, and any number of other fields. Substantial amounts of money are also spent on the development of special effects and new animation technologies. Quite often these are developed especially for a particular project. For the making of Disney's *Tarzan* (1999) for example, animators developed a new computer technique called 'Deep Canvas' in order to facilitate the speedy action of Tarzan swinging through the trees. Stars' salaries also form a significant part of a feature length animation's overall spend. Star names are still important to the feature length animation – in the form of the celebrity voice – and star salaries are still high, even though, arguably, the stars themselves are not actually 'present' on the screen.[3] Feature length animation films also set aside substantial funds for promotion and advertising costs, and this might easily form a significant part of a film's budget. Popular feature length animation film functions almost always as a pre-sold concept. As argued in Chapter One of this thesis, there are certain audience expectations

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[3] It is rumoured that Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz commanded large salaries for their roles in *Shrek 2*. Some sources say as much as $10 million each, with an additional $5 million bonus due to the film's enormous success (Susan Wloszczyna, USA Today online).

associated with the feature length animation film: a simple, often morally driven, narrative, clearly coded good and evil characters, songs, visually stunning set pieces, for example. Although there may be some challenges to this basic format – such as the examples discussed from the DreamWorks studio - audiences generally know what to expect when they watch a 'Disney' feature animation. Like the live action blockbuster, popular feature length animation depends heavily on merchandising tie-ins and other media spin-offs. However, since children and young people are frequently the target audience for popular animation releases, there are likely to be substantially more spin-offs and tie-ins associated with feature length animation blockbusters. However, also like the live action blockbuster, there are no guarantees of box office success. Despite having followed the blockbuster 'formula' outlined above, it is still possible for popular feature length animation films to fail to be financially successful. The popular feature length animation film fits into the categorisation of the Hollywood blockbuster offered by King and other writers, but the form remains frequently overlooked in discussions of the blockbuster.[4] This oversight is typical of the neglect that the genre has suffered in academic discussions.

During the mid to late 1990s the precise form of the blockbuster began to change. All of the above features and characteristics remained the same, but the blockbuster took on a more culturally prominent position, and became an 'event' movie. According to King, the 'event' movie is the most economically desirable version of the blockbuster. 'An event movie is one that gains prominence in the wider culture, beyond the cinema screen; one that everyone seems to be talking about, that is almost impossible to avoid' (52). King's preferred example is *Star Wars: Episode One – The Phantom*

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[4] However, King at least does include *Toy Story* within his discussion of the blockbuster, conceding that the form does deserve to be included within debates about this dominant film form (50).

Menace (1999), that he describes as 'penetrating into every crevice of popular culture' (52). The event movie, then, is blockbustering taken to the extreme, where budgets are even higher, special effects are ever more stunning, and advertising and promotion are especially saturating. Event movies can be described as 'tent pole pictures', making enough money to be able to 'prop up' any studio's losses incurred through its other ventures (53). Arguably, a number of examples of recent popular feature length animation film could be categorised as 'event' movies. The popular feature length animation films *Shrek* (2001) and *Shrek 2* (2004) have proved to be financially successful for the DreamWorks studio, and are the studio's only real successes in the popular feature length animation format. The release of each film has been surrounded by a substantial amount of media interest and hype, each of the films becoming the 'must-see' events of the year. It is also the case that the substantial financial successes of these two films may have helped to 'prop up' other DreamWorks projects.

Towards an Industrial Analysis of the Celebrity Voice

This section will develop ideas towards a 'theory' of the celebrity voice that continues the above ideas and locates the celebrity voice technique as an important aspect of the popular feature length animation industry. The following section is divided into sub-sections that examine how the celebrity voice operates within the production, distribution, and exhibition processes of the feature length animation film. The section is further subdivided within these categories in order to highlight and explore specific issues relating to the celebrity voice technique. The overall aim of this part of the chapter is to stress the importance of the celebrity voice to the feature length animation film, to draw attention to some of the particular processes attached to the

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technique, and to gesture towards a 'theory' of the celebrity voice. The topics of production, distribution, and exhibition are vast, and it is not the intention of this thesis to examine fully how the popular feature length animation film operates within each of these processes. Rather, the thesis intends to explore the more precise roles and functions of the celebrity voice within them.

Production

> The right choice of actors during casting, combined with a great performance during the recording, are two of the most critical steps in the production process. Since the voice track serves as a guideline and source of inspiration for the animators, if it's weak, not even the best animators can produce good performances. *The animation, timing and overall success of the project, therefore, hinge on the quality of the voice track*[5]

> If an animation film were a sky-scraper, the voices would be the steel girders, the very first things they get done. They build everything on the sound of the voice.[6]

King (2002) describes the production process within Hollywood filmmaking as 'anything to do with the activity of actually making films' (6). Previously held to be the preoccupation of industry personnel on the one hand, or fan-based literature on the other, exploring and accounting for what goes on 'behind the scenes' of a film has been a recent departure within film theory. Current perspectives within film studies claim that a film should not – indeed, cannot - be divorced from the conditions of its production, which ultimately impact upon the final finished text. For animation however, the precise artistic and creative processes that result in producing the animated film have had a more consistent and historical critical interest. Wells (2002) devotes a considerable section of his research to the animation 'process' (15-30), for

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[5] Winder and Dowlatabadi, 'Producing Animation: the Voice Track', accessed from 'Animation World Magazine', online extract, November 11th 2001. (My emphasis).
[6] John Lithgow discussing the production process for the celebrity voice in an interview for *Film Review* (#607, July 2001, p47).

example, and in general, discussions around animated film are less rarely divorced from production-based anecdotes. The following sub-section of this chapter focuses on the production aesthetics relating to the celebrity voice within popular feature length animation filmmaking. Some of the issues to be explored emerge from the Mike Myers and *Shrek* anecdote that shapes the overall concerns of this thesis. The theory of the celebrity voice in production offered here is driven by information sourced from magazine interviews and newspaper articles, journals, and electronic resources, including the internet. The aim is to generate an original theory of film production relating to the celebrity voice, and the processes that shape its position within the popular feature length animation film.[7]

The quotations given at the start of this section sum up the overall importance, and dominant role of the celebrity voice within a popular feature length animation project. Both of the quotations – one from the perspective of a producer, and one from a 'celebrity voice' himself[8] - suggest that over and above everything else that is produced for a popular feature length animation project, it is the voice - specifically the celebrity voice - that is most crucial to the success of the other elements of the film's production. From this perspective, the celebrity voice possesses a high status of importance, and functions as the production glue that cements an entire project together. The following sections establish the validity of this claim, by examining some specific processes within the production of the celebrity voice track for popular feature length animation film.

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[7] If further work was to be pursued in this line of enquiry, it might be useful and beneficial to arrange to interview key production personnel, such as casting directors, voice coaches, and voice directors, for example, in order to ascertain the accuracy of some of the issues to be developed here.
[8] John Lithgow provided the voice of Lord Farquad in DreamWorks' *Shrek* films.

1. Casting: Hiring the Celebrity Voice

The first of the two quotations above states that the first most crucial stage for the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film production is casting the *right* celebrity voices for a project. In a Channel 4 television programme, John Lasseter, the director of the two *Toy Story* films, claims that in popular feature length animation celebrity voices are cast on their vocal merits, not on who they are. In an interview with Andi Peters he maintains, 'We don't hire voices for how big a star they are. We hire voices for how good an actor they are, and how their voice fits'. This is an interesting comment, and at least three key issues emerge from it that help shape this discussion around casting and the celebrity voice. Firstly, although Lasseter claims that stars are not hired just because they are 'big', 'high profile' or household names, it certainly cannot be a bad thing for a popular feature length animation film to be able to draw upon the reputation and impact of a well-known Hollywood actor. The *Toy Story* films themselves may not have been able to boast such success if Tom Hanks was not cast as Woody the Cowboy.

However, Lasseter does proceed to qualify and defend this perspective by adding a second important issue: the Hollywood actors who are cast as celebrity voices for feature length animation film must be *good* actors. This seems to bring an issue of credibility to the discussion. It is not enough for the celebrity to just *be* a celebrity – they must be able to act, too.[9]

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[9] In fact, what Lasseter fails to explain is that the Hollywood actor cast as a celebrity voice for a popular feature length animation film must actually be a good *voice actor* - which is surely something quite different.

Thirdly, Lasseter explains that in order for a Hollywood actor to be cast as a celebrity voice, their voice needs to 'fit' into the overall project. This is a serious consideration for producers of the celebrity voice. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, all voices have different 'qualities'. It is important to the overall balance of the popular feature length animation film's voice track that celebrity voices are sufficiently *different* in their qualities so as to stand out from each other, and also be simultaneously *complimentary*, so that a voice track 'hears' well. Sergi (1999), in his discussion about the relationship between actors, their voices, and the production personnel responsible for producing them, comments specifically on the voice track and casting decisions behind the *Toy Story* films. It is important, writes Sergi, that each celebrity voice occupies its own 'frequency range' (134). It is a practical issue of clarity that celebrity voices should be distinguishable from each other. 'All the key voices in *Toy Story* ... were cast for their aural characteristics so that they could occupy different frequency areas in the soundtrack and complement each other' (134). Sergi particularly draws attention to the casting of the central figures of Hanks and Tim Allen (Buzz Lightyear), since their voices are heard to occupy very different frequency levels within the voice track.[10]

Not only must important pre-production decisions be made about *who* should be cast as a celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film, it is also critical *how* they sound.[11] The balance achieved between these two elements is presumably responsible for the success or failure of the celebrity voice, and considering its overall

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[10] For further comment and discussion on *Toy Story*, the casting of Hanks and Allen, and a discussion around voice and masculinity, see chapter 5.

[11] This thesis argues that the relationship between who you are as a Hollywood actor, and how you sound, is one especially pertinent to female actors. Chapter 6 contextualises this argument within feminist debates around gender identity, and discusses this issue at greater length.

importance to the project as a whole as the opening quotations suggested, the success of the film itself.

2. Voice in the Soundtrack: Effortless or Manufactured?

The means by which the voice is produced for a film's soundtrack is often overlooked as an aspect of film production.[12] The voice is persistently perceived as an 'effortless' element of the soundtrack, as something that requires little effort from the performer, and as something that is not manufactured or 'made up' in the way that the face or body is understood to be prone to manipulations and change (Branston: 1995, 38). However, this thesis argues that such a position, especially with regard to the celebrity voice, cannot be accurate. The celebrity voice is subject to manufacture and manipulation in the same ways as the image or other visual elements, through certain specific editing and mixing processes. To strengthen this aspect of the argument, the following sections identify a number of production processes specifically relating to how the production of the celebrity voice track is managed for popular feature length animation.

a) (Re-) Recording the Voice Track

As the Mike Myers and *Shrek* anecdote in the Introduction of this thesis demonstrated, the celebrity voice track for popular feature length animation film is subjected to a number of recording and re-recording processes. In the case of Myers, his celebrity voice role underwent a significant amount of re-recording at a *post-production* stage, which would seem to be the exception, rather than the rule. Under more typical circumstances, the celebrity voice is recorded *before* any significant

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[12] Sergi's essay 'Actors and the sound gang' (1999) is a rare example of a consideration of the processes inside and outside an actor's control, with regard to the ways that their voice might be 'handled' at the level of film and soundtrack production.

artwork has been generated.[13] Zimmerman, interviewed for the on-line *Animation World Magazine* confirms that the animation 'comes second' to the voice track, and animators routinely 'animate to the dialogue track'.[14]

Another unusual production process stipulates that celebrities rehearse and record their voice parts in isolation, usually separate from their celebrity voice co-stars, with other personnel 'standing in' for the missing voice parts. Producing the celebrity voice track is not like recording a radio play, where all the voice actors are present around the microphones at the same time.[15] When recording her voice part for *Shrek*, Cameron Diaz was surprised at this method of recording. During an interview she explained how the producers

> … told me that Mike Myers and Eddie Murphy were in most of my scenes, so I expected to walk into the room and find them both there and do lines together. Instead, I got storyboards and a pointer stick running across dialogue on the bottom. I thought, 'Okay, this is different' …[16]

Depending on their work schedule, some members of the celebrity voice cast may even be at some physical distance from where the rest of production is taking place, and it is not unheard of for celebrities to rehearse their voice track over the telephone.

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[13] This strikes me as being an unusual process, especially since in the cartoon short industry it is much more common for voices to be added at post-production. Because of this production process, it is possible to talk about cartoon voices being 'voice-overs'. If the production practice of recording celebrity voices *first* is accurate, the same cannot therefore be said of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film, which evidently cannot be accurately described as a voice-over. For further discussion around the definitions of cinematic techniques for using the voice – including the voice-over, see chapter 3.

[14] www.awn.com

[15] Recording the celebrity voice track individually and in isolation would seem to be the industry's preferred method. Some celebrities, like Diaz above, have expressed their surprise at this approach. However, there are instances where celebrities have worked and recorded together. For example, Billy Crystal and John Goodman recorded their parts for *Monsters Inc.* simultaneously, and the result is believed to be a greater level of interaction and response.

[16] From a set of production notes, accessed via DreamWorks' official fansite for *Shrek*. (. Accessed 23/05/02).

The process of recording the celebrity voice for popular feature length animation is a lengthy one. Celebrities are often required to produce the same phrase over and over with different inflections, different stress patterns, and different accents even, until the production team are satisfied with the effect. Tom Hanks, interviewed in 'The Making of *Toy Story*' expresses his surprise that he was asked to deliver lengthy experiments with articulations of the word 'no', using every possible level of emotional inflection. Other celebrities have commented on the work involved in producing voice tracks, in terms of the length of time it takes to complete - several years, in most cases - and the intensity of the vocal work required. This is interesting, because doing voice work has been denigrated as something easy and 'natural'. Now however, celebrities are keen to point out the 'labour' required in doing voice work, and this perspective can be linked to academic approaches to the 'work' of star performance. King (1986) and McDonald (2000) both focus on what actors 'do', and from a Marxist perspective understand it as 'work' or labour. McDonald writes that since Dyer's approach to the study of stars, the majority of work in star studies has been preoccupied with what stars ideologically 'mean' or 'stand for', rather than what they actually 'do' on screen. Written work on star studies has tended to focus on the meaning of stars without considering how that meaning is produced: the focus has been on consumption rather than production. King also points this out, and writes that understanding stars as engaged in an occupation challenges received wisdom that situates stars as being above and beyond these production process, and reads them instead as being somehow magically 'created' by popular enthusiasm (155). Today's preference for reading Hollywood as a business and film making as an economic practice is reassessed by McDonald, who attempts to redress this imbalance towards the film star by explaining stardom as a manufactured aspect of the Hollywood

business and situating it within a production context (2). McDonald considers stars as part of the economy of Hollywood and understands them as a form of capital, forming part of the labour force and functioning at various times within production, distribution, and exhibition processes (5). Drawing upon Staiger's borrowing of the Marxist concept of the 'mode of production', McDonald argues that stars fit into Hollywood's hierarchy of capitalist production through a very specific role, that of 'performance specialists' (9). McDonald includes the following activities as key to a star's work: script reading and the learning of lines, rehearsals, shooting scenes on location and/or in the studio, post-production processes including dubbing and re-recording, promotion, interviews, appearances. He concludes that 'these [tasks] are the specialist responsibility of the star in the division of labour' (10). Certainly, these debates help us to understand stars in terms of the work involved in their performance, but this has not included the idea that using the voice is a particular site of actor's labour. This is strange given the fact that a substantial amount of actors' training focuses on the voice, in terms of being able to use their voice appropriately, the learning of accurate accents, and so on. There is an under-researched area of voice coaching and voice training that argues that voice work is an important part of actor training, and that celebrity voice work should be understood as labour.

Despite claims to the contrary, and despite the above efforts to re-claim some value and worth for the celebrity voice source, the production processes of recording and re-recording, however, do remove the performer's autonomy, since the actor becomes subject to strict direction and specific guidance.[17] Once the voice track is recorded it

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[17] Mike Myers manages to put a more positive 'spin' on this aspect of the production process, and suggests that animation is by definition a 'collaborative process', and that rather than feeling a sense of loss of autonomy when his voice is manipulated post-production, he feels that it is a good thing 'to have the director ask for a small inflection in [my] voice, and then, when the scene is drawn, you see

is mixed and edited so that the celebrities are not responsible for the ultimate result. Barker (2003) notes the example of an actor working on the feature length animation *Ice Age* (2002), who was asked by the producers to leave a moment of silence in his voice work. Through the work of sound editors and mixers, the featureless silent gap becomes 'a moment pregnant with emotion' as the animated character 'sheds a tear and seems to choke on his words' (21). The actor concerned is given credit for this moment of high emotion and praised for his ability to convey an intensity of feeling through the voice.[18]

b) 'Acting the Voice', and Video-Taping

During the process of recording and re-recording the celebrity voice track, it is inevitable that celebrities physically 'act out' their lines whilst in the recording booth. While film theory may have succeeded in divorcing the performance paradigm of the voice from that of the body, the face, and other features of physical performance, many celebrity voice sources have commented on the experience of 'acting out' their lines physically, as well as vocally, suggesting that the body and the voice are inseparable elements of performance.[19] This process – where celebrity voice actors 'act out' their voices - is routinely video-taped and retained as a reference source for animators, ostensibly to enable future accurate animations of mouth, lip, and jaw positions, but this process often goes much further. John Lithgow remembers the fun that he had 'acting out' his voice role as Lord Farquaad in *Shrek*, but he also recounts

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how that slight change brings out the emotion' (accessed via the DreamWorks SKG Fansite for *Shrek*, at   . Accessed 23/05/02).

[18] There is nothing really new about this though, since most film acting work is manipulated/edited and arguably film stars have for a long time been taking the credit for editing processes.

[19] For further discussion about the voice as a performance paradigm see chapter 3.

how producers 'captured on video all the faces I pulled and the way I moved.'[20] This videotaping process results in a 'visualisation' of the voice.

c) Celebrity, the Body, and the Voice as Creative Inspiration

Only after the voice work has been rehearsed and the sessions recorded does artwork begin for popular feature length animation film. Animators view the videotapes made during the recording of the celebrity voice roles, and routinely incorporate the physical gestures and facial expressions of the celebrities into the animations. This process explains the frequent observations that viewers can 'see' the celebrity behind the voice in the actual animation. Once this process is understood, the surprise and amazement of reviewers who comment on 'the canny voice casting that so exactly matches the character design' seems redundant.[21] Both Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks recall seeing themselves in small one-off pre-animations – very short animated scenes with their voices added – which were used by the producers of the films to persuade them to take on the part. As part of the official *Anastasia* website, Ryan remembers only being persuaded to take on the role because she was so impressed by the union between her voice and the character of Anastasia.[22] Similarly, in 'The Making of *Toy Story*' that accompanies the video release of the film, Tom Hanks recalls how sound editors added a piece of dialogue from one of his earlier films onto an animation of Woody so that Hanks could get a feel for the project. In an interview for *Film Review* Cameron Diaz describes her surprise at seeing drawings of Princess Fiona for the first time. 'They created this character that looks nothing like me but has this essence that is me' she says, 'I can see it in the eyes, the gestures and the movement'.[23] In a

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[20] Quoted in an interview for *Film Review*, #607, July 2001, 44-49.
[21] Kim Newman reviewing *Toy Story 2* in *Sight and Sound* (March 2000, volume 10, issue 3), 57.
[22]   . Accessed 5/2/03.
[23] *Film Review* (#607, July 2001, 44-49), 49.

similar vein in an interview for *The Guardian* newspaper, Vicky Jenson one of the directors of *Shrek* draws attention to the similarities between animated character and celebrity voice source. 'I mean look at Donkey' she says, 'who doesn't look anything like Eddie, and you think you can see Eddie Murphy in there'.[24] The UK television advert for DreamWorks' *Shark Tale* that uses a split screen device featuring shots of the celebrities recording their voice parts along side the corresponding animated footage from the film leaves no doubt that physical similarities are incorporated into the animations, and that audiences are intended to recognise the celebrities behind the voices.[25]

This section has demonstrated that it is useful to analyse the celebrity voice from a production perspective. When the processes that control and constrain the celebrity voice are identified and explored it becomes clear that while the celebrity voice is a central and very key element of the production of a popular feature length animation film, the processes that surround it are not unique or special to the genre. The celebrity voice is exposed to many of the practices of manipulation and editing that are common throughout filmmaking, and although some of the procedures may be surprising and unexpected – such as celebrities recording voice parts alone – these are just some of the necessary practical aspects of producing the celebrity voice.

Distribution

The process of distributing a film depends on a variety of different networks and key players. In this section the thesis intends to focus on two very precise elements of the

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[24] Taken from www.guardian.co.uk, June 29, 2001.
[25] Similarly, a newspaper journalist observes of the film *Antz* that, 'The facial mannerisms [of the animated characters] are clearly borrowed from the famous voices' (Phil Raby, *Bath Chronicle*, 11 November, 1998).

distribution process – firstly how popular feature length animation films are promoted and advertised, through the use of publicity posters, and secondly, the role of the celebrity voice in a related topic – on-screen accreditation systems. With its newly found blockbuster status, the processes of distribution have become integral to the popular feature length animation film, and the celebrity voice plays a central role in the marketing, advertising and publicity of these films.

1. 'Unprecedented Star Billing[26]: Film Publicity Posters and the Celebrity Voice

This section will begin by exploring the typical content of live action film posters and will draw upon the work of Wyatt (1994) and his exploration of the film poster within the notion of 'high concept' filmmaking. By establishing the content of live-action publicity posters in this way, this section intends to show how posters for popular feature length animation films may differ, and also expose the role and function of the celebrity voice to these printed publicity forms. While the popular feature length animation film may not strictly fit into Wyatt's notion of 'high concept' in the sense that the films are reducible to a single image, (although perhaps many of them can be condensed into a single phrase – Spielberg's famous 'twenty-five words or less') the originality of his research is useful here for drawing attention to and examining the content of film publicity posters.

Wyatt reproduces a number of film posters in his chapter on the marketing of high-concept film as a means of demonstrating how Hollywood has created particular narrative iconographies in order to sell particular films.[27] According to Wyatt, 'high

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[26] Peter Bradshaw, *Shrek* film review, Guardian Unlimited, Jun 29, 2001, at www.filmunlimited.co.uk.
[27] Wyatt's preoccupation is almost exclusively with films from the 1970s and 1980s and some of his case studies include *Jaws* (1975), *Nashville* (1975), *Midnight Express* (1978), *Endless Love* (1981), *American Gigolo* (1980), and *E.T* (1982).

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concept' filmmaking is so successful because it draws upon 'slick, arresting images' that especially draw the attention of the viewer (109). These images are also frequently reproduced in the marketing tools for the film, especially print advertising forms such as the film poster, thus generating and maintaining audience awareness through a coherence of image and style. According to Wyatt, important elements of the film poster include the creation of an instantly recognisable narrative image, such as the pointed nose and jagged teeth of the huge shark in contrast with the vulnerability of the naked female swimmer on the poster for *Jaws* (114). According to his discussion of 'high-concept' filmmaking, the ability of a film to be reducible to a single image is key.

However, there are other elements frequently present in film posters – not necessarily those classifiable as being 'high-concept'. These might include a 'strap-line' - a very short piece of copy - or the inclusion of reviewers' sound-bites, plus studio names, director/producer information, as well as information about opening dates and show times. The position of star billing, if it occurs at all, can take a number of different forms. Some posters may actually lists the names of the stars involved in the project, but others such as the one for *American Gigolo* for instance, do not need to if they can show a picture of the actor who is instantly recognisable, or who has a particularly identifiable star image – Richard Gere, in this example.

From this evidence it would be fair to argue that the popular feature length animation film has quite a different relationship to the film advertising poster than live-action films. The film poster for *Shrek* for example, differs considerably in content from most of the live action film posters discussed by Wyatt. The poster that appeared in

the UK to promote *Shrek* consisted of a blue background and bold white lettering. Down the left-hand side of the poster appeared small thumbnail pictures of the four main characters from the film: Shrek himself, Donkey, Princess Fiona, and Lord Farquaad. Directly opposite the relevant picture, again in bold white lettering were listed the names of the performers supplying the voices of the animated characters: MYERS, MURPHY, DIAZ, LITHGOW. The *Shrek* logo appeared at the bottom of the poster, but no further information about the film was included. The centrality of the celebrities to this publicity process are quite unique in the *Shrek* example, and in this particular instance the poster exploits the presence of the celebrity voice. This example demonstrates that with the publicity for *Shrek*, the celebrity voice has become so centralised to the feature length animation marketing process that the celebrities gain, as Bradshaw (2001) has observed, an 'unprecedented star billing', on a level not seen before in popular feature length animation, but also one rarely witnessed in publicity for live-action film either.

Historically though, this has not always been the case. Certainly, the celebrity voice has not always been so central to the popular feature length animation film's marketing campaign. A useful example with which to compare *Shrek's* (over-) dependence on the celebrity names attached to the project, is *The Jungle Book* – the first feature length animation film to showcase the celebrity voice.[28] Although the celebrity voices were thought to be quite key to the success of this film, they are hardly recognised as such in the film's publicity poster which only mentions the celebrities' names in 'vanishingly small type' at the bottom of the poster.[29] This

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[28] See Chapter 1 for a discussion around *The Jungle Book's* status within the history of the celebrity voice technique in popular feature length animation filmmaking.

[29] Peter Bradshaw's on-line review of *Shrek* at www.guardianunlimited.co.uk.

provides a nice comparison with the poster of *Shrek* and further works to cements the importance of the celebrity voice to today's feature length animation films.

There is still some debate about the importance of the star name to popular feature length animation projects. As part of his argument about the instability of star images as guarantees of financial success, McDonald (2000) claims that 'Disney's popular animated features … may have used the voices of some stars, but it is questionable whether this involvement represented any actual appearance by a star, and certainly the names of stars were not used to sell these films' (101-102). Although he might be right for some of Disney's initial renaissance films, this thesis would argue that there is a definite case for the 'presence' of stars through vocal performance, and would maintain that *Toy Story 2* in particular was (pre-) sold on the strength of Hanks' and Allen's names.

2. On-Screen Accreditation Systems and the Celebrity Voice

My research suggests that Disney's *Toy Story 2* was the first feature length animation to give star billing to the celebrities supplying the voices. By this, it is meant that the names of the celebrities – Tom Hanks and Tim Allen – are considered to be so important to the film and its success that they *precede* the title of the film.[30] Such a position is an extremely significant place for stars' names to appear in film advertising and promotion, and credit sequences.

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[30] It is possible to construct an argument in relation to *Toy Story* as well, that suggests that although in this film the celebrities' names are not mentioned in the opening credits sequence, Tom Hanks' voice is heard very early in this sequence, when Woody's pull-string is activated during Andy's game. Hanks is heard to say 'Reach for the skies!', and arguably his voice could be said to function as a 'credit' in itself.

The exact positioning of stars' names in relation to the title of a film, the names of other stars, other information included in film credits, and the significance of these elements has a long history that forms part of the history of the development of the star system. Altman (1992) suggests that in 1908 'whereas vaudeville thrived on name acts, contractually guaranteed billing, and star system salary scales, film never even so much as alluded to the names of its actors, writers, or technical personnel' (115). The act of naming performers, according to McDonald (2000), was one of the final elements that ultimately secured the star system and the solidification of stars' identities in the public mind. DeCordova (2001) also suggests that the circulation of a star discourse and public knowledge of a star's identity marks the arrival of the star system proper. Most accounts of the birth of the star system argue that the Florence Lawrence and Carl Laemmle story marks the first incident of star naming and promotion. However, McDonald disputes this by providing evidence of a form of accreditation from as early as 1909 (30). Altman also takes a different stance, arguing that it was the introduction of the 'Cameraphone' – a camera that permitted clearer close-ups, enabling audiences to better recognise and identify stars - that brought about the beginning of the star system (116). Whichever event is responsible for the emergence of the Hollywood star system, the naming of stars became a commonplace practice, and worked to individualise performers through promotion in print media and theatre lobby displays. According to McDonald, on-screen accreditation systems began in May 1911 (31). Accreditation became important, in terms of how a particular star was billed – as sole star, or as co-star – and the size of the font of their credit in relation to other filmic information conveyed was also important, as was the overall position of the credit, whether it appeared at the beginning or the end of the film. Clark (1995) presents evidence that accreditation was taken so seriously by

some actors that they striked or took legal action when not receiving their desired or contracted accreditation. McDonald gives an example of how James Cagney was particularly dissatisfied when a co-star's name appeared above his own, claiming that this was in breach of the terms of his contract with Warner Bros. (68).

There are an established set of rules about the role and function of cast lists in credit sequences. 'Protagonist, secondary protagonist, opponents, and other major characters will be denoted by the order, size and time onscreen of various actors' names' (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson: 2002, 25). But naming stars is only one requirement of credit sequences within the classical Hollywood cinema model. Credit sequences usually have several specific tasks to accomplish, especially in terms of how they operate in relation to the subsequent narrative. Credits sequences are often used to initiate the narrative and frequently carry a substantial amount of information, including music and perhaps recurring musical motifs, the film title (which often carries a great deal of significance in itself), specific backgrounds or other relevant images from the film, as well as the cast listing. All of this renders the opening credits sequence 'highly self-conscious, explicitly addressed to the audience' (26).

The position of a star's name in relation to other filmic information conveyed in on-screen credits therefore becomes crucial. However, feature length animation has a history of *not* crediting those involved in a project. *Toy Story 2* stands as a unique example because it promotes the celebrities' association with the project by showcasing the names of Hanks and Allen ahead of the film's title.

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Exhibition

'Exhibition' refers to a variety of conditions that determine and influence how a film might be viewed and consumed by an audience. This section explores some of the exhibition effects generated by the use of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation. It will question the role and function of the celebrity voice at this level, and raise a series of discussions linked to how the celebrity voice might be received by audiences.

1. Reputation and Prestige

The issue of reputation and prestige was touched upon in the Introduction to this thesis, and also in Chapter One, but receives a more detailed discussion here. Feature length animation - and the animated form more generally - is a genre that has been consistently dismissed as unworthy of serious critical attention. Like film comedy, the action genre, and other seemingly less valuable elements of Hollywood film production, animation has suffered a distinct level of academic neglect. While comedy has tended to be overlooked on the grounds that it somehow defies analysis, popular forms of animation have been persistently disregarded for academic attention because of their status as children's entertainment forms.

However, despite this association with children's entertainment, American animated forms - especially the cartoon and feature length animation – have quite substantial adult fan bases, and much material addressing these forms has emerged from these non-academic arenas. The popular cartoon, the animated short, and feature length

animation forms then, are frequently dismissed as being 'light weight' genres, and have only recently begun to be explored with academic analysis.[31]

The technique of the celebrity voice functions as a way to overcome some of these problems of credibility. The associations invoked by the involvement of big celebrity names allows the feature length animated form to be taken more seriously – by the film industry as well as by audiences - as a 'legitimate' example of popular cinema. It also permits the form to bear a fairer comparison with live action films. This aspect of the function of the celebrity voice as a legitimising device has a much deeper application in terms of the wider cultural significance of feature length animation. The ability of an animated film such as *Shark Tale* for example, to attract the involvement of culturally significant figures such as the actor Robert de Niro and the director Martin Scorsese generates a significant amount of cultural kudos and prestige for the project.[32]

2. 'Cross-Over' Audience Appeal

Cross-over movies are the 'buzz-word' of contemporary Hollywood and function to appeal to as broad an audience demographic as possible. Where films may have been specifically targeted at either child or adult audiences, a 'cross-over' film is one that is intended to hold appeal for both adults and children. Although it shares a close relationship with the 'family film' – a film form designed specifically for family entertainment - the cross-over film is one that is ostensibly aimed at either adults or

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[31] Some things are beginning to change, in terms of the neglect previously afforded to animated forms, and not just in its academic reception. There are an increasing number of animated film festivals, for example, and feature length animation has finally secured official industry recognition in the form of its own category at the Academy Awards.

[32] It may be the case that this cultural kudos actually works both ways, raising the public profiles of those figures involve in popular feature length animation.

children, but carries additional, often unintentional appeal for the other demographic too.

Kramer (1998) argues that since the 1970s Hollywood blockbusters have revealed an intense preoccupation with 'family issues': they have often explored problematic family dynamics.[33] Kramer suggests that this focus on the family is one of Hollywood's strategies for appealing to a wider audience – 'beyond the core audience of teenagers and young adults' – leading him to the conclusion that 'many of today's action-adventure movies are, in fact, family films' (294). While one of the main aims of the Hollywood blockbuster has always been to generate mass appeal, Kramer argues that contemporary Hollywood is aiming many of its films at this perceived audience.

However, I would argue that film events from recent years such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy[34] and the *Harry Potter* series of films[35] would seem to fit better into the category of 'cross-over' movie, than Kramer's concept of the family movie. The *Harry Potter* films, for instance, are based on the popular children's books by J.K. Rowling, but both the books and the subsequent films have attracted a substantial adult fan-base, meaning that the *Harry Potter* phenomenon has 'crossed-over', and now embraces both child and adult audiences.

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[33] Kramer's opening illustration is the dysfunctional family of *True Lies* (1994), and other films that he includes in this family-oriented category are *E.T* (1982), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Star Wars* (1977), and *The Lion King* (1994))

[34] *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003).

[35] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004))

Popular feature length animation achieves its cross-over appeal through a number of different techniques. While animation is ostensibly aimed at child audiences, popular feature length animation has attempted to attract adult audiences by emphasising the technological breakthroughs featured within a particular film, thus enticing older audiences to see the film in order to witness something special on the screen. Popular feature length animation film, especially since the 'renaissance' of the genre, has also paid particular attention to creating 'layers' of meaning in its narratives, so that although a story may be simple enough for children to enjoy, there are extra built-in dimensions of meaning to keep older audiences satisfied and engaged.

Popular feature length animation also achieves cross-over appeal by including elements that will be appreciated by older audiences. This might include in-jokes, or extra-textual references.[36] One example of this might be the types of toys featured in Disney's *Toy Story*. While Slinky, Mr. Potato Head, a can of monkeys, a bucket of soldiers, and 'Etch-a-Sketch' might still be played with by children today, they could be described as 'retro' toys – toys from around the time that today's adults were children. This stands as an example of how popular feature length animation films can target and incorporate adult audiences too.

This thesis argues that the celebrity voice is the greatest way that popular feature length animation achieves cross-over appeal and secures the sustained interest of older audiences. While most child audiences will have little interest in the fact that Will Smith is heard as one of the voices in *Shark Tale*, for example, for older audiences,

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[36] See chapter 1 for more discussion on a history of extra-textual referencing within Hollywood animation.

this celebrity voice casting sets off a series of associations that may add extra dimensions of meaning to the experience of watching the film.

3. Active Celebrity Identification: the Audience and the Celebrity Voice

This section argues that the relationship(s) between audiences and the celebrity voice is driven by the impact of audiences' abilities to actively identifying the celebrity behind the voice. Traditionally there has always been a difficult relationship between film studies and the audience. Within film studies, theories of spectatorship have been troubled by problems relating to 'the audience'. When the subject of 'the audience' arises in film studies, this has tended to mean a theorised audience, rather than the 'real' individual people making up the audience. Within film studies, the spectator has been traditionally conceptualised as 'an effect of discourse, a position, a hypothetical site of address of the filmic discourse', as opposed to a real-life person who may engage with a film in any number of ways (Creed: 1989, 133). This attitude towards the audience has been prevalent in many of film theory's dominant schools of thought. For example, McDonald (1999) has drawn attention to how the field of star studies has been shaped and ultimately curtailed by a reluctance to address real audiences. He writes, 'A severe limitation of all spectatorship theory is that it hypothesises the positioning of moviegoers, without researching if moviegoers occupy those positions' (190). This problem of engaging with the audience has also been of particular importance within feminist approaches to film criticism. Doane (1989) confirms that, 'I have never thought of the female spectator as synonymous with the woman sitting in front of the screen munching her popcorn ... The female spectator is a concept, not a person' (142).

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The issues surrounding how audiences watch films seems to have been overlooked within film studies, and this draws attention to a rather troubling division between film theory and cinema audiences where actual cinema audiences have proved to be uninteresting to the film theorist. However, film theory's attitude towards the audience is gradually beginning to change, especially as the self-limiting remit of film studies dissolves and broadens out to admit the perspectives of cultural studies that has always positioned a real-life audience much more centrally within its debates. Studies that engage with real audiences are now much more prevalent.

In terms of popular feature length animation the audience has persistently remained un(der)theorised. Aside from comments by Walt Disney about how he perceived his audience, and similar ones from Jeffrey Katzenberg and Jerry Beck used earlier in this thesis, the popular feature length animation audience has never been empirically researched beyond these basic observations about child/adult demographics. This condition has only very slightly been improved. In *Understanding Animation* Wells (1998) includes a short chapter on 'Animation and Audience' that includes some 'preliminary ideas' for how audiences of animation could be studied (222-243). Wells' particular interest is in the memories of adult audiences recounting watching Disney animated films as children. Using the returned questionnaires of a sample of 435 people Wells organises the responses into four useful frameworks for understanding how this audience sample had engaged with specific animated films. Under the headings of 'empathy and identification', 'fear and concern', 'treats and occasions', and 'codes of contentment', Wells makes a valuable start on understanding how audiences negotiate Disney animation. His research is complicated by the heavy undercurrent of nostalgia that circulates around many of the

participants' observations, but the chapter still stands as a breakthrough in the analysis of animation and its audiences.

Although it is beyond the scope of this current project to produce empirical audience research to investigate how audiences might actively engage and interact with the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation, there is some interesting work to undertake here. The use of the celebrity voice to generate the cross-over appeal to adult audiences discussed above, encourages a close relationship between audiences, the film, and the celebrity voice casting, and assumes an audience that is sufficiently invested in Hollywood and its products to be able to recognise how the celebrity voice is operating. Adult audiences watching popular feature length animation and hearing celebrity voices may engage in a 'spot the celebrity' practice, and try to identify the celebrity behind the voice. Such a practice encourages a 'cultural elitism' amongst informed audiences: the ability to be able to identify celebrities by their voices, and then appreciate all the layers of meaning generated by their star persona and associations, stands as evidence of how culturally informed an audience member may be.[37]

4. Transferrals and Transactions of Celebrity Associations

The above discussions suggest that the casting of a particular celebrity in a popular feature length animation film cannot be understood as a neutral process. This thesis

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[37] Radner (2001) introduces a useful terminology here when she talks about the 'cinephile', an audience member who possesses a 'shared Hollywood literacy' (29).

maintains throughout that the celebrity voice is responsible for setting in play a series of transferrals or transactions that relate directly to the persona of a given celebrity. The ideological 'meaning(s)' attached to a particular celebrity remain present in and are carried through their voices. For example, Byrne and McQuillan (1995) observe how significant is the voice casting of James Earl Jones as Mufasa in Disney's *The Lion King* for generating 'an uncanny chain of deferral' where numerous scenes draw on moments from *The Empire Strikes Back* (102). However, film theory seems to be remarkably ill-equipped for dealing with this phenomenon, and is unable to account for precisely how the voice can operate such transactions and transferrals of meaning. The next chapter of this thesis demonstrates how film theory has fallen short in its ability to be able to handle the voice in general, and the celebrity voice more specifically, and it is in this chapter that the case is made for the benefits of a phonetic approach to the celebrity voice.

Chapter Three

Analysing the Celebrity Voice: Film Theory and the Problem of Voice

The intention of this chapter is to locate the celebrity voice within a theoretical perspective. The overall aim of the chapter is to show that despite a significant historical relationship between film stars and their voices – specifically during the transition from silent to sound filmmaking – film theory has made little attempt to engage with or understand this relationship. By reconstructing the history of the relationship between film stars and their voices and reading it along side the theoretical perspectives that have emerged within film studies, I hope to be able to show that there is a noticeable discrepancy here, and that film theory is essentially ill equipped to deal with this important relationship. The chapter consists of two large sections. The first part of this chapter aims to consider how the voice has been addressed within film theory. Via a literature review of some key contributions within this field, this section will show that while the study of sound has been significantly marginalized within film theory, the voice itself, as an aspect of the film soundtrack, has routinely suffered from even more critical and theoretical neglect.

Film Theory: Sound versus Image

The image has always dominated film studies and film theory - one does after all go to *see* a film - and theoretical approaches to the study of sound are relatively recent. As an element of the soundtrack, the voice as it is used on film and experienced in the cinema seems to find a home amongst the campaign of work that argues for sound studies to be given as much credibility within film studies as the image. The problem with the voice as an aspect of the film soundtrack however, is that it tends to be subsumed within the soundtrack itself, and passes largely unnoticed in our cinematic

viewing experience. Lawrence (1991) has written that throughout film studies, 'the image is assumed to be the source of enchantment ... Sound ... seems to fade away – if it is mentioned at all' (2). The voice then, becomes ever more marginalized within film theory's approach to sound. The position adopted within this thesis, is not that the voice in film has gone totally unnoticed, but that a particularly obvious and significant element of the voice – film stars and their vocal performances – has gone unremarked. Some writers have begun to tentatively suggest avenues of research in this domain, but there have been significantly few attempts to understand the voice in terms of star image and performance. Below, I shall offer a review of work that addresses the voice, while attempting to negotiate space within it for my own thoughts on popular feature length animation and the celebrity voice. Subsequently, the chapter will move on to consider the relationship between voice and film star performance in more detail, before concluding the discussion with a consideration of the specific problems – both theoretical and practical – that face any attempt to analyse the voice in film.

Film and the Voice: 'Voice Studies'

In this section the chapter will consider how the voice has been addressed within film theory. Despite the marginalisation of sound, and the voice in particular, there have been some important contributions within what can be loosely termed 'voice studies'.

I intend to structure this discussion predominantly around the contributions of the French theorist Michel Chion, who probably more than any other writer, is responsible for putting 'voice studies' on the film theory map. Chion's influential book *La voix au cinema* was first published in 1982, but was not made available in

translation until 1999.[1] In her editor's note, Chion's translator, Claudia Gorbman, tries to prepare the reader for Chion's concept of the voice in cinema. His interest, she writes, 'is the voice – not as speech, not as song, but everything that's left afterward' (xi). Gorbman is right to try and introduce this concept early on, as Chion himself does in his early paragraphs. One of the fundamental problems with thinking about the voice on film is this difficulty of definition. The relationship between voice and speech is admittedly a close one, but the two are often difficult to separate. Chion says we often 'forget' the voice 'because we confuse it with speech', and that from the speech act 'we usually retain only the signification it bears, forgetting the medium of the voice itself' (1). It is Chion's aim, and also the intention of this thesis, to try to separate voice from speech, and focus not on *what* an actor says, but on *how* it is said. Chion's agenda is to explore 'the traits by which [the voice] defines a speaking person, and the timbres that colour it' (1). Although the terminology used to describe the idea is different, Chion's ideas are very similar to the phonetic approach being adopted in this thesis.

One method for addressing the use of the voice in film has been to examine how the voice is used as a narrative technique for cinematic story telling. Although the image tends to be the dominant means for communicating information within a film, as Chion remarks, Hollywood film is particularly 'voco-centric'; that is, it gives precedence to the human voice over other elements of the soundtrack, and as a means of communicating narrative questions (5). Kozloff (1995) has examined the role of the voice as a narrative voice-over, while Chion puts forward the idea of the voice being understood as an 'acousmetre', or as a bodiless voice. Kozloff's work is

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[1] Page numbers throughout this chapter refer to the 1999 edition of the book.

especially useful for the precise definition that she offers for the voice-over. Kozloff understands voice-over narration techniques within American fiction film as a technique that unites cinematic narrative with oral traditions of storytelling. What is particularly interesting for the purposes of this thesis is how voice-overs have been theorised as sites of pleasure for audiences hearing these voices. Doane (1986) has argued that listening to voice-overs and voices-off provides the auditory equivalence of voyeurism: 'the use of the voice in the cinema appeals to the spectator's desire to hear', rather than see (342). Psychoanalytic explanations for the pleasures to be gained from hearing voices are rooted in the infant's understanding of space in auditory terms, and the 'sonorous envelope' generated by the mother's voice during foetal development (342). Chion (1999) confirms that of all the senses, hearing is probably the earliest to occur (17). It becomes possible to argue that the hearing of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film adds an extra dimension of pleasure for audiences experiencing the voices of well-known performers. However, the celebrity voice as it is used in popular feature length animation film cannot in the strictest sense be defined as a voice-over. This is partly because of the production processes attached to the generating of the voice track, as revealed in the previous chapter, but also because the voice-over requires the voice to be free-floating, and unattached to an on-screen body. The celebrity voice is attached to a body, albeit an animated one, so that the celebrity voice is better understood in Chion's terms as an 'already visualised acousmetre', that is linked to a body, and is therefore more familiar, reassuring, and pleasurable that the somewhat unnerving experience of hearing the unattached voice-over.

The voice in star studies

This thesis maintains throughout that the celebrity voice technique as it has been used in popular feature length animation has been persistently neglected and overlooked within film theory, and that there are a number of reasons for this being the case. As has already been discussed, the celebrity voice's associations with the much-maligned film form of animation, and its problematic relationship to the image verses sound debate may partially account for these layers of neglect. However, this thesis puts forward the idea that the main reason that the celebrity voice has been so consistently neglected within film theory is because what is at stake in the celebrity voice directly challenges and problematises one of the structuring theories of film studies – stardom. The following section explores how film theory has negotiated the phenomenon of the Hollywood star and the concept of stardom, and shows how difficult it is to slot the celebrity voice into these debates.

History

This section aims to show that the voice has been examined within star studies from an historical perspective, and identifies the specificity of the relationship between film stars and their voices through recourse to the historical events that shaped the period of transition from silent to sound film making.[2] The historical perspective of this section identifies the human voice as a point of connection between two temporally distinct events within the history of film – the development of the studio star system,

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[2] The methodology here will not include accessing archives and historical sources myself, but rather by drawing upon the findings of a range of film historians, including the work of DeCordova, Eyman, Gomery, Crafton, and Williams, amongst others, this section will attempt to construct an original history that highlights the specific issues of sound, stardom, and the voice. Also, contrary to what it would suggest, the silent film was very rarely silent. There were a whole range of 'effects' that could be added during the exhibition of any particular film. Chion consequently observes that rather than being silent, early films were in fact 'dumb', in the sense that although silent film stars could be seen to mouth their lines, they could not be heard (19).

and the consolidation of the sound technologies that would permit synchronised speech to be heard on film.[3]

The coming of sound is a particular moment in film history that has proved to be especially interesting to researchers, and a significant body of work has emerged exploring this pivotal moment. It has become almost a mythologised element of film history, and is taken by many to mark the birth of film, as we now know it. The holy grail of early cinema technology was to achieve accurate synchronisation between image and sound. Getting film stars to 'speak', however, was not the primary aim of this quest. Synchronising apparatus were initially only intended to be used to play music, perhaps to reproduce singing voices, and to generate some sound effects. Permitting film stars to 'have a voice' was not deemed to be important. Harry Warner has been quoted as saying 'Who the hell wants to hear actors speak?'[4] The voice itself was perceived as only another sound effect that could be used occasionally. Initially, the quest for synchronised sound was used to perform music and singing, and then only in short formats. In fact, using the technology to reproduce speaking voices in a feature length format was not even anticipated.

Consequently, when early sound film did eventually find its voice the process was met with a lack of enthusiasm on a number of different levels. At best, it was perceived as a gimmick, a passing novelty, the 'sound fad' (Eyman, 116). At worst,

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[3] DeCordova identifies the year 1907 as marking the beginning of the Hollywood star system proper, while Eyman suggests that Hollywood finally experienced the full 'talkie revolution' considerably later, from 1926-1930. There was a strange 'in-between' stage in the history of the coming of sound, that featured 'part-talkies', but these eventually led to *The Jazz Singer* (1927), reputedly the first talking film, but which contained only a few minutes of synchronised speech. Various challenges to the status of this film exist, including Eyman's case for *The Lights of New York* (1928) as more deserving of the accolade of 'first all-talking movie' (175).

[4] Quoted in Eyman (70).

there was specific resistance. Critical reaction claimed that the synchronisations of the voice destroyed the fantasy of the silent image, rendering it too 'real', too ordinary, and too much like the theatrical experience from which film had always tried to distance itself. Many people thought that the stage was the only appropriate place for actors' voices to be heard. Silent film stars were not theatrically trained performers, and the tense relationship between film and theatre fuelled much of the early debate about talking films.[5] The issue of realism also dominated. 'Instead of making the movies more real, it makes them less real', wrote one journalist. 'The voice accentuates a fact that we sometimes forget – that movie characters are flat shadows on a wall'.[6] Sound was criticised for detracting from the image, and it was thought that poorer quality films were produced as a result of the focus on the challenge of reproducing sound.

The coming of sound and the acquisition of voice to early film stars had quite dramatic effects on the screen careers of some of these performers. It is part of the mythology of this period within film history that synchronised sound brought about the ruin of some stars' screen reputations, and the demise of the acting careers of those who were unable to successfully make the transition to the new talking films. Eyman demonstrates this perspective by rather dramatically over-stating the case: '… as a result [of the talkies] an art form was eliminated and hundreds of careers were extinguished. Major directors were ruined, great stars plummeted' (22).

There are several reasons why certain stars may have fallen out of favour at around the same time as synchronised speech became a central part of filmmaking. The most

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[5] DeCordova suggests that many of the early film stars were in fact stage actors who were 'moonlighting' anonymously in this form.

[6] Quoted in Eyman (170).

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commonly held belief is that some stars had especially 'bad' voices, in the sense that that were of poor quality, and were not sufficiently up to the job. Williams has suggested that 'The decline in the careers of certain stars of silent cinema … is said to have occurred because their voices 'recorded badly'' (134).

A second and related argument for wrecked acting careers, lays the blame at the feet of the rather basic recording equipment of the time, that may have struggled to reproduce certain types of voices. One perspective suggests that talking films were initially greeted unenthusiastically by audiences because the recording technology was primitive, and the results less than satisfactory in terms of verisimilitude. Some of the blame should also be attributed to the limits of what could actually be reproduced, and what could not, which had particular relevance to women's and children's voices whose higher rates of fundamental frequency were especially difficult for the early equipment to reproduce.

An alternative argument suggests that the demise of actors' careers may have had very little to do with their voices at all. Williams has suggested that there were probably very few actors whose voices could not be recorded successfully, and maintains that the real reasons that certain figures became less popular at this time was because of their associations with particular melodramatic performance styles which rapidly went out of fashion after the introduction of sound. In terms of this argument, Williams concludes that it was mostly male actors who suffered from this prejudice, particularly those who were associated with a somewhat 'feminised' melodramatic style of acting. 'For them', Williams surmises, 'perhaps *no* voice would have 'recorded well'' (134). One example of such an instance is the actor John Gilbert (1899-1936), whose

'breathy, slightly nasal', although 'perfectly pleasant light baritone' was not enough to save his acting career (Eyman, 300/301). Gilbert was typically cast in the role of the leading man in his films, and was particularly well-known for starring opposite Greta Garbo, with whom he had tremendous on-screen chemistry. When Gilbert moved into sound films it was thought that his voice did not match his screen image, and he was unable to successfully make the transition to talking films. This story frequently constructs Gilbert as being a 'victim' of the introduction of sound, and has come to stand in for the experience of many failed actors during this period. Gilbert's voice is often described as being too high pitched, but as Eyman writes above, there was probably very little wrong with Gilbert's voice at all. Eyman suggests that there were two other reasons for Gilbert's failure to transfer to talking films. Firstly, there was the problem of voice matching. Evidently, there was too large a difference between how audiences of silent films imagined Gilbert should or would sound, and how he actually did sound. Secondly, there was an issue with the types of films which Gilbert was starring in. Some films were inherently more suited to a silent treatment than the addition of sound, and it was some time before the industry fully grasped this concept. Consequently, many stars fell out of favour because of the filmic vehicles they starred in, rather than anything to do with their voices at all. However, having said that, in Gilbert's case, he was associated with a melodramatic style of acting, made popular – and necessary – during the silent era, but almost totally out of place once sound was added.[7]

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[7] Other actors who also apparently suffered because of the introduction of sound include Charles Farrell (1901-1990) who also allegedly suffered from a mis-match of voice and image. Eyman describes him as having 'the build of a linebacker', but sounding as though he'd been 'inhaling helium' (304). Richard Barthelmess (1895-1963) suffered a career demise blamed on his poor voice, but more likely related to bad choices of pictures. His first talking film required him to sing and play the piano, even though he was actually unable to do either, and his performance had to be dubbed. Any potential curiosity about hearing the voice of a particular favourite actor was undermined by this process, and Barthelmess was ultimately 'marginalized by sound' (Eyman, 305).

One of the most persuasive accounts for the collapse of certain key actors' careers was that the newfound voices of the stars failed to meet their audience's expectations. Comic performer Harold Lloyd perceptively joked that

> The fans don't like *us* at all. They like the *idea* they invent around us. They doll us all up with black eyes, golden hair, six feet of brawn, and a voice like Caruso's. Then we come out with red hair, green eyes, freckles, and a squeak in the upper register.[8]

Throughout cinema's silent years it was thought that audiences invested heavily in the imaginative processes required by silent cinema, and internally generated their own dialogue and voices for their favourite stars, imagining how they might or should sound. Williams writes that, 'Spectators reading title cards to themselves provided their own voices for them. Suddenly, with the talkies, there were *other* voices' (136). Eyman takes a similar position,

> Because of the immensely seductive atmosphere of the overall experience, the silent film had an unparalleled capacity to draw an audience inside it, probably because it demanded the audience use its imagination. Viewers had to supply the voice and the sound effects... [9]

When the real voices of the stars were revealed, and they consequently failed to match up to the expectations of the audience's imagined voices, audiences became disillusioned and unimpressed.[10]

The issue of 'voice matching' began to gather importance. It became essential for success that stars' voices matched their on-screen persona. Heroes thus needed appropriately heroic-sounding voices. Damsels in distress needed to conform to stereotypical expectations of women's voices. Accented voices were acceptable, providing that they were accompanied by an appropriately exotic on-screen presence.

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[8] Eyman (301).
[9] Eyman (20).
[10] This idea is also related to the notion that the addition of sound to silent films provoked a 'fall from grace' for film stars, in the sense that the acquisition of a voice rendered them ordinary and normal, and their sense of mystery and their god-like status was diminished.

It was around this time that the performance paradigm of the voice began to become 'part of the actor's distinct identity' (Crafton, 478), and it is from this time that we can mark the importance of the voice as an active element of a star's on-screen presence, or star persona. Voice matching proved to be the key to survival for silent stars attempting to make the transition into talking films: 'If their voices fit their personalities – then they would triumph. But if there was a misalliance between image and voice ... disaster' (Eyman, 266).[11] More accurately perhaps, those actors who survived the transition into sound film were generally the ones whose voices matched their on-screen image, but also those who were fortunate enough to have chosen the right films to appear in, and those whose acting and performance styles could be suitably adapted to the new formats of sound film making.[12]

Some stars, though, did secure success as talking stars. In some instances, audiences were particularly curious to experience the voice of a favourite performer – such as the example of Mary Pickford (1892-1979). Known as 'Little Mary', Pickford was one of the most popular stars of the silent era, and audiences were keen to hear her actually speak. There was also significant anticipation created by the marketing build-up to Garbo's first talking picture, which announced to audiences that 'Garbo speaks!'

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[11] After this preoccupation with the issue of voice-matching, debates about the voice in film began to move away from considerations of *how* an actor sounded, and become preoccupied instead with debates around the *content* of what they were saying. This perspective is still dominant today: we readily discuss content over voice.

[12] Other reasons for actors failing to make the transition from silent to sound films could include the fact that many silent film actors were not native speakers of English, having a poor grasp of the language or else heavily accented voices. Some of these actors may have been unfairly treated as a result of the introduction of sound, and were not given the opportunity to learn how to develop and use their voices in the new medium.

Until the late 1970s, the academic discipline of film studies stubbornly refused to engage with the phenomenon of film stars and stardom. It seems strange that although there had always been a significant amount of material on stars in circulation – mainly in the form of newspaper review, magazine articles or interviews, annuals, and photo books, which we can now classify as being the trappings of 'fandom' – and that these popular mainstream responses to stars had always discussed stars as significant elements of film production and reception, the discipline of film studies had been somewhat reluctant to consider the role of the film star and the phenomenon of stardom. As has been recently suggested, the apparently accessible and highly 'popularised' nature of the topic perhaps condemned it to be considered 'too embarrassingly banal for academic study' (Cook and Bernick: 1999, 39). It appears to be difficult to apply rigorous academic analysis to a subject that has such a 'popular' status. Despite some twenty years having passed since the first substantial negotiation of the topic emerged, the painful difficulties of engaging with film stars still exist. Phillips (1999) has exposed the particularly problematic dual nature of attempting to critically analyse the film star, saying 'There is pressure to avoid sounding like a gushy fanzine and instead to being real critical rigour to the object of study', but at the same time, he writes, there is the 'counter pressure to represent adequately the felt presence of the star as a figure of desire and fantasy within popular culture' (192). Studying stars academically then, faces at least two forms of stigmatisation. Firstly, that it is not a sufficiently 'worthy' subject, and is too couched in the popular to be sufficiently 'elitist' for some quarters, and secondly that this dual nature identified by Phillips makes it just too 'difficult' a subject to handle. Although many writers have identified the former issue and have perhaps seen themselves as crusaders of popular

cultural studies, generally critics have been less willing to admit that star studies might actually be a bit tricky. Cook and Bernick however, do acknowledge that 'what may appear at first glance an attractively straight-forward topic turns out to be anything but' (39), and Babington (2001) is equally willing to concede that 'the issue is less theoretically resolvable that is sometimes thought' (8).

Both McDonald (1995) and Geraghty (2000) have noted that star studies often seems to promise more than it can realistically deliver. McDonald says:

> The promise of star studies … was that it might allow one to address the organization of the industry, the properties of the individual texts, and the experiences of the audience, and to relate all three within a small and coherent focus (80).

Geraghty echoes this, saying 'work on stars offered the possibility (not always taken up) of looking at the whole cinematic process through work on production, text and audiences (183). The multi-purpose function of star studies as a means of understanding the whole cinematic process through a very small lens is perhaps at the root of any difficulties associated with getting a handle on the topic. Despite star studies appearing to be a relatively small area of investigation its boundaries are by no means fixed or stable, and its potential to impact on other areas of research – audience research, aspects of consumerism, for example, has not gone unnoticed.

Much work that addresses stars and stardom, routinely begins with the question, 'What is a star?' Definitions of stars and stardom are difficult because of the different kinds of star and the different kinds of stardom that form our current understanding of the phenomenon. On one level, Babington offers as a starting point the definition that a star is 'a performer whose name is displayed above the title of the film' (6). He goes on to suggest that the 'central criteria of stardom' includes constituting the main

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'attraction' within a film, and achieving the circulation of a star image across intertextual media (7). Ellis (1982) similarly identifies a star's marketing function within the filmmaking process, arguing that stars can provide a 'foreknowledge of the fiction, an invitation to cinema' (91). He also stresses the intertextuality that is a key element of stardom: a star is 'a performer whose figure enters into subsidiary forms of articulation, and then feeds back into future performances' (91).

Dyer (1979) argued that approaches to looking at stars had fallen into one of two camps – either semiotic or sociological in approach. Dyer claimed that 'This division of interest [between sociological and semiotic approaches] ... while useful ... is essentially one of convenience, and ... both concerns are mutually independent' (1). Dyer's method for examining the film star then, was to combine the two approaches, letting one inform the other. Dyer structures his investigation around three key questions: why, what, and how do stars signify? To address the first question Dyer considers the social conditions necessary for the existence of the phenomenon of stardom and considers how stars are produced. He draws on historical information about the production of early stars – material that is much developed and expanded upon by DeCordova. Dyer understands the star as a 'complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs' (34) that exist across a range of media forms including promotion, criticism, and commentary.

Crafton (1999) remarks that after the introduction of sound and the consequent upheaval in the career trajectories of some Hollywood actors, the issue of voice became 'part of the actor's distinct identity' (478). Similarly, Lawrence (1991) has observed that 'The voice is an integral part of the star system', where she draws upon

the work of Doane who has argued that 'the voice serves as a support for the spectator's recognition and his/her identification of, as well as with, the star' (25). However, despite such observations, and despite the historical specificity explored above, film theories of star performance have tended to situate the film star within exclusively *visual* terms. The dominance of the image within film studies and film theory would appear to pre-dispose us to *see* rather than *hear* a star.

Dyer states that film star performance consists of various performance signs, or paradigms, and these are facial expression, voice, gestures, body posture, and body movement (1979: 134). Dyer illustrates this point by offering a detailed reading of the performances of John Wayne and Henry Fonda in one particular scene of the film *Fort Apache* (John Ford, 1948). In his analysis, Dyer concentrates on aspects of the actors' physical performance, drawing particular attention to movements of the faces and of the bodies of the two actors. However, he neglects to mention the performance paradigm of the voice at all. This is a pattern of neglect that has been repeatedly reproduced in much subsequent work to be found on film star performance. While most critics and commentators reiterate Dyer's performance paradigms, the paradigm of the voice is still systematically neglected.

Approaches to the study of the voice, then, take a variety of perspectives. Although the above discussions suggest that there is a substantial body of work that engages with and analyses the voice on and in film, it is important to recall that the voice still remains a substantially neglected topic within converging aspects of film theory. Despite the historical specificity of the relationship between stars and their voices which is evident from an exploration of the coming of sound to Hollywood

filmmaking, and despite the fact that claims have been made for the significance of the voice to a star's screen persona, and to their performance style, very little work exists that attempts to understand film stars in terms of their voices, or that evaluates the role and function, and overall importance of the voice to a star construction. One thing that remains constant throughout attempts to negotiate the voice on and in film, is that the voice is an inherently difficult thing to deal with. There must be some specific reasons for the reluctance of film theory to more fully explore the voice, especially its relationship to star performance, and the following section attempts to isolate and explain some of the issues that have repeatedly emerged as stumbling blocks to accessing the voice more successfully.

Problems of definition: what do we mean by 'the voice'?

As mentioned above, Chion has explained how easy it is to 'forget' the voice in film. In a similar vein, Smith (1993) argues that 'the vocal level of performance ... is consigned to the interpretation of its content' (219). In terms of the way voices are discussed within film theory, it seems that what is said tends to overshadow how the voice is used. Different writers may also use the term 'voice' to mean different things, depending on the context within which they are writing. Confusions like this, make it difficult for work on the voice to find any point of reference and ensure that all work on the voice is operating within the same sets of meaning.

The 'complexity' of the vocal act

The vocal act is a complex one, and especially when combined with cinema's sound technology, it becomes very difficult to separate out individual aspects of the speech act for analysis. Branston in particular has suggested that any attempt to study the

voice in film is hampered by the fact that it is so often 'wrapped up' in other elements of the soundtrack:

> Most of those who have written on the voice suggest how difficult it is to separate out any one strand of signification for exploration. Script, recording technology, the inextricable elements of ambience and often music included in the recorded voice all easily get caught up in memory and discussion of voices (1995: 41).

What emerges from observations like this one, is that the vocal level of performance is a distinctly complex one, consisting of several different layers that seem to be inextricably involved with each other, difficult to separate, or even identify. The problem of how to separate the *content* of what is said, from the ways that it is *delivered*, and the editing technology that surrounds it all, is one of the fundamental stumbling blocks that has resulted in so little attention being paid to the vocal level of performance.

Lack of analytic tools

Smith observes, quite accurately, that 'the vocal level of performance is the most difficult one to get at analytically' (1993: 219). Within film studies there is no appropriate or effective theory or method that sufficiently enables us to 'get at' the voice. What is especially missing is an appropriate vocabulary to enable critics to describe the voice as it is used in film performance. Vocabulary, or the lack of it, is an issue in related sections of film theory too. Maltby (1996), for example, bemoans the 'paucity' of vocabulary available for discussing aspects and elements of screen performance. He suggests that although the 'constant, subtle changes of expression and intonation that comprise a performance are easily comprehended within the context of a movie', these aspects of performance are 'notoriously difficult to describe or analyse in words' (235). Attempts to describe performance fall into two camps,

according to Maltby, those that draw heavily on various degrees of impressionistic language,[13] and those that feature painfully lengthy and detailed descriptions (236). Within the field of sound studies in film and cinema there is a similar difficulty of expression, here troubled by the belief that there is no pure way to describe sound, since most filmic language is contaminated by its connections to the image. Altman muses that, 'At every turn we sense that sound critics are gleaning from a field already harvested by image critics' (1992: 171). Similarly, another of the drives towards avoiding 'fuzzy adjectival language' is in order to sound more 'academic'. Phillips acknowledges that 'communicating in critical academic terms about stars has proved very difficult. There is pressure to avoid sounding like a gushy fanzine and instead bring real critical rigour to the object of study' (1999: 192). Although in other fields, the problem of finding ways to talk about the subject is not isolated to voice studies and analysis alone then. The issue of how to access and describe voices without descending into adjectival nonsense is one of the main problems facing a rigorous analysis of the voice in performance.

Problems of representation

Branston has complained that 'It's one of the frustrations of writing about such sound effects [as the voice] that I cannot even offer a freeze-frame equivalent to consider' (1995: 42). From a pragmatic point of view, the study and analysis of the voice is problematic because it is not possible to offer a 'snap-shot' of a voice to facilitate discussion in the same way that the visual, mise-en-scene, camera work, editing, and so on can be represented within the text for the benefit of the reader. While writing image-based analysis, a writer can easily insert a still photograph from the film in

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[13] Smith (1993) gives an excellent example of the use of such adjectives, when he describes 'Eastwood's *drawl*, Kathleen Turner's *husky* voice, the *quasi-Englishness* of Cary Grant's voice, Judy Holliday's *whine*' (220, my italics).

order to illustrate their point, and to ensure that the reader is fully 'in the picture'. Failing this, a lengthy descriptive passage could be inserted with the same aim. These options though, are not available when analysing the voice in film. Writing about the voice, or in fact any other film sound effect, presents its own set of representational problems. One significant reason why so much of the work that tries to address the voice in film is dominated by characteristically extravagant and imaginative uses of impressionistic adjectives, is because there seem to be no words to adequately convey the auditory experience. Writers struggle endlessly to convey in words the same information and experience that can be conveyed through a pictorial representation. This is a practical stumbling block that has probably prevented much work on vocal performance.

Implicitness of voice

Smith has also observed that 'At some levels of course the vocal level of performance is not ignored, even if it goes largely unexamined' (1993: 220). Smith is drawing attention to the 'invisible' quality of vocal performance on film that has been somewhat subsumed by the visual image, and is so highly naturalised as to pass virtually unnoticed by the spectator. The difficulty here is how to make explicit the implicit experience of hearing the voice.

The first part of this chapter has explored some of the prejudices and difficulties associated with accessing the voice in general, and the celebrity voice more particularly. The remainder of this chapter calls for an alternative approach. Based upon the premise that media and cultural studies is by nature a multi-disciplinary subject, and that it has a lengthy history of drawing upon linguistic disciplines for

inspiration, the following section takes a step deeper into the analysis of the voice, and suggests accessing a theory and method drawn from the field of phonetics as a means of facilitating greater precision when analysing the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation film, allowing for a more specific definition of the 'voice', enabling the voice to be separated out from the rest of the soundtrack and analysed more accurately, and subsequently leading to more detailed discussion of the importance and the role and function of the celebrity voice within popular feature length animation.

Media and cultural studies has a history as a cross-disciplinary enterprise. The initial genesis of cultural studies as an academic field of enquiry was as a direct response to some of the questions that 'traditional' disciplines seemed unable to answer. Two of the major proponents of cultural studies as an academic field of study – Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams – were working within the 'traditional' field of English Literature, and found that the traditions of literary studies were unable to answer questions of meaning and value, other than those solely to do with the text, authorial creativity, and authorial intention.[14] Cultural studies exists as a rather eclectic combination of ideas and theoretical perspectives and positions drawn from a wide variety of sources. Therefore, a cross-disciplinary enterprise that suggests an alternative approach to dealing with the voice, especially when film, media and cultural studies already has an established relationship with linguistic fields, finds a home within cultural studies.

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[14] Where traditional forms of criticism are artist-centred and their focus is on the autonomy of the text itself, cultural studies approaches call for an investigation of the relationships between texts, and the relationships between audiences and texts, as sources of meaning and value.

Phonetics and Voice Quality

As a discipline, phonetics shares a close relationship with the field of linguistics. But where linguistics can be described as the study of language, phonetics is defined as the study of speech. Conceived by some, due to its practical nature, as more art than science, phonetics nevertheless locates its practical applications within a strong theoretical basis.[15] Traditionally, phonetics has worked closely with linguistics and concentrated on those aspects of speech relevant to language, hence a primary aim of phonetics has been to provide a description of speech, manifested most clearly in the model of the phonetic alphabet, where phonetic symbols enable a notation of speech to be transcribed. However, more recently some phoneticians have called for the horizons of phonetics to be broadened, and speech to be considered as part of a wider system of communication behaviours. Such a broadening out of concerns, allows more recent approaches to phonetics to be defined as 'the scientific study of *all aspects of speech*' (Laver, 1994: 2, my italics), even the voice.

The discipline of phonetics has traditionally tended to preoccupy itself with the description of speech at the linguistic level. As a result, phonetics has developed a very elaborate and sophisticated theory and method for describing the linguistic aspects of speech, but para- and extra-linguistic elements of the speech act have been less well researched. Laver has called for phonetics to adopt a more radical remit, and spend more time engaging and researching these neglected areas. He writes:

> I do not regard the domain of phonetics as restricted to the study of spoken language alone ... No aspect of speech should be foreign to a phonetician, in

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[15] Laver takes this criticism seriously: 'Phonetics is sometimes thought by practitioners of other disciplines ... to be somehow a chiefly 'practical' subject, more properly conceived as an art than a science, preoccupied with the description of data but without a central interest in theoretical matters.' Laver defends phonetics against the criticism: 'As a basic aspect of the philosophy of science it is quite illusory to conceive of 'data' except in the context of a theory within whose framework the data are characterised' (1994: 3).

my view, Linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic aspects of speech are all legitimate topics of study. (1991: xvii)[16]

For the purposes of this research, this thesis is specifically interested in the field of phonetics for its potential to facilitate discussion around the medium of the voice. For this reason, the foray into phonetics explored in this chapter is concerned with the under-represented, slightly unfamiliar paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of the speech act, and especially their propensity for the revelations and analysis of information about the speaker held in, carried by, and communicated through the voice. Laver sums up the relationship between speaker and voice as follows:

> ... our social interaction through speech depends on much more than solely the linguistic nature of the spoken messages exchanged. The voice is the very emblem of the speaker, indelibly woven into the fabric of speech. In this sense, each of our utterances of spoken language carries not only its own message, but through accent, tone of voice and habitual voice quality it is at the same time an audible declaration of our membership of particular social and regional groups, of our individual physical and psychological identity, and of our momentary mood.[17]

As a basic definition, a speaker's 'habitual voice quality' refers to various long-term muscular tensions, often referred to as 'settings', within the components of the speech apparatus – the larynx, (especially the vocal folds), the vocal tract (the pharynx, the oral cavity, the tongue, the lips, and the jaw), even the lungs – that effect a particular

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[16] Laver has consistently called for a broader remit for phonetics than has rather traditionally been conceived. This 'radical' approach is made most apparent through his willingness to explore seemingly unrelated fields in order to further his understanding of human speech functions. For example, during the 1970s, Laver conducted research into the medical field of neurophysiology as a means of understanding how 'slips of the tongue' function in everyday speech (see chapters 2 to 6 of *The Gift of Speech* (1991)), and he has recently stated that he now believes the study of speech to be 'necessarily a multidisciplinary enterprise' (1991: xvii). Laver lists the fields of linguistics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, anatomy, physiology, neurology, medicine, pathology, acoustics, physics, cybernetics, electronic engineering, computer science, and artificial intelligence, as overlapping into the domain of phonetics. It is with reference to Laver's somewhat broader classification of the domain of phonetics that this thesis approaches the relationship between speaker and voice, through the analysis of voice quality.

[17] Laver 1994, p2.

'quality' of voice, held to be virtually unique to an individual, and as such, indicative of their identity.[18] Abercrombie, writing in 1967 defines voice quality as

> those characteristics which are present more or less all the time that a person is speaking: it is a quasi-permanent quality running through all the sound that issues from his mouth.[19]

Laver distinguishes two different aspects of voice quality: those elements that are biologically innate, and consequently outside a speaker's conscious control, such as the anatomical and physiological characteristics of the speech apparatus unique to the individual, and those elements that are potentially within the control of the speaker, which Laver describes as 'long-term muscular adjustments' (1972: 190). The degree to which these voice quality settings can be thought of as permanent, fixed, or unconscious aspects of an individual's speech seems to be problematic. Abercrombie argues that the non-anatomical aspects of voice quality are capable of being controlled by the speaker, then proceeds to qualify this statement by suggesting that

> though acquired by learning, the habit of such muscular tensions can, once acquired, be so deeply rooted as to seem as much an unalterable part of a person as his anatomical characteristics.[20]

Laver agrees that these muscular settings, 'once acquired idiosyncratically, or by social imitation', can become 'unconscious' (1972, 190). However, later in his writing, Abercrombie reverses the argument again, in order to suggest that 'Probably

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[18] At this level, voice quality functions extralinguistically, and is thought to also carry information about a speaker's physical and psychological states, and even their social status. However, voice quality may also have a shorter-term paralinguistic function, whereby certain qualities of voice are temporarily adopted as communicative devices. For example, a 'whispery' voice is often employed as a sign of confidentiality, or a 'creaky' voice as one indicative of boredom or tiredness. Extralinguistically, however, whispery or creaky voice qualities may be long-term characteristics of an individual's voice, enabling them, perhaps, to be identified, by those to whom they are already known, by voice alone. It is important to note that the relationship between a paralinguistic function of voice quality, and an extralinguistic use, is only a temporal consideration of duration, where paralinguistic voice quality is a temporary state adopted to convey a particular frame of mind or attitude, and extralinguistic voice quality is a more permanent, habitual, and unconscious state.

[19] Reprinted in Laver and Hutcheson (eds.) *Communication in Face to Face Interaction* (1972), p91.

[20] 1972, p93.

most people are capable of making some change in their voice quality', and he

specifically cites professional performers as being particularly skilful at this:

> There are many professional mimics on stage, radio and television who are
> able to give convincing imitations of their fellow actors and of public figures,
> imitations in which the performer's own voice quality characteristics are
> effectively submerged.[21]

The degree to which extralingusitic voice quality can be described as fixed or unstable

is one of the problematic aspects of the theory, and the extent to which a voice may be

trained in reproducing various types of voice qualities is open to question.

The early body of work that has been generated by this topic has been mainly

preoccupied with attempts to phonetically describe, label and account for the

particular voice qualities of a given speaker's voice. However, within the field of

experimental phonetics, where many of these ideas have been tested out, a large body

of data has been gathered, which can be adapted for the purposes of this thesis.

Experimental phonetics, particularly during the 1980s, has been preoccupied with

testing out the ideas about voice quality proposed in earlier material. My method of

accessing and utilising this material, has not been to engage particularly with the

scientific nature of the material or with the analytical process involved in the

assimilation of data, but rather to isolate and extract the central discussions and points

of interest to fuel the debates with which the thesis is concerned.

Although a phonetic theory of voice quality only really began to emerge during the

nineteenth century, interest in the voice itself goes back much further. Interest in the

arts of oratory and public speaking as far back as ancient Greece has generated an

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[21] 1972, p94.

historical context for considerations of the voice and in particular its 'good' or 'bad' qualities. Voice quality can also be understood as a source of information about a speaker. Historically, there have been observations relating to the relationship between a speaker and their voice. Sapir, writing in the 1920s, confirms that

> on the basis of voice one might decide many things about a man. One might decide that he is sentimental; that he is extraordinarily sympathetic without being sentimental; that he is cruel – one hears voices that impress one as being intensely cruel. One might decide on the basis of his voice that a person who uses a brusque vocabulary is nevertheless kind-hearted. This sort of comment is part of the practical experience of every man and woman.[22]

Early experiments had also suggested that the voice betrays significant information about the speaker. Allport and Cantril's 1934 article 'Judging Personality from Voice' takes as its starting point an exploration of voices heard over the radio. They argue that radio listeners frequently believe that they are able to make accurate judgements about a radio announcer's physical attributes, and even their personality, with surprising degrees of accuracy:

> Most people who listen to radio speakers feel assured that some of their judgements are dependable. Often the impression is nothing more that a feeling of favour or aversion, but sometimes it represents a surprisingly definite judgement concerning the speaker's physical, intellectual and moral qualities.[23]

Allport and Cantril cite one of the first known recorded experiments to uncover this relationship, which took place at the BBC in 1931. Pear established that listeners could accurately judge the sex and age of hidden speakers. Even physical descriptions, and amazingly vocations, proved to be judged with surprising accuracy. Following in the vein of this earlier experiment, Allport and Cantril set up an investigation to determine to what extent voice is an indicator of various features of personality. These features included 'outer' characteristics – such as age, height,

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[22] Reprinted in Laver and Hutcheson (eds.) *Communication in Face to Face Interaction* (1972), p75.
[23] 1972 reprint, p155.

complexion, appearance, and even tested examples of handwriting – and 'inner' characteristics – including vocation, political allegiance, levels of extroversion or introversion, and dominant values. Allport and Cantril carried out and recorded the experiment, finding the results to be higher-than-chance. Although the results fell far short of being conclusive, the experiment did allow Allport and Cantril to conclude that at the very least, the human voice does seem to arouse a particular impression in the listener, whether or not that particular impression proves to be an accurate one.

According to Laver (1972), there are three categories of information that can be carried in or through a speaker's voice. The first category revealed by the voice is that of biological information, which Laver suggests is derived from the innate anatomical aspects of the speaker, about which the speaker can do very little. Biological information that can be revealed through a speaker's voice can include information about the speaker's size and physique, for example, their sex and approximate age, and in some instances, even their medical state. Some of these aspects can be quite accurately judged. Judgements concerning a speaker's sex are quite reliably accurate, and are based on aspects of pitch, and patterns of intonation. As a general rule, female speakers are perceived to have a higher level of pitch that male speakers, as well as a greater flexibility of pitch than men (Smith, 1979: 123). These differences can be accounted for in biological terms due to the relatively larger physical; size of men, and their subsequently larger vocal organs, and it is also thought, by the thicker vocal folds of men compared to women (Smith: 123). Patterns of intonation are also thought to distinguish the sexes, particularly where women use a greater proportion of 'rising tones' than men (Smith: 125).

The category of a speaker's age is also usually quite accurately conveyed through the voice. Particular 'cues of age' include certain aspects of pitch, tone, volume, clarity, and speed of speech (Helfrich, 1979: 79). Generally, for most speakers, pitch levels decrease with increasing age until adulthood. During adulthood and into old age the pitch of the voice remains largely stable for female speakers, but for men it appears to increase slightly, although it is not absolutely clear why this should be the case (Helfrich: 82/83). The loss of elasticity of the vocal folds brought on by the onset of old age is thought to account for a decrease in the flexibility of pitch variation in older speakers, and also in the possible levels of volume. Clarity, and speed of speech are similarly thought to decrease with age (Helfrich: 86).

Laver argues that voice quality also enables a listener to make some observations about the medical condition of a speaker. Here, Laver distinguishes between long-term, and more temporary medical states (1972: 196). For example, permanent abnormalities of the vocal apparatus, such as a cleft palate, or harelip, may be identifiable through the speaker's voice quality. Similarly, any semi-permanent medical condition affecting the vocal apparatus such as tonsillitis, laryngitis, or a common cold, may be recognised through the speaker's voice quality. Laver also draws attention to the potential for the effects of alcohol and tobacco to be revealed through a speaker's voice quality (197).

Secondly, Laver suggests that psychological information relating to the speaker may also be revealed through voice quality. He writes that 'We seem to be prepared, as listeners, to draw quite far-reaching conclusions from voice quality about long-term psychological characteristics of a speaker, in assessments of personality' (197/8).

Allport and Cantril's work above, would seem to suggest that this is accurate. That there might be a relationship between the personality of a speaker and their voice has been discussed and debated since the 'physiognomics' of Ancient Greece believed that they could deduce character from voice:

> Some believed, for example, that people with deep and tense voices were brave, those with high and slack voices cowardly; if disgruntled, one that rises from high to low. If spiteful and morally lax, you are likely to speak with a nasal quality. Greedy and vain people have high, clangy voices like birds; stupid ones bleat like sheep or goats. If you hear a dry quality in someone's voice, look out – he is probably a wily fellow. And a man's cracked or broken tone should warn you against his gluttony and violence ... So, at least the physiognomists thought.[24]

Bizarrely, more recent attempts to understand the relationships between voice quality and a speaker's personality have hardly moved on from such stereotypes responses. It is generally thought that there is a correlation between 'breathy' voices and introverted, neurotic, and anxious personality types, for example (Scherer, 1979: 158).[25] Similarly, there may be a connection between 'harsh, metallic and resonant voices, and personality characteristics of stability and dominance (Scherer, 1979: 159). Some of these ideas have been empirically pursued by researchers within the field of experimental phonetics. Of particular interest is an experiment carried out by Pittam and Gallois (1986), exploring the impressions of naïve listeners (non-phoneticians) to various reproductions of different voice qualities. The voice qualities reproduced were breathy, creaky, nasal, tense, and whispery. Listeners were asked to rate the voices they heard alongside a list of personality adjectives, in order to determine to what extent they considered the particular voice qualities to convey

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[24] Stanford (1967) *The Sound of Greek*, 148-149.

[25] 'Breathy' voice quality is used to describe a form of phonation where the vocal folds are held in such a way as to allow degrees of air to be forced through them, causing them to vibrate. Paralinguistically, a breathy voice quality may be used to signal confidentiality, or intimacy, but breathy voice quality can also be adopted by speakers – especially female speakers – quasi-permanently, forming part of a gendered identity. See Chapter 6 for a further discussion of this issue.

particular impressions. The outcome of the experiment showed that listeners responded most favourably to those voices that had the lowest amounts of creakiness, nasality, and tenseness (245). Indeed, breathy voice and whispery voice received the highest levels of positive response, suggesting that these voice qualities were perceived as indicators of positive personality attributes. Nasal voice, on the other hand, was perceived particularly negatively as a marker of a negative personality type. This experiment, and others like it, suggests that there is a willingness for a listener to attribute personality characteristics to speakers based on particular voice qualities, and that these attributes are largely based on stereotypical responses, provoking the conclusion that 'such 'vocal stereotypes' have remained the most frequent finding in all studies of the relationship between voice and personality' (Kramer, 1972: 173).

The third category of information carried by the voice, according to Laver, relates to social information about the speaker. Social characteristics revealed by the voice could include such things as 'regional affiliation, social status, educational status, occupation and social role' (Laver and Trudgill, 1979: 3). Laver suggests that certain accents, for example, are characterised by particular voice qualities, and where this is the case, social information carried by voice quality 'may serve as an index to features of regional origin, social status, social values and attitudes, and profession or occupation' (1972: 198). In particular, Laver cites nasalisation as characteristics of speakers with a British Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, and velarisation as particularly characteristic of accents from Liverpool and Birmingham (198). Of particular interest within this category, is the extent to which voice quality may be manipulated or imitated in order to deliberately convey a particular social impression:

> For example, some British male stage actors seem to consciously strive to attain a voice quality like that of Sir Laurence Olivier; similarly, military drill

sergeants typically have harsh voices, and these are not necessarily the result of habitual vocal abuse, but rather acquired by imitation, in the hope of projecting the characteristic persona of their profession (199).

Laver consistently argues for the potential of the voice as an indicator of a number of physical and social characteristics of a speaker. One of the principal aims of this thesis is to analyse star performance from a vocal perspective, and to try and overcome some of the problems with this discussed above. The linguistic field of phonetics appears to offer a way to deal with and indeed solve some of these difficulties and has the potential to offer film studies a theory, method, and vocabulary of description that could facilitate further discussion around the performance paradigm of the voice. The following section revisits the five problems listed above and engages with these precise problems and demonstrates how phonetics and a phonetic approach to the study of the voice may actually be able to address, and ultimately overcome, these stumbling blocks.

Problems of definition: what do we mean by 'the voice'?

What has emerged from some of the discussion above is a significant degree of confusion relating to the use of the term 'the voice', and exactly what it refers to within the context of film performance. Confusion over the parameters of meaning attached to the term 'voice' as it is routinely used by non-phoneticians, provoked Abercrombie to comment that

> Although we, as phoneticians, are able to unravel the total complex of the aural medium into ... strands[26] ... this is not the case with the non-

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[26] Abercrombie (1967) uses the term 'strands' to distinguish between the separate elements of the speech act. He describes them as 'components of the aural medium', and lists them as 'segmental features', 'feature of voice quality', and 'feature of voice dynamics' (89). Such ideas are preceded by Sapir (1927), who subdivided speech into five 'levels': the voice itself, voice dynamics, pronunciation, vocabulary, and style. The terms, linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic are similarly methods of subdividing elements of the speech act, a process that is familiar to phoneticians generally, but less commonly identified by 'ordinary' people.

phonetician, and the ordinary person's judgements on ways of speaking are usually made without explicit differentiation of the … strands. There are, in fact, no terms in ordinary language by which people can discriminate between them, and whenever the medium as such is under discussion they usually fall back on the all-purpose word 'voice', a word which sometimes refers to the medium as a whole … but sometimes to a part of it only (1967: 90)

The 'complexity' of the vocal act

This second point follows on from the first and confirms that a phonetic approach to the voice in film firstly enables it to be defined and explored more specifically, and in particular it offers a means of 'separating out' the layers of communication wrapped up in the 'voice' which is often held to be a stumbling block to successful analysis of the voice in film.

Abercrombie and Laver propose, however, that the voice can be separated out from other aspects of communication through a consideration of the 'layers' of communication operating within the speech act. These can be separated out into linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic elements, and this method is essentially useful for separating out the various elements of speech that can sometimes make analysing the voice especially difficult. The information conveyed by the speech act can be defined as being constituted of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic speech behaviours. Linguistic behaviour is probably the one that we are most familiar with through the discipline of phonetics. It is made up of the phonological and grammatical units of spoken language, and communicates linguistic meaning. Paralinguistic behaviour, on the other hand, refers to non-linguistic and non-verbal forms of communications. This includes communication by tone of voice for example, as well as through other non-verbal elements of communication such as gesture, posture, and facial expression. Paralinguistic speech behaviour tends to be

used to communicate temporary states of attitude or emotion, and as such tends to be quite short. Finally, extralinguistic behaviour can be defined as, 'the residue of the speech signal after analysis of all coded linguistic and paralinguistic aspects is complete' (Laver, 1994: 22). Extralinguistic speech behaviour is long-term and (semi-) permanent. Extralinguistic speech behaviour can communicate a great deal of information about the identity of the speaker, often carried through the speaker's habitual 'voice quality'.

Having established that there are definable layers of communication within the speech act, and that phonetics recognises these and accesses them theoretically, I can now show that it is possible to speak of these elements in some degree of isolation, and remove some of the confusion that writers like Branston, for example, have argued is associated with analysing the voice on film.

Lack of analytic tools

A phonetic approach also enables particular features of a voice to be explored and analysed. Specific features of a voice, such as its volume, pitch, and rate, can be singled out and analysed, and phonetics has a theory, method and vocabulary for this task that we could access, and where necessary adapt, in order to be able to discuss elements of the celebrity voice with more precision.[27]

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[27] Within the literature on voice quality theory there is some debate as to whether elements of voice dynamics should be treated separately from voice quality in its strictest sense. Voice dynamics are not quite as 'permanent' as elements of voice quality and often function paralinguistically as indicators of temporary attitudinal states. Laver's descriptive model of voice quality incorporates voice dynamics of pitch and volume, while Abercrombie treats them separately. However, certain elements of voice dynamics may be employed as long-term habitual characteristics of an individual's voice, and where this is the case I would argue that elements of voice quality and voice dynamics should be considered along side each other. For the purposes of this thesis I intend to adopt the position advocated by Pittam and Gallois, who argue that, 'Ultimately, voice qualities must be examined along with vocal features such as pitch, loudness, and tempo … in a *communication package* (1987, 245: my emphasis).

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Problems of representation

The fourth 'problem' was to do with the practical problems of finding ways to represent the voice. The methods of description and transcription used in phonetics, with perhaps a little adaptation, could be drawn into the service of film theory, and benefit attempts to engage with the study of the voice in film.

Implicitness of voice

The fifth and final problem relates to the implicitness of voice, and by drawing attention to the way phonetics deals with the voice, and sees it as an important and significant element of the communication package, it should be evident that such an approach aims to make the voice more explicit. Altman's complaint about the difficulty of accessing the study of film sound with an appropriate vocabulary, that was not hindered by being already drawn from an image-driven system of thought, may be addressed by drawing upon the special set of sound-derived descriptive tools, such as those favoured by phonetics and voice quality theory, as a way of generating an alternative method for thinking and talking about film sound, and specifically the role of the voice on film, and within film star performance, and ultimately a means of making explicit what we as listeners largely take for granted.

One of the most practical uses of Laver's work on voice quality, on developing a method for analysing and describing a range of voice qualities, is within the field of speech therapy, where Laver's methods can be used as a means of aiding the diagnosis of speech pathologies. Based on some of his earliest work, Laver has developed a system that can be taught to and practised by clinical professions concerned with, in particular, pathological speech disorders. A 'Vocal Profile' can be

drawn up for each patient, based on Laver's hypothesis that 'particular speech disorders have characteristic vocal profiles associated with them' (1981: 266). Laver defines a vocal profile as:

> a statement of the speaker-characterising, long-term features of a person's overall vocal performance. It includes comment on laryngeal and supralaryngeal aspects of voice quality, on means, ranges, and variability of prosodic aspects such as pitch and loudness, and on factors of temporal organisation such as rate and continuity. In lay terms, a vocal profile summarises the phonetic features of a speaker's habitual 'voice' (1981: 265).

Laver intends the Vocal Profile to be used as a diagnostic tool enabling trained therapists to make patient assessments without recourse to expensive or complicated procedures. The Vocal Profile Analysis Protocol is, necessarily for its purposes, very detailed. Broken into four sections, the protocol offers space for analysis of vocal quality features, prosodic features, temporal features of organisation, and any other comments. The protocol allows for a first and second listening, or 'pass', of the voice being analysed. This, it is suggested, should take the form of a recording of the patient's voice of at least 45-70 seconds duration (1268). During the first pass, the clinician is required only to record whether the patient's voice can be judged as neutral or non-neutral under the particular categories. If the voice is judged to be non-neutral in a certain category, the clinician makes a decision as to whether the voice falls into the normal or abnormal set of ranges for that category. On the second pass, or listening, more detail is required of the clinician in the form of scalar degrees of deviation within the normal or abnormal ranges. For professionals in the field, this system allows a detailed charting of a patient's vocal profile which can then be used to record changes over time, as the result of treatment or therapy, for example, and exists as a written account that can be stored in the patient's notes to be interpreted by any professional trained in this method.

While this thesis does not propose drawing upon this detailed model in its entirety, something similar might be produced as an analytical aid to the vocal element of film star performance. The approaches adopted throughout the next three case study chapters are nowhere near as thorough studies of the voice as Laver proposes in this model, but the idea that film star's voices could be systematically analysed and examined along side a pre-existing set of criteria, may enable film theory to engage with the voice at a level never before achieved. Referring again to Laver's definition of a vocal profile as 'a statement of the speaker-characterising, long-term features of a person's overall vocal performance, generating a vocal profile for film theory could help to facilitate the discussion around the voice that is currently lacking in theories of film star performance.

Chapter Four

Black Voices: The 'Coon' Performance Aesthetic and Voice Dynamics – Eddie
Murphy in *Shrek*

In 'Teaching Children how to Discriminate', Lippi-Green gives an account of
Disney's Depression era cartoon short *Three Little Pigs*, released in 1933 (1997: 79-
80). One of the visual renderings of the Big Bad Wolf in this original release was as a
Jewish peddler, who featured a hooked nose, sidelocks, and a 'dark broad-rimmed hat
similar to one worn by some Orthodox Jews' (79). The wolf also spoke with a
contrived Yiddish accent. When the cartoon was re-released in 1948 the insensitivity
of this portrayal was brought to the attention of Walt Disney, who eventually ordered
the scene to be re-animated. However, it was only the offensive *visual* representation
that was changed, and Lippi-Green observes that it was some time later before the
dialogue and vocal recording were also replaced, meaning that for a while, 'even
when the Wolf no longer *appeared* Jewish, he *spoke* with a Yiddish accent' (79-80:
my emphasis).

This short observation is particularly significant on a number of different levels.
Firstly, it is important because it suggests that there is some inherent difficulty
attached to the animated representation of race. This chapter will argue that there is in
fact a long history of problems associated with the animated representation of race,
and that this is at least partly predicated on a second important issue raised by Lippi-
Green's observations – that there is a complex set of issues at play in animation
operating between the visual level - what is seen – and the audio level - what is heard.

Certain conflicting aspects of the production processes particularly complicate the relationship between representations of race within the animated form. On the one hand, as Lindvall and Fraser (1998) point out 'the image on the screen is invented by an act of human consciousness and intent' (122). On the other hand though, the very nature of animation is based on distortion and exaggeration so that 'regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, or physical characteristics, cartoons [present] broad caricatures of everyone' (125). But, in the world of popular animation, the representation of race is not only seen, but also heard, and the above Disney anecdote would seem to suggest that it might be more acceptable for representations of race to be aurally experienced, rather than visually witnessed. This chapter sets out to explore representations of race in popular feature length animation film, and will focus especially on the use of 'black voices' as a short hand for a stereotypical black characterisation. Through a case study of the popular black actor Eddie Murphy and his voice work as Donkey in *Shrek*, this chapter will develop an argument that there is a stereotypical black voice quality, and by drawing on the performance aesthetic of the 'coon', which relies heavily on particular vocal characteristics, I will investigate some of the ideologies at work in the vocal performance of Murphy in this film.

King (2002) draws attention to the 'coon' aesthetic as a particularly black comic performance style. King explores the racial stereotype of the 'coon', defining it as Bogle does, as a throwback to vaudeville and the minstrel shows, as a 'racist version of the African-American as black buffoon and object of amusement' (143). However, King goes on to argue that 'racist stereotypes such as that of the 'coon' have proved hard to shake throughout the subsequent history of American cinema' (145), and he makes certain observations about the impact of the 'coon' aesthetic on popular

contemporary black performers, including Eddie Murphy, who he describes as possessing a screen persona 'based to a large extent on a supply of loud, demonstrative and highly performative comic 'turns'' (147). Listing those black actors who have managed to obtain some degree of success in Hollywood – Goldberg, Murphy, Pryor, and more recently Lawrence, Tucker, and Rock – all of whom have careers that began in stand-up comedy performance, King asks, 'To what extent might the success of these performers, in the format of comedian comedy, be explained by the degree to which their antics conform to racist stereotypes such as that of the 'coon'?' (145). Whatever the answer to King's question might be, it is evident that across the last few decades one of Hollywood's dominant spaces for black actors has been within the realm of comic performance.

I shall begin this case study by outlining how the characterisation of Donkey in *Shrek* plays upon the star persona of Eddie Murphy – including the 'coon' aesthetic - in a number of specific ways. Chapter 2 discussed how common it is for animators to incorporate physical elements of celebrity performers into animated characters, and how it might be possible to 'see' Eddie Murphy in the rendering of Donkey. This is perhaps especially noticeable in the animation of the eyes, mouth, and facial expressions of Donkey, that may recall these elements of Murphy's physical appearance and performance style. Murphy is a comic performer with a long acting career that spans over two decades, beginning in 1982 with *48Hrs*, although prior to this his reputation as a stand-up comedian had been secured through his many appearances on the popular US television programme *Saturday Night Live*. As a black actor operating within the mainstream cinema industry Murphy represents an ideal case study for investigating the relationships between Hollywood and

representations of race since many of his films figure prominently in discussions around Hollywood's history of black film performance.

Most accounts of the history of representations of blacks in Hollywood film mark D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) as the watershed film that was largely responsible for creating and fixing an image of black people that would direct Hollywood's future attitudes towards representations of race.[1] Indeed, Diawara (1993) states that the film constitutes the 'grammar book', and stands as the 'master text' of race films, setting down the codes and conventions for black representation in Hollywood that were to endure, arguably, until the present day (3). The majority of the black characters in *The Birth of a Nation* appeared on screen only in supporting roles, often of a negative or especially criminal or deviant nature, existing simply in relation to the white characters, and often restricted to particular types of spaces clearly demarcated as 'black'. Bogle (2002) has classified the recurrent types of characters that black actors have played since their first appearance in live action film into five categories: toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and brutal black bucks, all of which, Bogle writes, were 'character types used for the same effect: to entertain by stressing Negro inferiority' (4). Suggesting that these character types were simply 'carried over' from other performance traditions such as theatre and vaudeville, Bogle writes that these roles were initially 'picked up' and 'put on' by white actors. When black actors began to perform these character types themselves, the history of black film performance becomes defined by their struggle to work within, and against, these limiting roles.

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[1] See for example, the work of Bogle (2002), and Diawara (1993), amongst others.

During the 1970s – often referred to as the Blaxploitation era – there seemed to be a significant change in the ways that Hollywood negotiated issues of race. Bogle even goes as far as to claim that 'no other period in black movie history ... has been quite so energetic or important as the frenetic 1970s' (232). Black actors, writers, and directors began to gain more prominence, and a number of films were produced and targeted specifically at black urban audiences. For example, films such as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) and *Shaft* (1971) used almost exclusively black casts, offered black audiences a recognisable social and cultural milieu, and explored and dealt with issues of particular relevance to black communities. The main character in these films was often an independent, tough, and aggressive male figure who carried a gun, was well-dressed, 'cool', and ready to take on the white establishment. These characteristics seemed to offer black audiences a more positive point of identification and contrasted strongly with the types of black roles that had gone before.[2] *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* and *Shaft* spawned a large number of similar films throughout the 1970s that seemed to be equally 'black' in a variety of ways. They focussed on ghetto life, gun and drug crime, and the dissatisfaction of urban living. They always featured a black male hero who was seen to triumph over adversity and the racist system. However, these subsequent films were often written, produced, and directed by white personnel, and were typically made on very low budgets in order to secure maximum returns at the box office. In this way black audiences were effectively exploited giving rise to the term 'blaxploitation', as a means of describing films that seemed to promise black audiences positive role models and effective solutions, but were ultimately made in the interests of the white community and economy.

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[2] However, on the other hand Bogle reads this new black role as simply a resurfacing of the old stereotype of the brutal black buck, 'dressed in new garb to look modern, hip, provocative, and politically "relevant"' (232).

Since the Blaxploitation era Hollywood roles for blacks have tended to fall within certain specific categories. Predominantly, a number of key black actors such as Richard Pryor, Whoopi Goldberg, Will Smith, Chris Rock, Chris Tucker, Martin Lawrence, and in particular Eddie Murphy have made their various marks within Hollywood by performing almost exclusively comic roles. There is a long history of black comic performance, as Watkins (1994) and King (2002) both demonstrate. Watkins, for example, traces a history of African American comedy from its roots in slavery to an analysis of some of the most contemporary of black comedians, but it is King who points out that,

> The very fact that comedy — coded as ultimately unthreatening, unserious — has been the primary realm in which black performers have consistently achieved superstar status in film speaks volumes about the racial politics of American society (150).

In particular, Murphy's acting career has been shaped by his performance of comic roles. Beginning as a stand-up comedian and throughout the majority of his film roles, Murphy has demonstrated a particularly distinct and instantly recognisable comic style that has attracted significant discussion.[3] As well as comic roles, black actors have also been offered recurring roles within the genre of action cinema, but these roles have operated within specific sets of limitations. Again, Murphy's career reflects these developments. Murphy is probably best known for his 'black buddy' roles, as Billy Ray Valentine in *Trading Places* (1983), as Axel Foley in the *Beverly Hills Cop* trilogy (1984; 1987; 1994), and for his performances as Reggie Hammond along side Nick Nolte in the *48Hrs* films, which secured him significant industry recognition and box office successes.[4] Guerrero (1993) has argued that after the

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[3] See for example Bogle (2002), King (2002), Ward (2002), and Watkins (1999).
[4] Bogle confirms that it was *Beverly Hills Cop* that turned Murphy into 'a bonafide Movie Superstar' (284), and that by 1987, when Murphy signed a $25 million contract with Paramount, 'there was no

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collapse of the Blaxploitation era during the mid-1970s, roles for blacks in mainstream Hollywood actually regressed, and he suggests that Hollywood has developed 'strategies of containment' in order to subordinate the black image and reaffirm dominant society's (white) racial order (237). Recognising that during the 1980s in particular, Hollywood seemed to favour the financially viable combination of pairing a black actor with a white actor in a comedy-action format, thus securing maximum appeal to both black and white audiences, Guerrero argues that in 'the biracial buddy formula' the black presence is effectively placed within the 'protective custody' of the white male lead.[5] This is achieved on a number of different levels. Firstly, the majority of these types of films are definable as action-comedies, and therefore the role of the black character within them again systematically confines black expression to the realm of the comic. The black star is also often represented as completely isolated – from other blacks, or any other references to black life or culture. Many of Eddie Murphy's earliest and most successful films are based on this principle of removing the black character from his familiar environment. Taking Murphy's character Billy Ray Valentine from the poverty of the city streets and placing him within the privilege of luxury high-class living in *Trading Places* is just one example of this particular strategy. Guerrero observes that, 'The recurring central gag or comic motive, played to endless variation in all of Murphy's hit, buddy vehicles, is predicated upon the Black penetration of clearly demarcated white, cultural, social or physical space' (243). Black sexuality too, is significantly marginalized in the buddy movie format, and it is routinely the white male lead who secures the conventional love interest of the narrative. Even where the black

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star in America, with the possible exception of Sylvester Stallone, as powerful a box-office draw as Murphy' (286).

[5] This is literally the case in a film like *48Hrs* (1982), which sees Murphy playing the role of a convict who is given over to the custody of the police (Nick Nolte) in order to help solve crime.

character may be given a home and family life as in *Lethal Weapon* (1987), this is clearly domesticated and made 'safe' through the vulnerable positioning of Danny Glover's character in the bath, and is starkly contrasted with the much more macho and virile lifestyle of the white Mel Gibson character.[6]

Although perhaps most obviously dominant during 1980s Hollywood, the bi-racial buddy formula has by no means disappeared. More recently, Guerrero (1998) has observed a number of variations within the formula, including *White Men Can't Jump* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1995), *Money Train* (1995), and *Independence Day* (1996),[7] permitting him to reach the conclusion that 'it is a safe bet that the biracial buddy formula in all its variations is destined for a long run in Hollywood' (333).[8]

The narrative of *Shrek* and its similarities to buddy movie formats may also recall the star persona of Eddie Murphy, and previous roles he has played. *Shrek* contains a number of elements of the bi-racial buddy movie, and the casting of Murphy as Donkey deliberately recalls some of Murphy's earlier acting roles. Donkey seems to share similarities with the 'black buddy' of Guerrero's sub-genre, firstly because he remains relatively isolated within the narrative. He has no friends of his own, and becomes attached to Shrek because of his ability to protect him from dangerous situations. Donkey also functions as the supporting comic 'foil' to Shrek, and is the butt of many of his jokes. Although Donkey is awarded a narrative love interest – of

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[6] Admittedly, this relationship is observed to change somewhat through the sequel films – *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989), *Lethal Weapon 3* (1992), and *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998).

[7] We might also add to this list such films as *Men In Black* (1997) and *Men In Black II* (2002) starring Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, and *Se7en* (1995) starring Morgan Freeman and Brad Pitt.

[8] There have also been some other variations within the biracial buddy theme, such as *Rush Hour* (1998) and *Rush Hour 2* (2001) starring Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker, and *Bad Boys* (1995) and *Bad Boys II* (2003) starring Martin Lawrence and Will Smith, that alter the conventional black-white pairing. Guerrero confirms that 'the convention of placing non-White buddies in the protective cultural custody of the White 'norm' must inevitable erode and open up to new combinations and possibilities' (1993: 245).

sorts – it is inevitably undermined by the comedy value of the pairing of a tiny donkey and an enormous dragon.

During the 1990s, black filmmaking, and consequently the type and variety of roles available to black actors appeared to take on a new lease of life. The emergence of key black directors – including Mario van Peebles, John Singleton, and Spike Lee – who defended a more 'independent' approach to the making of black films, meant that there were more opportunities for black actors, and a wider variety of roles. Films such as *New Jack City* (1991), *Boyz N The Hood* (1991), and *Malcolm X* (1992) raised the profile of black filmmaking, and ensured that black actors were seen on screen in roles that were other than comic or action-based. Since the Academy Awards ceremony of 2002 - widely recognised as a particularly 'historic' Oscar ceremony because both Best Actor categories were won by black actors – Halle Berry (for *Monster's Ball* (2001)), and Denzel Washington (for *Training Day* (2001)) - and Sidney Poitier also received a life-time recognition award, certain changes have been observed in the variety of roles available to black actors within Hollywood, and the subsequent recognition they have received (Bogle, 2002: 429). Actors like Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, Will Smith, Cuba Gooding Jnr, and Halle Berry are becoming more widely recognised within Hollywood, and are demonstrating their acting abilities across a much wider range of roles than black actors previously had access to. However, throughout these periods of black film making and despite an apparent increase in the range of roles available to black performers, Eddie Murphy has still retained a film career based predominantly on comic performance, although more recent films target children and/or a family audience. After a spate of highly successful bi-racial buddy movies during the 1980s, Murphy's career looked to be less

stable. *The Golden Child* (1986), *Coming to America* (1988), and *Harlem Nights* (1989) were less well received.[9] These films and others, including the all-black romantic comedy *Boomerang* (1992) can be categorised as Murphy's 'black' films, where instead of being partnered with a white male lead, Murphy is surrounded by largely black casts. Hollywood institutionally fears that films featuring more than one black actor inevitably result in an exclusively black interest film – thus alienating white audiences - and this may be offered as a partial explanation for the relative lack of success of these films.

Bogle has suggested that Murphy managed to effectively re-invent himself after this series of less than successful films by tapping into what might be categorised as 'family entertainment' films, which includes the two *Dr. Dolittle* films (1998: 2001), and the re-make of *The Nutty Professor* (1996) and its sequel *The Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps* (2000). Bogle argues that Murphy's recent successes, especially in *The Nutty Professor* films, suggest that 'a new generation wanted a Murphy hero that was less rowdy and outspoken', and that ultimately Murphy's new found success with family and younger audiences marks 'the full domestication of Murphy' (405). However, it is interesting to observe that Murphy's voice work – in *Shrek, Shrek 2* and Disney's *Mulan* (1998) – serves to recall and revisit his much earlier roles within the buddy movie formula. Bogle concedes that there is an inherent contradiction between Murphy's role as family entertainer in his recent live-action films, and the 'rather loud' voice work that is heard in his popular feature length animation films (405). It is to this discrepancy that I shall be returning through an analysis of Murphy's vocal performance as Donkey in *Shrek*.

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[9] Guerrero (1993) confirms that these 'Black-focused comedies' which 'situated Murphy in Third World or Black environments and supported him with non-White or Black casts, came nowhere near the box office earnings of his buddy movies' (241).

Following on from Bogle's comments about Murphy's voice work in recent popular feature length animation film, this section will argue for and construct a much less well-known history of black performance in animation, and discuss Murphy's specific contribution to it. Murphy has had a particularly important role to play in the history of black roles in animation since he is one of a group of actors that have leant their voice to more than one feature length animation role.[10]

Along side the relatively well-known history of the representation of blacks in live action Hollywood film making outlined above, runs a parallel and equally engaging - although much less well recognised - history of the representation of blacks in *animated* film making.[11] King (2002) suggests that there is a long and problematic tradition of representations of race in American film animation, which is especially evident in the cartoon short (144). Lindvall and Fraser's work for example, on the images and representations of African-Americans in the 'classic' Warner Bros. cartoon repertoire of the 1930s and 1940s, draws attention to the cartoon industry's use of the dominant racial stereotypes of the time, through such characters as those that frequently featured in pursuit of Bugs Bunny: 'the fat, stupid redneck Elmer Fudd, the bumbling little Hiawatha, and a pokey Stepin Fetchit black' (1998: 124). Ultimately though, Lindvall and Fraser conclude that despite such demeaning elements as the 'monkeylike face' of the little black boy Bosko (animated by Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising) and the exploits of Inki the African cannibal child (Chuck

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[10] Murphy's voice can be heard in *Shrek*, *Shrek 2*, and *Mulan*.
[11] It is interesting to observe that Bogle's passionate exploration of the history of black representation in Hollywood film should fail to include any examples drawn from animated film forms. Lindvall and Fraser (1998) confirm that 'While images of blackness have received critical coverage in studies of the classical Hollywood cinema, they have been generally neglected in the often overlooked category of the animated film' (121).

Jones), the majority of Warner Bros. cartoons were 'not motivated by any personal hatred or animosity' and instead were products of 'institutional racism' (133).

However, the history of the popular feature length animation film similarly reveals a long-standing preoccupation with representations of race. From as early as the release of *Fantasia* (1940), Walt Disney was accused of using a form of visual racism by employing the colour palette binaries of white to represent good, and black or dark colours to stand for evil. Byrne and McQuillan (1999) describe how one specific scene from *Fantasia* featuring 'a very young black centaur, figured as a little girl with four pigtails … large hooped earrings and a huge white grin' was necessarily censored because of its inherently racist portrayal (95). Even during Disney's 'golden age' the animated films continued to consistently provoke comment on their representations of race and colour. Byrne and McQuillan explain that *Dumbo* (1949) for example, is frequently held to be Disney's first use of characters that were clearly marked, or coded, or intended to be read as 'black' (95). Similarly, Disney's *The Jungle Book* (1967), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *The Aristocats* (1970) all feature narratives that centre around groups of distinctly racially differentiated characters, the codings of which are clearly located within quite primitive racial stereotyping: King Louie and his ghettoised troop of jazzed-up monkey musicians in *The Jungle Book*, a Russian wolfhound, a Mexican Chihuahua, a German daschhund, and a Cockney bulldog in *Lady and the Tramp*, and a Siamese cat who 'plays the piano with chopsticks, wears a cymbal as a 'coolie' hat, is cross-eyed and has a maniacal laugh', in *The Aristocats* (100).

More recent Disney films from the animation 'renaissance' still struggle with accusations of racism. Byrne and McQuillan, naming *The Lion King* (1994) as one of Disney's most 'black' films (101), draw attention to its reproduction of the kinds of stereotypes of black Americans 'that should be out of place in the revisionist Disney corpus of the mid-1990s' (100). *Toy Story* (1995), has been accused of totally eliminating any shades of blackness, of favouring instead the inherent appeal of whiteness, and through its rendering of clean, flawless and pristine images achieving a simulated 'cyber-whiteness' (Guerrero, 1998: 335).[12]

However, despite evidence of a close and troubled relationship between popular feature length animation and representations of race, and despite Disney's apparent increasing awareness of the issue, the *physical* appearance of a black person in feature length animation is virtually non-existent. Blackness is instead made to be present at a number of other levels, including at the level of the voice, which will be discussed in more detail below. However, although it is extremely rare to find any physically black characters in Disney's films, in the sense that they are visually rendered as black or of colour in the animation process, there are a number of instances where black characterisation is implied. The crows in *Dumbo* for example, are arguably coded as black, and this film is often taken to be the first incidence of Disney's use of clearly demarcated black characters. The crows perform what is essentially a chorus role and function together as an ensemble. The crows can be read as black at least partially because of their black feathers, which stand out in contrast particularly with the made-up whiteness of the circus clowns and their ringmaster. However, they can also be

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[12] A number of Disney's most recent animated films have been deliberately contrived to try to demonstrate Disney's new willingness to seriously engage with and negotiate questions of race. Both *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) and *Pocahontas* (1995), for instance, were both intended to stave off accusations of racial stereotyping in earlier feature animations, however unsuccessfully.

identified as black characters through their distinctive clothing, which features waistcoats, bow ties, and banded tall hats. The most commented upon element of their characterisation, however, is the musical performances with which they are associated, namely the acapella group singing of the well-known song 'When I see an elephant fly'.[13] The song is notable for its jazz rhythms and 'scat' influences, including improvisatory trumpet playing, and a particular style of loose 'jive' dancing. This kind of musical performance also marks many of the swinging, jiving characters of *The Jungle Book*, with which there are certain similarities. Both films feature 'a group of strangers singing jazz-style songs with scat', and in each film 'one of the performers makes a horn shape with his mouth to produced trumpet sounds' (Wainer, 1993: 53). In a similar vein, Sebastian the Crab in *The Little Mermaid* (1989) is also coded as black partly through his association with the Caribbean 'calypso' style number 'Under the Sea' in which he orchestrates the underwater world to a syncopated reggae beat with a steel band sound.[14] Like these examples, Eddie Murphy's role as Donkey in *Shrek* is also racially marked by his relationship to music. Donkey frequently breaks into passages of song, which Shrek objects to. When the duo arrive at Duloc and Donkey refuses to stop singing Shrek threatens 'You're going the right way for a smacked bottom!' Similarly, at the end of the film, during the celebrations for Shrek and Fiona's wedding, Donkey adopts a James Brown-inspired 'soul man' performance as he leads the singing and dancing. This performance is

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[13] This number is performed by the Hall Johnson choir, 'considered by many [to be] the greatest choral company in the country' at the time, and well known for their spiritual songs (Bogle: 134).
[14] More worryingly though, Sebastian's blackness may also be signalled by the emphasis frequently drawn to his teeth and mouth, especially his thick lips and large white teeth, which suggest a 'Negro' caricature.

carried through into the 'Shrek in the Swamp Karaoke Dance Party' section, where Murphy's style of musical performance is especially noticeable and recognisable.[15]

Some of these black codings invite comparison with Guerrero's 'strategies of containment' where the black image is only permitted to appear in certain forms (1993). In a similar vein, Snead (1994) has argued that Disney's representation of the black man in *Song of the South* (1946) is driven by a 'rhetoric of harmlessness', that like Guerrero's strategy of containment would appear to work to minimise the threat of black masculinity (84). The Uncle Remus character is similar to the original Uncle Tom described by Bogle as the contented and happy Negro slave. Uncle Remus' associations with the innocent past time of storytelling, his naivety towards the children, and his ability to call up and command the animated characters that illustrate his tales, all serve to infantilise him and work to remove any potential threat of blackness, rendering him 'harmless'. It would appear then, that animation might have its own set of strategies of containment to deal with the problem of black representation. Selective anthropomorphism for example, could also be one such strategy, where only white characters are permitted to be human figures, resulting in black characters often being trivialised within the roles of animals. *The Lion King* perhaps offers the best example of this since despite the film's obvious preoccupation with race, it would appear to be reluctant to represent black people as people at all since all of the characters are animals. Byrne and McQuillan (1999) note how Sebastian's diminutive size results in his containment within *The Little Mermaid*, which alongside his attachment to the heroine functions as something of a domestication, and in particular removes the threat of his black male sexuality (105).

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[15] It is also in these sections that we hear Murphy's characteristic laughter patterns. These have been foregrounded in other performances too, especially in *Beverly Hills Cop*, and are clear codings of Murphy's star persona and screen presence.

Even the colour that he is rendered within the animation – bright red – results in his racial identity being made invisible.[16] Sebastian is also proved to be incompetent and incapable of protecting his charge, when Ariel escapes to the surface. His role as a hapless sidekick is one typically assigned to black performers, and he is also frequently made the butt of physical comedy, becoming trapped in a teapot in Ariel's secret cave, being accidentally served up on a platter for dinner, and generally creating unintentional chaos.

Discounting Disney's *Song of the South* then, that starred James Baskett as Uncle Remus in a mixed animation and live action film, Disney had never shown a black man *as* a black man in any of its feature length animations until *Atlantis: the Lost Empire* which was released in 2001.[17] Joshua Sweet (voiced by Phil Morris) is the military doctor who forms part of the crew put together for the expedition to recover Atlantis. Sweet is clearly visually rendered as black through the colour of his skin, but also through other signals of a stylised form of black masculinity, including a square jaw, broad flat nose, thick lips, a heavily muscular build, and a shaved head. Sweet's role within the narrative is largely sympathetic, and is associated with compassion and healing. This is evident when he stands up for and defends the people of Atlantis – 'this was not the plan' - and when he tends to the dying King, but it is still a largely limited role. Although the character is often present in scenes, he frequently has little to say or do in them: he is silent and passive for large sections. Arguably, Sweet is less clearly defined and less well developed than some of the other

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[16] There is an interesting set of comparisons between Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid* and the character of Mushu the miniature dragon in *Mulan* (1998) (voiced by Eddie Murphy), who is also coded as black but visually rendered as bright red and lacking in physical stature.

[17] Black women had been represented as black women a little earlier, in *Hercules* (1997), but only in a supporting 'chorus' role, which effectively side-lines the trio of black female characters allowing them to only comment on the action.

members of the crew, and although he is the first to 'tell his story' around the communal campfire at the beginning of the quest, his is one of the most subsidiary roles in the team, and he has only a minimal screen presence throughout. However, despite this persistent marginalisation, Sweet does perform a pivotal narrative role by persuading Milo (Michael J. Fox) to work with the remainder of the team to save Atlantis. Overall though, the character is somewhat marginalized, leading to the conclusion that the black presence is actually a rather token one.[18]

The above reconstruction of the history of representation of blacks in popular feature length animation clearly differs dramatically from the more general history of the representations of blacks throughout the rest of live action Hollywood. Although roles for blacks have always been marginalized and often stereotypically limiting throughout the history of Hollywood film making, blacks have at least had *some* presence on the live action screen. The visual black presence – that is, black people represented *as* black people – still remains largely denied in the popular feature length animated form. However, like the anecdote described in the opening paragraph of this chapter, where it may be unacceptable for black people to be seen in feature length animation film, it does not follow that they are not heard. The following section explores the relationship between black voices and feature length animation, and especially focuses on a stereotypical black vocalisation, typified by Murphy's performance in *Shrek*.

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[18] Despite what seems to me to be the obvious significance of the character of Joshua Sweet – standing as he does as the very first incidence of an animated black man in mainstream popular feature length animation – the event seems to have passed rather unnoticed by film critics and commentators alike, and regrettably no relevant or useful observations could be sourced to support my perspective.

The use of 'black voices' is one method for achieving a level of black representation. This has been partially achieved in a number of popular feature length animations through the implementation of linguistic elements that can be heard as distinctly 'black'. For example, the ensemble of crows in Disney's *Dumbo* call each other 'brutha', and employ Southern black accents and syntax. Wainer describes their dialogue as a 'black colloquial dialect similar to that of Amos n' Andy', and he transcribes a passage as follows: ' "Uh, what's all the rookus? C'mon, step aside brothuhs, uh, what's cookin' around heah? What new? What fryin', boys?"' (1993: 52). The vocal performance of Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid* is similarly persistently marked by certain linguistic features heard to be typical of some forms of black speech, such as, 'Dis will be de finest concert I have ever conducted!', and 'Teenagers! Dey tink dey know everyting!'[19]

There is a linguistic basis to this trend for using readily definable 'black' voices. It is generally believed that black and white speakers can be readily distinguished by the way they speak. There has been substantial research into the linguistic and phonological differences across black and white speakers, especially African American speakers. For example, Rickford (1999) gives some specific descriptions of the distinctive features of African American Vernacular English that may help describe some of the characteristics of the pronunciation of the speech examples

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[19] There are a number of wider issues associated with the use of 'racialised' voices in popular feature length animation films. Of particular interest is the use of the voices in *The Jungle Book* that features the voice talents of the (white) performers Phil Harris (Baloo the Bear) and Louis Prima (King Louie). Both Baloo and King Louie arguably draw at least part of their characterisations from black-inspired performances. The use of white actors to perform black voices has some history. Smith (2003), for example, discusses how some of the voices of the black performers in *Carmen Jones* (1954) were dubbed and replaced by those of white singers, prompting Smith to wonder whether this was because Dorothy Dandridge sounded 'too black' (29). In the case of *The Jungle Book*, though, I would argue that there is scope to understand this sort of practice as a kind of vocal equivalent of 'blacking up', and representative of a devious and insidious form of racism, assuming the appropriation of something akin to a black voice quality.

transcribed above in more phonetic detail. Speakers of AAVE routinely substitute the voiced sound *th* for *d*, resulting in *dis*, *de*, and *dey* for 'this', 'the' and 'they' in the example from *The Little Mermaid*, above (4). Similarly, voiceless *th* often becomes *t*, as in the word *everyting*. The final letter of words ending in –*ing* is frequently dropped in AAVE, giving *cookin* and *fryin*. Grammatically, AAVE has some important features too. For example, the abbreviated form of the word 'is' is often dropped completely, as in the phrase *What new?* for 'What's new? (6). There are many other distinctive features of AAVE at phonological, grammatical and lexical levels, but it is generally thought that it is the characteristics of grammar that particularly set AAVE apart from other forms of English. It would seem that by drawing upon these recognisable features it might be possible to enable producers of popular feature length animation to generate a character that employs AAVE characteristics, and consequently sounds distinctly 'black'.[20]

However, in addition to phonetic and grammatical signifiers, a 'black' voice may be signalled by drawing upon more prosodic elements of speech, such as voice dynamics. When Dr. Joshua Sweet is heard to speak in Disney's *Atlantis* he conforms to stereotypical patterns of black speech: he talks very fast, and his vocal delivery style could be described as being characterised by 'wise-cracks' and gags ('I have soap, and I'm not afraid to use it!'). This sort of vocal delivery – based on rapid 'one-liners' and persistent gags - is very similar to a spoken performance style that has

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[20] Although differences between black and white speakers may be noted at a linguistic level as discussed above, some experiments have suggested that black and white speakers may differ even when the linguistic and phonological content of what they say is controlled. Giles recounts the details of an experiment where a group of black and white Americans were asked to read aloud a passage of prose 'which supposedly kept dialectal features to a minimum' (1979: 266). It was found that the black and white speakers could be 'accurately distinguished' from each other, leading to the conclusion that 'ethnic categorisation was to all intents and purposes largely determined by paralinguistic (or even prosodic) aspects' (266).

become synonymous with many black actors, including Eddie Murphy, and it is most noticeably Murphy's vocal reputation that forms the key element in the characterisation of Donkey in *Shrek*. Described with the tag line as 'the greatest fairy story never told', this film is based on William Steig's children's book of the same name. DreamWorks adapted the story into essentially a buddy movie format (see discussion below) where the unlikely duo of swamp ogre Shrek (voiced by Mike Myers) and the verbose Donkey (Eddie Murphy) are sent on a quest to rescue the beautiful Princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz) from the dragon-protected fiery keep, at the behest of the vertically-challenged Lord Farquad (John Lithgow) who intends to take Fiona as his wife. The story itself might be highly conventional but the treatment of it certainly is not. Caro describes the film as a 'spoof', saying that although the narrative adopts a traditional 'fairy tale template' it frequently goes off 'on satirical tangents', the principal target of which would appear to be Disney's classic film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (2001: 17).

As in many of Murphy's live-action roles, it is part of the characterisation of Donkey that he will not stop talking. This relationship between Donkey and talking is cemented from the first scene when we are introduced to the character at the sale of Fairy Tale Creatures. His owner tells him to 'Shut up' when he appeals for clemency, and the sole reason he is expected to fetch a good price at the auction is because he is a *talking* Donkey. Initially he refuses to co-operate, playing dumb, so that his owner has to explain 'He's really quite a chatterbox ... he talks, he *does*', and resorts to a ventriloquist routine in order to convince the soldiers. Only after he has been affected by magic fairy dust does Donkey concede to proclaim 'Now I'm a *flying* talking Donkey!'

This relationship between Donkey and talking is continued throughout the film, but most noticeably in the partnership between Donkey and Shrek. Donkey first meets Shrek after being chased through the forest, and he chatters rapidly through this first encounter. Shrek's dream of a quiet life is interrupted and he is powerless to stem the flow of Donkey's stream of consciousness, even grabbing him round the muzzle, but Donkey still keeps talking. During these early stages of the relationship, Donkey seems to be quite happy chatting away to himself, with Shrek hardly listening. Even when banished from the inside of Shrek's swamp home Donkey can be heard chattering away to himself on the front step. The relationship between Donkey and Shrek is based on Shrek's reluctant tolerance of Donkey's verbosity. After being sent on the quest to rescue Fiona, Donkey rapidly recounts events so far in a fast talking style, prompting Shrek to comment wearily 'Maybe there's a reason donkeys shouldn't talk'. When they reach the Castle to rescue Fiona, Donkey's fear makes his chattering even worse, until Shrek turns and stops him, saying 'Donkey! Two things: Shut! Up!' When escaping from the Castle with Fiona in tow, she exclaims 'It talks!' Shrek replies, 'Yeah, but it's getting him to shut up that's the trick!' Finally, after Fiona confides her secret to Donkey, but makes him promise not to tell Shrek, Donkey complains 'What's the point of being able to talk if you have to keep secrets!'

Throughout the film Donkey's relationship to talking is highlighted. This is especially achieved by a number of instances were Donkey's chattering is faded out on the soundtrack, usually marking the transition from one sequence to another, and then faded back into the soundtrack again. For example, when Donkey and Shrek leave the swamp to go in search of Lord Farquaad, Donkey's chattering is faded out as the scene changes to Farquaad torturing the Gingerbread Man. Then Donkey's

chattering is faded back into the soundtrack as the scene returns to the duo arriving at Duloc. The impression created by this use of fade-out and fade-in suggests that Donkey has not stopped talking for the whole journey. A similar effect is achieved when Donkey and Shrek first set off on the quest, and walking through the fields Shrek's discussion of ogres, onions, and layers, prompts Donkey into a ramble about cakes and parfaits. This dialogue is faded out over a montage sequence of events during the journey, again suggesting that Donkey's verbal musings will accompany the entire quest.

This kind of relationship to talking, especially fast and loud talking, has formed part of Murphy's screen persona since his stand-up comedy beginnings, and became a recognisable feature of his early film performances in *48 Hrs*, *Trading Places* and *Beverly Hills Cop*. Throughout his film career Murphy has established a reputation for a particular brand of vocal performance, forming an essential element of Murphy's star persona, without which he is not 'Murphy'. This vocal element of Murphy's performance has not gone unobserved. King (2002) describes his vocal performance with a range of adjectives including 'loud', 'crazy', 'unruly' (143), 'irrational', 'childlike', 'disruptive' (145), 'brash', 'out-spoken', 'unconventional' (146), 'demonstrative', 'highly performative', 'high-pitched', and 'motor-mouthed' (147). Bogle (2002) similarly describes Murphy's vocal performance style as 'fast-talking', 'raucous and rowdy', 'quick-witted', and 'sharp-tongued' (281), and further categorises Murphy as a 'brash wiseguy loudmouth, with expert-timing and a rapid-fire delivery' (283). Ward (2002) describes Murphy's performance as Mushu in *Mulan* as that of a 'nonstop talker' (111), and Watkins (1994) says that in *Beverly Hills Cop* Murphy plays the role of a 'fast-talking black conman' (19). The focus of

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these descriptions of Murphy's vocalisations is on aspects of volume ('loud', 'unruly', 'disruptive') and pitch ('childlike', 'high-pitched'). However, it is the voice dynamic of rate that has attracted the majority of comments - 'motor-mouthed' 'fast-talking', 'rapid-fire', 'non-stop'.[21] Murphy has established a vocal reputation based upon loud and fast talking that has been built up across the various roles he has played, and which is now expected from each subsequent role he takes on.

As mentioned briefly in the introduction to this chapter King has argued that Murphy's earliest performance style, epitomised by his stand-up comedy video *Eddie Murphy Raw* (1987), and his roles in *Trading Places*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, and *48Hrs*, draws heavily on what King calls the 'coon' aesthetic. In particular, King draws attention to the performative nature of the 'coon' aesthetic, saying that it is characterised by particular uses of physical gesture, distinct facial expressions, and importantly for this thesis, certain typical forms of vocalisations. Apart from saying that the 'coon' was often responsible for 'butchering the English language', Bogle does not have anything specific to say about the vocal elements of the 'coon' performance stereotype (8). It is King that further elaborates on the vocal elements of the 'coon' aesthetic by suggesting that the vast majority of successful black actors in Hollywood draw in some way on this performance style.

Within the field of phonetic theory and voice quality elements of speech such as volume, rate, and pitch are defined as voice dynamics, and can be accurately described and analysed. By adopting these techniques, a more detailed account of Murphy's typical vocal performance can be achieved. Laver (1994) identifies some

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[21] Bogle identifies Murphy's performance as Axel Foley in *Beverly Hills Cop* as being 'a loud, fast-talking pseudo-Crazy-Nigger routine', and specifically draws attention to the scene in the Beverly Hills Palm Hotel where Foley manipulates the hotel receptionist into giving him a room.

specific categories of voice dynamics that can be defined and quite precisely described using certain phonetic terminologies. The eight key categories of analysis within the field of voice dynamics as recognised by Laver are pitch, tone, speech melody, loudness, stress, rhythm, rate, and continuity. Where these factors are habitual characteristics of an individual's vocal performance they can be measured, defined, and evaluated. These terms need defining and describing in phonetic terms. Pitch can be defined as the perceptual auditory correlate of the frequency of vibration of the vocal folds, and it is measured in Hertz (Hz). There are various terms relating to the perceptual measurement and description of pitch that can be used for our purposes. For example, pitch-mean describes the average pitch of a given speaker based on what one would normally expect from a speaker of that particular age, sex, height, physique etc., and pitch-mean is perceptually recorded as being high or low. Pitch-range is the range within which a speaker's voice varies in ordinary speech and can be measured as wide or narrow. Pitch-variability is the amount that a particular speaker's pitch varies within its habitual range, and can be measured as high or low, so that voices that tend to have largely constant pitch levels can be described as having low variability, and voices with a large amount of dynamic pitch movement can be scored as having high pitch variability. There may be also other habitual characteristics of a speaker's voice relating to pitch, such as declination, for example, which is the process whereby at the end of a given utterance pitch values tend to become gradually lower, or the opposite of this where the ends of an utterance are habitually characterised by rising pitch patterns, as in the tendency of some speakers to habitually use a rising pitch at the end of an utterance, turning statements into questions. Aspects of pitch can be transcribed on a sort of stave, representing the upper and lower limits of an individual's pitch-range.

Loudness is the perceptual correlate of the acoustic intensity of the voice, and again there are descriptive terms we can use. An individual has a loudness-mean, perceived as being high or low, depending on what we would expect from the physiology and anatomy of the speaker. A speaker also has an habitual loudness range preferred by them for everyday conversation which can be described as being wide or narrow, and a loudness-variability which can be described as high or low, where voices tending to show uniform levels of loudness can be described as having low variability, and voices with dynamic movements of loudness can be described as having high variability.

These dynamic aspects of voice quality can serve a number of different purposes. For example, they may be used paralinguistically as a means of conveying emotion or a temporary state of mind. A very quiet voice dynamic – whispering, for example - may be used to signify intimacy, while a loud volume could extralinguistically signify anger. Where certain voice dynamics are used habitually by an individual speaker they may serve an extralinguistic function, and be typical of their habitual voice quality.

Since so many of Murphy's performances have often been described as being fast-talking, and many of his roles, including this one as Donkey in *Shrek*, are characterised by passages of particularly rapid delivery, the aspect of his vocal performance to be explored in depth in this case study will be the voice characteristic of *rate*. Within the discipline of phonetics, analysis of the temporal aspects of speech can be understood along the twin axes of *rate* and *continuity*, where continuity relates to the number of pauses in speech in terms of such things as filled pauses, where the

speaker inserts such non-linguistic material as 'er', 'erm', 'um', for example, and silent pauses where no such material is heard. Continuous speech can therefore be defined as speech that contains only silent pauses while non-continuous speech is more common, and contains the kinds of pauses typical of normal everyday interaction.

Rate itself can most simply be defined as the overall tempo of speaking, and can further be subdivided into the measurement of the articulation rate and the speaking rate. The articulation rate, which is traditionally measured in syllables per second, takes into account the rate at which any given utterance is produced excluding silent pauses, where an average articulation rate for an English speaker would be approximately 5.3 syllables per second (Laver, 1994: 158). The speaking rate on the other hand, can be defined as the rate of speech of a complete speaking turn and includes in its measurement both silent and filled pauses, and usually results in a measurement of words per minute, where an average speaking rate for an English speaker is around 200 words per minute (Laver: 158).[22]

As shown above, Murphy's typical vocal performance is often routinely and glibly described as being 'fast-talking', as has been illustrated above, but within phonetic terms a fast speaker would be one that speaks in excess of 240 words per minute. A small experiment will ascertain whether Murphy's vocal performance fits within this category. Within King's observation that Murphy's vocal performances are based on 'fast-talking' a lot of things are being assumed and hypothesised. Such attempts to

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[22] Other useful descriptive terms employed within phonetics to define and expand upon the analysis of the temporal qualities of speech include distinguishing between slow, medium, and fast tempos, between accelerating and decelerating rates, and additional terms relating to continuity such as hesitancy and fluency.

describe vocal performance cover over a whole host of perceptual responses that once uncovered may reveal a great deal about how we hear and understand vocal performance in terms of a star's screen persona. I suspect that Murphy's performance in moments of *Raw* for instance, will be marked by a distinctly fast rate but that *Shrek* will be nowhere near as fast. This would then invite ideological-based discussion as to why Murphy should be persistently perceptually heard as fast-talking, even when his vocal performance is not in fact marked by this vocal characteristic.

The following is an experiment to determine whether Murphy's vocal performance as Donkey in *Shrek* is characterised by a truly fast speaking rate – which Laver defines as being in excess of 240 words per minute (542). The experiment intends to compare two segments of Eddie Murphy's vocal performance – one from *Raw* and one from *Shrek.* The below transcript is taken from one of Murphy's filmed concerts *Eddie Murphy Raw* (1987). There is a methodological issue to consider with measuring and analysing Murphy's rate of speech when he is engaged in scripted conversation with other characters. For this reason I have chosen not to use segments from Murphy's live action films, even though these are also similarly thought to be characterised by rapid speech delivery.[23] I have chosen instead to analyse a segment from one of Murphy's stand-up concerts because it is just Murphy talking. Similarly, the segment from *Shrek* has been chosen because it is effectively a monologue. The below segment from *Raw* comes towards the end of the stand-up comedy routine, during a section where Murphy reflects on the characteristics of his ideal woman.

> Gotta be a good cook. I didn't realise that my mother was a good cook til after I moved out the house. When you're a child, and your mother won't take you to McDonald's you don't think she can cook, and I had one of those mothers

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[23] Watkins (1994) has described the opening sections of both *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Beverly Hills Cop 2* as Murphy performing a 'hip street persona ... a slick, apparently frenetic, fast-talking black con man engaged in out-thinking and out-talking some dangerous, if somewhat inept, white criminals' (19).

y'know, no matter what you want she had the ingredients at home. You say 'Ma, I wanna stop and get some McDonalds'. And she go, 'I got hamburger meat at home'. 'But I want McDonald's hamburger'. 'I make you a hamburger better than McDonald's'. 'Better than McDonald's?' 'That's right, and when you get home you can help momma make it'. And you say, 'Shit, better than, better than McDonald's?'. And your mother says, 'Ok, go and get the big black frying pan from under the stove'. So you hand her the big black frying pan, and she says, 'Now while you're in there I want you to go to the refrigerator and get the chopped meat, and while you're in there get me a green pepper and an onion'. And you say, ''Ain't no green peppers in McDonald's'. 'I'm not making you McDonald's, I'm making you momma's burgers and I need green peppers and onions, and while you're in there get me an egg too'. 'What you need eggs for? I want hamburger. You making egg McMuffin'. 'I'm not making egg McMuffin, I don't even know what no damn egg McMuffin is, so give me the egg and shut your mouth'. And she take the egg and the green peppers and chops the green pepper up in big chunks, not even dice it, but big chunks of green peppers and onions and mix the egg in, and put paprika and all this shit in and make a big meat ball and put it in the middle of the frying pan. In McDonald's the meat is this thin. Your mother's shit is like this and fat with green peppers hanging out of it and shit and a big split in the middle of it and grease is popping out and you're looking at it while its popping and you're looking at the grease in the pan and you're thinking to yourself, 'That don't look like no MacDonald's'. And your mother says, 'Go inside the refrigerator, go inside there and get me the bread out of the bread box'. And you go look in the bread box and you say, 'Ma, we don't have no hamburger buns. All we have is Wonder bread'. 'That's what I said, get the bread out of the bread box'. 'You gonna put it on square Wonder bread?' 'God damn it, bread is bread. You better bring me that bread before I slap you in the mouth. Don't tell me nothing there about Wonder bread. I know how much that bread cost and don't tell me some shit about Wonder bread. This is Wonder bread and hamburger is a hamburger, and you make it, and put it in the middle of the square Wonder bread'. In McDonald's they use buns, the meat covers the whole bread. At your mother's the meat's right in the middle of the bread, with grease running through the middle making the bread stick to the plate. Now big green peppers are hanging out the top of this big meat ball on the bread and you're trying to put some ketchup on it and its mixed with the grease and turned the bread into pink dough. Then you grab it and you fingerprint it and you get big pink fingerprints in the dough and you stand there looking at it and you're trying to make it look like McDonald's so you rip the edges off it to try and make it round, and you got green peppers and grease running down your hand, and your mother says, 'Now go outside and play'. And the other kids, they got McDonald's. They outside going 'We got McDonald's hamburgers. McDonald's, McDonald's. I got McDonald's.' And you stand there with this big house burger. And kids are honest, 'Urgh, where do you get that big welfare green pepper burger?' And you cry, 'My mother made it ...'

This section analyses a comparative scene from *Shrek*, which takes place during the rescue of Princess Fiona from her dragon-protected castle, where Donkey attempts to fight off some unwanted attentions from the enamoured dragon. It is a much briefer segment but the same methods of analysis will be applied.

> Slow down slow down baby please I believe it's healthy to get to know someone over a long period of time just call me old-fashioned you know ha ha I don't want to rush into a er a physical relationship I'm not emotionally ready for a er a commitment of this er magnitude really is the word I'm looking for magnitude what hey that is unwanted physical contact hey what are you doing okay okay let's just back up a little and take this one step at a time I mean we really should get to know each other first you know as er friends or maybe even as penpals cos I'm on the road a lot but I just love receiving cards and you know I'd really love to stay but hey hey hey don't do that that's my tail that's my personal tail why you're gonna tear it right off I don't give permission hey what're you going to do now hey now no way no no no no no no no no no oh .... [24]

As mentioned above, Laver describes a fast speaking rate as being in excess of about 240 words per minute, which represents an average of approximately 4 words spoken per second. The above quoted segment of Murphy's stand-up routine lasts for 194 seconds.[25] According to Laver's figures we should expect to anticipate a word count of approximately 779 words within that time frame in order for Murphy's speech to be classified as a fast speaking rate. The total word count that Murphy speaks is 687.[26] This is not quite as fast as Laver predicts, but it is nevertheless quite close. Due to the nature of the stand-up routine, there are moments of pause in Murphy's

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[24] This scene is effectively a monologue by Donkey since the dragon does not speak. It is typical of a number of other instances of Donkey's speech that could be described as having an improvisatory quality, almost like a 'stream of consciousness', which is quite apt considering Murphy's stand-up comedy roots.

[25] This segment was timed as accurately as possible using a counter clock. It was measured at 3 minutes and 14 seconds.

[26] Transcription was achieved through a process of watching and re-watching this section of Murphy's stand-up routine. Although every effort was made to achieve accuracy in the transcription process, it is possible that what is reproduced here does not contain every word that Murphy utters during the segment. However, it is not absolutely essential for the purposes of this thesis that scientific precision is achieved. It is enough for the requirements of this thesis that Murphy's speaking rate can be examined in the light of phonetic judgements of what constitutes a fast speaking rate. Even if technically, there may be some inaccuracies in the measuring and transcribing processes, this should not detract from the observations to be made.

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delivery, where he waits for the audience's laughter for example, or pulls a comical face, and this may account for the fractionally fewer words per minute expected.

The excerpt from *Shrek* is much shorter, but the same method of analysis was employed to establish Murphy's average speaking rate.[27] The segment lasts for 50 seconds, and Murphy speaks 178 words in that time. In order to qualify as possessing a fast speaking rate according to Laver, it would be expected that within 50 seconds, Murphy should speak 200 words. Again, the number of words that Murphy actually speaks in the segment, although not exact, is quite close to this figure. From the two examples transcribed and timed it can be concluded that although Murphy's speaking rate does not precisely match the figure that Laver suggests would mark a particularly fast speaking rate for a speaker of English, both samples do come close to the suggested figure.

However, if Murphy's 'fast-talking' vocal performance is not in fact as rapid as Laver expects a fast speaker should be, why do so many observers conclude that Murphy's performance style is marked by a fast speaking rate? Laver asserts that 'The analysis of phenomena such as rate is dangerously open to subjective bias' (542). By this statement Laver would seem to suggest that most people can make fairly accurate judgements of rate and continuity that correspond quite accurately to measured analyses, but a listener's perception of rate and continuity can be crucially influenced by what Laver terms that listener's 'phonological experience', making a given listener's perception of rate and continuity in a different language, unfamiliar accent, or different cultural context, for example, quite unreliable. In support of this point,

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[27] Again, the segment was timed using a counter clock, and measured at 50 seconds. A certain degree of inaccuracy is anticipated, in both the timing and the transcribing of the segment, which will be accounted for.

for example, Giles has explained how West Indians living in Britain are often perceived by British-English listeners as being hysterical and over-emotional since their speech patterns are often marked by a rate and continuity quite unfamiliar to the phonological experience of members outside their language community (1979: 381). Eddie Murphy's 'fast-talking' vocal performances may similarly be perceived in this way. According to Laver's suggestion of the subjectivity of perceptual responses to rate and continuity, Murphy's speech rate in *Shrek* may actually be perceived as fast only by those audiences whose phonological experiences are unfamiliar with the rate and continuity patterns of the speech community that Murphy may be thought to represent. Consequently, Murphy's screen persona has become inextricably linked with a set of speech patterns and behaviours based on rapid delivery and fast speaking rates. By drawing upon this long-term speech behaviour in the characterisation of Donkey, the producers of *Shrek* simultaneously achieve a characterisation that is clearly based on Murphy, and also one that draws on distinctly 'black' vocal features. Murphy's voice work in *Shrek* conforms to white audiences expectations of the black man as buffoon, and the comedy value of his voice is achieved through such destabilisations of the vocal dynamics of rate, pitch, and volume that render the characterisation 'performed', 'coon-like', contained, and ultimately non-threatening. Murphy's screen persona is based around his habitual vocal patterns that stand as recognisable elements of his star presence. The above experiment has demonstrated how a phonetic approach to the celebrity voice allows these aspects of performance to be singled out for analysis, and has also shown that the celebrity voice is a productive site of revelation, especially for revealing ideologies of race.

Chapter Five

Tom Hanks in Disney's *Toy Story*
Masculinity, Identity, and Voice

Tom Hanks' star image:

Tom Hanks is one of Hollywood's most prolific, profitable, and critically acclaimed actors. McDonald (2000) lists Hanks as one of the 'leading stars' of the 1990s, and refers to him as one of Hollywood's most 'dependable' performers (103). Hanks is a prolific actor, having starred in at least one film release every year since his career began with *Splash* in 1984. He is one of Hollywood's most highly paid performers – commanding salaries in the region of $20,000,000 for recent roles[1] – but he is also a highly 'bankable' figure, meaning that the name of 'Hanks' attached to a particular project can virtually guarantee a film's box office success. Hanks' acting career has been particularly shaped by his ability to combine popularity with critical acclaim. He has twice won Academy Awards for Best Actor: for his performances in *Philadelphia* (1993) and *Forrest Gump* (1994),[2] and in 2002 he was awarded the prestigious AFI Life Achievement Award in recognition of his successes.

Hanks' on-screen star image is built on his reputation for playing 'good guys'. This reputation is perhaps partly derived from his close association over a number of years with the romantic comedy format – including in particular *Splash*, *Big* (1988), *Sleepless In Seattle* (1993), and *You've Got Mail* (1998), and his 'New Man' characterisation within these types of films. But even in other genre films such as *Apollo 13* (1995), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *The Green Mile* (1999) where he

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[1] Hanks was paid $18,000,000 for his role in *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), as well as taking a profit option from the film.
[2] Hanks was also nominated for Best Actor in 1989 for *Big* (1988), in 1999 for *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and in 2001 for *Cast Away* (2000).

plays more dramatic roles, Hanks maintains an on-screen image that is built on the characteristics of honesty, goodness, reliability, and an all-American wholesomeness, usually carried through in the face of adversity. For example, despite the fact that his 'good guy' image might be seen to be compromised in *The Green Mile*, where he plays an officer in charge of executions on a death row prison wing, Hanks' role is based on a troubled and angst-ridden performance that negotiates the moral complexities of the legal and penitentiary systems of America in the 1930s, and their relation to justice, institutionalised racism, and the death penalty. Similarly, in the action films *Apollo 13* and *Saving Private Ryan*, Hanks' characters may struggle and be forced to take difficult decisions, but the 'good guy' characterisation remains.

Hanks' on-screen image is also augmented by his off-screen industry persona. His reputation for reliability played out on-screen is supported by his economic reliability within the Hollywood industry itself. Not only can the name 'Tom Hanks' pre-sell a film, but he also has a particular reputation as an actor of 'quality'. He has demonstrated his acting ability and his versatility as a performer by playing a wide variety of roles across a broad range of film genres, and in particular by making the difficult transition from comic roles in the early part of his career, to more dramatic roles, and the reputation for being a 'serious' actor. Hanks has received substantial critical acclaim for his willingness to tackle difficult or confrontational issues in his roles – playing an AIDS victim in *Philadelphia* (1993), and exploring learning difficulties and mental illness in *Forrest Gump* (1994). *Cast Away* (2000) is a particularly good example of his acting ability. Not only was he required to prepare for the role by altering his body shape, he also 'carried' large sections of the film alone, with only a basketball as a 'co-star'. Recently, Hanks has begun to work

behind the scenes of Hollywood filmmaking, becoming involved in production and directing – *That Thing You Do!* (1996) was his directorial debut – and this move has also helped to secure him respect and establish his status as a 'serious' figure within the industry, and position him alongside other Hollywood 'greats' who have similarly made the transition from merely acting to overseeing their own projects, such as Clint Eastwood, for example.

Despite his many successes, Tom Hanks is marketed as being actually rather unremarkable. He is perhaps of average good looks; although not unattractive, there is neither anything significantly striking about his features, and unlike several of his contemporaries of 1980s and 1990s Hollywood cinema – Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis - his physical body is rarely the focus of any of his roles. Although physical transformation forms the main narrative drive within *Big* (1988) for example, there is clearly not the focus on the 'hard body' explored in other films from this period. Similarly, although Hanks transformed his body by losing over two stones in weight for his role in *Philadelphia* (1993), and gaining and losing over four stones for *Cast Away* (2000), these transformations are coded as the necessary preparations of a serious actor. In interviews and press releases he appears as 'ordinary', and a 'nice guy'. The popular press recently reported two occasions where Hanks demonstrated his all-round 'niceness'. In September 2001 Hanks came to the assistance of a jogger collapsed with heat exhaustion, and also helped to save a drowning man in April 2002, even swapping banter and signing autographs after the event.[3] In his Academy Award acceptance speech in 1993, Hanks famously credited his High School drama teacher with his acting success, further helping to secure his

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[3] Both events were reported in *The National Enquirer*, and the information accessed via www.imdb.com 22/10/04.

reputation as a 'nice guy', who does not forget his roots, or those who have helped him achieve. Although Hanks comes from a fractured family up-bringing – his parents divorced, and there followed a series of stepfamily arrangements – Hanks considers himself to have had a normal and happy Californian childhood. In his private life Hanks is constructed as a happily married family man: he is frequently photographed with his wife. Although he has been married twice and has four children across the two relationships, Hanks' personal relationships are rarely the focus of gossip-columns or celebrity magazines. His off-screen persona works to support his 'good guy' on-screen image, and there seems to be little difference between the 'real' Tom Hanks, and Tom Hanks 'the Hollywood star'.

How does Hanks' *voice quality* contribute to his star persona?

Like his physical appearance, Hanks' voice can be described as 'ordinary' too; it is not particularly remarkable in any defining characteristic. While in the previous chapter, many commentators described key elements of Eddie Murphy's voice, and stressed the importance of Murphy's voice as forming a significant element of his on-screen persona, Hanks' voice does not appear to have received comparable critical attentions, either in terms of *how* he sounds, or the level of contribution his voice makes to his star image. On the rare occasions that Hanks' voice has warranted comment, its descriptions are vague and non-committal: Branston (1995) describes it as 'deepish' (39). Branston's observation is made in passing within a larger discussion about male voices in Hollywood cinema, but despite its seeming insignificance the unpromising description 'deepish' actually presents a useful opportunity to explore a number of key issues relating to Hanks' star image, his voice quality, and his vocal performance in *Toy Story*.

Hollywood masculinity: body and/or voice?

There are a number of possible reasons for the general lack of interest in the male voice carried in the vagueness of the description 'deepish'. Hollywood has always tended to favour explorations of representations of masculinity via a focus on the male *body*, rather than the male voice. Jeffords (1994) draws attention to the muscle-bound heroes of 1980s action films, and categorises them as being representative of what she terms the 'hard body'. Key actors who performed the hard body include Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and their hyper-muscled physiques were displayed as visual spectacles to be admired in films such as *Rambo: First Blood* (1985), and *Predator* (1987). During the late 1980s and into the 1990s film critics observed a transformation in Hollywood's representations of on-screen masculinity, from the muscles and the hard-bodies of the action cinema to the emergence of what became known as the 'soft body' (Jeffords: 1993). The 'soft body' appeared in films preoccupied with a more 'domestic' sphere, with a particular focus on children, the arena of fatherhood, and the family unit. *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) and *Look Who's Talking* (1989) heralded a cycle of films that were the antithesis of the masculine physicality displayed in the 'hard body' films. I would argue that this focus on the *physical* representations of masculinity within Hollywood film has blinded critics to the role of the male *voice* across the same groups of films. In the 'hard body' films, masculinity is often represented as being taciturn and inarticulate. In *The Terminator* (1984) for example, Arnold Schwarzenegger speaks only seventeen lines of short one-sentence dialogue in the whole film.[4] In the sequel film *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* released in 1991 when Hollywood representations of

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[4] Schwarzenegger's dialogue in *The Terminator* is as follows: 1) Nice night for a walk 2) Nothing clean, right 3) Your clothes, give them to me now 4) The 12-gauge autoloader 5) The .45 long-slide with laser-sighting 6) Phazed plastic rifle in 40-watt range 7) The Uzi 9-millimetre 8) All 9) Wrong 10) Sarah Connor? 11) I'm a friend of Sarah Connor 12) I was told that she's here 13) Could I see her, please? 14) Where is she? 15) I'll be back 16) Fuck you, asshole 17) Get out.

masculinity had become 'softer', there is a corresponding increase in the number and variety of lines for Schwarzenegger: he becomes more eloquent, asking questions ('Why do you cry?'), and using slang phrases picked up from Connor ('No problemo').[5] As well as a transformation in the physical representations of Hollywood masculinity from a 'hard body' to a 'soft body', there is also a transformation in the way male voices are used and heard in these films. I would argue that there have been so few attempts to understand Hollywood representations of masculinity in any other terms than those defined by the body, that discussions of Hollywood masculinity have become – literally – muscle-bound, and there remains an unwritten account of how men's voices operate in Hollywood cinema.

Phonetic theory and the male voice

If film theory on the whole has tended to overlook the opportunity to explore how men's voices are used in film, this may not be altogether surprising, considering that even within the field of phonetics the male voice remains similarly under-explored. Graddol and Swann (1989) discuss a number of stereotypical descriptions of female voice qualities – chatterbox, endless gossip, strident nag – and set these patterns of vocal behaviour in contrast to those of 'strong silent men' (2). Smith (1985) includes a section on 'women's speech style', but does not seem to find it necessary to offer a comparable discussion of *men's* speech style. Talbot (1998) can discuss 'women's language' without needing to include a separate section on *men's* language. These examples show that it has tended to be *women's* voices that have proved more interesting to phoneticians. Women's voices are valued for how they *differ* from men's voices, positioning the male voice as the 'standard' against which women's –

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[5] It is possible, however, that Schwarzenegger's verbal reticence in *The Terminator* – one of his earliest films – may be connected to his status as a foreign-accented actor.

and other non-normative- voices are measured and compared. While the feminist debate has fuelled much of the interest in women's voices, the lack of a similar movement for men has perhaps resulted in the male voice being rather taken for granted within phonetic theory and presumed to be uncomplicated or self-explanatory. Consequently the male voice remains significantly under-investigated. While Eddie Murphy's coon-inspired vocal performance invites significant comment, a white (normative) masculine voice quality – typified by that of Hanks - apparently does not.

Tom Hanks and voice

Over all, I think it is the suffix '-ish' of Branston's description that reveals the greatest apathy and lack of interest attached to the (white) male voice, and simultaneously to Hanks' voice itself, and its significance for his star image. The vagueness carried by the '-ish' suffix renders the voice as unimportant, and this is augmented by the assumption that Hanks also has a reputation for not particularly altering his voice, that is, it seems he uses his 'own' voice in most roles – he does not put on accents or adopt different voice characteristics very often. From time to time Hanks has used different accents and voice qualities in his roles: a 'Deep South' accent in *The Green Mile* (1999), and a generic Eastern European accent in *The Terminal* (2005) - but he is perhaps not especially remembered for his ability to alter his voice. This is in contrast to other 'quality' actors like Dustin Hoffman, John Malkovitch, or Morgan Freeman, for example, who are well known within the industry for their ability to adopt different voices for different roles. Sergi (1999) confirms that Morgan Freeman in particular alters his voice across a number of roles, and stresses that Freeman's ability to achieve different levels of characterisation by making changes and adaptations to his voice should be understood as a signifier of his acting ability and Freeman's status

as a 'good actor' (129). Since Hanks does not seem to share this reputation for voice-work, Hanks is *heard* as Hanks in most of his roles; he is recognisably the same, and instead of signifying acting skill Hanks' voice signals his on-screen identity.

The overall impression created then by Hanks' on- and off-screen personas, and given that fact that he does not manipulate his appearance or voice in any significant way, is the creation of an image of consistency, reliability, and stability. These adjectives form the key words in Hanks' star image, and Hanks' voice is at least as important as any other element of his persona to the creation and maintenance of this image. Given these observations, Hanks' voice work as Woody in Disney's *Toy Story* becomes a much more interesting – and potentially troubling – vocal performance, that could be understood as a role that 'cross-casts' Hanks' 'nice-guy' persona. Woody the Cowboy is *not* reliable or trustworthy; at times he is dishonest, jealous, and sneaky, especially when his status as 'Andy's favourite toy' is threatened by the arrival of Buzz Lightyear, and he is not the all-round good guy that we have come to associate with Hanks' usual star image. In particular, I would argue that the unreliability attached to Woody's character is especially figured through the pattern of his voice. Alongside the steady and reliable sound of Buzz's voice (provided by Tim Allen), Woody frequently sounds hysterical and over-emotional. An ability to move easily between vocal registers results in a 'feminising' of Hanks' voice. Hank's voice work in *Toy Story* invites comment because it seems to be at odds with both his usual star image, and his predictably 'deepish' voice quality identified by Branston.

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Despite the fact that *Toy Story* was much celebrated as the first fully computer-generated feature length animation film to be released, the focus of the film seems to be as much on the aural experience of listening as it is on the visual experience of looking at and admiring the new effects achievable with CGI. The aural experience advances down two particular lines of enquiry: the recurring theme of the voice itself within the film, and the castings of the celebrity voices. Firstly, *Toy Story* pays particular thematic attention to the voice, and issues circulating around the voice emerge at key moments within the narrative. The climax of the film – when Woody rescues Buzz from Sid's rocket experiment – is predicated on Woody's ability to talk, to use his voice. His status as a 'talking toy' - one that has 'come to life' through the acquisition of voice - so terrifies Sid that he promises never to hurt another toy again. Similarly, when the majority of the toys think that Woody has betrayed them and murdered Buzz, their highest level of scorn relates to the *loss* of the voice, to no longer being able to speak: 'I hope Sid pulls your voice-box out, you freak!'

In fact, voices form an important recurrent theme throughout the film, even from the very first few frames. In the opening scene of *Toy Story* we watch Andy's imaginative play with his collection of toys. As the wild-west fantasy game develops, Andy gives voices to his toys as they interact. He characterises Mr. Potato Head as the 'baddie' of the piece, and adopts an appropriately 'mean' sounding voice for him. Andy also puts on a suitably high-pitched 'feminine' tone for the damsel-in-distress, played by Bo-Peep. The adoption of appropriate gender-based voice qualities is a theme that re-emerges later in the film when Woody has to convince the rest of the toys that Buzz is still alive, and attempts to do so by impersonating Buzz's much

deeper voice.   In a similar vein, Buzz adopts a higher-pitched 'feminised' voice quality when he is forced to play the role of Mrs. Nesbitt at Hannah's dolls' tea party.

Voice reproduction also becomes a recurrent theme within the film.   When Woody calls a staff-meeting with all the toys, his voice is amplified through the portable cassette-player and microphone, and is later distorted via the baby monitor as the soldiers spy on Andy's birthday party.   The competitiveness that initially drives the relationship between Woody and Buzz is also partly based on the toys' ability to produce a voice; Woody has a pull-string to activate voice-reproduction, but Buzz has the advantage of a 'quality sound system' that enables him to speak.

Secondly, *Toy Story* is obsessed with the celebrity voice.   As well as Tom Hanks' casting as Woody, the film also makes a feature of a number of other well-known performers, including Tim Allen, John Ratzenberger, and Laurie Metcalf.[6]   Vocal casting is also carefully considered in order to avoid any aural confusion within the film's soundtrack.   Sergi (1999) argues in particular that the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen were paired together for their contrasting 'aural characteristics', and deliberately cast so that 'they could occupy different frequency areas in the soundtrack and complement each other' (134).

Toy Story as a profoundly 'male' film

Toy Story is a film with a very obvious male-bias, on a number of different levels. Firstly, the vast majority of the central characters are coded as male or are generic toys that male children might be stereotypically expected to play with: Buzz and

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[6] Tim Allen starred in the US television series *Home Improvement* (1991-1999), John Ratzenberger appeared as Cliff in *Cheers* (1982-1993), and Laurie Metcalf played Jackie in *Roseanne* (1988-1997).

Woody, Rex the dinosaur, Slinky, *Mr.* Potato Head, *Mr.* Spell, a bucket of soldiers. A Little Bo-Peep lamp-stand – a highly domesticated form of 'toy' – and a Barbie doll represent the only examples of 'female' toys in the film. The owner of these male-coded toys is a male child, and his bad tempered neighbour is another young boy. The number of male characters in *Toy Story* becomes especially obvious when compared with those featured in the sequel film *Toy Story 2*. In order to pacify accusations that the first film was indeed 'too male', the sequel features Jessie – a female counterpart to Woody, introduces Mrs. Potato Head, and includes a much larger role for 'Tour Guide' Barbie.[7]

However, *Toy Story* is not unusual in this male bias. A substantially large number of Disney's popular feature length animation films are similarly concerned with the fates of exclusively male characters. Lippi-Green (1997) examines the numbers of male and female characters in the canon of Disney animated features from *Snow White* (1937) to *The Lion King* (1995). She concludes that across these 24 films, 371 characters are given gendered identities. Of these, only 112 – just over 30 percent – can be identified as 'female' characters, meaning that the vast majority of Disney's animated characters are coded as 'male' (91).[8]

The narrative of *Toy Story*, its buddy-movie formula, and its action elements might be thought to appeal more to male audiences than female ones. It is possible that this male-appeal could be an indirect-unintentional result of the virtually all-male staff

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[7] It is interesting to observe that although these character additions gesture towards a re-balancing of the number of male and female roles within the film, the new female toys are still held to normative female roles and spaces: as wife/carer in the case of Mrs. Potato Head, and as service provider in the case of Tour Guide Barbie.

[8] It should be pointed out that Lippi-Green only includes in her sample those characters that have speaking roles, and it is also not entirely clear what criteria were being employed to determine whether a character should be categorised as 'male' or 'female'.

that created and worked upon the film. The 'Making of *Toy Story*' documentary shows the all-male team of design and creative staff playing with the toys featured in the film, as part of their research. A large proportion of Disney's staff have historically always been male. Bell (1995) explains that during the Disney studio's fledgling years, the production staff were 'overwhelmingly male' (107). Very few opportunities were available to female staff in the early Disney studio, and what tasks were delegated to women, such as applying colour to cels in the Painting and Inking Department, tended to be tedious, repetitive, labour-intensive, and usually uncredited (107). If there is a history of a male dominance within the production processes of Disney animation (and perhaps the wider animation industry, too) this may have resulted in a gender-bias in the films produced by that studio, meaning that *Toy Story* represents a long tradition of male-bias within Disney animation.

The male-focus within *Toy Story* has prompted some critics to examine the film within popular cultural debates surrounding representations of masculinity. Byrne and McQuillan (1999) suggest that *Toy Story* should be understood as a film that betrays a profound anxiety regarding American forms of masculinity (129). While it may be tempting to interpret Byrne and McQuillan's comment in terms of an analysis of how *Toy Story* negotiates its physical representations of masculinity – where Buzz may represent the 'hard body', and Woody the 'soft body' – an investigation of the role of the male voice – and in particular the use of Hanks' voice quality – would be a more original and less obvious approach.

Pitch.

Branston's original observation of Hanks' voice quality as being defined by the description 'deepish' obviously implies something about the pitch of his voice. In terms of Branston's wider argument about men's voices in Hollywood, a deep voice is heard as a vocal indicator of masculine identity. Both male and female voices are subject to culturally determined stereotyping, and listeners readily make assumptions about how male and female voices 'should' sound. Talbot (1998) writes that men's voices are generally expected to be 'deep and husky' (3), while Henton (1989) suggests that women ought to sound 'high-pitched' and 'swoopy' (299). Consequently, pitch - the perceptual indicator of fundamental frequency – is one of the main ways that listeners differentiate between male and female voices. Talbot (1998) confirms that as listeners we are 'very rarely mistaken' in our ability to identify a speaker as either male or female. Pitch differences between male and female speakers are not heard to emerge until puberty, when the vocal cords begin to develop quite differently for men and women.[9] In adults, there is a difference of about 6 centimetres between the average lengths of male and female vocal cords, so that the average male vocal cord length measures 23 centimetres, while the average female vocal cord length measures 17 centimetres (Smith: 1985, 59). It is the combination of the size, length, and thickness of the vocal cords that ultimately determines the fundamental frequency of a speaker's voice, and invariably self-limits their available pitch levels, and habitual pitch range. Pitch range, or the varieties of pitch used by male and female speakers also has bearing on how male and female speakers may be identified. It is thought that women use a greater variety of pitch

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[9] Pitch differences between newborn male and female babies are mostly indistinguishable, and even as children grow, research suggests that pitch differences between pre-pubescent male and female children remain virtually indistinguishable (Smith: 1985, 59).

changes within an utterance, and employ a wider range of pitch levels than men. For some researchers there is something rather too 'obvious' about this gendered relationship to fundamental frequency. Graddol and Swann (1989) and Henton (1989) have suggested that male and female voices may not differ in pitch levels and ranges as much as might be expected. Hanks' vocal performance as Woody seems to fit this alternative argument. In many of his film roles Hanks' voice probably could be described as 'deep', although perhaps not as memorably deep as some other male actors such as Harrison Ford or James Earl Jones, for example. Hanks' vocal performance in *Toy Story* though, is significantly at odds with this description and cannot be described as 'deepish' at all. We hear Woody move through a wide variety of pitch ranges, none of which are significantly heard as 'deep'. In fact, Woody's consistent pitch range during the majority of the film is quite high. This results in a 'feminisation' of Woody's characterisation within the narrative, but is also responsible for a much wider destabilising of the gendered relationship between speaker and pitch. Hanks' vocal performance as Woody undermines the conventional relationships between male and female pitch levels and ranges, and suggests that there may be less difference between them than the phonetic literature illustrates. Ultimately, studying Hanks' use of pitch renders the whole topic much more problematic, and therefore more interesting. Hanks employs pitch in his vocal characterisation of Woody in a number of different ways. Below, I will explore how Hanks uses pitch to signify emotion within Woody's narrative, and how pitch variety becomes a defining characteristic of Hanks' vocal performance. I will focus on one particular moment in the film that highlights and showcases Hanks' use of pitch, before exploring to what extent pitch and voice quality stand as indicators of identity.

Pitch as a paralinguistic indicator of emotion

Although a speaker may have a preferred pitch range, within which their normal utterances are contained, fundamental frequency also has a paralinguistic function, and pitch levels, or pitch changes, may be employed to signify temporary attitudes or states of mind. A very low pitch or whispering for example, is often used paralinguistically to convey intimacy, or secrecy. A higher level of pitch may convey excitement, or perhaps fear. When Buzz and Woody become separated from Andy by falling out of the car at the petrol station, Woody's anxiety is heard to emerge through the paralinguistic use of a high pitch, when he hysterically screams 'We're lost! We're lost toys!' It is important to stress that pitch can be used in this way, as an expression of a *temporary* emotional state, in order to differentiate from a more permanent use of pitch characteristics that may define an individual's habitual voice quality.

Pitch variety within an utterance

Hanks' vocal performance as Woody is noticeably marked by the variety of pitch levels employed within a single utterance. When Buzz first arrives in Andy's bedroom, the other toys are impressed by his array of gadgetry, but in a fit of jealousy Woody informs them, 'He's not a Space Ranger! He doesn't fight evil, or shoot lasers, or fly!' Similarly in the showdown between Buzz and Woody at the petrol station, when Buzz continues to believe that 'Star Command' will come to their rescue, Woody incredulously screams, 'You actually believe you are the real Buzz Lightyear? You are a toy! You're not the real Buzz Lightyear. You are an action figure. You are a child's plaything!' In both of these examples Hanks moves through a variety of pitch levels in a vocal style that rather than adhering to Branston's

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'deepish' description, may actually recall Henton's 'swoopy' characteristic, above. Throughout the film, the 'feminised' sound of Hanks' voice is offset by the voice of Tim Allen as Buzz. Allen's voice is heard to have a much lower pitch level, as well as less pitch variation, so that it sounds deeper and more monotonous than Woody's. Although Sergi has suggested that these contrasting voices serve a practical function within the film, and operate at different fundamental frequencies in order not to confuse listeners, it is equally the case that the different pitch levels employed by Hanks and Allen also work to differentiate the cultural stereotypes attached to the characterisations of Buzz and Woody: Allen's voice is heard to be more stereotypically 'male' than Woody's. Hanks' use of his voice here and its similarity with the way female voices are thought to employ pitch variety may function to undermine and destabilise Woody's character, and by extension, Hanks' star image. The unreliability of Hanks' voice – signified by his use of various pitch levels – is a vocal representation of Woody's untrustworthy and at times unstable character.

The 'No' riff

Towards the end of *Toy Story*, when Buzz and Woody have made their escape from Sid's backyard and are speeding towards Andy's removal truck with the assistance of a remote-controlled car, the batteries begin to lose power, and Woody intends to improvise by lighting the rocket still strapped to Buzz. Woody has a single match tucked into his pocket, which unfortunately burns out before he can light the rocket. He collapses to the ground in a fit of frustration and anguish, repeating 'No, no, no, no, no!'

I have drawn attention to this particular moment in the film partly because Hanks himself does in the 'Making of *Toy Story*' documentary. He was asked by the film's producers to provide a 'riff' on the word 'no', moving through as many different variations of expression as he could. Hanks discusses this moment as an incidence of voice work that he recalls as being particularly challenging. It is also a moment that is characterised by a wide variety of pitch changes. The riff moves through a wide variety of pitch levels, descending from an emotionally high level that we are accustomed to as part of the vocal performance of Woody, down to a much lower pitch level, that perhaps could be described as 'deepish'. The narrative of the film is effectively put on hold while Hanks delivers this dexterous vocal performance, and the moment functions as an isolated opportunity to particularly display his ability to move his voice through a wide range of pitch levels. Hanks employs an extended pitch spectrum, in defiance of the normative expectations of limited pitch range usually attached to the male voice. By doing so, he simultaneously confirms Woody's slightly unpredictable character, and also achieves a vocal representation of Hanks' star image. Hanks refuses to conform to the deep taciturn vocal performances expected from some male Hollywood performers, and by drawing upon a wider pitch range vocally represents a more flexible version of masculinity, more in keeping with the 'nice guy' elements of his star image.

Voice as identity

In the opening sequence of *Toy Story*, the only toy whose voice Andy does not attempt to impersonate is that of Woody himself. To hear Woody 'speak', Andy activates Woody's pull-string, and we hear Hanks' voice crying 'Reach for the skies!' Woody's - and therefore Hanks' - voice is privileged, and established as more 'real'

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or authentic than that of the other toys, who remain voice-less in this scene. As listeners we are familiar with our ability to be able to recognise people by their voice, whether it be a friend or family member heard over the telephone, a public figure giving a radio interview, a popular actor endorsing a product in a television advertising voice-over, or a well-known film star providing the voice of an animated character. In this instance, we are invited to identify Hanks by voice in the opening sequence of the film. Voice quality theory suggests that there are certain innate characteristics of an individual's voice that can ultimately stand as markers of an individual's identity. These might include the size and shape of the vocal organs, as well as other physical characteristics such as the size and volume of the chest cavity, and the capacity of the lungs. The theory behind an innate or biological voice quality suggests that an individual can do very little to change their biologically determined vocal characteristics. While voice quality may be temporarily altered in a variety of ways – paralinguistically, during impersonation, as a performance skill – the underlying fundamental voice quality of an individual cannot be significantly altered beyond a certain set of limitations. It should be theoretically possible to still accurately identify a speaker even if they are temporarily 'putting on' a voice. For this reason, certain branches of phonetic theory have suggested that the voice may function as an indicator of identity, as 'the very emblem of the speaker' - and as such, make it possible to identify an individual by voice alone (Laver: 1994, 2).[10]

The theory of innate voice quality standing as a signifier of identity means that Tom Hanks must still be identifiable as Hanks even though his performance as Woody in *Toy Story* draws on pitch ranges and levels of vocal dexterity that his other film roles

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[10] Milroy (1984) disputes this position, and argues that claims made for voice quality as a clear indicator of individual identity overstates the case, and takes no account of a number of other factors that may influence the way that a speaker is heard (53).

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have not required. The phonetic theory of voice quality also offers a means of accounting for audiences' abilities to recognise a celebrity by voice, even if, like Hanks, their vocal performance across films are audibly different: Hanks is still *heard as* Hanks. In terms of star identity, voice is vital to the construction of star persona, and is one of the main ways that stars are recognised and identified by their audience. This strong relationship between star voice and star image is particularly brought into focus through the use of celebrity voices in popular feature length animation film. While in live-action cinema the star voice may at times be subsumed within a star's on-screen appearance, meaning that the relationship between voice and identity is 'naturalised' or taken for granted, the use of the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation showcases the star voice, and actively encourages the identification of star through voice. Despite variations within pitch levels and pitch ranges, Hanks is still audibly identifiable as Hanks: his voice quality signifies his star image, and star identity.

Afterthoughts and concluding observations

Byrne and McQuillan's concern that *Toy Story* betrays a 'deep insecurity' about American masculinity is explored through the use of the male voice in the film: the obsession with issues relating to the voice, and the problematic casting of Hanks (1999: 129). On the surface, *Toy Story* appears – like much of popular feature length animation – to be an innocuous and frivolous piece of Hollywood entertainment. An analysis of the voice and its interplay with issues of masculinity, stereotypical male voice quality, and Hanks' star image reveals that there is something more complex at play in *Toy Story*.

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If Buzz is the 'hard body' and Woody the 'soft body' within *Toy Story* then maybe the film could be read as an animated exploration of Hollywood's representations of masculinity. But the binary of masculine identity is not as simple as it first seems. Reading beyond these obvious codings produces some complex re-negotiations of representations of masculinity. Despite Buzz's hard body status – he is made of plastic and 'muscled' – the physicality of his body ultimately fails him. He is unable to fly, and can only 'fall with style'. Throughout the majority of the film he remains unaware of his true status as a toy, and naively believes he is the 'real' Buzz Lightyear. When he finally learns the truth after seeing a television commercial, and reading the words 'Made in Taiwan' on his arm, he suffers a kind of breakdown. It is Woody – the soft body – who has to take the initiative and 'save the day'. Despite Woody's paternalism towards the other toys – making sure they all have 'moving buddies', and quelling the panic surrounding Andy's birthday presents – it is the devious nature of his jealousy towards Buzz that motivates the narrative of the film. Because he cannot bear the thought of no longer being 'Andy's favourite toy'. Woody engineers a situation that exploits Buzz's 'save the day' programming. When Buzz breaks down, Woody is forced to become the action hero himself and devises a plan of rescue. The binaries of hard and soft body are not clear or sustained in this film, and suggest that rather then conforming to pre-defined sets of male behaviours, the toys represent an awareness of the limitations of binarised masculine identities, and instead offer a re-negotiation of representations of masculinity. While this re-negotiation of masculinity can be easily read at the physical level, the destabilisation is equally driven by the casting of Hanks, and especially by his voice. Hanks' role as Woody is in opposition to his typical 'good guy' characterisation, and his vocal performance, heavily marked by the adoption of a 'feminised' use of pitch levels and

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pitch variety, particularly undermines Woody's characterisation, as well as working against the 'deepish' characteristic more normally associated with male voice qualities in Hollywood. By using Hanks' vocal performance in *Toy Story* as a case-study, it becomes clear that rather than conforming to predetermined expectations, the male voice is not as fixed or as stable as phonetic literature has suggested. Male voices can readily move through a wide variety of pitch ranges, destabilising the convenient gender binary that phonetic literature has adopted. This case-study would argue that male voices are more interesting than traditional approaches have suggested, and that phonetic literature has tended to over-simplify the reality of the male voice. This chapter has also explored the theme of voice as identity, and consequently constructed an argument for the recognition of the importance of the relationship between a star and their voice, even in an incidence like this one where Hanks' voice might initially be thought to be a relatively unimportant aspect of his star screen image. Hanks' voice should be understood as a critical part of the construction of his star image, at least as important as any of the other issues circulating around him. His work as Woody in *Toy Story* brings this relationship into particular focus, but even outside of a feature length animation context, Hanks' vocal performances and innate voice quality across all his various film roles must unavoidably contribute to the ways that his star image is constructed and understood.

Chapter Six

Meg Ryan in Fox's *Anastasia*
Femininity, Identity, and Voice

Writing in 1988, just at the point that the popular feature length animation film was about to reassert itself, and ten years before *Anastasia* would be released, a feminist film critic observed that:

> It has somehow escaped theoretical attention that sexual difference is the effect of dominant cinema's *sound* regime as well as its visual regime, and the female *voice* is as relentlessly held to normative representations and functions as is the female body (Silverman, 1988: viii, my emphasis)

The female voice on film had not received much attention by feminist critics at this time; feminist observers had been much more astute at identifying *images* of women that confirmed patriarchal structures. How women might *sound*, instead of how they might *look* on screen, had not yet been theorised. A substantial body of work now exists that has discovered a history of a problematic relationship between film and women's voices. This chapter will engage with some of the issues raised by this history, and explore the relationship between the female celebrity and her voice through a case study of Meg Ryan's vocal performance in *Anastasia*. In the corpus of recent popular feature length animation films that make up this study, this chapter will show that Twentieth Century Fox's first feature length animation film, *Anastasia*, released in 1997, stands alone as a unique example of a popular feature length animation film that features a female-focused narrative, and also showcases the dominant female celebrity voice of Ryan. Through a close and detailed analysis of Ryan's voice quality in one key scene from the film, the chapter will develop a discussion about the structures that determine how women 'should' sound, and build on the phonetic theory introduced in the two earlier case-study chapters.

<u>Meg Ryan's star image</u>

Meg Ryan is one of Hollywood's most well-known and popular actors. She made her first important appearance on film in the blockbuster *Top Gun* in 1986, and since then has starred in a wide range of Hollywood films. Ryan can command salaries in the region of $10 million per role, but although she has been nominated for Golden Globe and BAFTA awards, she has never been able to secure 'serious' actor status and achieve an Academy Award nomination. However, like her male counterpart discussed in the previous chapter, Ryan is particularly recognised for her appearances in a number of profitable and long-standing romantic comedy films, including *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), and *You've Got Mail* (1995) – the last two in which she co-starred with Tom Hanks. Like Hanks, Ryan's star persona has thus been particularly connected to the romantic comedy genre. Evans (1998) describes Ryan as the 'quintessential 1980s/1990s female Hollywood romantic comedy heroine', and argues that despite various forays into other types of film, it is for her portrayal of romantic comedy heroines that she is most well known (188).

As a result of this association with the romantic comedy genre, Ryan's on-screen image is strongly based on her reputation for playing 'American sweetheart' roles. In many of her romantic comedy roles she appears as child-like, innocent, and charming. In *When Harry Met Sally* for example, a film that records the ten-year friendship between Harry (Billy Crystal) and Sally, Ryan's role is marked by a charming naivety, especially relating to adult sexual relationships. Despite claiming to have had 'plenty of good sex', Sally is still shocked when Harry reveals to her how men think about women. The differences between Harry's promiscuousness and Sally's sexual reluctance emerge on a number of occasions during the film, reinforcing the film's

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initial philosophy that 'men and women can never really be friends, because the sex part always gets in the way'. When the couple do finally have sex – after Sally discovers that her ex-fiancé is to marry someone else – the act becomes a moral stumbling block to Sally. Her child-like – even child*ish* response to the event – played out at their best friends' wedding – involves Sally in an almost infantile tantrum. Her reluctance to become just another one of Harry's sexual conquests is representative of her trusting adherence to the ideology of the couple and the family - the recurring themes of the film. Ryan's role as Sally incorporates the characteristic of sexual naivety, but also of vulnerability, and all-round 'goodness'.

Ryan's screen persona is therefore built on 'loyalty, trustworthiness and all things natural', achieved through the nature of the characters she plays as described above, but also through certain manipulations of her off-screen image (Evans, 1998: 193). Her real name is Margaret; shortened to Meg, it 'stresses the evasion of pretence and the promotion of next-door neighbourliness' (193). In interviews, Ryan talks candidly about modern sexual relationships, wears casual clothes, and offers publicity shots were she appears barefoot (195). A large part of this framed innocence is achieved through her physical appearance. Ryan is blonde-haired and blue-eyed, suggesting a childlike, even baby-like, appearance.

Evans has described Ryan as having 'clear forget-me-not blue eyes, flaxen hair and slender, slightly scrawny build which can slip from almost Tom Sawyerish boyishness to senior prom virginal prettiness' (194). As a female actor, Ryan's physical appearance carries particular significance for her Hollywood screen persona, but unlike other female Hollywood celebrities her physical appearance is not frequently

eroticised. In keeping with her child-like 'girl-next-door' persona, she often appears as 'natural' - without excessive make-up, and rarely appears in films even partly-clad: prior to her role in the controversial film *In the Cut* (2003) (see below), only in *The Doors* does Ryan appear semi-naked, meaning that the non-eroticisation of her female body is quite notable. In *French Kiss* for example, Ryan's boyish figure is thrown into relief by the voluptuousness of her French love-rival, who is dressed in tight-fitting short dresses and high heels, with flowing hair and obvious make-up. In contrast, Ryan wears a mannish white shirt or vest, and jeans, and has short, unkempt hair. Considering the sexualised nature of some of her most famous film moments, such as the provocative line from *Top Gun*, 'take me to bed, or lose me forever', and particularly the notorious fake-orgasm scene from *When Harry Met Sally*, it seems unusual that Ryan's associations should remain so puritanical. Both of these film moments are quite highly sexually charged, yet Ryan's on-screen image remains dominated by resonances of innocence, rather than sexual aggressiveness. This observation points to a substantial discrepancy within the on-screen personas portrayed by Ryan. Although from time to time this 'girl-next-door' screen persona is challenged by deliberate instances of cross-casting, and she appears in films like *The Doors* (1991) where she plays a drug addict, *Courage Under Fire* (1996) where she plays a military officer, and *When a Man Loves a Woman* (1994) where she plays an alcoholic, I would suggest that Ryan's star image is rather more complex than the 'good girl' persona would imply.

It is likely that Ryan was cast for *Anastasia* because of her close and enduring association with the romantic comedy format. *Anastasia* itself bears comparison with the trends of the romantic comedy genre, and should be read as an animated romantic

comedy. It includes such devices as the initially antagonistic 'special couple'; Anya

(Ryan) and Dimitri (John Cusack) argue and bicker constantly during their first few

meetings, a narrative that is complicated by twists and turns and misunderstandings,

driven by the deception plot that fuels the story, and of course the compulsory happy

ending. As an actor, Ryan herself has invited significant critical comment that often

emerges within academic debates about the romantic comedy genre, and particularly

women's roles within it. The status of female roles within the romantic comedy

tradition of Hollywood has generated some feminist debate, especially as to whether

these female roles should be read as 'traditional' or 'progressive'. Historically,

screwball comedies were interpreted as examples of positive uses of female roles, in

the sense that romantic comedies gave focus to female concerns and generated new

more central roles for female actors in Hollywood at the time. However, at the same

time, romantic comedy narratives are notoriously conventional and operate within

patriarchally defined norms of gender relations, quite often ending in marriage, or at

least an implied union. Recent interpretations of the romantic comedy genre have

reached the conclusion that the romantic comedy is constantly in flux and always

needing to reinvent itself (Evans and Deleyto: 1998). It is perhaps helpful to situate

Anastasia within these debates, and consider it – and the casting of Ryan within it - as

a positive re-negotiation of the Hollywood romantic comedy form.

Although Ryan's on-screen image seems to be clearly situated within the terms of the

romantic American sweetheart fantasy, with occasional forays into alternative roles,

Evans observes that, in these films 'attributes ideal for romantic comedy survive even

in roles that call on other resources' (189). In fact, these 'cross-cast' films are not so

very far-removed from the 'good girl' image of the romantic comedy films. However,

there is one film, one interview, and one particular off-screen story that strongly challenges, contradicts, and problematises the careful construction of Ryan's on-screen persona. On 25th October 2003 Ryan appeared as a guest on the popular BBC1 chat show *Parkinson*, in order to promote her new film, *In the Cut*. Directed by Jane Campion, the film challenged Ryan's usual screen persona by presenting a rather sordid and erotic narrative, and featuring Ryan naked in sex scenes. During the interview, Ryan seemed to take offence at Parkinson's suggestion that she should go back to 'what she did best', and continue to star in romantic comedy films instead. Ryan's responses became more and more monosyllabic, until she was refusing to reply at all, turning her back on and ignoring her fellow guests, declining to make eye contact with her interviewer, and looking off-camera as though for an escape-route. As the interview continued to deteriorate, Parkinson asked Ryan, 'If you were me, what would you do now?' 'Let's wrap it up, shall we?' was Ryan's spiked reply. After the event, Ryan accused Parkinson of being over-bearing, aggressive, and patronising. Because of Parkinson's status within the talk-show format, the interview stands as a piece of British television history, and Parkinson recalls Ryan as his most difficult guest ever.

Ryan's reputation was severely dented by the fall-out from this interview, but it was also affected by certain other revelations about her off-screen private life that were circulating at about the same time. Ryan had married Dennis Quaid – her co-star in *Innerspace* (1987) and *D.O.A.* (1988) – in 1991. However, on the set of *Proof of Life* (2000) Ryan had an affair with her new co-star Russell Crowe. The affair became public knowledge and was well documented in celebrity magazines and gossip columns. The highly publicised extra-marital affair was frequently described as

'torrid', and reports accused Crowe of being a 'marriage-wrecker' and a 'wife-stealer'. The relationship that developed only lasted for six months; the couple blamed the media's unfavourable attention for its eventual collapse. The result of this affair was an inevitable undermining of Ryan's reliable, trustworthy, and pure persona. Her new 'scarlet woman' characterisation spoilt her 'perfect' image. Media accusations also suggested that Ryan may have been unfaithful with Crowe as a means of generating publicity for their film, and that their affair was deliberately engineered to generate interest in the film, which was not overly successful at the box office. Such negative and cynical claims rendered Ryan not only morally questionable, but also devious, dishonest, and thoroughly untrustworthy. Quaid was humiliated by the very public nature of his wife's betrayal, and divorced Ryan in 2001. Subsequently, Ryan has been romantically attached to a number of other Hollywood figures, including – again – her co-star in *Anastasia* – John Cusack.

Unlike Hanks, where there seems to be a close relationship of similarity between his on-screen and off-screen personas, in Ryan's case there seems to be an uneasy relationship between her on-screen persona and her real life. There also seems to be some substantial surprise attached to the fact that there is not more correlation between her on- and off-screen identity. One source recounts a story of Ryan publicly losing her temper with an assistant while out shopping. A witness recalls, 'Meg was yelling at this poor girl that she had kept her waiting. I was really shocked because she always plays such sweet characters in movies'.[1] In order to try and account for this, and similar reactions, Evans adopts the concept of 'performativity', suggesting that Ryan's screen image is 'highly artificial in construction' (193), and the 'goody-

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[1] Sourced from www.imdb.com (accessed 25/10/04).

goody' nature of her roles cannot be sustained across her personal life. Drawing upon Butler's concept of the construction of a gendered identity, Evans builds an argument for the 'fabricated' nature of Ryan's persona (199). Although both Evans and Butler refer mostly to the 'acts, gestures, enactments' of a physically – or corporally – constructed gendered identity (Butler, 1990: 136), there is no suggestion of the significance of the role of the *voice* in the construction of gendered performance. As the opening quotation of this chapter suggests, there is a history of far less attention being paid to the meanings behind the female voice than the significances of the female body on film.

How does Ryan's *voice quality* contribute to her star persona?

Like Hanks, Ryan is also not especially well known for adopting different voice qualities or accents for her various roles. Her voice work on film has not particularly invited comment in film reviews or evaluations of her star image. Her voice seems uninteresting, 'normal' or 'ordinary' and not worthy of comment or analysis. In most instances, it is assumed that she uses her 'own' voice, so that like Hanks, Ryan is consistently and reliably *heard as* Ryan in the majority of her screen roles. It is perhaps because of this acceptance of the unremarkableness of Ryan's on-screen voice that incidences such as her spiky retorts during the Parkinson interview, or shouting loudly at shop-girls seem to stand out so much, and to invite comment, and surprise. However, Evans offers a rare description of Ryan's vocal performance as 'high-pitched', and featuring 'looping cadences' (199). While we can accept the description of Ryan's voice as being 'high-pitched' as a simplistic description of voice quality based on gender-expectations of appropriate pitch levels for women, the description of 'looping cadences' invites further consideration. There is something

much more animated, and performative about this vocal description, and simultaneously the description conveys a sense of unreliability and instability. This chapter will proceed to consider Ryan's vocal performance in *Anastasia* in order to bring to light an interesting and complex relationship between Ryan, her screen persona, and the role of her voice within its construction.

The 'problem' of women's voices in Hollywood

This case-study chapter argues that there is a problematic relationship between Ryan and her vocal performance in *Anastasia*. Within film studies more generally there is a substantial history of work that has uncovered a significant and problematic relationship between women and voice on film. Lawrence (1991) locates the beginnings of such problems with women's voices in a pre-cinematic history. She writes that as sound recording technology developed and the voice became one of its principle subjects, men's and women's voices were not treated equally.

> When women's and men's voices were recorded for the first time, an entire lexicon of gender-specific cultural assumptions were recorded with them … women's voices were always inserted into a pre-existing ideology that economically and politically predefined how the female voice was to be represented – or whether it would be heard at all (10).

Lawrence also examines how women's voices were treated in early examples of cinema. This can be traced back as far as the transitional period from silent to sound filmmaking explored in Chapter Three of this thesis, where the limitations of the early recording and reproducing equipment meant that certain types of voices could not be adequately handled. This seemed to apply mostly to women's and children's voices – possibly because of their higher levels of fundamental frequency – and consequently women's voices were rendered more difficult to capture, and ultimately as less important. As sound technologies improved, women's voices in classical Hollywood

cinema developed into objects of fascination. According to Lawrence, women's voices were one of the recurring pre-occupations of classical Hollywood cinema, but were frequently constructed as a 'problem or dilemma' that needed to be overcome (10). Silverman (1988) similarly confirms that a significant number of Hollywood films were concerned with exploring 'problems' associated with the female voice. She includes in her study *Possessed* (1947), *Johnny Belinda* (1948), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *Marnie* (1964), and *Blow-Out* (1981), as evidence of Hollywood's persistent pre-occupation and fascination with the female voice in a variety of forms, over a number of decades. As well as the problem with the female voice-over (see discussion below), female voices in live action cinema were represented problematically when they were reduced to being heard as meaningless 'noise' – often in the form of 'chatter', or female gossip - or conversely, where the female voice was removed completely and silenced, or rendered mute. As the prefacing quotation for this chapter demonstrates, Silverman develops an argument that it is strange that given Hollywood's evident preoccupation with the female voice, feminist film theory has preferred to focus instead on the construction of woman as image. This dilemma is at the heart of this chapter and this analysis of *Anastasia*, which intends to show that this particular example of popular feature length animation film has an especially complex relationship to the representation of women, both visually and vocally.

Popular feature length animation and the problematic female voice

The same sort of preoccupations with the female voice, and the 'problems' associated with its representations are also to be found in popular feature length animation examples. A pair of films – *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *Mulan* (1998) - will reveal a range of issues relating to the female voice, and locate popular feature length

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animation within the same sets of gendered ideologies that preoccupy live action cinema. The two films also pre-figure some important issues that emerge in *Anastasia*, and these links will be identified and discussed.

As discussed above, women's voices have been treated as problematic within classical Hollywood cinema generally, but there are also feature length animation expressions of a problematic relationship between women and their voices. *The Little Mermaid* is probably the best example of a problematic relationship between woman and the voice, since Ariel sacrifices and gives up her voice, and trades it for legs so that she can pursue her Prince Charming onto land. On these grounds, it is a film that has attracted substantial attention from feminist film critics. In the earlier chapters of this thesis, the importance of *The Little Mermaid* for the Disney studio, and for the renaissance of popular feature length animation more generally has already been considered.[2] Here, the film is discussed as revealing and negotiating a problematic relationship between woman and ownership of the voice.

It is *The Little Mermaid's* narrative basis of trading on the voice that has provoked some substantial feminist criticism of the film. The idea of the power associated with 'having a voice' or 'being heard' in both literal and metaphoric senses is quite key to *The Little Mermaid*. Ariel surrenders any power she may have had early on in the film by trading her voice for human legs so that she can pursue the object of her affections – Prince Eric – onto dry land. Sells (1995) reads the film as 'disheartening'

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[2] *The Little Mermaid* still remains especially significant in the history of popular feature length animation since it marks a turn in Disney's fortunes and the re-birth of the genre as a whole. After a period of marked instability and financial difficulty where the company lost popularity as well as money and was nearly bankrupted, *The Little Mermaid* was Disney's first commercial success for several years, and ushered in a new era for both Disney and the popular feature length animation industry as whole.

for the messages it carries, especially that 'like so many women who enter any 'male sphere', Ariel wrestles with the double-binding cultural expectations of choosing between voice or access, but never both' (179). In *Anastasia*, something quite similar operates. Initially there is no doubt about Anastasia's ownership of her voice – she can rarely be silenced during the first half of the film. Unlike Ariel who is rendered mute for large portions of *The Little Mermaid*, Anastasia has much to say – she even talks to herself in several of her first scenes of the film. Throughout the film, the voice of Anastasia is important because we often hear her in heated exchanges – especially with Dimitri – and she will not be silenced. She is not afraid to express her opinions, and she will not permit the men to vocally overpower her. However, in one key turning point of the film, Anastasia undergoes a significant vocal transformation during the 'blue dress' sequence. Unlike Ariel, Anastasia does not lose her voice completely in this scene – she is not rendered entirely mute – but the use of her voice, and the sound of her voice quality changes so dramatically as to be unavoidably significant in terms of the power relations and gender politics at play in the film.

The Little Mermaid stands as a particularly important film for the debate it encourages surrounding the relationship between woman and voice, but it is not the only example of problematic women's voices to be found in popular feature length animation releases. A second useful popular feature length animation film that explores elements of the female voice is *Mulan*. Like *The Little Mermaid*, this film also offers a useful opportunity to initiate discussion about the use of the female voice in *Anastasia*. Mulan is required to disguise both her physical appearance *and* the sound of her voice in order to pass as male and take her father's place as a soldier in the Chinese army. In one particular scene, where having quite easily disguised her body

by adopting the external trappings of a man - an apparently simple process, involving the tying back of her long hair, the acquisition of body armour, and the performance of a 'man walk' - Mulan struggles to 'try out' a number of different voice types that she - and presumably we - accept as sounding appropriately 'male'. This appropriation of a 'male' voice quality is based on a lowering of pitch and the adoption of what might be described as a 'rough' voice quality. Mulan feels that she has little success with this attempt at sounding like a man, saying, 'Who am I fooling? It's going to take a miracle to get me into the army'. Although the film would appear to focus on some of the elements of gendered performance implied by the cross-dressing narrative, it is Mulan's inability to be able to sufficiently subsume her female voice that is rendered most problematic in her transformation. Having an authentic voice – *sounding* male – seems to be more important than *looking* right. Adopting the authenticity of a male voice proves to be problematic.

Mulan stands as an interesting film because its themes propose that the voice is central both to the construction of, and our understanding of, gender.[3] In *Anastasia*, the significance of sounding 'right' recurs again in the 'blue dress' sequence, in terms of Ryan's adoption of a 'breathy' voice quality in order to signal female sexual availability. Before investigating more fully exactly what is at stake during this

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[3] *Mulan* is essentially a very interesting – and sometimes clever- film. Despite Mulan's 'performance' of the masculine being required to conform to certain expectations of appearance and voice, the irony of the film is that many of the authentic male characters are themselves not particularly marked as male by these attributes. For example, one of them giggles persistently and possesses a rather high-pitched and consequently 'feminine' sounding voice, another encourages the army to chant, and meditate ('Feeling better now?'). Like all cross-dressing narratives, *Mulan* plays with the expectations of stereotypical male and female behaviours. In terms of the celebrity voice connection, however, an additional layer of clever extra-textuality can be added. As one writer for *The Independent* newspaper observes, 'The most inspired vocal casting can create sparks of recognition that bring new layers of meaning to a movie ... Two of the butchest roles [in *Mulan*] are taken by the gay playwright and actor Harvey Fienstein ... and the actor B.D. Wong, best known as the camp wedding designer in *Father of the Bride*. What might have been throwaway in-jokes in a lesser film became subtle endorsements of the film's message: if these actors could pass for macho men, then anyone could change, switch, cross over' (July 20, 2001, 11).

pivotal 'blue dress' sequence, the following section will establish the extent to which *Anastasia* is preoccupied with issues pertaining to the female voice.

Anastasia: privileging the female voice-over

Anastasia is an example of a popular feature length animation film that privileges and makes a feature of the female voice; specifically, the female voice-over, and the female celebrity voice. This is initially achieved at the very start of the film through the use of Angela Lansbury's opening narration. As the Empress Marie, Lansbury recounts the historical events that brought about the orphaning of the Princess Anastasia, and that provide the 'back story' to the narrative of the film. The voice of the Empress Marie effectively controls the telling of this flashback story, her voice conjuring up the images of the past events that structure this opening section. This use of the female voice-over in a popular feature length animation film challenges the typical ways that female voices have been employed in live action film examples. Both Lawrence (1991) and Silverman (1988) have observed that women's voices are rarely allowed to be the controlling exterior voice in this way, and instead are more normally held to the interiors of narratives. The gendering of the narrative voice-over permits only men to create external voice-overs. Chion (1999) uses the term 'acousmetre' to signify a bodiless voice heard in a film, and confirms that 'most acousmetres are masculine. Female acousmetres in classical cinema are rare' (72). Kozloff (1988) has also revealed how rarely women's voices are heard as third-person narrators within classical Hollywood cinema. However, Kozloff argues that it is not that women *never* get to be narrators at all, but that they remain confined to specific *types* of narration. Kozloff lists documentary films, television commercials, and news broadcasts as sites where women are permitted to perform the role of third-person

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narrator. In the classical Hollywood fiction film, however, women are much more likely to be restricted to instances of first-person narration, telling 'their own life stories or their memories in 'women's films', adaptations, and occasional *noirs*', with a focus on their own personal experiences, aimed at female audiences (100). Kozloff draws on the feminist and psychoanalytic approaches of Mulvey and others, who have argued that Hollywood cinema narratives have constructed women to be the objects of the male gaze, and suggests that this may be one of the reasons that Hollywood forbids women to be unseen third-person narrators. Kozloff explains that Hollywood has always 'preferred its women malleable and pleasing to the eye; and … like men the world over, felt deep down that women should be seen but not heard' (100). Ultimately, Kozloff argues that 'If a woman were *heard* but never *seen*, she would escape the limiting, possessive, and erotic scrutiny to which she may be subjected when her image has been captured by the camera and offered to the gaze of the spectators' (101). The structures of Hollywood filmmaking very rarely permit this to happen. If a female voice-over is heard, it is usually only of a temporary nature, and voice and body must necessarily be quickly reunited. As a consequence, the female authorial voice-over who is unseen remains extremely uncommon within mainstream Hollywood practices. The voice-over of the Empress Marie in *Anastasia*, while unusual and perhaps unexpected, does still conform to these patterns. The voice-over is not permitted to remain free-floating for long within the opening sequence, and is quickly re-united with the animated body of the Empress.

Anastasia and the female celebrity voice

Ryan's position as a celebrity voice in *Anastasia* is also important because it is a rare example of a *female* celebrity voice. It is interesting to observe that popular feature

length animation films that display a female-focus – that is, they are preoccupied with a narrative concerning the plight of a central female character, or group of female characters – often reveal a lack of celebrity voices, or more specifically a lack of *female* celebrity voices. Of the seven female-focused films within this study – *The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Pocahontas, Anastasia, Mulan, Chicken Run,* and *Lilo and Stitch* - only two – *Anastasia* and *Chicken Run* - feature what could be described as 'high profile' celebrity voice castings. *Chicken Run* features a cast of predominantly British actors that probably exempts them from 'high profile' Hollywood celebrity status. This leaves *Anastasia* as the *only* female-focus film that celebrates a high profile celebrity voice – Meg Ryan. The table below represents the relationships between popular feature length animation and female celebrity voice castings. Female narratives are significantly under-represented in feature length animation releases, but when a female-focused film is allowed to dominate, the voice source for the central female character tends not to be a 'high profile' or especially well-known celebrity.

Performers who specialise in voice work, or who have an acting career in television, but who are not classifiable as 'high profile' celebrities provide the majority of voice sources for central female characters in female-focused narratives. The evidence presented in the table suggests that the distribution of 'high profile' female celebrity voices across popular feature length animation film may be revealing something about the problematic status of the female celebrity voice. This problem may be related to the ways that characterisation is achieved in feature length animation film.

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FILM	DATE of RELEASE	CENTRAL FEMALE CHARACTER	VOICED BY...	FAMOUS FOR ...
The Little Mermaid	1989	Ariel	JODI BENSON	Voice actor: also in *Toy Story 2*. Worked on a number of other straight-to-video Disney releases.
Beauty and the Beast	1991	Belle	PAIGE O'HARA	Voice actor. Worked on a number of *Beauty and the Beast* spin-off videos
Pocahontas	1995	Pocahontas	IRENE BEDARD	Worked on TV films/low budget releases. Typically cast in Native American character roles.
Anastasia	1998	Anastasia	MEG RYAN	High profile Hollywood actor since 1980s. Famous for romantic comedy roles eg. *When Harry Met Sally* (1989).
Mulan	1998	Mulan	MING-NA	Voice actor. TV actor (ER)
Chicken Run	2000	Ensemble cast	JANE HORROCKS, MIRANDA RICHARDSON, JULIA SAWALHA, IMELDA STAUNTON	British TV and film actors
Lilo and Stitch	2002	Lilo	DAVEIGH CHASE	TV actor.

It was suggested in Chapter Two of this thesis that characters voiced by celebrity voices achieve a degree of their characterisation via a transferral of associations generated by the 'high profile' celebrity voice source. It becomes clearer in this chapter from the evidence supplied in the table that this transferral of associations must occur predominantly for male celebrities. Since 'high profile' female celebrities do not voice the majority of female characters this transaction of characterisation cannot occur. Instead, characterisation must be achieved through the voice alone. Unknown female performers providing voices for animation are required to generate their characterisation by conforming to expectations of gendered voice stereotypes.

In the light of this argument *Anastasia* again stands out as a unique example. Throughout this film the potential for identification of Meg Ryan's casting as Anastasia is clearly encouraged – as though the film wants to draw attention to this rare example of female celebrity voice casting. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that for the majority of the female-focused narratives discussed it is more important *how* female voices sound, than *who* they are.

Meg Ryan's vocal performance in *Anastasia*

The 'blue dress' scene

Some of the issues raised in *Mulan* – specifically those relating to sounding 'right' for one's gender - also find a point of focus in *Anastasia*. In one of the most pivotal scenes of the film, when Anastasia's lessons in princess-hood reach their culmination, Dimitri and Vlad (Kelsey Grammer) present Anastasia with a blue dress to wear, and give her a final dancing lesson. Initially, the physical transformation that ultimately occurs as the result of Anastasia donning the dress functions within the narrative as

the climax of the princess fantasy that runs throughout the film. This is the point at which Dimitri and Vlad's instruction of the orphan Anya reaches its culmination, and they finish off her training with dancing lessons and a makeover. The visual transformation of the orphan Anya into the Princess Anastasia is key at this moment. Throughout the majority of the film the orphan Anya has appeared dressed in over-sized clothes in dark shades, that swamp and disguise her figure, and with her hair mostly scraped back from her face, or hidden under a hat. The effect of this is to represent Anya as somewhat desexualised. At this point in the film, however, Anya puts on the pale blue dress supplied by Dimitri that clings to her figure and emphasises her waist and breasts, and wears her hair long, demurely tied with ribbon. It may be as a result of these changes in dress, but at this moment of transformation, even the animation of Anya's physicality seems to have altered. Anya's eyes seem bigger, her mouth wider, and neck longer than earlier in the film. The effect of the transformation is sudden and quite stunning, as we are led to believe by Dimitri's infatuated response. This sequence functions within the film as a pivotal moment, where the balance of the relationship between Anya and Dimitri shifts, and their relationship begins to be recognised and developed. With the acquisition of appropriately 'feminine' clothing, even Anya's body language and behaviour changes. She swishes her skirts, performs girly 'twirls' for the men, and develops a sudden interest in Parisian shopping. The scene is important within the narrative because it signals the change in the relationship between Dimitri and Anastasia: their mutual attraction is acknowledged for the first time.

This particular scene from *Anastasia* is also important because it mirrors very closely an identical scene in the romantic comedy film *French Kiss*, which also stars Meg

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Ryan. In this film a similar degree of 'teaching' and 'coaching' takes place, where Luc (Kevin Kline) coaches Kate on how she should behave in order to win back her unfaithful fiancé. The climax of this sequence is similarly the donning of a pale blue dress and the transformation is treated in quite comparable ways cinematically. This parallel sequence – linking animation with its live-action cinema counterpart - is unlikely to be a coincidence, since this thesis has already argued for the importance of inter-textuality within celebrity voice castings. The twin-scenes function to draw attention to the celebrity casting of Ryan as Anastasia, and for informed audiences able to recognise the inter-textual referencing, the parallelism heightens the relationship between Anastasia and Ryan, encouraging an active identification of Ryan as the source of the celebrity voice.

The blue-dress scene in *Anastasia* is important because it foregrounds and highlights the relationships between femininity and the voice, between Ryan, her screen image and her voice, and also problematises the characterisation of Anastasia within the narrative. Throughout the majority of the film, Anastasia has been marked by her vocalisations. She has frequently had much to say, especially to Dimitri, and has been out-spoken and unafraid to be heard. We have heard Ryan's voice running throughout the film, particularly in vocal confrontations with Dimitri. However, after putting on the blue dress, Anastasia undergoes a transformation that obviously occurs at the visual level: she suddenly appears as slender and shapely, with her hair loose to her waist, girlishly swishing her skirts. However, the transformation also occurs at the vocal level of Anastasia's performance too. One of the first things to observe is that during her initial transformation when she first puts on the dress and dances with Dimitri, Anastasia is struck dumb; like Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* she is left with no

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voice at all. Ryan's voice is effectively removed from the narrative and she says very little. Prior to this, her vocal performance had been marked by exchanges of wit and verbosity in other sequences. After having previously been so verbose, Anastasia now loses the power of speech, and is effectively silenced by the intimacy of the moments she shares dancing closely with Dimitri. The audible void is particularly noticeable because we have become so accustomed to hearing Ryan's chatter as a key feature of the film's soundtrack, and a distinguishing characteristic of Ryan's performance of Anya. Silencing the woman in this way has a wider political agenda, and has traditionally been one of Hollywood's methods for dealing with the 'problem' of the female voice. Hollywood has a reputation for arbitrarily removing women's voices, often at key and pivotal moments in a narrative, an analysis of which reveals much about the gender politics operating within that particular film.

When Anastasia does eventually regain her voice in the 'blue dress' scene, the voice quality employed by Ryan has changed dramatically: Anastasia's voice is softer, and quieter. Like Ryan's vocal reticence at the start of this sequence, this alteration of the type of voice used is particularly noticeable. In phonetic terms the voice quality used, especially marked by the phrase 'I feel a little dizzy', would be described as 'breathy'.

'Breathy' voice quality

The voice quality of 'breathiness' can be phonetically defined as a vibration of the vocal folds with slight audible friction where the vocal folds never quite meet, allowing air to escape between them, creating a sighing effect. Breathy phonation of this sort is used across some languages to achieve forms of linguistic distinction, but it is not a form of phonation normally used linguistically by English speakers. In fact if

used to excess, breathy voice quality may even be considered a pathological voice defect. 'Breathiness' is an inefficient form of phonation that can easily lead to communication problems. Breathy voice is not only an inefficient, potentially pathological phonation in speakers of English, it also presents other limitations in communication. Pitch for instance, can be compromised, leading to the possibility of a more monotonous delivery. Also, intelligibility might be affected, since breathy voice is the equivalent of background noise, and may 'muddy' a speech signal. However, breathy voice quality does have a paralinguistic function for speakers of English, and is most commonly employed to signal intimacy. In particular, it is often adopted during sexual intimacy to signal sexual availability and compliance. The observations and experiments of Henton and Bladon (1985) suggest that breathy voice quality is a common and socially acceptable voice behaviour, particularly for women. They propose that breathy voice signals more than just a willingness to engage in sexual intimacy: some women may deliberately adopt a breathy voice quality because it signals sexual availability and renders them desirable. More commonly, breathy voice functions extralinguistically as a learned vocal behaviour and a vocal recognition by female speakers that they know their place within the vocal order.

In 1984 Henton and Bladon carried out an experiment to measure breathiness in a group of male and female speakers. In terms of voice differences between males and female, Henton and Bladon state that 'breathiness is a regular concomitant of the speech of non-pathological British English women' (221). Using a narrow band spectral analysis, Henton and Bladon were able to measure and record levels of breathiness in both male and female RP speakers. Analysing very precise and subtle changes in aspects of the pronunciation of open vowels, Henton and Bladon found

that the female speakers showed 'considerable breathiness', while the male speakers did not, and that these male-female differences were judged to be 'highly significant' (224). As a result of these findings, Henton and Bladon were able to initially conclude that 'The general picture emerging ... supports the view that, in RP at least, women speakers' vowels are physically more breathy than males' (224). In order to establish whether these findings were unique to RP speakers, or more widespread, Henton and Bladon then go on to compare these findings with another dialect - Modified Northern British English - in order to establish whether this breathy tendency is dialect-specific. Their findings here suggest 'the same significant trend', again suggesting a pattern of female breathiness (225).

The composite results of these experiments showed measurements of significantly more breathiness in the female groups than in the male groups. Henton and Bladon were not surprised by these findings since a breathy voice quality is generally more associated with women than men. However, Henton and Bladon hypothesise that some women may be *deliberately* adopting a voice quality built on breathiness, in order to sound more attractive. Henton and Bladon surmise that women may adopt a breathy voice quality out of choice because a breathy voice is thought to be a sexy voice. There are physiological reasons for the relationship between a breathy phonation and sexual arousal, which they describe, so breathy voice has come to stand for being sexually aroused. 'If a woman can manage to sound as though she is sexually aroused, she may be regarded as more desirable or with greater approbation by a male interlocutor that if she speaks with an ordinary modal voice' (226).

Taking Henton and Bladon's observations into account means that a phonetic reading of the blue-dress scene in *Anastasia* marks it as potentially the most interesting scene in the film – and the most troubling and disappointing. For the purposes of this thesis what is so interesting about the transformation sequence is not how the transformation is handled visually – although there are plenty of things to be said about that too – but how the transformation occurs vocally and is aurally experienced. When Ryan gives Anastasia a breathy voice quality in the blue dress transformation scene while dancing closely with Dimitri, her breathy voice signals intimacy, and possibly sexual availability, within the dynamics of the scene. Ryan mat also be adopting a breathy voice at this point in order to make Anastasia sound more attractive, as Henton and Bladon suggest above. However, within the wider politics and power structures of the film, especially where this relates to Anastasia's relationship to the voice – she rarely stays quiet – the adoption of a breathy voice quality at this particular moment carries much greater resonance and significance. Throughout the film Ryan's vocal characterisation of Anastasia has been based on a tough-talking independent action heroine. However, the narrative of the film demands that Anastasia eventually be confined within the limitations of the princess-fantasy, which she embodies. Her independent ways need to be contained, and her narrative must be subsumed within the traditional quest for romance and romantic union. By adopting a breathy voice quality in this pivotal scene – where the romance between Dimitri and Anastasia is first recognised – Ryan signals Anastasia's compliance with her romantic fate. The use of the breathy voice is a critical moment that signals a clear sea change in the characterisation of Anastasia up to this point. From now on, Anastasia becomes much more passive within the narrative. The positive and pro-active female model that Anastasia had drawn upon, especially in her relationship with Dimitri, is undermined

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by the conventional response to the moment of intimacy, and Anastasia now adopts the behaviours of the more stereotypical 'damsel in distress'. Directly after the blue dress sequence, Anastasia becomes the victim of a sleepwalking revenge-attack inspired by Rasputin, and has to be rescued by Dimitri: 'You're safe now'. On arrival in Paris, Anastasia becomes suddenly inspired by shopping and feminine fitted clothes: a surprising interest given her earlier choices of shapeless and baggy apparel.

Alongside the aural transformation that effects Anastasia in the blue-dress sequence, is an equally important and revealing change in the way that Anastasia is represented visually. Although Anastasia is not subjected to the point-of-view of Dimitri and Vlad during this scene – she is not 'filmed' from the point of view of the men at the point of transformation - her new clothes and unfamiliar feminine behaviours invite our gaze, and she is intended to be looked at.[4] She draws attention to herself by swishing her skirts, and when the dancing begins, Vlad's accompanying song draws attention to the camerawork that closes in on the couple – from long shot, tightening to a close-up two-shot when Dimitri tries to tell Anastasia how he feels – and works to intensify the moment. However, on arrival at the ballet in Paris, wearing full princess regalia, Anastasia is firmly located as an object of to-be-looked-at-ness. This is achieved by her position ascending the theatre stairs, and the 'camera-work' starting at her feet and panning slowly up her body.

For the remainder of the film Anastasia retains this status of objectification, despite some further inconsistencies of characterisation.[5] Within the approaches favoured by

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[4] In animation there is of course no 'camera work', but many effects draw upon camera shots, *movements, and placements derived from live action cinema.*

[5] After the initial transformation scene and the ballet sequence Anastasia returns to her earlier feisty characterisation. This includes some vicious verbal 'put-downs' for Dimitri and a slap for supposedly

Mulvey and other critics who have explored the structuring techniques operating within Hollywood's narratives, this scene conforms to the expectations of female characters as erotic spectacles 'to be looked at'. What is valuable from Mulvey's work is the extent to which it stands as evidence of an obsession within feminist film criticism for exploring film in terms of its visual pleasures – specifically constructed through the performer's face and body. Camera work and point of view is one of the main ways that Mulvey and others observe Hollywood's methods for representing women. While this is the case in *Anastasia* too, it is important that the *vocal* representation of woman is not under-estimated or over-looked. It is the adoption of the breathy voice quality that precedes Anastasia's to-be-looked-at-ness: she is firstly an erotic spectacle to be *heard*, before she is an erotic spectacle to be *seen*. Anastasia is aurally objectified as an erotic spectacle to be heard, by the adoption of a different voice quality from the one Ryan has maintained throughout the rest of the film. Not only are women expected to conform to a set of Hollywood and patriarchal conventions about how they should look, but they must also 'sound' appropriate too. Along side the construction of Anastasia within a male gaze that situates her as a passive spectacle, there may also be an acoustic mirror in place whereby Anastasia is equally undermined by the vocal performance of Ryan during these key scenes. As well as a male gaze operating within Hollywood and a male way of objectifying female characters through their appearance, Hollywood may also be operating and supporting a system of a male way of *listening*, that aurally objectifies women as an

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betraying her. Despite initially being easily lured away by the evil and vengeful Rasputin and requiring a token rescue from Dimitri, it is ultimately Anastasia who effects her own rescue, and that of Dimitri, by destroying the charm with her stiletto heel and rousing Dimitri from his injuries. Again, these are examples of the overall inconsistency of the female characterisation within the film. The film seems to be unsure whether Anastasia can or should be allowed to get away with being her own heroine. The film allows for progressive representations of femininity, but only up to a certain point. Ultimately, the female character must be made to conform to patriarchal and normative heterosexual expectations.

erotic spectacle to be heard. A wider application of these ideas links some of these observations to the relationships between Ryan, her star image, and her voice quality. Ryan operates within Hollywood's gendered expectations of how women should behave, and sound. When she conforms to these conventions – as she does through the majority of her film roles – they pass unremarked upon. However, when Ryan flouts these expectations – by undermining her 'good girl' image – such events become highly reportable. Similarly, when her vocal performances do not adhere to expectations of how women 'should' sound – when she is rude to interviewers, or shouts in public – these events also become significant. In her interpretation of Anastasia however, Ryan seems to instinctively conform to Hollywood's expectations of the role of women's voices, and by adopting a stereotypical breathy voice quality makes Anastasia sound acceptably feminine.

These suggestions build upon the discussion begun in the previous chapter that discussed voice quality as a biologically innate process that can be little altered. The analysis of Ryan's vocal performance during *Anastasia* - especially during the transformation sequence described above - coupled with Henton and Bladon's work on the role of breathy voice quality as used by female speakers, leads to the suggestion that voice quality can function as a learned behaviour, and therefore has a role as part of a performed gender identity. The influential work on the construction of gender by Butler (1999) argues that within feminist and queer theory, gender is understood as not something innate or natural - not something that we are born with or that is biologically determined - but something that we learn, or are socially conditioned to perform. By extension of this argument, it is thought that gender is something that can be constructed by appropriating the trappings that signal it, and

that gender identity can be performed within culturally prescribed terms. The concept of performativity uncouples sex from gender, and the performative dimensions that produce gender generate gender identities as a continuum rather than a fixed set of (heterosexual) binaries. Butler and other theorists tend to discuss how gender is inscribed across the body, but as Silverman observes in the prefacing quotation of this chapter, the voice is just an important contributor to the performance of gender as the body, but it has frequently not been recognised as such within feminist film theory.

Afterthoughts and concluding observations

By drawing upon phonetic theories, and experimental evidence of voice quality as a learned or adopted behaviour, this chapter has shown how women's voices might be understood as operating within these systems, and how the female celebrity voice might also be situated within these debates. By focusing on the 'blue dress' transformation sequence in *Anastasia*, Ryan's vocal changes have been isolated, and the transformation witnessed aurally as well as visually. The instabilities, or uncertainties, attached to Ryan's star image, and the difficulty she experiences maintaining her 'good girl' image across film roles and her public star persona, are equally played out in the way her voice changes through the film. Rather than maintain a stable vocal identity, Ryan gives Anastasia a changeable vocal characterisation -- drawing upon verbosity, quick witty retorts, silence, and breathy voice qualities. Evans described Ryan's voice quality as 'swoopy', implying some suggestion of unreliability or non-conformity, and the changes of voice through her performance of Anastasia seem to support this description. However, to further complicate the issue Ryan's adopted voice quality during the pivotal 'blue dress' moment in the film clearly conforms to traditional expectations about how women are

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expected to sound. At the appropriate moment, Ryan's vocal performance matches the expectations of how Henton and Bladon argue women use their voices to signify intimacy and availability, thus supporting an ideology that argues it is important that women 'sound right'. It would appear that Ryan has internalised the notion of gender performativity at a vocal level, and although her off-screen vocal behaviours may differ, her on-screen vocal performance 'fits' traditional expectations of how women's voices should sound at key moments. The overall effect of these vocal transformations stresses the importance of voice to Ryan's star image, and like all the examples of popular feature length animations films discussed above – *The Little Mermaid*, *Mulan*, and in particular *Anastasia* – reveals interesting and complex relationships between women and the voice. In particular, this chapter has initiated a detailed discussion of the role of the female celebrity voice in *Anastasia* and highlighted the uniqueness of the casting of Ryan in this film, as well as simultaneously drawing attention to the instabilities within Ryan's star persona, and her vocal performance. More involved debates have sprung from these observations and further highlighted the complexities at work in the inter-relationships between the visual and the vocal representations of women on film.

Conclusion

'Starring the Voices of …': When Does a Voice Become a Star

One of the main aims of this thesis has been to draw attention to the popular feature length animation film as a genre, and call for a greater level of recognition of the importance of the film form at today's box office. Like film comedy and the action cinema, popular feature length animation has been historically persistently undervalued and dismissed as being just light entertainment, or a film form only aimed at children. By tracing a historical time-line of popular feature length animation film since 1937, and exploring the generic elements of the film form across subsequent decades, this thesis has generated a sense of generic development, and argued that the popular feature length animation film is worthy of detailed analysis and exploration. In particular, the thesis has drawn attention to the celebrity voice, and located it as the key defining feature of popular feature length animation film since the genre's renaissance in 1989. The thesis has argued that the high levels of incidence of the celebrity voice in feature length animation releases during the 1990s mean that the technique cannot be ignored. The thesis has explored and analysed the celebrity voice from a historical perspective, and has generated an original train of inter-connectedness for the technique from the earliest sound cartoons. The thesis has also explored the production processes particularly relating to the celebrity voice, and revealed some of the issues at stake during the production, distribution, and exhibition of popular feature length animations that exploit the celebrity voice. Throughout the case-study chapters the thesis has revealed that the celebrity voice repeatedly provides a useful starting point for exploring many significant issues of representation, which raise the profile of the celebrity voice, and render the technique a crucial aspect of

film analysis. Current evidence would suggest that enthusiasm for the celebrity voice as a defining technique of popular feature length animation may be losing its momentum: the genre seems to be moving towards a 'retro' phase, featuring a return to solid story-telling, original characterisation, and a celebration of a nostalgia for the appeal of hand-drawn animation. The trend for the celebrity voice, especially through the 1990s, stands as evidence of the celebrity-driven pre-occupations of the Hollywood film industry and of Western during this period. This thesis has shown that there is a complex set of relationships at work in the celebrity voice, and like so much of contemporary work within media and cultural studies, what appears to be frivolous, innocuous, or meaningless is actually a valuable resource to explore, and one that reveals much about the state of race, gender, and identity ideologies that circulate within these films, and by extension within the Hollywood film industry as a while. The thesis claims the celebrity voice as a special site of significance, and has argued that a thorough exploration of the celebrity voice produces interesting and worthwhile analyses.

The methodology for accessing the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation has involved employing theory and methods from the phonetic field of voice quality. By developing an inter-disciplinary mode of analysis, the thesis has been able to overcome a series of problems that have previously restricted film theory's access to the performance paradigm of voice. A phonetic approach has enabled more precise description and analysis of precise elements of the celebrity voice. It has also drawn attention to more complex issues – voice as identity, and voice as learned behaviour – and offered alternative ways of understanding these complex phenomenon.

The title of this thesis - 'Hearing Stars' – is intended to draw attention to the more commonly heard phrase - 'seeing stars' - for a particular purpose. Film theory has traditionally located film stars in terms of their physical appearance. The majority of analyses of stars are structured within codes of looking, and seeing the star. In particular, stars' faces, bodies, and their physical performance styles form the main ways that star studies are structured. Hayward (1996) writes that stars reach their audiences primarily through their bodies (340). Rarely, if ever, are film stars considered from the point of view of their voices. This thesis has intended to make an intervention into film star studies and suggest that this area has been wrongly overlooked and ignored, and that it is overdue for the voice to have a prominent role in the analysis of a star's screen persona, and a star's performance style. It is a timely suggestion because it coincides with a revival of interest in elements of the sound of films, a much-maligned section of film studies that has been overshadowed by the study of the image throughout the history of academic film studies. The project to engage with film stars from a vocal perspective has also benefited from the timely opportunity to explore the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation, which provides a useful set of case studies.

The celebrity voice discussion generated throughout this thesis is not limited to popular feature length animation examples: this is a particularly useful field of investigation, an underestimated one in terms of its importance and value to the film form, and one that has not been fully examined before. But, celebrity voice issues impact on other film forms too, especially in mixed live action and animation films, and also in films that feature devices such as talking animals, or babies. The celebrity voice debates impact upon every day life in other ways. By extension, some of the

debates around voices can be applied to other areas. Phonetic theories of voice quality can help us to account for our experiences of voices we like or are drawn to, or voices that we hate to hear, or those we find annoying or irritating. Although at a conscious level we remain largely unaware of the messages we send and receive with our voices – aside from their linguistic messages – as speakers and listeners we participate in an extremely complex system of vocal communication. Phonetic theories of voice quality try to isolate some of these experiences and make more explicit the invariably implicit experience of the voice. Everyday talk about 'good' and 'bad' voices draws upon phonetic approaches to voice quality. For example, one newspaper article reveals the results of a survey to find the world's sexiest male and female voices. These were revealed as Sean Connery and George Clooney, and Kylie Minogue and Joanna Lumley.[1] These voices have been judged on their voice quality, certain elements of which, as this thesis has argued, are deemed to be more attractive than others. This thesis proposes the importance of the voice to the celebrity persona, and in this incidence it seems likely that the judgements of these voices are crucial to the way that audiences receive the star image. Connery and Clooney are both considered to be icons of popular masculinity: their physical appearances are crucial to the constructions of their star personae. However, their voices are just as critical to audience understandings of the star image: how they *sound* is equally important to the way they *look*. The relationship between voice and image is a vital and close one. How might Connery's sexual attractiveness be judged without his Scottish brogue? Would Clooney still be considered 'sexy' if his voice featured a much higher pitch level? These are questions that have been raised in film theory's negotiations of

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[1] The most 'annoying' voices in the survey were judged to be Janet Street Porter, Chris Eubank, Ruby Wax, Lloyd Grossman, and former *Big Brother* contestant Jade Goody. This only serves to cement the argument that there is an undeniable connection between star and voice, and that voice is a crucial element of star persona (Fiona Stewart, writing for *The Scotsman*, 3 January, 2003).

stardom, but without successful negotiation. This thesis proposes that by isolating the vocal elements of a film star's performance – as the celebrity voice in popular feature length animation enables us to - and analysing the vocal element of a star's performance with theories and methods drawn from voice quality debates, our understanding of a star's construction is significantly augmented.

The field that this thesis has operated within is full of potential areas of subsequent research and investigation. There are several other aspects of the celebrity voice, and voice and stars in general that would no doubt generate valuable contributions. The role of voice coaches, both historically, and currently would be interesting. More explorations of the effects created by actors who 'put on' voices for particular roles, or who are especially well-known for changes or adaptations of voice may be useful as a means of challenging the extents to which even a phonetic approach may be unable to account for the multitude of ways that the voice works in film. Of particular interest may be the line of enquiry indicated by the title of this Conclusion, which suggests that there may be a point at which a voice can become a star in its own right, or be divorced from the star completely. More work within this field would surely find grounds to challenge many of the systems in place within film theory – especially the structuring vision of the star system – and would force the performance paradigm of the voice into an even more central position.

By focusing on the relationships between celebrity and voice, the thesis has ultimately stressed the influence of the seemingly frivolous celebrity voice on popular feature length animation, and has demonstrated the potential impact of the phonetic study of voice on film theory and star studies. Such a study has value for its intervention into

film star performance analysis, and while it cannot claim to offer a definitive solution to the tricky problem of accessing performance, and performance with the voice especially, this thesis marks the beginning of a new way of thinking about the relationship between stardom and the voice.

Appendix I

Feature Length Animation Films Included in This Research

The Little Mermaid	(1989)	Disney
Beauty and the Beast	(1991)	Disney
Aladdin	(1992)	Disney
The Lion King	(1994)	Disney
Pocahontas	(1995)	Disney
Toy Story	(1995)	Disney
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	(1996)	Disney
Hercules	(1997)	Disney
Anastasia	(1997)	20th Century Fox
The Quest for Camelot	(1998)	Warner Bros
Mulan	(1998)	Disney
Antz	(1998)	DreamWorks
A Bugs Life	(1998)	Disney
The Prince of Egypt	(1998)	DreamWorks
Tarzan	(1999)	Disney
The Iron Giant	(1999)	Warner Bros
Toy Story 2	(1999)	Disney
The Road to El Dorado	(2000)	DreamWorks
Dinosaur	(2000)	Disney
Titan A.E.	(2000)	20th Century Fox
Chicken Run	(2000)	DreamWorks
The Emperor's New Groove	(2000)	Disney
Shrek	(2001)	DreamWorks
Atlantis: the Lost Empire	(2001)	Disney
Monsters, Inc.	(2001)	Disney
Ice Age	(2002)	20th Century Fox
Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron	(2002)	DreamWorks
Lilo and Stitch	(2002)	Disney
Treasure Planet	(2002)	Disney
Finding Nemo	(2003)	Disney
Sinbad: Legend of the Seas	(2003)	DreamWorks
Brother Bear	(2003)	Disney

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