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Craft and Play in Lotte Reiniger's Fairy Tale Films

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Despite the fact that Lotte Reiniger's films are both animated and often based on fairy tales, her films, perhaps surprisingly, are not often associated explicitly with children. This chapter seeks to interrogate the relationship, or lack of, between Reiniger and children's culture, by focusing on a number of key areas. Firstly, Reiniger is perhaps best known for her animated films based on fairy tales, and this chapter will seek to position Reiniger alongside, or within, a long-held societal and cultural association between fairy tales and children. Secondly, Reiniger's films are animated, and despite its being extremely wide-ranging and multi-faceted, animation is often, like fairy tale, aligned with children's culture. As Amy Ratelle notes, 'On a broad scale, animation has been historically devalued and dismissed as "kids' stuff"'.[1] Thirdly, Reiniger herself is often portrayed as a childlike figure in the trade press, as well as – ironically and paradoxically – a maternal presence. I have argued elsewhere, in a co-authored book chapter with Katharina Boeckenhoff, that much of the writing on Reiniger (in both trade press and scholarly works) 'suggest[s] she has magicked these films out of nowhere, […] links her with children's culture; and finally […] characteris[es] […] her as maternal and unthreatening'.[2]

In this chapter, I seek to move beyond these arguments to consider Reiniger and children's films in relation to notions of craft and play. As such, this chapter will be organised into three sections, each exploring the following areas: animation, fairy tale, and play. What is more, the concept of craft will provide an overall framework. What sets Reiniger apart from most other animation associated with children (such as the many examples of computer-animated television) is her method of animation; Reiniger uses the time-consuming technique

of silhouette paper cut-outs, a form of stop-motion animation. Her method is a distinctly 'crafty' one, and the use of paper cut-outs is something that Ewan Kirkland aligns with children's culture in his discussion of the TV series, *Charlie and Lola* (2005–2008). He argues that the collage aesthetic, despite its being achieved through computer-generated animation, 'faithfully reproduces the design of the book series on which the franchise is based, while more broadly exploiting animation's proximities to sequential art, picture books and other visual culture aimed at children'.[3] Craft and play, then, are self-evidently also associated with children's culture in some cases, and will provide a lens through which to examine the relationship between Reiniger's films and/as children's culture.

Reiniger and Method: Silhouette Cut-Out Animation and Children's Culture

Ratelle argues that the eighteenth century saw a shift change in terms of publishing for children, who came to be valued, for the first time, as a separate audience from adults.[4] Indeed, published fairy tale, as noted below, would have formed part of this movement, which saw that the 'emergence of children's literature as a vehicle for cultural values tied household economic advancement to Locke's ideals of social advancement through education'.[5] In an increasingly commercial context, education here combines with economic progress in a potentially 'win, win' situation. As Ratelle goes on to argue, children's media at large, including animation, can be seen as an extension of this eighteenth-century move towards children's literature as a 'delicate balance between education and entertainment'.[6] It is interesting to place Reiniger within such debates and contexts. Famously difficult to contextualise,[7] Reiniger clearly does not fit into animation that is mass-produced for a young audience, and she is also hard to

contextualise in many other ways (such as in relation to the Weimar Republic, German Expressionism, and the like).[8]

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that her method of production aligns her with children's culture, but also *doesn't*, and this is precisely because of the particular technique she uses. Silhouette cut-outs can never be produced on a mass scale because of the time needed to create such animation; hence the two techniques used to create animation in the 'mainstream' studio settings have been traditionally cel animation, later followed by computer-generated imagery and digital processes. Reiniger's method of animation, then, warrants some further interrogation as it cannot, in most ways, be situated alongside mass-produced children's culture (which as Ratelle, drawing on Paul Wells, notes, is problematically derided for being 'loud, often obnoxious, poorly written and frivolous').[9] Although there are many deeply problematic implications in writings about Reiniger that her work is 'frivolous', she certainly does not fit the other categories, creating work that is often described as 'pretty' (equally problematic), never 'loud' or 'obnoxious'.[10] Instead, her work is meticulously created and cannot be replicated in a large-scale industrial setting.

As several scholars have noted, 'children's films' cannot be defined solely through textual strategies.[11] Noel Brown argues that, in order to understand children's films, it is also important to consider contexts and paratexts, and he goes on to suggest that there are at least five contextual processes that allow for defining children's films.[12] These processes are: the ways that films are marketed and distribution materials/strategies put into play; censorship and suitability ratings; critical reception; merchandising; and exhibition strategies that might, for example, feature children's matinees. These five processes all feed into how we might understand a film to be, or are encouraged to receive a film as, a children's film. Brown also suggests that such categorisations are just as relevant to television, suggesting that television shows aimed at a younger audience will be shown in the child-friendly times of the morning

or afternoon, rather than in supposedly 'adult-only' times.[13] For Brown, the generic identity of the children's film 'is not just a matter of what appears on screen. It is subject to broader, largely uncoordinated processes of negotiation' between bodies such as review boards, producers, audiences and critics, as well as merchandisers and exhibitors.[14] This is important to acknowledge, because one of the reasons it's hard to locate Reiniger in discussions of 'children's film/culture' is that these contexts/paratexts and processes of negotiation don't necessarily apply. For example, Reiniger's films were not accompanied by large studio practices of something like merchandising. It may also be the case that those wider contexts or paratexts are less accessible to us now. In the case of *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed,* archival research on the critical reception of the film in the trade press (one of Brown's processes that does relate to Reiniger's output) when first released in Germany suggests it was not being received necessarily as a children's film; initial screenings seemed to have been attended by more of an adult 'arts' crowd, of which Reiniger was very much a part.[15] Our lack of knowledge about how children *did* or *do* relate to Reiniger's films is compounded in the twenty-first century by the fact that most people who engage with Reiniger's films in a contemporary context are adults, cineastes, or scholars, as I will explore further below; the films are now arguably even more distant from children than they were when they were produced.

It is also worth noting that silhouette methods had, according to Michael Cowan, long been associated with portraiture before photography became ubiquitous.[16] He argues that 'the era of photography did not so much suppress the silhouette as it marginalized it, forcing it to migrate into less "serious" domains, particularly that of children's illustration'.[17] The silhouette method migrated from the 'serious' work of capturing likeness in portraiture to the much less 'serious' world of children's culture, notably fairy tale. Such associations, which pre-date any later links with fairy tale, demonstrates the precariousness with which such interconnections

lie; associations are led by industrial, commercial practices rather than intrinsic qualities that automatically entwine with certain demographics. The silhouette method and increasing links with children's culture and fairy tale can be considered a precursor to animation's becoming associated at large with children in the advent of mass media and, in particular, television.

It is possible to chart the process by which animation became associated with children's culture in the US through developments in the moving image industries, both cinema and television. Undeniably, Disney targeted a child or family audience, but there are examples of animation in the United States that provided more adult content, such as Felix the Cat, who engaged in all sorts of 'adult' behaviour such as drinking and going to clubs.[18] With the legal action that resulted in the removal of exhibition chains to the industry's oligopoly and the dismantling of the vertically integrated system, practices such as block booking (integral to the animated short's survival) began to wane.[19] Television became a lucrative medium, and children were clearly a target audience for much of the animation produced, historically and now. This can be linked back to Brown's argument about the wider context of the different processes that position children's media; with the development of mass media, across film and television, it is the case that lucrative markets reveal themselves in the children's demographic. As Brown notes above, this is related not just to the films and television shows themselves, but also in practices such as merchandising.[20] But, of course, we cannot contextualise Reiniger in such ways. Although her works have been shown on television, and – in the case of *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (1954) and *The Magic Horse* (1954) – commissioned for US television, she has never been associated with mass-produced children's television programming. Her commissioned work for television also includes adverts, which Tashi Petter terms as 'useful' films,[21] suggesting that her work produced specifically for television was with commercial interests in mind. On the contrary, her more 'personal' projects were produced outside of the mainstream studio context, which is not uncommon among animators who very often work

across different sectors and industry contexts. How, then, is Lotte Reiniger aligned with children's culture in terms of her method of animation, if indeed she is at all?

In terms of academic literature, much of the literature on animation that explores its association with children is focused on television, and understandably so given the amount of animated children's television on offer, and while Reiniger's work has been shown on television, as noted above, she is never considered in terms of 'Television Studies'. Brown provides a useful critical framework for children's cinema, where he works with a number of textual features to provide a broad definition of children's films and their modes of address. For example, Brown argues (noting that there are always exceptions to the rule) that the children's film generally will avoid 'unsuitable' topics such as sex or drug abuse, features a sympathetic protagonist, has a narrative that is easy to follow, and has clear moral binaries where good will always win out in the end.[22] Ultimately, Brown argues that children's films uphold social norms.[23] Given that much of Reiniger's films are fairy tales, much of Brown's arguments apply, as the fairy tale famously aims, for the most part, to condition children into understanding their place in the social world. Brown also makes the point that many children's films appeal to as wide an audience as possible, which could also apply to Reiniger given that fairy tales do have wide appeal (this will be explored further below).[24]

Rachel Moseley also provides some useful frameworks in her work on stop-motion animation of the 1960s and 1970s, where she looks at production companies like Smallfilms. Moseley argues that much of the literature in Animation Studies has largely ignored stop-motion unless it fulfils these criteria: 'an address to an adult audience; the perception that it is "international", avant-garde or, at least, art; its distribution as film'.[25] She makes the point that while children's animated television has been neglected, to some degree, stop-motion of the nature she interrogates is doubly ignored by both Television Studies and Animation Studies. For Moseley, then, animation that is made for children has not been considered to be critically

'important' enough to gain scholarly attention. Arguing that stop-motion animation for children is associated with 'lightness', the 'playful' and perhaps the even more loaded term of 'whimsy',[26] Moseley suggests that such connotations are 'indicative of the lack of attention paid to children's television in general histories of television and perhaps also of the perception of this particular form of pre-school television as simple and self-apparent in its meaning and address'.[27]

Once again, it is difficult to place Reiniger alongside Moseley's examples of stop-motion animation because, as noted above her work does not fit neatly into pre-school children's programming. It is also worth noting that her works are referred to as 'films'. Perhaps more poignantly, it is also the case that she is far closer to what Moseley loosely describes as 'art' than stop-motion examples like *The Clangers* (TV series, 1969–74; 2015–), which Moseley explores in her book. Moseley's assertion, for example, that the kinds of stop-motion that have attracted critical attention are '"international", avant-garde or, at least, art' applies to Reiniger in multiple ways. Reiniger's method has, on many occasions, placed her further towards what we could consider the 'art' end of the spectrum. This is a thorny issue, and one explored elsewhere in relation to craft, but the fact that her work is often displayed in museums, such as the permanent exhibition in Tübingen for example, is one way we can consider her work as art.[28] It is also the case, and again I have argued this elsewhere, that although we can't really categorise her work distinctly as avant-garde, there are elements of 1920s avant-garde animation in *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed* (an argument echoed in Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer's chapter in this volume), which is often, somewhat problematically, attributed to some of her collaborators.[29] As a German national, and someone that produced animation in multiple locations throughout her career (notably across Europe), she is also 'international' in terms of Moseley's categorisations, and so, once again, we can see that Reiniger is difficult to categorise; in this instance, she falls between an 'artistic', innovative

use of stop-motion methods and popular narrative storytelling. She also cannot be contextualised in the ways that both Television Studies and Animation Studies have tended to categorise and discuss either children's programming or stop-motion methods.

While it may be difficult to contextualise Reiniger in relation to these histories of stop-motion animation and children's culture, it is important to consider in more detail why and how her work skirts around the edges of children's culture. It is here we can turn to the notion of play, which has generally been under-theorised in animation studies (although Chris Pallant provides very useful thoughts on the notion of play in relation to video games, which, of course, as he points out, are examples of animation). Identifying the similarities between play in a playground, where children move in play within a particular boundary (the fenced off section of playground), and that which is animated moves within the boundary of the frame, Pallant writes that this

> highlights an important tension between the potential freedoms afforded by play/animation and the regulation imposed by the playground/frame (perhaps a narrative framework, or principles of verisimilitude, or the physical limits of space itself if projection mapping is the type of animation employed).[30]

I turn to aesthetics in more detail below, but first it is important to consider the thematic use of play in Reiniger's work, which would broadly come under Pallant's 'narrative framework'.

The notion of play is captured thematically in *The Grasshopper and the Ant* (1954), which opens with a butterfly, followed by a dragonfly and then more butterflies, flitting among the flowers in the peak of summer. The idyllic scene is set to music, which is being played by Grasshopper, and the impression given is that the insects are dancing to the tune (**insert image here**). As the sequence continues, the butterflies synchronise and fly together creating patterns,

followed by frogs who also dance together to the music on lily pads. A number of woodland creatures join in with the dancing to Grasshopper's tune, culminating in a joyful scene. This is interrupted by the severely cut (with scissors, not editing) Ant, who ignores the jollities in favour of collecting enough food for the winter. What then plays out is pertinent for a number of reasons. Firstly, the film plays as a moral tale for children, as is common in the fairy tale narrative. Grasshopper plays his fiddle all summer, and come winter nearly dies due to not collecting any food, whilst Ant, in her cosy home full of food for winter, turns Grasshopper away when he asks for help, thinking him foolish for not preparing for winter properly. When Ant is lonely and seeking company, Grasshopper, now recovered thanks to the kindness of other woodland animals, invites her in and plays the fiddle for her.

The moral of the story, then, is that work and play should be balanced; too much play and one will not thrive, too much work and one will become detached and isolated. A further moral of the story is to be kind to others, which is demonstrated by a number of the woodland creatures, including Grasshopper who overlooks Ant's former unkindness and welcomes her in. Interestingly, Reiniger's version differs in its tone and message (as well as style) to Disney's 1930s adaptation of the same story. In Disney's *The Grasshopper and the Ants* (Wilfred Jackson, 1934), the grasshopper similarly does not prepare for the winter; instead, he happily plays his fiddle while the army of ants work very hard to gather food. However, in this version, when the grasshopper needs food and shelter, the ants take pity on him and feed him. The grasshopper is ashamed and learns the lesson that hard work is required in order to thrive, and although he plays music for the ants, the film very much comes down on the side of the ants' industriousness (possibly reflecting its 1930s New Deal Depression-era social context) rather than the grasshopper's self-indulgent play.

Reiniger's adaptation of *The Grasshopper and the Ant* is also interesting because it demonstrates her love of music (how she animates is often likened to dancing and ballet). In

archives, it is possible to view papers from Reiniger's pre-production phases where she draws the movement of characters in her films as if they are dancing. The marks on the pages form circular movements with notes making them appear like choreographed movements, which indeed they are. By having the woodland creatures dance in time to Grasshopper's music, the film embodies much of Reiniger's approach to her work; her love of music is prominent, and she frequently refers to the influence of ballet and dancing on her characters' movements. The notion of play is thematised in this film, and indeed, we could consider play as fundamental to the moral storytelling common to the fairy tale; it is quite often the case in fairy tale that 'straying from the path' in whatever form that may take is akin to allowing too much play and pleasure into one's life. To further explore the association (or lack of) between Reiniger's work and children's culture, it is necessary to explore the notion of fairy tale further.

Fairy Tale Films

Despite producing other outputs such as advertising, Reiniger is often associated with the fairy tale, which is due, in large part, to the fact that her feature-length film, *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*, is based on the Middle Eastern *The Thousand and One Nights*, or *Arabian Nights*, and the fact that she is well known for her short fairy tale films, most of which were produced in the mid 1950s (with some exceptions) and released on DVD by the BFI in 2009. It is well documented that fairy tales have long been associated with children's culture. As Andrew Teverson argues in the context of the fairy tale as an emerging literary genre, they were 'used in the moral education and "socialisation" of children'.[31] And while it would be straightforward to analyse Reiniger's fairy tale films in light of their moral instruction (and I have given one example above), it is potentially more useful here to consider her fairy tale

films from a different angle, and one that is entirely to do with the fact that they are animated. It is here that we can turn to the concept of metamorphosis, because it is fundamental both to animation and to fairy tale. Lucy Fraser's extended study of the fairy tale and pleasure argues that transformation is key to understanding fairy tale in multi-faceted ways. She argues:

> Transformation is the magic that is built into the fairy tale, which is also known as the 'wonder tale'. Magic regularly manifests itself in events of metamorphosis, impossible changes in form, as when a fantastical creature such as a mermaid gains human legs or morphs into an air spirit. Transformation also structures the fairy tale genre, in which the fairy tale morphs constantly into new shapes but remains somehow recognizable.[32]

For Fraser, metamorphosis is crucial to understanding fairy tale (and its pleasures) because the tales morph through time and across borders, and also, as a matter of convention, feature characters and objects that magically and marvellously shift form through the genre or mode's 'tendency to replicate and mutate'.[33]

Writing specifically about *Prinzen Achmed*, Rachel Palfreyman argues that the film

> does not set out to overturn the patriarchal premises of the traditional fairy tale. Not part of the feminist or Marxist revision of the genre, it is a tale in which a handsome prince goes off on an amazing odyssey, spies upon a fairy princess skinny-dipping in an exotic lake, and the tale ends with not one, but two princesses rescued into marriage.[34]

Palfreyman's 2011 article outlines some key ideas about Reiniger's output and reception, much of which are beyond the scope of this chapter. But it is worth noting here that, despite the fact

that Reiniger clearly does not subvert the patriarchal ideology core to so many fairy tales, Palfreyman acknowledges that she does have much to offer feminists, largely in what she calls a 'celebration of transformation and metamorphosis'.[35] This raises two questions that this section of the chapter shall consider. Firstly, as metamorphosis is considered core to an understanding of animation, what then is the relationship between fairy tale, metamorphosis and animation?[36] Secondly, what does this contribute to our understanding of Reiniger's films in terms of their interplay with play?

On discussing the ability that animation has to engage space in a different way to live-action, because we can see 'in between' the frames, Aylish Wood argues that 'The sustained metamorphoses of resolving transitions, the dimensional play, and space which defies abstraction variously reveal the versatility of animation to depict spaces where possibilities have not yet fully subsided'.[37] This opening up of spaces of possibility could equally be applied to the fairy tale where, due to their fantastical nature, possibilities in these narrative spaces also often 'have not yet fully subsided'. In *The Golden Goose* (1944), for example, the young hero of the story, Dummling, meets an old man in the forest with magical abilities. Because Dummling is kind to the old man and offers him bread and water (unlike his older brothers who selfishly refuse him) the old man bestows on him several gifts, perceiving that he has a 'good heart'. Firstly, he turns the water into wine; secondly, he turns the bread into a roast chicken; lastly, he informs the young man that if he cuts down an old tree in the forest, he will find a great gift at the root. On turning the water into wine, the jug magically begins to wobble and shake and is transformed into a bottle of wine. The bread walks, flips over, and is transformed into a roast chicken.

Such a sequence is demonstrative of how metamorphosis works in terms of the method of production, the animation, and the space that fairy tale (and other fantastical works) gives to the transformation of objects and things. The animation – and specifically the use of the

paper cut-outs – allows for metamorphosis in exactly the way that Wood describes; we can see in-between the frames. It is also the case that the slightly 'jerky' movement afforded by the use of stop-motion allows us to perceive how each frame morphs into the next. On cutting down the tree, Dummling sees a golden goose emerge from the roots; the goose is preceded by a number of magical rings emanating from the tree, and finally the goose rises from the roots, again in that familiar stop-motion movement that lacks the fluidity of certain other techniques. This lack of fluidity allows us to see the transition from frame to frame, and this metamorphosis is doubled by the magical appearance of the goose with golden feathers.

Similarly, in *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (1954) a bright circle of light appears when Aladdin rubs the lamp and the genie appears. The use of the magical light in both this example and in *The Golden Goose* act as a signpost to the audience that a magical transformation is about to take place. When the genie appears, it is with the use of what looks like paint, rather than paper cut-outs, and gradually the genie fills the space by bubbling and smudging into the form of the genie. Due to the different method (paint as opposed to paper) there is a distinct contrast in this scene between the genie and Aladdin; the genie has no solid edges and is constantly shifting and morphing, while Aladdin retains his hard borders due to the scissor cut-outs. The genie is also pale against Aladdin's black paper. The sequence highlights Wood's argument that metamorphosis acts in a variety of ways depending on the method of animation used, and in this instance the metamorphosis is doubled by the magical transformation of empty space into the genie. In this sense, these films fit Wood's 'view of space as not easily defined, and which may even remain obscure'.[38]

This doubled use of metamorphosis – made possible by the combination of animation and fairy tale conventions – begs the question of what this contributes to an understanding of how her films sit alongside both children's culture and the concept of play (play not necessarily being simplistically aligned with children's culture, but also applicable to adults). Palfreyman's

acknowledgment that 'her [Reiniger's] fairy tale narratives combine to develop a conceptual engagement with life and death, subject and shadow, flatness and depth, shifting shapes and metamorphosing bodies' potentially allows for thinking of Reiniger's films as containing more adult themes.[39] Yet this would be to oversimplify the distinction between what appeals to adults and what appeals to children. The oversimplification of the argument that aligns animation with children's culture does not allow for the fact that there is much crossover in what appeals to both children and adults, and this is perhaps particularly evident in Reiniger's output. As Kirkland argues, 'pleasure in magic, or its representation on the screen, is not exclusive to child audiences'.[40] Metamorphosising bodies and transformative objects can clearly appeal to a wide range of audiences, albeit with the possibility of this occurring in different ways.

The magical transformation of objects and things in Reiniger's fairy tale films is afforded through animation and is evocative of both play and the 'child-like'. Ewan Kirkland suggests that 'children and the child-like have historically functioned as a means whereby adults negotiate discomforting aspects of modern life, culture and art in the age of mechanical reproduction'.[41] The enduring appeal of magic is showcased here in relation to transformation (which is replicated in children's imaginative play), and if we take Kirkland's point, is likely to appeal to both children and adults. Magical transformation is also reminiscent of the idea that objects might have power, which Jane Bennett refers to as 'stuff that commands attention as vital and alive in its own right, as an existant in excess of its reference to human flaws or projects'.[42] Magical transformation in the examples discussed here evoke both the child-like and play, which will be discussed further in the last section, and the idea that things might possess power and be able to affect: 'Thing power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle'.[43] Bennett's discussion of thing power is useful in that it allows for seeing the doubling effect of metamorphoses where to animate

some ‘thing’ is happening at the level of Reiniger and her paper and card, and thematically and narratively where inanimate objects possess the power to ‘produce effects’.

Play and Craft

Reiniger’s method is the use of scissor cut-outs or silhouettes which can, if we follow Kirkland’s argument, be seen to be associated with craft-like activities seen as popular amongst children. Craft-based activities form a major part of toys and activities marketed with children in mind. What’s more, the very concept of craft, or aesthetics that prioritise a ‘handmade’ look, often inform and underpin animated examples regardless of how they have actually been produced, which might be digital and/or otherwise.

I have noted throughout this chapter that there is no easy way to situate Reiniger in traditional contexts of what is perceived as children’s culture, despite the fact that much of her work is both fairy tale and animation. Kirkland argues that ‘[N]otwithstanding the demonstrable popularity of animation with adults, the form has persistent associations with child audiences’.[44] What complicates an association between Reiniger’s work and children’s culture are the many ways she cannot be contextualised, as pointed out by Palfreyman in 2011. While she may, for example, use popular narrative storytelling in the form of fairy tale, we can also detect elements of the avant-garde in her work. It is also important to acknowledge that in order to see Reiniger’s work in a public space, it is usually the case that one would encounter her films at a museum, or as part of film screenings that are not necessarily targeted at children (as, for example, a screening and Q&A at The Cinema Museum run by *Fantasy/Animation* in October 2019).[45] The late evening timeslot, presence of a Q&A, and the setting clearly target a more grown-up audience. Rachel Palfreyman observes in a footnote that Reiniger’s work is

displayed in a variety of festival contexts and special screenings, targeting both adult and child audiences.[46] Given Reiniger's likely multifaceted appeal, then, it is useful to consider the content of her films in relation to a further consideration of play, notably in terms of aesthetics; regardless of the actual demographic that might find pleasure in her films, the concept of play allows for further interrogating her films in terms of both the method of production and thematic content.

Kirkland argues that the (imaginary) figure of the child, and childhood, embodies a number of ambiguities as well as problematic notions of nostalgia. He writes:

> [T]he imaginary figure of the child comes to embody many contradictions, anxieties and hopes of the very era which brought it into being. The child functions to articulate adult dislocation from modernity, and anxiety about the speed of social, cultural and technological change.[47]

Kirkland is discussing examples where a fictional child appears in the television or film example, as in *Charlie and Lola*, to name one example. However, his arguments could carry over to apply to the concept of play in interesting ways; indulging in play (and for adults it is seen as an indulgence) can allow that 'dislocation from modernity' and distance from the kinds of anxieties that Kirkland notes. The concept of the child and/or childhood is a complex one, but a useful framework for considering how Reiniger's films intersect with play and, by extension, craft. If Reiniger's films offer some form of escapism, it may be in those fairy tales that revert to stories long known, told and retold throughout generations, but it is also in the particular crafted nature of the films, which encourage us to think about how they were made and if it were possible for us to make something similar. As many have noted in relation to watching/seeing/viewing crafted items, they invoke a haptic quality, encouraging us to imagine

what it would feel like to craft those things ourselves. If Reiniger's work appears in museums, it is not uncommon to find a space where visitors can make their own silhouette cut-outs, as is the case in the permanent museum at Tübingen. This is another example where her work can be seen to appeal to everyone without necessarily seeing audiences as divided into children and adults.

The 'perceived lack' attributed to stop-motion in terms of any realistic portrayal of movement, according to Moseley, needs to be reframed 'in favour of an "aesthetics of child's play", through which we understand the slight hesitancy and unevenness of the movement created as commensurate and "realistic" with the movement of the small object in the hand of the child at play'.[48] It is interesting to map such an 'aesthetics of child's play' on to Reiniger's work. In order to do that, it is necessary to consider the stop-motion object (whatever that might be) as a toy. This is perhaps easier to do with 3-D animated objects than those that are flat and 2-D; it is quite straightforward to think of Bagpuss, or the knitted Clangers as objects that could easily translate from stop-motion animated movement to being played with in a child's hand. The flat, 2-D cut-outs of Reiniger's silhouettes are less easy to translate to a plaything. This is due, in part, to their fragility, which one has a sense of in watching her films; they quite clearly lack the solidity of 3-D animated objects. While essential to the aesthetic of Reiniger's work, which Michael Cowan terms 'ornamental', the use of paper and card is less easy to imagine as a plaything than something closer to a soft toy.[49] Instead, what the paper does insinuate is the practice of crafts and scissor play. An indicative example of this in Reiniger's work is her 1922 adaptation of *Cinderella*.

The film opens with a title page introducing the story of Cinderella and explaining that the tale will be 'told by a pair of scissors on a screen'; this is an explicit reference to the crafted nature of the film, and is also framed by a clearly scissor-cut border. Scissors then appear, moving apparently with a life of their own, followed by a pair of hands (presumably

Reiniger's), which proceed to cut a figure out of paper or card at a higher frame rate in order to speed up the process. Such an introduction to the film works in a similar way to Moseley's assertions above, where – instead of imagining the stop-motion animated puppet or object in the hand of the child – we might imagine the scissors in our own hands attempting to craft these figures as Reiniger does. The film is also self-conscious about its crafted method of production, where the subtitles frequently state 'snip!' before revealing narrative development. Reiniger's work foregrounds a crafted aesthetic, made explicit through the very material of the films themselves.

As the material is paper and/or card, it is important to return to Moseley's 'aesthetics of child's play' which, for Moseley, encapsulates both the specifics of the movement of stop-motion animation, but also how this movement could translate into the movement of the toy as played with by a child. The delicacy of the paper lends it a 'weightlessness', according to Cowan, who cites Reiniger on the matter: 'The puppets lay flat on the surface. They are missing that centre of gravity which gives the marionette such a charming unreality […] But in exchange, they are masters of this surface, and there is no limit to their delicate mobility'.[50] For Cowan, this weightlessness is explained through a lack of gravity and 'laws of mechanics', which are a direct result of two-dimensional space where all figures appear flat.[51] For Reiniger, the material of paper allows for a 'delicate mobility'. The weightlessness associated with the flat 2-D paper images is emphasised in sequences where characters or animals fly through the air. A good example is the magical horse in *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*, who takes to the skies with Achmed on his back, and Achmed is unable to work out how to make the horse descend for some time. The figure on the horse soaring through the sky embodies the lack of gravity associated with the flat 2-D paper or card images. Similarly, in *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, the magic of the genie lifts Aladdin out of the cave as if he were as light as a feather, which, again, is insinuated by the stuff of his being, paper or card.

It is possible to consider Reiniger as falling between camps again in relation to this 'aesthetics of child's play' as, on the one hand, her use of stop-motion fulfils Moseley's conceptualisation, creating that jerky movement lacking in fluidity. That movement, however – which Moseley then translates into the movement of a toy in a child's hand – is not quite so straightforward with Reiniger's use of paper and card. Lacking in 3-D 'substance', it is arguably less easy to imagine them as toys being played with. It is much easier to think of them on a flat surface being crafted.

Conclusion

To some extent, it is possible to see Reiniger's fairy tale films as part of the tradition of silhouette cut-outs that were increasingly aligned with children's culture through its association with fairy tale. As Cowan argues:

> If the silhouette appeared as such an appropriate genre for these illustrated children's stories, this was precisely on account of its newfound status as a medium opposed to the documentary medium of photography: that of a 'naïve' art whose flatness holds the illusionism of three-dimensional representation at bay.[52]

Despite its long-held association with portraiture, its perceived 'naivety' and flatness apparently positions it as a useful medium for children's storytelling, and as Cowan rightly asserts, this is all due to industrial and contextual shifts in production rather than any intrinsic quality to the silhouette form. For Reiniger, though, her work is not usually explicitly discussed in relation to children's culture, and this is due to the fact that very often she falls between

several camps; the works I have considered here are based on popular narrative storytelling in the form of fairy tale, and she uses animated methods, both long associated with children's culture. Yet she is an international artist, her work distributed as film. Her use of animation is stop-motion rather than the more usual forms of mass-produced children's culture, and she cannot be contextualised in the traditional ways that both Animation Studies and Television Studies have placed stop-motion. Importantly, if we turn to notions of play, we can see that play informs her work both thematically and aesthetically. Play in relation to fairy tale moral narratives feature, but also we can turn to Moseley's 'aesthetics of child's play', which allows us to see that while Reiniger's work does indeed embody that jerky stop-motion movement, it is less easy to translate this into imagining her silhouette cut-outs as toys in a child's hand. As ever, Reiniger cannot be easily categorised or contextualised.

Finally, it is also worth noting that this chapter continues to problematise notions of what constitutes children's culture, as often opposed to adult's, and how these conceptions are realised. As Kirkland notes:

> Certain narrative aspects undoubtably recur throughout histories of children's media, such as fairy stories, talking animals and alternative worlds. Animation also seems to be fairly consistently associated with children, evident in film, television and digital media. But to connect these recurring qualities with some innate aspect of children's, in contrast to adults', pleasures disregards the extent to which those tastes have been shaped by adult-informed institutions.[53]

Reiniger reminds us quite clearly that there is no easy way to distinguish between what might appeal to children and what adults find pleasure in; the metamorphoses and transformations so prominent in her fairy tale works dissolve such boundaries.

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[4] Ratelle, 'Animation and/as Children's Entertainment', pp. 192–193.
[5] Ibid., p. 193.

[6] Ibid.
[7] See Caroline Ruddell, 'Contextualising Lotte Reiniger's Fantasy Fairy Tales' in Christopher Holliday and Alexander Sergeant (eds), *Fantasy/Animation: Connections Between Media, Mediums and Genres* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 109–125; see also Rachel Palfreyman, 'Life and Death in the Shadows: Lotte Reiniger's *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*', *German Life and Letters*, 64:1 (January 2011), pp. 6–18.
[7] Ratelle, 'Animation and/as Children's Entertainment', p. 191.
[8] See Palfreyman, 'Life and Death in the Shadows'.
[9] Ratelle, 'Animation and/as Children's Entertainment', p. 191.
[10] Boeckenhoff and Ruddell, 'Lotte Reiniger: The Crafty Animator and Cultural Value'.
[11] See, for instance, Ewan Kirkland, *Children's Media and Modernity: Film, Television and Digital Games* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017) and Noel Brown, *The Children's Film: Genre, Nation, and Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).
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[13] Ibid., p. 10.
[14] Ibid.
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[24] Ibid., pp. 20–24.
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[39] Palfreyman, 'Life and Death in the Shadows: Lotte Reiniger's *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*', p. 18.
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[45] See *Fantasy/Animation* at fantasy-animation.org run by Christopher Holliday and Alexander Sergeant.
[46] Palfreyman, 'Life and Death in the Shadows: Lotte Reiniger's *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*', p. 7.
[47] Kirkland, *Children's Media and Modernity*.
[48] Moseley, *Hand-Made Television*, p. 14.
[49] Cowan, "The Ambivalence of Ornament'.
[50] Lotte Reiniger cited in Cowan, 'The Ambivalence of Ornament', p. 790.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 796.
[53] Kirkland, *Children's Media and Modernity*, p. 21.